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School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Arts, Education, and Law
Griffith University

Supporting First Nations families with a parent in prison: A realist evaluation of *Belonging to Family*

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Krystal Margaret Anne Lockwood

MSc Evidence Based Social Intervention
Bachelor of Criminology and Criminal Justice (Hons)

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Abstract

In this thesis, I use a case study to understand how a realist approach to evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson et al. 2004) can contribute to two areas: First Peoples justice programs and parental incarceration. Both areas are highly contextual. First Peoples continue to have adverse experiences with criminal justice systems in Australia. First Peoples are among the most imprisoned populations in the world (Anthony, 2017), with 1,935 per 100,000 (age standardised) Indigenous adults imprisoned in Australia compared to 166 per 100,000 (age standardised) non-Indigenous adults (Productivity Commission, 2021b). Consequently, there are disproportionate rates of Indigenous families with a parent in prison.

Parental incarceration has been associated with numerous adverse outcomes for children, parents, family, and community (Arditti, 2012). These impacts stretch across the lifetime as well as intergenerationally and can include negative impacts on mental and physical wellbeing, social marginalisation, anti-social behaviour, and adverse impacts on community wellbeing. These impacts are compounded for over-incarcerated minority groups, including First Peoples. Building an evidence-informed approach to supporting families with a parent in prison is difficult. Families are hard to reach, and the experiences of incarceration are highly variable. This is exacerbated when trying to address the experiences of minority populations. Conducting theory-based evaluations of programs can help improve understanding about the impacts of parental incarceration and how programs can operate to improve outcomes.

The realist approach to evaluation is a theory-driven model (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson et al. 2004). The aim is to seek “what works, for whom, in what respects, to what extent, in what contexts, and how?”. These questions are addressed by identifying generative mechanisms – drivers that promote change in participants. For example, an employment program for people returning home from prison could consider social drivers such as access to opportunities, or psychological drivers such as a person’s job readiness. Realist evaluations also identify the influence of context on how programs work. Context impacts mechanisms as well as a program’s circumstances. For example, for the employment program, opportunities are influenced by location, and job readiness may be influenced by a person’s past workforce experiences. The realist approach recognises that what works in one place may not work in another. Identifying the outcomes, generative mechanisms, and contexts inform why this occurs, and grounds an evidence-informed approach in real-world social environments.

In this study I used the realist approach to evaluate *Belonging to Family* (BtF) - a small-scale reintegration program administered by the non-government organisation SHINE for Kids. BtF has supported First Peoples with a parent in the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre since 2011. With the assistance of SHINE, I focused my evaluation on how and to what extent BtF worked. My research design consisted of two steps. First, I conducted a rapid realist synthesis, an approach systematically reviewing evidence to understand the context, mechanisms, and outcomes of BtF. I synthesised 17 internal documents and 53 external documents to identify BtF's context, mechanisms, and outcomes. Second, I used the outcomes of the rapid realist synthesis to conduct a realist evaluation. I used an ethnographic approach, based in the field for four months while observing one offering of BtF, from enrolment to completion of their eight-week program. For data analysis I drew upon documents, observational data, and interviews with participants (15 family dyads from eight mothers and seven fathers in prison) and stakeholders (*n*=5).

BtF achieved two primary outcomes (i) *strengthening positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration* and (ii) *improving participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community.* Due to the highly contextual nature of parental incarceration, mechanisms were triggered dependent on family's needs. Therefore, the strength of BtF was the highly flexible, person-centric approach. The evaluation also demonstrated how cultural values were an underlying mechanism; cultural values were ingrained throughout BtF and influenced how participants engaged and interacted with the program.

In this thesis, I contribute to the literature in five significant ways. First, I demonstrate how a realist approach to evaluation can foreground and embed Indigenous perspectives, methods, and methodologies. Culturally appropriate evaluation methods that embed Indigenous perspectives are crucial for advancing evidence-informed practice; and can significantly contribute to informing criminal justice issues. Second, in terms of the realist method, I demonstrate how a rapid realist synthesis can inform a realist evaluation and provide an opportunity to build rapport with program providers. Third, I demonstrate the importance of understanding how mechanisms work, particularly in areas of service delivery that have disparate participant outcomes. Identifying mechanisms illustrate how a program works, which can assist service providers improve or expand their programs to other sites and strengthen evidence-informed policy and practice. Fourth, I demonstrate that small-scale programs can be an important piece of the puzzle in supporting families experiencing parental incarceration. Many services are needed to address the highly complex and multiple needs of parents in prison and their families and recognising and valuing the role of programs such as BtF is necessary. Finally, I demonstrate how a small-scale program administers a context dependent service delivery. In particularly, I demonstrate how services need to have strong community

outreach systems that include a breadth of services, be flexible enough to adapt to the multiple systems within the local context, and respond to the shifting support needs of communities and families. Overall, these five significant findings each inform the existing literature which I explore further in the discussion (Chapter 10).

Findings highlight the need for evaluation designs and macro-level policies to be strengthened to support highly contextual service delivery such as programs for parents in prison, particularly for a hyper incarcerated minority population. The findings can also support SHINE in their ongoing improvement of BtF, as well as inform other service providers across Australia and internationally who are developing culturally relevant programs, particularly supporting families experiencing parental incarceration.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Krystal Lockwood

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Definitions and Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AVO	Apprehended Violence Order (at the time this thesis was submitted, NSW had changed the name to APVO, Apprehended Personal Violence Order)
BtF	*Belonging to Family*, the program being evaluated
CBT	Cognitive Based Therapy
CSNSW	Corrective Services New South Wales, the state division of the NSW government that administers public correctional facilities and community court orders in NSW.
CMO	Context-mechanisms-outcomes. The three predominant concepts of realist approach to evaluations. At times denoted as CMOc which refers to CMO configurations.
DoCS	DoCS (pronounced docks) is an acronym of the former NSW state government agency, the Department of Community Services. DoCS was responsible for child welfare including child removal and foster services. The term DoCS is still commonly used to refer to child protection activities despite several departmental changes in name and responsibilities.
DVO	Domestic Violence Order (at the time this thesis was submitted, NSW had changed the name to ADVO, Apprehended Domestic Violence Order)
EBM	Evidence-based medicine
EBP	Evidence-based practice
First Peoples	There are numerous proper nouns that represent Indigenous Peoples of Australia (AIATSIS, 2018). In this thesis, I predominantly use the term 'First Peoples'. At times, I have also used '**Indigenous'** and '**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander**' interchangeably when I refer to common phrases, quotes, origins of specific sources, or administrative data. See section 2.2 for further details.
Indigenous Peoples	In this thesis, I use 'Indigenous Peoples' to refer to the distinct communities around the world who identify with a separate culture from the dominant society in which they live. See section 2.2 for further details.
Koori	A proper noun that represents First Peoples in a specific area, predominantly used by communities throughout NSW.
MNCCC	Mid North Coast Correctional Centre
MST	Multisystemic therapy

NAIDOC	NAIDOC Week (pronounced nay-dock) is a time of observance in Australia held from the first Sunday of July. The acronym stands for National Aborigines and Islanders Day of Observance Committee.
NGO	Non-governmental organisations
NSW	New South Wales
PPCT	Process-Person-Context-Time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006)
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
RCT	Randomised Control Trial
SCRGSP	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision
SHINE	SHINE for Kids, the organisation that designed and administers *Belonging to Family*

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Dedication

Uncle Baz Aunty Chris Uncle Lloyd Aunty Anna Uncle Clivey

See you when I'm looking at you.

Chapter 1
Introduction

In Indigenous affairs nothing is new, just forgotten – Lowitja O'Donoghue (1997)

Lowitja O'Donoghue is a Yankunjatjara woman and esteemed public administrator who has dedicated her life to the advocacy of First Peoples[1] rights and reconciliation. She used the above quote as the title of an oration she delivered where she reflected on her experience and observations on the public administration of Indigenous affairs in Australia. The title and oration convey the long-term cyclical nature that derives from ideology led government policies in Indigenous affairs. She witnessed a series of "(b)enevolent but naïve intervention(s)" (p.10) that aimed to make First Peoples' social outcomes equal with other Australians while simultaneously acknowledging and maintaining unique Indigenous cultures. However, in practice, tensions tend to tighten between First Peoples culture and values against governmental and bureaucratic expectations. O'Donoghue could see the tensions particularly in accountability measures, where she remained 'ambivalent' because:

> Indigenous affairs is a culturally ambiguous business. There are issues of both morality and practicality, and a need to balance these concerns. (p.10)

In this thesis, I focus on a specific form of accountability measure enforced within bureaucracies: evaluations. The tensions O'Donoghue identified are prevalent within the approach to evaluations for First Peoples - a quarter of a century after her oration. First Peoples have significantly lower participation, completion, and success rates in mainstream programs (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, 2013; Ferrante, 2013). Although there is dedicated funding and service delivery for First Peoples, 92% of these programs are not evaluated (Hudson et al., 2017). Best practice for engaging First Peoples necessitates supporting local programs, building long-term relationships, and embedding Indigenous perspectives (Hunt, 2013; Marsh et al., 2017). However, these practices are severely hindered with short-term funding cycles, a high number of pilot programs with no long-term support, and top-down policy initiatives (Davis, 2016; Sullivan, 2011). This is particularly the

[1] In this thesis, I predominantly use *First Peoples* to refer to the people who belong to the 250 different language groups, the traditional custodians of Australia. *Indigenous* and *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* may, at times, be used interchangeably. See sections 2.2 and Definitions and Acronyms for further information.

case for evaluations processes, which tend to be process orientated; and where results tend to be rarely embedded in policy learning and ongoing program improvement (Stewart & Jarvie, 2015).

These issues faced within public administration tend to be exacerbated in certain fields such as criminal justice. Criminal justice issues are generally politicised within public administration and service delivery (Pratt et al., 2013). Resources tend to be allocated from populist opinion rather than from an evidence based or informed framework (Pratt, 2007). Evaluations are usually under-resourced in both government and community-based programs, and when evaluations are completed, tend to be kept in-house (Morgan & Homel, 2013). Significant barriers are particularly faced for justice issues concerning First Peoples; tellingly, the leading federal government policy initiatives targeting First Peoples during the completion of this thesis did not include justice targets (Australian Law Reform Commission, 2017). The consequence of these policy barriers has a detrimental domino effect on supporting people in the criminal justice system. This is particularly evident in areas which are impacted indirectly from criminal justice policy initiatives, such as families with a parent in prison.

Family members of incarcerated parents have been referred to as the 'invisible' collateral damage of imprisonment (Turanovic et al., 2012). There has been considerable research to understand the impact of parental incarceration, which includes heightened social exclusion and the likelihood of adverse social and emotional outcomes for the incarcerated parent, carer, and children (e.g., Arditti, 2005; Dennison & Smallbone, 2015; Foster & Hagan, 2007; Murray et al., 2014). Despite this, research, service delivery, and support are lacking or still developing for families of incarcerated people (Henson, 2020; Kjellstrand, 2017; Miller, 2006). This is especially concerning for minority groups or communities who experience hyperincarceration (Graham & Harris, 2013), such as for First Peoples in Australia.

Evaluations are an integral component in generating evidence for policies, practices, and programs (Trochim, 1998). As a systematic approach for determining the merit, worth, or significance of an intervention, evaluations are embedded in models of evidence-informed practice (e.g., Craig et al., 2008). However, there are various models of evaluations that vary in purpose, functionality, and intent (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Nonetheless, evaluations can serve as a lynchpin between research and practice. This is particularly true for areas like parental incarceration where evidence for best practice is lacking.

1.1. Research Objective

In this thesis, I have taken a case study approach to evaluate the program *Belonging to Family* (BtF). BTF supports First Peoples families who have an incarcerated parent in the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre (MNCCC) in New South Wales (NSW), Australia. BtF is a throughcare program. Throughcare in the criminal justice system is characterised by programs that support people pre- to post release from prison (Borzycki, & Baldry, 2003; Day et al., 2019; Seiter & Kadela, 2003). BtF is administered by the organisation SHINE for Kids (SHINE) and the program was established in 2011, five years prior to this evaluation. Internationally, throughcare programs are increasingly being considered as best practice for supporting people who are incarcerated, including Indigenous people (Day et al, 2019). Despite this, BtF is one of few throughcare programs in Australia, has been offered for a substantial length of time, and is among the fewer throughcare programs designed specifically for First Peoples. Therefore, BtF's experience can offer valuable insight for evidence-informed practice.

In this thesis, I examine how a specific approach to evaluation – the realist approach – can be utilised to address two main issues. The first issue is the tension O'Donoghue identified between administering support programs for First Peoples while simultaneously recognising First Peoples culture. Second, the case study focuses on a program that supports families with a parent in prison and can therefore contribute to applied knowledge on specific mechanisms to support a hard-to-reach and marginalised population.

The realist evaluation framework is a theory-driven approach to evaluation based in realist philosophy (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The realist evaluation framework acknowledges that the same intervention can have different outcomes for different people. Consequently, realist evaluators seek to establish not only what works, but what works, for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects, to what extent, and why. Through consultation, the main priority of the evaluation was to understand how and to what extent BtF achieved their outcomes. To achieve this, I (i) developed testable hypotheses based on the context, mechanisms, and outcomes of BtF*;* and (ii) tested these proposed hypotheses. By developing an applied research strategy using ethnographic methodology, I collated in-depth data in a real-world setting.

Overall, there are two overarching aims of the thesis. The first aim is to identify the extent a realist approach to evaluation can assist in understanding how unique contexts and mechanisms for First Peoples effect outcomes in justice programs. The second aim is to identify the extent that a realist approach to evaluation can assist in understanding the context, mechanisms, and outcomes that impact parental incarceration programs.

1.2. Relevance of thesis

In this thesis, I make a significant contribution to knowledge in two distinct areas that can improve outcomes. First, this thesis identifies a way to build a culturally appropriate evidence base for programs for First Peoples. In completing the case study, I use the theoretically driven realist evaluation framework to understand how contextual factors of First Peoples interact with program elements to impact the effectiveness of BtF. More broadly, this has implications for social justice programs for First Peoples. The increasing and ongoing overrepresentation of First Peoples in the criminal justice system has been described as Australia's most pressing human rights issue (Gooda, 2014). Extensive resources have been allocated for reducing Indigenous over-representation; however, there is still a lack of evidence-informed approaches to address the issues that contribute to higher involvement in the criminal justice system, and a particular lack of interventions that support the collateral consequences of overrepresentation (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, 2013). There are many programs already implemented that support First Peoples. Evaluation methods that embed Indigenous perspectives can develop sound evidence-informed approaches for disrupting First Peoples contact with the criminal justice system and mitigate the broader impact of high incarceration rates on families and communities. This has been identified as a critical contemporary issue with an Australian federal government taskforce realising an Indigenous evaluation strategy (Productivity Commission, 2020).

The second area this thesis advances knowledge on is developing evidence-informed support for families experiencing parental incarceration, particularly for a minority population that is hyper-incarcerated. In this thesis, the experience of a small community-driven service provider is integrated with the growing number of resources analysing the impacts of parental incarceration. I identify how and to what extent BtF supported their participants. More broadly, this has relevance to program development and implementation of family-focused interventions for families experiencing parental incarceration.

Theory driven interventions are elusive in many service areas and can be challenging to implement for hard-to-reach populations experiencing complex issues. Evaluation practices should be designed to accommodate this complexity. The realist approach establishes a framework for evaluations suitable for service providers and policy makers targeting complex issues. Moreover, this would bring a theoretically driven approach to strengthening evidence-informed programs for parental incarceration and First Peoples that is established from an applied setting. Realist

evaluations can also help service providers adapt their services to the specific contexts of their programs' participants (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). This may encourage both government and community-based organisations to develop culturally appropriate programs and in turn contribute to the wider knowledge base administering programs for First Peoples and families experiencing parental incarceration. BtF is in a unique position to address these issues, as there are only a handful of programs in Australia that specifically support First Peoples families experiencing parental incarceration (e.g., Howard-Wagner & Evans, 2020).

1.3. Methodology and research questions

In this thesis, I use an Indigenous research methodology. Moreton-Robinson and Walter (2009) identify three interdependent critical elements of Indigenous research methodologies: standpoint; conceptual framework and theoretical paradigm; and methods. Standpoint refers to the life circumstances that shape how an individual understands and interacts within the world. I established my standpoint as a Gumbaynggirr and Dunghutti[2] woman and acknowledged the role this has in researching On Country[3]. The conceptual framework refers to the specific theoretical constructs that inform research while the theoretical paradigm is the paradigm that closely aligns with the theoretical approach. As my intention for this thesis was to examine the realist evaluation framework, I align my conceptual framework within realism, and identify how this is interdependent with my Indigenous paradigm with the influence of Rigney's Indigenist Research (section 4.5.2).

As I am focused on examining a specific method, I note here the processes inherent to the realist evaluation framework. Working to evaluate a specific intervention program in a real-world context, a realist evaluator establishes the program's guiding theory using Context-Mechanism-Outcome configurations (CMO). The (O)utcome is what the program is aiming to achieve (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). A program's (M)echanisms include how a program achieves the outcome, including how a participant's reasoning and/or resources are changed. (C)ontext are factors that impact the mechanisms; this includes social, economic, and political structures, organisational context, program staffing, program participants, and geographical and historical contexts. The evaluator then tests the CMO configurations using multiple methods that are appropriate for the population. The realist

[2] Gumbaynggirr and Dunghutti are two distinct First Peoples nation groups of Australia.
[3] For First Peoples, *Country* refers to the place of origin, belonging, and belief system that is connected through the people, animals, and the land and waterways, and how this comes together through stories and Songlines.

evaluation framework focuses on understanding an intervention's context, mechanisms, and outcomes.

My standpoint, conceptual framework, and theoretical paradigm have shaped my research methods and research questions. In this thesis, I use the two methods within the realist approach to evaluation: the realist synthesis and realist evaluation. First, I conducted a realist synthesis, which is a method of synthesising secondary data including available experiences of the service provider as well as research (Pawson et al., 2004; Wong et al., 2013). The aim of my realist synthesis was to develop hypotheses that articulate how BtF works by identifying the intended outcomes, proposed mechanisms, and pertinent contexts. In doing so I addressed the following research questions:

1a. What are the primary intended outcomes of Belonging to Family?

1b. What is known about achieving the intended outcomes established in (1a) for families with a parent in prison?

2. What are the key contextual factors created by the incarceration of First Peoples parents that are hypothesised to impact the outcomes of Belonging to Family?

3. What existing causal mechanisms are proposed to be (de)activated by the introduction of Belonging to Family and what new mechanisms are proposed to be (de)activated through the introduction of Belonging to Family to improve participating families' experiences and intended outcomes?

4. For which families, and in which conditions, does the introduction of Belonging to Family lead to the (de) activation of proposed mechanisms producing negative experiences and unintended outcomes for participating families?

After the realist synthesis, I conducted a realist evaluation. The aim of this evaluation was to test the hypotheses established in the realist synthesis. Therefore, I focused the evaluation on how and to what extent BtF achieved the outcomes identified in the realist synthesis. This led to three research questions:

1. *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family strengthen positive family relationships?*
2. *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community?*

3. *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family reinforce cultural values?*

To conduct the realist evaluation, I used an ethnographic approach, spending four months at SHINE's Aldavilla Family and Community Centre based on the MNCCC property. My methods included observations, document analysis, and interviews using yarning modalities. Interviewees included families participating in one offering of the BtF program (15 family dyads from eight incarcerated mothers and seven incarcerated fathers) as well as stakeholders (*n*=5) including SHINE and correctional centre employees directly involved with the program.

1.4. Overview of Chapters

This Chapter has provided an overview of the underpinning theories and methodologies of this thesis, as well as the pragmatic significance. The methods, methodology, and research questions were also identified. The remainder of the Chapter outlines the thesis' 10 chapters.

I present the literature review over two chapters. Chapter 2 encompasses three topics: i) First Peoples in Australia; ii) the relationship between First Peoples and the criminal justice system; and iii) the theoretical and empirical literature on parental incarceration. Overall, I identify the highly contextual nature of parental incarceration, which is compounded when this impacts an over-incarcerated minority group such as First Peoples.

Chapter 3 covers two topics: i) the applied and theoretical underpinnings of evaluations; and ii) the realist approach to evaluation. I identify several contentious issues of administering evaluations and interpreting evidence, particularly noting the considerations of context. I propose the realist approach to evaluations to account for contextual factors, including embedding Indigenous perspectives in evaluations.

In Chapter 4, I outline the research design and methodology. First, I state the aims and rationale of the research. Then I summarise ethics considerations, including the predominant concerns, completing institutional ethics, and abiding by an Aboriginal ethical framework. I outline the BtF program. Then I detail the methodology, including my Indigenous Standpoint, realist conceptual framework, Indigenous theoretical paradigm, and methods. I used two realist methods in this thesis: a rapid realist synthesis and a realist evaluation. Finally, the research questions are presented.

In Chapter 5 I present the realist synthesis, including the methods, findings, and results. The synthesis drew on secondary data focusing on understanding the outcomes, contexts, and mechanisms that influence BtF. The aim of the realist synthesis was to provide a hypothesis for how BtF works which is used as a framework for the realist evaluation. The realist synthesis elicited three primary outcomes of BtF: (i) strengthen positive family relationships, (ii) improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community, and (iii) reinforce cultural values.

In Chapter 6 I outline the methods of the realist evaluation and the details of the participants. I outline the methods: an ethnographic case-study using field work notes and observations, semi-structured interviews using yarning modalities, and document analysis. I also provide details of the qualitative data analysis approach that builds from the work of Miles and Huberman (1994).

I present the results of the realist evaluation in Chapters 7, 8, and 9. I provide an in-depth analysis of how and to what extent BtF achieved the three intended outcomes identified in the realist synthesis. BtF's outcomes are considered in turn in each chapter with Chapter 7 focused on *strengthening positive family relationships,* Chapter 8 focused on *improving participant's support networks,* and Chapter 9 focused on *reinforcing cultural values.*

As a result of the evaluation, I refined BtF's program theory, identified key strengths, and recognised areas BtF could improve going forward. I noted the person-centric and flexible approach to service delivery and illustrate how cultural values are an integral mechanism in providing culturally appropriate services.

Finally, in Chapter 10, I provide a summary of the thesis, before outlining five significant ways the thesis has contributed to our understandings of evaluations, Indigenous service delivery, and supporting families experiencing parental incarceration. I provide implications for theory and practice, before outlining the limitations of the thesis and directions for future research.

Chapter 2
First Peoples, the Criminal Justice System, and Parental Incarceration

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I outline empirical and theoretical insights into First Peoples in Australia and parental incarceration and identify gaps in the research that I address in this thesis. First, in section 2.2, I provide a brief context of First Peoples focusing on principles pertinent to this thesis. In section 2.3 I detail the relationship between First Peoples and the criminal justice system and how First Peoples' overrepresentation throughout the system impacts social, emotional, and community wellbeing. In section 2.4, I provide empirical and theoretical insights into parental incarceration, analysing the international and Australian literature. I highlight the highly complex and contextual nature of parental incarceration using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development. I also outline the diverse impacts of parental incarceration identified in the empirical literature and describe how this applies specifically to First Peoples. Finally, in section 2.5, I identify an impasse; on one hand there is a large and growing body of research on the adverse consequences of parental incarceration. On the other hand, there is a perpetuated rhetoric that there is a lack of evidence in the stages of designing and delivering programs. This impasse can be addressed with evaluations, which is examined in the next chapter.

2.2. First Peoples

Indigenous Peoples are distinct communities who have a continued connection to a territory prior to being incorporated into a nation state (United Nations, n.d.). There are an estimated 370 million Indigenous Peoples in 90 countries worldwide (United Nations, 2019.). Although Indigenous Peoples may be difficult to characterise, there are core characteristics, particularly that each community has unique knowledge, social, and belief systems separate from the dominant society that they are a part of (Sanders, 1999). In Australia, there are two distinct cultural groups - Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples consist of over 250 different language groups (depicted in Figure 2.1). First Peoples belief systems include creation stories connected to the land since time immemorial, and there is now DNA and archaeological evidence of First Peoples dating back over 80,000 years (AIATSIS, 2018; Reyes-

Centeno et al., 2014). In this thesis, I have used the proper noun First Peoples to refer to members of the over 250 language groups across Australia.

Figure 2.1

AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia (Horton, 1996)

First Peoples in Australia are one of the world's oldest civilisations and have the oldest continual cultures in the world (Rasmussen et al., 2011). The 250 language groups represent diversity and differences in Lore. Lore refers to belief systems that connect people physically and spiritually to Country and establish kinship structures and how to interact (Bourke & Cox, 1998). Lore sets out the social norms and processes including acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and how unacceptable behaviour is addressed. Although there are diversities between language groups, there

are some key values that are common amongst First Peoples, particularly in valuing kinship networks. Kinship systems refer to the relationships and roles placed on people within family and community (Bourke & Cox, 1998). Generally older men and women can have responsibilities and relationships that represent Aunties and Uncles while peers can have strong social bonds that reflect those of siblings or cousins. Another common value is the respected role of Elders (Busija et al., 2020). Elders are people who are recognised as custodians of knowledge and Lore and provide guidance, counselling, and knowledge to their community.

Indigenous Peoples have adverse outcomes on social, emotional, economic, and political rights across the world. Due to similar histories, the ongoing impacts of First Peoples in Australia are commonly compared to Maori in New Zealand, and First Nations Peoples in the United States of America and Canada. First Peoples have been and continue to be adversely impacted from colonisation. McRae et al. (2009) provide a brief history of major policy areas practiced on First Peoples since first contact (Table 2.1).

Terra nullius allowed the British Empire to establish Australia as a penal colony without any form of treaty or legal interactions with First Peoples. As illustrated in Table 2.1, policies used on First Peoples for over 230 years aimed to systematically dismantle and control social and civic opportunities of First Peoples; including housing, education, family support, community networks, political participation, and economic opportunity. These policies led to poverty and disorder which became visible as the major policy approaches moved towards formal equality and gaining citizenship in the 1967 Referendum. The ‘administrative problem’ of First Peoples became a penal problem (Hogg, 2001). This was amplified as the policy decisions to dismantle social and civic opportunities also removed protective factors against being involved in the criminal justice system (Finnane & McGuire, 2001). Consequently, the incarceration rates of First Peoples have risen since Indigenous status has been recorded (Leigh, 2020; Weatherburn, 2014) (incarceration rates discussed further in section 2.3.).

Table 2 1

Government policies and practices towards First Peoples, 1788-2018 (McRae et al. 2009, pp.9-64)

Approx.	Major policy areas	Brief description
First contact (1770s)	Conciliation	Initial contact, when colonists established foothold, Indigenous peoples weighed up the newcomers, and the doctrine of terra nullius ("nobody's land") stripped First Peoples of all legal rights.
1788 to late 1800s	The Killing Times	Dispossession and despoliation as the colonists seized the land, First Peoples died in their thousands from disease and massacres.
1890-1960s	Protection	Social control after dispossession. The era of "Aborigines Act" designed to protect and control First Peoples by forcing many onto reserves and strictly regulating their lives with apartheid-like discrimination.
1937-1970s	Assimilation	Formal equality where First Peoples are subject to the same laws. Aims of equality vs eliminate cultural difference - "soften the dying pillow". Children were forcibly removed from their kinship and became known as the Stolen Generation.
1972-1992	Self-Determination	The Whitlam government heralded a 30-year era when the distinct rights of Indigenous peoples, and historical injustices were first acknowledged by settler nation.
1996-2007	Practical Reconciliation	The Howard government curtailed progress from preceding policy in the name of formal equality and national unity. Exclusive focus was on socio-economic status and the impact of settler responsibility contested.
2007- 2018	"Closing the Gap"	Ideological tensions: the Rudd government's apology to the Stolen Generation vs adoption of NT Emergency Response. "Closing the Gap" as a policy focus driven by pragmatism and moderation but devoid of ideology of past policies.

Indigenous Peoples around the world have fought for recognition of their identities and ways of life (United Nations, n.d.). Central to this fight is self-determination - the right to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development" (human rights.org, n.d.) as a distinct group of people. As presented in Table 2.1, self-determination was a major policy area during 1972 through 1992. Although subsequent policy areas curtailed the progress from the self-determination era, the ideals of self-determination have continued to be largely prioritised by First Peoples (Behrendt, 2003) including within the justice context (Porter et al., 2017). The implementation of self-determination is a complex process. The most notable application of self-determination is self-governance; a process that would need to be implemented at a macro-level. This thesis has focused on the program level, which is reflected in the United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People. Article 23 states that Indigenous Peoples are entitled to:

> …determine and develop priorities and strategies…[and to be] actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions. (UN General Assembly, 2007)

Therefore, First Peoples should be the decision makers by identifying issues to address and then designing, implementing, and administering solutions, particularly at the local level. The role of self-determination is explored further in relation to the role of evaluations (section 3.2.3), as well as in the effectiveness of program delivery (section 9.3.1.).

2.3. First Peoples and the criminal justice system

Indigenous Peoples around the world have a complex and largely adverse relationship with criminal justice systems (Cooke et al., 2007). In Australia, the overrepresentation of First Peoples throughout the criminal justice system has been an ongoing and critical public policy challenge and social justice issue (McRae et al., 2009). First Peoples comprise approximately 2% of the Australian adult population, but account for 29.2% (n=12,456) of the adult prison population (Productivity Commission, 2021b). Moreover, First Peoples make up 6% of people aged 10-17 years, but account for 52% of young people in detention, with a rate 17 times higher for young Indigenous Peoples (23 per 10 000) to be in detention compared to non-Indigenous young people (1.3 per 10 000) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021). Compared to non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous peoples' victimisation rates can be up to six times greater (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017), and substantiated child protection reports are six times higher (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020). Indigenous imprisonment rates are 1,935 per 100,000 (age standardised) (*n*=12,456) of the adult Indigenous population, which is over 11 times higher than the imprisonment rate of the non-Indigenous population (n= 30,200; 166 per 100,000 age standardised) (Productivity Commission, 2021b). Indigenous imprisonment rates have been increasing over the past three decades and the disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous incarceration rates are becoming wider, making Indigenous Australians one of the most incarcerated populations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (Cooke et al. 2007; Deloitte Access Economics, 2018; Weatherburn 2014).

The hyperincarceration of First Peoples throughout the criminal justice system is a highly contextual and complex social justice issue. 'Hyperincarceration' refers to the complex and

multilayer factors that contribute to incarceration - such as law, policy, and practice – and recognises that groups are affected differently, such as higher incarceration rates of First Peoples (Cunneen et al., 2013). The complexity of the system and historical legacy is outlined in section 2.2, which demonstrated how First Peoples' relationship with the criminal justice system and any programs that are designed to address hyperincarceration are embedded in the legacy of colonisation and the role of the criminal justice system in the process of colonisation (Blagg, 2008; Blagg & Anthony, 2019; Blagg, 2008; Cunneen & Tauri, 2015). Additionally, the relationships between contact with the criminal justice system and detrimental outcomes in social, emotional, financial, and community wellbeing have been widely theorised and researched (e.g., criminological theories such as strain theory, social control, and social disorganisation, see Vold et al., 2002). Communities that experience overrepresentation in the criminal justice system experience these detrimental outcomes at higher rates; and this is evident for First Peoples (Ferrante, 2013; Homel et al., 1999; Weatherburn, 2014).

The federal government measures 52 indicators of wellbeing in the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage report series released bi- and triennially from 2003 to 2016, and most recently in 2020 (SCRGSP, 2020). These reports identify the extent to which First Peoples have negatively disproportionate outcomes compared to non-Indigenous Australians in alcohol and substance consumption and harm, family and community violence, health, stress, employment, education, and housing ownership and overcrowding. Each of these measures of disadvantage is known to be related to engagement with the criminal justice system and can be exacerbated after being in contact with the criminal justice system; for example, people who have been incarcerated are more likely to return to prison, be unemployed, experience substance and alcohol abuse, and have mental health problems (Petersilia, 2003). Consequently, contact with the criminal justice system can add to an accumulation of disadvantage that affects the wellbeing of First Peoples. The Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage report (SCRGSP, 2020) indicated that some gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous economic, health and post-secondary education outcomes had improved, yet justice outcomes continued to worsen for adult and juvenile incarceration and community and family violence.

The evidence base for addressing the causes and consequences of Indigenous overrepresentation is considered weak and anecdotal (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, 2013). This is despite numerous reports, commissions, and reviews that have been established to address these exact issues. One of the prominent reports was the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) released in 1991, which highlighted the disparate contact of First Peoples throughout the criminal justice system (Commonwealth, 1991). Subsequently, numerous programs and interventions addressing Indigenous overrepresentation were implemented, propelled by an

equivalent of $AUS700 million government spending on addressing the Report's 339 recommendations (Weatherburn, 2014). The policies and interventions established from the RCIADIC contributed to Indigenous Australians becoming one of the most studied populations in the world (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003). Even so, in the three decades since the RCIADIC was released, the recorded rates of Indigenous overrepresentation have remained consistent or increased (SCRGSP, 2020). Numerous other reports have been commissioned with little improvement to Indigenous overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. This has led community members, policy makers, activists, and taxpayers to be frustrated at the continued wave of research and expenditure with few observable improvements. Moreover, the relationship has strained between First Peoples communities and researchers, evaluators, government bodies, funding agencies and interventionists (Bond & Brady, 2013; Stewart & Jarvie, 2015; Taylor, 2003; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Embedding appropriate methods for developing an evidence base for First Peoples justice programs is a critical and urgent task for both reducing incarceration and mitigating the broader impact of high incarceration rates on families and communities.

2.4. Parental Incarceration

In this section I review the literature on consequences, impacts, and policies when a parent is incarcerated. First, I outline the prevalence of parental incarceration before briefly illustrating the wide-ranging impacts of parental incarceration, which I situate theoretically within the bioecological model of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). Then I examine the impacts of parental incarceration in more detail, by reviewing research on individuals, family members, and communities. Finally, I identify policies and practices associated with parental incarceration, particularly for First Peoples.

2.4.1 Prevalence of parental incarceration

Many countries have increased their use of imprisonment as a form of punishment. In the USA the movement of mass incarceration since 1973 has been dubbed the "grand social experiment" (Frost & Todd, 2009). In Australia, there has been increased incarceration rates across all states since the 1980s (Tubex et al., 2015) with the national imprisonment rate increasing by 35% from 2000 to 2021 (Productivity Commission, 2021a). With increased reliance of imprisonment, the impacts have been lived, observed, and researched. A primary aim of imprisonment is crime

reduction – however there are also “collateral consequences” – unintended impacts on the person imprisoned, their social networks, as well as the community (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). One of ‘collateral consequences’ of imprisonment is the impact on a family when a parent is incarcerated.

Internationally there is limited information available about the prevalence of parental incarceration. In Australia and internationally, parental status is not standard information collected by correctional centres. To compensate, researchers use a country’s population level parenting rates, prison statistics, and surveys to estimate the number of children impacted by parental incarceration. For example, Murray (2007) used national reception statistics, Home Office surveys, and his own survey data to estimate that 1% (n=125,000) of children in England and Wales had an incarcerated parent. Ayre et al. (2006) used the French parenting rate (1.3 offspring per parent) and national prison data to estimate that 800,000 children in European Union were separated from their incarcerated parent on any given day. The Northern Ireland Prison Service used visitation data to estimate 1,500 children had a parent in prison on any given day. Hoffman et al. (2010) conducted an inmate survey in USA estimating 810,000 incarcerated parents had over 1.7 million children, equating to one in 43 children in USA experiencing parental incarceration. Inevitably, parental incarceration is higher for minority groups overrepresented in prisons. Wildeman (2009) used life-table methods with three criminal justice data sets to estimate that one in four African American children experience paternal incarceration in their childhood. Glaze and Maruschak (2008) used surveys to demonstrate that in the USA, compared to white children, African American children were 7.5 times more likely and Hispanic children were 2.5 times more likely to have a parent in prison.

Three studies have estimated the number of children impacted by parental incarceration in Australia. Quilty et al. (2004) used the NSW Corrections Health Service’s cross-sectional survey and a population model to estimate that approximately 4.3% of all children under 16 in NSW had a parent imprisoned in 2001. Dennison et al. (2013) cross referenced a research survey conducted at the prisoner’s intake, prison statistics, and state level population data to calculate that 4% of children in Queensland experience paternal incarceration in their childhood. Dowell et al. (2017) analysed linked population-level administrative data of Western Australian between 2003-2011 to identify that an average of 1,544 children aged 0-17 years experienced maternal incarceration (303 per 100,000) each year. Inevitably, all three studies found higher rates for First Peoples. Quilty et al. (2004) estimated that First Peoples children in NSW were 4.7 times more likely to experience parental incarceration in 2001 (20.1%, 20,128 per 100,000 children under 16 years) compared to non-Indigenous children (4.3%, 3,692 per 100,000 children under 16 years). Dennison et al. (2013) estimated that First Peoples children in Queensland (16.3%, n=68,955) were four times more likely

to experience paternal incarceration in their lifetime compared to non-Indigenous children (3.8%, n=976,901). Dowell et al. (2017) found Indigenous children in Western Australia were 27 times more likely to experience maternal incarceration each year (2,929 per 100,000, *n*=1,034) than non-Indigenous children (108 per 100,000, *n*=510). Overall, a significant number of families, both in Australia and internationally, are affected by parental incarceration with higher rates in communities experiencing hyperincarceration.

2.4.2 Theoretical framework for understanding the complexity of parental incarceration: Bioecological model of development

In this section I describe the impacts of parental incarceration using the theoretical framework of the bioecological model of development (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). I centre the impact of incarceration on the parent, and then extend this to their familial and social networks. In the subsequent section I link this theoretical framework to the empirical literature on the impacts of parental incarceration for the incarcerated parent, carer, children, and community.

Testing theoretical frameworks in empirical research or service delivery would inform best practice to support families. Literature examining parental incarceration focuses on: (i) changes to individual outcomes, for example children's behavioural problems (Wildeman & Turney, 2014); (ii) the impact of new contexts, for example the impact of visitation rooms (Gordon & MacGibbon, 2011); (iii) relationships, for example attachment of children to incarcerated mothers (Poehlmann, 2005); and (iv) a combination of these variables and outcomes. Therefore, the focus of research in this area has been about person-context interrelatedness and thus lends itself to the bioecological model of development (Arditti, 2005; 2015; Dennison et al., 2017; Poehlmann et al. 2010).

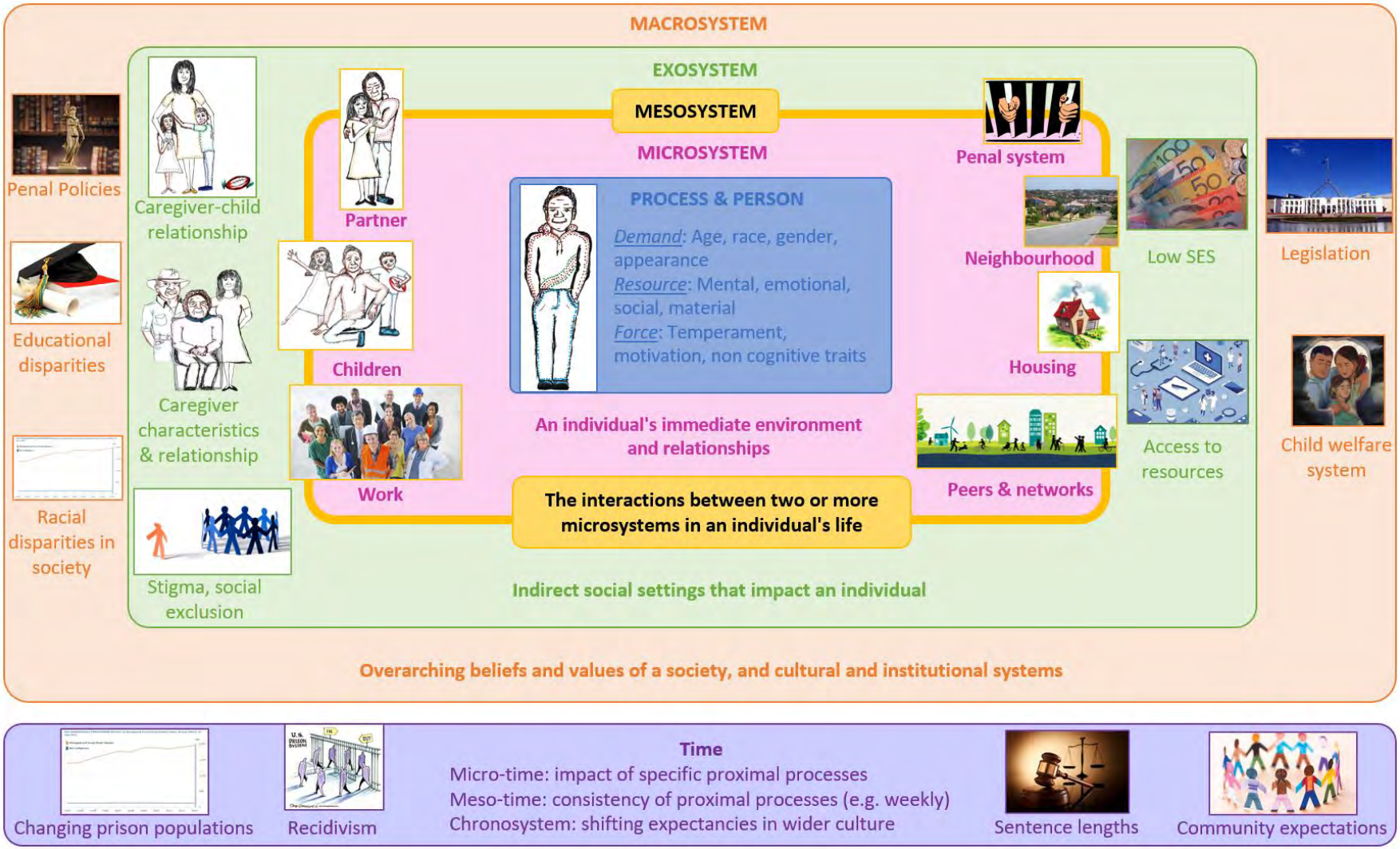
Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of development originated out of his earlier work where he developed the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In his earlier work through to the mid 1980's, Bronfenbrenner aimed to calibrate the role of context in developmental studies, noting that theories overlooked the impact of context on an individual's development. As his work progressed, Bronfenbrenner noted that his contemporaries were over-emphasising the role of context, thereby removing individual agency. From the 1990's until his death in 2005, Bronfenbrenner continually re-evaluated and built upon his work. The primary change was a shift away from context towards a focus on the person-context interaction. This led to the bioecological model, which provides a theoretical framework that aims to understand the interaction between a person's biological, psychological, and sociological factors and how these respond within and between multiple systems, throughout a person's life (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). The

bioecological model focuses on the highly contextual and multifaceted nature of development over the life course and demonstrate how major events can impact different people in diverse ways depending on their own personal systems and relationships (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). This led to the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). These four components are dynamic and interact with each other.

As the PPCT model reflects complexity and person-context interaction, researchers found the model conducive to examining the impacts on family members experiencing parental incarceration. The work of this adaptation is displayed visually in Figure 2.2. I consider each of the principles in turn and provide brief examples of how they apply to parental incarceration.

Figure 2.2

Process-Person-Context-Time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) applied to parental incarceration



Process is crucial in development and was a key feature in shifting the focus onto the individual within their contexts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Proximal processes refer to the progressively more complex, regular, and reciprocal interactions between individuals and the persons, objects, and symbols in their immediate environment. For parental incarceration, positive parenting is an important proximal process in a child's development. When a parent becomes incarcerated, a child can lose a parental role model (Geller et al., 2012), have negative associations with visiting their parent (Gordon, 2015), or miss attachment during early childhood development (Dallaire et al., 2014). Dennison et al. (2017) examined the proximal processes within the PPCT model between imprisoned fathers and their children. After interviewing 64 fathers across Queensland Australia, they found that there were limited opportunities to facilitate developmentally promotive proximal processes. The presence of opportunities was reliant on social and interpersonal contextual factors such as prison policies that allowed child-friendly visitation areas, or interpersonal relationships between caregivers and incarcerated parents. Overall, proximal processes are the primary mechanism for effective human development and form the basis of how an individual makes sense of the world and how to interact within it. The parental incarceration literature demonstrates that this can be significantly impacted when a parent is incarcerated.

Person refers to the biological, genetic, and personal characteristics of the individual with a focus on how these traits interact within social environments (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Bronfenbrenner classified three types of characteristics: (i) *demand* characteristics, the immediate stimulus another person can react to, such as age, gender, skin colour, or physical appearance; (ii) *resource* characteristics, traits that are not immediately apparent, and can include mental and emotional resources - such as past experiences, skills, and intelligence – as well as social, and material resources – such as educational opportunities and housing; (iii) *force* characteristics, the behavioural dispositions of an individual, such as delay in gratification, curiosity, impulsiveness, or motivation. *Person characteristics* have been identified within parental incarceration literature, particularly in identifying different experiences and inequalities, such as between mothers and fathers (Dallaire, 2007b) and racial groups (Foster & Hagan, 2009). Programs that support families experiencing parental incarceration should understand how demand and force characteristics influence how their programs are delivered. For example, parental incarceration effects on children can be dependent on age (section 2.4.3.1.), and programs should be age appropriate; for example residential units have been developed to allow incarcerated mothers and their new born to toddler aged children to form positive attachment (Walker et al., 2019). Programs or policies can also be gendered to account for differing experiences such as targeted programs for incarcerated mothers

(Young & Smith, 2000) compared to incarcerated fathers (Brito, 2012). A significant *force characteristic* to consider in service delivery is motivation and desire to change (Farabee et al., 1998; Gideon, 2010; Hiller et al., 2002). Moreover, service providers should be able to identify and positively support *resource characteristics*, such as supporting positive family relationships, facilitating access to social networks, and providing access to material needs such as adequate housing (Kruttschnitt, 2011).

Context is the environment and is conceptualised as four nested structures (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). At the centre and closest to the individual is the *microsystem*, which represents a person's immediate environment and relationships, such as the family, school, work, or peers. For families who experience parental incarceration, the function of previous relationships may change, such as the role of parenting from behind bars as well as either a shift in carers or the possibility of a temporary single headed household (Gordon, & MacGibbon, 2011; Besemer & Dennison, 2018). New relationships may be introduced, such as correctional visiting centres (Cramer et al., 2017). The *mesosystem* relates to the interactions between microsystems that the individual is directly involved in. Similar to the *microsystem*, these relationships may be pre-existing but change as a result of incarceration, such as the relationship between the parents and their child's educational environment (Dallaire et al., 2010). New relationships may also be created, such as the relationship between the home and correctional visiting centres (Cramer et al., 2017). The *exosystem* is the indirect social setting that impacts an individual even though they do not have an active role. Families experiencing parental incarceration may be highly impacted by the *exosystem*. For example, the possibility of negative stigmatism from the community in accessing appropriate or adequate support services (Foster & Hagan, 2007; Murray, 2007), or the impact of the correctional centre on children, as some parents prefer to disengage from parenting altogether to prevent a child's exposure to prison (Dennison & Smallbone, 2015). Finally, the *macrosystem* refers to the overarching beliefs and values of a society as well as the cultural and institutional systems such as the political, social, or economic systems. This can include policies and ways of thinking about families who experience incarceration and whether they are supportive, negative, or absent altogether. The impact of parental incarceration on *context* is explored in further in section 2.4.3 with reference to each family member and the community.

Finally, ***Time*** refers to the impact of an event over a certain period (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Micro-time refers to the impact of specific proximal processes and Meso-time refers to the consistency to which proximal processes occur, such as days or weeks. The micro- and mesosystems are important to acknowledge in parental incarceration literature; for example,

Gordon and MacGibbon (2011) found that some families found visitation centres and security processes not to be family friendly and ceased visits. Therefore, a negative micro-time process led to negative outcomes to parenting opportunities for the incarcerated parent in a significant meso-time. Bronfenbrenner also discusses macro-time (*chronosystem*), which refers to the shifting expectancies in wider culture including sociohistorical events both over a lifetime and between generations. For First Peoples, the macrosystem can illustrate how the inherently political nature of Indigenous hyperincarceration and intergenerational policies have led to fewer opportunities for positive parenting within First Peoples communities (Ball, 2009; Dennison et al., 2014) and may impact the types of programs that address parental incarceration.

2.4.3. Impact of parental incarceration

Incarceration is a form of individual punishment, but as demonstrated with the bioecological model, the collateral impacts are wide ranging. Moreover, the impacts are highly contextual and can vary from positive experiences to adverse outcomes (Turanovic et al., 2012). Parental incarceration is both impacted and impacts across multiple systems. The family unit, each family member, and the community can each manifest various outcomes to parental incarceration. Relationships can be positively or negatively altered between the people, organisations, and environments that are involved within and across family members' lives. In this section, I review the literature that examines the impact of parental incarceration on the incarcerated parent, the children, the non-incarcerated carer, and the community.

2.4.3.1. Children

Measuring intergenerational impacts of incarceration is methodologically challenging. This is attributed to the type of outcomes that are being measured (especially length of time) and the complexity of people's lives. For example, prior to parental incarceration, children are more likely to experience 'packages of risk' (Giordano & Copp, 2015), which refers to the cumulative disadvantage of experiences such as family dysfunction, parental criminality, poverty, exposure to violence, or abuse and neglect. However, isolating the impact of "packages of risk" relative to parental incarceration is difficult. Murray et al. (2014) administered a systematic review, collating 50 samples in 40 methodologically rigorous studies from England, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the USA. They found children with incarcerated parents had significantly higher risk for antisocial behaviour compared to their peers (OR=1.4). However, Murray et al. (2014) cautioned that the impact of

parental incarceration was difficult to isolate as research methods and differences in study designs could not separate the impact of parental incarceration other forms of disadvantage. This conclusion was supported by Bhuller et al. (2022) who argued that studies which indicate negative effects of incarceration use correlational research designs that draw upon administrative datasets or retrospective surveys which have limited variables. Such designs are prone to missing correlated unobservables – variables that are not recorded in the dataset but significantly impact outcomes. Bhuller et al. (2022) demonstrate how studies using experimental and quasi-experimental designs have inconclusive findings on intergenerational impacts of incarceration. Consequently, there is a myriad of research and outcomes in this area which tends to reflect the complexity of parental incarceration.

Despite methodological restrictions, both qualitative and quantitative research has established that children who have a parent in prison are a vulnerable group and have found that incarceration can be a significant compounding factor. The separation from a significant person within a child's *microsystem* has ongoing consequences. Accumulated disadvantage can intensify when a parent is imprisoned, and the negative social stigma associated with prisons can contribute to isolation from peers and severely impact relationships within a child's *micro*- and *meso- systems* (Foster & Hagan, 2007). Compared to children who do not have an incarcerated parent, the impact of incarceration can sustain inequality across the lifetime and intergenerationally (Murray, 2007; Wildeman & Turney, 2014). Further studies have identified that such accumulation of adverse childhood experiences including economic deprivation, ongoing paternal absence, and maternal hardship has ongoing adverse health consequences, that continue onto the next generation (Hughes et al., 2017).

Within the PPCT model, a significant *person characteristic* is the gender of the incarcerated parent. Maternal incarceration tends to manifest different impacts on children than paternal incarceration. Impacts are compounded when both parents are incarcerated. Paternal incarceration has a higher prevalence as more men are incarcerated. Wakefield and Wildeman (2013) identified the causal effects of paternal incarceration through rigorous statistical analyses across three data sets, identifying higher rates in infant mortality, child behaviour and emotional problems, and homelessness. Continuing their analysis, Wakefield and Wildeman (2013) distinguished the experience of mothers inside whom "on average, [are] struggling with more serious problems than men who end up behind bars, many of which further complicate the mother's parenting". This contributes to the identification of the higher prevalence of cumulative disadvantage in the lives of children prior to the parental, and particularly maternal, incarceration. Children have also been

found to be impacted prenatally with low birth weight (Dowell et al., 2019), as well as postnatally. As mothers tend to be the primary caregiver, maternal incarceration has a higher likelihood of leading to foster placements, adoption, and loss of a primary caregiver (Dowell et al., 2018).

Again, relating back to the *person characteristic*, the gender and age of the child can also lead to different impacts of parental incarceration (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2003). Infants and young children require consistent and sensitive attachments to caregivers for later social and emotional competence. Continuity of care and attachment throughout incarceration could be a protective factor for the healthy development of a child (e.g., Poehlmann, 2005). For school aged children, the home and school environments are likely to be disrupted during their parent's incarceration increasing risks for academic difficulties and disrupted social development (see Gordon, 2015). Adolescents with incarcerated parents are more likely than other adolescents to leave high school earlier, engage in delinquent behaviours, go to jail, be sexually promiscuous and experience teenage pregnancy (see Dallaire, 2007a). Maintaining positive social connections, and stable supportive family connections throughout the experience of having a parent in prison is integral to reducing these risks and disrupting the likelihood of an intergenerational continuity of contact with the criminal justice system.

2.4.3.2. Family and carer

Parental incarceration impacts the family unit and disrupts the role of the caregiver. Many of the issues faced by children outlined above are shared with the family. For example, the types of accumulated disadvantage experienced by the child reflect the experience of the family. The methodological challenges are also similar, such as distinguishing the impact of incarceration from the impacts of accumulated disadvantage, examining unique effects of risk factors, or identifying compound variables. For example, Dennison et al. (2019) used the HILDA dataset - an Australian longitudinal survey - to examine changes in levels of stress of maternal parenting over a period of time that included a term of paternal or close family incarceration. They found three distinct maternal stress profiles; decrease in stress, no change, and an increase in stress. However, after controlling for contextual, recent, and cumulative adverse events, the impacts of incarceration on the carer diminished. Consequently, incarceration was but one of the adverse events among many that the families were facing. Nevertheless, multiple *systems* of caregivers and families are disrupted throughout the process of a parent being incarcerated. Wildeman et al. (2012) examined mothers with children by recently incarcerated fathers. They found that in addition to economic insecurity, mothers' wellbeing was significantly reduced with elevated levels of life dissatisfaction and increased

risk of a major depressive episode. The caregiver also takes on a new role as a gatekeeper between the child and the imprisoned parent while coping with stigma and negotiating a predominately unfriendly visitation centre (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2011). Inevitably the role of a caregiver can be significantly changed due to parental incarceration.

People who are incarcerated are perceived as socially deviant, which leads many community members to be hostile or apathetic towards addressing the collateral consequences of incarceration. Arditti (2005) explains how families experience disenfranchised grief when a parent is incarcerated. Disenfranchised grief refers to the experience of loss where family find it difficult to 'grieve' a 'social death' because of little social support or public acknowledgment or mourning of the loss. However, from 100 in-depth interviews with carers, Turanovic et al. (2012) found that the impact on carers and children can vary greatly, and depends on the interpersonal relationship of the parents, the incarcerated parent's prior involvement, and whether there is an existing support structure for the carer. With the absence of support structures, families with a parent in prison are more likely to experience high levels of social exclusion which has been found to range from homelessness, lack of care coverage, and an absence of political participation, administrative exclusion, and stigma (Foster & Hagan, 2007; Murray, 2007). For many families, the removal of a parent is the removal of an income, support, carer, and role model for a family (Arditti, 2005; Dallaire, 2007a). In their study using Queensland and Australian datasets, Besemer and Dennison (2018) found caregivers of children with a father in prison were heavily socially excluded compared to the general population. However, compared to datasets from the USA, some forms of exclusion were not as severe, such as health care, due to Australia's public healthcare system. Moreover, they found financial hardship and single parent status were mediators of the influence of paternal incarceration on social exclusion. Nonetheless, social exclusion had significant impacts on families seeking adequate social, emotional, or financial support, which has impacts across the lifetime.

Overall, the PPCT model can be used to illustrate the multitude of changes that occur from parental incarceration. *Micro*- and *mesosystems* can be altered due to changing relationships between members and the likelihood of changing housing, school, and financial support arrangements, all of which can impact the family's social and emotional wellbeing (Dennison et al. 2019; Wideman et al., 2012). This is compounded by the limited services and support available within the *macrosystems* of family members; for example, there are limited social security benefits designed for 'prison widows' and correctional visiting centres are notoriously not family friendly (Besemer & Dennison, 2018; Cramer et al., 2017). Moreover, the introduction of the prison into a family's *exosystem* has ongoing impacts, such as increased pressure and stresses for visiting their

family members and supporting them financially while they are incarcerated. The costs associated with keeping in contact with an inmate are high and these costs are borne by families that are already likely to be under financial pressure (Dennison et al., 2014).

2.4.3.3. Community

High incarceration rates concentrated in specific neighbourhoods and communities are destabilising and can negatively impact the quality of community life. Clear (2008) demonstrated that disadvantaged minority communities in the USA exhibit higher recidivism rates. Social disorganisation theory provides a sound explanation to the importance of social networks in building a community's human and social capital; safe communities are built with 'strong' bonds between people for personal support and 'weak' bonds that give you access to other networks that increases a person's, families', and community's social capital (Putnam, 2001; Sampson et al., 2002; Wilson, 2012). Reciprocal and positive connections between an individual and community groups and neighbourhoods are also evident in the *micro* and *mesosystems* of PPCT (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). High levels of incarceration remove disproportionate numbers of active community members. Participation in the labour market is severed with the removal of working age community members and this trend continues after re-entry of inmates into the community as people who were incarcerated experience higher levels of unemployment (Clear, 2008; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Lower participation within the workforce restricts participation and growth of economic and political infrastructures within communities. Family formation can be disrupted and restricting a family's access to social capital increases the likelihood of mental and physical health issues. This, in turn, can hinder the potential of establishing bonds and social networks within a community and diminishes informal control, notably for adequate parental supervision of adolescents (Clear, 2008; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Therefore, incarceration has short-term consequences and impacts the long-term prospects of a community.

2.4.3.4. Incarcerated Parent

Initially criminologists researched the impact of incarceration solely on the offender and there is extensive research in this area that could be examined well beyond the limit of this thesis. In terms of parental incarceration, clearly the incarcerated parent's family and community roles will be affected (Arditti, 2015). The impact of incarceration on their parenting depends on numerous factors; for example, whether they were a mother or a father, the engagement or contact the parent had in family life prior to imprisonment, or the amount and type of contact they have with their

family while in prison (e.g., Chui, 2016; Murray, 2007; Turney & Wildeman, 2015; Wildeman & Turney, 2014). From the *PPCT model*, the only factor in their microsystem is the prison environment, with the loss of connection to the environmental *microsystems* on the outside, including their family home. As discussed in the community section above, the incarcerated parent is also significantly likely to lose contact with people, community groups, employment, and social networks (Clear, 2008; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Moreover, the parent now has limited capacity for role modelling in their family and community which has been shown to contribute to intergenerational disadvantage (Dennison, et al. 2014; Murray et al., 2014). In addition, as demonstrated above for children and carers, incarcerated parents are more likely to experience cumulated disadvantage (Arditti, 2015). Overall, there are many factors to consider in supporting any person when they are incarcerated; however, parents would need additional support to continue their parenting role.

2.4.3.5. First Peoples

Communities experiencing over-representation in the criminal justice system experience amplified impacts of parental incarceration (Wildeman & Turney, 2014). In their large-scale statistical analysis, Wakefield and Wildeman (2013) identified the heightened prevalence of incarceration among less educated parents of African American children, which in turn embedded and increased racial disparities in society. In Australia, the collateral consequences of parental incarceration on children, the family, and the community outlined above would have a higher prevalence in First Peoples communities, which would increase the negative impact on social, emotional and community wellbeing (Ball, 2009; Dennison & Smallbone, 2015; Dennison et al., 2014). The concept of family within First Peoples communities has a broader definition than in the parental incarceration literature above. As identified in section 2.2, older men and women can have responsibilities and relationships that represent Aunties and Uncles, and peers can have strong social bonds that represent relationships that are similar to siblings or cousins. Inevitably, this would mean that the incarceration of one Indigenous person may have larger familial impact as has been described throughout section 2.4.3. The extended familial network increases the likelihood of experiencing parental incarceration when considering that 25% of males under the age of 25 are removed from communities to prisons (Stewart et al., 2011).

It is also important to acknowledge the significant rise in the incarceration of First Peoples women. From 2008 to 2018, Australia's female incarceration rates increased by 55% (compared to 29% for men) with First Peoples women making up just over one third of the female prison population (ABS, 2019). Further, Sullivan et al. (2019) found that Aboriginal women in contact with

the criminal justice system have higher rates than non-Aboriginal women of mental health disorders and are more likely to experience violence victimisation than non-Aboriginal women, and that Aboriginal mothers in prison had significant physical and mental health needs and psychological distress. As mothers, their incarceration and ongoing health needs have significant impacts on the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal children, families, and communities (Sherwood & Kendall, 2013). This identifies a need for culturally appropriate healthcare in prison.

First Peoples' overrepresentation throughout the criminal justice system is inextricably entwined with the historical context between First Peoples and the use of the criminal justice system in the process of colonisation (Blagg, 2008; Cunneen, 2013). Since first contact, the criminal justice system and the system's employees have been used to administer policies aimed to systematically dismantle First Peoples networks and cultures (Finnane & McGuire, 2001). The Bringing Them Home Report (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997) presented the personal narrative stories from First Peoples of the impact of government policies directing law enforcement officers to forcibly separate families. The stories recounted personal hardships and demonstrated the intergenerational suffering separation policies had caused within First Peoples communities. Today, the removal of First Peoples from communities into prisons is considered the next chapter in Indigenous policies that have removed generations from participating or having meaningful roles within communities (Cunneen & Libesman, 2000; Porter, 2015). This includes removing the opportunity for First Peoples to provide parental role models or positive roles that model appropriate behaviour. However, the interaction between and within First Peoples' ecological systems can impact on the wellbeing or opportunities to provide positive role models. Within the *meso*- and *exosystems*, strained interactions between people and organisations lead to higher rates of social exclusion from the wider community. Moreover, within the *macrosystem*, policies and practices continue to impact the lives of First Peoples. Royal Commissioner Johnston described his observation of the overarching detrimental impacts broad policies have on First Peoples in Australia, stating:

> … until I examined the files of the people who died and the other material which has come before the Commission and listened to Aboriginal people speaking, I had no conception of the degree of pin-pricking domination, abuse of personal power, utter paternalism, open contempt and total indifference with which so many Aboriginal people were visited on a day to day basis. (Johnston in Commonwealth, 1991, s1.7.23)

Inevitably, the historical and political contexts must be understood and addressed to provide appropriate support for families experiencing parental incarceration.

2.4.4. Policies and practices addressing parental incarceration

Overall, there is substantial body of research identifying the impacts of parental incarceration, however there are fewer studies developing an evidence-base for interventions that aim to reduce the impacts (Kjellstrand, 2017). Policies, practices, and programs that aim to support families experiencing parental incarceration are a relatively newly emerging field and evidence a largely ad hoc approach. There tends to be a lack of political and social will to support people who have been sentenced for breaching societal laws; this extends to addressing the collateral consequences of incarceration such as the hardships faced by the families left behind. In Australia there have been several sporadic governmental reports highlighting the vulnerability of children and difficulties for families who have an incarcerated parent. For example, the 1982 NSW Department of Youth and Community Services study looked at the impacts to children with imprisoned parents and the Legislative Council Standing Committee Inquiry into Children of Imprisoned Parents was commissioned from the NSW Parliament in 1997 (Cunningham, 2001). These reports detail the same issues that have been discussed in the above literature review, highlighting the marginalisation of prisoners, isolation of their spouses and adult friends, and invisibility of their children (Hounslow et al., 1982). However, as illustrated throughout this literature review, there continues to be little political and social redress or support to address the issues highlighted in these reports in Australia and many other countries.

In many countries, including Australia, the temporary loss of a parent to incarceration leads to significantly fewer opportunities and more limited social security benefits than families who are not experiencing parental incarceration. Furthermore, correctional facilities have a continued mandate to isolate and contain an inmate rather than to foster positive family bonds throughout the incarceration period. This limits the use of family friendly practices such as the provision of family friendly visitation areas. Visits between parents in prison and their children have been recognised as an important process in maintaining attachments. In their cross-national systematic review, Murray et al. (2014) found social and penal contexts – that is, the influence of the *exosystem* and *macrosystem* - condition the effects of parental incarceration on children. Children with a parent in prison in the punitive criminal justice system of England had poorer outcomes in education, mental health, drug use, and life success, compared to the welfare-orientated criminal justice system and extended social welfare system of Sweden where the effects of parental incarceration were weaker. In terms of the PPCT model, this demonstrates how policies in the *macrosystem* have a direct and significant impact on the lives of family members.

As demonstrated throughout this literature review, empirical research is still developing to understand the risk and protective factors that affect outcomes in children with incarcerated parents and their families and communities. Methodological issues limit our understanding of how to reduce adverse outcomes that are attributed to complex and multifaceted issues, such as a child's academic engagement following their parent's incarceration. This is complicated further for minority groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, who have unique risk and protective factors that need to be considered. The heterogeneity of experiences before, during, and after a custodial sentence leads to a heterogeneity of responses and outcomes for families. Different outcomes to the same experience of parental incarceration require research methods, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks that are accommodating to the impact of different contexts, responses, and outcomes. For example, Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model can be used to demonstrate how heterogeneous outcomes occur and can be used to establish a framework for developing programs that incorporate strategies to address socio-bioecological differences. Overall, empirical research has demonstrated that families impacted by parental incarceration are a vulnerable group that experience a myriad of issues.

Several researchers and practitioners are establishing evidence-informed interventions to accommodate for these complexities. For example, Eddy et al. (2019) have proposed embedding theory-based multimodal interventions to support families experiencing parental incarceration. A multimodal program recognises the multiple contextual aspects to people who are incarcerated, such as is illustrated in the PPCT model in this Chapter. Such models have the core tenets of throughcare programs – which provide support pre- through post release (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). The effectiveness of throughcare has been mixed (D'Amico & Kim, 2018). Mark et al. (2019) indicate that this variability is largely attributed to the developing field, and variability in program design and delivery. Overall, however, throughcare programs have been considered a best practice model for supporting people holistically.

There are also numerous non-government organisations (NGO's) in multiple countries that are integral to supporting vulnerable families and have made significant contributions to understanding the ripple effects of incarceration. Some NGO's administer programs to address the impacts of parental incarceration. These programs are often spearheaded by people who themselves have experienced parental incarceration first-hand or organisations that have an extensive history of supporting prisoners. For example, Pillar's Inc (2016) in New Zealand was founded by Verna McFelin, who struggled through supporting her children throughout her husband's incarceration. The New York Initiative for Children of Incarcerated Parents is administered

by the Osborne Association who have been "supporting individuals and families affected by incarceration" since 1971 (Krupat et al., 2011). In Australia, SHINE for Kids (2015a) has delivered programs since 1982 after a NSW state inquiry into the impact of parental incarceration. SHINE is the organisation that delivers the program I have evaluated in this thesis. In terms of the PPCT model, organisations that provide support programs can impact the "person" and "process" development of family members; for example, children may have access to a mentorship program or families may have access to drop-in centres. Organisations may also provide a service to create positive connections through the *mesosystems* of family members: for example, providing referral to appropriate support services, providing family-friendly visitation areas, or providing academic support for children.

NGO's can also influence the *macrosystem* by producing studies or reports or lobbying for the rights of family members impacted by parental incarceration. For example, Australian community-based welfare organisations such as the Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders conduct studies such as the Doing it Hard (2000) survey that analysed the needs of children and families of prisoners in Victoria and released action papers for establishing frameworks to support families impacted by incarceration (Robinson, 2011). USA community partnerships established the Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights which has been instrumental in guiding the development and working ethos of similar interventions (San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership, 2005) and led the way for national summits that have examined the impacts of parental incarceration (Krupat et al., 2011). Internationally, the United Nations held a meeting to discuss children of incarcerated parents and the resolution for the rights of the child contains a section outlining the rights that need to be protected for children with an incarcerated parent (United Nations, 2011). These holistic and overarching reports have been integral to demonstrating the complex, multi-layered, and systematic impact of parental incarceration, including understanding how the individual, family, community, and policies are related in leading to positive or negative outcomes of parental incarceration.

Although the impacts of parental incarceration are amplified for over-represented minority groups within criminal justice systems, there are limited policies or interventions that have been established specifically for minority groups. Programs need to adapt to the unique risk factors that are prevalent in the lives of minority groups experiencing parental incarceration. For example, the political nature of Indigenous over-representation in Australia requires a level of consideration and cultural competency to successfully deliver a program in a way that is relevant for the participants. This creates a layer of complexity for delivering programs. Understanding the factors that support

families with an incarcerated parent is integral; but equally as important is understanding the unique risk and protective factors that First Peoples face and this is crucial in delivering effective and culturally appropriate services. Again, this can be reflected in the PPCT model; Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2007) explained how programs could affect communities with shared histories and experiences in the *chronosystem*, such as the experience of colonisation for First Peoples. This would indicate that although some promotive factors are important for all populations (such as access to an advocacy service), some risk and protective factors are unique to First Peoples (such as incorporating Aunties, Uncles or community members within advocacy services). There are limited programs in Australia specifically designed with and for First Peoples families experiencing parental incarceration. For example, in the *Tjilari Justice Strong Culture, Strong Families* program runs four workshops during school holidays to connect incarcerated fathers with their children and partners through cultural activities in the Alexander Maconochie Correctional Centre (Howard-Wagner & Evans, 2020). There are also unstructured visitational programs, such as *Colourful Dreaming* that provides cultural activities for incarcerated fathers and their children which is delivered at the Junnee Correctional Centre (SHINE for Kids, n.d.). This thesis will focus on the program BtF administered by SHINE for Kids (SHINE). Compared to other targeted services, BtF is a more intense and long-term program, supporting families through reintegration via an eight-week program prior to release followed by 12 months post release case management (further details are provided in section 4.4).

2.5. Conclusion

In Chapter 2 I provided key insights into the context and service delivery for: (i) addressing the overrepresentation of First Peoples throughout the criminal justice system, and (ii) families with a parent in prison. I demonstrated that there is a large and growing body of research for both areas. Both are highly contextual, with people who are in the criminal justice system having diverse experiences. Generally, people and their families impacted by the criminal justice system experience adverse outcomes in relation to their social, emotional, and economic wellbeing. Groups or populations with high incarceration rates also experience adverse outcomes at a community level. These impacts can stretch over a person's lifetime as well as intergenerationally. Service providers in these two areas are tasked with supporting highly contextual and complex issues that stretch across systems and, at times, generations. Unfortunately, service providers are usually over-worked and

under-resourced with limited co-ordination between policy makers, service providers, and researchers in designing or delivering programs. This creates an impasse, between a large and growing body of research and a common rhetoric in service delivery of a lack of evidence. This impasse between research and practice provides the basic overarching aims of this thesis. Specifically, there is a gap in knowledge translation between research and practice, and there may be a role for evaluations to address this. I elaborate on this premise in the next chapter, where I present the theoretical and empirical literature about evidence and evaluations.

Chapter 3
Evidence, Evaluations, and the Realist Approach

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: (1) to outline general concepts and empirical and theoretical insights into the use of evidence and program evaluations, including reference to the use of evidence and evaluations for First Peoples; and (2) to introduce the realist approach to evaluation. In section 3.2, I provide an overview of the role of evidence and evaluations in program delivery with a focus on the Australian context. I discuss different evaluation models and identify practical, methodological, and ethical issues that relate to the role of evidence and evaluations in Australia. I present broad issues, before identifying issues specific to the criminal justice system and interventions designed for First Peoples. Then in section 3.3, I outline the realist approach to evaluation. I introduce the two methods used in this approach: the realist synthesis and the realist evaluation. Then I provide a justification for examining the contribution of the realist approach in this thesis. Finally, I provide a conclusion in section 3.4, drawing together important aspects of Chapters 2 and 3. I outline how the realist approach can address gaps in research and practice for complex and highly contextual issues including programs designed to support families experiencing parental incarceration or programs impacting First Peoples.

3.2. Evidence and Evaluations

The role of evidence has become increasingly prominent in policies, programs, and practices. Over the past two decades, 'using evidence' has been purported as best practice for government bodies, professional organisations, and tertiary education and research organisations (Fraser et al., 2009). This movement was ignited by evidence-based medicine (EBM); an approach to practice originating in the early 1990's (Sackett et al., 1996). EBM aimed to shift away from basing decisions on loose bodies of knowledge and the authoritative model where decisions of patient care were based solely on the expert's (medical professional's) opinion. Instead, evidence-based medicine promoted the integration of three principles in reaching an optimal patient intervention; (i), using the best available research; (ii) clinical expertise; and (iii) the client's preferences (Sackett et al., 1996). EBM has become widely adapted as evidence-based practice (EBP) in various disciplines including allied health, psychology, nursing, policy, and social science professions. The promotion of

the EBP model claims to preserve the integrity of relevant fields or practice and prevent the use of interventions that may do more harm than good.

As the use of EBP has grown, the methodological process of interpreting evidence has become formulated and certified by organisations specialising in generating 'the best available evidence' (The Campbell Collaboration, 2016; Cochrane, 2016). A hierarchy of evidence was developed to illustrate the amount of weight different research methods should be given (Fraser et al., 2009; Sackett et al., 1996). The preferred methods are considered objective where little judgement on the part of the researcher is required. Therefore, randomised control trials are considered by many as the method to strive for as subjective decisions made by the researcher are restricted and independent variables are controlled so the impact of the intervention can be isolated and measured. In this approach, an intervention would preferably first be trialled in a closed system, which resembles a clinical setting without the impact of variables that would occur in the real-world setting. Systematic reviews are the pinnacle method of the hierarchy; a reviewer systematically searches for studies using methods that meet the high standards in the hierarchy of evidence and computes an effect size that estimates the impact an intervention has across various populations and environments. Specialised bodies were established to promote the interpretation of research for EBP through the creation of guidelines, training, professional networking, and the publication of systematic reviews (Fraser et al., 2009). The pinnacle bodies include Cochrane (2016) established in 1993 for the medical sciences and the Campbell Collaboration (2016) which was established in 2000 to meet the demands of EBP in the social sciences. For criminal justice, evidence-based crime prevention has been described as the most sustainable way to address crime rates (Welsh & Farrington, 2007). The Campbell Collaboration has a Crime and Justice Group that has been instrumental in producing systematic reviews for an international evidence-base on criminal justice issues.

The link between EBP and the epistemological position of positivism is clear. The positivist paradigm perceives the world as an objective entity where the researcher is an independent investigator who finds causality by observing and measuring events; the outcomes are a truth external to the social world, and this truth is verifiable through deductive observation and experimental research methods (White & Willis, 2002). As illustrated above, all these qualities are explicitly valued and ingrained within EBP. The researcher's subjectivity is limited, deductive methods such as RCT are the golden standards of evidence, and systematic reviews aim to produce an effect size that can be calculated despite variations across sites. The similarities are not surprising

as both strive for the use of the scientific method in validating and offering authority to the outcomes.

The limitations of EBP and positivist approaches to evaluations has been a point of contention in research and practice. Numerous arguments have emerged that have shown the limitations of adopting the stringent methodology of EBP, the lack of flexibility in considering the context of an intervention, or the limitations to use EBP with complex, multidimensional interventions particularly in a political setting (Biesta, 2007; Cherney, & Sutton, 2007; Guenther et al., 2010). However, critics are generally supportive of the major components of EBP; the role of theory, expertise, and individual preference is integral to balance when administering interventions. The integral question to consider is: how can you systematically collect evidence given variation in bioecological contexts across participants and other key program elements?

Evaluations are an integral component in generating evidence for policies, practices, and programs. Evaluations are a systematic approach for determining the merit, worth, or significance of an intervention. Information is accumulated and synthesised to provide feedback about a program's process, outcomes, impacts or costs. Considering these goals, it is easy to understand how evaluations have been described as providing an overlap or partnership to EBP (Fink, 2008), with evaluations even ingrained as a component in authoritative frameworks that apply EBP (Craig et al., 2008). Conversely, evaluations have been used to demonstrate the shortcomings of applying the stringent rules of EBP by highlighting tensions between methodology, theories, stakeholders, bureaucracies, and addressing the needs or concerns of the people the program is intended to support (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). There are numerous approaches to evaluations, but Trochim (1998) succinctly highlights the integral components and issues of program evaluations as:

> …a profession that uses formal methodologies to provide useful empirical evidence about public entities (such as programs, products, performance) in decision making contexts that are inherently political and involve multiple often-conflicting stakeholders, where resources are seldom sufficient, and where time-pressures are salient. (p.248)

Trochim (1998) highlights the need to conduct evaluations that are informative to the service provider and their context specifically while also balancing for the need to contribute to the wider body of knowledge that the intervention is addressing. In other words, evaluations can be the tool to integrate 'evidence' with the varying bioecological factors of participant's that would influence a program's outcome.

From the outset, it is important to acknowledge that there are multiple approaches to conducting an evaluation. The process is not neutral; for example, deciding what data to collect, selecting what outcomes to measure or how to measure them, or determining the degree of participant input into the framework are steps that provide opportunities for subjectivity (Trochim, 1998). Although the discipline of program evaluation is relatively young, it is multidisciplinary, and draws on the history of fields such as social science and statistics; including the fields' long-established philosophical paradigms that guide an evaluation. As illustrated above, evaluations can be used in EBP, which is a positivist approach to practice. However, evaluations can also be used to assess subjective outcomes, such as participatory action evaluations (Trochim, 1998). Therefore, although evaluations can be used for establishing evidence, the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings should be identified to inform how or why certain outcomes are found.

3.2.1. Evaluations in Australia

State and federal government departments often claim that evidence-based approaches are standard practice in their program delivery (Head, 2014; Productivity Commission, 2010). However, this is rarely reflective of the EBP protocol outlined above where political needs can be prioritised (Head, 2016). For example, Queensland Government Departments that administer justice initiatives consistently state they use evidence-based approaches for juvenile justice (e.g., Queensland Government, 2019). However, in 2013 over two million dollars was allocated to trial boot camps despite the large evidence base indicating that boot camps consistently produce negative outcomes (Hutchinson & Richards, 2013). Similar tensions between political needs and EBP have been evidenced internationally. Weiss et al. (2008) demonstrate how this comes down to the inherent tensions between policy making led by performance management versus evidence-based practice, which is led by research. For Australian policymaking, there is clearly a commitment to using evidence; however, there are no guidelines that establish what this means and how this is accomplished.

In terms of evaluations, since the 1980s Australian state and federal governments followed the international trend in adopting evaluations to assess internal performance for primarily a cost-benefit analysis (Sharp, 2003). The Queensland Government provides evaluation guidelines established from the Economics Division of Queensland Treasury and Trade, which defines program evaluation as "[t]he systematic, objective post-implementation assessment of the appropriateness, relevancy, process, effectiveness and/or efficiency of a program" (Queensland Government, 2014, p.1). Internal governmental stakeholders establish the program theory within the planning phase

and thereafter consultation may occur with stakeholders and program recipients. This process has been described as a centralist approach that proclaims objectivity and is evidenced throughout state and federal government interventions.

3.2.2. Issues with evidence and evaluations

There are numerous issues that arise when integrating evidence and evaluations into practice. As noted above, EBP has been critically assessed on its adaptability in real life settings, particularly in areas where outcomes are highly dependent on the contexts of an intervention. These issues may help explain why Australian service providers and government bodies rarely follow the methodological process of EBP. Even when there is a broad commitment to using evidence and evaluations as seen in Australia, there are still issues in building upon evaluations and using evidence in programs, policies, and practice. The issues are extensive and, in many cases, dependent on the specific type of intervention. For example, Tilley et al. (2015) outline 13 issues for evaluations that apply to community safety interventions, that included both specific issues to the project (such as the unique conditions of their 'context'), and also general issues (such as implementation failure). For the current review I briefly outline the issues pertinent to this thesis.

Macro level issues are generally linked to funding requirements and bureaucracies. Morgan and Homel (2013) demonstrate how evaluations of Australian crime prevention programs are lacking in number and quality despite the worldwide trend for including evidence in programs. Crime prevention programs are centrally funded through short-term contracts to local service providers. Moreover, local service providers have limited support, time, and resources to undertake high quality and rigorous evaluations. This arrangement is counterintuitive to government bodies' claims to strive for long-term or sustainable services. Morgan and Homel (2013) recommend macro-level initiatives to address this problem, including the support of evaluations through central agencies and universally adopted minimum standards for evaluations. These minimum standards include establishing a systematic approach, conducting both process and outcome evaluations, identifying short and long-term outcomes, and considering information gathered from across the hierarchy of evidence rather than restricting to 'stronger' evidence gathered from RCTs or systematic reviews. Moreover, they specifically highlight the need to consider not only if an intervention works, but also how and in what circumstances it works. Raising the standards of evaluations would prevent the reliance on descriptive measures or process evaluations as evidence of effectiveness. This has been one of the major conclusions drawn throughout the national collection of "what works" research on

the Closing the Gap[4] website (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, 2016). This in turn impacts on the quality of services provided to the community and does not contribute to informed decision making in the future.

The scope of this thesis does not include the bureaucratic environment that surrounds the use of evaluations and evidence; however, this as an important factor that influences the quality of evaluations. In the planning phase, evaluations are often overlooked; service providers are generally granted a fraction of the financial support necessary to administer programs and the completion of evaluations does not guarantee or may threaten extended funding. This creates uncertainty for service providers in creating long-term evaluation goals, or even the assurance that their service will exist. If an evaluation is completed, there is no guarantee that it will impact future policy making. Stewart and Jarvie (2015) demonstrate how the lack of policy learning in Australia is ingrained in the political system where evaluation outcomes are overshadowed by political strategies, a resistance to change, a lack of procedures to make changes, and inter-agency competition and labelling. Overall, the use of evidence and evaluations is highly politicised, and the bureaucratic environment can lead to distrust and a negative working environment. Evaluations should aim to be unobtrusive to service providers and reflective of the bureaucratic environment of the program.

One of the banes of evidence-based practices is the impact of culture on service delivery. An assumption of controlling contextual factors in evidence-based practice is that a program will work, regardless of a participant's lived experience. At the centre of this is the impact of culture. Notably, there have been efforts to develop cultural adaptations to EBP. For example, Lau (2006) advocated for targeted ways to identify interventions that require cultural adaptations and using research – particularly with community groups – to develop these adaptations. She provides the specific example of how the established field of research on parent management training can be adapted to cultural groups, such as teaching African American children how to navigate race-related ecological challenges. However, as a process, cultural adaptations require intensive resources in time, finance, and expertise. Some critics argue that cultural adaptation of programs is exaggerated as outcomes do not vary between mainstream programming and adapted versions (Elliot & Mihalic, 2004). Inevitably, in EBP, this has led to ongoing tensions in program delivery, evaluations, and interpretation of evidence.

[4] *Closing the Gap* has been the leading federal government policy initiative addressing disadvantage of First Peoples in Australia. The policies were originally adopted in 2008, producing annual reports on seven targets: life expectancy; child mortality; access to early childhood education; literacy and numeracy; Year 12 attainment; school attendance; and employment outcomes. In July 2020, a revised framework was established with 16 targets with a focus on delivering initiatives in partnership with First Peoples (Closing the Gap, n.d.).

Moreover, there are numerous methodological issues that evaluators must address. The effectiveness of interventions that address complex issues is hard to measure. For example, researchers have suggested that the impact of parental incarceration is hard to separate from the impact of criminogenic parents (e.g., Besemer & Dennison, 2018; Murray et al., 2009). The difficulty is compounded when sample sizes are small, populations are hidden or unknown, there is social stigma, and/or the intervention involves vulnerable populations including children, prisoners or First Peoples. All of these factors are relevant to this thesis and impact on the availability of evidence and the evaluation methodology.

3.2.3. Issues with evidence and evaluations for First Peoples

Historically, evidence and evaluations were not used in First Peoples policy making (section 2.2). Instead, there has been a long history of paternalism based on what was perceived as best for First Peoples (Davis, 2016; McRae et al., 2009). Today, the same issues with using evidence and evaluations that are discussed above are prevalent for programs either designed for, or involving, the participation of First Peoples; however, in many cases, the impacts are intensified. For example, the bureaucratic impacts on evaluations and lack of policy learning are heightened for complex and controversial policy fields (Pratt, 2007). This is epitomised in policies aimed at addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage which are considered "wicked" due to their seemingly complex, intractable, open-ended, and multi-faceted nature (Head, 2008; Rittel & Webber, 1973).

Porter (2017) provides an in-depth analysis of the complexity of First Peoples programs in the criminal justice system. She notes the role of evidence and evaluations, emphasising the impact this has on knowledge production. Porter (2017) conducted an ethnographic study of Aboriginal patrols, which are local initiatives that provide safety for young people. She demonstrated the complexity of delivering Aboriginal patrols, particularly in the process of establishing relationships with numerous state agencies - including evaluators. State agency representatives bring the mind set of EBP and with it posits a rivalry between their 'expert knowledge' and the patrol workers 'local knowledge'. In doing so, state agency representatives became gatekeepers of knowledge production. Porter dubs this the 'seagull syndrome'; where 'expert knowledge' trumps 'local knowledge' for policymakers and many academics. This leads to a misrepresentation of Indigenous organisations and programs that causes restricted or ceased funding, misrepresentation of program aims and outcomes, an undervaluing of initiatives, and, consequently, negative impacts on communities.

This control of service delivery impacts First Peoples self-determination (section 2.2). To reiterate self-determination is the right to freely pursue economic, social, and cultural development. Self-determination has been a dominant feature within Indigenous affairs but in the Australian context has been operationalised as a form of self-management where First Peoples have few decision-making roles in the programs, policies, and practices that impact their own lives (Tauri, 2013). This was evident in Porter's (2017; 2018) observations on Aboriginal patrols, where locally driven initiatives were held at the whim of state agency decisions. In terms of administering evaluations, the number of First Peoples who have experience or qualifications to be involved in developing, implementing, and evaluating programs is low. As demonstrated by Porter (2017; 2018), community members involved in program evaluations tended to have minimal input, in many cases, their role was tokenistic (Markiewicz, 2012). Also evidenced by Porter (2017; 2018), the centralist approach and objectivity that is promoted as essential in evaluations - for both government run and government funded programs - contradicts the ideology of community driven programs developed to address specific goals or issues identified by the community themselves. The one factor that is agreed upon in program administration is that the success of an intervention is dependent upon community involvement. Therefore, the level of community involvement throughout an intervention and evaluation is pertinent.

Methodological issues that complicate evaluations of First Peoples programs are prominent throughout the literature. Recent reviews of "what works" to make First Peoples communities safe emphasised two major issues: that there is a lack of an evidence-base and the evidence that is available is weak or anecdotal (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, 2013). First Peoples have lower participation and completion rates in mainstream crime prevention programs. Some researchers suggest outcomes may be impacted by unique risk or protective factors that are not routinely collected in evaluations (Ferrante, 2013). In many cases, First Peoples' participation is low, or their identity is not included in data collection, making comparisons between First Peoples and other participants impossible (e.g., Tyler et al., 2007). There is also diversity between First Peoples within Australia, limiting the generalisability of outcome measures from evaluations between different First Peoples communities within Australia. These issues restrict the quality of the evaluation and the information that can contribute to an evidence-base.

The impact of culture and context has become an 'explicit criterion' to address in the development, implementation, and administration of programs (American Evaluation Association, 2011). Cultural competence is the "process of learning, unlearning, and relearning" (American Evaluation Association, 2011, p.3) to engage and understand the cultural and contextual dimensions

within a community. The rise of culturally competent evaluations has emanated from cross-national studies usually upscaling programs originating from developed countries into developing countries. Culturally competent evaluations have also become more prominent because of the need to address intranational disparities between multiracial and multicultural contexts (Chouinard & Cousins, 2007). Steps have been taken to consider how the context of First Peoples in the USA, Canada, and New Zealand impact evaluations (American Evaluation Association, 2011; Kerr, 2012; LaFrance, 2004; LaFrance & Nichols, 2008). At the time I commenced this thesis, culturally competent evaluations in Australia were still in the early stages of development (Productivity Commission, 2013). The recognition of the tensions between evaluation models and the needs of First Peoples has been largely led by the Australian Evaluation Society (Wehipeihana, 2008). Through the work of this society, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous evaluators have been able to express issues that have arisen from the need to balance culturally sensitive evaluations that benefit the community with the evaluation principles and practices that meet the resources and requirements of the funders (e.g., Scougall, 2006; Taylor, 2003; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Fundamentally, a framework for evaluations with First Peoples would need to accommodate language differences, the adverse impacts from colonisation, service delivery to remote communities, and the significant level of widespread disadvantage. Further complicating efforts in Australia arise from the need to draw from the evaluation literature and combine this with Indigenous cultural values and knowledges to understand and develop a practical framework for Indigenous evaluations.

As this thesis was underway, the move to adopt an Indigenous framework for evaluations became a prominent issue within Indigenous affairs. Several First Peoples have developed evaluation frameworks that embed Indigenous values. Williams (2018) developed the Ngaa-bi-nya framework, which is a practical guide for the evaluation of First Peoples health and social programs. Ngaa-bi-nya embeds First Peoples perspectives across four domains – landscape factors, resources, ways of working, and learnings – to establish culturally relevant ways to administer evaluations. Moreover, service providers are becoming more aware of cultural differences in program engagement and developing approaches to evaluation to identify and address this (e.g., Muir & Dean, 2017). Additionally, the federal government established the National Indigenous Australians Agency by an Executive Order of the Governor General in May 2019 (National Indigenous Australians Agency, n.d.). The Agency provides advice on the implementation of Government's policies and programs that improve Indigenous people's lives. Of 16 focus areas, one is dedicated to Evaluations and Evidence. Moreover, the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy was commissioned by the federal government Treasurer to the Productivity Commission running from April 2019 - October 2020

(Productivity Commission, 2020). The Productivity Commission is the principal advisory body to the Australian Government providing independent research and advice. The Indigenous Evaluation Strategy was established because numerous high-profile reports indicated there was significant underreporting on program and policy impacting First Peoples. The overall aim was to develop a whole-of-government evaluation strategy on policies and programs affecting First Peoples. From a public call for contributions, 114 individual submissions were presented by organisations, academics, and members of the public. The Strategy released principles and practical steps for evaluations that will centre First Peoples. As its core, the Strategy ensures First Peoples perspectives, priorities, and knowledges are embedded throughout these processes (Productivity Commission, 2020). Overall, establishing a solid framework for Indigenous evaluations has become a critical issue in Australia, and one the Government is addressing.

3.3. Realist synthesis and realist evaluation

As demonstrated above, there are numerous issues with administering evaluations, particularly for First Peoples and programs that have little co-ordination between theory and practice. Consequently, evaluation frameworks that can account for these characteristics are necessary. This leads to the overarching aims of this thesis, which are to understand how the realist approach to evaluation may be suitable for (i) justice programs supporting First Peoples, and (ii) parental incarceration programs.

The realist approach to evaluation is a contemporary evaluation framework that is continually gaining popularity. Theoretical, practical, and applied support have been provided from the Centre for Advancement in Realist Evaluation and Synthesis (CARES) that provides consultations, training, and a biennial international conference to advance the understanding and share experiences of realist evaluations (CARES, n.d.). Additionally, the UK's National Institute of Health Research funded the Rameses Project, an international collaboration that has developed governance, infrastructure, and guidance for realist evaluation and synthesis (Wong et al., 2013; Wong et al., 2016). Evaluations using the realist approach has grown significantly, particularly in health (Greenhalgh & Manzano, 2021; Marchal et al., 2012; Rolfe, 2019). The zealous uptake in realist approaches is most evident with the HM Treasury in the UK embedding realist evaluation approaches within the government evaluation framework (HM Treasury, 2020).

This section details the theoretical underpinnings and process of the realist approach for understanding how a program works and in turn the merit and worth of a program for particular participants. I then provide justification as to why this methodology has the potential to address existing gaps in developing evidence-informed practice for First Peoples, particularly given the lack of co-ordination between theory and practice that characterises current policy and program efforts.

3.3.1. What is the realist approach to evaluations?

There are two fundamental methods of the realist approach to evaluations: realist evaluation and realist synthesis. Pawson and Tilley (1997) coined the term realist evaluation and provided a platform for developing the approach from their 1997 book *Realistic Evaluation*. The origins of realist evaluation stem from a scepticism towards EBP. During the time the book was written, EBP was becoming popular within the social sciences and beginning to be considered for policies that were inherently complex and dependent on personal, social, and system level contexts. Pawson and Tilley (1997) presented the realist evaluation as a complementary and applied approach to evaluating complex interventions. The second method - realist synthesis - is used to collate and assess the body of literature about a social program (Pawson et al., 2004). A realist synthesis aims to avoid the pitfalls of best buys and exemplary cases and instead focus on explanatory conclusions for theory refinement and understanding why a program has been successful or not.

Both the realist evaluation and realist synthesis are theoretically grounded in the philosophy of realism (Bhaskar, 2008; Bhaskar, 2014), which underlies the process of each method and distinguishes the realist approach from other approaches to evaluation. At its core, realism is a philosophy of science that rejects positivism. I outlined the basic principles of positivism in section 3.2 and demonstrated how EBP is grounded in positivism. The positivist's view of causation is successionist and aims to demonstrate that an intervention is related to an outcome without necessarily understanding why or how this process occurs. For an evaluation, this means that an intervention causes an outcome, the impact of an intervention can be measured external to the individual, and the links between the intervention and the outcome can be identified in a closed system. A closed system refers to a controlled setting - emulating a laboratory - where the influences outside the intervention are limited (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The opposing view of scientific explanation is constructivism. Constructivism views truth and knowledge as a human perception generated through social experiences (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). For an evaluation, this means that the impact of an intervention can only be measured through the internal perceptions of the participants, the outcome of an intervention is unique to each individual, and the links between the intervention

and the outcome can only be identified in the social world where the individual interacts (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

Realism is an epistemological philosophy that finds a middle ground in scientific explanation between empiricism and constructivism (Bhaskar, 2008; Harré, 1979). Like constructivists, realists believe that truth is dependent on the influence of the social world. The same experience can lead to different outcomes for different people due to the interactions between internal and external processes. Therefore, context is an important factor for realists. Similar to empiricists, realists believe researchers can observe casual mechanisms and develop generalisable conclusions. However, for realists, research observations in the social sciences are not isolated phenomena; it is not enough to know that an intervention is related to an outcome (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Rather research should seek to unveil the rationale behind observations. This is referred to as the generative view of causation, which aims to demonstrate the processes of how an intervention leads to different outcomes (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The processes that occur between an intervention and the outcome are known as mechanisms. Mechanisms are an important factor for realists that are in stark contrast to the successionist view of causation, where the process that occurs between intervention and outcome is not considered.

The key concepts in the realist framework to evaluation are Context, Mechanisms and Outcomes. This is pictured in Figure 3.1. Overall, the foundations of the realist evaluation and synthesis to realism are clear. Unlike the aim of EBP in describing “what works”, the realist approach places greater importance on explaining how interventions impact participants; these processes are the program mechanisms. Social programs are established to change a participant’s mechanisms, which can be either their reasoning or resources (Dalkin et al., 2015). Reasoning can include a participant’s values, beliefs, attitudes or logic about a situation, and resources can include information, skills, material resources or support.

Figure 3.1

Basic ingredients of realist social explanation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p.72)

Image Removed

From the outset, realist evaluators understand that programs work in different ways for different people. An intervention triggers mechanisms that are dependent on the individual's perception and how this interacts with their social reality. Therefore, the program should be evaluated in the social setting because the social context is an important factor in how participants interact with the program. Understanding the context is integral because the context affects the mechanisms that drive whether and how a participant's reasoning and resources are impacted. Pawson (2006; 2013) has identified at least four contextual layers, dubbed the 4 I's, and these are described in Table 3.1. From this perspective it is considerably less helpful to know whether a program "works or not", than to understand why and how the program works for some participants and not others (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

Table 3.1

Identifying contextual layers, the four I's

The four I's	Description
The individual capacities of the key actors	The characteristics of the key actors of an intervention
The interpersonal relationships supporting the intervention	How the interactions between individuals will affect how the program works
The institutional setting	How organisation's ethos, management, and resources affect how a program operates
The wider infrastructural system	The social, economic, political, and cultural settings of an intervention that affect how a program operates. This may include geographical and historical context.

Inevitably, the realist approach to evaluation proposes that change is not straightforward; there can be difficulties in measuring change as a result of a social intervention. Realist evaluators identify this complexity arises from concept of ontological depth, which Jagosh (2019) depicted as an iceberg (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2

Ontological depth: Understanding how mechanisms are triggered throughout the empirical, actual, and real layers of reality. (Jagosh, 2019, p.363).

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Ontological depth identifies that reality manifests through stratified layers. This has a significant and direct influence on how an evaluator would approach their project. Referring to Figure 3.2 above, the visible tip of the iceberg is observable and - within research - would represent what can be empirically measured. Within an EBP framework, this is what is operationalised and measured as an outcome. The effectiveness of a program evaluated using an RCT would report the outcome within a black box, devoid of the submerged iceberg and surrounding environmental impacts. Conversely, a realist approach seeks to extend the framework to understand the mechanisms and contexts that contribute to why the observable reality is what it is. This includes understanding the submerged ice, which represents the underpinning mechanisms that are generative causation of the observable reality. For an intervention, this is where the majority of change occurs – an intervention triggers the change in the submerged iceberg which then can be measured within the empirical reality. However, the change that occurs cannot in itself be measured. An EBP utilises successionist causation – that an intervention led to an outcome.

Conversely a realist approach utilises generative causation – that an intervention triggers underlying mechanisms that leads to an outcome, such as changed reasoning, motivation, ways of thinking, or interpersonal characteristics (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

Realist approaches also analyse the effect of context. In the iceberg metaphor in Figure 3.2, context is depicted by the surrounding observable (above water) and unobservable (below water) environments – the water, the air, the weather. The mechanisms remain latent until activated or deactivated within these contexts. In practice, this means realist evaluators do not subscribe to a hierarchy of evidence, but the type of research that would assist in understanding these many layers. This would include the incorporation of qualitative case studies, commentaries, theoretical papers, grey literature, as being as valuable as a systematic review of RCT (Jagosh, 2019).

Although the realist approach aims to understand the differences of outcome, the aim should not be to develop individualised understandings for each participant or a specific program. Rather, the realist evaluator aims to find a middle-range theory. The middle range theory is development of CMO configurations derived from applied settings of programs and generalisable across other programs and possible other disciplines (Pawson, 2013; Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

Guidelines to conduct realist syntheses and evaluations were developed as more evaluators and researchers applied the realist approach. The guidelines were not intended to be prescriptive, but rather assist evaluators and researchers through the process and writing the results (Wong et al., 2013; Wong et al., 2016). In the subsequent two section, I overview the guidelines for conducting a realist synthesis and then conducting a realist evaluation.

3.3.1.1. How to conduct a realist synthesis

The realist synthesis was developed after the realist evaluation, and considerable work has been done to develop an introductory manual and quality and reporting standards for realist synthesis (Pawson et al, 2004; Wong et al., 2013). Pawson et al. (2004) developed an initial sketch of a realist synthesis which was refined by Wong et al. (2013) into a step-by-step process, but strongly note that the process is a guideline rather than stringent rules. These steps are outlined in Table 3.2. The central aims of identifying the context, mechanisms, and outcomes are central to the realist synthesis. Evidence is not restricted to specific types of research methods, such as systematic reviews that prioritise RCTs. Rather evidence is considered any research that can inform the aims identified in the scope of the review – which can include studies that are RCT, but also values quasi-experimental designs, qualitative research, or even informative opinion pieces. The value of the

evidence is in the relevance and rigor of the item. Moreover, decision makers are encouraged to be a part of the process of drawing conclusions, to ensure the applicability of the outcomes to the real-world setting. The steps taken should be transparent to allow readers to follow the research process. Overall, the aim is to synthesis evidence to refine program theories.

Table 3.2

Mapping the process of a realist review (Pawson et al., 2004, p.29i).

Define the scope of the review	Identify the question	• What is the nature and content of the intervention? • What are the circumstances or context for its use? • What are the policy intentions or objectives? • What are the nature and form of its outcomes or impacts? • Undertake exploratory searches to inform discussion with review commissioners/decision makers
	Clarify the purpose(s) of the review	• Theory integrity – does the intervention work as predicted? • Theory adjudication – which theories about the intervention seem to fit best? • Comparison – how does the intervention work in different settings, for different groups? • Reality testing – how does the policy intent of the intervention translate into practice?
	Find and articulate the programme theories	• Search for relevant theories in the literature • Draw up 'long list' of programme theories • Group, categorise or synthesise theories • Design a theoretically based evaluative framework to be 'populated' with evidence
Search for and appraise the evidence	Search for the evidence	• Decide and define purposive sampling strategy • Define search sources, terms and methods to be used (including cited reference searching) • Set the thresholds for stopping searching as saturation
	Appraise the evidence	• Test relevance – does the research address the theory under test? • Test rigour – does the research support the conclusions drawn from it by the researchers or the reviewers?
Extract and synthesise findings	Extract the results	• Develop data extraction forms or templates • Extract data to populate the evaluative framework with evidence
	Synthesise findings	• Compare and contrast findings from different studies • Use findings from studies to address purpose(s) of review • Seek both confirmatory and contradictory findings • Refine programme theories in the light of evidence
Draw conclusions and make recommendations		• Involve commissioners/decision makers in review of findings • Draft and test out recommendations and conclusions based on findings with key stakeholders • Disseminate review with findings, conclusions, and recommendations

3.3.1.2. How to conduct a realist evaluation

Realist evaluations have gained wide support and uptake since their inception in 1997 (Emmel, 2018; HM Treasury, 2020; Marchal et al., 2012). There are now a set of quality and reporting standards (Greenhalgh et al., 2015; Wong et al., 2016). Like other approaches, the realist approach uses evaluations to make sense of what is going on through observations. The realist evaluator considers two important steps. As a theory-driven evaluation, the first step to conducting a realist evaluation is to develop theories of how the program works (Emmel, 2018; Wong et al., 2016). For a realist evaluation this theory emerges through the identification of influential contexts, relevant mechanisms, and the overall outcomes the program is aiming to produce and is referred to as the CMO configuration. These are identified through a mixed-methods approach and can be found through the literature and conducting interviews with important stakeholders including the developers of the program, past participants, and program staff. The main aim should be to identify key program mechanisms and how participant's contexts may cause variability in outcomes (Emmel, 2018; Greenhalgh et al., 2015; Wong et al, 2016).

The second important step is to test the hypothesised mechanisms (Emmel, 2018; Greenhalgh et al., 2015; Wong et al, 2016). This should be done using pluralist and mixed methods in the social setting where the intervention would be administered. The main aim should be to present information to service providers so the programmatic elements linked to key mechanisms can be refined and future evaluations can assess the influence of programmatic changes on the outcome measures. The end of an evaluation would not simply present an effect measure, but rather present detailed information that would demonstrate how contexts impact mechanisms.

3.3.1.3. Key considerations in practice

One of the assumptions a realist evaluator has is that any research project is only partial knowledge - whether realist or from another epistemological viewpoint (Pawson, 2013). Detailing the entirety of the contextual impacts on a myriad of mechanisms to reach individual outcomes in even a straightforward intervention is beyond the scope of a single report. The most avid realist evaluator will be the first to mention that even addressing each of the staple elements in the realist evaluation mantra "what works, how, why, for whom, to what extent and in what circumstances" is unfeasible (Pawson, 2013). Therefore, a necessity of a realist evaluation is to set priorities in the aspect, knowledge, or process that is needed (Wong et al, 2016). There are numerous reasons or aims for which a realist evaluation may be used. The overarching aim will always be to gain a richer understanding of how an intervention works. However, evaluators need to articulate their specific

aims, as the aims shape how the evaluation is designed, implemented, and analysed (Emmel, 2018; Greenhalgh et al., 2015; Wong et al, 2016). This variability can be ascertained by identifying the breadth of programs that the realist approach has been used on, and the diverse ways the evaluations have been designed. For example, consider these three realist evaluation projects:

i. *The Aboriginal Alcohol Drug Worker Program* which is a small scale, race-based, community delivered, pilot program based in Ontario Canada (Davey et al. 2014). The aim was to establish a program theory heavily relying on participant and case worker interview and follow-up interviews.
ii. The policy *Moving to Opportunity* which is an established, thoroughly researched, government delivered (across five USA cities between 1994-2006), class-based program (Jackson et al, 2009). This study synthesised published work – ranging from RCTs to qualitative studies - with the aim of refining the theory that was used to originally develop the program.
iii. A universally delivered health service across London that needed to understand the benefit from technological advances (Greenhalgh et al., 2009). This study focused on the mechanisms necessary for organisational change and drew upon ethnographic observations, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of organisational documents.

All three examples have been evaluated using a realist approach, but the design, implementation, and analysis vary greatly. The aim of each of the evaluations was guided by the literature drawn upon, the participants that were included, how questions were asked, and how the evidence was analysed. Essentially, the rationale of a realist evaluation should reflect how the results of the evaluation are going to be used.

This adaptability reflects the versatility in potential informants to consider in the evaluation (Greenhalgh et al., 2015; Wong et al, 2016). Informants can range from the people receiving the service, to the service providers, policy workers, management, invested community members, program developers, or specialists in the field. Each informant has specific roles and different insights into the intervention. In the process of selecting key informants to participate in an evaluation, the evaluator needs to consider the overall aim of an evaluation and engage the key informants that are in the positions to give the greatest insight to the evaluation.

3.3.2. How can the realist approach to evaluation contribute to this thesis?

There are five key points that justify exploring the extent a realist evaluation approach can contribute to improved understanding of the impact of parental incarceration and programs for First Peoples. The key points mirror those that have been outlined by the growing number of researchers, evaluators, and service providers that have taken up the use of a realist approach. These are (i) recognising context and complexity; (ii) contributing to knowledge production; (iii) supporting the ongoing improvement of programs; (iv) synthesising a diverse range of evidence; (v) embedding Indigenous perspectives. Each are considered in turn.

3.3.2.1. Recognising context and complexity

The realist approach is designed to not only identify complexity, but to understand its impacts on program delivery (Pawson, 2013). Different participants and groups assign varying levels of importance to certain values, have different levels of access to resources, and are participating in a program set in complex systems. Many evaluation approaches ignore these differences or simplify the impacts of complexity which in turn does not account for variables that inevitably impact the experiences and outcomes of an intervention (Ferrante, 2013; Porter, 2017; Williams, 2018). In many cases, realist approaches have been embraced by practitioners running programs for complex issues or identifying disparities of outcomes between participants. Such practitioners are searching for methods to identify and understand differences in program outcomes to optimise program delivery going forward (e.g., Cargo & Warner, 2013; Clark, 2017; HM Treasury, 2020). This complexity is present in services supporting parental incarceration which is highly dependent on the individual's developmental system and has unique factors for hyperincarcerated minority groups. Interventions and evaluations should be able to accommodate this. I have described how I have used the bioecological model of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) as a conceptual framework to understand complexity in this evaluation in section 4.5.2.1.

3.3.2.2. Evaluations and knowledge production

The realist approach is a theory-driven evaluation that can be used to enrich the understanding of not only the program but also of the broader issue the program is aiming to address. Importantly, realist evaluators aim to find a middle range theory; although contexts can create differences in how the mechanisms of a program operate, realists believe that it is still possible to develop a theory that can be generalised to different situations through the analysis of the CMO configurations (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2013). For areas such as parental

incarceration where theory is developing, the realist evaluation framework can provide the information needed to fill gaps in understanding how parental incarceration affects the families and children. Moreover, realist evaluations aim to identify the risk and protective factors for specific sub-groups of participants. We know from past research that First Peoples have varying degrees of participation and completion and success in social programs; a realist evaluation can contribute to our understanding of why this happens. In this way, a realist evaluation can have an important role in knowledge production that is embedded in the real-world setting. As noted in Porter (2017, 2018), if evaluations are not reflective of the lived experience, this can have detrimental effects on how a program is perceived, particularly if administered using 'expert knowledge' that dismisses 'local knowledge'. Overall, realist evaluations can have an important role in knowledge production.

3.3.2.3. Ongoing improvement

One of the main aims of the realist approach to evaluation is to help service providers improve their services (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2013). Some methods of evaluation prioritise bureaucratic goals where the results serve political agendas but fail to provide feedback to the service provider (e.g., Porter, 2017; Productivity Commission, 2020). The realist approach to evaluation acknowledges that improvement is ongoing and aims to use the experience of the stakeholders and participants to ensure the services are meeting their needs and expectations.

3.3.2.4. Valuing all forms of evidence

The realist approach adopts a wider definition of what constitutes 'evidence' (Jagosh, 2019). The realist approach acknowledges that there is an abundance of research and past evaluations that would not meet the standards of high internal validity. In understanding the CMO configurations, this body of knowledge is rich in information about the mechanisms through which an intervention works. This is demonstrated in this thesis. Parental incarceration is the type of social issue that is hard to address using the standards of EBP. Murray et al. (2009) performed a systematic review on the impact of parental incarceration on the child's mental health that restricted the evidence base down to 12 studies. However, incorporating research that is considered anecdotal in EBP, there is an abundance of research that assesses the impact of parental incarceration on children, carers and the family unit (as analysed in section 2.4). This also applies to research of First Peoples and understanding program and policy effectiveness. As noted above, the evidence-base for First Peoples interventions is "weak and anecdotal" (Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, 2013) despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders being one of the most researched peoples in the world (Martin

& Mirraboopa, 2003). The realist evaluation would incorporate the broad evidence base to assess, validate, and test the combined contributions and relevance of evidence that may be considered weak and anecdotal.

3.3.2.5. The role of value positions: Embedding Indigenous perspectives

Finally, and the most important reason why I considered the realist approach in this thesis, is because realist evaluators "believe that the value positions surrounding a social program can and should be directly studied" (Henry et al., 1998, p.6). Specifically, for this thesis, this allows for First Peoples' perspectives and theory building to not only be considered but embedded in the program theory and outcome measures. This also extends to the incorporation of Indigenous methodologies. For this thesis, I was guided by the Indigenist research methodology developed by Rigney (1999). Rigney critiqued the contested space between Indigenous research and Western institutions and highlighted the need for research that is for Indigenous peoples instead of about Indigenous peoples. At the core, Rigney (1999) unveils the inherent political nature of Indigenous research and how research should be a medium that values and incorporates the experiences and voices of Indigenous peoples. Decolonising research is the process that acknowledges the history of race in shaping experiences with social systems, cultural identity, institutions, attitudes, and behaviours, and that the relationship between researchers and Indigenous people has not always been positive either in the past and in present times (Smith, 1999). Indigenist research aims to address these issues by incorporating three fundamental principles: resistance, political integrity, and privileging Indigenous voices (Rigney, 1999). Resistance refers to the need for research to be a process of self-determination for Indigenous peoples by confronting the impacts of colonisation and incorporating the ongoing impact this has on contemporary issues. Political integrity refers to the responsibility Indigenous researchers have in undertaking research that informs and guides the political agenda of Indigenous communities. Finally, privileging Indigenous voices emphasises the need to bring the lived experiences, aspirations, traditions, and interests of communities that are involved in research to the forefront of the research (Rigney, 1999). Subsequently, Indigenist research methodologies have led First Peoples to structure their research projects on Indigenous Knowledges (specific ontological perspectives, e.g., Martin, 2003), and adapt theories to account for Indigenous perspectives, including realism (Smallwood, 2015). Overall, Indigenist research is a methodology that reframes, reclaims, and renames research for the interest of Indigenous communities.

Considering these five strengths, there is little surprise that there is a rising number of Indigenous programs using a realist evaluation framework. At the commencement of this thesis, in

2014, there were limited published examples of realist evaluations focusing on Indigenous programs or policies (e.g., Cargo & Warner, 2013; Davey et al., 2014; Tilley et al., 2014). As I have progressed through my studies, I had a number of occasions that afforded me the opportunity to meet other Indigenous Peoples using the realist approach, including at the 2017 International Conference for Realist Research, Evaluation and Synthesis where the organisers incorporated a space for Indigenous realist evaluators from across the world to connect. I also found the number of published studies of evaluations focused on Indigenous programs or articulating differences for Indigenous Peoples in programs have risen over this time in a wide variety of topic areas (e.g., Clark, 2017; Conway et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2018; Kornelsen, & McCartney, 2015; Lindstedt et al., 2017; Reddy et al., 2018; Smylie et al., 2016). This has had a significant impact on the growth and the development of my approach to my evaluation. The points raised in this section were common themes that gave rise to the adaptation of realist evaluations for Indigenous Peoples.

3.4. Conclusion

In Chapter 3 I provided key insights into the use of evidence and evaluations in service delivery. The role of evaluations is central in evidence-informed practice; however, the process of evaluations is not objective or value free. Theoretical and practical challenges shape the quality and effectiveness of an evaluation and the ability of the outcomes of an evaluation to contribute to the wider knowledge base. Evaluation approaches have created issues in practice in Australia including macro level issues such as the incorporation of evidence in policy making, funding arrangements, and navigating bureaucracies; methodological issues including research designs that can accommodate complex issues; and specific issues faced by First Peoples, such as accommodating self-determined practices in service delivery and evaluations, as well as recognising the impact of culture in programs in evaluations. At the time of the submission of this thesis, the need for responsive program and policy evaluations for First Peoples had been identified as a critical issue; the federal government appointed an expert committee for Indigenous evaluations (National Indigenous Australians Agency, n.d.) and also requested the Productivity Commission establish an Indigenous Evaluation Strategy (Productivity Commission, 2020). To conclude the chapter, I outlined the realist approach to evaluation.

In drawing together Chapters 2 and 3, parental incarceration and First Peoples relationship to the criminal justice system are complex issues that have been informed by a large and growing body of research. This comes to an impasse for service providers, where a rhetoric drives a belief that

there is little evidence to inform service delivery. This has been exacerbated by a lack of resources for service providers, translational issues from empirical work into real-life settings, and impractical processes of funding bodies. Evaluations of programs, policies, and practices may address these issues, but these evaluations need to be systematic and designed to accommodate their complexity. The realist approach can address gaps in research and practice for complex and highly contextual issues by bringing together empirical studies, the knowledge and values of Indigenous participants, and the practical experience of service providers.

In summary, there is a gap in knowledge translation between research and practice and the realist approach to evaluation may have a role to close this gap by integrating the experience of service providers and participants with a sound theoretical evidence base. Exploring the contributions of a realist approach is the overarching aim of this thesis. I illustrate how I have explored this contribution in the next chapter, where I outline the research and methodology of this thesis.

Chapter 4
Overview of the Research Design, the Evaluated Program, and the Methodology

4.1. Introduction

In this Chapter, I detail pertinent aspects of my methodological approach. I address the research aims and ethical considerations, describe the program I evaluated, outline my underpinning methodology, and state my research questions. In this thesis I used the two fundamental approaches of realist approaches to evaluation: (i) a realist synthesis, and (ii) a realist evaluation. Notably, in this chapter I only briefly overview the methods as they are extensively detailed in section 5.3 for the realist synthesis and Chapter 6 for the realist evaluation.

To reiterate, in Chapter 2 I identified large and growing bodies of research on (i) supporting First Peoples in the criminal justice system and (ii) parental incarceration. I identified an impasse between this research and service delivery where a rhetoric of a lack of evidence permeates. In Chapter 3, I identified the empirical and theoretical background that supports the role of rigorous and theory-driven evaluations as one way to strengthen evidence-informed practice. In the current chapter, I outline how I framed this thesis to understand if or how a realist evaluation framework could strengthen service delivery in these areas. In section 4.2, I reiterate the aim of the thesis and the case study approach I use to evaluate BtF. In section 4.3 I discuss the institutional ethics process and approvals as well as the 'Aboriginal ethics framework' I abided by. In section 4.4 I provide a detailed description of BtF, including the background of the program and its administering organisation, as well as pertinent institutional and infrastructural contexts. Then I outline my methodology in section 4.5. I draw on the works of Moreton-Robertson and Walter (2009) to identify the inter-dependence of three important concepts: my standpoint, theoretical framework, and methods. I establish my standpoint as a Gumbaynggirr and Dunghutti woman researching on Dunghutti Country with Dunghutti people and First Peoples. Additionally, I have used a realist theoretical framework that has been guided by an Indigenist research theoretical paradigm. The research aims and my methodology have informed my research questions, which are stated and discussed in section 4.6, with a conclusion at section 4.7.

4.2. Aims

In Chapter 2 I identified two major issues. First, anecdotal evidence is pervasive in delivering Indigenous programs. This was particularly evident for interventions addressing Indigenous over-representation in the criminal justice system as well as interventions addressing the collateral consequences of incarceration on Indigenous communities, families, and children. The second issue identified in the literature review was the lack of connection between research and effective interventions in supporting families experiencing parental incarceration. The international body of literature on parental incarceration is still developing. Similarly empirical research investigating programs supporting families experiencing parental incarceration is still developing, particularly for minority populations experiencing hyperincarceration. An approach that would contribute to resolving both issues is to administer rigorous theory-based evaluations of interventions. In particular, a realistic evaluation framework may provide an opportunity to strengthen evidence-informed practice for First Peoples justice programs and contribute to an understanding of the impacts of parental incarceration.

Therefore, the aims of the research are:

1. To identify the extent that a realist approach to evaluation can assist in understanding the context, mechanisms, and outcomes that impact First Peoples parental incarceration justice programs.
2. To examine how, for whom, in what circumstances, when, and why BtF works for First Peoples incarcerated parents

I address these aims by using a realist evaluation framework to evaluate an established program that supports First Peoples families with a parent in prison. I evaluated the program BtF administered by SHINE and run in Mid North Coast Correctional Centre (MNCCC), NSW. I wanted to contribute to the body of knowledge on parental incarceration by integrating the experience of SHINE's BtF program with a sound theoretical evidence base through a realist evaluation framework. Given this framework, the evaluation of BtF would help contribute to its improvement and longevity – important given that it is one of few programs in Australia supporting First Peoples families experiencing parental incarceration.

4.3. Ethics

The aim and nature of this project inherently involves populations that have been historically exploited for the purpose of research and may be in positions where this exploitation can continue (Martin & Birraboopa, 2009; Rigney, 1997; Smith, 1999). First, my evaluation involves the recruitment of First Peoples. The impact of colonisation on the health and wellbeing of First Peoples has left an ongoing legacy, and the relationship between Indigenous people and researchers has not been, and is not always, a positive experience (Chapter 2). Processes to move research forward as a medium for self-determination and voice for the communities are key steps for ensuring the research is for First Peoples rather than about First Peoples. My study population also includes people who are incarcerated. Incarcerated participants are in unequal relationships with correctional authorities. This has the potential to impact the incarcerated person's ability to feel the freedom to decline participation in the program or research. Furthermore, incarcerated populations have higher rates of characteristics that increase vulnerability, such as mental illness or lower educational levels (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008).

I adhered to numerous guidelines and institutional processes that aim to minimise or eliminate ethical challenges. As I was researching a program run by a not-for-profit organisation in a correctional centre, I sought ethics approval from each invested institution. At Griffith University I was approved by a full review panel of the Human Research and Ethics Committee (ethics application code 03/08/9513). SHINE approved the evaluation and included a clause in their standard *Release of Information Form* completed prior to the commencement of the programs to ensure participants could consent to be involved in the evaluation. I also received approval for research with the Corrections Research, Evaluation and Statistics section of Corrective Services NSW. From this perspective, I minimised risks by consulting and following; the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (The National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007); the Griffith University Research Ethics Manual which has guidelines for conducting research with Indigenous Australians, people in unequal relationships, and research where people may divulge illegal behaviour; the Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2012) and; Researching Indigenous Health: A Practical Guide for Researchers, developed by the Lowitja Institute (Laycock et al., 2001).

These guides shaped the current research project. As with any ethical research, I ensured that participants were informed and understood the project prior to consenting to participate in the evaluation. I discussed the evaluation with each participant during the recruitment stage of BtF or during our first interview, as well as providing an *Information Sheet* (Appendix D) and *Consent Form*

(Appendix E). I reviewed the *Information Sheet* and *Consent Form* with the participants prior to commencing follow-up interviews. In considering First Peoples, I identified a topic that benefits First Peoples, as well as using research methods and methodologies that value and permeate the voice of Indigenous people on the issue. Moreover, I utilised protocols that are suitable for conducting research with Indigenous communities. Consultation continued throughout the project including from cultural liaison officers, Elders, Indigenous academics, community members where the research is based, and peers to ensure the project and research plan were culturally appropriate. In considering incarcerated populations, I ensured the participants had informed and voluntary consent (section 6.4.2.2 outlines the recruitment strategy). Participants were made aware that the information gathered in the process was going to be used for the purposes of a research project. Confidentiality was a primary concern, and the independence of the research from decisions made by Corrective Services NSW or SHINE was stressed upon commencement of any collection of data outside of the programs' standard processes. Information was presented in written, visual, and oral mediums and the capacity to consent was determined prior to participation in the research.

As an Aboriginal researcher there are specific challenges and advantages in undertaking research. These can directly relate to what Douglas (2015) phrases an 'Aboriginal ethical framework'. Indigenous researchers are personally accountable to the people involved in their research projects; more so than a 'distant institutionally based ethics committee' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.952). Indigenous researchers are commonly 'tested' from within their own cultural group to check their personal integrity and sincerity on the subject matter (Smith, 1999). Being invited to local events with the people you are working with is generally a sign of acceptance. For me, establishing a positive Aboriginal ethical framework was made particularly difficult due to the topic I was asking about, the life experience I was 'evaluating', as well as the institutional setting of the correctional centre. A number of participants were cautious of my intentions, questioned my association with certain departments (such as child protection services), and showed concern about how the findings would be used, or whether other people or organisations would have access to our interviews. I acknowledge that my standpoint (section 4.5.1) had a significant impact on being 'granted' approval. My kinship connections 'expedited' the 'ethical review process'. However, my kinship connections also heightened my responsibility to the participants I engaged with. Being able to participate in NAIDOC events[5] within the MNCCC, and attend local workshops and events indicated a 'pass' in the Aboriginal ethics framework. However, my ethical obligations extended beyond gathering data and

[5] NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day of Observance Committee, pronounced nay-dock) is a time of observance in Australia held a week from the first Sunday of July. Events are held to celebrate First Peoples culture and achievements.

interacting with participants; I carried an ethical obligation throughout the analysis stage, where I needed to consistently ensure the information I conveyed in the evaluation was a true representation of the participant's voice and what I was involved in and, in turn, how I presented the outcomes to a wider audience.

4.4. The Program

BtF is delivered on the land of Dunghutti People (alternative spellings include Dainggatti, Thunggutti, Djangadi). The Dunghutti People are the traditional custodians of the area known as the Macleay Valley in northern NSW. Dunghutti land stretches from Point Lookout to the MacLeay River, inland to Walcha in the Great Dividing Range, as depicted in Figure 4.1 below. This land includes Kempsey, a town 433 kilometres north of Sydney in the Mid North Coast of NSW with a population of 8,137 people. Fourteen kilometres west of Kempsey is Aldavilla, a rural residential area.

Figure 4.1

AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia, Dunghutti Country (Dainggatti) (Horton, 1996)

Image Removed

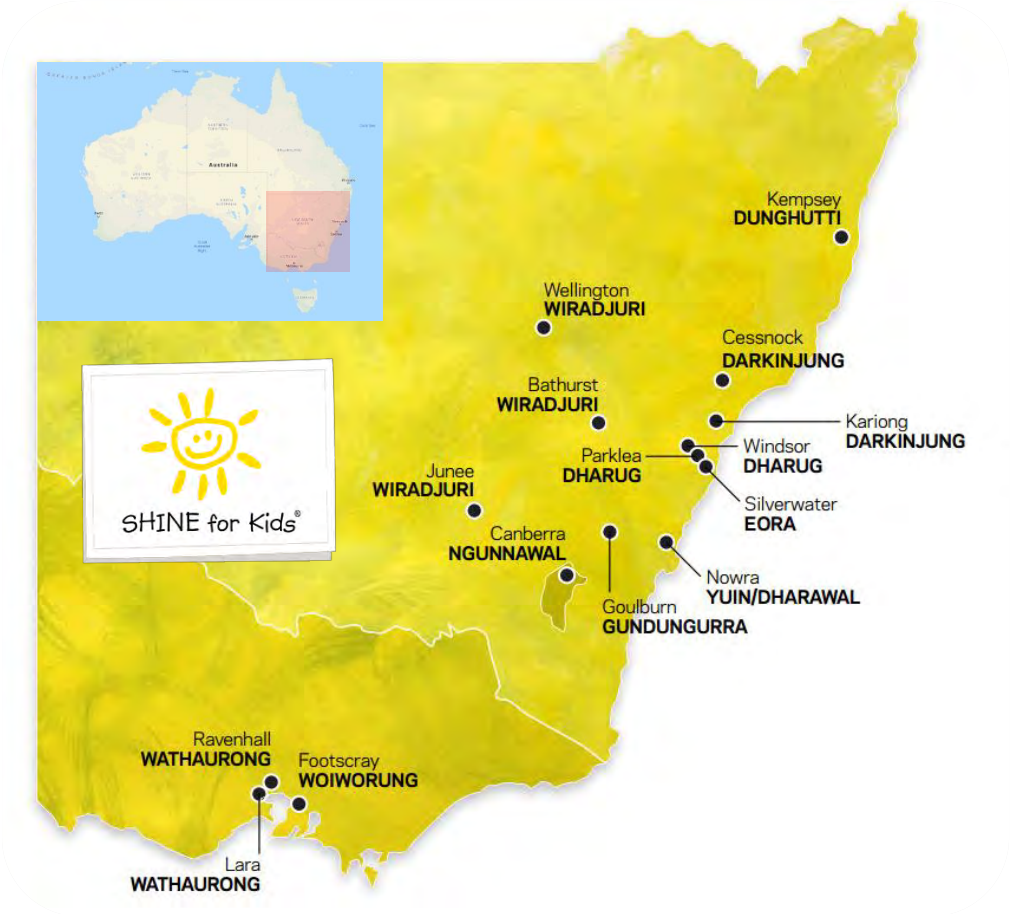
Corrective Services NSW (CSNSW) opened MNCCC in Aldavilla in 2004. At the time of the evaluation, the MNCCC had capacity for approximately 450 males in medium and minimum-security sectors, and 50 females in a minimum-security sector.

4.4.1. SHINE for Kids

SHINE is a not-for-profit organisation supporting children and families with an incarcerated relative. The organisation was established in 1982 as the Children of Prisoners' Support Group, which formed as a response to the Children of Imprisoned Parents Report commissioned by the NSW government's Family and Children's Services Agency. The report identified the invisible impact of parental imprisonment on children, and for over 30 years, SHINE has been dedicated to unveiling this invisibility and addressing the lack of support services by administering a range of programs, including casework services, contact services, day trips, mentoring, research, and advocacy. At the time of the evaluation, SHINE consisted of the head office based in North Parramatta NSW and the Victoria office in Footscray, 10 Child and Family Centres throughout NSW co-located on prison grounds, and seven support centres throughout NSW, ACT, and Victoria. The Child and Family Centres provide a child-friendly, supportive venue for families, children, and all visitors to 'drop in' when visiting prisons.

Figure 4.2

Location of SHINE centres and the respective First Peoples language groups (adapted from SHINE, 2014), insert includes the SHINE logo



4.4.2. Belonging to Family

I evaluated *Belonging to Family* (BtF) - a program administered from the Aldavilla Child and Family Centre. The Centre is located on the MNCCC property approximately one kilometre from the centre. The Centre offers programs supporting families visiting the MNCCC. BtF was established in 2011 and delivered for four years prior to this evaluation. BtF is a holistic re-entry program designed for First Peoples families who are affected by parental incarceration. BtF was established in partnership between CSNSW, SHINE, and the local Elders and community. At the time of the evaluation, BtF was delivered by two Aboriginal caseworkers, one female and one male. One of the caseworkers is Dunghutti and grew up in the local region, and the other lived on Dunghutti Country

for most of their life. At the time of the evaluation, all Indigenous programs administered by SHINE were managed by the National Indigenous Project leader based in SHINE's head office in Sydney.

Incarcerated parents could apply to join BtF within 6 - 12 months of release from prison. Referral forms for the BtF program were obtained from MNCCC staff, Aboriginal Elders, caseworkers, and SHINE staff. The program was also promoted during Inmate Delegate Committees, and by inmate participants, MNCCC staff, and posters in MNCCC and the community.

BtF works with family units including the incarcerated parents and family members who have a significant role in caring for a child with a parent in prison. Herein, I use the term "kinship participant" to refer to the participating family member as the program encourages a broad range of participants including the parent, guardian, Aunties, Uncles, Grandparents, Elders or community members. Families can have more than one kinship participant enrol in BtF. I discuss the relationship of the kinship participants further in section 6.4.2.

BtF has two components. First, the BtF caseworkers deliver case management from the point of acceptance into BtF until 12 months post-release. Case management is offered for family members – both incarcerated parents and kinship participants - and includes identifying issues and linking the family members to appropriate support services. Issues may be identified at any time during the program, however specific forms are completed during the enrolment process as well as an "Issues you are dealing with" form prior to release. Areas specifically addressed include education, training, health, employment prospects, financial issues, housing or social and emotional wellbeing.

The second component of BtF is an eight-week program. The eight-week program is a group-based program offered within 12 months of release in two-hour weekly sessions. Group sessions are offered simultaneously, one for incarcerated parents and one for the kinship participants. The incarcerated parent and kinship participants attend the first and last session of the eight-week program together, with the last session consisting of a graduation ceremony. Sessions 2-7 are held with separate sessions for the kinship participants and incarcerated parents. Children are invited to attend the graduation ceremony and a child-minding service is available during group sessions. Table 4.1 outlines the projected group sizes that were being estimated for the funding period that this evaluation was conducted based on the funding application and early meetings I had with SHINE. Note that these projections include Townsville. The exclusion of Townsville Correctional Centre is explained in section 4.4.3. Overall, at the MNCCC, SHINE proposed to hold six intakes from

July 2015- December 2016 with each intake engaging up to 14 incarcerated parents, 25 kinship participants, and 35 children.

Table 4.1

The projected group sizes, location, and total participant engagement

Location	Program Component	Incarcerated parents	Children	Kinship Participant	Elders & Volunteers
July-August 2015					
Kempsey	Mothers inside	6	15	10	8
Kempsey	Fathers inside	8	20	15	8
October-November 2015					
Townsville	Mothers inside	6	15	10	4
Townsville	Fathers inside	8	20	15	4
February-April 2016					
Kempsey	Mothers inside	6	15	10	8
Kempsey	Fathers inside	8	20	15	8
March-April 2016					
Townsville	Mothers inside	6	15	10	4
Townsville	Fathers inside	8	20	15	4
August-October 2016					
Kempsey	Mothers inside	6	15	10	8
Kempsey	Fathers inside	8	20	15	8
Kempsey	Mothers inside	6	15	10	8
Kempsey	Fathers inside	8	20	15	8
Kempsey		56	140	140	
Townsville		28	70	70	
Total		84	210	210	

Each session in the eight-week program consists of topics that aimed to support a positive re-entry experience for the family. Figure 4.3 is a handout provided to the participants in Week 1 that outlines the topics and activities for each week. Each week revolves around a central theme. For example, in Week 2 both groups discuss the topic “how the gaol sentence effects the family”. The incarcerated parents hold a group session through a guided discussion – a group in the women’s section for Mothers, and groups run in alternate intakes in the medium and minimum men’s sections for Fathers. Then the parent’s kinship participant holds a separate session addressing the same questions – a group for the mother’s kinship participants, and a group for the father’s kinship participants. In the following week, the kinship participant’s group and incarcerated parent’s group swap answers and discuss the responses. Reading and discussing the other group’s answers occurs in Weeks 3-7. In the final week, all participants and children come together for the graduation ceremony.

Figure 4.3

Belonging to Family program structure, handout provided to participants in Week 1

SHINE for Kids "Belonging to Family Program"

Week	Session Topic
1	Children at Cottage with Volunteers/Elders Inmate and Partner/Carer/Family Members together in the Gaol Introduction to Program Group Rules LOVE TANK explanation Love tank questionnaire given out to be done Explanation of what love tanks mean and hand out to be given Art Pack given out and explained
2	Discuss Exchange of Gifts How the Gaol Sentence effects: Me, Partner, Children and Family
3	Swap Ideas from Session 2 with other Group Reoffending Patterns effect Me, Partner, Children and Family
4	Swap Ideas from Session 3 with other Group What can we so/say to let our partners/family/children know how we feel in/out
5	Swap answers from Session 4 with other Group. Relationship Parenting Culture
6	Discuss the meaning of writing a "Dear" Letter "Dear" Letters – Group Leaders and Elders to help write letters Culture
7	Swap "Dear" Letters over Culture
8	All the Group Together: Services & Elders Presentations and Performances Gifts exchanged BBQ/Picnic

The eligibility criteria to be accepted into BtF are:

- Indigenous mothers or fathers in custody who,
    - Have 6 to 12 months to serve on their sentence (parents on remand are ineligible)
    - Have no offences against children
    - Have no Apprehended Violence Orders (AVO) or Domestic Violence Orders (DVO) that restrict contact with family members. AVOs and DVOs are court orders that restricts a person's behaviour towards another person. This includes threats and intimidation, but can also include restrictions on residing together, contact and communication, and staying a certain distance away from a person's home, work or school. DVOs apply to people in a domestic relationship, and AVOs are applied to those who are not in a domestic relationship (NSW Police Force, n.d).
    - Will return to communities within two-hour radius of the correctional centre
    - Are genuinely interested in participating
- The kinship participant lives within a two-hour radius of the correctional centre.
- The kinship participants and children wish to participate
- A BtF Referral Form has been completed

4.4.3. Structure change, previous evaluation, and current funding

Notably, there have been several changes to BtF since it was established. These changes are noted throughout the results; however, I note here adaptations to the employees and their roles. BtF was originally developed with a case manager position (for case management), two facilitators (for the eight-week program) and an administrative assistant. The administrative assistant utilised SHINE's database to record all BtF outputs, which included actions such as who attended sessions, phone calls, house visits, drop-ins, court support, or school visits. As noted above, there is no longer a case manager position or administrative assistant. The two caseworkers have taken on these roles. I note the impact of this throughout the thesis.

Considering previous evaluations is an important process of ongoing improvement. BtF was funded for three years commencing 2011 and correspondingly SHINE engaged an independent body to run a process and outcome evaluation throughout these three years. This previous evaluation had positive aspects including the engagement of the independent evaluators prior to service delivery rather than at the end, consultation and input with SHINE, an initial research mapping stage, annual

progress reports and a final report delivered in April 2013 (Matrix on Board, 2013). Data collection included consideration of case plans and program statistics, conducting staff interviews, and designing and analysing participant feedback surveys on completion of the group sessions as well as on-release and 12-months post release. The previous evaluation aimed to assess both implementation and outcome measures. Overall, the evaluators found that BtF was implemented well and had positive outcomes. In my early consultations with SHINE, there was appreciation of the previous evaluation. However, SHINE also indicated that the evaluation had, at the time, not been able to address specific issues. Although the previous evaluation had focused on implementation, there was hesitation in conceptualising or operationalising key strengths. Moreover, the previous evaluation included only some crude outcome measures and also lacked baseline questions before the program. The previous evaluation was most certainly insightful, and I have incorporated the learnings in this evaluation. I have also aimed to address the gaps identified from the previous evaluation. I describe how I have incorporated the findings of the previous evaluation in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5).

SHINE is funded through philanthropic donations and government grants. As mentioned above, BtF was initially supported by a three-year grant from the Commonwealth Attorney-General Department running from 2010-2013. In the interim between the previous funding grant and the second funding grant (that is associated with this evaluation), BtF continued with in-house allocation of funds from SHINE which resulted in indeterminate staff loading and no new participant intakes. BtF was re-funded under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy federal grants scheme. I conducted the evaluation during this funding round. In Chapter 2, I noted that policy and funding for First Peoples programs and policies is a contentious and volatile process. The Indigenous Advancement Strategy was an attempt by the federal government to streamline and administer all federal Indigenous funding from the Prime Minister and Cabinet Department. The Indigenous Advancement Strategy had five broad categorical streams (Jobs, Land and Economy; Children and Schooling; Safety and Wellbeing; Culture and Capability; and Remote Australia Strategies). Detailing the environment and impact of Indigenous politics and funding is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, this environment needs to be acknowledged as a macro-contextual factor that impacts the delivery of services for First Peoples.

SHINE was awarded a grant under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. The grant covered three programs each for 18 months from July 2015 to December 2016. The first program funded was the continuation of BtF from SHINE's Aldavilla Children's and Family Centre. The second program was the scaling out of BtF to the Townsville Correctional Centre in Queensland. This was SHINE's first

program delivered in Queensland. The third program was the implementation of a Children's Support Program. This was an education program supporting First Peoples children with a parent in the MNCCC. Prior to this grant, SHINE had developed and administered the education program from their Bathurst Family and Community Centres. In Bathurst, the education program did not target First Peoples children. The new funding allowed the introduction of the education program from the Aldavilla Centre and would be targeted to specifically support First Peoples children. Although the grant was successful, the total funding was only 10% of the projected overall costs.

In July 2015, I was given the opportunity to run an evaluation under the grant as a part of this thesis. The CEO of SHINE approved the use of a realist evaluation. From the final funding budget, SHINE allocated $14 000 specifically for this evaluation. Of note, the children's education program and BtF Townsville were both at the implementation phase and required additional resources and a wider scope in the evaluation. Consequently, the realist synthesis and evaluation in this thesis focused on BtF administered from the MNCCC. In Chapter 10, I note the impact of funding requirements and of establishing the education program alongside BtF (see section 10.3). The inclusion of the education program in the grant application forced BtF into the 'Children and Schooling' stream of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. Consequently, BtF was assigned educational targets for children rather than reporting intended outcomes of BtF. In practice, the education program and BtF worked cohesively, but were separate programs.

4.5. Methodology

In this section, I present my methodology. In social science research, the methodology incorporates the broad philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of how a researcher approaches, administers, and interprets a project and its outcomes. The methodology is important to consider as context, particularly culture, significantly affects inferential procedures (Evers & Mason, 2011).

There are two pertinent reasons why I have clearly outlined my methodology in this section. First, I have used qualitative methods. For qualitative research, presenting a clear methodology is important as a researcher's personal views are seen to have a greater opportunity to influence the outcomes (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Outlining my methodology brings rigour and transparency to my research methods and outcomes. Second, for research involving First Peoples, presenting a clear methodology similarly strengthens the research while also addressing historical and ongoing social justice issues. Minority groups tend to be the subject of the 'research gaze' interpreted through

'Western lenses'; this process tends to privilege alternative world views to the group being studied. For Indigenous peoples of any country, "their entire existence seems to be a problem or a question for researchers" (Porsanger, 2004, p.106), and in Australia this has led to First Peoples being one of the most studied people in the world (Rigney, 1997). Articulating the methodology brings transparency to how outcomes are formulated. Overall, a clear methodology will strengthen my research process and outcomes.

The continual and rising presence of Indigenous peoples as researchers has led to an increasing number of Indigenous methodologies. Indigenous methodologies incorporate Indigenous knowledges, perspectives, and understandings within research. In outlining my methodology, I have drawn on the work of Moreton-Robinson and Walter (2009). Moreton-Robinson and Walter (2009) identify three interdependent critical elements of Indigenous research methodologies; Standpoint; conceptual framework and theoretical paradigm; and the methods. I outline these elements below.

4.5.1. Standpoint

Standpoint theories analyse the production of people's knowledge and perspectives and how power can be used to subjugate the knowledge gained from the lived experience of certain people (Harding, 2004). Everybody has their own individual experiences which shape their perspectives and knowledge with certain groups sharing environments and experiences. Critical feminist scholars in the 1970s-80s built on the work of Hegel to expose how groups that have power and influential social positioning validate their own perspectives while overlooking the lived experience of women (Hartsock, 1983; Smith, 1987), which can be amplified in a matrix of oppression of gender, class, and race (Collins, 1990). Feminists use standpoint theory frameworks as a mechanism for empowerment to actively centre the voice of participants to ensure that the knowledge and perspectives of marginalised people are valued. Consequently, other minority and marginalised groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, have adapted the framework as a process to privilege knowledges and perspectives that have otherwise been suppressed (Martin, 2008; Moreton-Robertson, 2000; Rigney,1999).

Within Indigenous research methodologies, Moreton-Robinson and Walter (2009) assert that a researcher's standpoint is the first element that should be identified. In outlining your standpoint, you are examining how your life circumstances contribute to how you understand and interact within the world. Martin, a First Peoples Noonuccal woman, identifies this interaction as the ways of 'knowing, being, and doing' (Martin & Birraboopa, 2009). Moreover, for First Peoples, the

foundations of relationships are built on outlining your cultural location by establishing connections to political, cultural, and social grounds (Martin & Birraboopa, 2009).

My social positioning has a significant influence on my thesis. I am the youngest of three daughters of Rod and Karoly Lockwood (nee Mullins). My paternal grandfather was a First Peoples Gumbaynggirr man who worked as a stockman throughout the Mid North Coast area of NSW. While moving to find work, he met my paternal grandmother, a First Peoples Dunghutti woman from Bellbrook, an Aboriginal mission 54 kilometres west of Kempsey in NSW. They married and started a family. They wanted to move to a town; and had two choices as Bellbrook is halfway between Kempsey and Armidale. They decided against moving to Kempsey due to a number of personal, negative, racially based incidents experienced in Kempsey (the site of the current evaluation). So, they moved to Armidale, and it was here that they made a home and raised their nine children, including my father. My mother is the daughter of a third-generation Australian woman who revelled in her Scottish heritage. My maternal grandmother (Nan) grew up on a farm on the outskirts of Armidale. She met and married my maternal grandfather, a Hungarian refugee. He passed away three months before my mother was born, swimming in the oceans of the Mid North Coast NSW. My Nan raised her four daughters in Armidale.

My parents met, married, and raised their three children in Armidale. My parents resisted numerous objections for being a mixed-race couple; but have now been together for over 37 years. Growing up, my sisters and I were taught about our history, ancestral ties, and to be proud of our identity. We knew our extended paternal family, and significant connections between families in particularly in Armidale and throughout the Mid North Coast area. We were also aware of the stories of how policies impacted my Aboriginal family, including how my father's parents were a part of the Stolen Generation (see section 2.1 regarding Stolen Generation).

After finishing high school, I decided to study law and criminology at university, but eventually focused on criminology. I was consistently met with contradictions; my life did not mirror the predominately negative stereotypes of First Peoples examined in criminal justice studies; my family were not incarcerated, we valued education, and we led relatively healthy lives. Many other First Peoples families were not as fortunate, and I wanted to work to correct this. Through my studies, I found that research could have a significant role in achieving social justice. I was fortunate to be granted a Charlie Perkins Scholarship and complete my Masters of Evidence Based Social Intervention at Oxford University. In this degree, I explored specifically how research can be used to understand how policies, practices, and programs can work to achieve social justice. This led to my interest in evaluation and this thesis.

The circumstance that provided the opportunity to conduct my research on Dunghutti Country was an incredibly fortunate coincidence. Two of my supervisors had established a working relationship with SHINE and contributed to the writing of the grant to evaluate BtF administered at the MNCCC. I was able run the evaluation as a part of my thesis.

Geographically, the Mid North Coast has a significant role in my own and my family's life. As outlined above, these experiences were both negative and positive. I was pleased that I could research on Country; more so, I was also happy to find out a board member for SHINE was a closely related cousin, one of the caseworkers was my cousin, the childcare worker remembered my grandparents visiting their home near Kempsey as a child, another caseworker previously worked in Bellbrook, and the Elders involved in Belonging to Family were my relational and cultural Aunties and Uncles. The relational connections were significant. I made immediate and close political, cultural, and social connections that have remained unbroken. This gave me a unique position to engage with the lived experience of the participants, community, and program evaluation I was conducting. As I outlined in the 'Aboriginal ethical framework' in section 4.3; I became personally accountable to the people I engaged with during my research, and this accountability is amplified due to my connection with them. The fact I had established familial and cultural connections enhances my obligations, as a researcher, to accurately portray the lives of the people involved in BtF and furthermore to contribute to the program in a constructive way, particularly in supporting SHINE for ongoing improvements of BtF and in turn meeting social justice objectives (section 4.5.2). A part of this was being able to communicate my intentions, being clear on my theoretical framework (outlined below) and being clear on the outcomes I could contribute to within my role.

4.5.2. Conceptual framework and theoretical paradigm

A researcher's conceptual framework and theoretical paradigm are the next elements identified by Moreton-Robinson and Walter (2009) that are important to identify within Indigenous methodologies. In outlining one's conceptual framework, emphasis is on identifying the specific theories that inform the research. In outlining one's theoretical paradigm, the paradigm that closely aligns with one's theoretical approach is identified. Here lies a significant aim of my thesis; I aimed to understand to what extent my conceptual framework in realism could contribute to an Indigenous paradigm, and how these may interact within evaluation practices.

4.5.2.1. Conceptual framework: Realism & bioecological model of development

(i) Realism

My conceptual framework is grounded in realism. The initial basis of this thesis was to determine to what extent the realist framework of evaluations could contribute to Indigenous justice programs. The theoretical basis of realist evaluations is explicably linked to realist tradition in the philosophy of science. Therefore, I adopted a realist conceptual framework within this thesis.

I detailed the theoretical roots to the realist evaluation framework in section 3.3. To briefly reiterate, realists believe that truth is dependent on the influence of the social world. Pawson and Tilley (1997) used meta-theoretical realist principles to inform an empirical method. They favour scientific realism to articulate how mechanics of explanation can lead to a progressive body of scientific knowledge. Everybody has different experiences of the social world and these differences explain why different people have different outcomes despite exposure to similar interventions. The process of change occurs though generative causation; where an intervention triggers mechanisms that in turn lead to differing outcomes. Interventions are embedded in social systems and are thus shaped by four contextual layers; individual, interpersonal, institutional, and infrastructural contexts (Pawson, 2013). Therefore, context has a driving force in shaping peoples lived experiences and perceptions.

There have been a number of First Peoples in Australia that have used a realist approach in their academic work. Gracelyn Smallwood, a First Peoples woman of Biri descent, established an Indigenist critical realism in asserting the Human Rights Agenda in Indigenous affairs in Australia (Smallwood, 2015). Similarly, Chris Sarra, a First Peoples man, examined how critical realism influenced his work in establishing the Stronger Smarter education institution to support Indigenous children (Sarra, 2014). Smallwood and Sarra are two prominent examples of the use of realism by First Peoples.

Significantly, Indigenous scholars tend to use critical realism. Critical realism is a meta-theoretical position with heterogeneous contributions that are linked by a commitment to formulating a post-positivist philosophy. The realist evaluation framework drew heavily on the meta-theoretical assumptions of critical realism in understanding the relationship between society and people and how social change and social reproduction take place in society (section 3.3). However, in the process of creating an empirical method, Pawson (2006) was wary of embracing the normative principles of critical realism. Indigenous scholars tend to use critical realism to articulate the impact of system level structures on First Peoples and furthermore emphasise an emancipatory goal. As the

use of realist frameworks for evaluations have increased, researchers have also considered the impact of critical realism in the field. For example, de Souza (2013) shifts the focus of an evaluation from the social *program* to the social *context*.

In my thesis, I used scientific realism as outlined by Pawson and Tilley (1997). This is predominately attributed to my initial interest in understanding how this realist framework could be used to understand the relationship between content, mechanisms, and outcomes for First Peoples justice programs, and additionally I was also interested in program level analyses. Notwithstanding, the realist evaluation framework does emphasise the role of social structures within the framework and allows adaption of critical realist concepts such as power dynamics. As such, I have used critical realist concepts when they were needed for analytical and explanatory purposes.

(ii) Bioecological model of development

I use Bronfenbrenner's (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) bioecological theory of human development as the principal theory guiding my evaluation for three reasons. First, the theoretical framework has been used within the parental incarceration literature (Arditti, 2005; 2015; Dennison et al., 2017; Poehlmann et al., 2010) (section 2.4). Second, the theory helps to articulate how different people in diverse contexts exhibit varying outcomes which correlates to the aims of a realist revaluation. Third, Lerner et al. (2000) examine how university-community collaborations that use applied developmental science (such as Bronfenbrenner's model) contributes to social justice by linking empirical research to real-life settings. This thesis is applied research that builds from a university-community partnership. Notably, Bronfenbrenner refined his theory throughout his career (Tudge et al., 2009); I use the 'mature' theory that was used from the 1990s.

I also use the bioecological model to aide in understanding complexity. Pawson (2013) explored the ways that complexity has been conceptualised and operationalised. He analysed several schools of thought that assess complexity before putting forth a realist approach. In this pursuit, Pawson finds many perspectives on complexity are left wanting, including perspectives from augmented trials, critical realist, pragmatist, and systems. The latter - systems perspectives - is significant for this thesis as this incorporates bioecological models. Systems perspective is a family of theories that share the aim of understanding non-linear dynamical systems that impact people. Pawson (2013) cautioned that systems perspectives:

> …embellishes rather than deals with the burden of complexity in evaluation research. It demands more elaborate programme theories, greater subtlety in the measurement of outcomes, ceaseless vigilance in the study of implementation, and, above all, the idea that the fortunes of an intervention are deeply embedded in contextual layers that are themselves subject to change. The issues remain endless. (p.60)

In this case, the aim of systems theories is to describe contexts and how contexts impact decision making rather than explain mechanisms. Consequently, systems-theory can be seen as diminishing individual agency, particularly in responding to adverse situations like parental incarceration. This is also true for bioecological systems theory. For example, in terms of parental incarceration, a child may become disengaged with schooling when their parent is incarcerated: what point of the hierarchical system is contributing to this the most and by what types of interactions (mechanisms)? Contributions can range from the child's personality traits (Person), or at any of the contextual levels (Context) – ranging from relationships with the carer, lack of support from school, impact of visitations, lack of financial support, or lack of policies for supporting families to name a few. Realist evaluators have identified that bioecological systems theory is descriptive and lacks the ability to articulate mechanisms which leads to difficulty in providing greater specificity. For some evaluators, this has led to avoiding the use of bioecological models (Parkinson, 2018; Willis et al., 2018). Others have used bioecological models but tackled the shortfalls. In some cases, Bronfenbrenner's model was combined with the realists 4 I's (see Table 4.2) and other systems perspectives to develop frameworks for evaluations (e.g., Lawson, 2017; Westhorp, 2008); others have developed analytical frameworks on Bronfenbrenner's work (e.g., Birch, 2015).

In this thesis, I draw on Bronfenbrenner's theories to address complexity. I address the issues identified in several ways. As noted, bioecological systems theory has been conceptualised, operationalised, and measured in the parental incarceration literature (section 2.4.2), including studies directly testing bioecological systems theory (Arditti 2005, 2015; Dennison et al., 2017; Poehlmann et al., 2010). Many of these studies have sought to identify mechanisms using bioecological systems theory as a basis. For example, Dennison et al. (2017) analysed the function of communication and parenting skills as proximal processes and identified the impact prison has on the developmental context for parenting. From this basis I developed an analytical framework drawing on the application of PPCT to parental incarceration and the intentions of a realist evaluation.

The points of comparison between the PPCT model and realist evaluation framework are illustrated in Table 4.2. Concepts from the PPCT model directly reflect the concepts used within the

realist evaluation framework. For example, within the PPCT model, there are specific characteristics of the individual which impact how an individual develops, including biological differences and personal characteristics. Such individual characteristics are important to identify in evaluations; individual differences can lead to divergent outcomes between participants. Within Pawson's 4 I's, he identified that at the *Individual* level, people differ in their capacities – whether this is the participant or the service providers. This is prevalent within the parental incarceration literature – for example, there are distinct difference between mothers' and fathers' needs, between the parenting experience and skills of different parents in prison, or what types of supports are needed for specific children. Overall, I used this framework to assist in identifying significant contexts or mechanisms and what differences could lead to certain program outcomes.

This analytical framework assisted me to develop my initial theories (see Chapter 5) and further refinement (Chapters 7-9). Similar to Westhorp (2008) I approached the articulation of mechanisms though a constructivist approach. Constructivism is at an opposing end of a spectrum that realist evaluations aimed to reconcile with positivism (section 3.3). However, Westhorp (2008) outlines the role constructivism can play in investigating mechanisms. Drawing on Hammersley, (1992/2002) Westhorp outlines how constructivists believe that people construct a social world where they act upon their interpretations of it. Therefore, engaging program participants is integral to understanding mechanisms. Although most people do not understand why they react a certain way, programs usually have a clear theory of change, so evaluators have an opportunity to ask participants how this 'external reality' has been processed within the individual. In the case of this thesis, I also have a significant body of research, both regarding parental incarceration and First Peoples, that can also guide the identification of mechanisms.

Table 4.2

Parallels between Process-Person-Context-Time (Bronfenbrenner) and context-mechanisms-outcomes (realist evaluation)

PPCT	Realist evaluation framework		Example from parental incarceration
	Context the 4 I's	**Mechanisms and Outcomes**	
Process: progressively more complex, regular, and reciprocal interactions between individuals and the persons, objects and symbols in their immediate environment		Provides a way to identify mechanisms. Programs may also be established to address this (identify outcome)	When a parent becomes incarcerated a child can lose a parental role model
Person: biological, genetic, and personal characteristics of the individual	The individual capacities of the key actors: The characteristics of the key actors of an intervention	Mechanisms are triggered within the individual	Service providers should be able to tailor support (e.g., Gender specific support for mothers inside)
Microsystem: a person's immediate environment and relationships	The interpersonal relationships supporting the intervention: how the interactions between individuals will affect how the program works	PCCT focuses on the individual's reaction to their environment. This, assists in identifying what mechanisms are being triggered	Change in roles (e.g., role of parenting from behind bars)
Mesosystem: interactions between microsystems that the individual is directly involved in **Exosystem**: indirect social setting that impacts an individual	The institutional setting: how organisation's ethos, management, and resources affect how a program operates		E.g., relationships between the home and correctional visiting centres or indirectly (exo) the impact of the prison on the child
Macrosystem: overarching beliefs and values of a society and institutions	The wider infrastructural system: the social, economic, and cultural settings of an intervention that affect how a program operates		Policy level support of families with a parent in prison
Time: Microtime (immediate) and mesotime (consistency of events) Chronosystem shifting expectancies in wider culture	(provided further context related to infrastructural system, eg expectations in wider culture)	Programs may be established to address this (identify outcome)	E.g., families found visitation centres and security processes not to be family friendly and ceased visits

4.5.2.2. Indigenous paradigm

Although I am adapting a realist conceptual framework, I am working from an Indigenous paradigm. I will process the research through my ways of knowing, being, and doing, which are linked to my standpoint as a First Peoples woman in research (section 4.5.1). For example, the interpersonal aspects of how I interact with people during my research will be heavily influenced by my relational and kinship networks. Knowledge I gather throughout my data collection will also be understood within a context of growing up as a Gumbaynggirr and Dunghuttii woman. Within my research, my life experiences have influenced how I process information, relate to people, and relay my ideas.

Indigenous scholars from different countries have established and formalised ways to engage in the research process that ensures rigour while foregrounding Indigenous values (e.g., Grande, 2000; Martin & Birraboopa, 2009; Moreton-Robinson, 2000; Nakata, 2006; Rigby, 1999; Smith, 1999). In this process, these scholars have critiqued mainstream research and practices to ensure Indigenous issues are accurately portrayed and prioritised.

In my thesis, I drew upon Rigney's (1999) Indigenist research methodology (section 3.3.2.5). To briefly reiterate, Rigney (1999) championed an approach to research that is *for* Indigenous peoples instead of *about* Indigenous peoples. In terms of this thesis, Rigby's three principles guided me throughout my thesis. The first principle is *resistance* to any research that did not achieve steps to self-determination. BtF has been delivered for several years with considerable community support. I aimed to assist the community members supporting BtF. Specifically, I aimed to conduct an evaluation that drew upon the community members' views and intentions of delivering BtF and producing outputs that amplified their voices and which could be used to support and improve BtF into the future. Moreover, throughout the research I have illustrated how colonisation has contributed to the context and mechanisms on BtF and the participants involved in the program. Rigney's second principle is *political integrity*. This principle refers to me, as a researcher, to ensure I contribute to the political agenda of the Indigenous community I am working with. Again, the process of this evaluation aims to support BtF with improving on their program while also establishing the mechanisms that are necessary to support other Indigenous families with a parent in prison. Rigney's third principle is *privileging Indigenous voices* as a reminder to represent the lived experiences, aspirations, traditions, and interests of the community I am working with. In this sense I have accurately communicated the experiences, voices, and values of the Elders, community members, and participating families of BtF. Rigney's Indigenist Research navigated me through embedding my Indigenous paradigm.

4.5.3. Methods

Research methods are the tools used to address research questions. My standpoint, conceptual framework, theoretical paradigm, and research questions (section 4.6) influenced the methods I used and report in this thesis. I used the two overarching techniques from the realist evaluation framework: a realist synthesis (Chapter 5) and a realist evaluation (Chapters 6-9). These approaches are not methods (section 3.3); rather they are guiding principles on how to use both qualitative and quantitative strategies. To avoid repetitiveness, in this section I have only identified the methods utilised. For further details, see Chapter 5 for the realist synthesis and Chapter 6 for the realist evaluation.

Due to time constraints, I used a rapid realist synthesis (Saul et al., 2013). Rapid realist synthesis follows realist synthesis principles but adapted to shorter time frames. I used a targeted literature review identifying BtF's context, mechanisms, and outcomes to inform these configurations to the findings and hypotheses in the wider literature. Program theories were established through a review of in-house documents, workshops, and the predominate theories in programs for children with incarcerated parents and the risk and protective factors of First Peoples children in particular. Table 3.2 (section 3.3.1.1) in the literature review provides guidelines for completing the synthesis (Pawson et al., 2004).

I conducted a realist evaluation to test the program theory from the initial hypotheses of the realist synthesis. In my realist evaluation I used an ethnographic approach to gain an in-depth and detailed examination of BtF's mechanisms and the contexts of individuals within the program. Three methods were used:

- Observations of BtF eight-week program in prison, case-management, and general delivery of BtF (see section 6.4.1).
- Semi-structured interviews using yarning modalities (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) with staff members, incarcerated parents, and kinship participants (see section 6.4.2).
- Analysis of documents data held by SHINE (see section 6.4.3)

4.6. Research questions

My research questions are informed by the research aims and my methodology. The aims of this thesis are to understand the extent a realist evaluation framework can contribute to understanding justice programs supporting First Peoples as well as understanding parental incarceration programs. I have addressed these aims by using a case study approach by applying the realist evaluation framework to the BtF program. Drawing on my theoretical perspective, I have used the realist framework to inform the research questions and subsequent research design, completing both a realist synthesis and a realist evaluation. As such, I have two sets of questions. My first set of research questions are addressed by the realist synthesis while the second set of questions are addressed by the realist evaluation.

The first set of research questions establish the contexts, mechanisms, and intended outcomes of BtF. Accordingly, I undertook a realist synthesis of available research and experiences of service providers. This allowed me to establish hypotheses about how, for whom, in what circumstances, when, and why BtF works. The outcomes informed the subsequent realist evaluation and to understand how the outcomes contribute to the wider body of knowledge. The methods, outcomes, and conclusion of the realist synthesis are detailed in Chapter 5.

My research questions for the realist synthesis were:

Realist Synthesis

1a/ What are the primary intended outcomes of Belonging to Family?

1b/ What is known about achieving the intended outcomes established in (1a) for families with a parent in prison?

2/ What are the key contextual factors created by the incarceration of First Peoples parents that are hypothesised to impact the outcomes Belonging to Family?

3/ What existing causal mechanisms are proposed to be (de)activated by the introduction of Belonging to Family and what new mechanisms are proposed to be (de)activated through the introduction of Belonging to Family to improve participating families' experiences and intended outcomes?

4/ For which families, and in which conditions, does the introduction of Belonging to Family lead to the (de) activation of proposed mechanisms producing negative experiences and unintended outcomes for participating families?

My second set of research questions tested the outcome measures, contexts, and mechanisms identified in the realist synthesis by administering a realist evaluation of BtF. As outlined in Section 4.4, SHINE's eight-week program was administered six times from July 2015-December 2016. I interviewed and analysed data from family members who were enrolled in one of the eight-week program blocks. The realist evaluation of BtF incorporated an ethnographic approach where I observed how the participants' contexts impacted program outcomes.

My research questions were constructed from the three proposed outcomes of the realist synthesis. The research questions were:

1. *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family strengthen positive family relationships?*
2. *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community?*
3. *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family reinforce cultural values?*

The methods for the realist evaluation are detailed in Chapter 6 and Chapters 7, 8, and 9 address each research question.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter outlined how I approached and conducted my research. This thesis involves applied research aimed at identifying the extent a realist approach to evaluation can assist in understanding the context, mechanisms, and outcomes that impact First Peoples parental incarceration justice programs. Specifically, I evaluate the BtF program delivered on Dunghutti Country and administered by SHINE in the MNCCC, NSW. I secured institutional ethics clearance and acknowledged an 'Aboriginal ethical framework' I abide by. In this chapter I have also clearly outlined my methodology. I used an Indigenous methodology outlined by Moreton-Robinson and Walter (2009). In doing so, I established my standpoint as a Dunghutti and Gumbaynggirr woman and acknowledged the role this has in researching on Country. I also detailed my conceptual framework as embedded within realism, and how this is interdependent with my Indigenous paradigm and the influence of Rigney's Indigenist Research. My standpoint, conceptual framework and theoretical paradigm have shaped my research methods and research questions. I briefly outlined my methods and how my thesis is structured to first address a realist synthesis to develop

CMO configurations, and subsequently a realist evaluation, to test the CMO's established in the realist synthesis. Overall, this chapter provides the blueprint and core values of my research design. In the next Chapter, I provide the methods, outcomes, and results of the first stage of my evaluation: the realist synthesis.

Chapter 5
Rapid Realist Synthesis

5.1. Introduction

In Chapter 4 I outlined how I use two predominant realist methods in this thesis: a rapid realist synthesis and a realist evaluation. In this Chapter, I report the methods and results of the rapid realist synthesis. The primary aim for completing the rapid realist synthesis is to establish and analyse Belonging to Family's (BtF) context, mechanism, and outcomes.

Internationally, the number of realist reviews published has significantly increased. Consequently Wong et al. (2013) established reporting standards to support evaluators to achieve rigor in implementing and reporting their realist reviews. I incorporate Wong et al.'s (2013) reporting standards in this chapter, which I have structured under five sections. First, I restate the rationale and objectives of the synthesis. In section 5.3, I outline the methods I adapted in this synthesis, including the steps taken to gather and synthesise 53 in-house and external documents in establishing the CMOs. In section 5.4 I outline the results of the synthesis. In section 5.5 I discuss the findings including how the outcomes of the realist synthesis are intended to be tested and refined in the subsequent realist evaluation reported in Chapters 6 - 9. A summary is provided in section 5.6.

5.2. Rationale and Objectives

The rationale and objectives of this realist synthesis are identified in Chapter 4 and guided by the literature review. To briefly reiterate, I identified a realist synthesis as an appropriate method for understanding parental incarceration interventions due to the complexity, diversity, and multi-faceted nature of parental incarceration. Interventions and evaluations need to account for this highly contextual nature. Moreover, in understanding interventions, realist reviews can privilege Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing (section 4.5). Overall, a realist review is suitable to understanding BtF as a small-scale, community driven program targeting First Peoples parents in prison and their families.

A realist synthesis is also appropriate for the overall methodology. Realist syntheses are a discrete method. As the realist perspective in evaluation has grown, realist syntheses have been encouraged as a foregrounding process for realist evaluations (e.g., in Birch, 2015). If time and

resources permit, a realist synthesis provides a way of scoping the literature and refining the program theory in realist terms prior to an evaluation (Pawson et al., 2004). This allows for a richer understanding of the program and identifies how the program contributes to the wider knowledge base (Jagosh, 2019).

The primary objective of this realist review is to build the foundations for the subsequent evaluation. I first drew upon the experiences of BtF and the employees to establish the CMOs. Then I compared, contrasted, and analysed how these CMO's related to the wider literature. This allowed the synthesis to inform the evaluation and allowed me to identify how BtF contributes to the empirical knowledge on supporting families with a parent in prison. The research questions for this synthesis are presented in section 4.6, and restated and addressed in section 5.4.3.

5.3. Methods

5.3.1. Changes in the review process

Realist reviews evolve as further information is analysed. This can change the aims of the review, and affect what data and information is incorporated in the analysis (Wong et al., 2013). For the current review, the primary aim of establishing BtF CMOs for an evaluation did not change. However, the scope of the review was refined as I understood more about BtF and the needs of SHINE. I narrowed the focus of the review as the CMO's of the program were established. Notably, BtF is not a program that teaches participants parenting skills. Consequently, the large number of evaluations and empirical data on programs focused on developing parenting skills were not included in this review as the outcomes and mechanisms would be vastly different to BtF. Moreover, children did not participate in the weekly sessions; therefore, I focused on programs and data targeting adults rather than children. I also preferenced studies analysing community programs administered in correctional centres for First Peoples.

5.3.2. Scoping the literature

My process of scoping the literature privileged Indigenous voices and experiences. Overall, the evaluation contributes to the ongoing improvement of BtF: a program that was developed in partnership with the Dunghutti community and SHINE and had maintained local support for over five

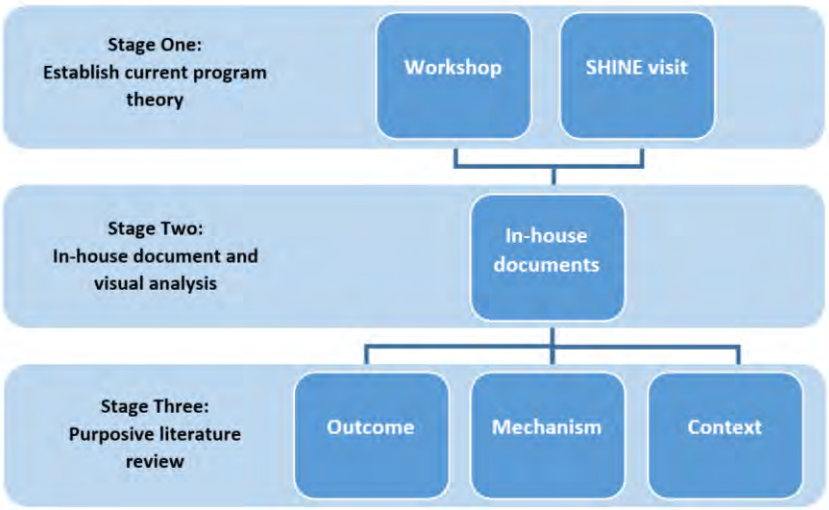
years at the time of the evaluation. BtF addressed issues identified as important by the local community and used mechanisms appropriate for the unique community based contextual factors. Resultantly, this realist synthesis was developed to continue to support the program by embedding the CMOs that have been established: the wider literature was used to elaborate on the program theory, not to steer the program theory.

I established a three-stage process outlined in Figure 5. 1. In Stage One, CMOs were identified from the BtF service providers, past participants, and stakeholders who were involved in delivering BtF. I conducted a site visit to the SHINE Family and Community Centre in Aldavilla from 22-26 June 2015. During the site visit, I was introduced to key stakeholders of BtF and MNCCC, observed the site, and established key details about how the program worked through a series of informal meetings with the key stakeholders. Additionally in Stage One, a workshop was held on 27 July 2015 at Griffith University. The eight attendees included the BtF caseworkers, SHINE employees involved in delivering BtF, a Board member of SHINE, two academics (supervisors of this thesis) specialising in parental incarceration and realist evaluations, and myself. The duration of the workshop was 4 hours. The primary aim of the workshop was to establish the CMO of BtF drawing on the different experiences and expertise of the practitioners and academics. The workshop was collaborative, with the academics explaining the realist evaluation methods, and the practitioners providing how BtF applied to this framework. The program was mapped on a whiteboard allowing the attendees to visualise the process. Discussions were targeted to establish the key outcomes achieved, what mechanisms were being triggered at each stage of the program, and how contextual issues impacted this process at different stages.

The CMOs were expanded upon in Stage Two, from document and visual analyses of in-house material including previous evaluations, participant feedback sheets, and SHINE's promotional material. Subsequently, Stage 3 contributed to the understanding of the program theory with purposive literature reviews of wider literature set around the identified CMOs. My three-stage process privileged Indigenous perspectives, built on the history and experience of the program, encouraged ongoing improvement of BtF, and identified how the evaluation contributed to the wider literature on parental incarceration interventions.

Figure 5.1

Realist synthesis: Three stage process



5.3.3. Search process

Administrative practicalities dictated the synthesis time limits. Stage One involved meetings from 22 June to 27 July 2015 as well as ongoing personal communication. Stage Two incorporated document and visual analyses completed June through August 2015. For Stage 3, the purposive literature review was an iterative and ongoing process until December 2015. This date was set as the realist review informed the material required for the realist evaluation that required approval from my institutional ethics application.

For Stage 3, initially I was recommended empirical studies on parental incarceration and realist evaluations by experts in these fields. Subsequently I searched the academic databases using the search terms listed below. I pearled references by searching through bibliographies. As the CMOs were established, I focused on outputs that contributed to relevant areas and performed additional searches in the following academic databases.

- Criminal Justice Abstracts
- Google
- Google Scholar
- HeinOnline Criminal Justice Journals
- Informit Search (including Australian Criminology Database; Australian Federal Police Digest; Health Issues in Criminal Justice)

- JSTOR
- Medline
- National Criminal Justice Reference Service
- ProQuest (including: Criminal Justice Database; Dissertation and theses; ERIC; Sociological Abstracts)
- PsycInfo
- Springer
- Web of Science
- Wiley

Search terms included:

prison* or jail* or penitentiary or imprison* or detention

AND

child* or son* or daughter* or parent* or mother* or father* or famil*

AND

Indigen* or Aborigin* or “Torres Strait Islander*” or “First People*” or “First Nation*”

AND

intervention* or program* or evaluat* or review*

5.3.4. Selection and appraisal of documents

In a realist synthesis, documents are included if they address the two key areas of relevance and rigor (Pawson, 2006). Relevance refers to whether a document can contribute to the overall theory building and testing. Rigor refers to whether the method used to generate the document is credible and trustworthy. For the current review, each stage in Figure 5.1 had differing approaches. In Stage 1, the inclusion of information was heavily based on communication with the key stakeholders. Additionally, Stage 1 and Stage 2 included several documents. For these stages, the inclusion criteria included:

1. All in-house documents produced directly for/by BtF
2. All publicly available media and documents that were produced for BtF, or were produced from participation in BtF

3. SHINE documents that provided further understanding of CMOs of BtF.

Stage 3 (purposive review) had a greater possibility of potential documents. Throughout the search, the relevance of documents was determined on how it could contribute to the CMOs already identified in the Stages 1 and 2. The inclusion criteria included:

1. Documents must describe, evaluate, and/or analyse a CMO that was identified for BtF
2. No restrictions were placed on research methods
3. Papers published from 2000 or later
4. Australian and international documents
5. Documents are written in English
6. Documents considered from any discipline
7. Privileged Indigenous outputs.

5.3.5. Data extraction

Documents selected in a realist synthesis need to be compared and contrasted. A systematic approach to data extraction provides a way to methodically synthesise documents. In the current synthesis, I devised a data extraction matrix to ensure that the documents were systematically assessed, in a way that would make them comparable (see Appendix A). The matrix also ensured the data collected directly addressed the research aims. Additionally, the extraction matrix allowed a degree of transparency in how the studies were analysed and how they contributed to building upon the initial hypotheses of BtF.

5.3.6. Analysis and synthesis processes

Inherently, a review requires information from various sources to be compared and contrasted. The synthesis process in a realist review does not follow a strict guideline and is generally an ongoing, iterative, and lengthy process that incorporates multiple types of data. Providing an overview of the process allows for a degree of transparency in how the overall outcomes of the review are obtained.

Prior to the realist synthesis, I became familiar with the literature on parental incarceration. As demonstrated in section 4.5, I used the bioecological model of development to understand the complexity of parental incarceration. I used Bronfenbrenner's Person-Process-Context-Time as an analytical framework for the realist synthesis.

In the current review, the data collected during Stages 1 and 2 formed the basis for selecting further data. Stages 1 and 2 consisted of analysing and synthesising data collected primarily through personal communication and discussions with BtF stakeholders. It was important to allow the BtF stakeholders to articulate the CMOs that characterise the program. However, this was not a straightforward process; BtF is a complex program and the realist terms for evaluations were new concepts for the stakeholders. Moreover, this was not a linear process. I simultaneously and repetitively talked informally with stakeholders, observed the work environment, and analysed SHINE's and BtF's documents while constantly referring to research within the parental incarceration and First People's service provision literature. This process led to a continual refinement of theories until there was a pattern that strongly reflected BtF.

Throughout Stage 1, a primary goal was to establish the proposed outcomes and mechanisms of BtF. As is the case in many realist evaluations, delineating the mechanisms proved challenging (Dalkin et al., 2015), as did identifying the outcomes. Importantly, an intervention's activities are not the mechanism; rather the mechanism refers to the dynamics that generate change within the individual (Astbury & Leeuw, 2010). In analysing the discussions in Stages 1 and 2, I referred to Dalkin et al. (2015) and Astbury and Leeuw (2010) to distinguish between three key terms: strategies, mechanisms, and outcomes. ***Strategies*** I defined as steps, activities, and processes performed throughout an intervention. Distinctively, ***mechanisms*** refer to how and why the participant's reactions to the strategies lead to a particular ***outcome***. In this way, I could discuss the strategies that were used throughout BtF, then link these directly to the corresponding outcomes. Once the strategies were linked to the outcomes, I made informed decisions on what mechanisms were being (de)activated and was able to associate these mechanisms with concepts in the wider literature in the purposive review.

Understanding the contextual factors that impacted BtF was integral in conceptualising the CMOs. Prior to the realist synthesis, I used a bioecological model of development to demonstrate that parental incarceration is highly contextual leading to each family having varied experiences (section 2.4). The PPCT model was used to demonstrate how there are multiple, interrelated systems, and that people have different experiences throughout. These systems range from individual members, to the family, to the community, to the policy level. Throughout Stages 1 and 2, contextual factors were harder to establish compared to linking strategies to outcomes and mechanisms. The pertinent contextual factors were eventually identified from in-depth discussions during the workshop and site visits which involved the case managers, and a board member and the SHINE CEO. These discussions also informed each component of BtF, what influenced these

components, and who the key stakeholders were. Within the discussions throughout Stages 1 and 2, the broader literature was used as a catalyst to guide further discussions. Importantly, the stakeholders made comparisons and conclusions from specific past participants or actions they believed were successful, and why they thought the actions were successful. The majority of data that informed the selection of contexts came from conversations rather than promotional material and administrative forms.

Identifying mechanisms and contexts that hinder participants' success was harder. During Stage 1 of the synthesis, I did not need to prompt the stakeholders in providing exemplars of BtF. I found it challenging to ask for examples of people who did not succeed, particularly as I was still developing rapport with the stakeholders. Identifying conditions that were not conducive to the program was possible through in-depth discussions and specific examples by the stakeholders directly involved in delivering BtF.

The documents collected in Stage 3 qualified for further analysis if the documents addressed the CMOs identified in Stages 1 and 2. In Stage 3, I undertook the synthesis of the papers. In Stages 1 and 2, the program theory developed could be specifically applied to the program, whereas Stage 3 gave an opportunity to establish how BtF could contribute to a broader understanding of how to support families with a parent in prison. I also had an opportunity to consider how the review outcomes would inform the evaluation and focus the review on issues that could be addressed within the thesis' scope.

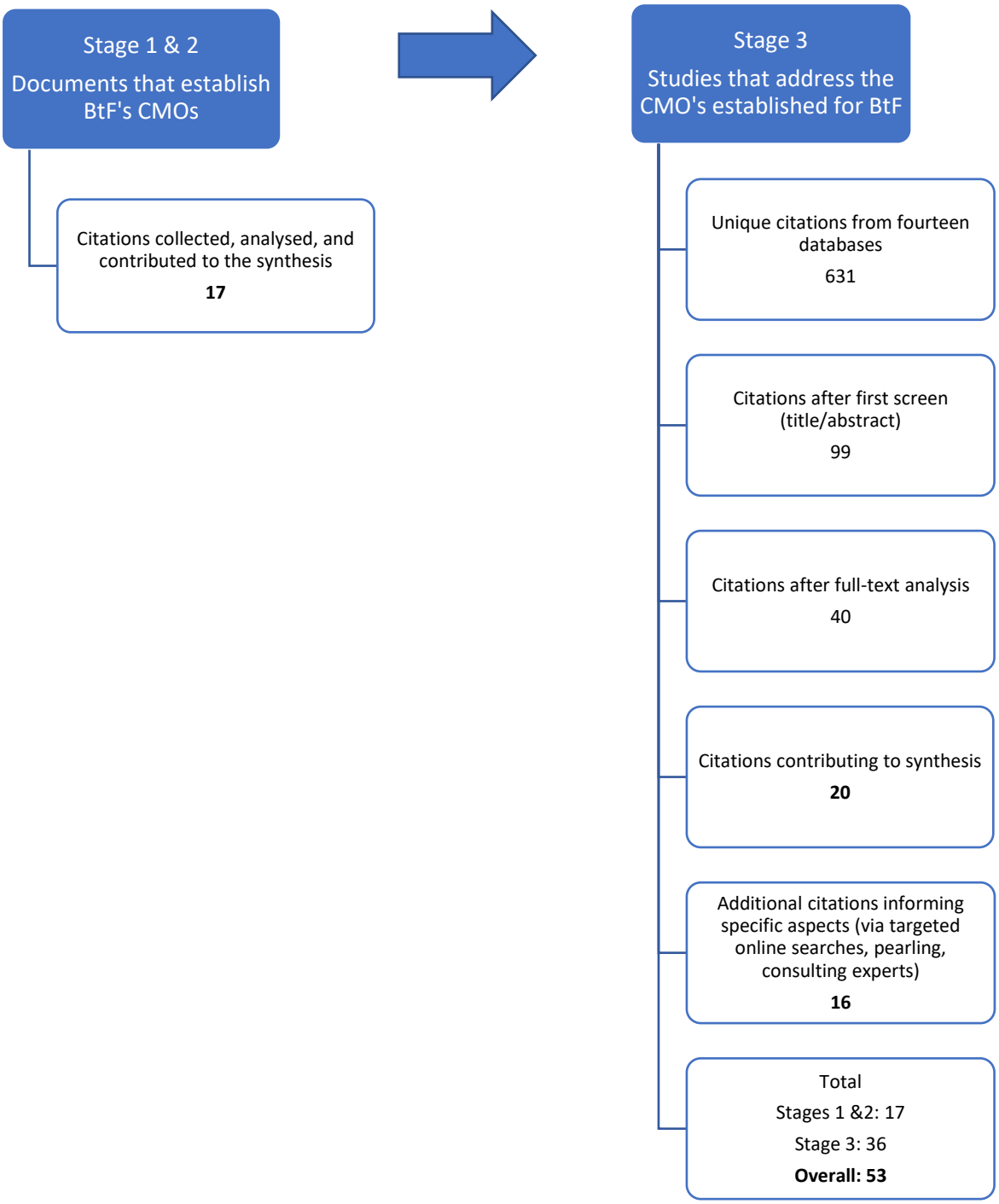
5.4. Results

5.4.1. Document flow diagram

The document flow chart of the process and number of documents identified at each stage is depicted in Figure 5.2. At the completion of Stages 1 and 2, 17 documents were identified. These documents established the CMOs of BtF including the how the program originated, developed, and was currently delivered. The citations included in-house documents as well as publicly available documents that originated from SHINE and external sources. The details and contribution of each citation is summarised in Appendix B.

Figure 5.2

Realist synthesis: Document flow chart



The role of Stage 3 was to conduct a purposive literature review to compare and contrast the CMOs identified in the previous Stages to the wider literature. The aim was to locate studies that could elicit supporting or refuting evidence for the established CMOs. As depicted in Figure 5.2, this search found 631 documents. Titles and abstracts were screened to determine their relevance and potential contribution to the review. Documents were excluded if they did not meet the inclusion criteria, with a specific focus on First Peoples, parental incarceration, and reintegration programs. After the first screening, 99 documents were retained. Subsequently, full texts of documents were retrieved. From the full text analysis, 40 documents were determined to contribute to the review. At this stage, I was able to determine that 20 documents were both relevant and rigorous in informing the CMOs or to the overall CMO. Some areas identified in Stages 1 and 2 were not as extensively researched as others within the parental incarceration literature. For example, many reintegration programs *develop social networks*, whereas fewer programs focused on *reinforcing cultural values*. At this point, I undertook additional searches using specific terms for these areas, which broadened the focus and crossed disciplines rather than relying on documents exclusively focused on parental incarceration. The additional documents were derived from consulting experts, targeted online searches, and pearling. The additional search yielded a further 16 documents. The details and contribution of each citation from Stage 3 is summarised in Appendix C. Overall, 53 documents were synthesised in the review.

5.4.2. Document characteristics

Realist reviews do not have a prescriptive process to include or exclude documents based on methodology or methods (Jagosh, 2019). Therefore, I included a variety of studies and documents into my analysis. The 17 documents included in the review from Stages 1 and 2 are summarised in Appendix B. Considering the types of documents, 53% (n=9) were primarily used for administrative purposes, including four documents outlining the methods and results of the previous evaluation. Twenty-four percent (n=4) of the documents were used for promotional purposes, while three documents were developed from my communications during the workshop, meetings, and site visit. I was also provided with a speech delivered by a previous BtF participant at a function about their experience with BtF.

The 36 documents included in the review from Stage 3 are summarised in Appendix C. Of the documents, 81% (n=29) focused specifically on First Peoples of Australia, three (8%) papers included mainstream Australian populations, and four papers (11%) included international populations. Considering the type of documents, 69% (n=25) were primary research, 28% (n=10)

were review papers or critical analyses, and one document was a report. Of the primary research, the majority of studies were qualitative (68%, n=17), with three (12%) studies having quantitative approaches and five (20%) studies with mixed methods approaches. The predominate method used were interviews, with 15 articles interviewing inmates or ex-inmates, 10 interviewing service providers, and six interviewing family members of inmates. Three papers included rigorous systematic reviews, with two of these systematic reviews focusing specifically on the reintegrative needs of First Peoples in Australia. Only one paper performed a quasi-experimental design of a program which was conducted as one component of a larger project.

Notably, from Stage 3, there were six primary resources that provided extensive guidance in the synthesis [29,33,34,40,49,53][6]. The details of these studies including the population, research design and purpose is detailed in Table 5.1. Each citation provided a systematic and thorough examination of supporting the reintegration of First Peoples in Australia. Four of these documents were led by First Peoples researchers and focused on applying Indigenous perspectives and methodologies in the process of their work [34,40,48,53]. Overall, the relevance and rigour of these six primary resources provided a strong foundation that allowed the current synthesis to have a specific focus on First Peoples of Australia, reintegration, and parental incarceration.

[6] From herein, the documents included in the realist synthesis are referred to with a number that corresponds to the Tables at Appendix B and C.

Table 5.1
Realist synthesis, significant studies: population, research design, and purpose

Study	Population	Research design	Purpose
CIRCA et al. [29]	First Peoples (program level)	(i) literature review (ii) assessment of evaluations to 8 programs focused on Offender Support and Reintegration (including consultations and document review)	Part of federal government review on evaluation on First Peoples justice programs. Reviews eight programs. Provides a good practice framework for the programs which are considered "promising"
Gilbert et al. [33]	First Peoples, young adults	Review article	Draws on international research to identify good practice for re-entry and Indigenous re-entry evidence from CAN, NZ, AUS
Haswell et al. [34]	First Peoples, women	Evaluation consisting of: (i) literature review, (ii) three case studies reviewing project scope/existing doc/qualitative data, (iii) meta-synthesis of findings	Pilot project to find an appropriate model of community care to support ATSI women leaving custody
Moresu-Diop [40]	First Peoples (Qld) & Maori (NZ)	Qualitative: 21 interviews with formerly incarcerated and service providers	Examines what is available, is it appropriate, and ways forward Indigenous prison programs
SPRINT [49]	First Peoples (NSW) (post-release, family, service providers)	i) systematic literature review; ii) linked dataset analysis iii) interviews formerly incarcerated, their family, and service providers	Identifying best practice for primary health care providers supporting Aboriginal people at reintegration.
Williams [53]	Urban Aboriginal (post-release, family, service providers)	Qualitative: 36 in depth interviews with formerly incarcerated, their family, and service providers	Explore post-release social support from an urban Aboriginal perspective; focusing on the role in preventing reincarceration.

5.4.3. Main findings

In this section I report on each research question in turn. For research questions 1a and 1b, I synthesise the findings about the intended outcomes of BtF. This includes analysing what BtF aimed to achieve and whether these outcomes are common within the wider literature. For research question 2, I analyse the pertinent contextual factors that affect BtF. For research question 3 I list each outcome, and in turn identify and analyse their corresponding proposed mechanisms. Finally, for research question 4, I identify the conditions that lead to divergent outcomes between participants.

For readability throughout the findings, the documents included in the realist synthesis are referred to by a number that corresponds to the Tables at Appendix B and C.

1a/ What are the primary intended outcomes of Belonging to Family?

The intended outcomes of BtF were established from Stages 1 and 2 of the synthesis. Initially the intended outcomes were difficult to identify. In part, this was attributed to the variations of outcomes identified throughout the discussions and documents. From further analysis, the variation reflected the need to appeal to the intended audience of each document. For example, in the funding application [1] the stated outcomes corresponded to funding body targets such as intergenerational disadvantage. Conversely, promotional material distributed to potential participants [2,3,4] focused on outcomes that were perceived to appeal to participants as being prominent issues in their lives that could be addressed by BtF, such as:

- Building a closer bond with their children
- Developing healthier family relationships
- Learning to be the best partner possible
- Providing support during and after release
- Helping to teach their children the right way
- Providing support to stay out of prison

Overall, the documents had clear outcomes, however the diversity of aims made distilling the direct impact of BtF complicated. A PowerPoint presentation [16] provided important insight into the outcomes. The presentation aimed to inform potential allies and stakeholders about BtF, SHINE, and why the program is needed. Therefore, the audience was generalised, and the aim was to provide a succinct overview. The stated outcomes were to "reduce the effects of incarceration and to allow reintegration for the emotional wellbeing of these children and their families", support parents in becoming positive role models, and to break the intergenerational cycle of crime. After viewing the slides, I was also provided with the previous evaluation [10,11,12,13] and I was then able to talk to BtF employees about the strengths and weaknesses of the previous evaluation and how to move forward. The previous evaluation assessed administrative milestones (such as financial management) as well as the impact of BtF. In focusing on the impact components, we discussed what measures were reflective of the program, which questions were inappropriate for participants, and where the current evaluation could extend. Overall, the lengthy discussions [6,14,15] and detailed documents provided an opportunity to distil the impact of BtF.

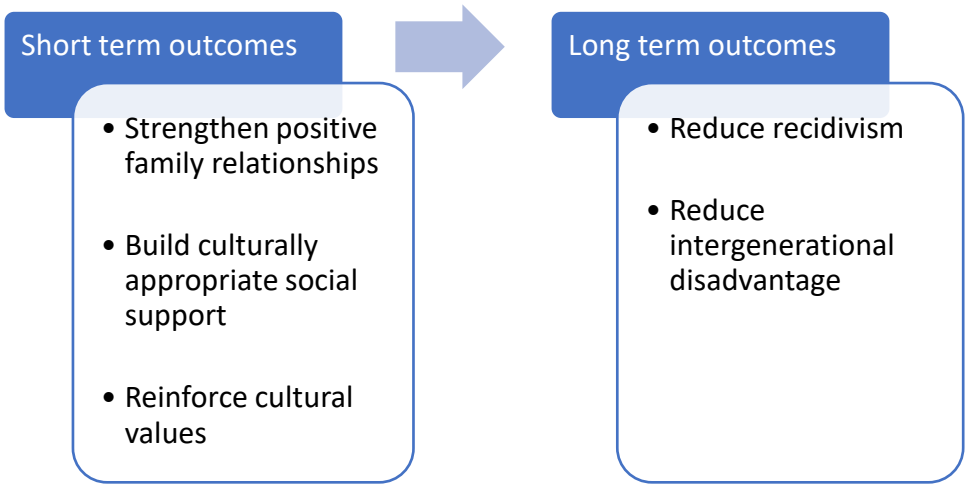
Notably, a major barrier to identifying the outcomes was BtF's complexity; including how the program was delivered, the issues the program aimed to address, and the environment the program operated within. BtF has multiple components [9]; The eight-week program has specific aims each week and the case-management focuses on tailored long-term goals (see Chapter 4). I could only

identify the outcomes when I had the opportunity to talk with the stakeholders and establish the strategies used by the caseworkers and link this to the intended aims of completing these strategies [6,14,15]. The stakeholders described how each family they worked with had different life experiences, goals, and access to resources. They also indicated that families' lives could be complicated with multiple issues facing each family. This made the identification of outcomes difficult as each family's success was attributed to different outcomes.

Although the program was complex and there were identifiable variations, the workshop and site visit gave BtF stakeholders the opportunity to articulate the wide range of support provided by BtF and, in turn, how this corresponded to achieving the overarching aims of the program. The outcomes could be synthesised into three short-term goals, which were precursors to achieving two long-term goals as visualised in Figure 5.3. In realist evaluation terms, Jagosh et al. (2015) explored this relationship as a *ripple effect* where short-term outcomes can become the necessary contexts in medium and long-term CMOs. Jagosh et al. (2015) found that in long-term community building partnerships, the outcomes from short term CMOs (such as building trust) became the contexts of CMO's over time (such as sustained trusting partnerships). Similarly, for BtF it was assumed that there was a direct link to from the short term to long term outcomes outlined in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3

Realist synthesis: Identified short term and long term intended outcomes for BtF



There were three short term intended outcomes identified in the realist synthesis. The first intended short-term outcome was strengthening positive family relationships, which included supporting prosocial and supportive relationships between the incarcerated parent, their children

and prominent carers of the child. The second intended short-term outcome was building culturally appropriate support network, which referred to establishing or strengthening both formal and informal connections that can support the family achieve their goals during the transition of the parent from prison to home. The third intended short term outcome was reinforcing cultural values, which ensures that cultural needs are met, and that cultural specific protective factors are recognised and strengthened for families and family members during the reintegration of a parent. The three short term outcomes are expanded on in the subsequent research question addressed below. Notably, the realist synthesis also identified that the short-term outcomes lead to the long-term intended outcomes of reducing intergenerational disadvantage and recidivism.

Notably, in BtF's previous evaluation (section 4.4.3) the main outcomes identified were intergenerational offending and recidivism. Surveys were administered before and after the program and after 12 months post release. In discussions with SHINE, certain limitations were identified, including people who returned to prison would not have received the follow-up survey and the difficulty in providing evidence of addressing intergenerational offending. The latter was particularly difficult to measure considering BtF and the evaluation were only administered for 12 months post release – addressing and measuring intergenerational outcomes require extended time and resources well beyond those available.

In this thesis, limited resources and time only allowed for the analysis of the intended short-term outcomes. Follow-up or longitudinal studies would be required to test and refine the ripple effect of BtF. Therefore, I have analysed the three intended short-term outcomes identified in Figure 5.3, which I analyse in the following research question.

1b/ What is known about achieving the intended outcomes established in (1a) for families with a parent in prison?

For research question 1b), I have synthesised the outcomes of BtF established in Stages 1 and 2 to the wider literature identified in the purposive literature review in Stage 3 [18-53]. Numerous characteristics refined my response to 1b). Overall, there are large bodies of research that indicate the three short-term outcomes – positive family relationships, social networks, and cultural identity – are important to establish in any population [see analyses in 25,33,49,50,51,52,53]. A comprehensive review for each outcome is beyond the scope of this review. Furthermore, there are an extensive number of programs developed to support people impacted by incarceration [30,45]. Similar to BtF, the majority of programs are independently designed and delivered by non-government organisations or correctional centres [59,34]. Consequently, information about other

programs is limited, confidential, and found in grey literature that is hard to access. A full review of past and current programs is beyond the scope of this review. Instead, I have focused on how each outcome has been identified as a key variable to address in reintegration, how this translates to interventions, and how this will impact the evaluation framework for BtF.

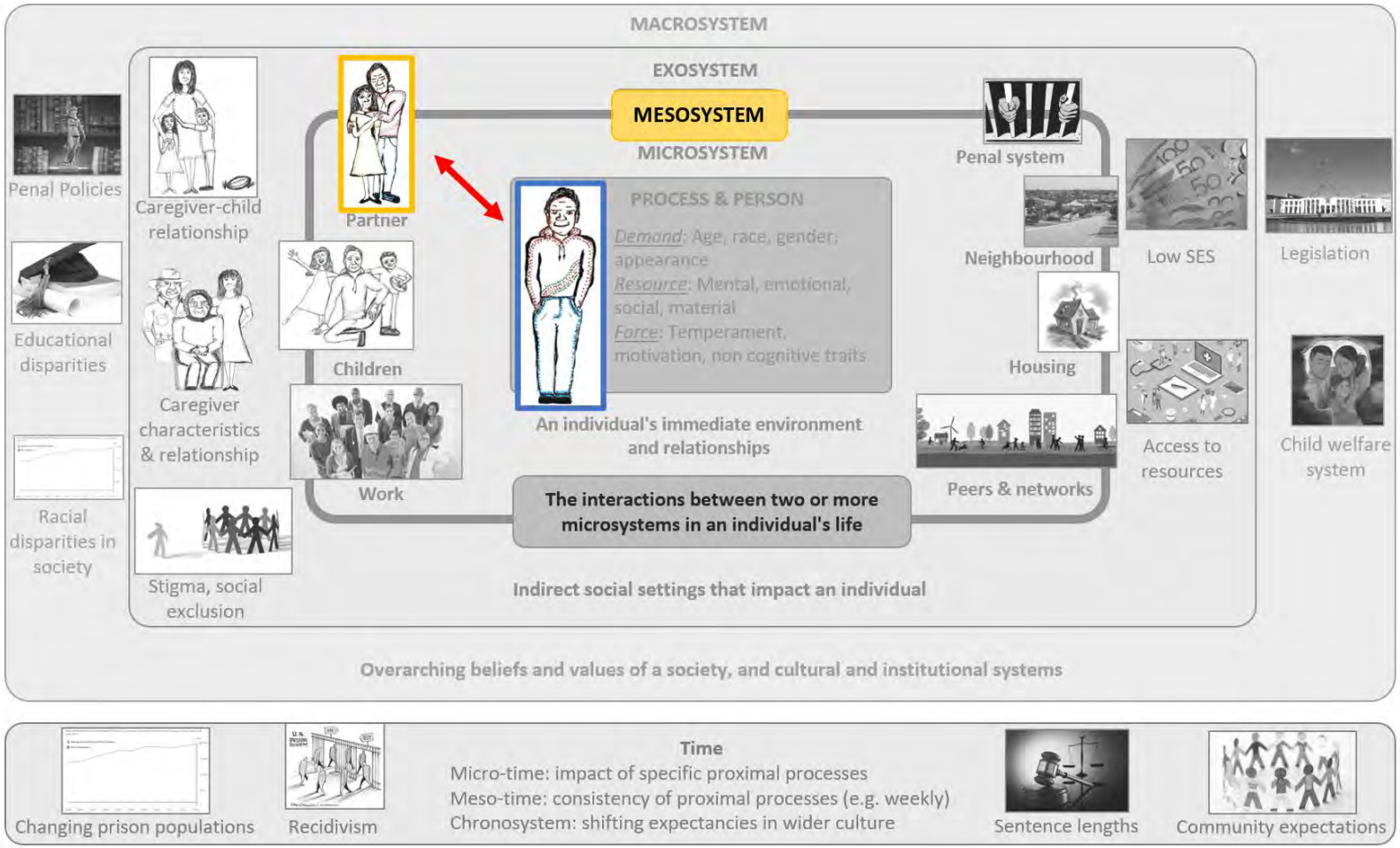
The three outcomes identified for BtF have all been addressed in other programs supporting families with a parent in prison [29,33,34,40,48,53]. For the papers focused within Australia, there was consistent concern with the hyperincarceration of First Peoples and the impact policies have on kinship networks [e.g., 23,42,43,44], particularly intergenerational trauma [19,20,21]. From this perspective, the three outcomes BtF aims to address have a significant concern for First Peoples, and particularly for families experiencing parental incarceration. The six primary resources [29,33,34,40,48,53] (in Table 5.1) each identified the three outcomes as having relevance for First Peoples. I consider the three outcomes in turn.

Outcome 1: Strengthen positive family relationships.

Good family functioning is essential for individual, family, and community wellbeing, but has been shown to be significantly and negatively disrupted by incarceration. Colonisation has impacted familial relationships of First Peoples [19,20,23,36] and parental incarceration has contributed to intergenerational trauma [19,20,21], disrupting intergenerational learning [32], and negatively impacting community wellbeing [18,19,20,50]. Moreover, parental incarceration and familial separation has been shown to negatively impact social and emotional wellbeing [22,35,43,44,49]. Incarcerated Indigenous women are particularly impacted as they are more likely to have a parenting role [22,23,26,27,34,47]. Using the PPCT bioecological model of development, I identified the specific factors BtF were aiming to target. Below is the Figure I presented in section 2.4.2. that depicts the PPCT and parental incarceration. PPCT can be used to identify the relationships that are impacted when a parent is incarcerated (section 2.4.2). Using this Figure, I identified that BtF aimed to address the relationship between the incarcerated parent and the kinship participants. BtF were addressing this within the wider context of the PPCT model that is coloured in grey in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4

Using PPCT to identify BtF outcomes: Strengthen positive family relationships



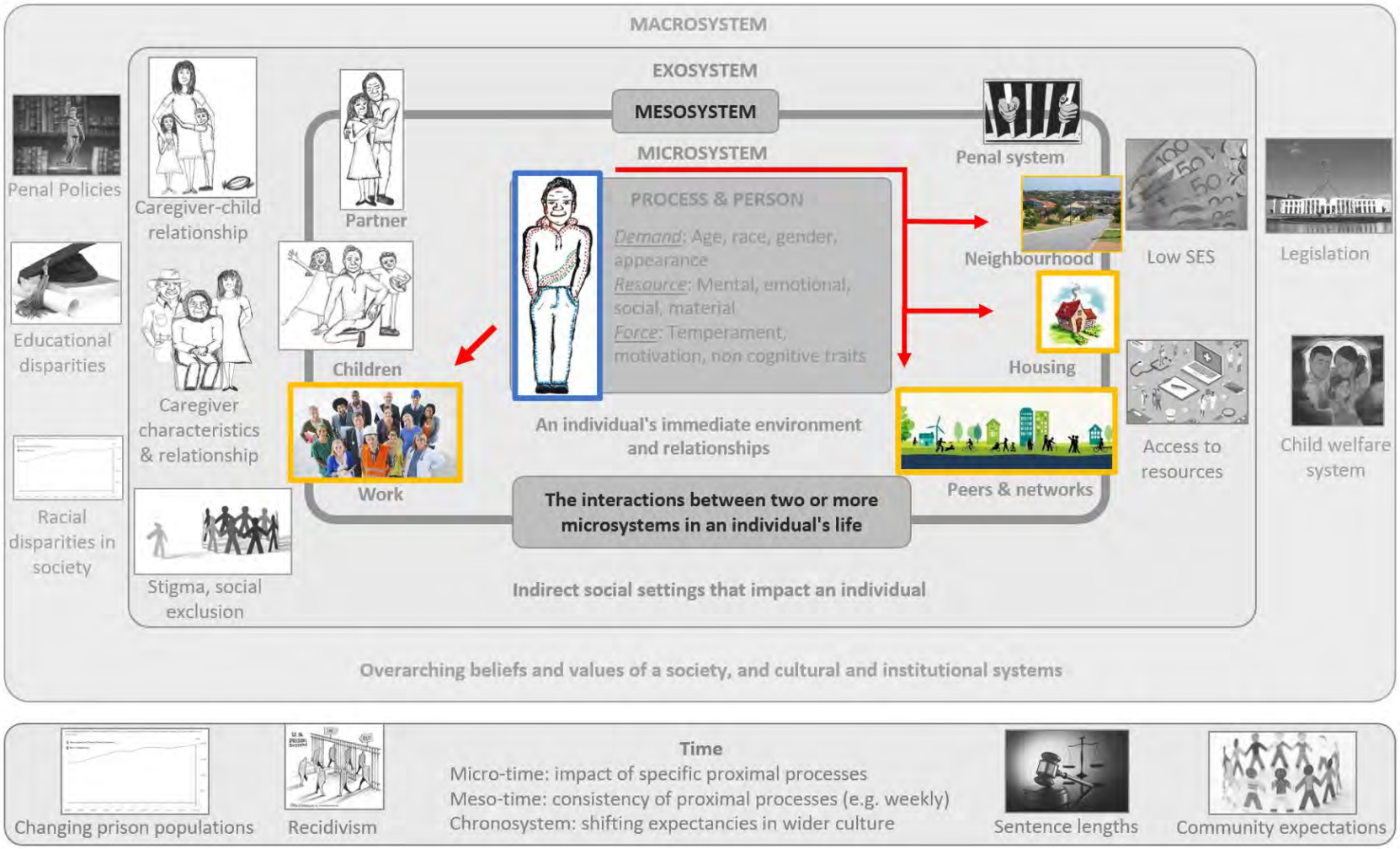
Supporting positive family relationships was the primary outcome of numerous programs [see reviews in 20,35,49]. However, the mechanisms for promoting positive family relationships vary widely (research question 2b). Most family-based programs in prisons focus on teaching general parenting skills, but as BtF does not do this, these studies were excluded from this synthesis. Within the synthesis, family networks and kinships were considered an integral component in the lives of First Peoples and a protective factor for reintegration. Programs were viewed more positively if they identified and supported First Peoples family practices, parenting styles, and familial strengths [25,35,38,51]. For example, Babiin-Miyagang supported incarcerated Indigenous fathers using cultural kinships to Elders as a strength [46]. Similarly, Williams [53] identified multiple forms of formal and informal support necessary for successful reintegration for Aboriginal people. Williams (2015) found interpersonal support crucial for reintegration, particularly linking into family and peers. However, Williams found that reintegration support services rarely utilised these interpersonal networks or addressed any issues that arose in these relationships during reintegration. Moreover, multiple studies and evaluations identified supporting family members of incarcerated parents as integral to successful reintegration [27,28,40,42,43,44,47,49,53]. In turn, supporting family members contributed to strengthening community wellbeing [18,19,20,50]. Overall studies identify, strengthening positive family relationships and addressing intergenerational trauma as integral for supporting the well-being of families experiencing incarceration.

Outcome 2: Improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community.

The second outcome BtF addresses is *improving social and formal support networks*. Positive social networks impact levels of social control, social learning, and access to opportunities. Building these networks requires social capital, which refers to the resources required to establish trusting networks and relationships [see 25]. Within the reintegration literature, establishing positive networks during reintegration is important for personal relationships, community relationships, and addressing social stigma [21,24,27,40,48,49,53]. Social support also refers to access to services that address reintegration needs of parents. Support includes housing, training, employment, and financial support, to the services specific to parents such as childcare and family support [27,39,48,49,52,53]. Again, this outcome can be depicted with the PPCT model; in referring to Figure 5.5, BtF is aiming to connect the incarcerated parent with appropriate services, depicted with the red arrows. Here, BtF supports parents into appropriate employment opportunities or housing and link the incarcerated parent and their family into a positive social network and opportunities within their neighbourhood.

Figure 5.5

Using PPCT to identify BtF outcomes: Improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community



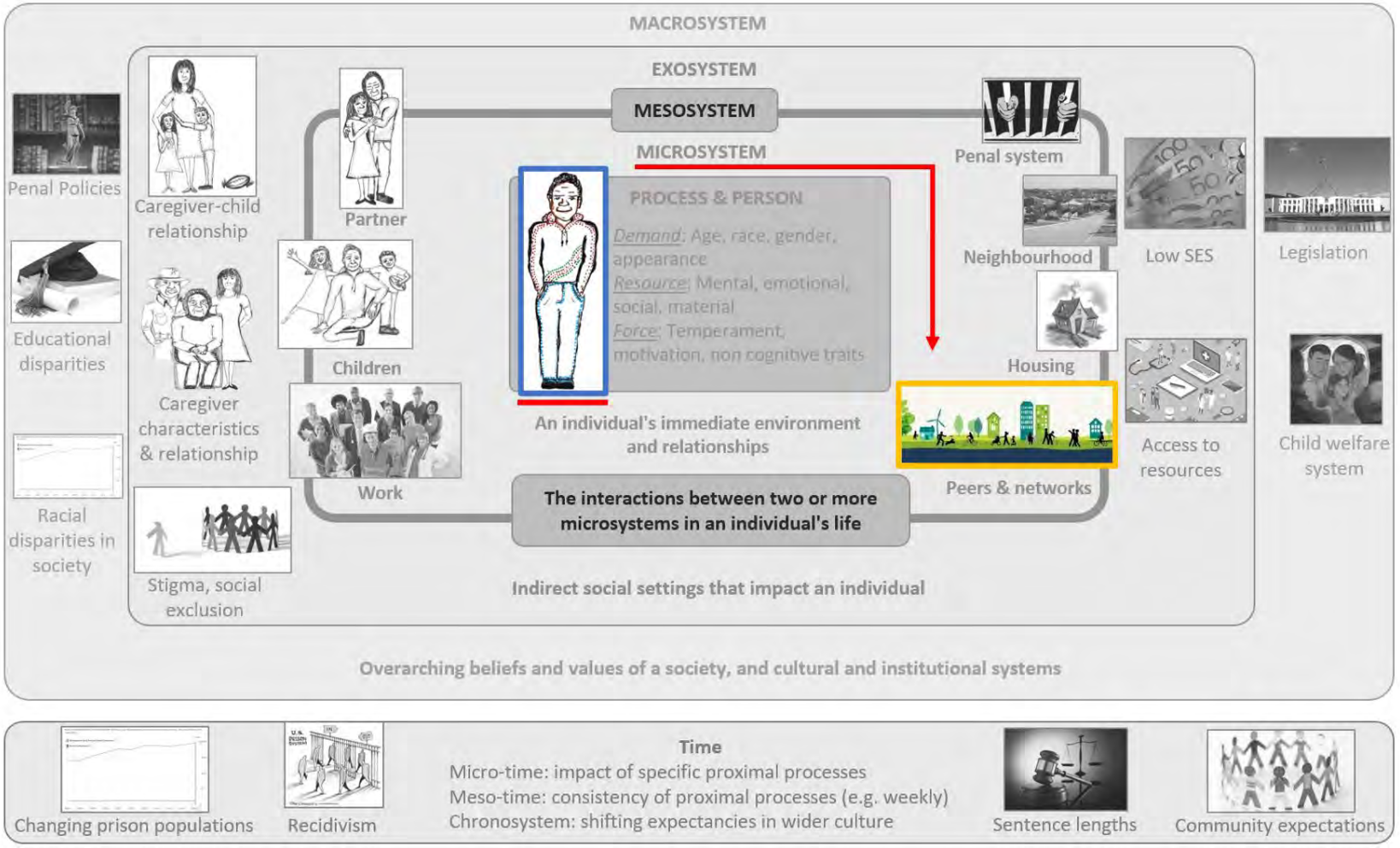
Numerous policies and programs create social opportunities, mentoring, and facilitate referrals to appropriate services for people returning home from prison [see reviews in 20,35,49]. Document 48 included a comprehensive systematic review of the primary health care and social support of Aboriginal people post release in NSW finding a high need and supply of services – yet a lack of systematic availability and targeted access based on specialised need, such as supporting people with cognitive impairment. A lack of co-ordination across or between services persisted as an issue [22,34,27]. Programmatically, it is important to recognise that social capital can be culturally dependent. For example, Brough et al. [25] found that First Peoples had strong connections with kinship and family networks that led to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community connections. This bonding social capital could be used from a strengths-based perspective in creating programs. Overall, strengthening support networks to services and the community are important for First Peoples, particularly exiting prison.

Outcome 3: Reinforce cultural values.

BtF's third outcome is *reinforcing cultural values*. Eighty-one percent (n=29) of Stage 3 documents focus specifically on First Peoples of Australia. From these documents, there is a focus on using cultural strengths in addressing specific issues. For example, Moresu-Diop [40] examines how mainstream rehabilitation programs in prisons were culturally inappropriate, and there was a lack of Indigenous and gender specific programs both pre and post release. Similarly, Williams [53] concluded an Aboriginal perspective on an ecological approach for post-release social support of an urban Aboriginal population would improve outcomes. Both articles systematically examine how culture can be used as a positive way to provide support throughout the reintegration of First Peoples. Again, this outcome can be depicted with the PPCT model as displayed in Figure 5.6; the red arrow shows BtF connecting to informal support networks, while underlining the incarcerated parent symbolises the use of reinforced cultural values and belief systems of the individual to support their reintegration.

Figure 5.6

Using PPCT to identify BtF outcomes: Reinforce cultural values



Drawing and building on positive attributes for programs is referred to as a strengths-based approach, and this is supported throughout the documents in this synthesis [18,22,23,27,29,34,41,43,44,46,49,50,52]. A significant body of literature focuses on supporting First Peoples in reintegration programs due to the over-representation of First Peoples in prison and the recognition that mainstream programs were less effective for this population [22,2333,34,40,49]. As Baldry and McCausland [23] conclude in their paper focusing on Indigenous women leaving prison, stronger support could be provided by not only addressing the needs experienced by all people leaving prison via throughcare, but also utilising a holistic Indigenous approach, and identifying the specific needs of Indigenous women. This was reiterated in documents examining specific programs, where drawing on a strength-based approach for First Peoples' cultural values leads to reports of higher engagement, satisfaction, and completion [18,41,46].

Summary.

Overall, BtF addresses pertinent short-term outcomes, each grounded within a large body of research and important to incarcerated people. *Strengthening positive family relationships*, *strengthening culturally appropriate social networks*, and *reinforcing cultural values* are factors that are extensively researched and are common outcomes in other programs for First Peoples, reintegrative programs, and parental incarceration interventions. Notably, there are limited examples of programs combining these outcomes as BtF has done. Although BtF's intended outcomes are evident within other research and programs, it is important to understand the outcomes from the perspective of First Peoples and how the intended outcomes shift in focus to have First Peoples and culture at the centre of the program. I explore this in the remaining research questions in understanding the contexts and mechanisms.

2/ What are the key contextual factors created by the incarceration of First Peoples parents that are hypothesised to impact the outcomes of Belonging to Family?

As discussed in section 2.4, parental incarceration is highly contextual. This was reinforced throughout the three stages of the synthesis. Therefore, the range of contexts to consider for an evaluation can be vast. For research question (2), I have focused the analysis on the predominant contexts that were identified in Stages 1 and 2. I have organised the analysis of context in the four systemic categories outlined by Pawson (2006; 2013) (see section 3.3.1). These are (i) *individual* capacities of the key actors, (ii) *interpersonal* relationships supporting the intervention, (iii) the *institutional* settings, and (iv) the wider *infra-structural* system. I have used these categories to assist

in illustrating how the context created by the incarceration of First Peoples parents would specifically impact the effectiveness of BtF. As noted above, it was difficult at times during the realist synthesis to identify pertinent contexts that impact achieving outcomes. At times I was able to refer to the PPCT model, particularly in Stages 1 and 2 when talking to the stakeholders and community members about their experiences and understanding whether these were reflected in the literature. In section 4.5.2.1., I discussed the overlap and approach I took to understand context and complexity by intersecting the PPCT model and the four I's. In terms of the PPCT model, I was able to identify whether there were pertinent contextual factors from the micro-, meso-, exo-, and chronsystems that impacted parental incarceration.

i. Individual capacities

Individual capacities refer to the characteristics of the key actors of an intervention. Two primary individuals to consider for BtF are members of the supported families and the BtF caseworkers. First, considering the families' context, the caseworkers indicated that "success" for each family or family member was individualised [14]. This was attributed to the variability between family contexts. BtF stakeholders described how contexts between families in the program varied greatly [14,15], which was reflected in the purposive review in Stage 3 [22,23,26,33,34,39,43,44,48,49]. Each incarcerated parent and kinship participant in BtF have had different histories, relationships, support, resources, or engagement with justice and welfare services. Each of these factors or intersections of these factors contribute to how each participant may engage with BtF or what issues BtF can assist with [14,15]. The caseworkers also indicated that the incarceration was just one disruption to the complex needs of participants. Many issues the participants faced were interwoven in long histories which contributed to the complex web linking family members to one another at the point that BtF became involved. Again, these histories are what made the desired "outcomes" highly individualised [14,15].

There is also a distinction between the needs of mothers and fathers in prison. BtF was originally designed to support fathers in prison, but as MNCCC also has a female section, the demand and needs of mothers arose and BtF began to be delivered to incarcerated mothers [1,6,13,16]. Within the literature, culturally appropriate support as well as gendered programs are needed. Studies focused specifically on female or mother's needs [22,23,26,27,34,47] as well as male or father's needs [21,31,32,41,46]. Although the content of BtF did not change between the incarcerated mother's and father's groups [9], the different experiences between mothers and fathers will be important to note in the evaluation.

Notably, participation in BtF is voluntary and self-referred with one of the selection criteria requiring the parent and participating family members to be "genuinely interested in participating in the program" [5]. This was evident in a speech presented by the past participant [7], who, despite initially believing BtF was "just another program that goes nowhere" still came to the program with the mindset:

> *But I thought why not give it a go, nothing better to do and I did want to get my life back on track.*

Here, the past participant shows they were open to change. This demonstrates an influential contextual factor: voluntary participation and willingness to change are a predictor of program success (Farabee et al., 1998; Gideon, 2010; Hiller et al., 2002). As a voluntary program, participants have no obligation to stay in contact throughout BtF's case management when they return home. Overall, the individual capacity of the participant – particularly motivation to change – will be important to consider in the evaluation.

Additionally, the influence of the BtF caseworkers is important. During Stage 1, the caseworkers clearly had an influential role. Stakeholders praised the work of the caseworkers in the local community, and both caseworkers were involved with BtF since it was established [6,15]. Both caseworkers were also open about their passion and ongoing commitment to BtF and the participants [14,15]. In Stage 3, caseworkers were indicated as important factors for program fidelity and success [18,34,40,44,46,49,50,53]; the BtF caseworkers' enthusiasm and positive reputation suggested that they may be central to BtF's success. In this vein, it will be integral to consider whether the caseworkers have the necessary skills to deliver the program. Specifically, BtF is based on connections in First Peoples communities [9]. Therefore, the evaluation should consider whether the caseworkers are engaged with appropriate community connections including both interpersonal connections and organisational connections [25]. From Stage 3, an important factor to consider is also whether the caseworkers are engaging in a culturally appropriate way [18,40,46,49,53].

ii. Interpersonal relationships

Interpersonal relationships refer to how the interactions between individuals affect the program. Three interpersonal relationships were integral to BtF. First the relationship between the caseworkers and the participants. The eight-week program gave the participants an opportunity to establish connection with the caseworkers who provided confidential, personalised support outside the jurisdiction of the corrective services or governmental departments [8,9,14,15]. The caseworkers described how this connection was the most important factor in instilling the family members with

the trust to contact BtF after re-entry [15]. This was reiterated in the purposive review [18,40,46,49,53].

The second interpersonal relationship that impacts BtF are peer to peer interactions. BtF's eight-week program involves group work – one group for parents inside and the other for family members outside [9]. Group work provides an environment where participants in the same situation could share experiences and learn from one another in a culturally safe environment [9,15]. Peer-to-peer interactions were not mentioned during Stage 1; however, in the purposive review, group work is favoured over individualistic approaches [45,52] and was considered integral in other programs [41,46]. Age, experience, knowledge of the criminal justice system, and whether members knew each other prior to the program are just a few of the factors that could impact peer dynamics [14].

The third interpersonal relationship that impacts BtF are interactions within family dyads. Family support is a significant protective factor for successful re-entry [40,43,44]. For BtF, both the parent inside and the kinship participant must agree to participate [9] which indicates a high likelihood the family has positive relationships (or at least a willingness to communicate). However, the relationship between family members and the role of the kinship participant can vary significantly and has a direct impact on what a positive outcome can look like. The caseworkers provided an example of differences between two family dyads. One dyad involved parents who were no longer in a relationship but needed assistance in developing positive strategies maintaining a relationship between the incarcerated father and their child. This was compared to another family where grandparents were seeking guardianship of the incarcerated mother's children [14,15]. Here, the types of relationships within the family differed, which also impacted on the types of outcomes the families needed. The type of relationship has a direct impact on what the outcomes are (strategies to maintain a parent-child relationship compared to seeking guardianship) and what the mechanisms are to achieve them.

iii. Institutional settings

Institutional settings refer to how an organisation's ethos, management, and resources affect how a program operates. The two prominent institutional settings to consider for BtF are SHINE and the MNCCC. SHINE is the organisation that developed, seeks funding for, and administers BtF. This history indicates that SHINE has a strong investment in the outcomes BtF can provide [6]. The organisational management of programs specifically designed for First Peoples is highly politicised [1,40,53], and this would be particularly significant factor for SHINE as a non-Indigenous organisation working within the criminal justice system. Within the funding round of this evaluation,

SHINE was able to create an Indigenous supervisors' role to co-ordinate the Indigenous specific programs delivered by the organisation, including BtF [1,6]. Furthermore, as a non-government organisation, SHINE relies on indeterminate funding and grants [1,6]. BtF aims to address long-term goals - such as intergenerational offending - and was designed to provide personalised case management for 12 months post-release. Indeterminate funding had already disrupted the frequency of service delivery, as well as uncertainty of long-term support [6,14,15,16]. Overall, SHINE's ethos, management, and resources have an extensive impact on the quality of BtF's services.

The MNCCC also has a significant role in how BtF is delivered. For any prison, the management balances their mandate to incarcerate offenders with the obligation to provide opportunities for rehabilitation [17,30,45]. For programs run by outside organisations, a prison's management would also have to consider the safety of guests, employees, participants, and official visitors, and also how the external program will complement or contribute to the existing services administered through the corrective services [17,30,45]. In this balance, BtF does not take priority over official procedures and safety measures such as lockdowns, transfers, or restrictions placed on participants [15]. BtF works with MNCCC in scheduling the optimum times to deliver the eight-week course as well as attaining pertinent information about incarcerated participants, such as any existing Apprehended Violence Orders [9,15,17]. In saying this, the MNCCC was involved in the inception of BtF and have an ongoing vested interest in BtF [1]. The MNCCC has shown continued support throughout the five years BtF had been delivered, including providing a site allocation for the Child and Family Visiting Centre and office space for the BtF caseworkers [6,15]. The stakeholders indicated that the relationship between the BtF caseworkers and MNCCC personnel - particularly the MNCCC Aboriginal Liaison Officer - was paramount in the development and continuation of BtF [15]. The MNCCC has a prominent role in the delivery of BtF that can have a decisive influence on how BtF is delivered and in turn influencing the program's outcomes.

iv. Wider infrastructure

Wider infrastructure refers to the social, economic, and cultural settings of an intervention that affect how a program operates. Colonisation has had a significant role in shaping First Peoples experience with the criminal justice system [21,23,34,37,40,53]. Incarceration has a distinctively different role for First Peoples. Within the wider literature, incarceration is another form of transferring intergenerational trauma rooted within colonialism [21,23,34,37,40,53]. As one of BtF's primary aims is to work as a circuit breaker across generations, the role and impact of intergenerational trauma and the impact of colonisation is significant [19,20,21]. This coincides with

acknowledgment that families tended to experience several adversities or accumulated disadvantage [34,44,48,53]. In delivering programs, this is described as being able to treat complex needs. Notably, in the literature accumulated disadvantage was addressed within this wider infrastructural level, but also had real consequences on the individual and interpersonal basis also.

Moreover, the impact of federal policies influenced how BtF operated [1,6,13,14,15]. BtF was originally funded from a federal government grant in 2010 for three years (see section 4.4.3). The next major funding round was delayed from restructures moving all Indigenous funding into the Prime Minister and Cabinet Department. BtF experienced an extensive gap between the funding rounds which resulted in the caseworkers moving from full-time positions to part-time positions as well as the cessation of new intakes and participants. This interrupted the reputation of the program and stability of employment for local employees [6,14,15,16]. Program disruptions also has a direct impact on the reputation and reliability of the service at the local level. The greatest factors that contribute to success in First Peoples service delivery is local development, community support, and connections to the network of culturally appropriate services [e.g., 25]. Dunghutti community members were involved in the development of BtF as equal partners, and this support continued to the current model of the program with the continued participation of the Elders throughout the program. However, disruptions to service delivery can lead to fatigue in community engagement with services as relationships routinely need to be reactivated with each new service model or program.

There is also the impact of the policies guiding the structure of the welfare system. BtF is a referral service, and the caseworkers made it clear that they are not an all-inclusive provider of services [14,15]. Rather they are embedded into the support systems that are available within the communities where their participants reside. The known predictors of success upon re-entry include employment, housing, mental health facilities, and health services [33,49,52,53]. If these community services are not adequate or culturally appropriate, then the aims of BtF and the successful outcomes for the participants are undermined. Furthermore, access to services was described as geographically dependent. Although BtF's eligibility requirements required participants to reside within two hours of MNCCC (see section 4.4.2), in practice this was not a strict requirement. Families were accepted from a much wider radius (over 5-hour drive) with BtF supporting participants from the largest city in Australia (Sydney) to small Aboriginal reservations, such as Bellbrook [14,15]. Consequently, access to opportunities varies substantially. Ultimately, federal policies are designed to impact on the lives of the people that they target. This is achieved by directly affecting

capabilities, resources, and opportunities of services such as BtF and the services to which BtF provide referrals.

3/ What existing causal mechanisms are proposed to be (de)activated by the introduction of Belonging to Family and what new mechanisms are proposed to be (de)activated through the introduction of Belonging to Family to improve participating families' experiences and intended outcomes?

Research question 3 aims to establish the mechanisms of BtF. The mechanisms were established by linking program strategies to the intended outcomes. The results of this process are visualised in Table 5.2. The first column lists the three outcomes established in research question 1a: (1) *strengthen positive family relationships*, (2) *improve participant's support networks*, and (3) *reinforce cultural values*. Throughout Stages 1 and 2 of the review, I was able to identify strategies that were employed during BtF and link these to the intended outcomes. These strategies are listed in the middle column of Table 5.2. In the final column are the proposed mechanisms that the strategies are intended to trigger. In this section, I considered each outcome in turn, and examine their corresponding proposed mechanisms which are listed in Table 5.2. I also examine how each mechanism is related to pertinent contextual factors.

Table 5.2

Realist synthesis: Belonging to Family outcomes, strategies, and mechanisms

Outcome	***Strategy/intervention***	***Potential mechanisms***
Strengthening positive family relationships	• Holding kinship participant and inmate groups separately and swapping answers anonymously • Brainstorming around specific, targeted topics • Graduation BBQ involving family and community • Handing ownership of program to group members	• Improve communication within family • Consider the role they have in the family • Consider views of other family members
Improve participant's support networks	• Develop relationships between SHINE and community and criminal justice partners • Involve Elders from implementation to delivery • Provide holistic individualised support for families • Caseworks represent/act as a reference	• Participants learn about culturally appropriate support services and access those services that they need • Participants feel supported by social community
Reinforce cultural values	• Involve Elders from implementation to delivery • Peer to peer learning with Indigenous participants • Be inclusive of First Peoples (from brochure design to artwork activity)	• Shows support from First Peoples community • Shows support from peers • Learn about cultural values and practices

Intended outcome 1: Strengthening positive family relationships

Within family studies literature the mechanisms behind achieving strong family relationships have been found to be complex and multifaceted, as well as culturally and contextually dependent [35,38,51]. Parental incarceration adds an additional variable to this complex system of familial relationships [23,25,28,32,46]. The majority of strategies used by BtF aimed to promote positive family relationships. In referring to the PPCT model, the mechanisms can be identified by the red arrows that are placed between the incarcerated parent and their children's carer in Figure 5.4. As indicated in realist approach to evaluations, these mechanisms are influenced by the context that surrounds them, including the *person* and *proximal processes* identified in PPCT model. For BtF, the most salient strategy that was linked to strengthening family relationships was the specific topics in the group sessions, which focused on the role of the family members, the impact of incarceration on the family, and ways to support family members [9]. The very name of the program- *Belonging to Family*- focuses on the role of the family in supporting members [2,3]. Overall, as outlined in Table 5.2, I identified three predominant proposed mechanisms elicited to achieve positive family relationships; (i) 'improve communication within family', (ii) 'consider the role they have in the family', (iii) 'consider views of other family members'. These three mechanisms are common strategies of parenting programs; however, they have been adapted by BtF to incorporate the barriers created by incarceration as well as from First Peoples perspective. I consider each mechanism in turn.

(i) Improve communication within family.

Communication - as a process of exchanging information and caring for one another - is a predominant mechanism for strong family connections [35,38,51]. Maintaining positive communication with people has been noted as a challenge in sustaining family relationships when a parent is incarcerated [28,33,36]. BtF aims to promote the amount as well as the quality of communication between family members. In particular, BtF aims to establish a safe environment to openly communicate about the barriers to good family functioning caused by incarceration and re-entry [9,14,15]. The weekly topics included ways of communicating between the kinship participants, and constructively communicating about issues during and after incarceration [9]. The caseworkers also described how the design of the program aims to facilitate the adult member's communication [14,15]. Each group of parents inside and family members outside would contribute group answers to concept maps for each weekly topic. The caseworkers collate and share the answers to the opposite group without attributing specific responses to specific participants. The caseworkers described how this was a catalyst for participants to talk to each other about specific

topics that the family members may not have talked about previously [14,15]. The speech delivered by the past participant [7] highlighted this mechanism:

> *This program guided me to think clearly and how to communicate to my partner and son. It brought our family back closer than ever before.*

Overall, BtF facilitates communication as a mechanism in strengthening family relationships.

(ii) Consider the role each parent has in the family.

Colonisation and incarceration have disrupted the role First Peoples have within their family and community [21,23,34,37,40,53] (sections 2.2 and 2.3), resulting in intergenerational trauma [19,20,21] and disrupting generative learning, which refers to the process of passing down information to the next generation [32]. The inclusion of family members in reintegration has been considered necessary [28,49,43,44] and found to contribute to success in reintegration [45,53]. BtF assists family members to consider the contribution family members make to their family and the community - particularly the parents inside [14,15]. BtF's group work structure requires the input from kinship participants and the incarcerated parents, which promotes the idea of strengthening family relationships through inclusion and involvement [9]. BtF developed strategies for the incarcerated parent to understand the contribution they have for their children, partner, and extended family. For example, BtF provides the incarcerated parent with art supplies at the beginning of the program to create artwork for their child at the BtF graduation [9]. This was considered by past participants [7], indicating that BtF had made them focus on the child, wanting to be a role model, and getting "back on track for my son".

(iii) Consider views of other family members.

Empathy is a common mechanism for strong family connections [35,38,51]. This is particularly important for parental incarceration due to the physical separation of family members and the resultant issues both inside and outside [28]. The inclusion of family during reintegration processes allows each member to understand this process [28,49,43,44,45,53]. The structure of BtF encouraged the participants to consider the role of other family members before, during, and after incarceration [9,14,15]. The caseworkers described the importance of holding the kinships participants and inmate groups separately. This provided both groups the opportunity to discuss issues in depth without the influence of their family member being present [14,15]. The distribution and discussion of de-identified group responses to the opposite groups within the group setting was a way to understand the concerns of the parents/carers/children in a non-confrontational, relaxed way [9,14,15]. There were also questions that specifically called upon the group to consider the

emotions, situation, and challenges of their family members, which was a direct way of eliciting empathy [9]. Perhaps this is best expressed by a past participant [7]:

> *Attending the program opened my mind and heart as it gave me an understanding of what our partner, children, and family's go through when we are locked up. It showed I needed to be a good role model for my son…*

Intended outcome 2: Improve participant's support networks

The second intended outcome embodies the values of social capital. Social capital refers to the process of gaining positive outcomes by developing positive relationships in the community [see 24,25,51]. There is a significant body of work conceptualising and refining the impact of social capital, particularly with vulnerable populations. Notably, social capital can be culturally and contextually dependent [see 24,25]. BtF aims to establish "bonds", which refers to networks built within a community. Bonds can be formal – reflective of organisational relationships – or informal – relationships outside structured organisations. BtF aims to connect participants to predominantly formal bonds via support services as well as establishing informal bonds. In referring to the PPCT model, the mechanisms can be identified by the red arrows that are placed between the incarcerated parent and their connections within their microsystems in Figure 5.5. The two mechanisms BtF uses to *improve participant's support networks* are (i) 'participants learn about culturally appropriate support services and access those services that they need', and (ii) 'participants develop relationships with their social community'. Again, the mechanisms are prevalent in the wider literature and BtF have adapted the mechanisms to be culturally sensitive and to counter the barriers created by incarceration. I consider both mechanisms in turn.

(i) Participants learn about culturally appropriate support services and access those services that they need.

This mechanism focused on developing formal bonds such as with the Aboriginal Medical Centre, Aboriginal Legal Services, or liaison officers in schools. The need for systematic and culturally appropriate services upon reintegration was identified as an area in need of development [22,23,27,39,48,49,52,53]. In BtF, the caseworkers aimed to link participants to services throughout each family's time in the program. From enrolment, the caseworkers use an administrative form to check whether the participants have any ongoing or impending issues that BtF can assist the family with [5]. The caseworkers continue to offer support throughout the eight-week program and up to twelve months after the incarcerated parent returns home [9]. The participants must reside within

two hours of the MNCCC [3,4,9]. However, many services are confined to work within geographic boundaries, therefore BtF must ensure that the services needed for each participant are available within their community [14,15]. The speech from the past participant [7] indicated process in action:

> *Because Aunty [caseworker] and [caseworker] from SHINE for Kids had supported me and assisted me and it had taken away a lot of the frustrations that happen when you get out of gaol. It allowed me to think clearly, keep on track and succeed in reaching my goals.*

Moreover, the BtF caseworkers also identified that each family is unique [14,15]. Families' needs can range from needing assistance to remove AVOs so family members can talk over the phone or visit the prison, to references for court appearances, to links to health services such as through the Local Aboriginal Medical Services [14,15]. The greatest impeding contextual factor was the availability of culturally appropriate support services. The context at the infrastructure level, as described in research question 2, drives the availability of appropriate support services [14,15]. Overall, the caseworkers aimed to provide holistic individualised support by connecting participants to appropriate services.

(ii) Participants develop relationships with their social community

This mechanism focuses on developing informal bonds. Community connections are an important part of First Peoples values and identity [25] and are an important part of supporting reintegration [18,22,23,24,27,34,39,40,41,43,46,47,48,49,53]. BtF is structured to ensure families feel supported during the incarcerated parent's return to their community when there may be trepidation regarding how the parent inside feels about returning to the community and the families in supporting their return [14,15]. The most influential strategy included making sure the participants felt supported from the relationships with Elders [9,15]. Prior to the parent's re-entry, families are also invited to Family Fun Days hosted by BtF, where up to four times a year the caseworkers provide food and children's activities for past and present participants [14,15]. BtF caseworkers also inform families of opportunities available within the community. For example, during my visit I attended a Yap n' Yarn event [15]. Yap n' Yarn is an open community event held in collaboration between Interrelate, Kempsey Family Community Centre, and SHINE who provide a free BBQ and casual evening talking to service providers.

Intended outcome 3: Reinforce cultural values

Incorporating First Peoples culture was acknowledged as an integral component in reintegration programs and practices [18,22,23,27,29,34,41,43,44,46,49,50,52]; however, the mechanisms to achieve this varied. In a 'post-colonial' time, embedding culture within programs is intrinsically linked to self-determination [25,23,40,53]. In practice, in an Australian context, self-determination would be a model where independent Nations of First Peoples would drive programs. This includes establishing what outcomes need to be addressed, and how these outcomes should be addressed. In other words, outcomes and mechanisms are local. This process has played out for BtF and the Dunghutti people. BtF developed numerous strategies that aimed to *reinforce cultural values*. BtF was established specifically to support First Peoples families. This indicates that from the outset, cultural values were considered in some way. In the previous evaluation [10-13], the role of culture in the program was interpreted as counting the times Elders participated and understanding "(i)ssues specific to Aboriginal history of colonisation and disempowerment". In this synthesis I noted that BtF had specific strategies including involving Elders from the implementation of BtF as well as ensuring the Elders influence is embedded throughout the program delivery by including them in group workshops [9,14,15]. The promotional material also aimed to be culturally inclusive, including artwork that was designed specifically for the program by an Aboriginal inmate [2,3,4]. The BtF logo is depicted in Figure 5.7.

Figure 5.7

Belonging to Family program logo

The three mechanisms aiming to *reinforce cultural values* that were identified were: (i) show support from First Peoples community; (ii) show support from peers; (iii) learn about cultural values and practices. Each is common in other First Peoples programs [18,25,40,41,46,53]. BtF adapted the mechanisms to counter the barriers created by incarceration. The mechanisms can be visualized by referring to the PPCT model and can be identified by the red arrows that are placed between the incarcerated parent and their community within their microsystems in Figure 5.6. This mechanism also impacts reasoning of participants and are therefore inclusive of changes in thoughts and beliefs of the individual also. I consider each mechanism in turn.

(i) Shows support from First Peoples community

Inter-dependence of community and kin members is an important value in First Peoples programs [25]. The relatedness has been found to impact program success for First Peoples. Willis and Moore (2008) [52] demonstrated how the need for collective community values directly impacts rehabilitation programs in the criminal justice system. They found offender programs that focus on individual self-awareness and self-disclosure (such as Cognitive Based Therapy [CBT], which is the

most widely cited effective element included in mainstream programming in mainstream programs) are not as effective for First Peoples. CBT focuses on identifying and changing individual behaviours. For example, in document 31, anger management programs aim to identify an individual's actions that are a response to anger; the outcome is to change how the individual responds to anger. CBT or anger management programs do not aim to identify collective and community driven influences that shape individuals. For example, the aim of CBT is not to identify the impacts of systemic racism or change systemic racism that can contribute to an individual's wellbeing or reasons for responses of anger. Therefore, CBT fails to recognise and deliver collective or community driven outcomes.

BtF continually garners support from the community, in particular the participants' First Peoples community. The most influential strategy to involve the community is the involvement of Elders [9,15]. Elders are the bearers of knowledge and respect in First Peoples communities and their involvement and participation in the group work is considered an influential component of the program. The caseworkers themselves have a vital role in demonstrating support from the community. The caseworkers have significant informal and formal connections in the community [6,15] and hold a respected role in the community. This demonstrates to participants that there are positive supportive connections for them in the community.

(ii) Shows support from peers

A specific variation to community connections is the role of peers. In First Peoples communities, your peers take on a role similar to brothers, sisters, and cousins, forming bonds of mutual care, shared experience, and related values [25]. Within a prison, other inmates can be your peers. BtF activates peer-to-peer support and learning by bringing together First Peoples peers facing the common issue of parenting from prison [9,14,15]. Group members in both the kinship participants and incarcerated parents' groups have an opportunity to learn from people in similar situations in a culturally safe environment and draw upon shared experiences or values.

(iii) Learn about cultural values and practices

The role of colonisation is to extinguish one cultural identity and replace it with another. Colonisation has been linked to trauma [19,20,21]. One way of counteracting this trauma is through connecting with or learning about cultural values and practices [40,53]. The BtF stakeholders recognised that cultural connections were a positive contribution in participant's lives and the program's strategies aimed to activate this mechanism by focusing on cultural strengths. For example, the caseworkers reinforce the group members' ownership in leading discussions about

how culture has influenced their lives and how culture can be used for positive actions in the future [9,15].

4/ For which families, and in which conditions, does the introduction of Belonging to Family lead to the (de) activation of proposed mechanisms producing negative experiences and unintended outcomes for participating families?

Realist evaluations aim to understand the diverse experiences people have within an intervention; this includes understanding why some participants do not fare as favourably as others. The experiences of participants who are not successful contribute as much to understanding an intervention as the experiences of participants who are successful. In Stages 1 and 2, I aimed to gain an understanding of the context's families had that prevented their success and, in turn, further this understanding in the evaluation. In Stages 1 and 2 I framed my questions around what barriers the stakeholders were familiar with that prevented participants in reaching their goals.

Eligibility criteria

BtF's selection criteria excludes three participant characteristics. First, incarcerated parents with an offence against children are not allowed to participate [5,9]; this may indicate that parents in this situation need targeted interventions to address their offending behaviour prior to including family contact. Second, family units where one member does not want to participate were excluded [5,9]; this criterion was included as BtF is highly structured and requires participant involvement. Although BtF provide case management, they are not trained family counsellors that provide the high-volume intervention to address families that are not willing to cooperate within the program. Third, families are excluded that reside further than two hours from Kempsey [5,9]. This criterion is for logistical reasons for the caseworkers as well as feasibility for family members to attend weekly group sessions during the eight-week program. The evaluation outcomes should be considered with these exclusion criteria, as each would significantly increase the likelihood of participant's success.

Success as context dependent

The barriers that hinder people from making positive choices in BtF were context dependent and stretched across the four categories explored in research question 2. For example, the caseworkers explained how each participant and their goals were different [14,15]. An undisputed positive outcome would be for a person not to return to prison. However, recidivism is not a straightforward process. The caseworkers recognised that each participant was on a journey - there

are ups and downs and life is never straightforward. The caseworkers explained that if a parent returned to prison, it was an opportunity for them to take the course again, share their experience, and view BtF's content with a new perspective from their experience of re-entry [14,15]. The barriers were cumulative - the more barriers a family experiences, the more likely the family and its members were to struggle to reach their goals. This suggests context is driving what an outcome is and in turn how the mechanisms are triggered.

Focusing on the outcome of strengthening family relationships, the interwoven and complex nature of how context impacts how families interact with BtF can be demonstrated with reference to the wider literature. At the individual level, numerous factors can impede a family's likelihood of engaging in a program, including each individual's temperament [31]. Families on the outside may not have adequate resources to engage [28,32]. BtF involves attending an eight-week program, with weekly in-person sessions, and during working hours [9], which may not be aligned with people's availability. Moreover, although BtF is a support service their support was limited. Common issues for families can vary from securing adequate housing, coping with ongoing or chronic health issues, maintaining their children's engagement in school, managing a child's behavioural problems, or maintaining a supportive network, to name but a few [22,23,27,32-34,37,44,47-49,53]. A family with complex needs may struggle to incorporate BtF as another support service within their lives. The individual context is interconnected with the interpersonal context. An individual's temperament and experience determine how a family member interacts with the programs. Also, within the family unit, have the members developed ways of supporting and communicating positively? Families that have a strong family functioning base level will find it easier to engage in a program that is designed to bring family members together. At the institutional level, do the aims of BtF and SHINE align with the needs of the family? For example, does the family need high levels of individualised support such as family counselling rather than the mechanisms that are provided by BtF? Finally, in considering the wider infrastructure level, what has the impact of past policies had on the family? Have the family members addressed the impact of the Stolen Generation or child removal policies? Do family members live in a catchment that offers the required services they need? For example, if a child has special needs, are there appropriate support services? Overall, this example demonstrates how BtF needs to adapt to the highly contextual environment.

BtF incorporated strategies to help account for this context. The initial referral form listed issues that may need to be addressed [4], the program included administratively collating information to identify and address issues of the family members [9], and the caseworkers had developed a excel spreadsheet to assist in keeping track of the individuals' goals [8] (although a new database was

being rolled out at the time of this realist synthesis that would assist in case management). The highly contextual nature of BtF and the processes that were developed were flagged during this synthesis to be followed up during the realist evaluation.

Community wide issues

There were two major community wide concerns for reaching success that came across repetitively in the synthesis. First was the influence of drug use and abuse. A number of stakeholders had mentioned that legal and illegal drug abuse, particularly ice, had become a significant problem in communities, particularly small regional communities [15]. Stakeholders had continually witnessed the impact substance abuse had on people. The second concern families faced was having the parent return to the same environment that contributed to their incarceration [15]. This is a common concern for programs delivered in prison [24,26,29,30,33,44-49,53], or any program that is delivered outside a person's natural environment. Many stakeholders lamented the fact that for some people, the only hope of them not getting involved in the criminal justice system was to move out of the town that they were living in prior to their incarceration [15]. As a small program, BtF is not equipped to address community level issues, but stakeholders need to be aware that these are conditions that influence family's success in the program.

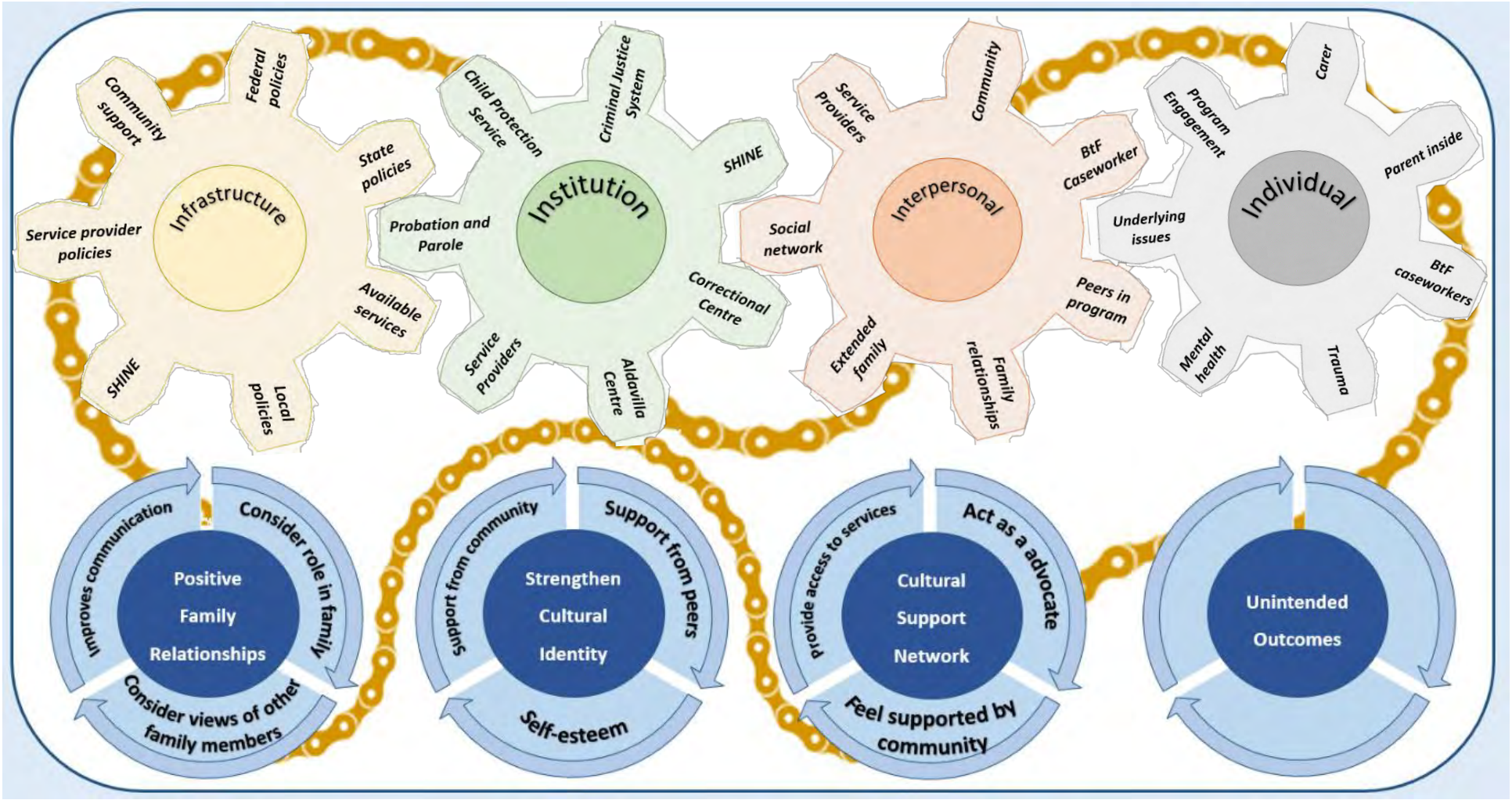
5.5. Discussion

5.5.1. Summary of findings

The aim of this realist synthesis was to establish the middle range CMOs of BtF, then compare, contrast, and analyse how these CMO's relate to the wider literature, and establish how the CMOs could be evaluated. The CMO's pertinent to BtF are depicted in Figure 5.8. The three outcomes are depicted in the dark blue circles in the bottom row: *strengthen positive family relationships*, *improve participant's support networks*, and *reinforce cultural values*. All three outcomes are identified as contributing to successful reintegration for First Peoples, particularly if they are parents.

Figure 5.8

Realist synthesis: Final model of context, mechanisms, and outcomes for Belonging to Family



In Figure 5.8, the mechanisms are displayed in the light blue circles surrounding their corresponding outcome. These mechanisms that were identified were also widely researched and are recommended for successful reintegration of First Peoples experiencing parental incarceration. Although the outcomes and mechanisms are not novel, BtF is working within a highly contextual environment. In Figure 5.8, the interrelated contextual factors are represented by the cogs, which represent the interrelated nature between how the contexts work and influence BtF. The complex and interwoven nature of individual, interpersonal, institutional, and infrastructural contexts determined how SHINE delivered BtF, the outcomes each family aims to achieve, and how the families achieve their outcomes. The barriers for families to achieve success in BtF were context dependent and cumulative, indicating families with complex and entrenched issues may not experience the same level of positive outcomes as families who do not have to manage multiple and layered issues. Unfortunately, there are barriers that may be beyond the control of BtF but are important to consider, such as drug abuse and incarcerated parents returning to environments that have the same issues that contributed to their incarceration. The nature of the context will add a layer of complexity into the evaluation but will also create an opportunity to illustrate how a small-scale program manages delivering outcomes in the face of multilayered, complex, and complicated issues.

5.5.2. Strengths, limitations, and future research directions

The greatest strength of performing this synthesis was the ability to build CMOs prior to the realist evaluation. Particularly, the data that was used was predominantly sourced from the intervention itself, including a site visit and interviews with key stakeholders. This process is a move away from top-down approaches, and thus reinforces self-determination and instilling local Indigenous voices in the initial stages of the evaluation design.

There are a number of limitations to this synthesis. My resources were limited, and I restricted the scope to address the primary aim of establishing CMO's for the subsequent evaluation. In doing so, I may have limited the generalisability of findings or contributions to the wider literature. This was confirmed throughout my time collating and analysing the data in this synthesis. I found gaps in the literature that I may have been able to fill by widening the scope of the data but would have outpaced my resource limits. For example, synthesising evaluations of small-scale Indigenous programs would have provided a rich data source to share. The majority of Indigenous and community owned programs are localised and small-scale. Due to resource limitations, I was not able to canvas programs within the corrective services specifically for First

Peoples, but as I searched, I found numerous resources referring to programs in corrective services designed for First Peoples. Particularly, there were numerous programs that were pilot studies or at a preliminary stage of development but, alas, when I searched there was no record of the program being implemented. The reasons for discontinuing programs should be documented and accessible to avoid repeating mistakes, and strengthen evidence-informed practice in corrective services, for First Peoples, and for support services in general. Additional studies could address these issues.

In terms of future directions, this synthesis provided the platform for the evaluation of BtF. Methodologically, running a realist synthesis prior to an evaluation is optimal but is generally beyond the limits of most research projects; my experience can contribute to this area. Moreover, in terms of parental incarceration, this synthesis greatly assists in establishing an evaluation of a small-scale program that aims to deliver outcomes in the face of multilayered, complex, and complicated issues. The complexity is known to researchers and service providers addressing parental incarceration but is difficult to convey to a wider or general audience such as funders. This thesis can contribute to how we implement future interventions. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 10.

5.5.3. Comparison with existing literature

BtF is a unique program. I could not identify another program with BtF's structure or aims. Many factors contribute to the unique format; namely that BtF was developed locally, derived from needs identified by the population, and has consistently evolved since it was first delivered to meet logistical and participant demands. Although there are limited comparisons of BtF to other programs, the aims and processes of BtF align across disciplines and mirror the recommendations of how to assist families experiencing parental incarceration. For example, in each of the systematic reviews analysed in the realist synthesis [29,33,34,40,48,53], family functioning, communication, and referral services were important components of services to provide to families. However, as was also evident in this realist synthesis, there are differences within and between programs on how outcomes were achieved or how the contexts of different areas influenced the program. However, the complexity and ripple effect of parental incarceration are widely acknowledged. Recommendations from both research and service providers highlight the need for holistic throughcare for people returning to the community after incarceration. Again, BtF has mirrored best practice by also striving to achieve holistic throughcare.

Importantly, BtF is a program designed for First Peoples families. The outcomes and mechanisms used by BtF are consistent across multiple disciplines that also provide culturally appropriate programs. However, BtF have adapted the outcomes and mechanisms to counter the

barriers of incarceration. Overall, this synthesis has shown that BtF is delivered in a way that captures multiple outcomes and mechanisms that are consistent in the literature. This evaluation is an opportunity to develop a more sophisticated understanding of how to address individualised needs within the complexity of parental incarceration. In addition, although the outcomes and mechanisms are familiar, the evaluation provides an opportunity to consider whether this combination of outcomes and mechanisms meet the needs of the families in this context.

5.5.4. How did the realist synthesis inform the realist evaluation in this thesis?

The primary aim of this realist synthesis was to establish BtF's CMOs to inform the subsequent realist evaluation. In this section, I explain how I intend to use the findings of the realist synthesis throughout the realist evaluation. In the synthesis, I found that the three outcomes BtF aim to achieve are to (i) *strengthen positive family relationships*, (ii) *improve participant's support networks*, and to (iii) *reinforce cultural values*. These three outcomes formed the themes for the interviews completed in the evaluation. In the realist evaluation, I interview a small sample of participants, aiming to gather high quality and detailed data on the experience of families. Throughout the synthesis, I assessed the suitability of questions used in other studies to explore similar issues in interviews and data collection in the following evaluation. I also constructed observation guidelines that included prompts to make notes on the three outcomes and how BtF achieved them. I detail these methods in section 6.4. Essentially, I test the theories I developed in the synthesis in the evaluation.

I found conceptualising and theorising context was more difficult to translate due to the high variability and number of contributing factors. This, in part, contributed to the fact that I did not make an exhaustive list of CMO configurations to test in the evaluation, as is the norm for realist evaluations. Despite context being a central component of realist approaches, the variability and difficulty of conceptualising and operationalising context is widely recognised (Greenhalgh & Manzano, 2021; Nielsen et al., 2022). As these works suggest, I explicitly defined context using foundational realist evaluation resources (see 5.4.3., Research Question 2). I also used the synthesis as an opportunity to become aware of the contexts, including the most prominent contexts, that create barriers for families. I use these findings as a starting point to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship of context on the outcomes and mechanisms of BtF. This preliminary analysis of context in this synthesis formed the basis for the evaluation, in creating observation guidelines, interviewing stakeholders, and observing the process of how context influences the lives of family members throughout their participation in BtF.

Overall, the synthesis provided the opportunity to conceptualise theories about BtF to test in the evaluation in realist terms; however, the synthesis also provided an opportunity to establish how it would be best to evaluate BtF. I also had the opportunity to develop a relationship with community and program stakeholders who gave their time and advice on how the program works as well as advice on logistically preparing how to incorporate my presence in the program and appropriate times for me to interview participants. Building rapport is invaluable and the extra time to develop a relationship and familiarity is beneficial to the overall project and evaluation.

5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I reported the methods, outcomes, and results of the realist synthesis. The aim of the realist synthesis was to establish BtF's CMOs in preparation of the evaluation. I outlined the methods of iteratively searching for data. I found 17 in-house and 36 external resources to inform the synthesis. In the results I identified three proposed short-term outcomes, their respective mechanisms, and influential contexts. I demonstrated how I embedded Indigenous perspectives through a process privileging Indigenous perspectives; this occurred at both the program level with the stakeholders, as well as within the literature. Moreover, the process of the synthesis allowed for the consideration of context and how it impacted the program operations. This is especially important for supporting families with a parent in prison due to the highly contextual nature of parental incarceration. In Chapter 6, I build on the results of the realist synthesis and detail the methods I used in the realist evaluation.

Chapter 6
Realist Evaluation Methodology and Details of Participants

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter I provide an overview of the methodology used to complete the realist evaluation. The aim of the realist evaluation was to test BtF's CMOs identified in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5). The increased number of realist evaluations used across multiple fields has led to the establishment of implementation and reporting standards (Wong et al, 2016), which have been incorporated into this chapter.

In sections 6.2 and 6.3, I outline the overall rationale, research questions, and evaluation environment. This overview includes a summary of how the outcomes of the realist synthesis in Chapter 5 provided the scaffolding of the realist evaluation. In section 6.4 I describe my approach to data collection where I used an ethnographic approach drawing on data from fieldwork notes, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. I also provide the recruitment process, sampling strategy, and participant details. In section 6.5 I outline data analyse processes. Following Miles and Huberman (1994) I report the three-step approach for data reduction (coding); data display (creating a matrix); and conclusion drawing and verification. A conclusion is provided in section 6.6.

6.2. Rationale for evaluation, programme theory and evaluation questions

This evaluation of BtF provides a case study in understanding how a realist approach to evaluation can contribute to delivering programs to support families experiencing parental incarceration as well as programs supporting First Peoples impacted by the criminal justice system. The realist approach has been used to account for the impact of a highly contextual environment (see Chapters 2 and 3), and benefits from a theory-driven approach, and diverse data. The realist approach is also important in addressing BtF's focus on First Peoples. Realist evaluations require culturally appropriate ways to collect data and interact with the participants; this calls for embedding Indigenous perspectives in the evaluation. Moreover, the realist evaluation contributes to understanding the heterogeneous context within First Peoples groups, which can be overlooked or dismissed in program services for First Peoples.

As outlined in section 4.4, BtF had been running for five years (at the time of this evaluation), had a program manual, and had been previously evaluated. One of the long-term goals for SHINE was to administer BtF in other correctional centres, with a trial of BtF being implemented in another centre concurrently to this evaluation. In addition to the main aims of the study, this evaluation aims to provide key insights for SHINE as they look to scale up BtF. Specifically, the aim is to refine BtF's CMOs identified in realist synthesis in Chapter 5 and focus on whether and how short-term outcomes were achieved. In doing so, this evaluation examines how individual, interpersonal, institutional, and infrastructural contextual factors interacted and impacted on BtF's outcomes. This scope was dependent on access to participants, resources, funding obligations, outcomes of interest, and the potential contribution to BtF and wider literature. Overall, the rationale for the evaluation is suited to BtF's future aims and complex working environment, as well as embedding Indigenous perspectives.

The evaluation questions have been formed to refine the CMOs established in Chapter 5. These are outlined in Table 6.1 where the three short-term outcomes are listed in the first column. Their corresponding mechanisms are presented in the second column, while the contextual issues are outlined in the final column.

Table 6.1

Realist evaluation: Initial model of Belonging to Family: Context, Mechanisms and Outcomes

Outcome	***Mechanisms***	***Contexts***
Strengthen positive family relationships	• Improve communication within family • Consider the role they have in the family • Consider views of other family members	**<u>Individual</u>** • Characteristics of family and family members • Personal qualities of caseworkers **<u>Interpersonal</u>** • Caseworker ⟷ Participant • Participant ⟷ Participant • Family member ⟷ Family member **<u>Institutional</u>** • SHINE for Kids • Mid North Coast Correctional Centre **<u>Infrastructural</u>** • Federal policies (First Peoples) • Availability of support services (for referral)
Improve participant's support networks	• Participants learn about culturally appropriate support services and access those services that they need • Participants develop relationships with their social community	
Reinforce cultural values	• Shows support from First Peoples community • Shows support from peers • Learn about cultural values and practices	

The three outcomes have formed the basis of three primary research questions, with mechanisms and contexts forming the basis of sub-questions:

1. *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family strengthen positive family relationships?*
    a. *To what extent does BtF improve communication within family? Which context(s) influenced this mechanism?*
    b. *To what extent does BtF make participants consider the role they have in the family? Which context(s) influenced this mechanism?*
    c. *To what extent does BtF make participants consider views of other family members? Which context(s) influenced this mechanism?*
2. *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community?*
    a. *To what extent does BtF participants learn about support services and access those services that they need? Which context(s) influenced this mechanism?*
    b. *To what extent does BtF participants feel supported by their social community? Which context(s) influenced this mechanism?*
3. *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family reinforce cultural values?*
    a. *To what extent does BtF show support from First Peoples community? Which context(s) influenced this mechanism?*
    b. *To what extent does BtF shows support from peers? Which context(s) influenced this mechanism?*
    c. *To what extent does BtF reinforce cultural values? Which context(s) influenced this mechanism?*

6.3. Description and justification of the evaluation design

The evaluation design was directly impacted by the evaluation rationale, funding (see section 4.4.3), time limits, and a feasible scope for a PhD. The rationale of the evaluation was to gain an in-depth understanding of BtF and understand the perspectives and experiences of the participants so that I could gain an understanding of what works for whom and how. Therefore, to

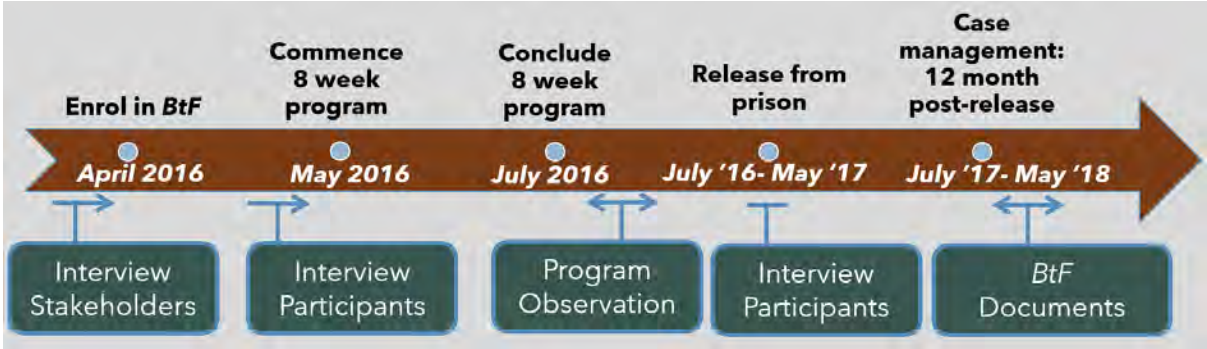
meet the rationale of the evaluation, an ethnographic approach was deemed the most appropriate methodology.

An ethnography provides rich, holistic insight into social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions through the collection of data via observations and interviews (Reeves et al., 2008). The aims of ethnography are parallel to realist evaluation; both require flexibility, are sensitive to context, seek out change, and are focused on gathering an in-depth understanding of a certain phenomenon. Moreover, as both frame the researcher as the novice and the participants as the experts, interactions in the field set the researcher as the learner of the participant's social world. Additionally, ethnography is a methodology that pursues an understanding of how social, political, and cultural aspects impact on people's choices. Each of these qualities I have mentioned align with the aim of this evaluation, particularly in gaining a detailed understanding of how BtF operates in the real-world setting. I also aimed to gather in-depth information about the social lives of people that have been noted as a 'hard-to-reach' and socially stigmatised population for both researchers and service providers (Hart-Johnson, 2017). An ethnographic approach allowed me to engage with this population and learn from their experiences, while focusing on how the outcomes of BtF are achieved, how the BtF mechanisms operate, and how context impacts upon the mechanisms.

The evaluation design and time sequence of important phases in BtF are depicted in Figure 6.1. I observed one offering of the eight-week program from the point of recruitment occurring from May - August 2016. I also returned intermittently from September-November 2016 to attend milestones in BtF (graduation), events (family days, and NAIDOC events), and conduct follow-up interviews. Overall, I observed the eight-week program, attended meetings and networking activities, and observed case-management and administrative tasks. Being based in the BtF office gave me the opportunity to gather rich data about the processes involved in administering BtF and the day-to-day tasks involved. The data collected during the fieldwork were intended to reflect any changes in real-time over the designated period. The intent was not to arbitrarily record before-and-after observations, but to note how any changes in context manipulated the mechanisms and outcomes to the program. In Figure 6.1, I identify my methods of data collection in the bottom row of boxes which are discussed in more detail in the next section.

Figure 6.1

Realist evaluation: Research design



6.4. Data collection methods

In a realist evaluation, the methods selected should be the ones that shed the greatest light on the intervention's CMOs while also addressing the evaluations primary aims (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). This may require a broad range of information and consequently the majority of realist evaluations use a multi-method approach. The process of selecting methods is inclusive and potentially a wide array of methods can be used within an evaluation with great differences between evaluations. Due to this variability in methods and aims, it is important for evaluators to describe what their data collection methods are and justify why the methods are the most appropriate in addressing the aims of the evaluation.

Within the ethnography I used multiple methods to collect data. This is depicted in Figure 6.1. Using multiple methods allowed me to gather the broad range of data I required to understand BtF, from identifying outcome measures to understanding the social lives of the participants. Therefore, to facilitate my collection of data I used three points for data collection: field-work observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. I consider each in turn in detailing how I used the methods within a realist perspective and why the methods are appropriate.

6.4.1. Fieldwork notes and observations

Fieldwork is a common method used in realist evaluations. Fieldwork involves the systematic collection of data in a real-world setting (Blommaert & Jie, 2010). A realist evaluation seeks to understand how context impacts an intervention, therefore the greatest benefit from conducting fieldwork is that it provides access to observe how an intervention works within the real-world setting. Comparative methods may rely on a participant's perspectives, where the participant may

be biased, invested in the program, or whose role only allows for a narrow perspective of the entirety of a program. In conducting fieldwork, the realist evaluator is in a position where they can observe the entirety of a program and can cross-check findings from other forms of data collection such as interviews. Moreover, conducting fieldwork allows an evaluator to gain an insight and observe additional CMOs that may not have been considered influential in developing the theory of how the program operates.

When working with First Peoples, fieldwork is an appropriate method with several strengths. Prominent Indigenous researchers have demonstrated how certain research methods are more appropriate for working with First Peoples (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Methods that include the participants as experts rather than objects, allow for personal interaction, and incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing that are more likely to reflect the experiences of First Peoples and in turn, lead to results that can benefit the social lives of the participants and other Indigenous communities (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). In this light, fieldwork as a method has strengths as the process allows face-to-face interaction and compared to alternate methods allows time, flexibility, and the observance of context in understanding an event, collecting data, and producing beneficial research outcomes (Reeves et al., 2008). The process of learning through fieldwork also reflects an Indigenous way of knowing. For First Peoples in Australia, a prominent way of learning is from watching, being involved, and yarning (Douglas, 2015). In this perspective, fieldwork is a method that reflects how First Peoples learn and therefore the participants may recognise and be familiar with this approach compared to alternate research methods.

Although there are strengths of using fieldwork as a method with First Peoples, there are also boundaries that need to be considered. Douglas (2015) articulates the role of the 'shame researcher'- an Aboriginal perspective on the process of being an ethnographer. Shame, here, differs from the English definition of an individual's awareness of guilt (Morgan et al., 1997). In Aboriginal communities, 'shame' is a way of reinforcing acceptable social behaviours through evoking an emotion of reflective disapproval. Many Indigenous communities have social and spiritual obligations that aim to benefit the group, and these obligations are linked into one's community, their values, and thus are an extension of one's life. Any behaviour that prioritises the individual is a deviation away from the community's inherent values and thus separates the person from their community and their being. Therefore, shame is an emotive tool that is prompted as a base for teaching and learning boundaries of behaviour and social life and to curtail 'egotism, selfishness, individuality' (Myers, 1991, p.121). Douglas (2015, p.47) explores how this extends to researchers by the feeling of reluctance towards completing research processes in the field so that they can avoid imposing demands on people's time. In the same light, although fieldwork may reflect an Indigenous

way of learning, the researcher is still a researcher, and continues to embody the baggage this role carries as an element of a colonial structure, in a position of an outsider, and continuing the objectification of First Peoples without any observable benefit. However, as Douglas (2015) also explores, a 'shame researcher' is in a privileged position. There are positive impacts in the field when you are aware of social processes and are sensitive to social interactions. From this privileged position, a researcher also has a duty to accurately reflect the environment they are observing. Therefore, the privilege of being a 'shame researcher' contributes to the strengths of fieldwork and influences each step from the initial interaction with participants and the community, to collecting data, to interpreting the results. As a 'shame researcher', I was aware of the impact research may have, particularly for people in unequal relationships or who may be vulnerable such as people in prison and their families. One of the strengths of this project was that I was working closely with the caseworkers and could be guided by them in terms of engaging with the participants in the program. To reciprocate the assistance the BtF caseworkers provided, I could also strive to assist around the office for basic tasks, such as helping assemble the informational display folders given to participants in BtF. The ethnographic approach also allowed me to remain flexible for organising time to meet with the interviewees. Overall being aware of being a 'shame researcher' allowed me to navigate the ethnographic approach in a way that embedded cultural values and ways of being.

I incorporated fieldwork notes and observations into my methods because of the benefits for both a realist evaluation and working with First Peoples. In the current evaluation, I spent approximately four months from May - August 2016 based at the Aldavilla Children and Family Centre. This encapsulated the time from one block of recruitment to the end of the eight-week program. Additionally, I conducted intermittent fieldwork for the following three months from September-November 2016. Throughout both periods of fieldwork, I observed case-management of the current and past groups, accommodated delays in the program delivery (see section 7.2.2. for details of the delays) and the day-to-day activities involved in running BtF. I did not designate times of structured observations. The working days of BtF changed regularly. There were formal procedures to follow for group preparation, however BtF was dependent on community and participant needs. I developed an observation guide (Appendix F) that I completed at the end of each day or during breaks. I aimed for the scope of the notes to be wide enough to allow reflection of emerging patterns from what could originally be considered unrelated events (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). However, I also wanted direction in the observations for data analysis, so to filter my observations I had two main sections (i) listing significant events in the day and their relevance to CMOs; (ii) reflections of the day related directly to the primary and secondary questions. I also continually read over notes and made space to add notes retrospectively.

6.4.2. Semi-structured interviews

Realist evaluation has embraced interviews as a method of data collection from its inception (Manzano, 2016). As more realist evaluations are conducted, the role of interviews has been explored and refined. Manzano (2016) provides a thorough overview of the 'realist interview' indicating that there are no authoritative interview formats; however, the role of the interview has the same purpose as any other method in a realist evaluation; that is to examine the CMOs. Rather than aim for large quantities of interviews, a realist evaluation aims to interview people with viewpoints that can inform the CMOs and aims of the evaluation. However, interviews are considered a method of providing a fragment of information whereby triangulation with other methods is advised (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The crucial element that distinguishes interviews in a realist evaluation from constructionist or interpretivists perspectives is the unit of analysis, which shifts from examining the narrative of the person to focus on the narrative of the intervention (Manzano, 2016). Therefore, in a realist evaluation, interviewees provide viewpoints to gain a richer understanding of how the program works rather than providing a personal narrative to analyse. In this light, realist evaluators favour theory-driven interviews that are used to propose a theory to the interviewee whereby the interviewer can 'inspire/validate/falsify/modify' (Pawson, 1996, p295) the hypotheses about how programs and interventions work. All in all, interviews in a realist evaluation are a tool to draw together differing perspectives and gain a greater insight into the program theory.

Similar to fieldwork, interviews have been considered an appropriate method for First Peoples as interviews can prioritise personal interaction, value Indigenous ways of knowing, and make the participants the experts (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). Interviews are not a homogenous method and the spectrum ranges from the stringent approach of a structured interview to the fluid approach of open-ended interviews. Therefore, the appropriateness of using interviews with First Peoples is dependent on how the interviews are administered. Researchers and evaluators acknowledge interviews are a fundamental method that can be utilised to give a direct voice of the community into the project. However, for some First Peoples asking direct questions is a confronting and intrusive form of communication. Circumlocution patterns are a common practice of communication for First Peoples. This includes asking indirect questions, circuitous conversations, and using strong narratives and relational ties in conveying stories or information. This form of communication is known colloquially as 'yarning' and was introduced as a research method by Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010). In research, yarning can be used in semi-structured interviews, focusing on relaxed discussions where "both the researcher and participant journey together visiting places and topics of interest relevant to the research study" (p.38). Bessarab and Ng'andu conceptualised four types of

yarning that occur during an interview, as outlined in the first two columns in Table 6.2. The four types of yarning incorporate a clear focus on the research topic and create a safe space while making a genuine personable relationship. Yarning is now considered an exemplar in ethical research with First Peoples (Laycock et al., 2011) and has been used widely in health care research and more recently in criminal justice research (Leeson et al., 2016; Rynne & Cassematis, 2015). Moreover, as indicated in the third column in Table 6.2, the aims of realist interviews can be directly linked in yarning modalities. Here, yarning can be utilised as a culturally appropriate way to facilitate the teacher-learner cycle in realist interviewing. This is exemplified by Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) who frame interviewees as the 'knower' while also allowing 'collaborative yarning' as an opportunity to share and explore ideas (or in realist terms, refine CMO's).

Table 6.2

Yarning modalities (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) and links to realist interviewing (Manzano, 2016)

Type	***Definition***	***Link to realist interview***
Social yarning	Before the topic yarn, when a connection is established and trust is usually developed	Good practice. Can establish an environment that makes an interviewee comfortable in discussing a program.
Research topic yarning	Relaxed but purposeful, to gather information related to the research topic	Need for purposeful and directive discussions about the program (rather than personal narratives), while allowing space to identify/discuss new theories that may arise from the interviewee's perspective.
Collaborative yarning	Sharing information, exploring ideas in explaining new topics, leading to new understandings	Sharing and refining specific ideas about CMOs in a collaborative way for new understanding
Therapeutic yarning	When the participant discloses information that is traumatic, or intensely personal and emotional. The researcher leaves the research topic to become the listener	Good practice. Can allow an interviewee to articulate an event or emotion in direct relation to a program. Listening to this experience is integral to understanding CMOs.

For these reasons, my evaluation incorporated semi-structured interviews using the four types of yarning modalities described by Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010). From a realist perspective, I was interested in understanding what the participants found beneficial in the program and how the program was administered. Therefore, I interviewed two distinct groups: participants and primary

stakeholders. The number and characteristics of interviewees are detailed further in section 6.4.2.3. The interview schedule is available at Appendix G.

6.4.2.1. Pilot of interview schedule

Prior to the evaluation, the interview schedule was piloted. Piloting was used to ensure that the participants could understand each of the questions and to check the length of the interview. The pilot interviews (i.e., mock interviews) took place in October and November 2015 with three participants who had experience working with families with a parent in prison. Piloting interviews included both the incarcerated parents interview schedule and kinship participant interview schedule. Feedback from the interviews was used to refine questions, create a flow in the schedule, and become aware of any prompts that may be necessary to elicit further information. Piloting was completed prior to submitting my application to the Griffith University ethics board to ensure the interview schedule could be attached to the application to ensure institutional ethical compliance.

6.4.2.2. Recruitment process and sampling strategy for interviews: BtF participants and stakeholders

Keeping with realist evaluation principles, I chose key informants who could inform the evaluation rationale and who were in the best placed position to contribute to the results. I engaged two distinct groups throughout my evaluation. First, I included service providers and primary stakeholders. The aim of engaging these informants was to gain a greater understanding of how BtF functioned within the real-world setting. Therefore, I narrowed the scope to people having a direct role in delivering the program. I selected the primary stakeholders as I gained a greater understanding of the program during the realist synthesis and as I observed how the program worked during my fieldwork. In the final evaluation, I interviewed five stakeholders: three caseworkers based at SHINE's Aladvilla Child and Family Centre, an Aboriginal Liaison officer with NSWCS, and an employee who was involved in the development of BtF.

The second group I interviewed were participants of BtF. The aim of engaging participants was to ensure the people receiving the service had their voices included in the evaluation and resulting ongoing improvement of the program. Moreover, participants are in the best position to describe how a program has impacted them and what components they find helpful or the components that need improvement. As indicated above, I interviewed the family members during one block of the BtF program. I also wanted to increase the likelihood of a range of perspectives. Realist evaluators seek to understand successful pathways, but also to understand why some

participants may not benefit as greatly as others. Evaluations that rely on voluntary feedback forms or selected case studies are likely to narrow the scope to successful participants. Selecting all families from one offering increased my chances of hearing a variety of views.

Participants in the eight-week program that I observed were informed by the caseworkers that a student researcher was interested in evaluating BtF and would like to hold interviews and be present during the eight-week program. I was introduced to the parents in prison and caregivers during the recruitment and referral process (section 4.4) where I informed the potential participants of my project. I ensured that each individual understood that the interview was not a compulsory requirement to participate in BtF and that their decision to participate would not impact their relationship or that of any participating family members with SHINE or NSWCS. During the referral process, participants completed a questionnaire with the caseworkers to ensure they met the criteria and to identify current issues BtF could address. During the referral process, I introduced myself, talked about the evaluation, and provided participants with the information sheet (Appendix D) and consent forms (Appendix E). After the participants were cleared for participation in BtF, I arranged interview times. To note, all the parents who were incarcerated agreed to participate in the evaluation. However practical limitations (such as transfers to other correctional centres) impacted my ability to interview every parent for both an initial and follow-up stages. Similarly, I was able to interview all kinship participants that actively participated in BtF. Some kinship participants did not participate, and unfortunately, I was unable to interview these participants. The final number of interviewees and the stage I interviewed them is displayed in Table 6.3. The involvement of each participant is displayed in Table 6.6.

Table 6.3

Realist evaluation: Number of people interviewed: interviewees role and time of interview

	Completed program	*Number of interviewees*	*Not interviewed*
Fathers inside	7	7 (initial=5; follow-up=6)	0
Kinship participant	7	7	0
Mothers inside	6	6 (initial=5; follow-up=4)	0
Kinship participant	3	3	3
Mothers inside (mentors)	2	2	0
Kinship Participant	N/A	1	1
Primary stakeholders	N/A	5	N/A
Total	25	31 (Total interviews = 38)	

There is one main caveat in my research design that impacted the analysis of BtF case management. In practice, the caseworkers provided case management from the point of being accepted into BtF to one year after the parent returns home. During the eight-week program, I was able to engage the same participants from the time they completed the introductory interview, to the time they finished the eight-week program. Unfortunately, I did not have the resources to continue collecting data with the families throughout the full case management of one year after they returned home. However, during my time in the field, I was able to observe and collect data about the case management of the program participants during the eight-week program. Further, during my time in the field, I also observed how the caseworkers provided case management to past program participants who had returned home.

6.4.2.3. Details of interviewees: BtF participants and stakeholders

In this section, I provide details of interviewees including stakeholders and the parents and kinship participants involved in BtF. In Tables 6.4 and 6.5, I collate the details of the BtF participants. For anonymity of participants, pseudonyms have been provided in Tables 6.4 and 6.5 and these pseudonyms are used throughout the remainder of the thesis. Moreover, age ranges have been provided for parents (≤20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45) and children (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-17) and offense details have been removed. For additional anonymity, I applied the Areas Statistical

Geography Standard (ASGS) remoteness structure (ABS, 2016) to detail the location a parent intends to be released to. The ASGS divides Australia into five classes of remoteness based on a measure of relative access to services. These structures are: (i) major cities, (ii) inner regional, (iii) outer regional, (iv) remote, (v) very remote.

Table 6.4

*Details of BtF participants involved in the evaluation, Mothers: Referral and assessment form**

Pseudonym	Parent-inside's age	Location, incarcerated parent, on release	Main reason for referral	Kinship participant's relationship to parent inside	Children		
					Does Kinship participant have custody of child?	Age range of child	Level of contact incarcerated parent and child
Allyra	36-40	Major cities	To keep in contact with children and to be a better parent	Nephew	No	16-18	Living with prior to incarceration
					No	11-15	Living with prior to incarceration
					No	6-10	Once every 2 months
					No (grandchild)	0-5	Living with prior to incarceration
					Three adult children not participating aged between 18-21		
Bindi	36-40	Inner regional	To stay in touch with my child and maintain a relationship being able to reconnect with my child and have him back in my care	Mother	Yes	0-5	.
					Two children not participating aged between 18-21		
Evonne	31-35	Inner regional	To have contact with my child and be a role model for her	N/A[1]	N/A	6-10	weekly
Kirra	26-30	Inner regional	To be a role model for my kids and be a part of their lives	Mother	No, state care	6-10	.
					No, kinship care	11-15	.
Lenah (mentor)	31-35	Inner regional	I have been in [another centre] for the last 2 years and only got to see them every 3 months. Now I'm up here I'd love to engage with them anyway I can	Father	Yes	11-15	weekly
					Yes	6-10	weekly
					Yes	6-10	weekly
					Yes	0-5	weekly

Table 6.4 continues

Table 6.4 continued

Pseudonym	Parent-inside's age	Location, incarcerated parent, on release	Main reason for referral	Kinship participant's relationship to parent inside	Children		
					Does Kinship participant have custody of child?	Age range of child	Level of contact incarcerated parent and child
Marli	≤20	Outer regional	Build up understanding and relationship. I want contact with my son. I want him to know who his mother is	Father	No	0-5	Full care prior to incarceration
					.	dec.	.
Mia (mentor)	41-45	Major cities	.	Father	(grandchild)	0-5	They weren't born
					(grandchild)	0-5	
					Grandmother to three adult children aged between 18-30		
Rianna (repeat)	21-25	Outer regional	To reconnect with my family and stay in contact with SHINE	Father[2]	No	0-5	weekly

* Kinship participants' details provided in the table are of those who participated. At times this differed from the kinship participants' details provided on the referral form.

1 Caseworkers tried to contact ex-partner throughout program without success

2 Participated during the first time completing BtF, not this round

Table 6.5

*Details of BtF participants involved in the evaluation, Fathers: Referral and assessment form**

Pseudonym	Parent-inside's age	Location, incarcerated parent, on release	Main reason for referral	Kinship participant's relationship to parent inside	Children		
					Does Kinship participant have custody of child?	Age range of child	Level of contact incarcerated parent and child
Adam	≤20	Inner regional	To be connected to my own little family	Partner	Yes	0-5	Living as a family unit (prior to incarceration)
					Yes	0-5	
Bob Repeat	26-30	Inner regional		Mother[1] and sister[1]	Yes	6-10	@ once/3 weeks
					No, maternal kinship care	6-10	Less often
					Yes	0-5	@ once/3 weeks
David	31-35	Inner regional	Family court proceedings… 9 months until release and want to maintain contact, be supportive and remain active parent in their lives [edited to deidentify]	Mother	Yes	6-10	Full care prior to incarceration, then 3x week contact
					Yes	0-5	
					Yes	0-5	
Djalu	31-35	Outer regional	I want to build a relationship with my daughter and I just want to better myself for her and our future	Mother	No	6-10	nil
Jarrah	31-35	Major cities	Because I don't know the next time I will see them because there is a AVO in place at the moment and that finishes April next year and because I want to build a relationship with them so they don't forget me	(ex) partner	Yes	6-10	.
					Yes	0-5	.
					Yes	0-5	.
					Children/dyads not participating: [one child aged between 11-15], [three children between 6-15]		
Lue	31-35	Major cities	To be a better father figure	Parents	No	0-5	no- often phone calls only
Warwick	26-30	Inner regional	For support	Mother	No	6-10	Living as a family unit (prior to incarceration)
					No	6-10	
					No	6-10	
					No	0-5	
					No	0-5	

* Kinship participants' details provided in the table are of those who participated. At times this differed from the kinship participants' details provided on the referral form.

1 Participated during the first time completing BtF, not this round

I interviewed the incarcerated parents and the kinship participants who engaged throughout the program. Fifteen incarcerated parents completed BtF during the wave I evaluated. As detailed in Table 6.4 six mothers completed the program, with an additional two mothers who participated as mentors. The mothers' ages ranged from ≤20 to 41-45. In total, the mothers had 16 children. Most children were aged 0-5 (n=7) and, 6-10 (n=5). The level of contact mothers had with their children directly before their incarceration varied, with only two mothers having lived with their children. Most mothers were returning to Inner (n=4) or Outer (n=2) regional areas. The kinship participants were most likely the incarcerated mother's parent (n=6), and only two of the kinship participants were the primary carer of the children.

As detailed in Table 6.5 seven fathers completed the program. Six of the fathers were aged between 26-35. In total, the fathers had a total of 18 children. All children were aged 0-5 (n=10) or 6-10 (n=8). The level of contact fathers had with their children directly before their incarceration varied, with four fathers having lived with their children. Most fathers were returning to Inner (n=4) or Outer (n=1) regional areas. The kinship participants were most likely the incarcerated father's parent (n=5). Four kinship participants were the primary carer of the children.

Notably, during the round of BtF I evaluated, eight participants had signed onto BtF but did not complete the program; six were transferred and two left the program. The two participants left the program voluntarily, one prior to the first session and one after attending three sessions. I did not have an opportunity to follow-up with these participants and therefore their views were not able to be included in the evaluation. Due to resource limitations, I only interviewed kinship participants at the conclusion of the eight-week program. In total, I interviewed the 10 kinship participants who actively participated throughout the eight-week program. I interviewed stakeholders at any convenient time throughout the duration of my stay in the field.

Table 6.6 lists the incarcerated parents and their kinship participants. I aimed to interview the incarcerated parents twice throughout the duration of the program to understand longitudinally how context over time may have influenced the mechanisms and outcomes. I had planned to administer pre-post interviews of the eight-week program, however some of the interviews occurred after the first session due to prison lockdowns, transfers, court proceedings, and limited availability of resources. The green coloured boxes indict the attendance or involvement of the participants by each of the weekly sessions. The final two columns in Table 6.6 indicate the completion of the initial and follow-up interviews for each participant.

Table 6.6

Realist evaluation: Participants: Session attendance, graduation status, and interview completions

Pseudonyms	Session 1 Intro	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6	Session 7	Session 8 Graduation	Initial Interview	Follow Up Interview
Incarcerated Mothers										
Kirra										
Kinship										
Marli										
Kinship										
Allyra										
Kinship										
Evonne										
Kinship										
Bindi										
Kinship										
Rianna[1]										
Kinship[1]										
Mia[1]										
Kinship[1]										
Lenah[1]										
Kinship[1]										
Incarcerated Fathers										
Djalu										
Kinship										
Lue										
Kinship										
David										
Kinship										
Jarrah										
Kinship										

Adam										
Kinship										
Warwick										
Kinship										
Bob[1]										
Kinship[1]										

1: These participants were either mentors or incarcerated parents that were repeating BtF. The caseworkers focused on engaging first time participants.

Legend: Participated | Absent | ~~**Not applicable**~~

Of the seven fathers inside, four completed both an initial interview and follow-up interview. One father completed an initial interview but was transferred to another correctional centre prior to the completion of a follow-up interview. Two fathers completed a follow-up interview but were attending official court visits during the initial interview stage. One of the fathers who only completed a 'follow-up' interview had completed the program previously.

I interviewed one kinship participant that was connected to each of the fathers inside. Five kinship participants were mothers of the incarcerated father, and two kinship participants were female partners and mothers of the children of the incarcerated father.

Of the six mothers inside, three completed both an initial interview and follow-up interview. Two mothers completed an initial interview but were transferred to other correctional centres prior to the follow-up interview. One mother was transferred to MNCCC after the commencement of BtF. She was a previous participant in BtF. She was released to supported accommodation in Sydney where I was able to complete a follow-up interview.

Only three kinship participants connected to three mothers inside participated in the interviews. One kinship participant was a mother of the incarcerated mother; one kinship participant was a father of the incarcerated mother; and one kinship participant was a nephew of the incarcerated mother. Three incarcerated mothers who participated in BtF did not have a kinship participant who consistently engaged in the program. I was unable to interview a kinship participant for these mothers inside.

During the program, two mothers who had long sentences participated in the program for a second time. These two mothers were given the role of mentors and participated in all course activities. The kinship participants connected to the mentors did not participate in the weekly sessions over this time. I interviewed both mentors at the conclusion of the program. I also had an opportunity to interview one kinship participant of one of the mentors who was the father of the incarcerated mother.

I interviewed five primary stakeholders that had direct involvement in administering BtF. Four stakeholders had direct professional positions with SHINE. Two interviewees worked directly for BtF. One interviewee worked for SHINE and administered the First Peoples children's program from SHINE's Aldavilla Children's and Families' Centre. One interviewee was a previous employee of SHINE and was involved in creating the BtF program. Finally, one interviewee held a position within the MNCCC.

6.4.3. Document Analysis

Document analysis is a qualitative method where the researcher gathers, examines, and interprets both textual and pictorial documents created without the researchers' intervention (Bowen, 2009). Although document analysis can be employed by itself, many researchers use document analysis to triangulate data with alternate methods, particularly in case studies. In this sense, document analysis can strengthen and enrich case studies by allowing the researcher to verify or extend data, explore topics that may have been discounted, and provide a richer context to the background of the phenomena. A document can be selected from several origins, including organisational, institutional, or official state records, and can include a broad range of items that can range from advertisements to minutes of meetings to newspaper clippings to name a few. From this broad selection, researchers should attempt to select documents that address the aims of the research.

Many realist evaluators have taken advantage of document analysis as a way of understanding an intervention's CMOs. In her brief review, Manzano (2016) found documentary analysis was the second most used method for realist evaluations after qualitative interviews. This is not surprising as the objectives and aims of a document analysis parallel realist evaluation. From the outset, document analysis provides the historical, background, and current context that can significantly contribute to understanding CMOs. This can be particularly important where practices have survived employee turnover. There is also an added benefit that document analysis is a comparatively less obtrusive method for collecting rich data. Incorporating information and work that has already been collected is of particular benefit to evaluating programs that may have limited resources to devote to collecting further information for the sole purpose of an evaluation. There is also the added benefit that this is an unobtrusive approach; therefore, there is no researcher impact such as interviewer or social desirability bias. Document analysis also upholds the ideal that empirical data can be derived from multiple forms of documents, which reflects realist evaluations non-method-centric approach to understanding an intervention. Notably, this is especially important in research or evaluations involving First Peoples, where visual documents and geographical places have significant importance or meaning.

I integrated document analysis throughout the evaluation. I began gathering documents during the realist synthesis (see Appendix B) to develop a greater understanding of BtF and refine the research questions for the realist evaluation. I included these documents in the analysis of the evaluation and continued to gather and appraise documents throughout the fieldwork component and analysis stages. The documents included publicly available documents originating from SHINE or other organisations, and in-house documents from SHINE. There was a significant number of

documents collected. Through the analyse of the data, documents that directly informed the scope and aim of the evaluation were prioritised, such as documents that were provided to participants throughout the program, and the updated program manual. See Appendix H for a list of documents included in the evaluation.

Here, I should acknowledge a significant change in the design of my evaluation. When I originally engaged with SHINE and BtF, I planned to incorporate administrative data collected by BtF from all participants that had accessed or engaged with the BtF program throughout the funding period. This would have provided significant insight and would also have strengthened the outcomes of my evaluation by providing quantitative data. Unfortunately, the data that was collected for BtF was incomplete and was not deemed suitable for analysis. Therefore, I was not able to include a quantitative component in the evaluation.

6.5.4. Summary

In this section I have detailed the three points of data that I collected and analysed in the evaluation. This included (i) fieldwork notes and observations, (ii) semi-structured interviews, (iii) document analysis. I also provided a rationale for why I used these methods and why they are appropriate for a realist evaluation. In the next section I outline the steps I took to analyse the data.

6.5. Analysis of qualitative data

Realist evaluators analyse data with the intent to understand an intervention's generative causality; that is, to understand which mechanisms work, in which contexts, to produce which outcomes. The evaluator needs to explain how multiple points of data are analysed and integrated to develop, support, refute, and refine program theory. In this evaluation, I used Miles and Huberman's (1994) approach to qualitative data analysis for the data collected through fieldnotes, interviews, and documents. Miles and Huberman (1994) outline an iterative and ongoing process of data analysis consisting of three definitive steps. The three steps form a concurrent flow of activity that each contributes to the ongoing process of data analysis. I detail each step in this section. In section 6.5.1 I outline 'data reduction', which is a process of coding the data. In section 6.5.2. I outline 'data display', which is a process of visualising the coded data. Finally, in section 6.5.3. I outline 'conclusion drawing and verification', where analysis of the displayed data leads to

identifying patterns and relationships. In each section, I outline how I approached each step and consider each step's parallel to a realist evaluation.

6.5.1. Data reduction

The first step in analysing the data involved data reduction. Data reduction is a process of coding the data; to transform raw data into discrete categories that can be analysed. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest using conceptual frameworks or research questions to keep large amounts of qualitative data manageable. This directive is helpful for realist evaluations, which have discrete CMOs to test or refine. Also similar to realist evaluation processes, Miles and Huberman (1994) explain how coding is iterative and is a continuous process throughout the life of the project. For realist evaluations, this can allow for refinement of theories throughout the evaluation, including the allowance for adding or refining new concepts or theories.

I used the results of the realist synthesis to create the research questions for the evaluation. These research questions were then transformed into themes for coding. The research questions and corresponding codes are depicted in Appendix I. Basing the themes on the research questions reduced data overload and assisted in focusing the analysis on the rationale of the evaluation in identifying patterns and observations of BtF. I read the transcripts, field notes, and documents line by line to understand the meaning and intent of the data. Then I assigned codes for the corresponding CMOs that the data was informing. Coding was completed by hand using track changes in Microsoft Word.

Notably, the coding was an iterative and ongoing process. During data collection and analysis, I had noticed there were many 'unintended outcomes'. This led to the creation of a new coding system to capture what the unintended outcomes were, what the mechanisms were, and what contexts were influential. Further refinement of the CMO's established the realist synthesis occurred during data analysis. The development of the CMO's were adapted and considered during data reduction. The refinement is explored in the Chapters 7-9.

6.5.2. Data display

Data display was the second step used to analyse the data created by observations, interviews, and document analyses. Data display is a process of organising condensed coded data to visualise and identify patterns. Miles and Huberman (1994) offer numerous ways to organise and visualise data, including graphs, charts, tables, or matrices. Matrices are a systematic way of organising data that involves creating tables that cross two or more main dimensions. Matrices are a visual form of data display that has been designed to identify trends and patterns by making

comparisons and identifying relationships between concepts and between participants. Matrices are useful in identifying patterns, which is the cornerstone of realist evaluations. Matrices are not a strict design and can be adapted to directly address the research questions. For this reason, matrices are particularly recommended when conceptual themes have been identified. Again, this is particularly useful for realist evaluations as CMOs make up the variables of interest. Moreover, a matrix can include rows based on each participant. This allows for comparisons between participants as well as the experience of the participant across a program. This is again particularly helpful for realist evaluations where comparisons between participants is necessary in understanding participant's different experiences and the reasons for these differences.

Consequently, I used a matrix to display data in this evaluation. An example of the matrix form, and an abbreviated extract of a family is provided at Appendix J. I used an Informant-by-Variable matrix format where I constructed rows dedicated to a family, with sub-rows for the incarcerated parent and kinship participants. I then constructed columns to represent the outcomes with sub columns dedicated to mechanisms and contexts that impact the corresponding outcome. The matrix allowed me to analyse the fundamental questions raised in the evaluation. For example, I was able to examine an incarcerated parent's experience of BtF in relation to each research question. Then I was able to compare the experience of an incarcerated parent to their connected kinship participant and their peers. I could directly link relationships between CMOs. Due to the relative ease of comparing participants and variables, I could pinpoint demi-regularities, theories, or CMOs and how these compared to the realist synthesis. Within the matrix, each cell was multiform consisting of short blocks of text, direct quotes, and my explanations. Quotes were identified by re-reading and identifying explanatory examples from the coded text. Short blocks of text described the relevance, link, or relationship of identified pattern, or situation that had occurred. This was an iterative process and further examples were sought to explain, refine, refute, or support each of the identified themes, ideas, quotes, and experiences. If related evidence was found, the relationships between them was noted.

6.5.3. Conclusion drawing and verification

The third step used to analyse the qualitative data involved conclusion drawing and verification. Conclusion drawing and verification refers to the process of identifying patterns, trends, configurations, and regularities within the data display (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each conclusion drawn by a researcher needs to be verified through the data. Methods of verification vary and can be through cross referencing with the data collected, to deliberations with colleagues and experts, to connecting themes with empirical research. Testing conclusions ensures a researcher's analyses

are valid. This iterative process of identifying, verifying, and validating conclusions is the primary goal of realist evaluations. The aim of a realist evaluator is to find the patterns in CMOs, and then verify this by collecting further data, cross referencing other research and consulting experts. The conclusions can be valid when there is further evidence to support the conclusions and can feedback into refining a program's CMOs.

I identified and verified conclusions by scanning the matrix. Specifically, I identified whether the data from the evaluation were supporting, refining, or refuting the CMOs established in the realist synthesis. For the matrix, I developed a colour system for the relationship of variables designating green for support, yellow for refine and red for refute. This aided me in visually identifying patterns and relationships of CMOs.

For conclusion drawing, the matrix was designed to be read along the rows to gain an understanding of each participant's experience. An example of the matrix using extracts from the experiences of David and Grace (participants) are presented in Appendix J. As I had grouped families together, I could also note any changes within each family. Within each row, columns were designed to directly link the outcome to the mechanisms and identified contexts that contributed to the experience of each participant. Moreover, I aimed to interview incarcerated parents before and after the eight-week program. This gave me an opportunity to investigate changes during the eight-week program and note the changes the participants subjectively noted themselves. A note was included to identify if any change had occurred over this time. Also, for conclusion drawing, the matrix was designed to read down columns to gain an understanding of differences between participants – or to develop a cross-case analysis. This assisted in pinpointing participants that had different experiences and link this directly with the mechanism and contexts that contributed to these points of difference.

Processes for verification were identified from Miles and Huberman (1994) as well as the realist evaluation literature. Both emphasise the point of the analysis being an iterative process that develops throughout the research project. In terms of my research design, I had spent considerable time with the caseworkers. We would talk on a near daily basis, and this included talking about the processes of BtF. In this way, I was privileged to be able to verify theories directly and immediately without the confines of setting up formal interviews with a designated time. Moreover, I was able to revisit coded data and the wider literature to verify ideas, concepts, or theories. I also had the opportunity to attend conferences where I made links to people in the field as well as exposure to projects that were not yet published. This in turn also contributed to my understanding of the evaluation. Miles and Huberman (1994) as well as realist evaluators identify several specific

processes to verify data. Specifically, data can be verified by checking for repetitions, looking for contradictory evidence, triangulating data, and examining extreme cases. Overall, I developed an iterative framework to verify data and in turn understand the CMOs and address the research questions.

6.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the methods used in the realist evaluation of BtF. The rationale of the evaluation is to examine how individual, interpersonal, institutional, and infrastructural contextual factors interacted and impacted on participant's mechanisms in achieving outcomes. The CMOs established the realist synthesis (Chapter 5) guided the research questions. To address the evaluation rationale, I used an ethnographic approach analysing data from multi-methods including fieldwork notes and observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. These methods align with the rationale of the evaluation. The length of time in the field included three months during the administration of one block of the pre-release, eight-week program, as well as periodic dates four months thereafter. I interviewed 15 incarcerated parents - 2 previous participants and mentors (mothers) and 13 who had graduated from BtF (seven fathers, six mothers). I also interviewed 10 kinship participants, and five stakeholders. Fieldnotes, interviews, and documents were analysed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) matrix method. This process guides the coding, displaying, and analysis of the data collected. The themes for coding and analysing were directly informed by the realist synthesis, as well as iteratively, drawing in new understandings and concepts during the analysis of the data. Overall, these methods aim to refine the CMOs established in the realist synthesis.

I have presented the results of the evaluation over the next three chapters. The aims of each results chapter are two-fold; (i) to analyse the data collected during the realist evaluation focusing on CMO interactions, (ii) to refine the CMO to strengthen BtF going forward. The three primary research questions addressed are:

Chapter 7: *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family strengthen positive family relationships?*

Chapter 8: *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community?*

Chapter 9: *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family reinforce cultural values?*

Chapter 7
Strengthen Positive Family Relationships

7.1. Introduction

Chapter 7 is the first of three results chapters of the realist evaluation. In this chapter, I address the research question: *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family strengthen positive family relationships?* 'Strengthening positive family relationships' was an outcome of BtF identified in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5). Table 7.1 provides a summary of the pertinent contexts and mechanisms identified in the realist synthesis that were related to this outcome. Three mechanisms were identified: (i) improve communication within family, (ii) consider the role they have in the family, and (iii) consider views of other family members. Several individual, interpersonal, institutional, and infrastructural contexts were also identified. The overall aim of this chapter is to test and refine these relationships.

Table 7.1

Realist synthesis findings: Context and mechanisms of the outcome 'strengthening positive family relationships'

Outcome	***Mechanisms***	***Contexts***
Strengthening positive family relationships	Improve communication within family Consider the role they have in the family Consider views of other family members	**<u>Individual</u>** • Characteristics of family and family members • Personal qualities of caseworkers **<u>Interpersonal</u>** • Caseworker ⟷ Participants/family • Participant ⟷ Participant • Family member ⟷ Family member **<u>Institutional</u>** • SHINE for Kids • Mid North Coast Correctional Centre **<u>Infrastructural</u>** • Federal policies (First Peoples) • Availability of support services (for referral)

This chapter has five sections. In section 7.2, I analyse *to what extent* BtF strengthened positive family relationships. I identify the overall perspective on the outcome and identify the program components that achieve this outcome, before assessing whether the participants achieved this outcome. Significantly, achieving this outcome was dependent on family's circumstances – the context – so I identify significant barriers and strengths of each family in the process of achieving this outcome. In section 7.3, I refine *how* BtF strengthens positive family relationships. I analyse how the mechanisms and contexts identified in the realist synthesis interacted. I note the gendered experience of BtF, before considering the three mechanisms identified in Table 7.1 in turn. Throughout the analysis of each mechanism, I identify significant strengths and barriers (the contextual factors) that families had, as well as program strategies that enabled the function of these mechanisms; particularly the concept of 'planting the seed' and program flexibility. The analyses of the CMOs lead to significant refinement, which I present in section 7.4. Of note, the outcome 'strengthening family relationships' was refined to 'strengthening positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration'. I also outline how this impacted the corresponding mechanisms and identify the most pertinent contextual factors. Finally, a chapter summary is provided in section 7.5.

7.2. Outcome: Strengthening positive family relationships

In this section I identify to what extent the outcome 'strengthening positive family relationships' was achieved. I have incorporated three subsections; first I refine the outcome by analysing the perspectives of the interviewees on the value and operation of this outcome. Then I distinguish the program components that achieved this outcome. Finally, I analyse whether families achieved this outcome.

7.2.1. Perspectives on the outcome

During the realist synthesis (Chapter 5) I had difficulty determining the intended outcomes of BtF. Therefore, one of the goals of the evaluation was to refine the outcomes to ensure that the evaluation reflected the impact that was occurring with the participants. When I conceptualised the outcome 'strengthening positive family relationships', the aim was to develop broad skills, particularly around communication and empathy. In this section, I start to identify how the aim of BtF was targeted; specifically, around what can happen to familial relationships due to parental incarceration and supporting families as the incarcerated parent returns home. This was particularly

evident from the interview I had with the person who created BtF, the views of participants, and the focus of the eight-session program's content.

The opportunity to interview a participant who contributed to the creation of BtF arose during the evaluation. I did not have an opportunity to interview them for the realist synthesis. The interviewee had volunteered and worked in supporting people in prison for over 20 years. At the BtF was created, the interviewee's role included writing programs for SHINE. The interviewee described how BtF was adapted from a program called *Rediscovering Families*, which was available to any family with a parent in prison. *Rediscovering Families* was not adapted from a generalised parenting program, rather the interviewee indicated that "[m]y only outcomes were the children, that they [the parents] didn't use the children as pawns". To extend on this, we discussed how many funding bodies want recidivism rates reported in evaluations, but that this was not reflective of BtF. She gave the example of her exchange with a father who returned to prison after undertaking the program:

> *[The incarcerated father] said "I didn't steal a car. I bought it."*
> *I [the interviewee] went "that's fantastic!" I said "so why are you in here?"*
> *He said "well I drove it without a licence. Like it was registered".*
> *So he wanted me to be really proud of him. He said "well I learnt what you said". I said "well couldn't you learn the other bit".*
> *But his wife and him they came back with us and look to be honest, I mean I've got five [past participants] that I still know of that were on that program. Three have broken up but they focus on the child. So there's none of this pulling. Each of those families I'm talking about have great [relationships] - they've all remarried, but there's no pulling and throwing with these kids.* (Stakeholder interview 5)

Here the interviewee identified the primary outcome of BtF as developing family relationships that create the best situation for the children with a focus on the parent's relationship and how this impacts the child. This was reiterated when I followed up with the caseworkers during the evaluation. The caseworkers used this study cohort as an example, as they described how supporting a mother who had little contact with their teenage child (as with Evonne) was very different from supporting a young father who, prior to incarceration, had lived with their partner and three children under five years old (as with Adam). The caseworkers of BtF highlighted how there was a particular focus on working on the impact of parental incarceration, establishing expectations prior to the parents return home, and to break down any barriers that each family had during reintegration. Strengthening family relationships in this sense varied from establishing positive relationships for families still living together, or for parents to separate but establish ways to keep

both parents in the child's life. Ultimately, each dyad's 'outcome' is highly dependent on the family situation.

The interviewee also identified the intended mechanisms to achieve positive family relationships. The interviewee described how the idea for *Rediscovering Families* originated from the experience of case workers at SHINE who supported families experiencing incarceration and drawing upon each family member's concerns during the incarceration and the transition home. The interviewee identified the concerns of parents inside, compared to the partner outside, and how the children were impacted. In describing this process, the interviewee described clear links to the mechanisms that were established in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5) which are depicted in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2

Links between mechanisms of the outcome strengthening positive family relationships

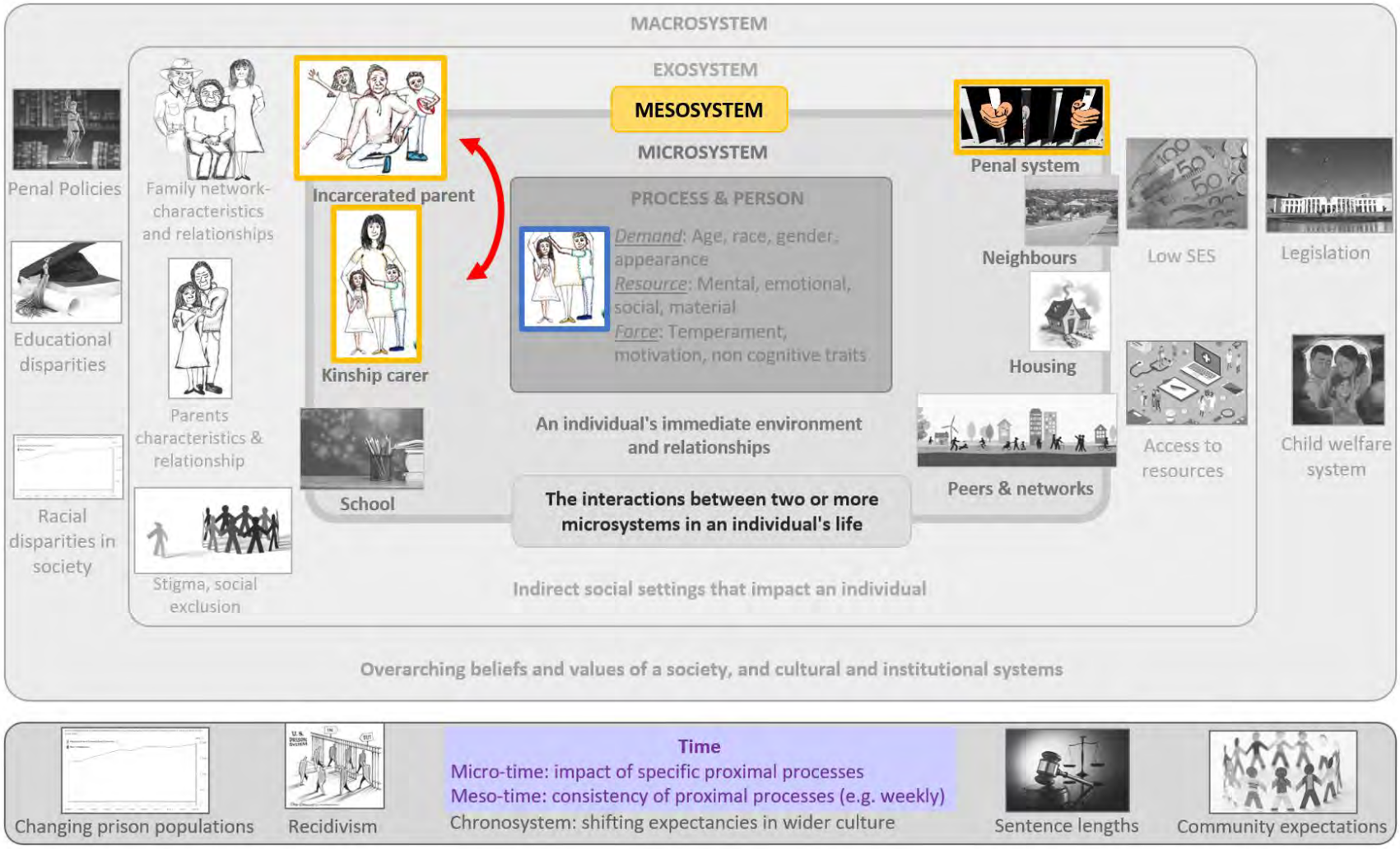
Mechanisms	Quote	Explanation
Facilitate communication within family to support reintegration	*"…I'm talking to the prisoners and I'm talking to the carers and I'm talking to the children. And the carers, the wives or the girlfriends would say 'oh my God he's going to get out soon and the last time we had sex was before I was pregnant. Now he's going to come out and I'm all stretched and droopy and do you know what I mean? Like I'm not that and we've never had it since. They were really body image concerned and yeah it was really interesting."*	This is an example of the interviewee identifying the need to facilitate communication on interpersonal issues between the parents that arise during reintegration.
Consider the role and impact each parent has in the family	*"So it's all these loving words behind walls [during incarceration] and then they get out and they don't know how to be a father. They don't know how to be a partner because that's not what happened when they went in. These children were feeding on that angst."*	This is an example of the interviewee identifying the need for parents to understand their role in their family and what this role involves.
Consider views of other family members	*"…they [the parents] were worried that they wouldn't be able to perform and they couldn't be a partner or a father and it was really interesting to hear these differences and then you've got the child in the mix not knowing what it was like to live with the parent in jail, whether it be male or female."*	This is an example of considering views between the parents.
	But what was my concern is that the children were being dragged and used between Mum and Dad. *"I'm not letting you see him and he's not coming to visit you."* *Has anyone asked the child? Well they're being dragged there and they don't want to go there. Has anyone asked the child? Has anyone sat down and said "hey excuse me, where do you want to go?"* [BtF aims to be delivered] from a child's perspective. Instead of being seen and not heard, it's more about monkey see, monkey do, so what should we do."	This is an example of the parents considering how their actions impact the children.

There are clear links in this discussion to the specialised intent of the program. Parental incarceration creates a context that parenting programs developed for non-incarcerated populations do not have the nuance to address. In this sense, the interviewee confirmed that '*strengthening positive family relationships'* was an outcome and mechanisms that were identified in the realist synthesis were reflective of the BtF, but was also able to refine the temporal and contextual issues that are specific to BtF's intended outcomes; as *strengthening positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration.*

The change can be depicted using Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model. In the realist synthesis (Chapter 5, section 5.4.3), Figure 5.4, BTF was depicted with the incarcerated parent in the centre with the focus of BtF on the relationship with the partner or kinship participant. The issue BtF aims to address (outcome), the red arrow identifies what relationships they aim to strengthen (where the mechanisms are), set within the PPCT model (contexts). The shift described in this section can be seen in Figure 7.1 below. Instead of the parent, it is the children who are centred. The main relationship BtF aims to impact is depicted by the red arrow between the parent and kinship participant, sitting within the children's *mesosytem*. Moreover, I included important *exosystem* factors and the factor of time – namely leaving prison and supporting through the time of reintegration for a period of 12 months.

Figure 7.1

Realist evaluation: Using PPCT to identify changes in BtF context, mechanisms, and outcomes: Strengthening positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration



This also resonated with the participants. Prior to the program, the incarcerated parent and kinship participants completed a registration form with one question asking, “What do you hope to get out of the program?” Every parent and kinship participant identified the aim of spending more time with their family during their incarceration and being a role model for their children. This was also reiterated in my interviews with program participants, where every parent and kinship participant had identified a need to spend more time with family members as the main aim.

Prior to the program only one parent who was incarcerated had expressed an aim to learn parenting skills:

> *…in case I picked up any extra tools or strategies to help with the kids. Even the most experienced parent doesn't know everything. Every child is different so therefore you can always pick up something from somebody else to help.* (David, initial interview)

In follow-up interviews, all participants had identified that BtF had provided tools to connect with their family during the program. This varied between participants, from being able to gift a painting, to being guided on what to talk with their partners about, to sharing stories with other parents inside. I expand on this in section 7.3.3.

Furthermore, at least one of the parents/kinship participants in 11 of the 15 dyads had recognised that participation in programs such as BtF provides documented evidence that the incarcerated parent was taking productive steps for reintegration.

> *It’ll help when I get out, going through custody battles and that as well, showing that I’m putting in the effort to be there for my son.* (Lue, initial interview)

In this way, BtF not only provides an opportunity for incarcerated parents to participate in the program, but also provides a way to demonstrate to justice administrators that a parent is being proactive in learning new skills for their parenting role. A range of services require such documented evidence, including probation, parole, upcoming sentencing, and child protection agencies. This is a role that BtF has in strengthening family relationships for reintegration in navigating the criminal justice system.

The process of refining this outcome and associated mechanisms had important impacts on the evaluation. The change in how I conceptualised this outcome did not affect the relationship of the mechanisms and contexts. From the outset, the realist synthesis incorporated the effects of incarceration into how the context and mechanisms impacted the outcome and therefore were already considered a primary factor in the evaluation and analysis. In fact, by narrowing the scope of

this outcome, it was easier to understand how BtF contributes to the wider knowledge of parenting programs and parental incarceration. In this instance, you can compare BtF to the well-known parenting program established for incarcerated mothers in NSW called *Mothering at a Distance* (Perry et al., 2009). *Mothering at a Distance* has been piloted and had both process and impact evaluations (Perry et al., 2011; Perry et al, 2009; Rossiter et al., 2015). The focus for *Mothering at a Distance* is teaching parenting skills. Conversely, BtF focuses on how to support the family transition from prison to the home. The two programs complement each other and were offered simultaneously at the MNCCC during the time of this evaluation. In practice the programs do not cover the same content even though they both focus on parents inside. *Mothering at a Distance* provides invaluable knowledge into ways of parenting from inside. On the other hand, BtF supports families during reintegration with a focus on establishing the variables that are important for parents and First Peoples. Refining this outcome helps to identify the impact of BtF (section 7.4).

7.2.2. BtF program components that strengthen positive family relationships

BtF had two distinct components: (i) the eight-week program and (ii) case management. The two distinct components have specific aims, which align to the outcomes identified in the realist synthesis. The eight-week program primarily aimed to *strengthen positive family relationships*. Whereas case management primarily aims to create *culturally appropriate networks* (see Chapter 8). This distinction was originally divided between employees (see section 4.4.3). For the first two years of implementation (2011-12), two facilitators were employed to run the eight-week program and one person was a family case manager. Over time, the case management position became redundant with responsibilities shifted to the two group facilitators, who had since been employed as ‘caseworkers’. Despite this shift of employee structure, the distinction in the components remained.

An evaluation can provide greater insight into a program and how to address issues when the components of an intervention can be distinguished and analysed. If a program component (or strategy) has a specific purpose in addressing a specific outcome, then this component specifically is addressed when identifying which mechanisms are being triggered, how this component is working well for one participant and not another or assessing how the component can be improved going forward. This is the case for BtF, where the eight-week program had significantly different aims (and therefore CMO’s) from the case management.

In considering this, the findings addressed in the following section are reflective of the incarcerated parents and kinship participants perspectives of the eight-week program, how BtF

contributed to *strengthening family relationships* during this time, as well as outlining the participant's plans upon reintegration. Notably, two of the parents participating in this evaluation had been released, returned to MNCCC, and enrolled into BtF for a second time. The returning parents shared significant insight on their interactions with their families and BtF post-release.

Significantly, the duration of the 'eight'-week program was severely disrupted during the intake I evaluated. The caseworkers noted that there were usually one or two disruptions during an intake. However, for the intake I was evaluating, the eight-week program was delivered over four months. Over this time several institutional and community factors delayed program delivery, including delays in participant approvals, MNCCC lockdowns, and the passing of an Elder from the community. These delays were accommodated in the program delivery, with content postponed from one week to the next. Therefore, although BtF was designed to be delivered consistently over eight sessions in eight weeks, in practice this was not generally the case, and for this intake the program's duration was significantly disrupted.

7.2.3. Stated and observed outcomes

A summary of the outcomes of *strengthening family relationships* for each family dyad is tabulated in Appendix K and includes each families' long-term goals, observed outcomes, identified barriers and strengths, and a quote supporting the outcomes. As noted by the information collated in Appendix K, I have situated the outcomes of BtF as occurring within a continuum in the families' lives – the families past experiences determine what outcomes are achievable for BtF and what are appropriate long-term goals. In understanding how the outcomes are achieved, I have also indicated the barriers and strengths of each dyad for achieving these outcomes.

Notably, I found it difficult to articulate the outcomes other than that of addressing the needs of the incarcerated parent. After interviewing an employee who contributed to the creation of BtF as well as the caseworkers there was a definitive aim on centring the needs of the child. This would imply that the outcomes of BtF should be measured from the child – whether this be on the wellbeing, support, schooling, or perceptions of their parent's relationship. In practice, the children have very little formal interactions with BtF. For example, in the program manual, children are offered day care during kinship participant's groups (realist evaluation reference #9). However, as there were no kinship participants groups (the absence of kinship participant groups is discussed in section 8.3.2.2), there were no children's group. Moreover, it would be difficult to control for the number of factors that contribute to a child's wellbeing to isolate the impact of BtF on the child. Alternatively, in practice, BtF is centred on the relationship between the incarcerated parent and the

kinship participants with a specific focus on the role of the incarcerated parent, identifying pertinent issues and how to address these issues. If the issue involves support such as housing, then this would also imply that the family's housing needs are being addressed. However, as noted, in the majority of the family dyad's, the kinship participants were not a partner (13 of the 15 families). The incarcerated parents were generally more focused on independent housing – not necessarily family housing. Overall, BtF was focused on addressing the needs of the incarcerated parent.

As presented in Appendix K, each family dyad achieved some form of *strengthening positive family relationships*. However, *strengthening family relationships* can be broadly interpreted. The relatedness of the kinship participants to the incarcerated parent and to the child was not necessarily parents and their biological children. In practice the broadening of the term for BtF captures the support network that can be impacted by an incarceration. In the sample, the kinship participants in BtF included the incarcerated parent's mother and/or father (eight participants), a current partner (two participants), an extended family member (two participants), or no contact (three participants). Consequently, the caseworkers aimed to address individualised needs, which lead to a variety of outcomes. For example, Bindi (incarcerated mother) had nominated her parents (the child's maternal grandparents) to participate in BtF. The grandparents had declined to participate. This may seem a negative outcome, however, the BtF caseworkers were able to support the placement of the children from a foster family to the grandparents by liaising with DoCS and providing support letters. Bindi was grateful for the placement, even though she was not in contact with the grandparents (during the follow-up interview). She had considered this a positive outcome in strengthening her family during her process of reintegration. Comparatively, Adam (incarcerated father) participated in BtF with his current partner Tish. They had been in a relationship for five years. At the time of arrest, Tish was pregnant with their second child, and police initiated a DVO which prevented the couple from communicating. BtF negotiated for a DVO variation to allow supervised visits and participation in BtF. This allowed the family to participate and also provided an opportunity for their first family photo during the graduation ceremony. The contexts surrounding these two cases is vastly different, with different outcomes and in turn different mechanisms. BtF was able to be flexible in achieving these goals.

The conceptualisation of *strengthening positive family relationships* was based in connectedness and informal bonds. Unlike programs like *Mothering at a Distance*, BtF did not focus specifically on parenting skills. As such, this outcome is difficult to assess using the qualitative data from the interviews and observations from this evaluation. The types of mechanisms that would be triggered are mostly latent – this is noted within the realist perspective of the "reasoning" mechanisms (Jagosh, 2019). In interviews, parents would say that "something just clicked" in the

groups or that some concepts that they were processing were difficult to describe. Despite this limitation, there were observable or stated outcomes that were conceptualised as strengthening family relationships. As displayed in Table 7.3, these outcomes were varied (with additional observations noted in Appendix K). Table 7.3 also includes examples provided by the participants for each of the subgroups. These subgroups included organising a family event (graduation ceremony) (n=7); establishing new ways for family members to connect during reintegration (e.g., taking things one step at a time, or addressing underlying issues) (n=7); establishing plans to modify negative behaviour (n=8); establishing appropriate guardianship for the children (n=9), and; facilitating processes for families with limited communication (n=3).

Table 7.3

Outcome, strengthening positive family relationships: Prevalence and examples

Outcome	#	Examples
Social family visit (graduation ceremony)	7	Allyra's history of incarceration had strained her relationship with Ellen, her 21 year old eldest daughter. Throughout the first few sessions, the caseworkers tried to engage Ellen, but were unsuccessful. For the final two sessions the caseworkers were able to contact Tim (her nephew) and support him to attend the graduation BBQ. Allyra was not aware that Tim was attending until the day. *"**They got Tim here for me. That just blew my fucking mind**. I was like, wow. Oh my God. I was so happy. Yeah. So yeah, no it was the best program I've ever done in jail." (Allyra)*
Establish new ways to connect to family to help with reintegration	7	David had been incarcerated "countless times". He identified that BtF had allowed him to take a different approach of how he stayed connected with his mother, Grace, who at the time of BtF was applying for custody of David's three children. He reflected that: *"I've had conversations with mum after certain days [sessions]. **It opened up the communication channels**. Before it was more or less, I deal with my stuff in here, she takes care of stuff out there. She makes the decisions for the children, I'm just left in here making the decisions for me at the time. Whereas we're now able to talk about what the kids need and what decisions need to be made and discuss that together. She's trying to keep me more informed as to what's going on out there. I'm trying to allow her to see that this place isn't all horror and violence and that like the movies." (David)*
Set plan to modify behaviour that negatively impacted their family	8	The current sentence was Warwick's first time in prison. He missed the first three sessions due to court appearances. However, on reflecting on the impact of BtF, he identified how the sessions he did attend allowed him to identify how his behaviours leading up to the sentence impacted on his family. *"Just before I come in I was pretty bad on drugs and I wasn't with my family that much. I got kicked away from up my in-laws for six months. I wasn't [allowed near] the kids so I wasn't going to the kids because of DoCs and yeah, just the ice, it just took me away from everything, my mum, my brothers. They didn't want me next to them and it took me to come in here to realise what I was really like, because I thought I was still the same person but I wasn't.* ***What I learnt [in BtF]- just what's more important in my life you know what I mean, besides drugs, being with my family**" (Warwick)*
Establish appropriate guardianship for the children	9	Prior to her sentence, Marli's child and niece passed away. The father of her second child was uncontactable. Marli's father, Ronald, participated throughout each of the kinship participant sessions. Ronald identified the intervention the caseworkers had in reconnecting to his grandchildren, which were important steps to keeping the family connected. *"[The biological father/primary carer] just took off and I couldn't get hold of him for about three or four weeks, and that's what I told [BtF caseworker] and as soon as I told [BtF caseworker], he rang [DoCs case manager] and then the very next day [the father] rang me up. **So it took [BtF] to get onto [DoCS case manager] to say look, what's [the father] doing**?"(Ronald)*
Facilitated processes for families with limited communication	3	Bindi (incarcerated mother) participated in the first 5 sessions of BtF, but was transferred to supported accommodation prior to graduation. At the commencement of BtF, her children were placed with foster parents. Throughout the eight-week program, the caseworkers tried to involve Bindi's parents in the kinship participant sessions – but were unsuccessful. However, the caseworkers were able to liaise with DoCS to support the move of Bindi's children from foster parents to the care of the Bindi's parents. I was able to contact Bindi for a follow-up interview where she acknowledged this support: *"**That they [the caseworkers] got my son back in my mum's care, and they got him off the system**. Majorly. That was awesome." (Bindi)*

SHINE gave great flexibility to the caseworkers in supporting participants, potential participants, or other Indigenous inmates. There were instances when the caseworkers would respond to incarcerated community members who were not participants of BtF. People in the community knew the caseworkers and their roles with SHINE, and if someone in their family was incarcerated, they could approach the caseworkers about them. The caseworkers took action to keep families connected, for example, the caseworkers helped a family apply for reimbursements of travel expenses in attending visits with an incarcerated parent. Other times, the support significantly assisted the group work. I recount Gabbie's story in Figure 8.6, section 8.3.2. where Gabbie was able to see her primary caregiver, her grandmother who raised her, one last time in a BtF session before she passed away. The grandmother was an active Elder in BtF and MNCCC and had shared words with the incarcerated mothers during this time. The caseworkers also had the flexibility to take advantage of prevailing opportunities. For example, the caseworkers had found an opportunity to purchase furniture on MarketPlace (MarketPlace is a feature on the social media site FaceBook that allows people to buy and sell goods). We dropped by to a person selling a couch while we were on a case call in Port Macquarie. The seller was relocating overseas, and once the seller found out the type of work BtF did, they donated all their furniture. This was gifted to BtF graduates who had indicated a need for furniture, white goods, clothing, and household items. The caseworkers indicated that they continually tried to find opportunities like this to support participants. These types of interactions are meaningful and show outcomes of strengthening families but would generally not be included if outside an evaluation's mandate.

7.2.4. Summary

In this section, I outlined the major changes that occurred to understanding the outcome *strengthening positive family relationships*. Identifying the specific aims and program components is important to this and further evaluations. The most significant refinement involved how the child was centred in the long-term impacts of BtF, with the short-term outcomes focused on the relationships of the incarcerated parents. Moreover, the outcomes are tailored for reintegration. Therefore, the outcome is more accurately described as *strengthening positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration.* Further, the evaluation indicated that this outcome draws predominately from the eight-week program and the analysis of the outcome *improving participant's support networks* in Chapter 8 draws predominantly from the case management component of the program.

These changes were significant, and confirmed by a number of significant interviewees, including an employee who was engaged in the creation of BtF. It was reassuring that the realist

synthesis elicited similar outcomes and mechanisms to that of the employee who was familiar with the origination of BtF. Also, knowing why a program was initially developed gives greater insight into understanding why certain outcomes were chosen, why certain mechanisms were developed, and what contexts were considered during the development and implementation phase.

Overall, these observations provided a thorough analysis of the stated and observed outcomes of the participants. Overall, each of the families had identified some way that BtF had strengthened their relationships with their families. However, due to the highly contextual nature of parental incarceration, the outcomes varied widely. The differences in these outcomes is the focus of the remainder of this chapter, where I analyse how the mechanisms and significant contextual factors impacted the ability to *strengthening positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration.*

7.3. Proposed mechanisms and the impacts of contextual factors

In this section I analyse the impact of contextual factors and the three mechanisms of BtF's outcome *strengthening positive family relationships*. These relationships were identified in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5) and depicted in Table 7.1 (section 7.1). In this section I identify the gendered experience of parental incarceration that impacted BtF. I then analyse each of the mechanisms and identify the most prominent contexts that impacted each one. The three proposed mechanisms considered in turn are: (i) 'facilitating communication within family; (ii) 'consider the role and impact each parent has in the family'; and (iii) 'consider views of other family members'.

7.3.1. Gendered experience

Parental incarceration is a gendered experience. The impacts of parental incarceration manifest differently based on gender; between incarcerated mothers and incarcerated fathers, whether the children of parents in prison are female or male, and the gendered nature of parenting and care and the that caregivers are more likely to be female (section 2.4). The gendered experience was evident in my sample and evaluation, and consequently how this has impacted my analysis and outcomes.

Mothers are more likely to be the primary caregiver which has significant impacts within parental incarceration, family structures, and community wellbeing (Sherwood & Kendall, 2013). Significantly, mothers who are incarcerated are more likely to trigger interventions from child welfare services. This was reflected in my sample. In my sample, all eight mothers had engagement

with child welfare services, either as an ongoing case at the time of evaluation (n=2), current placement with foster or kinship care (n=3) or were recently engaged with ongoing reporting (n=5). Overall, the mothers had 16 children engaged with BtF. At the time of the evaluation, these children were in the care of their biological fathers (n=3), kinship carer (female) (n=4), foster care (n=1), grandparents (n=5), or as incarcerated grandparents the children were with their biological parents (n=3).

This can be compared to the incarcerated fathers. In my sample, only three of the seven fathers had engagement with child welfare services. One had an ongoing case at the time of evaluation, which was settled during the evaluation and all three children were placed with their grandmother. Two fathers had previously engaged with child welfare services, with the children now placed with their biological mother or kinship carers (female). Overall, the fathers had 18 children engaged in BtF. Of these children the current custody was given to the biological mother (n=10), kinship carer (female) (n=5), and grandparents (n=3).

BtF was intended to work with family units, however in practice, anybody that has an impact on the children's life could participate – thus my use of the term kinship participant. Kinship participant was more representative as the participant was not always a primary caregiver. Of the six incarcerated mothers (excluding mentors), three of the kinship participants did not engage in BtF, two had no role in the children's life, and one had a restricted role. The relationship of the kinship participants that participated to the incarcerated mothers were their mother (n=1), father (n=1) or extended family member (male) (n=1). Comparatively, all incarcerated fathers had an engaged kinship participant. Four were primary carers, and three had an indirect but regular role in the children's lives. Kinship participants with a father incarcerated were primarily female, with the relationship of the kinship participant to the incarcerated father being their mother or sister (n=4), partner (n=2), or parents (n=1).

Overall, these relationships and experiences indicated incarcerated mothers were more likely to have children with a disrupted primary carer and interventions from child welfare services. Moreover, kinship participants were more likely to be female, both as the primary carer of children and as the enrolled kinship participant in BtF. Notably, this also extended to the Elders of BtF. Of the 18 active volunteers, 16 were Aunties and two were Uncles.

The gendered experience of parental incarceration is important to note. First, the types of family relationships that are strengthened will be different in terms of their relatedness and role in care giving. Moreover, the types of services that are needed may be different, such as liaising with child welfare services.

7.3.2. Proposed mechanism: Improve communication within family

The first mechanism I consider is 'improve communication within family'. Communication refers to the exchange of information and caring for one another (section 5.4.3). Previous research demonstrates that communication in families is multi-faceted, culturally dependent, and is relative to each family's own relational characteristics (Heath et al., 2011; Lohoar et al., 2014; Walker & Shepard, 2008). As discussed in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5), BtF focuses on facilitating communication within the family as a mechanism for strengthening family relationships. Communication is a common mechanism or outcome in any parenting program. However, as discussed in section 7.2, for BtF this mechanism focused specifically on communication that would assist reintegration. The focus of this mechanism shifted from a focus on facilitating communication in families to a mechanism focused on facilitating communication around issues about the incarceration and reintegration of the parent. In section 7.2, I also noted that strengthening family relationships was highly dependent on the context of the family. This had a direct effect on how the mechanism 'improve communication within family 'was triggered. Overall, communication has a multifaceted nature, and additionally parental incarceration is highly contextual. Consequently, the BtF caseworkers responded to numerous contextual factors that influenced how this mechanism was triggered.

In this section I outline three pertinent observations for BtF. First, the quality of communication prior to BtF was a primary contextual factor that directly impacted how BtF worked and benefited a family. This relates specifically to the interpersonal contextual factor between family members. The second and third observations relate to how the mechanism of 'improve communication within family' works within the role of reintegration, specifically the process of removing of barriers and building platforms. I consider each observation in turn. While these three observations do not capture the full complexity of communication and parental incarceration, this is beyond the scope of this evaluation.

7.3.2.1. The quality of communication prior to the program

A significant contextual factor that impacted the outcome was the quality of communication within a family dyad prior to enrolling in BtF. Each family's frequency and regularity of communication, and whether a relationship was positive prior to enrolling in BtF impacted on the level of assistance BtF could provide. For example, one criterion to enrol into BtF is that the incarcerated parent and kinship participants must both agree and be willing to participate in the sessions. Consequently, this leads to families with open communication and relatively strong

relationships to enrol whereas non-communicative families could not enrol. The eight-week program was not a family counselling service and thus could not directly address broken family ties. However, the facilitators of BtF exhibited cultural values that dictate that you need to support someone if you can (Chapter 9). Consequently, five of the incarcerated parents that completed BtF in this evaluation did not have a kinship participant confirmed upon their application. This included three incarcerated mothers participating in the program without a kinship participant or with a kinship participant with no relationship to the children. Of these three mothers, the kinship participant they nominated explicitly stated to the BtF caseworkers that they had ended their contact with the mother and did not want to participate in BtF. Similarly, for two of the seven incarcerated fathers, the primary carer of their children refused to be a part of BtF. Of these two incarcerated fathers, one father had his parents, and the other father had his mother and grandmother participate. The program logic suggests that the relational ties between the parent-inside and the kinship participant determine whether BtF could effectively trigger this mechanism. From an evaluative point of view, the lack of a kinship participants completely disrupts the 'program logic' or at the least be considered an 'unsuccessful completion'.

Moreover, a family's quality of communication prior to BtF also influenced how the mechanism of 'improve communication within family' operated. In practice, most parents inside and kinship participants (11 of the 15 dyads) reported frequent, ongoing, and positive communication relative to their circumstances. For example, families frequently telephoned each other and had physical visits. Their primary reason for enrolling in BtF was to increase their contact with their family. However, as in any program, there was a spectrum of base level communication between the families. This was reflected in how BtF could 'improve communication'. For example, two families (Adam and Jarrah) indicated that the most impeding contextual barrier to communication was infrastructural. In both cases police submitted DVO's at the point of arrest which prevented any form of contact. In both instances, the communication prior to incarceration was frequent and ongoing, and the DVOs had severed this communication since incarceration. BtF fulfilled this mechanism as advocates in removing the DVO's. Comparatively, one of the fathers inside (Lue) had a very strained relationship with his parents with minimal contact. In this case BtF's role was not as an advocate, but rather encouraging any communication.

The interpersonal context of quality of communication prior to BtF not only dictated whether BtF could assist in improving communication but also determined how the mechanism of improving communication operated. I noted two functions of how 'improving communication with the family' worked: 'removing barriers' and 'building platforms'. I consider both in turn.

7.3.2.2. Removal of barriers (infrastructural/institutional)

'Removing barriers' refers to addressing obstacles imposed by the institutional and infrastructural context of parental incarceration. The caseworkers removed barriers to ensure families could communicate. Barriers that I observed were all characteristic of the infrastructural and institutional contexts as outlined in the four I's (Table 3.2, section 3.3.1.1.) – this refers to organisational barriers such as the correctional centres, and wider political structures such as overall cultural attitudes about correctional centres. In this section I provide examples of barriers that both could and could not be removed.

The institutional and infrastructural contexts of parental incarceration are designed to be inhibiting and restrictive. The basis of incarceration is to separate a person who has offended from the community. The BtF caseworkers and MNCCC employees had a constructive working relationship. However, BtF still had to work within the prison context as the caseworkers aimed to 'improve communication within the family', which include several unnegotiable barriers. For example, BtF requested that incarcerated parents not to be transferred from MNCCC for the duration of the course. This would allow the family to benefit from the program as well as allow a parent inside to be at the correctional centre that was closest to their support network and community.

Unfortunately, this request was overridden on six occasions. The reasons included transfers for access to health services (one participant), court attendance (one participant), relocation to other correctional centres (three participants), and placements in residential drug rehabilitation programs (one participant). Of the participants who transferred, all had engaged in BtF and indicated they wanted to complete the program. I completed a preliminary interview with four of these six participants and organised to interview the other two participants prior to their transfer. I did not have an opportunity to follow-up with the six participants. There were also occasions when participants who graduated from BtF were restricted from attending one or more of the sessions due to transfers or that they were in solitary confinement. Therefore, the prison context prevented some families from benefiting from accessing the program and disrupted participation for others.

The caseworkers from BtF also worked within the policies of other agencies. Understandably referrals to services would require consideration of other organisation's policies. Additionally, engaging other services also impacted engagement in the eight-week program, as illustrated in Figure 7.2. BtF were malleable to institutional and infrastructural restrictions.

Figure 7.2

Removing barriers: Kirra's story, infrastructural barriers

Kirra has two children, a daughter and son, both under state supervision. In NSW, home placements have been outsourced to non-governmental organisations. Kirra's son was placed under kinship care with Kirra's Uncle in a regional town three hours away, and her daughter was placed with a foster family via a of local NGO.

The BtF caseworkers contacted the NGO to request that Kirra's daughter attend the final graduation at the end of the eight-week program. However, the NGO's policy stated that children are not allowed to visit correctional facilities, including to visit their biological parents.

Kirra was increasing worried of the wellbeing of her daughter in foster care. She had tried to arrange visits with her daughter via the NGO on a number of occasions prior to BtF. In her reflection, Kirra identified that being denied visits was negatively impacting her relationship and bond with her daughter:

> *"[foster care case worker] is very strict. Because I'm in jail, she thinks that I'm in here for fucking life. She thinks it's a bad environment to bring [Kirra's daughter] up and see me. Let them know where we are. That way they can learn and know mum's not outside. She is not coming to see me. She's in jail. That's why she can't come and see me. They've got to know a wrong from right. Mum did this, so that's why she went to jail."*

Throughout the eight-week program the BtF caseworkers took an advocacy role to negotiate with the NGO that the child attends the graduation ceremony, but to no avail.

Kirra's story (Figure 7.2) provides an example of barriers that could not be overcome, however, the BtF caseworkers were able to remove many barriers. For example, the caseworkers applied for AVO's to be lifted, suspended, or removed for incarcerated parents to communicate with their nominated kinship participant and children. For the cohort I was observing, this occurred for two separate families (Adam's and Jarrah's families). In both cases, at the time of arrest, police had ordered AVO's on behalf of the co-parent (who were the kinship participants in BtF) without the co-

parent's consent. In other cases, there were also subtle barriers that BtF addressed. In high security correctional facilities, inmates are required to wear a jumpsuit during visitations. During one of the enrolment interviews, one of the kinship participants inquired whether the parents-inside would be wearing the jumpsuits during BtF sessions. The kinship participant described how the jumpsuits negatively impacted the children during visits and was a constant reminder of their parent's incarceration during the visit. During the final graduation, parents were not required to wear jumpsuits. Although this may be a small barrier, this provided a great relief for the family and contributed to the community centric atmosphere of the program and graduation ceremony. Overall, the removal of barriers is an important function in improving the communication within families.

7.3.2.3. Building platforms (Interpersonal)

The second way BtF 'improved communication within the family' was 'building platforms'. Building platforms refers to opportunities the BtF caseworkers provided to facilitate opportunities for families to connect and communicate. In considering the outcome of *strengthening family relationships* through the mechanism of communication, the platforms BtF built were related to interpersonal relationships. Specifically, BtF provided a space to communicate about issues regarding the transition home for the parent inside – both within the family units and between peers.

The process of building platforms in personal relationships was evident as BtF was continually focused on creating safe spaces to talk about the transition from prison to home. Notably, BtF was not focused on parenting techniques or providing parenting advice. Rather the program focused on peers sharing answers to targeted issues about their role as a parent and key topics the parents inside and kinship participant should be considering in the transition home. Again, the way this mechanism was triggered was dependent on the type of relationship between the parent inside and the kinship participant. This relationship was determined by a gendered dynamic (section 7.3.1) as well as the type of relationship – as parents, grandparents, partner, kinship carer or other.

For example, David was a 36-year-old father who had been in and out of prison since his early twenties. His mother, Grace, was the current primary carer of his child and participated in BtF as the kinship participant. Both David and Grace had indicated that they had a strong relationship and talked almost daily. They had both also indicated that the primary reason for participating was to provide evidence in an upcoming court hearing that David was working towards becoming a

better parent. However, at the conclusion of BtF, both David and Grace indicated that group sessions had given them a platform to discuss issues that they had not talked about at any other time that David had returned home from prison: “I discussed some things on the phone with mum at certain times when it came up and it presented the opportunity for those conversations” (David, follow-up interview).

Platforms could also be created for families who had difficulties communicating. Lue was a 28-year-old father who was coming to the end of his first sentence of 7 years. He was the first person in his family and extended family to be incarcerated. Lue’s parents lived in Sydney and were the BtF kinship participants but did not have guardianship of Lue’s son. During the enrolment interview, Lue had warned the BtF caseworkers that his parents would be reluctant to participate in the sessions suggesting that “Dad seems to be alright. Mum doesn’t like to talk about it much. She always knows how long I’ve got left to go home, so yeah.” Although Lue telephoned his kinship participant’s home phone once a week, he and his parents had a relatively limited relationship. In talking to Lue’s parents, this tension had arisen from the impact of prison and Lue’s behaviour prior to prison which had disrupted Lue’s relationship with his parents and brothers, and Lue’s family with their extended family:

> *I mean these boys [Lue’s brothers] - these young boys, they talk about him [Lue] now but it's taken a long time. I mean this whole family fell apart. The whole family. We had issues. We've all had emotional issues. We actually moved to Queensland for a year. That's when [Lue] was on the run and all sorts of stuff. But he was always in contact with me. I dealt with it. [Lue’s father] didn't talk to him for a year. I dealt with it. But anyway, and he ended up where he is. That didn't work out up there. You can't run away from stuff. There's no family up there and these young boys - plus we had deaths in the family and all - my dad and their step pop. Everything happened. [Lue] in jail. Like your brother is in jail. It's not a real proud thing to say*. (Lue’s mother, interview).

In the first session of BtF, Lue had closed body language and made limited contributions in the discussion. The caseworkers successfully engaged with Lue’s parents. Once Lue learnt his parents were participating, he became more focused in the sessions and contributed to the discussions more. He would also stay behind each session to engage further with the BtF caseworkers. At the graduation ceremony he made a point to inform me that BtF was unlike any program he had

completed throughout his time in prison, and that he had enjoyed the program and it had given him the confidence to talk to his parents more openly about the impact of incarceration and returning home. This sentiment was reciprocated by Lue's mother. When I asked if there was any support for her, she disclosed that it was only:

> *You guys - Indigenous Help is the only help we've got ever. Ever. It's only you guys that bother. Other people say it's just the way it is. No, you guys are the only ones that have ever. Anywhere, it's only been the Indigenous Help ever.*
> (Lue's mother, interview)

Comparatively, the familial situations between David and Lue's families provide examples of numerous contextual factors that impact how BtF could trigger an improvement in communication. BtF allowed for a family with regular communication to benefit from a 'platform' as much as a family with infrequent communication. The caseworkers were adapting to each participant's contextual factors to create the stage for conversations about transitioning from prison to home.

7.3.3. Proposed mechanism: Consider the role each parent has in the family

The second of three mechanisms I analyse in this chapter is 'considering the role each parent has in the family'. In the realist synthesis (Chapter 5), this mechanism was a process of identifying the role a parent has within their family. Colonisation and parental incarceration have disrupted family structures and dynamics of First Peoples communities (Baldry & McCausland, 2009; Ball, 2009; Moresu-Diop, 2010). Moreover, the roles people have in their family has a gendered dynamic, as females are more likely to take on more parenting duties. As identified in section 7.3.1, carers were more likely to be female, and incarcerated mothers were more likely to have been involved with DoCs whereas incarcerated fathers were more likely to have their children in the mother's care. These factors are important as this mechanism reaffirms parental roles.

A major refinement to this mechanism was that the process did not involve teaching parenting roles, but rather understanding the impact the behaviour of incarcerated parents had in their family. This was particularly evident by comparing the pre- and post-interviews of incarcerated parents before and after BtF's eight-week session. One of the aspects I analysed was whether incarcerated parents changed in how they considered their role within their family before and after the eight-week program. A summary of quotes from each of the interviews is depicted in Appendix L. As can be seen in the second column, the 10 parents that held an initial interview were able to identify good parenting practices, such as Bindi's description of:

> *I know how to keep a house running, and kids getting up for school, and providing for them, and just being there every day…So, that to me shows me that I played a big stability in his life.* (Bindi, initial interview)

Some parents could even identify the impact of their anti-social behaviour had on their family, such as how Kirra identifies how drug abuse had impacted her role as a mother:

> *…that's another thing I'm doing my head in over, yeah. I think that every time I tell him something I always do the opposite because of fucking drugs.* (Kirra, initial interview)

Overall, the incarcerated parents were aware of the role that they had, and many recognised the impact their anti-social behaviour and incarceration had in fulfilling this role. In the follow up interviews, these views did not change for each of the parents. However, in the follow-up interviews, parents were focused on how parents' behaviours, actions, and subsequent consequences affected their family, particularly around the desire to prevent this when they return home. For example, Adam identified how he needed to take steps to be able to be a role model and support his family:

> *I want to, like I said, take it step by step before I even look for a job, because I've got two kids that I've now got to, you know, think about. Even though I've got the job is on the agenda of the list, is one of the main things to support them, but you know, I want to be a dad before I even get a job. Like it's hard to - yeah, it's hard in a way, but it's something - it's manageable, something I can do. I know, I'm easy to do it - I can do it, willing to do it.* (Adam, follow-up interview)

As such, this mechanism tended to focus only on the role of the incarcerated parent. There was a continuous focus on the actions and consequences of the parent that was incarcerated, and the use of the kinship participant's feedback was to reaffirm the impact and consequences of actions. This was also reaffirmed from how the kinship participant's sessions operated. In the program manual, kinship participants were scheduled to have weekly sessions. In practice, there were no kinship participant groups. This was predominately due to the distance that some kinship participants would need to travel, time, and resources. Contributions were sought one-on-one from phone calls with kinship participants. Therefore, the weekly sessions ended up focusing on the incarcerated parents rather than the kinship participants.

These characteristics led to refinement of this mechanism. In the realist synthesis (Chapter 5), this mechanism was conceptualised as 'considering the role each parent has in the family'. After evaluating the program, the mechanism can be more accurately considered as 'the incarcerated parent considers the role and impact they have in their family'.

In this light, capturing the full complexity of family functioning and the impact of parental imprisonment is beyond the scope of this evaluation; however, in the following sections I outline two pertinent contextual factors. First, significant life events and drug use directly impacted how parents inside had performed in their role as a father or mother. Many parents had described drug use initially as a coping mechanism that led to dependency. Second in considering how this mechanism works, I note caseworkers' approach of 'planting seeds'.

7.3.3.1. Significant life events and drug use

Significant life events and drug dependency experienced by incarcerated parents were contextual factors that impacted how BtF engaged with families. Trauma-informed research indicates that there is a correlation between adverse life experiences and problematic relationships to drugs and alcohol (Dube et al., 2003; Nadew, 2012). People in prison have higher reported usage of drugs and adverse life circumstances (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019; Fazel et al., 2006; Grella et al., 2013). I found that every incarcerated parent in BtF identified drug abuse as a contributing factor in their actions leading up to their incarceration. During the interviews, 12 of the 15 incarcerated parents linked their drug use to a traumatic experience in their lives. I did not specifically prompt for this relationship between trauma and drug use in the interviews as this had not been identified as an influential contextual factor to investigate during the realist synthesis. Figure 7.3 outlines Jarrah's story which is emblematic of the relationship between drugs, alcohol, and significant life events.

Figure 7.3

The impact of significant life events: Jarrah's story

Jarrah was a 34-year-old dad inside. During our initial interview, Jarrah proudly wrote down the names of his eight children. Arrows linked his kids to the names of three mothers.

My opening question: "so can you tell me about yourself?"

What followed was an eloquent and detailed battle between football and drugs.

Like all the other kids he grew up on football but "…I stopped playing footy and started drinking at about 17…". At first the drinking was just social when he hung out with his friends, but eventually "the effects of alcohol, which took over my - pretty much everything". He tried getting back into football and played a few knockouts but "I just couldn't because of the effects of alcohol."

At 20 years old, Jarrah was diagnosed with chronic pancreatic health issues. This impacted his life considerably and so at:

> *25 - 26, I realised that it [pancreatic health issues] wasn't going to stop. So I sort of thought well, fuck…I can't stop drinking. If I don't stop drinking I'm going to be dead by 40. So got on to about 27 - 28, and I thought, I'm going to give up the drinking but I couldn't really, so I just sort of started taking Ecstasy and that, and then Ecstasy led to speed and then from speed at the age of 28. So from about 27 to 28 - 29, the Ecstasy, then gas, which is speed, to late 29s, and then on my 30th I tried Ice, and yeah, here I am, four years later. (Jarrah, initial interview)*

Jarrah linked his use of ice at 30 to another significant event; the death of his father. Jarrah had only mentioned one person in his answer to that opening question: his father. Jarrah's father was an undeniably prominent man in Jarrah's life. But his memories of his father were spiked with a warning against alcohol. Jarrah identified that "my Dad was pretty crook from the alcohol" and he didn't want to experience the "health and wellbeing" issues that eventually took his father's life.

Diana was the kinship participant in BtF for Jarrah. She was the mother to three of Jarrah's children, the youngest of which Jarrah had not seen in 6 months due to a police ordered DVO. Diana said, "He's a really good dad to them" and "they've got the best but they just don't have their dad around. I can't fill that gap for them."

Diana's mum is more tempered "he's good when he's straight. He's a really good bloke…but when he's off the rails, get away." Even Diana conceded that Jarrah's choices got progressively worse "about four years ago" when Jarrah's father passed away.

> *Jarrah explained: "I'm going to give up the drinking but I couldn't really, so I just sort of started taking Ecstasy… then on my 30th, I tried Ice and that was pretty much the end of me…what come with it as well, was the violence."*

As demonstrated with Jarrah (Figure 7.3), drug abuse was linked to traumatic experiences, including the diagnosis and management of a chronic illness, as well as the death of his father. Moreover, there was also a link to how this drug dependency influenced other relationships. This was evident in other participants also, where both incarcerated parents as well as kinship participants directly linked this drug abuse to how the parent inside performed or viewed their role in the family.

The caseworkers identified that the impact of drugs and alcohol was an important contextual factor in how they supported families. The participants were provided opportunities to self-disclose whether they believed they needed support in this area – during registration or during the completion of needs assessment at the beginning and end of the eight-week program. The impacts of drugs on relationships was also discussed during the eight-week program. The focus of one session was "Reoffending Patterns". The primary question was broad: "What do you think leads you back to reoffending?". However, the prompts for the caseworkers were specific, including the instructions on how to talk about specific topics:

> *Drugs/alcohol – what makes you go back to taking drugs and alcohol – need to make them realize that they can't blame drugs/alcohol?* [BtF program manual]

This was a way to talk about a specific topic, share experiences within the groups setting, and then provide de-identified feedback between kinship participants and parents. At the higher level of intervention, caseworkers proactively advocated and linked parents into supported accommodation (further details in section 8.3). Overall, the impacts of drug abuse were the greatest contextual factor that impacted how BtF addressed the mechanism of 'considering familial roles' to reach the outcome of 'strengthening family relationships'.

7.3.3.2. Planting the seed

The ethnographic approach allowed me to develop a deep understanding with how each mechanism operated. This was particularly important with the mechanism of 'considering the familial role' due to its reliance on how this mechanism functioned. I talked to the caseworkers daily during the fieldwork. One of the regular phrases they used when they talked about how they

interacted with participants was ‘planting a seed’. In this case, ‘planting the seed’ referred to a non-directive and conversational process of discussing topics. In service delivery, this can be used as a way of teaching and learning. This is a prominent form of communication in Indigenous cultures across the world and particularly throughout First Peoples communities in Australia (further details in section 9.3.5). This way of learning refers to the idea of non-directive teaching; leading by example, showing how to act in certain situations rather than telling people how to behave, and providing a space for the learner to emulate the new skill.

Planting the seed was common throughout every mechanism of BtF and the principal way of how ‘considering familial roles’ operated. There were numerous program activities that characterised planting the seed, such as yarning in the group sessions. Each week, the caseworkers would pose questions and the group would provide answers and use personal anecdotes to explore the issue. For example, in the second session of the eight-week program, the discussions revolved around the impact of the prison sentence and their actions that lead to the incarceration. This was then posed from different points of view; first from the perspective of the parent inside, then the kinship participant, co-parent, the child, and finally the extended family. The group members share their experiences in a non-judgemental environment and the caseworkers try to focus the topics that demonstrate how the parents have an important and influential role in their family. Both the father’s and mother’s groups identified that prison had overtly removed them from their role as a parent and that this removal had placed pressure on the primary carer and kinship participants in filling this void. The caseworkers did not say “this is what you are doing to your family by being in prison”, rather the group work allowed the parents to share and compare stories and make the observations about how prison impacted their role in the family. The caseworkers would then collate the responses, type them into a Word document, print them out, then give a copy of the responses to each of the members the following session to discuss the answers as a group. An example of the printout can be seen in Figure 7.4. The caseworkers allowed parents inside to consider the role they have in their family and how it would be best to fulfil that role. The caseworkers planted a seed that connected how their behaviour impacts their role and their family.

Figure 7.4

Weekly discussion: example of a printout of answers (page one of two)

GROUP 8 ANSWERS / SESSION 2

Men – Wednesday 1 June 2016

How is the gaol sentence affecting you? (making you feel)

- Detached
- Still alive
- Done me good because I'm not doing drugs
- There's no Dad's Group in here
- Can't sleep with my kids – wake up with them
- Thinking about the kids before you go to sleep and when you wake up
- Trust issues – you don't know who you're talking to
- Adapting an environment that's not child friendly
- Regrets
- Missing out of the joys of parenting
- Not being in touch with the kids
- Not being an active parent
- Will my kids remember me

How do you think you being in gaol affects your partner/family member?

- Bottling emotions up-magnifying
- Anger
- Resentment
- Sick of it - they've had enough
- Issues are confronted
- Communication issues
    - Breakdown
    - Hard – no time
- Trust
- Sharing their lives with other child
- Life heaps hard -they need someone helping them with the kids
- Hurting them
- Hate – love
    - On the spot decisions
- Extra responsibilities
- Don't have time for themselves
- All of a sudden single parent

How do you think your children feel about you being in gaol?

(continued) Weekly discussion: example of a printout of answers (page two of two)

- They get low self esteem
- To gain and to understand
- They get bullied
- Breaking promises
- Confused
    - Emotional
    - Hurt and angry
- Angry
- Heartbroken
- Sad
- Why was I giving – WHY????
- Destroyed
- Left out – you're not there
- Upset on special occasions
- Not there for father's day
- Blame themselves
- They don't have identity
- Missing the contact

How do you think the family (aunt, uncle, grandma etc) **feel about you being in gaol?**

- Relief
- Wake up call
- They know where we are
- Depend on their involvement with the kids
- Looking out for the kids
- Kids come first
- Life changing responsibilities
- Didn't take long
- Happy

However, there are challenges for planting a seed within BtF's institutional contexts. In considering the challenges, we can consider Djalu's story (Figure 7.5).

Figure 7.5

Planting the seed: Djalu's story

> *Djalu was a father inside that was identified as having a promising future and lasting relationship with BtF. His Grandmother and Aunties were respected members of the community and dedicated their time to supporting people incarcerated at the MNCCC.*
>
> *Djalu was a highly engaged participant of BtF; he turned up on time, regular contributed to group discussions, and inspired the group with his stories of participating as a musician in events.*
>
> *But things changed.*
>
> *Djalu stopped attending the sessions. The other participants let us know that he was in the 'Bone Yard' (the Protective Unit in the correctional centre). A new inmate had arrived at the MNCCC that was connected to the murder of a close family member. Djalu had requested to be moved to the Protective Unit.*
>
> *Djalu did not finish the program and he did not attend the graduation ceremony. The presence of the new inmate, the extra administration of being in the different sector in the protective unit, and the pressures of organising re-entry had all contributed to Djalu's disengagement in BtF.*

BtF is delivered to people who are in prison. The participants came from an environment conducive of behaviour that required a prison sentence. Prison is a controlled environment that is separated from the entire developmental system that led to the parents' behaviour. To put it into perspective, BtF is an eight-week program that aims to address issues that have developed over a life-course and impacts that have been found to be intergenerational (Atkinson, 2002; Atkinson, 2008). Moreover, BtF is delivered in an environment that has none of the influences that lead to the behaviour that BtF is trying to change. At times, external contexts overrode the impact of BtF. As Djalu's story demonstrates, participants can be seen as great candidates for positive outcomes, but there are many factors occurring with the multiple systems of people's life, many which cannot be

controlled within a prison environment. And here lies the issue with planting seeds: there needs to be a fertile environment for the seed to germinate.

The concept of planting the seed, providing the right environment to grow the seed, and whether this process is observable can be directly related to realist evaluation processes. In section 3.3.1, I described the concept of ontological depth and how this is depicted by an iceberg (Figure 3.2) (Jagosh, 2019). Mechanisms are depicted as the submerged part of an iceberg that may be unobservable in empirical reality but contribute to the 'observable' reality of the exposed part of the iceberg. The 'germination' of planting this seed corresponds to the environment around the iceberg – above the water and the water itself – that contributes to whether these mechanisms can be triggered to produce certain outcomes. To apply this metaphor to BtF, 'planting the seed' is in itself an unobservable mechanism, but it contributes greatly when triggered to lead to the observable outcome (the exposed iceberg) of strengthening family relationships. In turn, there are environmental factors that could prevent this process from occurring – environments would prevent germination. For Djalu (Figure 7.5), there were persisting interpersonal relationships and incidences that prevented Djalu from attending the final sessions of BtF. In many cases, the environments that may hinder the germination of seeds are institutional and infrastructural (see sections 7.3.4.1. and 8.3 for further details).

7.3.4. Proposed mechanism: Considering views of other family members

The third and final mechanism that was identified in the realist synthesis for strengthening family relationships was 'considering the role of other family members'. In the synthesis I identified that this mechanism relies on empathy. Empathy is a common mechanism used in social interventions where the outcome is focused on addressing relationships. In this evaluation, I found that this mechanism functioned in a similar way to 'considering familial roles'. In this section I examine two pertinent observations for BtF. First, I discuss the importance of planting the seed (as discussed above). Second, I explore the flexibility BtF has in its delivery. The flexibility is evident across all of the mechanisms for BtF, but is particularly important for 'considering the role of other family members' due to variability in family structures as well as the diversity in who the kinship participants were within their family structure. I consider both in turn.

7.3.4.1. Planting the Seed

The two mechanisms of 'considering familial roles' and 'considering other family members' both primarily draw on the same function of 'planting the seed'. In the description of 'planting the

seed' above (section 7.3.3.2), I referred to the primary strategy used throughout the eight-week program whereby the caseworkers propose topical issues and the group discussed the answers through primarily personal anecdotes. The caseworkers put forward a broad topic, like the effects of incarceration. Then the caseworkers prompt the group members to consider how different people would feel about the topic – including themselves, their partner, their children, their extended family, their community. This process was a program strategy to evoke empathy. Taken one step further, the kinship participants were given the exact same questions. The following week, the parents-inside and kinship participants groups swap concept maps and talk about any similarities, differences, or surprises. The caseworkers did not say "this is what family members think of you being in prison", rather swapped anonymised responses from both groups and allowed the parents to see the responses from kinship participants and talk about this impact within their own groups. The caseworkers planted a seed that allowed parents inside to consider what their actions and consequences had on their family that was established directly from the kinship participants.

As explained above (section 7.3.3.2) processes like 'planting the seed' are unobservable, but the mechanism can be identified as the generative causation to outcomes observable in empirical reality – in this case the outcome of strengthening family relationships. One example was evident in Adam and Tisha's story in Figure 7.6.

Figure 7.6

Planting the seed: Adam and Tisha's story

Tisha and Adam had gone through school together and were the youngest couple in the group, both being under 20 years of age.

Tisha was a local, and for the second session she was the only kinship participant that could make the session in person. Her sister and youngest child came along too. I sat down with the caseworkers and Tisha around the lunch table in the Family and Children's Centre at Aldavilla. Being the only kinship participant, Tisha was evidently nervous. The questions in the sessions seem a lot more directive when there isn't a group to share experiences and stories. Her answers were considered and poignant. The caseworkers proposed the question "how does the gaol sentence effect the children?". She stared out the window and across the field and giggled. "They miss him. They used to go to the park together. They [the children] always want to stop at the park when we drive past, because they think he's there. [One child] was staring at

his picture. It's in a frame. I heard him talking from another room. He had the picture sitting next to him on the couch and was talking like Adam was there. Yeah. They miss him."

The following session the dads inside were excited to see the kinship participants' answers. The caseworkers typed out words or phrases that the kinship participants had said. The caseworkers read each out loud to the group but would embellish each dot point with stories. The dot point read "they miss him".

During incarcerated parents' session, the caseworkers would share the discussions they had with the carers on the same topic. The caseworkers shared the stories and feedback anonymously. During the session, the caseworkers shared the story of Adam's son. The caseworkers allowed a silence to fill the room.

It is one thing for a group to propose hypothetical feelings that other family members may be experiencing. It is another to hear stories of what your family and your peers' families are experiencing. Another seed was planted on the gravity of experiences of other family members.

7.3.4.2. Flexibility

Flexibility refers to the need for service providers to adapt to participants needs. Flexibility was evident in how each BtF mechanisms was triggered (section 8.3.1.1). The BtF caseworkers were flexible in how they delivered and supported diverse families and this was necessary in how they engaged kinship participants. The family structures varied, ranging from young new families (e.g., Adam and Tisha), compared to a grandmother who wanted to strengthen ties to her new grandchildren (like Mia and her family). There were parents with one child to one parent (like Evonne and Djalu), compared to another parent with eight children to three different partners (like Jarrah). Children's ages ranged from under one year to adults over 30-years-old (Table 6.4, section 6.4.2.3). Family structures have different needs and require different services. Therefore, flexibility was required in talking about a family's needs in the weekly sessions, as well as linking appropriate services to families who needed them.

Due to these diverse family structures, flexibility was particularly necessary in how the mechanism 'considering other family members' was triggered in BtF. In Figure 7.7, Allyra's story exemplifies the need for flexibility in identifying supportive familial networks for incarcerated parents.

Figure 7.7

Flexible service delivery: Allyra's story

Allyra was a mother inside with four children aged from 16 to 22 years. All of her children were living independently. Allyra nominated Ellen, her eldest child, as her kinship participant for BtF. Three weeks of unsuccessful phone calls ended when Ellen answered Uncle Clive's call. We were in the car driving to a funeral service. Ellen's words surround us from the car's speakers.

Uncle Clive queried "your mother wants you to join us in a program from SHINE…it's called Belonging to Family."

From the start Ellen explained her hurt which led to adamant responses wrapped in indignation. "She is not my mother. She gave birth to me, but she has never been a mother to me. Not for 22 years." Ellen did not want any contact with Allyra or from SHINE.

The BtF caseworkers changed tack. They called Tim, Allyra's cousin. He gave some answers over the phone that were used in the final kinship participant sessions and he was one of only two kinship participants that came to the final mothers inside graduation ceremony. Tim had not seen the children for years and did not have a role in rearing the children.

For Allyra: "The fact that you called my kids and that, that was a good thing. Because when I couldn't, Uncle Clive was still calling them and checking in on them and giving me an update. That was really good, yeah. They got Tim here for me. That just blew my fucking mind. I was like, wow. Oh my God. I was so happy. Yeah. So yeah, no it was the best program I've ever done in jail."

In his interview, Tim was able to identify why it was difficult to include other family members as kinship participants in BtF. In response to identifying how Allyra's incarceration had affected her children, Tim identified that

Tim: She [Allyra] was doing good. Had her own unit and all that, and the kids were going to see her, and hanging around. Then it was the drugs that - I think it all started, and the kids hated her again. Build up a promise to the kids and then let them down.

Interviewee: Was there a lot of support for Allyra when she was bringing the kids up?

Tim: Not really. I think nan used to buy her anything she needed, to make sure the kids had everything. Then pop would give her stuff, and she'd always end up in jail and lose it. Uncle [Lenny] would help her as well

and set her up again. But I think in the end they'd just had enough of it, you know what I mean?

Allyra had been having trouble contacting for family on the outside, but here, Tim was able to expand on how these networks were breaking down prior to her recent incarceration.

Tim was not able to participate in the first 6 sessions of BtF. However, at the graduation Allyra had told him of what she had been doing and what she had gotten out of the program. This discussion would have been useful in identifying what steps Allyra was planning for reintegration. However, the identification of a break down in Allyra's informal support network also indicates why Tim's physical presence was appreciated by Allyra as well.

Allyra's story is also an example of why having flexibility is particularly important in working with First Peoples in achieving the outcome of 'strengthening family relationships'. First Peoples familial networks differ from normative family nodes in Western research. The main difference between First Peoples and non-Indigenous family structures is the breadth of the network. In First Peoples communities, close family generally includes biological cousins, Aunties, Uncles, as well as families who are close to your family but may not be biologically related. The individuals in these families are also considered cousins, Aunties and Uncles depending on their age and the responsibilities within a family. This relational network is considered in how BtF is delivered. As in Allyra's story, the kinship participant does not necessarily have to be the primary carer or biological parent of the child. This created a great variety in the role and perspective a kinship participant has to the parent-inside, primary carer of the child, and the children themselves. Overall, this variability required the caseworkers to lead participants into "considering the role of other family members" in a very fluid way, drawing on the varied lived experiences of different family structures.

7.4. Refinement of contexts, mechanisms, outcomes

This chapter has analysed the context and mechanisms identified in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5) for the outcome *strengthening positive family relationships.* As discussed in realist synthesis, identifying the intended outcomes of BtF was a difficult process and outcomes were identified after linking the strategies employed to their intended aims. Through sections 7.1-7.3, I was able to refine these relationships significantly; these changes are depicted in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4

Refined outcome and mechanisms: Strengthening positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration

Outcome		***Mechanisms***		***Contexts***
Realist Synthesis	***Realist Evaluation***	***Realist Synthesis***	***Realist Evaluation***	***Realist synthesis (refined in Figure 7.8)***
Strengthening positive family relationships	Strengthening positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration	Improve communication within family	Facilitate communication within family to support reintegration	**<u>Individual</u>** • Characteristics of family and family members • Personal qualities of caseworkers **<u>Interpersonal</u>** • Caseworker ⟷ Participants/family • Participant ⟷ Participant • Family member ⟷ Family member **<u>Institutional</u>** • SHINE for Kids • Mid North Coast Correctional Centre **<u>Infrastructural</u>** • Federal policies (First Peoples) • Availability of support services (for referral)
		Consider the role they have in the family	The incarcerated parent considers the role and impact they have in their family	
		Consider views of other family members	Consider views of other family members	

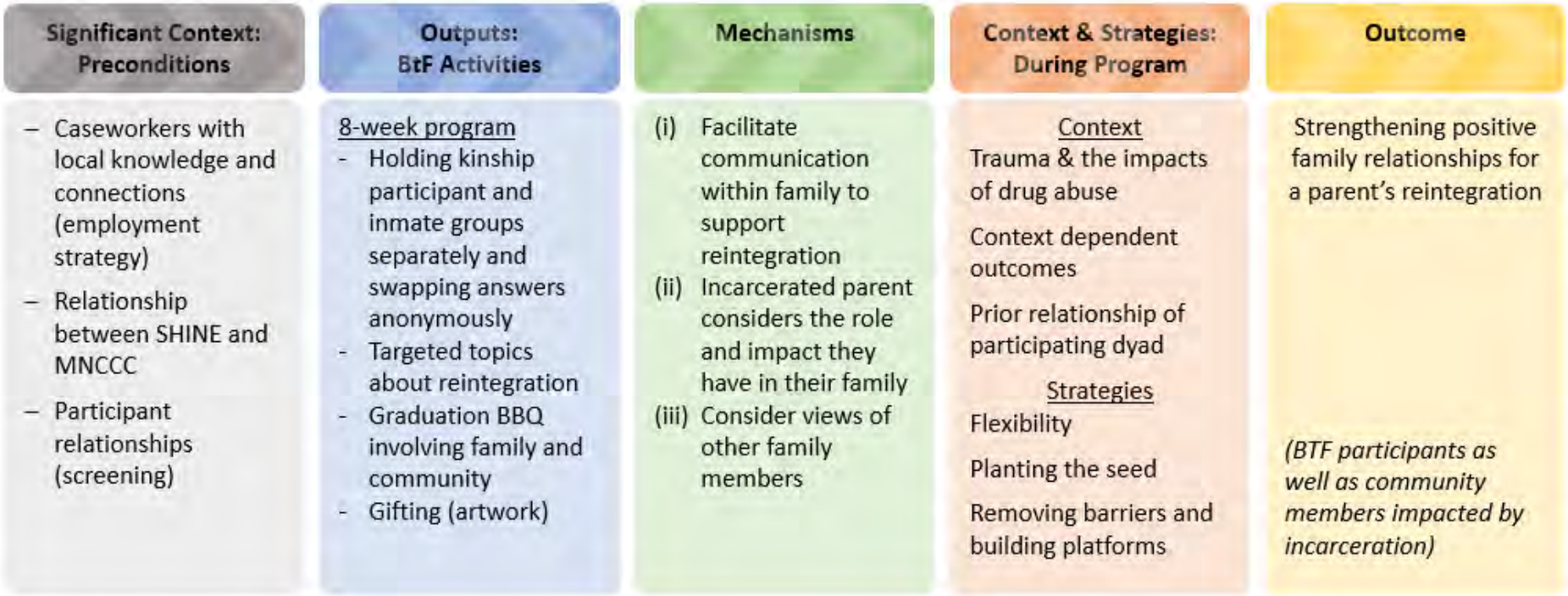
In Table 7.4, *strengthening positive family relationships* in the realist synthesis referred to instilling productive and constructive bonds within the relationships of parents, children, and family members that have a significant role in the child's life. Also identified in the realist synthesis and Table 7.4, the elicited proposed mechanisms to achieve this were (i) improving communication within the family; (ii) considering the role family members have within the family; and (iii) considering views of other family members. The aim of the outcome and the mechanisms established in the realist synthesis were conceptualised as achieving broad skills that could be applied within a general population whether within a prison environment or not. For example, the mechanism of facilitating positive communication skills could be triggered for any family whether they are impacted by incarceration or not.

Table 7.4 also depicts the changes that occurred. As noted throughout this chapter, I became aware that BtF was specifically focused on the point of reintegration. As such I refined the intended outcome *strengthening family relationships* to *strengthening positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration*. There was still a focus on strengthening family relationships, however, BtF had a clear focus on supporting families through the specific process of a parent returning to their family after spending time in prison. In section 7.3, this also shifted the function of the proposed mechanisms. Similar to the intended outcome, the proposed mechanisms I established in the realist synthesis had broad goals. As outlined in Table 7.4, the intent of the mechanisms remained, but switched to focus on the point of reintegration. For example, the mechanism 'improving communication' was found to be focused more on facilitating communication around addressing issues for reintegration in a positive and productive way.

The final logic model is depicted in Figure 7.8. The grey and orange columns list the significant contextual issues and the point in time in delivering BtF that they are most influential. The blue column identifies the main outputs for achieving this outcome, focused primarily on the eight-week-program. The green column identifies the refined mechanisms, and the yellow column identifies the outcome. Refining the program logic provides a true reflection of BtF and how the program works by accurately identifying the associated mechanisms. This in turn aids in pinpointing how the program can be improved and translating how the program works in future funding applications or to potential other sites. Overall, this refinement strengthens BtF going forward (this is discussed further in Chapter 10).

Figure 7.8

Program logic model for outcome 'strengthening positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration'



7.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I addressed the research question, *how and to what extent does Belonging to Family strengthen positive family relationships?* A significant change that emerged during the evaluation was the refinement of the outcome to focus on strengthening the family at the specific point of reintegration. This change was supported by; views of the interviewee who was engaged with BtF's creation; participants' indications that their primary aim was to spend more time with their families; and that the program content specifically aimed to address issues during reintegration rather than generalised parenting skills. In considering 'to what extent' BtF achieved the refined outcome, it was evident each of the families *strengthened positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration.* However, context took a leading role in shaping what outcomes were desired and achieved. Outcomes ranged from facilitating plans for reintegration, to removing police ordered DVO's to allow participation in the graduation day, to supporting placements of children with family members (Table 7.3). These diverse outcomes are reflective of the highly contextual nature of parental incarceration. Overall, it was evident BtF successfully *strengthened positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration.*

This chapter also identified 'how' BtF *strengthened positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration.* Three mechanisms were identified: (i) facilitating communication within the family to support reintegration; (ii) the incarcerated parent considers the role and impact they have in their family; and (iii) considering views of other family members. The operation of these mechanisms was diverse. This diversity was attributed to the highly contextual nature of parental incarceration, the varied types of relationships between family members, and the impact of trauma and drug use. BtF accommodated for this diversity by offering an individualise, tailored program. Caseworkers built platforms that would support the individual's goals. Caseworkers also removed barriers that prevented to progression of the individual. Consequently, flexible service delivery was a key driver throughout the program delivery. The caseworkers prioritised culturally values in their engaged with participants, such as 'planting the seed' in talking about topics, rather than directly instructing the participants on what to do. I examine this approach further in section 9.3.5. Overall, the identified mechanisms that *strengthened positive family relationships* were strengthened with flexibility and privileging culturally values.

Articulating how and to what extent BtF *strengthened positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration* clearly demonstrates how the program works, allows SHINE to strength the strategies that work or improve strategies that are weak, and also informs how other programs can adopt strategies to address similar issues. The consequences and impacts of the findings from this chapter are explored in the discussion section in Chapter 10. In the next chapter, I examine the

second outcome identified in the realist synthesis: improving the participant's social and formal support networks.

Chapter 8
Improve Participant's Social and Formal Support Networks

8.1. Introduction

Chapter 8 is the second of three results chapters of the realist evaluation. In this chapter I address the research question: *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community?* 'Improving participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community' (herein 'improving participant's support network') was an outcome of BtF identified in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5). Table 8.1 provides a summary of the pertinent contexts and mechanisms identified in the realist synthesis that were related to this outcome. Two mechanisms were identified: (i) participants learn about culturally appropriate support services and access those services that they need, and (ii) participants develop relationships with their social community. Several individual, interpersonal, institutional, and infrastructural contexts were also identified. The overall aim of this chapter is to test and refine these relationships.

Table 8.1

Realist synthesis findings: Context and mechanisms of the outcome 'improving participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community'.

Outcome	***Mechanisms***	***Contexts***
Improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community	Participants learn about culturally appropriate support services and access those services that they need Participants develop relationships with their social community	**<u>Individual</u>** • Characteristics of family and family members • Personal qualities of caseworkers **<u>Interpersonal</u>** • Caseworker ⟷ Participants/family • Participant ⟷ Participant • Family member ⟷ Family member **<u>Institutional</u>** • SHINE for Kids • Mid North Coast Correctional Centre **<u>Infrastructural</u>** • Federal policies (First Peoples) • Availability of support services (for referral)

This chapter has five sections. In section 8.2 I analyse *to what extent* BtF improved participant's support networks. I identify participants' and stakeholders' perspectives on the outcome and identify the program components that target social networks, before assessing whether the participants achieved this outcome. Like *strengthening family relations* (Chapter 7), this outcome was context dependent and varied significantly between participants. In section 8.3, I refine *how* BtF improved participant's support networks. I analyse how the two mechanisms and contexts identified in Table 8.1 interacted. I also detail a third mechanism that emerged from the evaluation - caseworkers acted as advocates. The analyses of the CMOs lead to significant refinement, which I present in section 8.4. This refinement includes the addition of advocacy as a mechanism as well as merging mechanisms from another outcome that had significant overlap. Throughout the analysis of each mechanism, I identify significant strengths and barriers (the contextual factors) that families had, as well as institutional and infrastructural factors that enabled the function of these mechanisms. Finally, a chapter summary is provided in section 8.5.

8.2. Outcome: Improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community

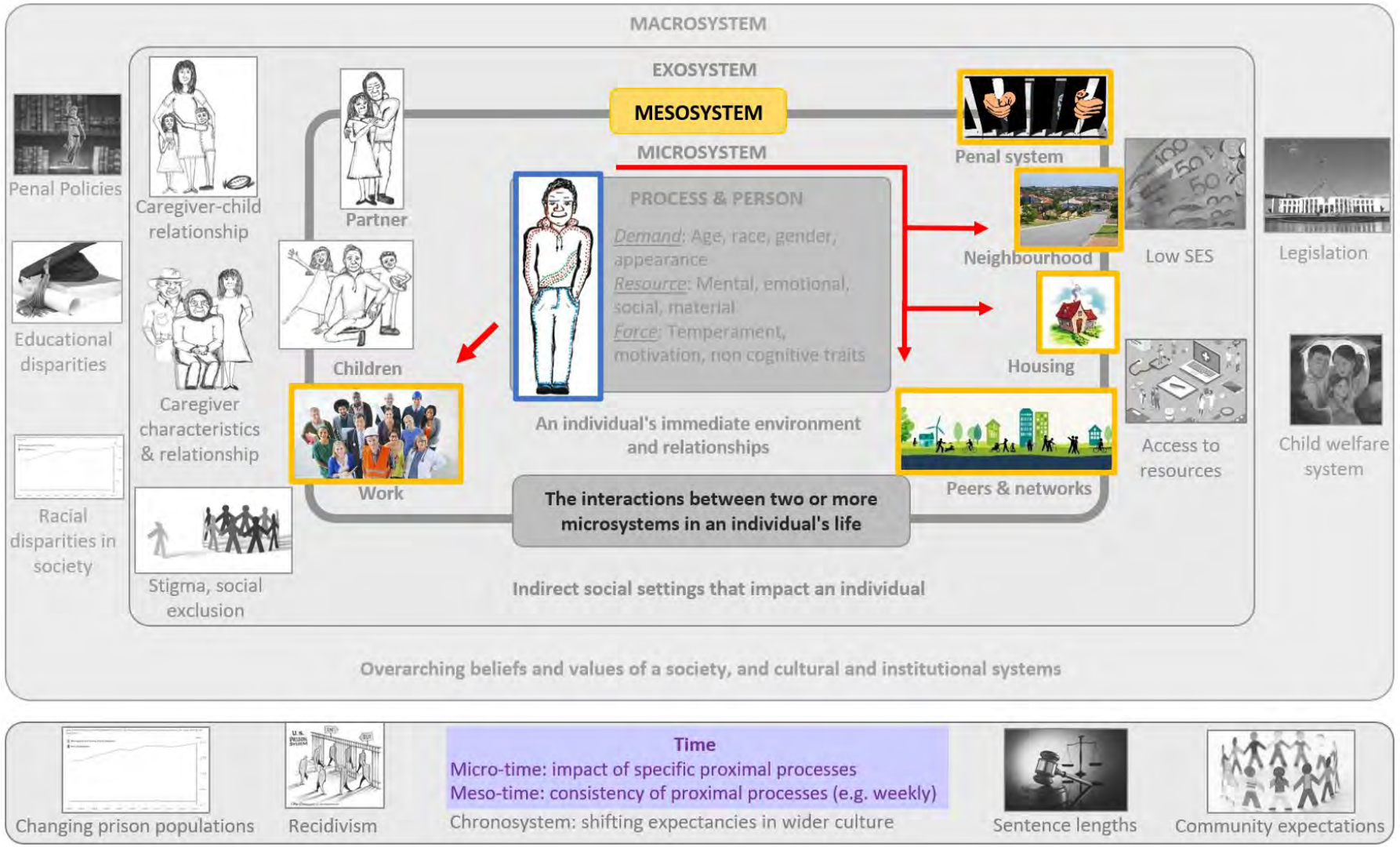
In this section I identify to what extent the outcome *improve participant's support networks* was achieved. I have incorporated two subsections; first I will distinguish the program components that achieved this outcome and analyse the perspectives of the stakeholders and participants on the value and operation of this outcome. In the second section I analyse whether families achieved this outcome.

8.2.1. Program components and interviewee perspectives on supporting participant's networks

Improving participant's support networks was identified in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5) as a main outcome of BtF. The outcome was explained using Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model, as seen in Figure 8.1. Here, the outcome can be depicted by addressing the interaction of the incarcerated parent with factors that occur in their *mesosystem*; such as housing, work and social networks. The impact is occurring within the *mesosystem* as the impacts are interacting with the setting of the prison. Similar to the outcome *strengthening family relationships*, the support is being provided within a certain time period (identified in purple in Figure 8.1); throughout the reintegration of the parent returning home. The mechanisms are represented by the red arrows and indicate the resources and reasoning that trigger *improving participant's support networks*.

Figure 8.1

Realist evaluation: Using PPCT to identify BtF outcomes: Improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community



As noted in section 7.2.2, BtF had two distinct program components: the eight-week prison-based program and case management. An evaluation provides greater insight into a program, and how to address issues when the components of an intervention can be distinguished and analysed. The two distinct components of BtF have specific aims, which align to the outcomes identified in the realist synthesis. Chapter 7 primarily focused on the eight-week program as this component addressed the outcome of *strengthening positive family relationships during reintegration*. The analyses presented in this chapter predominantly draws from the case management component of the program, as this component aimed to create the outcome of *improving participant's support network*s. Case management commenced upon acceptance into BtF until one-year post-release. Throughout this chapter, I draw on the experiences of case management of current participants during the eight-week program, as well as observations of past participants who had return home.

During the referral and enrolment stage of the cohort in this evaluation, no parents or kinship participants identified that they joined BtF to access case management, referrals, or social support. The outcome every parent wanted was to spend more time with their family (section 7.2.1). This was reiterated in my initial interview with incarcerated parents. A participant's lack of identifying case management support as an important outcome may be because participants from nine of the 11 dyads completing BtF for the first time explicitly said they were unsure of what to expect in BtF. For example, Marli identified that she wanted to spend more time with her son, and when I probed if she was hoping to learn anything else, she recounted that she enrolled because:

> *…there's a sign on the wall and I was trying to get as many programs in that I could… [but] I'm not 100 per cent on what they actually do.* (Marli, initial interview)

As families continued through BtF, they became aware of the role the caseworkers could take in supporting networks as there were several processes built into the program to establish formal networks. I explore these processes in section 8.3.1. Informal networks were identified through relationships from the program, which I expand on in section 8.3.2.

Establishing networks is focused on the best outcome for the children. This mirrors the aim of *strengthening family relations* (section 7.2). The interviewee who was familiar with the origination of BtF explained how BtF was created 'working backwards'. The program writers knew they wanted to support children and a way of doing this was identifying appropriate services that families need in order to provide a supportive environment for their child. Inevitably, this is highly individualised, and, as identified in Chapter 7, highly dependent on each family's situation. I explore the consequences of individualised service delivery for social networks throughout this chapter.

A major caveat I noted in case management was retention. BtF offer case management for participants up to 12 months after they return home. However, in past cohorts most participants do not reconnect with BtF post-release. Providing case management from pre- through to post-release for people who are incarcerated is a characteristic of throughcare. Throughcare has been identified as best practice in supporting the reintegration of people who are incarcerated (Seiter & Kadela, 2003), including models that were identified in the realist synthesis for First Peoples (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, 2012; Baldry et al., 2008; Williams, 2015). For BtF, there are numerous factors identified that contribute to low uptake of case management after leaving prison, which I discuss throughout this chapter.

8.2.2. Stated and observed outcomes

In this section, I analyse the extent participants achieved the outcome of *improving a participant's support network.* A summary of the outcome for each family dyad is presented in Appendix M which includes each families' long-term goals, observed outcomes, identified barriers and strengths, and a quote supporting the outcomes. Similar to the outcome *strengthening family relationships* (Chapter 7), *improving a participant's support network* is situated temporally at a particular time in the families' life. That is, past experiences of the families influence what BtF outcomes and long-term goals are achievable. Moreover, in this section I explore the barriers and strengths in achieving these outcomes, whether this was structural (e.g. availability of programs) or characteristics unique to each family dyad (e.g. resources available to family dyads).

In terms of informal networks, the Elders involvement was unanimously favoured by each participant. The Elders involvement played a key role in demonstrating that people in the community still cared about the parents inside. Kirra identified how for her, the connection of Elders from her community participating in BtF linked her to the community and motivated her to change her behaviour when she returned home:

> *[The Elders] seen us grow up too. They would have seen a big change. "She was a little cunt when she was on drugs. Coming down and seeing her do this course, it's a big change for her." It is very good change for me. I realised there is a lot I can do and that I will do when I get out, because of [BtF].* (Kirra, follow-up interview)

Of the 12 incarcerated parents that completed a follow-up interview, all had indicated that group-work helped share ideas and gain support from peers, and seven incarcerated parents had indicated that this support played a role outside of the sessions. Adam described how the group

sessions gave him a space to talk with other fathers and find connections and advice where he would not have otherwise found support:

> *If you're going to be sitting there talking or if you're going to be sitting back in the corner listening, I mean good to do both, you know what I mean, like talk about yours and then listen. Like I was listening, and I've learnt a lot from older boys like David, Bob, Warwick and that, you know? I've learnt a lot from them.* (Adam, follow-up interview)

Notably, there was no indication that the peer networks created in the group would continue post-release. This may not be the intention of BtF.

Eight parents indicated a worry about the influence that poor social networks would have on-release. Jarrah indicated that it would be best to dissociate with peers that had led him to the behaviours that led to his incarceration, but also identified that such peers would be in any community he moved to:

> *Just get rid of all the idiots out of my life. Just - sorry to swear - but to piss - yeah, just get rid of them - piss off out of my life….Well back to [hometown], but I want to move away from [hometown], and then it comes down to - well it doesn't really matter where you move to, because there's going to be the same sort of people wherever you move.* (Jarrah, follow-up interview)

Due to the absence of kinship participants groups, the effect of peer connections was not observed for kinship participants. Overall, these outcomes indicate that BtF participants developed strong informal bonds with Elders and among peers while parents were still incarcerated.

There was also strong support that BtF improved formal networks. As shown in Appendix M, the types of formal networks varied depending on the needs of the family dyads. For example for some families networks were focused on the child, locating children's specialised support (n=2); others were focused on or benefitted the family such as negotiations with lifting restrictions of DVOs (n=2), negotiating with DoCS (2), help with settling debts (n=2) letters of support for court (n=4), and advocacy with accommodation services (n=1); and other services focused on the incarcerated parent, ranging from career advice (n=1), advocacy for mental health (n=3), and support in finding places for drug rehabilitation (n=3). The variation reflects the individualised and holistic nature of support provided by BtF.

However, finding and securing support was not straight forward. As Bindi describes, there were barriers that needed to be addressed to allow appropriate support to be secured. In Bindi's case, issues with debt needed to be addressed in order for her to pay for supported accommodation. These steps were time consuming, particularly for people who are incarcerated and have limited access to communicating with people and organisations outside of prison. Bindi described how:

> *They got my electricity money back for me which paid for me to do [residential program]…He's like you owed 900 and something dollars on my second day there and I hadn't even got my crisis payment yet. We rang up the bank and in the bank it was the 680 bucks from the electricity place. So, that went straight on to that, paid for my [residential stay].*
>
> *So, everything that you guys set out to do, it might have taken a little bit of a time…But everything you said you were going to do, you did.*
> (Bindi, follow-up interview)

Two participants did not observable create new social networks, or benefit from social networks from the group. In terms of their context, they were vastly different. Evonne did not finish the program as she was relocated to another correctional centre. She did not indicate that she had strong connections to support networks, she did not have a participating kinship participant in BtF, and as there was no follow-up interview, I also could only identify limited outcomes for *strengthening family relationships*. Conversely, Mia had a longer-term release date, had established positive networks with her local Aboriginal Medical Centre, and mentioned her greatest outcome for BtF was *strengthening family relationships,* particularly with her grandchildren. Therefore for Evonne, the low uptake of creating networks was attributed to disengagement from BtF and the weak pre-existing bonds, whereas Mia's low uptake of creating new networks was based on her strong pre-existing bonds.

During my fieldwork, five past participants contacted BtF. One participant was seeking support for drug rehabilitation. The BtF caseworkers designated a large amount of time over three months to negotiate and secure a position in an Indigenous drug rehabilitation centre. The four other participants were previously incarcerated parents that were advising the caseworkers of their progress. Three of the five past participants were from the previous offering (in the current funding round) which had a cohort of 12. However, I was not privy to how many previous participants had returned home.

8.2.3. Summary

In this section I analysed the outcome *improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community*. There were no changes from the realist synthesis to realist evaluation on the conceptualisation of the outcome, however there was a temporal focus, aimed on the impacts of networks for reintegration. Further, the evaluation indicated that this outcome draws predominately from the case management component of the program, with the impacts of the eight-week program focusing on strengthening family relationships (Chapter 7).

The participants did not identify case management as the primary goal of accessing BtF. I did not follow the same participants through the one-year post release case management. However, I did note that the caseworkers reported low engagement on returning home. The uncertainty of what BtF offers may be a contributing factor. Other attributing factors to low engagement post release include the workload of the caseworkers, the voluntary nature of case management, and the participant-initiated nature for support. These are important contextual issues that I explore in sections 8.2.2 and 8.2.3.

Despite this, the majority of the families gained both informal and formal networks throughout the duration of the eight-week program. Due to the highly contextual nature of parental incarceration, the outcomes varied widely. The differences in these outcomes are the focus of the remainder of this chapter, where I analyse how the mechanisms and significant contextual factors impacted the ability to *improve participant's support networks.*

8.3. Proposed mechanisms and the impacts of contextual factors

In this section I analyse the three mechanisms of BtF's outcome *improve participant's support networks.* As identified in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5) two mechanisms were (i) teaching participants about support services and how to access those services that they need and (ii) making participants feel supported by the social community. In this section I also consider a third mechanism that emerged in the evaluation (iii) advocacy. I consider each mechanism and their relevant contexts in turn.

8.3.1. Proposed mechanism: Participants learn about culturally appropriate support services and how to access those services that they *need*

The first mechanism I consider is that 'participants learn about culturally appropriate support services and how to access those services that they need' (herein 'formal bonds mechanism'). This mechanism focuses on establishing formal bonds between the participants and organisations that can provide support services (Chapter 5). Capturing the full complexity of how incarcerated parents create formal bonds is beyond the scope of this evaluation; however, in this section I have outlined three pertinent observations for BtF. First, the context takes a leading role in how this mechanism works. As such, flexibility is again important in how this mechanism operates. The second observation highlights how BtF creates social networks by building platforms and removing barriers. However, I emphasise how BtF cannot force any participant to take on services, and that the individual's desire for change is the greatest determinant of success. The third and final theme focuses on how institutional and infrastructural contexts directly affect the extent that this mechanism can lead to successful outcomes. I consider each in turn.

8.3.1.1. Context and flexibility

In section 7.3.4.2 I outlined how context took a leading role in individual participants' outcomes and mechanisms for *strengthening family relationships*. This was also evident in creating formal bonds and supporting participants in accessing relevant services. Each family had different structures, family dynamics, needs, and access to resources. For example, David was the only person in his extended family to have been incarcerated. David and his mother Grace (BtF kinship participant) were widely informed about support services and had accessed services in the area that they lived for over a decade. Grace had adopted three children and become familiar with the services around supporting children with special needs, accessing Indigenous cultural programs for children, and accessing support for David in his past periods of incarceration. The only request for formal bonds that both Grace and David required from BtF was formal evidence that David was taking steps to become a better Dad – evidenced by enrolling in programs like BtF. Comparatively, there was Rianna whose story is outlined in Figure 8.2.

Figure 8.2

Context and flexibility in creating formal bonds: Rianna's story

Rianna was a young mum who grew up in regional NSW. When she was young, her dad went to prison and she was placed in foster care for five years. She loved her foster family and wanted to stay there, but her mother had her return to her biological family for "selfish reasons". Rianna was kicked out of home at 16-years-old after having disagreements with her mother.

Rianna had always wanted to be a mother and enjoyed having a son. However, things got tough. She gave sole custody of her son to her ex-boyfriend when her son was 17 months.

I first met Rianna in the third session of BtF. She came into BtF halfway through the program because she had completed BtF earlier in the year during her first time in prison. She had returned to the MNCCC for breaching parole. On returning to BtF she said,

> *"I loved the course. That's why I done it a second time, because the more I do it, the more I learn. I'm happy to do it a third time if I have to"*

When Rianna had gone back home on parole, she fell into her same habits and the same crowd. Reflecting on her community, Rianna said:

> "*I think my community means pretty much nothing to me. There was never really support and good friendship…[my hometown] has nothing to offer. It's just always going to be a hometown for me."*

During her second time in prison, Rianna decided she needed to take care of herself before she could take care of her son. She needed support in her transition home from prison. Support to only have natural highs. Support with housing. Support with finding a career.

Leading up to her first time in prison, Rianna had taken care of her father who had had cancer treatment. She liked helping. Now she wanted to take up nursing and work in remote communities.

Rianna wasn't familiar with how to do this and what was available; this is where BtF helped.

Rianna was released from the MNCCC before the BtF sessions I was evaluating were completed. Rianna had gained access to a residential holistic support service in Sydney and admission into an Aboriginal health care diploma. It was a big move away from her family, but this is what she needed. I was able to touch base with her while she was completing her community-based program. She reflected:

> *"If it wasn't for them [BtF caseworkers], I wouldn't be here doing this program. I'd be probably still be in jail doing my sentence."*

David and Rianna had different backgrounds with different family structures, family dynamics and consequently different needs. They also had vastly different access to resources. Grace (David's mother) owned her house and could access specialised resources to provide support for her children as well as David's children. This included the knowledge of the legal system and gaining advice on what to complete to gain custody of David's children. Grace had strong and

established formal bonds that she could use to support David and his children. Comparatively, Rianna had limited contact with her own parents and when she was released had little to no formal bonds that could assist her in this transition. The BtF caseworkers had to adjust their practice to account for this variability.

Another important issue to raise here is the impact of past experiences between participants and service providers. Most people who are incarcerated have a history of accessing support services in their community or having past experiences with government departments that deliver social services. The caseworkers recounted numerous instances where they had identified appropriate services for participants, but the participant did not want to engage with the services due to negative past experiences. This engagement even extended to BtF itself. Evonne, an incarcerated mother, recounted in the evaluation's initial interview her reluctance and continued uncertainty to join BtF:

> ***Evonne***: *When I first came to jail I was scattered on the ice and the girls were saying join them up [to BtF], join up, join up, and I wouldn't join up. I was just; no they might ring DOCS on me and stuff.*
>
> ***Facilitator***: *Yeah.*
>
> ***Evonne***: *Yeah, but you don't get in contact with DOCS?*

Participants were similarly hesitant to engage with me without being assured of my role and connections. For instance, one of the kinship participants I interviewed was only comfortable in being involved in my evaluation after they were assured I was not connected to the NSW government child protective services. People's past experiences can determine who they wish to engage with, particularly if services are associated with child protective services. This provides another reason for the caseworkers to be flexible in providing recommendations, referrals, and connections.

8.3.1.2. Building platforms and removing barriers for participants who want change

The *formal bonds mechanism* was reflective of building platforms and removing barriers as described in section 7.3.2.2 and 7.3.2.3. This refers to identifying ways to support families to reach goals, and helping families remove any -primarily institutional – impediments that prevented the family or family members reach these goals.

There were numerous structured processes in BtF that aimed to identify participant's needs. First, the incarcerated parents and kinship participants completed an assessment form prior to BtF's

first session. The form includes questions prompting to identify any immediate needs, and explicitly asks “Do you have any problems at present?” Moreover, in the first session the caseworkers provided a display folder. The folder included the program outline and initial resources. The parents brought the folder to each session where the caseworkers added resources, program materials and information about support available to the participants. Incarcerated parents and kinship participants were encouraged to talk with the caseworkers throughout the program if they needed any support. Additionally, in the seventh session, incarcerated parents completed a check list that aimed to identify any services that they may need in their transition home.

These processes assisted the caseworkers identify any barriers they can remove or platforms they can build to help participants engage formal supports to ease their transition home. For example, from the first interview, Allyra had identified that her subsidised rent initially available for incarcerated people was about to expire and she would have insecure housing. The BtF caseworkers contacted multiple services and her daughter (the current resident) to ensure the lease could continue until she was released. This type of support was removing the barriers that prevented Allyra from making these arrangements.

As noted, the caseworkers had comparatively high caseloads. In managing their time, the caseworkers had to prioritise who to assist. In the process, the caseworkers prioritised those participants who sought help. Bob was a repeat participant who joined BtF after returning to prison. Consequently, Bob’s story in Figure 8.3 highlights how the caseworkers provided support after a parent returned home and what steps he took to gain support when he returned home.

Figure 8.3

Supporting participants who want change: Bob’s story

Bob was a 30-year-old father of three daughters. Bob had been in and out of prison long enough to identify ‘the seven-month jinx’: seven months on the outside before he went back inside ever since his first time in juvie aged 15.

This was Bob’s second time doing BtF. After his first time completing BtF, Bob returned home but faced numerous issues. So, he reached out to the BtF caseworkers:

> *“…once DoCS got involved and got me out of the picture, that's when I called Uncle Clive and asked him to back me up and everything. That's when Uncle Clive started getting right into it and he came down. When I went to the court Uncle Clive was the only one that came down. He came down for court and that to help us -*

back us up and that…Uncle Clive and that went in to bat for us and they got us access to the kids as long as we're not on drugs, we got mad access to the kids… and Uncle Clive hooked us up with mad rehabs…"

Bob had initially sought help for his court case which the caseworkers helped with. However, there were some other issues the caseworkers had trouble addressing.

"Uncle Clive was trying to give [my partner] access to all the fucking rehabilitation and she wouldn't take it … [and] I knew I can't [because of] *my custody and it was pointless…my - ice wasn't a bad thing for me. My lifestyle and everything was mad. I think [Uncle Clive] was baffled by doing all that work for us and then we didn't do it. Yeah, I wasted his time I think"*

The caseworkers could help because Bob had stayed in contact. He had shared his issues. So, this time he said:

"I want to try and use everything that they've got. Yeah, I want to know every problem they can help with. Yeah. So if I be open with it, yeah, open with all my problems - let them know everything that's wrong."

Bob's story is emblematic of the notion that participants must want the change for issues to be effectively addressed. This adage is common in many social interventions particularly when programs address addiction (Farabee et al., 1998; Gideon, 2010; Hiller et al., 2002). For BtF, participants are not obligated to disclose information and it is not compulsory or mandated for participants to keep in touch with BtF on their transition home. The caseworkers noted that following up with each participant was desirable, however due to the limited resources for the program, was unfeasible. Bob had learnt that the caseworkers were responsive when he initiated support the first time in BtF and was keen to seek as much support as possible by being open and transparent in his issues. The greatest variable for success is the participant's desire for change. Both Bob and his partner needed immediate support with their court case. However, they both were not ready to change their lifestyle or address their drug abuse and thus did not take up their positions in a rehabilitation program. All the participants in BtF are given the same forms, advice, and resources in services available; however, only the participants that take the initiative to contact these services or contact BtF could benefit.

8.3.1.3. Institutional and infrastructural influences

Building formal bonds is dependent on institutional settings (organisations, management, and resources) and infrastructural systems (social, economic, political, and cultural settings) and contexts. Consequently, programs can only be as effective as the structures allow. This is particularly evident in programs that focus on referrals to other organisations and programs, like BtF.

A prominent issue was the BtF's funding structure. BtF caseworkers managed each family that graduated until 12 months post-release. However, BtF was funded on soft, short-term grants – the original grant being for three years, and the grant that this evaluation occurred was for 1.5 years. The nature of this funding places doubt on the length of time case management can be offered and continuity of the program. This is particularly important as word-of-mouth between incarcerated parents had become a primary way participants become interested in enrolling in BtF.

Building and maintaining networks was an important component of BtF. On my first day in the field, I joined the caseworkers at a Police Link-Up meeting– a regular forum where the local police inform services of current trends and services can share any concerns with the police. This is only one avenue BtF are actively involved in building links within the community. I have already mentioned a number of community events throughout Chapters 6 and 7 that provide an avenue for BtF to provide their service, including local, state and international conferences, local community events or festivals, information evenings or events, and Aboriginal network meetings run by Education NSW or the Aboriginal Land Council. Throughout the chapters, I referred to these events as a way that BtF connected participants to services; however, the events are also a way that BtF promotes their services, connects to other services, and builds a community focused reputation. These are the relationships that are needed to establish BtF within the wider infrastructural context. Building relationships takes time and ongoing consistency.

There are also limits to BtF caseworker workloads, geography, and location of other service delivery. BtF was designed to be run with four full-time positions; two people to facilitate the eight-week program, one case manager, and one administrative support worker (section 4.4.2). In the period I was involved with BtF supported 59 families with complex needs through the transition from prison to home. However, due to structural change, instead of four full-time workers for BtF, there were only 1.5 full time equivalent caseworkers supporting 59 families. The structural change removed administrative support and a dedicated position for identifying and securing formal networks and support. This is a very high case load particularly for supporting families with complex needs. In contrast, programs such as Multisystemic Therapy (MST) restrict caseworkers to a maximum of five families at a time within the six months of delivering support (Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development, n.d.). During my fieldwork, I attended a local conference that brought

together service providers throughout the Mid North Coast. At the conference there was a similar service in the locality of BtF that supported high risk children in contact with child welfare services; similar to MST, this program also managed five families simultaneously. The institutional restriction on workload has major effects on the quality and quantity of support that caseworkers can provide. Resultantly, participants that self-initiate get prioritised. The time restrictions on the caseworkers indicated that although they wanted to contact every participant, the limited resources made it impossible to follow-up with participants who have not taken the first step to contact BtF throughout the program and particularly on their return home.

Notably, the geography impacted caseloads– in terms of size of area to service as well as service availability. This geographical distance is depicted in Figure 8.4; the orange circle is the location of MNCCC, and the red pinpoints are the towns parents returned to upon release. The distance is time consuming to delivery face-to-face services with parents spread over a large geographical area from Sydney to Brisbane (approximately 1200 kilometres). Moreover, the distance depicted in Figure 8.4 is not only geographical but also impacts accessibility. Many support services are restricted to specific geographical boundaries. For the participants in my evaluation, the participants were returning to 13 different regions, and consequently had a high degree of variability of service availability for each family dyad. It is difficult for the BtF caseworkers to be aware of services available in each of the returning parents' districts. The services available in Kempsey (the pinpoints closest to the MNCCC) differ from Coffs Harbour (the pinpoint directly north of Kempsey), which differ from Grafton (the pinpoint directly north of Coffs Harbour). The distance between each area is only 100km or one-hour drive. However, each area has their own support services. Understanding the services of each area increases the workload of caseworkers substantially.

Figure 8.4

Map: Locations where parents returned to after incarceration

Note: pinpoints have been inserted by the author. References of maps: insert (Google, n.d.-a) larger map (Google, n.d – b)

The impact of high workloads was observable. On more than one day every week while I was collecting data, the caseworkers worked over their designated hours. Both caseworkers also identified that they unofficially work on-call due to the nature of their support and the dedication they have to their participants. As such, the caseworkers often drop what they are doing at any time of day to respond to a participant. The effect of the workload of the caseworkers was also evident from other service providers, one interviewee noting:

> *… I just feel saddened that in all the time that [the caseworker] has worked for this organisation, that she's never had an increase in wages and she* ***does work above and beyond what she should be doing****. I just feel - and I tell her, I'm quite open - I just feel that they're being used and abused.*
>
> *Because they do work really hard and I think SHINE needs to look at - yes, I know they put in for funding, I work with outside organisations, I know they put their funding in every year or every three years. But they're* ***entitled to an increment or a CPI increase in their wages*** *over each year. Because they're standing still but the price of everything else is going up, particularly petrol, and we live in a* ***rural area and we have to travel****, so that makes a big difference.*
>
> *That's my only real negative about SHINE for Kids, but I'm being quite open about it because I really feel that* ***the wages that they do get is a pittance to what they actually do in work****. So I think they should up the ante.* (Stakeholder interview 4, emphasis added)

In considering infrastructural systems, BtF can only provide referrals to services that exist. As I have indicated, the main role for BtF's case management is to identify the needs of the participants and refer them to services. Adam reflected on his hometown and the negative connotations that his regional town receives, which rarely acknowledges the lack of services that contribute to this reputation:

> *[Hometown] is, it's a good community, it's just the people that are in it and the negative that people bring to it, that they have to take like [Hometown] name for crime hotspots and that, on the news and stuff like that. It's not really known for crime hotspots, you know, it's just that - government doesn't give enough benefits and stuff. You know, you can even walk around with no job, nothing, I don't know, like they say, the harder - the more effort you put in is what you're going to get back, you know, but how can you do that when you know we've got nothing…*
> (Adam, follow-up interview)

Here, Adam indicated that the community he was living in did not have adequate services or opportunities. There was a lack of infrastructure in creating opportunities. The availability of services was also reiterated in Rianna's story (Figure 8.2), demonstrating the restrictions placed on people living in regional and remote areas. Rianna was born and raised in a regional town in NSW 500

kilometres north-northeast of the state capital of Sydney. Supported accommodation was not available in her hometown, and consequently she had to relocate to Sydney to access these services. Rianna successfully completed a three-month residential stay with the intention of staying in Sydney to complete studies that was also only available in Sydney. On follow-up the caseworkers found that Rianna had returned to her hometown without finishing her studies. She wanted to be closer to family and her old social networks. The limited availability of support or educational services available in regional areas ultimately impacted on how BtF could further assist Rianna. Barriers for other participants ranged from a lack of suitable employment, housing, education, and providing support for children who may have complex needs. Ultimately, BtF can only be as effective as the services and opportunities available in the community.

8.3.2. Proposed mechanism: Participants feel supported by their social community

The second of three mechanisms I consider in this chapter is 'participants feel supported by social community'. As indicated in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5), this mechanism focuses on establishing informal bonds. The mechanism explored in section 8.3.1 focused on formal bonds between the participants and organisations. Conversely, this mechanism focuses on bonds between the participants and their peers and community members. I identified three predominant bonds established for the participants; (i) bonds with Elders involved in BtF; (ii) bonds between peers in group sessions; and (iii) bonds to community members.

8.3.2.1. Elders

Dunghuttii Elders had influential roles in BtF since its inception. Elders were involved in the development of BtF and attended BtF sessions and Family Fun Days. At the time of the evaluation, there were 18 Elders registered with BtF. The recruitment and active participation of Elders was challenging as Elders had to meet the same security standards and administrative requirements as other visitors to the MNCCC. This included introductory and ongoing training which was delivered online as well as annual security clearances. The MNCCC requests community organisations running programs in prison - like SHINE - ensure their employees and volunteers meet security clearance regulations. Consequently, the BtF caseworkers took on the duties of organising security clearances and assisting Elders to complete training. Although the inclusion of Elders required a high volume of paperwork, the impact of the Elders in the program was powerful as demonstrated with Gabbie's story in Figure 8.5.

Figure 8.5

The role of Elders: Gabbie's story

Gabbie was a 40-year-old mother of four. She had been in and out of prison for the majority of her adult life and as a consequence had lost guardianship of her children.

Gabbie's rock in life was her grandmother – Aunty Rose. Aunty Rose was a well-known Elder in the Mid North Coast region and had volunteered with SHINE and BtF since its inception.

Aunty Rose was the only Elder available to attend the first session of the mother's group. She had been having serious health issues and used a walker on her way through the clearance zones. The entire session Aunty Rose embraced Gabbie.

Aunty Rose led a discussion and ended with a prayer blessing each of the mothers and giving them strength to not return to prison.
Aunty Rose passed away three days later. The BtF session was the last time Gabbie saw the woman that raised her.

I had recorded the session and with Gabbie's permission wrote out Aunty Rose's prayer. In the next session group members read aloud the prayer and shared Aunty Rose's wisdom. The caseworkers printed out a copy for each of the mother's inside to keep and refer to.

Gabbie was relocated to Silverwater in Sydney due to health reasons and access to health services. She did not finish BtF and was therefore ineligible for case management support. By many evaluation methods, Gabbie would have been considered an unsuccessful completion.

Many First Peoples' programs require the involvement of Elders to help identify community needs and contribute to program design and delivery. In some programs, their role can be tokenistic or superficial, but in BtF these Elders play an important and central role. As demonstrated in Gabbie's story, Aunty Rose's presence in this session was crucial, not only for her granddaughter but also to the other mothers that were participating. This finding was confirmed in the final interviews I performed with the participants. Every parent that completed the final interview expressed an

appreciation for the Elders attending the sessions. The reasons why the participants valued the Elders input ranged from having someone familiar in the group, to feeling support, to hearing stories, to feeling valued. Mia summed up a common appreciation:

> *They [the Elders] sit down and they tell you what they're looking at, because they're looking from the outside in, instead of being on the inside out. It's good that we get their output as well because sometimes they're right, you know what I mean? Like - shit. They care. If they didn't care they wouldn't come to the barbeques. They wouldn't go into our courses and it's good too - because they lived our life and it's good to see and hear what they've got to say. They're showing us you know, yeah, it's mad sis.* (Mia, mentor interview)

The bonds forged by the Elders is an important way this mechanism operated. The role of Elders in BtF is reflective of the importance Elders have in the structure of First Peoples communities. I have detailed the role of Elders further in section 9.3.2.

8.3.2.2. Peers

BtF aims to strengthen informal bonds between peers within the program. The eight-week program provided a space for peers in similar situations to connect and share their experiences. This connection with other parents inside was discussed in the second session with fathers inside as detailed in Figure 8.7. The fathers identified that it was difficult to parent inside and having those informal bonds to other Dads inside had a significant role in their wellbeing.

Figure 8.6

Forming informal bonds with peers: A discussion in Session 2 with father's inside

What do you talk about, is it limited inside? If you want to go and talk to someone about your kids, can you do that? Something about your partner, or your mum or your dad? Can you go and do that with someone? How is that affecting you?

Participant: On the outside you can do that, or your cell mate if you want to.

Participant: But you need that trust.

(consensus)

So do you want to put down trust issues?

Participant: You gotta know who ya talking to.

Participant: I took me photos down just for that reason - of my son. You don't know who's walking in your cell. If I've got mates in there, I'll show them. If they've got kids themselves, I could show them a picture of me kid and God daughter and that. It doesn't worry me.

Participant: If you don't know them you don't know what they saying, when they say is that your son there.

(consensus)

So I've got here 'trust issues you don't know who you are talking to'?

Participant: Unless you see them there with pictures of their kids or something. Like if I go into their room and his got pictures of his kids. Then I will say, "are they your kids? I've got kids too". That's the only way you can sort of trust someone. Is knowing that they are going through the same things that are going through my head.

Participant: Yeah he's a father too, and I'm a father.

Participant: 6 minute phone calls isn't that much to connect, you know 6 minute phone calls.

Is it hard to make friends is it hard to do that?

(consensus)

Participant: Yeah and no. You've gotta have trust.

Participant: There's no Dad's group you know.

What about parenting programs?

Participant: You know on the outside, they have Dads in Distress, or men's health ones, or they have groups where they have meetings or Dads' groups where parents or Dads can come and share experiences and help each other to support each other. We don't have nothing like that in here.

What's that program over there? Hey Dad. Of no, no they can't call it that one because that's the one with the kids.

Participant: There was a Koori one down in Ballarat. Deadly Dads they called it. Yeah that was a good one.

(consensus)

So if you were to go and talk to someone about your kids, what do they do? Walk away? You don't want to mix with everyone?

Participant: You can go and talk to someone but you don't know if they are genuine or interested. Especially when it comes to your kids. They are just like, "oh yeah, yeah". You're not going to get much.

But would you say for people like yourself?

Participant: From like friendships or you talk to people you know from the outside and they know you have a family, or are from the same area. Then that is something that would come up. But apart from that it's difficult.

So how is all this affecting you? How do you feel?

Participant: Detached.

Does everyone agree with that?

(consensus)

There are numerous issues addressed in this small segment of the session. In terms of addressing the mechanism of informal bonds, the participants noted that when incarcerated, it is difficult to find people on the inside who they can trust enough to disclose issues related to their children and parenting. BtF creates a community not only of other parents experiencing parenting inside, but also an environment where talking about these issues is encouraged, supported and confidential. BtF provides an opportunity for the parents inside to share experiences. In terms of kinship participants, during my round of the program, there was not an opportunity where the kinship participants meet as a group. Instead, the caseworkers telephoned each kinship participant to gather answers to each week's questions. Consequently, the kinship participants did not have an opportunity to develop a network that mirrored that of the incarcerated parent groups.

The group environment with peers also allowed parents to share ideas and learn from each other. The youngest participant in the fathers' group found that he could learn from his peers' experiences and that doing this in a group session allowed him to talk about issues, rather than stress about the issues by himself:

> *Like I was listening, and I've learnt a lot from older boys like David, Bob, Warwick and that, you know? I've learnt a lot from them. I look up to them now, you know? Let it out, you know, get it off your shoulder. It's one less, you know, one less - got one less grey hair to worry about, you just have put it out there, you know what I mean? One less grey hair to worry about.*
> (Adam, follow-up interview)

In this way, the group environment itself was a mechanism in sharing and learning from one another. This function was picked up by the caseworkers, and while I was involved, they were trialling the position of mentors in the program. Mentors were incarcerated parents who had completed BtF, but where still incarcerated at the time of subsequent BtF sessions. Two of the

incarcerated mothers that joined the sessions I was evaluating had taken on the role of mentors. Similar to the themes picked up in the quote above, mentors had an opportunity to share experiences and take on a leadership role. One of the mentors reflected on what mentoring meant to her:

> *Yeah, it helped me because I told them [other mothers inside] to do the course and I told them to listen and don't miss anything what they're saying because you might miss the most important part about the course. If you miss that, well then you're not going to think about it if you know what I mean. Then they say thanks Aunt for doing it, you got me and my children and my family in contact again - and that's mad sis. That's deadly to hear that you know and it puts a smile on my dial because I built that bridge between them. Like I lifted the bridge part between them, you know what I mean?* (Mia, mentor interview)

Mentorship provides an opportunity for the past participant to share their experience while also helping the new participants understand the content and possibilities of BtF. Similarly, the two parents who were returning as participants (but not in a mentorship role) were also able to share their experiences. I noted that this also brought credibility to the case management because previous participants were sharing how the caseworkers had followed up and supported them in the community.

Another way BtF builds informal bonds is by holding Family Fun Days four times a year during the school holidays held at the SHINE centre. The caseworkers provide food and children's activities for families supported by BtF. Figure 8.7 is a photo of a group project, where families and community members came together to paint a tablecloth that could be used at future BtF activities. In the past BtF had hired a bus from Kempsey Police Citizen's Youth Club (PCYC) to take short day trips as part of the Family Fun Days. The activities aimed to bring families together and keep them in contact with the caseworkers in an informal setting. During my fieldwork I was able to attend one of the Family Fun Days. The activities weaved in cultural knowledge. One of the Elders shared stories, taught language, and led a painting session as a way for the children to express the stories they had heard. Unfortunately, only one family was able to attend. Many factors contributed to attendance. As mentioned earlier, family structures may mean parents do not live with their children. Many families live outside of the Kempsey district and may have had restricted time to attend. Moreover, although the event was held in the school holidays, the event was held on a weekday when some

parents are working. Despite this the Family Fun Days provide several benefits and have the potential to instil informal bonds necessary to help in transition from prison to home.

Figure 8.7

Belonging to Family, Family Fun Day, group activity

8.3.2.3. Community

As identified in the realist synthesis, connections in the community are one of the mechanisms known to assist the transition of people from prison to home (Bazemore & Erbe, 2003; Calma, 2004; Moresu-Diop, 2010; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009; Williams, 2015). This is reflective in the third and final informal bond BtF aim to strengthen, this time between the participating families and other community members. There is a significant overlap in how this mechanism works and how BtF creates formal bonds (section 8.3.1). This is due to the connections BtF have established for participants to connect with the community. In the realist synthesis I mentioned the Yap n' Yarn event, where multiple agencies cooperate to hold a free barbeque with local support services such as the BtF caseworkers attending to connect with the community. While I was collecting data for the evaluation there were multiple other events with the aim of bringing the community and local services together, including community events held by Neighbourhood Watch, Bernado's, and a conference sponsored by Child Safety held at The Slim Dusty Centre in Kempsey. There were also activities where SHINE was able to cover the cost for families to become involved, such as school holiday programs held by PCYC. These types of connections were another 'platform' BtF built for

participants. In this case, participants used these platforms to connect with other community members.

Similarly, to the discussion above (section 8.3.1), BtF can only offer 'platforms', but ultimately families have the choice to engage. BtF presence at these events is reaffirming BtF's place in the community while also helping BtF caseworkers keep informed of the other services available in the region. However, at a number of events no participating families attended. As discussed above, numerous reasons contribute to family attendance, such as family's structures, travel time, and availability. Again, despite low attendance, community events can provide numerous benefits and have the potential to instil informal bonds necessary to help families in the transition from prison to home and connecting to other community members and services.

An important contextual factor to note here is the impact of negative influences in the community on returning home. Negative peer influence is an established factor in the likelihood a person will engage in anti-social behaviour, particularly as "deviant behaviour is predominately social behaviour" (Warr, 2002). This was evident throughout the interviews with incarcerated parents and their kinship participants. Eight of the 15 incarcerated parents had specifically identified that they worried about returning to negative peer groups and towns with limited opportunities. However, although the role of negative bonds was identified by both the incarcerated parents and kinship participants, they also identified the difficulty in breaking these ties. One mother explained throughout her interview no less than five times that she needed *"…to stay away from my old friends and using drugs…So when I get out I suggest I've just got to make new friends"* (Evonne, initial interview). I tried to end each interview on a hopeful note, and asked the mother "what are you looking forward to the most when you go home?" to which she did not hesitate to reply to:

> *Catch up with friends… That's what I'm looking forward to, but just - you know you can still hang around your friends and that because you love them and miss them, but just stay away from trouble, like thieving and stealing.*
> (Evonne, initial interview)

On top of the difficulties in establishing new networks, many interviewees indicated that for some people, the only way to stay out of trouble was to leave the town that they were in, particularly if they were small towns with limited opportunities and a small population where everybody knew each other. Again, this also has difficulties. Jarrah explained how he was being targeted by police in his hometown and that he had limited opportunities. I asked him where he planned to go after his release, he said:

> *Well back to [hometown], but I want to move away from [hometown], and then it comes down to - well it doesn't really matter where you move to, because there's going to be the same sort of people wherever you move.*
> (Jarrah, follow-up interview)

Overall, the caseworkers were aware of the difficulties faced by participants in returning to negative networks. There were steps taken in BtF to identify and address this, such as talking about these issues in the group sessions and trying to establish informal bonds while in the program. However, the scope of BtF was limited in addressing the structures and existing networks that contributed to negative experiences in the community, such as targeted policing or restricting which networks people associate with on return home. These contextual factors significantly impacted on the outcomes of BtF.

8.3.3. Proposed mechanism: Advocacy

The third and final mechanism that strengthens social networks is the role of advocacy. As noted in the introduction to section 8.3, this mechanism was not identified in the realist synthesis but rather emerged during the evaluation. In this section, I outline three important considerations for the role of advocacy in BtF. First, I outline why advocacy was considered an additional mechanism in *improving social networks*. Second, I outline barriers I identified for the caseworkers in their role as advocates. Third, as a new mechanism, I have identified how this advocacy can be recognised and strengthened for BtF going forward.

8.3.3.1. Why was advocacy considered an additional mechanism?

In the realist synthesis, I had considered advocacy as a process of formal bonds (section 8.3.1). However, there was a distinct difference in providing information and connections to services compared to advocacy. Advocacy is a role services play where they act as an intermediary between a client and a service (Ezell, 2000). Power imbalances between clients and services and complex processes can impact decision making that impact the client. Marli sought BtF to support her in an advocacy role. Marli was unfamiliar with court and correctional processes, and this was her first time in prison. During the BtF sessions she was engaged in court proceedings involving the wellbeing of one child and was in the process of establishing parental rights of her second child. She required support from BtF in navigating the court process as well as a letter from BtF that could attest to her working on her parental role. The caseworkers did not need to establish ongoing support from services, but rather needed to be an advocate with court processes for Marli and her family. Another

example occurred when the BtF caseworkers gained entry for a past participant into a highly sought-after Indigenous residential rehabilitation centre based on the Central Coast, NSW. The caseworkers spent close to three months to successfully negotiate entry for the past participant. The MNCCC support staff had acknowledged this was a rare accomplishment and sought advice from the BtF caseworkers on how to do this for other inmates. Again, the caseworker's advocacy role was quite distinct from creating formal bonds, and additionally was a time-consuming process that should be acknowledged as a core mechanism.

8.3.3.2. Issues for BtF in advocacy

Advocacy is a common mechanism used in social interventions which has been extensively researched (Ezell, 2000; Hoefer, 2019; Schmid et al., 2008). A thorough analysis of how advocacy operates, and its effectiveness is well beyond the scope of this evaluation. However, it is important to recognise the impact of advocacy on this and further evaluations. As indicated above, I initially considered advocacy as a part of creating formal bonds. Therefore, I was aware of the importance of advocacy at the start to the evaluation and recorded any instances throughout data collection. In this sense, advocacy was not excluded from this evaluation. However, it was only after the data analysis that I understood the importance of advocacy as a distinct mechanism as well as the time it takes to effectively advocate for incarcerated parents.

A contextual issue that impacted effective advocacy was distances and program jurisdictions. In section 8.3.1.3, I identified issues based on geographical distances, service jurisdictions, and being informed across multiple areas about complex needs. Similarly, many services that offer advocacy are based in single jurisdictions or are aimed at specific issues. The BtF caseworkers sought to connect with other services. However, as depicted in Figure 8.4, the parents were returning to numerous jurisdictions. People in correctional centres in regional areas tend to return to multiple jurisdictions at considerable distances. Many services are bound to serve jurisdictions and establishing effective advocacy may be difficult and time consuming. For example, Durrii, the Aboriginal Medical Service in Kempsey, delivers programs within a one-hour drive of the centre. In this wave of the evaluation, BtF would need to contact the Aboriginal Medical Service that would service this region as for four parents. Then they would need to identify all other regions parents are returning to and identify what services are available at each organisation. In the small cohort of this evaluation, this would include eight other areas. Effective advocacy would require significant time and resources to identify and engage appropriate services.

An additional consideration for effective advocacy is ensuring the participant's needs are met. As is evident throughout the stories in this thesis, the families have multiple and complex needs which require substantial time to discover, understand and address. For future evaluations, it may be necessary to gather more detailed information into the role, influence, and outcome of advocacy, including the services where BtF are an advocate, how long the process was, and the success rate. This would provide a clear demonstration of what BtF does, how the caseworkers accomplish outcomes, and in turn, provide clear evidence to aid future funding applications.

8.3.3.3. BtF ongoing improvement

Formal recognition of the mechanism of advocacy within BtF would ensure the ongoing improvement for the program. As I have indicated, advocacy is a time-consuming process. It took three months of persistent negotiations to secure a spot in a sought-after residential rehabilitation program for a past participant. This was a significant outcome for the participant, but this time and process should be acknowledged in the role of the caseworker. Moreover, the role of advocacy is further complicated in recognising that BtF caseworkers are servicing participants across multiple jurisdictions as well as different systems. The types of services that parents in prison need advocacy for are generally complex, regularly change, and are restricted in servicing particular geographical areas. Therefore, BtF is required to be aware of relevant services and learn about the required processes each time they act as an advocate. The role of advocacy is important to recognise to be able to factor in the significant time it takes caseworkers to successfully and effectively advocate. Moreover, other services and funders need to be informed of this extra service that BtF performs. Again, advocacy is a common trait in social interventions, especially those that incorporate case management. However, for the ongoing improvement of BtF, advocacy does need to be acknowledged as a significant component of the program.

8.4. Refinement of context, mechanisms, and outcomes

This chapter has analysed the context and mechanisms identified in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5) for the outcome *improving participant's support networks.* Realist evaluations provide an opportunity to refine an intervention's CMO configurations. Through sections 8.1-8.3, I refined the relationships of this outcome; these changes are depicted in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2

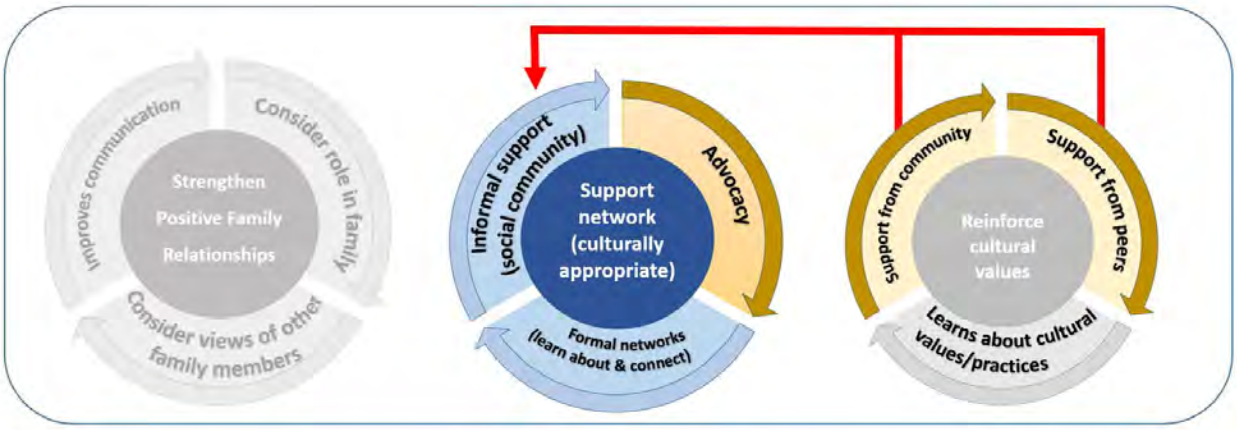
Refined outcome and mechanisms: Improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community

Outcome		***Mechanisms***		***Contexts***
Realist Synthesis	***Realist Evaluation***	***Realist Synthesis***	***Realist Evaluation***	***Realist synthesis (refined in Figure 7.8)***
Improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community	Unchanged	Teach participants about support services and how to access those services that they need.	Unchanged	**<u>Individual</u>** • Characteristics of family and family members • Personal qualities of caseworkers **<u>Interpersonal</u>** • Caseworker ⟷ Participant • Participant ⟷ Participant • Family member ⟷ Family member **<u>Institutional</u>** • SHINE for Kids • Mid North Coast Correctional Centre **<u>Infrastructural</u>** • Federal policies (First Peoples) • Availability of support services (for referral)
		Participants feel supported by social community	Unchanged, and merged with informal network mechanisms from the outcome *reinforce cultural values*, including: - Shows support from First Peoples community - Shows support from peers	
			Caseworkers provide advocacy	

Notably, I made two significant changes relating to the mechanisms of this outcome. I detail these changes with reference to Figure 8.8. Figure 8.8 has been adapted from Figure 5.8 (section 5.5.1) and depicts the three intended outcomes of BtF and their corresponding mechanisms that were established in the realist synthesis. In Figure 8.8, the intended outcome and mechanisms I investigate in this Chapter are coloured blue and yellow. *Improving participant's support networks* (the focus of this chapter) is depicted in Figure 8.8 as the middle dark blue circle. In the realist synthesis, I established that BtF had two mechanisms that triggered the creation of bonds; these are depicted as the light blue outer circles around the centre circle in Figure 8.8. The first mechanism was to teach participants about support services and how to access those services that they need. The second mechanism was making participants feel supported by their social community. There was no change in the conceptualisation of the realist synthesis outcome of *improving participant's support networks* or the mechanism concerning formal bonds.

Figure 8.8

Changes to the mechanisms and outcomes identified in the realist synthesis during the realist evaluation: Improve participant's social and formal support networks



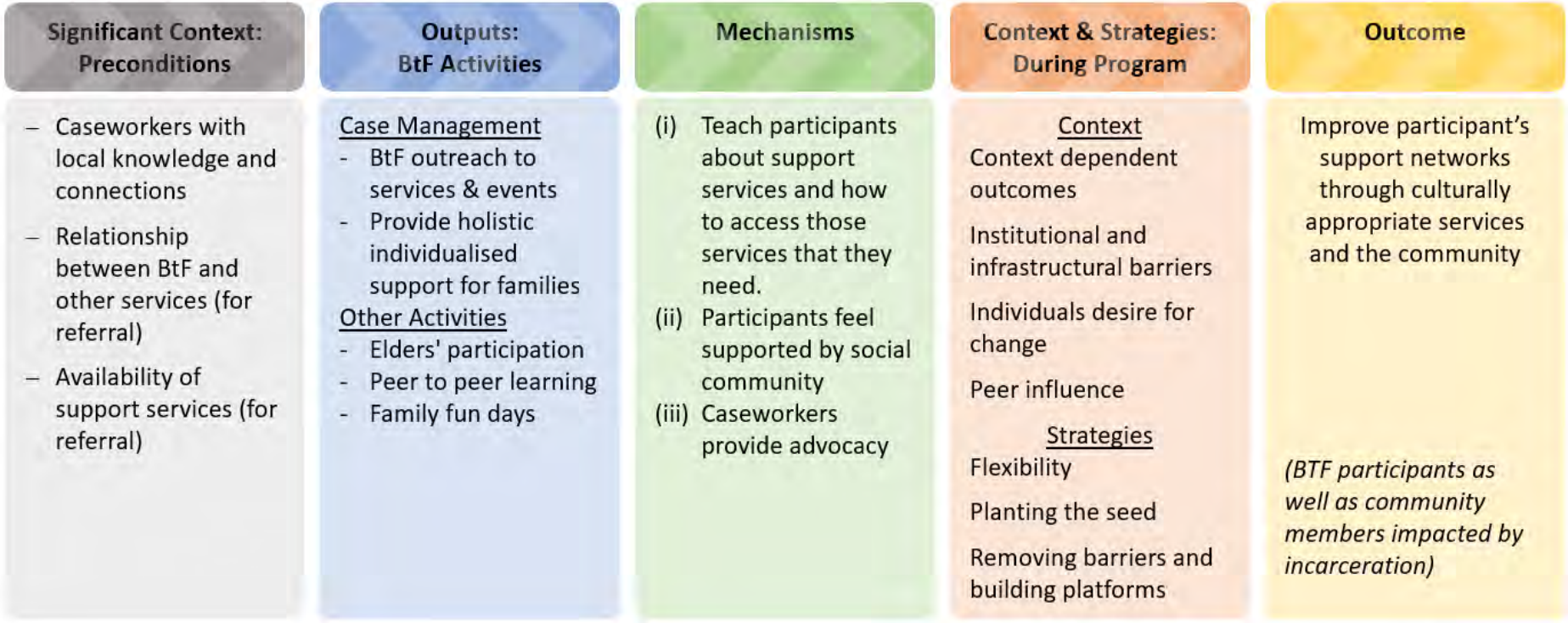
The first significant change included the addition of a third mechanism, advocacy. As noted in section 8.3.3, I found that a significant amount of the caseworker's time was dedicated to being advocates for the families involved in BtF. Advocacy was a process that could not accurately fit into the two mechanisms identified in the realist synthesis. Moreover, I could not conceptualise advocacy as a separate outcome. During data analysis I observed that advocacy was best characterised as a mechanism in establishing networks. Therefore, I included this as a third mechanism for this outcome. Advocacy has been added into Figure 8.8 as the yellow outer circle around the centre circle.

The second significant modification made during the realist evaluation involves the mechanism for informal bonds ('participants feel supported by the social community'). This modification impacts on two of BtF's intended outcomes I established in the realist synthesis; *developing support networks* (this chapter) and *reinforcing cultural values* (Chapter 9). *Reinforcing cultural values* is depicted in Figure 8.8 as the circle to the right. For this intended outcome, two of the three mechanisms identified in the realist synthesis overlapped into this chapter: (i) showing support from First Peoples community and (ii) showing support from peers. In Figure 8.8 these mechanisms are depicted as the yellow outer circles of the circle to the right. As described in this chapter (sections 8.2 and 8.3.2.), I found that these two mechanisms strengthened informal bonds. Consequently, I merged these two mechanisms into 'making participants feel supported by their social community'. This merger is depicted with the red arrow in Figure 8.8.

The final logic model is depicted in Figure 8.9. The grey and orange columns list the significant contextual issues and the point in time in delivering BtF that they are most influential. The blue column identifies the main outputs for achieving this outcome, focused primarily on case management. The green column identifies the refined mechanisms, and the yellow column identifies the outcome. Refining the program logic provides a true reflection of BtF and how the program works by accurately identifying the associated mechanisms. This in turn aids in pinpointing how the program can be improved and translating how the program works in future funding applications or to potential other sites. Overall, this refinement strengthens BtF going forward (Chapter 10).

Figure 8.9

Program logic model for outcome 'improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community'



8.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I addressed the research question *how and to what extent does Belonging to Family improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community.* The operationalisation of this outcome that was established in the realist synthesis was confirmed in the evaluation. However, like *strengthening family relationships* (Chapter 7), this outcome was tailored to the experiences of reintegration. Overall, outcomes for each of the families – particularly the incarcerated parents – included the *development of support networks.* However, also similar to the findings described in Chapter 7, context shaped mechanisms and outcomes which led to the necessity to be flexible in delivery. Outcomes ranged from writing support letters for formal court processes, negotiating places into supported accommodation, through to career advice (section 8.2). Therefore, in identifying *to what extent BtF developed support networks,* this evaluation would indicate this is to a high degree. The diverse outcomes that were identified are reflective of the highly contextual nature of parental incarceration.

As found in the realist synthesis, this outcome was achieved through the mechanisms of; (i) teaching participants about support services and how to access those services that they need; and (ii) making participants feel supported by the social community. Significantly, key changes arose from the evaluation concerning the mechanisms, including the addition of a third mechanism; (iii) advocacy. Moreover, creating informal bonds was refined, including the identification of how informal bonds overlapped with other outcomes (section 8.4). The operation of these mechanisms was impacted by the highly contextual nature of parental incarceration. In particular, on an individual level, the goals of case management and building bonds was impacted by the participant's desire for change. On an institutional and infrastructural level, the BtF caseworkers could only refer to programs and services that exist. This tends to impact participants that live in regional areas to a higher degree, as many services are only available in major cities. Moreover, indeterminate funding and the number of regions the caseworkers were expected to connect with impacted on the operation of BtF.

Overall, *developing support networks* is central to BtF and the steps outlined in this chapter can assist in the ongoing improvement of the program, including how to implement the program at alternate sites. I explore these impacts further in the discussion section in Chapter 10. In the next chapter, I examine the final outcome that was identified in the realist synthesis: reinforcing cultural values.

Chapter 9
Reinforce Cultural Values

9.1. Introduction

Chapter 9 is the third and final results chapter of the realist evaluation. In this chapter I address the research question: *How and to what extent does Belonging to Family reinforce participants' cultural values?* 'Reinforcing participant's cultural values' was an outcome of BtF identified in the realist synthesis (Chapter 5). Table 9.1 provides a summary of the pertinent contexts and mechanisms identified in the realist synthesis that were related to this outcome. Three mechanisms were identified: (i) shows support from First Peoples community, (ii) shows support from peers, and (iii) learns about cultural values and practices. A number of individual, interpersonal, institutional, and infrastructural contexts were also identified. At the outset of the evaluation, the primary aim of this research question was to test and refine these relationships.

Table 9.1

Realist synthesis findings: Context and mechanisms of the outcome 'reinforcing participant's cultural values'

Outcome	***Mechanisms***	***Contexts***
Reinforce participant's cultural values	Shows support from First Peoples community	**<u>Individual</u>** • Characteristics of family and family members • Personal qualities of caseworkers **<u>Interpersonal</u>** • Caseworker ⟷ Participants/family • Participant ⟷ Participant • Family member ⟷ Family member **<u>Institutional</u>** • SHINE for Kids • Mid North Coast Correctional Centre **<u>Infrastructural</u>** • Federal policies (First Peoples) • Availability of support services (for referral)
	Shows support from peers	
	Learn about cultural values and practices	

As noted in section 8.4, the function of cultural values was significantly refined during the evaluation. Reinforcing participant's cultural values was not an outcome for BtF, rather cultural values were being used as a program mechanism especially in relation to the outcome of to *improve participant's support network*s. Therefore, the outcome of *reinforcing cultural values* was changed to a mechanism. Consequently, the mechanisms involving informal bonds were merged with the mechanism 'participants feel supported by their social community' that is triggered for the outcome of *improve participant's support network*s (Chapter 8). The primary aim of this chapter is to summarise why I changed cultural values to a mechanism and detail how cultural values were being used as a mechanism.

This chapter has four sections. In section 9.2 I justify the shift to cultural values being used as a mechanism by detailing how I originally measured changes in participants' cultural values and how I found it was *how* BtF was administered that reinforced where cultural values were being used to interact and engage with the targeted population. In section 9.3 I detail five specific examples of how cultural values operated as program mechanisms for BtF, including: (1) the implementation of self-determination; (2) incorporating First Peoples experiences and perspective; (3) recognising Indigenous leadership styles and how these fit within SHINE's structure; (4) the role of the caseworkers; and (5) the use of Indigenous pedagogies and supporting Indigenous learning styles. A summary is provided in section 9.4.

9.2. Why was reinforcing cultural values considered a mechanism?

Table 9.2 outlines the changes in the role of *reinforcing cultural values* in BtF. Of note, I had determined in the realist synthesis that one of the proposed outcomes for BtF was to *reinforce cultural values*. *Reinforcing cultural values* was conceptualised as teaching, instilling, and practicing First Peoples' cultural values. However, during the realist evaluation, I observed that cultural values were being used as a mechanism rather than a specific outcome. To reiterate, mechanisms are the processes that interventions trigger to achieve program outcomes and are characterised by a change of resources or reasoning. Realists note that mechanisms can be culturally dependent. In this light, I observed that one of BtF's outcomes was not to *reinforce cultural values*; the outcomes were to *strengthen family relations* and *improve support networks* at the point of reintegration. Rather, cultural values were being used to provide a culturally appropriate service; that is, cultural values were being used to trigger the proposed outcomes.

Table 9.2

Refined outcome and mechanisms: Reinforce cultural values

Outcome		***Mechanisms***		***Contexts***
Realist Synthesis	***Realist Evaluation***	***Realist Synthesis***	***Realist Evaluation***	***(realist synthesis)***
Reinforce cultural values	*Reinforce cultural values* was changed from an outcome to a mechanism	Shows support from First Peoples community	Unchanged, but merged with forming informal bond mechanism for the outcome *improve participant's support network*s (section 8.3.2).	**<u>Individual</u>** • Characteristics of family and family members • Personal qualities of caseworkers **<u>Interpersonal</u>** • Caseworker ⟷ Participant • Participant ⟷ Participant • Family member ⟷ Family member **<u>Institutional</u>** • SHINE for Kids • Mid North Coast Correctional Centre **<u>Infrastructural</u>** • Federal policies (First Peoples) • Availability of support services (for referral)
		Shows support from peers	Unchanged, but merged with forming informal bond mechanism for the outcome *improve participant's support network*s (section 8.3.1).	
		Learns about cultural values and practices	Changed to mechanism	

I made observations that indicated that First Peoples' cultural values were considered an integral mechanism of BtF rather than an outcome. These observations were characterised into two broad groups. First, there were specific adaptations to BtF from its origins to the current evaluation that highlighted the role of cultural values. Second, I considered the views, experiences, and changes of cultural values in the parents who were incarcerated. I describe both groups of observations in turn in the following sections.

9.2.1. Adaptations to BtF and the role of cultural values

The interviewee who was familiar with the origination of BtF provided insight into BtF's adaptations over time, including the role of cultural values. This interviewee explained that a grants scheme and interest had given SHINE an opportunity to adapt their mainstream program, *Rediscovering Families*, into a culturally appropriate version which would become BtF. SHINE took conscious steps to involve First Peoples perspectives throughout the adaptation process, including involving Aboriginal liaison officers from NSWCS, engaging Elders, gaining feedback on content from First Peoples who were incarcerated, and running a competition for incarcerated First Peoples to design BtF's logo. SHINE made a deliberate attempt not to just deliver the same program under a different name. In emphasising the major difference, the interviewee noted the impetus of BtF from the perspective of incarcerated First Peoples:

> *Why are we treated differently? All you get is oh because they should say sorry and they took over our country? So they're like this. They're like in a see-saw. So who are we? Do we assimilate and become white and adjust or do we stick up for who we are but we really don't know who we are because our parents haven't taught us who we are. That is the whole idea of BtF.* (Stakeholder interview 5)

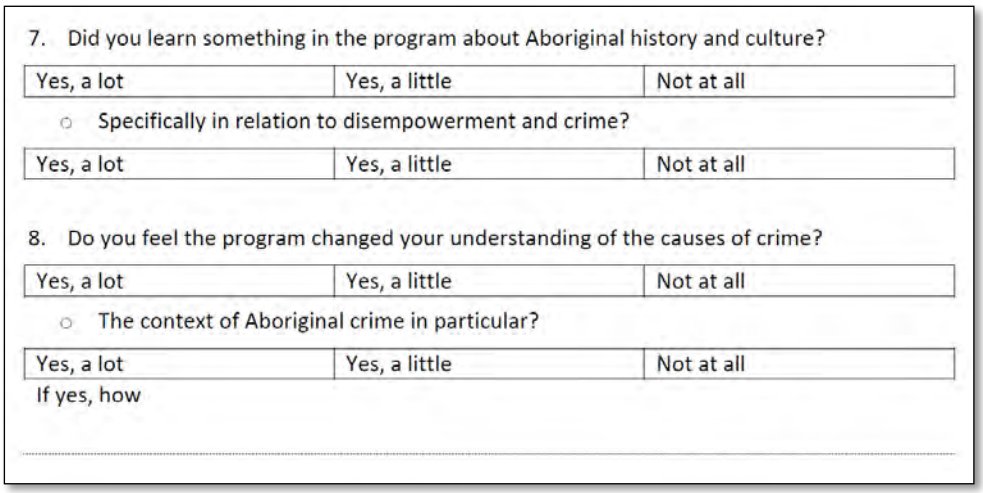
Here, the interviewee is explaining how potential participants wanted to strengthen their cultural values and knowledge, and how this led to distinguishing BtF to SHINE's mainstream program. As a result, SHINE originally designed BtF to include cultural activities as *outcomes* to the program. A week was dedicated to discussing culture, the incarcerated parents and kinship participants were asked to organise cultural performances at the graduation, and Elders were involved to teach incarcerated parents, kinship participants, and children. In this way, SHINE tried to build in cultural values and practices as a specific outcome.

However, the caseworkers made significant adaptations to BtF's original program manual. BtF was shortened from 12 weeks to 8 weeks and instead of attending every session as a family, the families only met in the first and final sessions. Consequently, the week dedicated to discussing culture was merged into the seventh week (see Figure 4.2). In practice, cultural concerns were distilled to one question in the group session and was not discussed and recorded like other issues. Moreover, the kinship participants' and children's groups were also not feasible in practice, and therefore the role of the Elders in sharing stories in this setting was not delivered as originally written. I also noted in interviews with employees that the main outcome that was focused on was *strengthening families through reintegration* rather than *reinforcing cultural values*.

Issues that arose with BtF's prior evaluation (Matrix on Board, 2013) demonstrates the importance of understanding the role of cultural values within a program as an outcome or mechanism. As a strength, the prior evaluation had identified and taken steps to measure the impact of cultural values. Unfortunately, the conceptualisation was not compatible with how BtF operated, as cultural values were considered an outcome. Three measures were developed: (i) "Aboriginal cultural values" was conceptualised as the participation of Elders; (ii) "issues specific to Aboriginal history of colonisation and disempowerment"; and (iii) the "needs of children of prisoners in the context of their culture, family, and community". The latter two outcomes were conceptualised with specific questions in the exit survey as outlined in Figure 9.1.

Figure 9.1

Prior evaluation of BtF: Exit survey, questions 7 and 8



7. Did you learn something in the program about Aboriginal history and culture?

Yes, a lot	Yes, a little	Not at all

- Specifically in relation to disempowerment and crime?

Yes, a lot	Yes, a little	Not at all

8. Do you feel the program changed your understanding of the causes of crime?

Yes, a lot	Yes, a little	Not at all

- The context of Aboriginal crime in particular?

Yes, a lot	Yes, a little	Not at all

If yes, how

The conceptualisation and operationalisation of cultural values gave rise to several issues. First, previous evaluators conceptualised cultural values in narrow terms. They measured cultural values as the attendance of Elders in sessions. However, the Elder's role was more influential than their attendance and there were multiple other ways cultural values were being used in BtF (section 9.3). Second the prior evaluation had considered some forms of cultural values as administrative goals. For example, the evaluation reported on First Peoples employment targets without considering ways to support First Peoples once they were in the role (sections 9.3.3-9.3.4). Third the prior evaluation oversimplified the processes required to address significant issues related to First Peoples experiences. This was exemplified in the conceptualisation of cultural values in the previous evaluation. As seen in Figure 9.1, the exit surveys developed by the evaluators asked participants about perceptions of "Aboriginal crime" and "disempowerment". The caseworkers explained how participants considered the wording and intention of the questions inappropriate, and when the caseworkers assisted participants fill in the survey, asking the question made the caseworkers feel uncomfortable. Consequently, most participants did not respond to the questions or had written comments such as "*What about non-Aboriginal crime?*". Some participants had also questioned the caseworkers about the relevance of the questions and found the question divisive. Consequently, the caseworkers created their own questions that they delivered at the conclusion of the eight-week program. The exit survey oversimplified the impact of colonisation, the criminalisation of First Peoples, and the impact this has on their families and communities. Moreover, the survey measured cultural values as outcomes of BtF without considering the role of cultural values as a mechanism. As a result, the previous evaluation may have missed core elements of how BtF worked and misrepresented outcomes of the program.

Overall, there were significant adaptations driven by the BtF caseworkers that had changed the role of cultural values. In particular there was a shift away from delivering cultural values or practices as a specific outcome of the program. This was evident in the previous evaluation where First Peoples values were considered as an integral component of BtF but were not conceptualised in a way that reflected how the program was being delivered. This may be a consequence of cultural values being underpinned as an integral mechanism, rather than an outcome.

9.2.2. The role of cultural practices and values for participants

The role of cultural values as a mechanism was also supported by the participants. Based on the findings of the realist synthesis (Chapter 5), I included questions in the realist evaluation to identify if BtF impacted participants views, perspectives, or beliefs regarding their cultural values. I

analysed the views of participants regarding their cultural values and practices from the interviews of the incarcerated parents before and after the eight-week program. I was not able to discern any differences between the interviews before and after the eight-week program. Participants whom I only interviewed once after the program also did not attribute any change to their cultural values from participating in BtF.

Notably, there were differences in the knowledge, practice, and lived experience of cultural practices and values within the group. This ranged from parents that had stated they had little contact with their First Peoples family:

> *I don't know much about my Aboriginal background or anything on that because it's on my mother's side and I don't have anything to do with her, so I don't really know much about that.* (Marli, initial interview)

Comparatively, other participants had regularly learnt cultural practices and lived experiences from birth:

> *[Being Koori] [m]eans everything. My grandpop, he passed away…and he used to take me and my older brother out and do culture things, he was a medicine man. So we used to go and get medicine and just do all black fella stuff like going hunting, everything and he taught what was good and what was bad to eat in the bush. So yeah, I love that I learnt that because not a lot of Koori teenagers got to learn that and that's important, especially in here. Like I see a lot of the Koori fellas converting to Muslim. I mean it's because they don't know who they are and that. It's because they don't know who they are and they don't know their religion, but I'll never ever change my religion. My pop gave me that.* (Warwick, follow-up interview)

Regardless of the level of experience in cultural practices, all of the participants had great pride in being First Peoples, which was used as a way for BtF to engage participants. Although there were no changes in perceptions of cultural values triggered by BtF, there was consensus amongst the participants in appreciating and valuing the way that BtF was administered. During follow up questions I could not only focus on the change in participants' cultural values, but also consider what participants enjoyed about BtF. I was able to attribute the positive feedback participants identified in the program to certain cultural practices and values evidenced in the delivery of BtF. I could ascertain that the caseworkers leveraged cultural values to address proposed outcomes; that is *strengthening family relationships* and *improve participant's support network*s. Programmatically, I

could identify these cultural values as mechanisms of BtF. Five specific cultural values are outlined in section 9.3. I identified these values in follow-up interviews which allowed me to gain the participants' perspectives. I also identified a number of cultural values after data collection when I cross referenced literature and the experiences of other programs.

9.2.3. Summary

Cultural values had a prominent function in BtF despite the observation that cultural values were not a specific outcome. After all, the premise of BtF is to support First Peoples. Overtime the role of cultural values had shifted. This was evident during my data analysis where I noted that cultural values were being used as a mechanism of BtF in its intent and function. I detail five specific ways First Peoples cultural values were used as a mechanism of BtF in section 9.3.

9.3. Culture values as a mechanism

In this section I outline five examples of how cultural values were functioning as a mechanism for BtF. This list may not be exhaustive; during the evaluation I was not focused on creating a finite list of how cultural values were acting as a mechanism. As is required in realist approaches to evaluation, I was testing this hypothesis as it emerged during the evaluation. In any case, I established five instances of cultural values being used as a mechanism for BtF which are; (i) the role of self-determination; (ii) the inclusion of First Peoples perspectives; (iii) cultural appropriate internal structures of SHINE; (iv) the interpersonal characteristics of the caseworkers; and (v) the learning method of planting the seed.

9.3.1. Self-determination: Process as a service

Self-determination refers to the ability of people to choose their own goals and make their own decisions and take steps to achieve these goals. On an individual level, having the ability to manage your own life improves your health and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). On a collective level, the right to self-determination for a people is a foundational principle of international law and is grounded in the right for people to freely choose their sovereignty and international political status (Anaya, 2004). Self-determination, from this collective position, is a group-based right of peoples; however, "peoples" has not been defined in international law (Cassese, 1995; French, 2013).

Consequently, conflicts can occur when different groups of peoples have conflicting interests, particularly between different groups within a nation state.

As outlined in section 2.2., self-determination is a prominent and important principle for Indigenous Peoples throughout the world. The implementation, scope, benefit, and history of self-determination for First Peoples is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, a thorough examination specific to the justice context in Australia is available in Porter et al. (2017). Briefly, for Indigenous Peoples, self-determination is the right to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development" (human rights.org) as a group of people. The importance of pursuing self-determination for Indigenous Peoples is imperative as policies and practices have overlooked and denied the inherent right of self-determination of Peoples throughout the world, particularly through colonisation practices.

In program delivery, self-determination is evident when local First Peoples communities identify their own needs and design, implement, and administer services. In Australia, there are countless examples of this in service delivery and First Peoples community-controlled organisations, including child and family welfare (Bamblett & Lewis, 2007), policing (Porter, 2018), health services (Davis, 2013), and media (Rennie & Featherstone, 2008). However, Australian policy and program delivery in Indigenous affairs is dominated by a self-management model. Self-management is characterised by the assignment of designated roles with limited autonomy, as well as services that are conditional on governmental decisions -including abolition of the service altogether (Behrendt, 2003; Tauri, 2013). An example of self-management in service delivery includes when established program are considered 'cultural competent' with only the addition of Indigenous designs or artwork, and when such programs are delivered to a community without consultation and by external providers. Self-management models are disempowering, and have been shown to negatively impact the engagement, completion, and outcomes of service delivery (Porter et al., 2017). The role of self-determination in the implementation of program delivery is an important step in principle, but also in considering the effectiveness of programs. Research continually shows that programs, policies and practices that implement self-determination principles have positive effects on the uptake, completion, and success. The process of delivering a program is a service in itself. In this, implementing programs while adhering to principles of self-determination is a necessary mechanism for delivering programs for First Peoples.

The implementation of self-determination is a complex process. The most notable application of self-determination is the self-governance of a peoples. This would be a macro-level recognition of First Peoples laws. There are also principles that can be recognised for programs

which cut across all structural levels. For example, at the infrastructural level, funding criteria would need to be adaptive to local needs; institutionally, organisations would need to be either First Peoples owned or be culturally appropriate; interpersonally, employees would need to implement First Peoples' ways of learning and teaching; and individually, unless programs are highly flexible, there would need to be recognition that one program would not be suitable for each participant as there is a great diversity in individuals needs and responsiveness to programs. The need for self-determined programs to meet criteria across multiple structural levels adds to the complexity of effectively implementing principles as well as evaluating the effectiveness.

There were infrastructural and institutional processes to consider in delivering BtF while implementing principles of self-determination. At an infrastructural level, there were issues in the reporting requirements for BtF. BtF was co-funded with an educational program and was consequently required to report on changes to children's school reports (section 4.4.3). In practice, requesting further paperwork from participants added further work for the caseworkers as well as frustration as the caseworkers were aware the activities that they performed would not necessarily be reflected in school reports. These reporting requirements are evidence of limiting the ability of BtF to respond to and report on meeting the needs of the participants that were established during the development of BtF.

There were also processes to ensure self-determination at an institutional level. SHINE is a non-Indigenous organisation delivering BtF as a First Peoples targeted program. An important aspect of self-determination is to have First Peoples lead in program development and delivery. SHINE had taken numerous steps to deliver BtF in a way that the program was and continued to be led by First Peoples (section 9.3.3). Notably, BtF was adapted from a mainstream program where SHINE took the opportunity to apply for a targeted First Peoples funding scheme administered by the federal government (section 4.4). Although the funding led to the implementation of BtF, the demand for a culturally appropriate version of the mainstream program was requested by potential participants and correctional service liaison officers prior to the funding scheme. Moreover, SHINE ensured that First Peoples perspectives were embedded throughout the entire process, including First Peoples corrective service liaison officers, local Elders, and First Peoples who were incarcerated. The guidance of First Peoples for BtF has also continued overtime where the program has been continually adapted. In many instances, adaptations were due to institutional constraints, such as restructuring who attended each session due to Corrective Services' caution in children attending weekly sessions within the correctional centre. There were also practical constraints, such as the kinship participants sessions being one-on-one over the phone due to the feasibility of attending weekly group sessions in person. But in restructuring BtF overtime, the caseworkers and Elders were

always given the opportunity to adapt the program. This extended to the Elders directing the topics they wanted to talk about during the sessions, as well as the caseworkers using ways of learning and teaching that were comfortable for them (section 9.3.5). In practice, this also extended to how the caseworkers facilitated the group work, ensuring that the participants led the discussion to encourage ownership of the content that was discussed during the group sessions.

Overall, there is complexity in identifying whether BtF is effectively applying principles of self-determination. There are numerous strengths that I could identify during the evaluation that reflected the intent of self-determination. These strengths form the basis of BtF and are integrated program mechanisms for how BtF was delivered.

9.3.2. Centring First Peoples experiences and perspectives

One of the prominent principles of self-determination is making a group's perspective central in practices. This is particularly important for First Peoples where best practice in policy and program or service delivery is to act *with* First Peoples rather than *for* First Peoples. The role of self-determination has also taken hold with research practices. For this thesis I used the Indigenist research methodology (Rigney, 1999; section 3.3.2.5). Indigenist research is a methodology that aligns research as a process of self-determination. As a methodology, the aim is to align research for *resistance* by recognising the role of colonisation on contemporary practices; have *political integrity* in using research to inform an Indigenous political agenda; and *privilege Indigenous voices*. Overall, the aim of self-determined practices is to privilege First Peoples experiences and voices.

In application, this can be difficult. As with any group of people, First Peoples are not a homogenous group. There are differences in opinion and beliefs both across different cultural groups as well as within groups. For First Peoples, the best practice is to deliver social policies and practices that reflect the local community's perspective. This can be particularly difficult for programs that are not delivered based on a geographical basis such as correctional centres. People who are incarcerated are not necessarily placed in a facility based on their home address. There are multiple factors that are involved in determining the suitability of a placement with home address being one. Consequently, all the participants in BtF were from different First Peoples cultures with varying beliefs and experiences.

Despite variations, there are multiple ways that programs can be adaptive to the experiences and perspectives of First Peoples; many of which I noted for BtF. A prominent way programs have ensured the perspectives of First Peoples are embedded into a program is the inclusion of Elders. Elders have an important role in First Peoples communities. In this evaluation,

the role of the Elders was best expressed by Sally, a kinship participant. Sally had explained that one of her sons was recently murdered, two of her sons were incarcerated, and that she had lost three other close relatives within the past three years. I asked if she had much support through this time. She replied:

> *I go and sit down with the oldies, that's who I sit down with, the oldies. They're always there to listen. They go to talk to young ones. That's why I look towards the oldies all the time, all my time is with the old people because you get a good yarn with them and you can sit there and tell them I really need to help this fellow. Because they know [my son] too.* (Sally, kinship participant interview)

Sally demonstrated how Elders have an important role in First Peoples communities. Elders are recognised as custodians of knowledge and Lore and provide guidance, counselling and knowledge to their community as well as the wider community (Busija et al., 2020). Elders also support people facing contemporary issues such as dealing with racism and oppression, building capacity within communities, and caring for Country, peoples, and intergenerational connectedness.

For BtF, Elders were an important part of establishing informal social bonds for participants, (section 8.3.2). Moreover, embedding the role of Elders reinforces cultural values and if included in programs in a meaningful way, Elders take a valuable role as a mechanism to achieving overarching outcomes in programs. This was continually evident in BtF. When talking of the roles of Elders, one caseworker recounted a specific time an Elder helped an incarcerated parent:

> *One of the Elders asked one of the inmates where they were from.*
> *And he said, "I'm from [hometown]".*
> *She goes "you look like such-and-such person."*
> *He went, yeah, that's my Nan's brother.*
> *You know, she said, "I'm looking at you, seeing your features, you look like my cousin. So, you my mob".*
> *He went, "Eh! I've got family here!"*
> *So, it was another sense of belonging.*
> *He was happy. When he comes into the group, he kept saying - or when NAIDOC comes every year, he looks for those old girls, you know, if he was in there. When he seen them there, then he got a photo taken with them, because he went, "yeah, my mob here."* (Stakeholder interview 1)

Here, the Elders are creating a connectedness for the participants. This was evident throughout BtF. For example, some kinship participants could not attend the final barbeque. Recounting a former graduation, the caseworker explained that all the mother's had family members except one. Recounting the Elders role, the caseworker said;

> *Then one of the Elders said to her, you know, you're looking, but there's no family. She said, "You know what? Remember we're your family. We Aunties and Uncles, here. So you belong."* (Stakeholder interview 1)

These are two examples of how Elders support families experiencing parental incarceration to feel connected to their family and community while incarcerated. Elders can draw on family, intergenerational bloodlines, connectedness, and local knowledge. This is an invaluable step in any program but particularly in supporting families experiencing parental incarceration.

As well as embedding First Peoples perspectives, programs need to be adaptive to the experiences occurring in the community where programs are delivered. There have been multiple initiatives that organisations have implemented that can account for experiences, such as granting cultural leave to employees that belong to certain groups to participate in cultural practices. Making allowances in programs can be particularly difficult. During my time in fieldwork, there were a number of deaths within the local First Peoples community. As the caseworkers were members of the local community, they were aware of the high number of deaths. This was amplified as two people who passed away had direct connections to BtF; one was an Elder who volunteered for BtF and was the kinship participant for one of the incarcerated parents; another was a past member of BtF who had remained in contact with the caseworkers. The caseworkers were responsive to the impact the high number of deaths had on the local community and in turn to the people in MNCCC and BtF. The caseworkers attended funerals and were able to gift people who were incarcerated and could not attend funeral services with community notifications and service brochures. They could also reflect on the impact the experience had within sessions and provide support to anyone during this time, whether people were directly involved with BtF or not.

Another aspect of embedding First Peoples perspectives is recognising the political space that has occurred to require targeting programs and policies. First Peoples in Australia are the most incarcerated population in the world (Chapter 2). The process of colonisation has led to the over-representation of First Peoples throughout the criminal justice system. For programs such as BtF, employees are in a position to support First Peoples families who are involved in the criminal justice system, and moreover, caseworkers can be in a position to be community brokers between people

who are incarcerated, the community, and the institutions that contribute to over-representation. In this role, the caseworkers can contribute to initiatives that require community support in prisons. For example, I was doing fieldwork during NAIDOC week. NAIDOC week is usually held the first week of July but was held in an alternative week in correctional centres to ensure Elders could visit. The caseworkers had an important role in ensuring Elders attended. For example, BtF assist with ensuring Elders have completed annual security checks and training required by the NSWCS as well as making sure Elders were aware and had transport to the activities.

The role of BtF in accounting for First Peoples perspectives and experiences is certainly beyond the scope in BtF's program manual; however, the responsibilities are integral for BtF to take its place within the community. In most instances, targeted programs rely on local relationships and networks to function. This epitomises the tension Porter (2017) identified between 'expert knowledge' and 'local knowledge', where funders – usually external to the community – assess programs without the requisite knowledge of how programs work within local communities. With programs that require strong networks within a community – like BtF – these networks do not appear due to funding availability but are rather built over generations. Undoubtedly, the ability and contribution of embedding First Peoples perspectives and experiences is a valuable and integral mechanism for BtF as with any First Peoples programs.

9.3.3. Indigenous leadership styles and the institutional structures for SHINE

Another prominent principle in First Peoples program delivery is embedding culturally appropriate support structures within the service provider. The optimal way to manage programs for First Peoples is to have First Peoples identify issues and develop, implement, and deliver programs. However, in many cases non-Indigenous organisations gain targeted First Peoples funding to deliver targeted programs. When a non-Indigenous organisation is awarded targeted funding, it is imperative that the organisation has culturally appropriate support and structures to deliver the program. In this space cultural competency has taken a prominent role in program delivery for First Peoples in Australia. Within program delivery for First Peoples, it is now widely recognised that the learning process is two-ways. In this case, service providers are required to learn and be as receptive to change as much as the participants they are targeting. Teaching cultural competency is constantly being updated and improved and can include initiatives such as employing people in identified positions, ensuring organisations are culturally safe, constructing advisory boards, or administering internally delivered programs of cultural competency for service providers to understand the lived experiences of First Peoples and how cultural values impact on how they deliver programs.

Developing culturally appropriate structural changes can be particularly difficult for non-Indigenous organisations delivering targeted First Peoples programs. Targeted programs would be delivered within a suite of programs and would therefore be structurally placed within organisation wide leadership structures. There is a large body of research that outlines First Peoples leadership styles. Rosile et al. (2016) explored how Indigenous people around the world tend to favour collectivist, relational, and heterarchical leadership styles. These are cultural values that are common in many Indigenous groups which have been transferred into contemporary leadership roles including for program delivery and management roles. In Australia, Stewart and Warn (2016) reaffirmed the importance of relational strengths for First Peoples in community development, management and administrative roles, and leadership roles. They interviewed 10 emerging First Peoples leaders. The interviewees expressed the need to manage their roles in 'two-ways' by meeting the needs of mainstream organisations while supporting First Peoples. In particular, Stewart and Warn (2016) outlined how many organisations conceptualise leadership in instrumental ways that overlook the characteristics valued and implemented by First Peoples.

SHINE is a non-Indigenous organisation that gained targeted funding for BtF. Notably, BtF is administered on soft funding – the administration of BtF is dependent on short term grants. During the evaluation, I noted that the funding had led to changes in the internal structures of SHINE. SHINE originally gained funding to deliver BtF from 2011-2013. The funding ran out and BtF ran on minimal intermittent funding from SHINE until the second successful grant was awarded from 2015-16. Throughout the delivery of BtF, the caseworkers had taken turns in taking on leadership roles within their program. They had each been in the position to take a senior role for BtF. Moreover, when the second grant was awarded SHINE had the opportunity to appoint a First Peoples program's manager within SHINE. The manager gave SHINE advice for supporting First Peoples and also oversaw Indigenous specific programs administered by SHINE, including BtF and the educational program that was run simultaneously to BtF.

The caseworkers were highly supportive of the Indigenous program manager position for the strengths this brought from First Peoples leadership roles described above. Specifically, the caseworkers felt supported in gaining advice and consulting the manager regarding BtF. They felt the program manager was more focused on meeting collectivist ideals for the participants of BtF rather than meeting reporting guidelines or imported outcome measures. The caseworkers also found that the program manager could help 'translate' their work. This was reflective of the program manager's role in meeting the demands of 'two-worlds' as described by Stewart and Warn (2016). During my fieldwork the caseworkers contacted the program manager to discuss issues with governmental reporting guidelines and how to report on processes to meet the requirements but also be reflective

in the outcomes that the caseworkers were addressing in BtF. This relieved the high administrative burden that was placed on the caseworkers which is common in their service delivery roles. Moreover, the connection between the employees was relational and heterarchical. For example, the caseworkers mentioned how they both had strengths in the program delivery; one had good connections to the local community while the other had strengths in advocacy roles and communicating with other service providers. This had led to valuing the substitution in the caseworkers taking on leadership roles within the local office. The heterarchical strengths were also evident in the way SHINE's Indigenous program manager took on his role in valuing the knowledge of the caseworkers while allowing their own strengths in program management to contribute to the ongoing improvement of SHINE. The caseworkers also felt that the program manager was taking a receptive position, striving to improve BtF, and encouraging suggestions and feedback. I had also noted these strengths within my fieldnotes and the positive impact this had on BtF. These are all valued leadership strengths for First Peoples, and I believe were important mechanisms to BtF in achieving their overall outcomes.

9.3.4. The caseworkers: First Peoples as frontline workers

Frontline employees are essential and influential in program delivery and can directly impact program effectiveness. Consequently, considering the impact of frontline employees to program delivery is necessary. The skills required of frontline staff tend to focus on knowledge and training completion rather than soft skills such as ways of communicating and building rapport (Leach, 2005). Culturally appropriate programs are also susceptible to overlooking cultural interpersonal skills as essential mechanisms (Morley, 2015).

The role of First Peoples as frontline staff is exemplary of an influential mechanism that has an interpersonal and relational basis. First Peoples in the role of frontline work are often seen as holding a critical and integral role in program delivery. In these roles, First Peoples generally have a strong desire to address issues that have a high prevalence in their community (Guerin et al., 2011; Taylor & Guerin, 2010). First Peoples have the additional role of taking on this responsibility while representing their community and applying an understanding of their community's circumstances and cultural needs within their role (Panaretto & Wenitong, 2006). In this way, First Peoples who are frontline employees are in a unique position of performing their employment role through the lenses of their Indigenous culture, history, and language. Frontline workers may also be tasked with addressing 'two-ways' in their role by addressing the needs of their community while managing the needs of mainstream service providers (Stewart & Warn, 2016; section 9.3.3). For these reasons,

First Peoples in frontline roles are highly valuable. In realist evaluation terms, the context of a program may give rise to the issues that a program is addressing; however, the unique role and function of First Peoples in frontline roles can be an integral mechanism in delivering outcomes.

Unfortunately, the role of a 'cultural broker' can have negative impacts on First Peoples employees, which in turn can impact the experience of the participants and service provider. High turnover rates are common amongst human service providers (Gomez & Michaelis, 1995), particularly for those people working with correctional centres (Gallavan & Newman, 2013; Garland, 2004). Adding the role of cultural broker compounds the pressures of frontline workers. Roche et al. (2013) analysed a national survey that identified that Indigenous drug and alcohol workers had higher rates of emotional exhaustion which can lead to higher turnover rates. I noted that the caseworkers exhibited workplace practices that commonly lead to emotional exhaustion. For example, the caseworkers worked long hours that negatively impacted their work/family balance. Additionally, the caseworkers indicated that they could not separate their role as a caseworker from their role as a community member, being consistently 'on-call' as a caseworker. SHINE had taken proactive steps to support the professional development of the caseworkers. During the evaluation, SHINE sponsored the BtF caseworkers to attend a conference on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as well as an international conference on parental incarceration. Additionally, I collaborated with the caseworkers in a presentation at an Indigenous incarceration conference. SHINE also provided ongoing training in the form of certificated courses in counselling and domestic violence. However, workers outside of SHINE had noted the pressures on the BtF caseworkers, including the high workload, and under appreciation of the skills and connections the caseworkers brought to their role, including their cultural values and community connections (section 8.3.1).

Undeniably, the caseworkers' value and contribution were integral to delivering BtF. Their value is inherent in different roles and from different perspectives. First, the BtF caseworkers are long time employees of SHINE and BtF which is rare within the human service field, which generally experiences high turnover of staff. Similar to other First Peoples in frontline roles, the caseworker's interest to work in BtF had come from each of their personal experiences with the criminal justice system and the desire to address the impact of incarceration in their community. Second, within this chapter I have identified numerous ways the caseworkers employ cultural values in triggering BtF's mechanisms. In terms of supporting self-determination (section 9.3.1.), the caseworkers are First Peoples and have been influential in the implementation, adaptations, and delivery of BtF. In terms of First Peoples perspectives (section 9.3.2.), the caseworkers have been integral in applying not only their own, but the views and influence of community members and Elders into the program,

responding to issues impacting the community, and facilitating the participants' views. Third, in terms of leadership roles (section 9.3.3.), the caseworkers have applied First Peoples values within the structures of their role in SHINE as well as taking on leadership roles for the community in their positions also. Fourth, in terms of ways of learning and teaching (section 9.3.5.) the caseworkers have implemented appropriate relationally and interpersonal methods in delivering BtF. Overall, the caseworkers' knowledge and lived experience contributed their work and engagement with the participants.

Consequently, the participants highly valued the caseworkers. I asked directly about the role of the caseworkers in follow-up interviews with incarcerated parents (n=12 participants) and kinship participants (n=11 participants). All the respondent's had positive feedback regarding the caseworkers. I acknowledge that there may have been a bias in respondent's feedback. I had attended each of the sessions inside, and incarcerated parents may have perceived that I worked closely with the caseworkers or believed I would have reported back to the caseworkers. Moreover, I was only able to get in contact with the kinship participants via the caseworkers. In this case, participants that had a negative experience may not have responded to the caseworker's request for my interview, and those that did agree may have seen me as the caseworker's colleague. For these reasons I asked follow up questions to understand why participants gave positive feedback. I categorised the feedback in two ways: (1) the participants valued responsiveness and (2) the caseworkers' interpersonal styles. Responsiveness referred to the level of perceived action or care the caseworkers had in addressing the needs of the participants. Nine of the parents inside and six of the kinship participants had identified that the caseworkers were highly responsive, and to a level that was unlike other programs. For example, Bob was an incarcerated father and returning participant of BtF. Consequently, he could comment on BtF's support post-release:

> *Bob:* *"When I got out I kept in contact with Uncle Clive…once Uncle Clive came down to visit me, I thought fuck he's right into it this fella. Yeah, it was the first time being in a program like that. Yeah and he done it right, he came down…*
>
> *Interviewer (author):* *A program that - like what? Like …*
>
> *Bob:* *That he cared for me - that he cared for my situation. He wanted to be involved in it.*

Bob's response also alludes to the caseworkers' interpersonal style. When referring to the interpersonal style of the caseworkers, I was acknowledging how the participants interacted with the caseworkers. The caseworkers were personable and charismatic. I noticed this in observations as well as how the caseworkers interacted with me. But it was how participants were able to

distinguish the interpersonal style compared to other services within the criminal justice system that stood the caseworkers apart. For example, Terry, a kinship participant, explained that:

> *They [the caseworkers] are close - Clive, he's a cracker. Clive, he goes, "this is Clive here."*
> *"Clive who?" I said, "I don't know any lawyer". I said, "oh yeah, Clive Smith, the actor?"*
> *"No, you idiot."*
> *But he's just so easy to talk to. I'd have to say to him, "Clive, I've got to go. Clive, I've got to go", but he's easy to talk to, Thelma's easy to talk to. You're easy to talk to.*
> *A lot of people go in the office, they'll sit there looking at you over their glasses. They don't want to be here and I'd rather not say too much, you know what I mean, but yeah.*
> *No, they're all good. They're all so good, easy to get on with.*
> (Terry, kinship participant interview)

Here, Terry acknowledged the caseworker's personable interpersonal styles while also acknowledging that in comparison other services can seem closed off which leads recipients to be non-responsive.

Overall, the caseworkers interpersonal and relational qualities as well as their local knowledge were integral mechanisms for BtF. The caseworkers were also in their role because they identified their roles as needs within their community and could draw on and share their own experiences. The characteristics that they employ are valued by the participants. Some of the characteristics are not exclusive to First Peoples or a specific culture. However, the caseworkers were consciously employing values that were important in their First Peoples culture. The role that they have as BtF caseworkers, was embedded into their roles as community members. This, in turn, had allowed them to administer BtF in a culturally appropriate way.

9.3.5. Indigenous pedagogies and ways of learning

Teaching and learning are integral in many programs, policies, and practices. Within realist evaluation, outcomes for programs are described as a change of behaviour or acquiring resources. Programs that aim to change behaviour are reliant on teaching and learning. Employees who deliver content have teaching styles which can be analysed within pedagogical research. Pedagogies outline the theory, practice, and interactions that occur when imparting knowledge (Murphy et al., 2012).

Teaching and learning styles are influenced by social and political aspects of the people involved and the community in which the learning takes place, as well as the psychological development of the learner. In program delivery, understanding culturally relevant ways of learning and pedagogy in program delivery would have a profound effect on program outcomes.

The differences and strengths of First Peoples ways of learning have been identified and widely recognised. A full review is beyond the scope of this thesis. Briefly, Harris (1980) has published an influential body of research. In 1980 he focused his observations on differences in learning styles of the Yolngu people in Milingimbi, Northern Territory and compared these to mainstream non-Indigenous ways of learning. The five differences he noted are outlined in Table 9.3. Notably, Harris emphasises the preference of Yolngu people to learn from observation, and trial-and error, with content being person centric. Harris' findings have been foundational in the field in recognising a difference in Indigenous ways of learning. Hughes and More (1997) explored ways of learning and learning strengths that are extended on to Harris' and outlined in Table 9.3. They confirmed many of the learning styles from earlier work as well as observing First Peoples tended to have strengths in using group-based learning, as well as utilising imagery and visual skills. Indigenous ways of learning have been widely applied in educational fields. There is recognition of adapting Indigenous ways of learning in early education (Kitson & Bowes, 2010), schools (Harrison, 2008), and universities (Nakata, 2007), as well as considering contemporary delivery, such as Indigenous ways of learning online (Duggan, 2009).

Table 9.3

Indigenous and non-Indigenous learning styles

Harris, 1980		**Hughes and More, 1997**
Yolngu learning styles	**Mainstream non-Indigenous learning styles**	**Learning Strengths of Indigenous learners**
Observation and imitation	Verbal instruction	Learning through observation and imitation rather than verbal instruction
Personal trial-and-error	Verbal instruction and demonstration	Learning through trial and feedback
Real life performance by the learner	Practice in contrived settings	Spontaneous learning
Context-specific learning	Learning of generalisable, context-free principles	Contextual learning
Person orientated	Information-orientated	
		The group is more important than the individual

		Holistic learning
		Visual spatial skills and imagery

Indigenous pedagogies have also been recognised in Australia but are not as widely applied within Australia particularly in comparison to Indigenous peoples in North America and New Zealand (Bierman & Townsend-Cross, 2008). A full review is again beyond the scope of this thesis. Briefly, Indigenous pedagogy refers to teaching methodologies that are based on Indigenous values and philosophies. Consequently, pedagogies can be as varied as there are distinct First Peoples groups within Australia. One of the most widely known and used forms of an Indigenous pedagogy is Yunkaporta's (2009) eight ways of Aboriginal learning. Yunkaporta developed eight ways from his and his community's values and principles and conceptualised the process for the ways of teaching to be rolled out in numerous contexts including across NSW education system (Bangamalanha Centre, n.d). Overall, there are several common values or principles between First Peoples groups that can be conceptualised into an understanding of Indigenous pedagogies.

For my evaluation, I had not intended to understand, measure, or articulate the pedagogy of the BtF caseworkers or learning strengths of the participants. However, the phrase 'planting the seed' was continually used as a reference to the teaching styles of the caseworkers (sections 7.3 and 8.3). In discussions with the BtF caseworkers with what this meant, the parallels to Indigenous pedagogies were clear and is outlined in Table 9.4. For BtF, planting the seed was in reference to a non-directive teaching and conversational process of discussing topics, leading by example, showing how to act in certain situations rather than telling people how to act in certain situations, and providing a space for the learner to emulate the new skill. These characteristics are all reflective of the learning strengths and key characteristics of Indigenous pedagogies outlined in Table 9.4.

Table 9.4

BtFs use of Indigenous learning styles and pedagogy

Identified strengths in Indigenous learning styles and pedagogy	BtF
Learning through observation and imitation rather than verbal instruction	• Non-directive teaching based on yarning and conversations within the group sessions
Learning through trial and feedback	• The group members shared issues that they had experienced, and the group talked through solutions. • Time was allowed to imitate these suggestions. • Participants are welcome to take BtF again
Real life performance by the learner rather than practice in contrived settings	• Discussions in the group are based on experiences
Context-specific learning	• Content is driven to address the specific needs of parents inside and issues that may occur at reintegration
Person orientated rather than information-orientated	• Information is provided based on the personal stories shared in the sessions or issues that occur during reintegration • Elders share their stories and experiences
The group is more important than the individual	• The importance of the group-based session • Having content that places the individual within their family and community
Holistic learning	• The content of the sessions and aim of case management is to remove barriers and build bridges for strengthening families. The person and their family are considered holistically.
Visual spatial skills, imagery	• Materials provided in the display folders • Group work is completed using mind maps • Parents inside are given materials to gift a painting

The strength of this pedagogy was also noted by the participants. In section 8.3, I noted that participants were receptive to the interpersonal style of the caseworkers. This is reflective of the approach the caseworkers took in delivering the content – or their pedagogy. I probed one of the mothers who was incarcerated to elaborate why she liked BtF. In reference to the program, she said:

> *It's not like "you've got to do this. You've got to do this that way. You've got to do it this way."*
> *It's like helping one another how to deal with things, like in the group. Aunty [caseworker], she put a lot of things in my head anyways. She made a lot of sense to me…yarning and yeah.* (Kirra, follow-up interview)

This quote shows how Indigenous pedagogies played into the strengths of the learning styles and is an integral mechanism. Similar to other participants, this mother identified that BtF was different from other courses that gave verbal instructions. She was more receptive to BtF because it drew on the strengths from the group, was person-orientated, and encouraged observations and made way for the group to imitate the content. The way the content is delivered is just as important as the content itself.

9.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I addressed the research question *how and to what extent does Belonging to Family reinforce participant's cultural values?* In the realist synthesis I conducted prior to the evaluation, I had conceptualised *reinforcing of cultural values* as one of three primary outcomes of BtF. After the evaluation, I reconsidered and reconceptualised cultural values as a primary and underlying mechanism of BtF. I identified five specific examples of how BtF was triggering cultural values: through steps of self-determination, incorporating First Peoples experiences and perspective, through Indigenous leadership styles, the roles of the First Peoples as caseworkers, and the use of Indigenous pedagogies and supporting Indigenous learning styles. Through these examples I identified numerous ways that cultural values were underlying mechanisms and the basis of how BtF functioned. There are numerous consequences to this observations. For BtF, *reinforcing cultural values* of participants would not need to be measured or reported as an outcome of the program. More broadly in program delivery, understanding and articulating the role of cultural values could illustrate why differences occur in program engagement. These implications to program delivery and evaluation are examined throughout Chapter 10.

Chapter 10
Discussion

10.1. Introduction

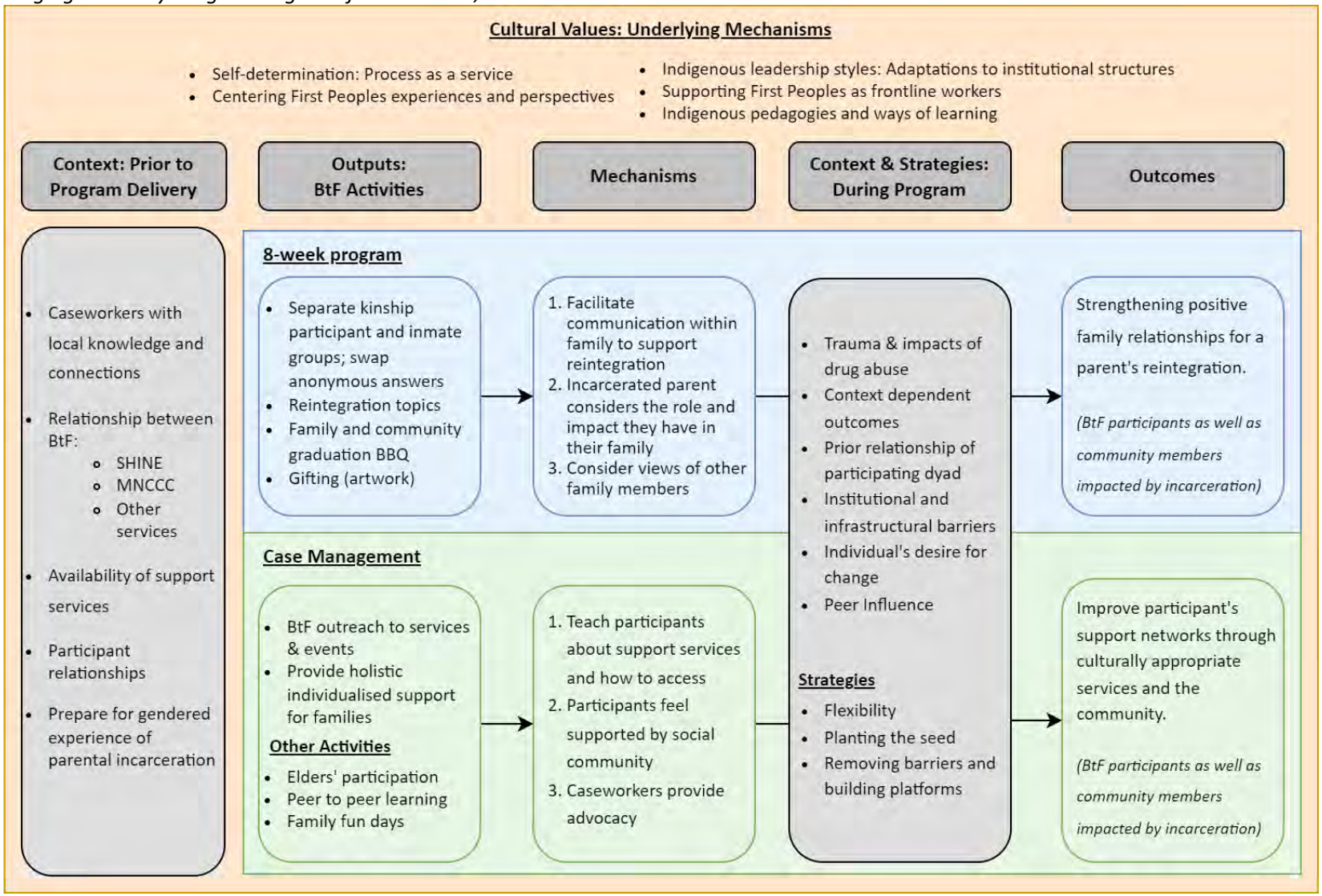
In this final chapter I summarise the research findings and assess the resulting implications. In section 10.2 I summarise the research and findings. In section 10.3 I identify four significant contributions of this thesis to research, policy, and practice. The first two address the two main aims of this thesis regarding how the realist approach informed (i) First Peoples service delivery and evaluations, and (ii) ways to support families experiencing parental incarceration. The final two areas relate to broader findings for service delivery, including (iii) supporting complex service delivery, and (iv) strengthening evaluation designs. Finally, I outline limitations (10.4), recommend future research (10.5), and provide an overall conclusion (10.6).

10.2. Summary of research and findings

In this thesis, I aimed to understand the extent to which realist evaluation framework contributes to: (i) programs supporting First Peoples; and (ii) parental incarceration programs. I addressed these aims using a case study of *Belonging to Family (BtF)* – a program that supports First Peoples families with a parent in prison. First, I completed a rapid realist synthesis comprising 53 citations to establish BtF's CMOs. I established that BtF was designed to achieve three short-term outcomes: (i) *strengthen positive family relationships*; (ii) *improve participant's support network*s; and (iii) *reinforce cultural values*. Corresponding mechanisms and contextual factors were identified. I then refined the CMOs by conducting a realist evaluation and sought to establish how and to what extent BtF addressed the three intended outcomes identified in the synthesis. I used an ethnographic approach. Data collection included over four months of field observations, analysis of administrative documents, and interviews with 15 family dyads and five service delivery personnel. The data provided a rich understanding and refinement of BtF's CMOs, with the final model depicted in Figure 10.1.

Figure 10.1

Belonging to Family Program Logic: Refined Context, Mechanisms and Outcomes



As depicted in Figure 10.1, two primary outcomes were identified. The first outcome was to s*trengthen positive family relationships during a parent's reintegration,* with its corresponding program components depicted in blue (Figure 10.1). In the realist synthesis, family and kinship relationships were identified as a strength in First Nations communities (Brough et al.,2006; Poroch, 2007). However, Williams (2015) argued that reintegration programs rarely identify this strength or address issues that may arise in these interpersonal relationships due to incarceration or reintegration. This thesis demonstrated how BtF addressed these interpersonal relationships during reintegration (Chapter 7).

The second outcome of BtF was *improving participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community,* with its corresponding program components depicted in green (Figure 10.1). In the realist synthesis, I identified that there was a lack of culturally appropriate services for First Peoples, particularly around re-integration (Baldry et al., 2008; Calma, 2004; Moresu-Diop, 2010), with a growing number of targeted programs (Rossiter et al., 2017) and pilot programs being administered (Haswell et al., 2014). This thesis demonstrated how BtF had processes to link participants into appropriate services (formal bonds) as well as community members (informal bonds) (Chapter 8).

As depicted in Figure 10.1, specific mechanisms were refined for both outcomes. Due to the highly contextual nature of parental incarceration, mechanisms were triggered depending on the needs of the families. A significant change between the synthesis and evaluation was the importance of advocacy in *establishing networks* (section 8.3.3.).

A significant observation from the evaluation was the role of culture in program delivery. *Cultural values* were underlying mechanisms embedded throughout BtF (Chapter 9). In Figure 10.1, cultural values are listed in the orange box. Additionally, an orange border encompasses BtF to convey how cultural values were omnipresent throughout program delivery and had wide ranging implications. There are established bodies of evidence that inform these mechanisms (see section 9.3). Overall, cultural values were an underlying mechanism that impacted nearly every factor of how BtF operated.

Finally, BtF was found to sit within a highly contextual service area (sections 7.3 and 8.3). This matched both the literature review (section 2.4.3) and the synthesis (section 5.4.3). There were multiple contextual factors found to impact across the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and infrastructural levels. The prominent contextual factors are identified in light grey boxes in Figure 10.1. The contextual factors have been depicted in larger boxes as they tended to impact across

both outcomes and their mechanisms. Moreover, there were contextual issues that were pertinent to address prior to the program (grey box on the left-hand side), for example ensuring productive relationships between BtF and other service providers. Other contextual concerns occurred during program delivery (grey box on the right-hand side), such as participants' past experiences. The impacts of contextual factors are discussed throughout section 10.3.

A contextual factor that emerged from this evaluation was gender. Mothers and fathers in prison have different needs, with mothers generally having more complex needs (Dallaire, 2007b). This was consistent with the realist synthesis findings (Haswell et al., 2014; Rossiter et al., 2017), where it was found that First Peoples women were lacking not only cultural support, but also female centric support. BtF is unique as the program is delivered to both mothers and fathers inside. However, there was a notable difference in how the program was delivered between mothers and fathers (section 7.5). Mothers were more likely to need support to regain primary caregiving responsibilities, so support was targeted towards strengthening the primary carer relationship, including more instances of facilitating communication with child protection services. Mothers were also less likely to have kinship participant support in the program. Additionally, BtF kinship participants (for mothers and fathers in prison) were more likely to be female, indicating that there are more responsibilities on women in carer roles in the community that require support. This also determined the types of relationships BtF aimed to strengthen (e.g., female partners, mothers, grandmothers, sisters, or aunties of the incarcerated parent). Moreover, although the caseworkers were actively seeking out male Elders, the majority of Elders currently participating in BtF were women. Therefore, the responsibilities of being positive role models and facilitators of community connections were more likely taken on by women. Overall, BtF's experience identified the different types of gendered support required, but also demonstrates how women are also more likely to take on extra responsibilities when a family member is incarcerated.

Overall, BtF was found to be an individually tailored program that addressed each participant's needs to strengthen family relationships. Most participants were able to establish formal bonds. Informal bonds (with community members) were established with the caseworkers, Elders, and peers within the incarcerated parents' groupwork – however informal bonds beyond this were found harder to establish in this evaluation. Considering these outcomes, BtF is contributing an important culturally appropriate service with individualised outcomes.

10.3. Implications for research, policy, and practice

This thesis contributes to research, policy, and practice in four significant areas. These include addressing the two main aims of this thesis regarding how the realist approach informed (i) First Peoples service delivery and evaluations, and (ii) informing ways to support families experiencing parental incarceration. The final two areas relate to broader findings for service delivery, including (iii) supporting context dependent service delivery, and (iv) strengthening evaluation designs.

10.3.1. Service delivery and evaluations for First Peoples

One of the main aims of this thesis was to understand how realist evaluations could contribute to understanding how unique contexts and mechanisms for First Peoples effect program outcomes. Programs and evaluations impacting First Peoples need to be culturally appropriate (Davis, 2016; Porter et al., 2017). In Australia, since the commencement of this thesis, identifying and addressing issues affecting First Peoples within evaluation practices has been prioritised in Indigenous affairs. For example, the Federal Government established the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy and Indigenous Evaluation Committee (Productivity Commission, 2020), and Indigenous scholars have development evaluation frameworks (e.g., Williams, 2018) (section 3.2.3). A pertinent issue going forward is establishing evaluation practices that are culturally appropriate by embedding First Peoples perspectives. In this section I first consider how the realist approach informed ways to strengthen service delivery, before analysing how the realist approach can support evaluations that impact First Peoples.

Service Delivery

This thesis demonstrated the important role and subsequent support of First Peoples frontline workers. The responsibilities and functions of First Peoples as frontline workers has been identified as an important mechanism of culturally appropriate service delivery (section9.3.4; Guerin et al., 2011; Panaretto & Wenitong, 2006; Taylor & Guerin, 2010). In this evaluation, I demonstrated how the dedication and perspectives of the caseworkers were integral to BtF operations. For example, the caseworkers had significant connections within the community prior to joining BtF. It was the value of these professional and personal connections that embedded BtF within the community, including having connections to the participants and their families. The evaluation also identified how organisations like SHINE can have structures in place to support Indigenous frontline workers (section 9.3). A way to support First Peoples frontline workers is to recognise the knowledge

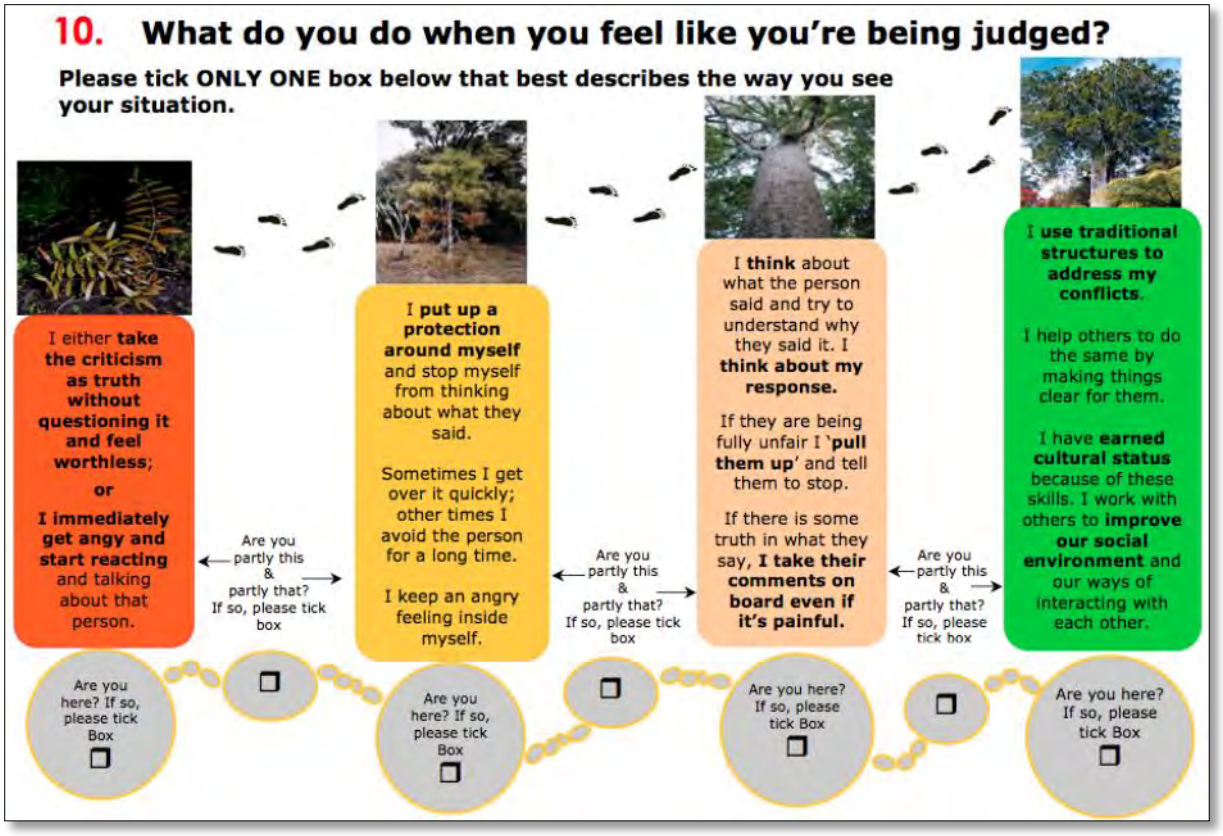
the employees add to a program and institution as well as support the time it may take to continue supporting or responding to issues within their community. This may include revising workloads, recognising local knowledge, and recognising the amount of time required to build and maintain community connections. Overall, the recruitment and ongoing support of First Peoples in frontline roles is an integral component for culturally appropriate program delivery.

This thesis also demonstrated the positive impact of supporting Indigenous leadership styles. The Indigenous programs manager was highly valued and contributed to the roles of the caseworkers in a positive and constructive way. Service providers can take steps to recognise the relational and interpersonal value of Indigenous leadership styles and internal structures. In their study of emerging Indigenous leaders, Stewart and Warn (2016) noted that Indigenous leadership values can be overlooked for operational measurements. Service providers, particularly non-Indigenous providers, should proactively create structures to support Indigenous employees (e.g., Herring et al., 2013).

In this thesis I also identified how culturally relevant tools could be incorporated and be beneficial. As with many social justice programs, BtF's outcomes were more nuanced than addressing recidivism. Incorporating culturally appropriate and relevant measures into pre-existing steps (e.g., enrolment interviews) would provide a way to record other outcomes. For example, the Growth and Empowerment Measure is a validated measure for social and emotional wellbeing and empowerment development (Haswell et al., 2010). The measure was developed from Aboriginal perspectives; Aboriginal participants gave their perceptions on the role of family wellbeing programs, consultations were held with Aboriginal community members and content experts, and the measure was piloted with Aboriginal people. The tool includes 14 questions in the Emotional Empowerment Scale and 12 Empowerment Scenarios. An example of a question is seen in Figure 10.2. Measures could also be adapted to be culturally relevant, such as the team delivering Families and Schools Together – an early intervention and prevention program to strength family functioning (Guenther & Boonstra, 2009). Families and Schools Together had been evaluated and delivered internationally, however, when delivered in the Northern Territory the service providers identified the need to adapt the measures to reflect the language and values of the communities where the program was delivered. Such practices would strengthen the ongoing improvement and evaluation of BtF, avoid inappropriate questions (see section 9.2.1), and measure outcomes that would otherwise not be recognised or reported.

Figure 10. 2

Growth and Empowerment Measure, a validated measure based on Aboriginal perspectives (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019)



Indigenous perspectives and the realist approach

Overall, the realist approach provided a strong framework for evaluating First Peoples justice programs. First Peoples disadvantage has been considered a 'wicked problem', being intractable, multifaceted, entrenched and therefore difficult to address (Head, 2008; Rittel & Webber, 1973). This complicates efforts to address or ameliorate this disadvantage. However, the realist approach addresses this difficultly by prioritising how context impacts programs, particularly in understanding how mechanisms are shaped to achieve outcomes. The realist approach has challenged evidence-based practice that minimises context and positions randomised controlled trials (RCTs) as the gold standard (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). While RCTs have been used to evaluate First Peoples programs (eg. Turner et al., 2007), it is important to acknowledge RCT results only contribute one piece of evidence, and especially for First Peoples, other evidence may be more pertinent (Carey, 2017).

The difficulties of addressing Indigenous disadvantage while simultaneously noting unique cultural differences has been central in Indigenous affairs for some time (O'Donoghue, 1997, Davis,2016). The central role of cultural values as a key program mechanism – as identified in this evaluation- inform why these tensions exist and where steps need to be taken to address these tensions. Notably, there are macro-level issues at a governmental and community level that need to be addressed to alleviate Indigenous disadvantage (Davis, 2016). However, understanding the role of culture in program delivery has significant impacts on how, and the extent to which, mainstream programs or programs developed internationally can be adapted for First Peoples; as well as the importance of supporting community driven programs for First Peoples.

I demonstrated that a realist approach not only accommodated First Peoples perspectives, but was designed to put context specific issues, perspectives, and methodologies at the forefront of an evaluation. In this thesis I demonstrated how approaches that do not incorporate the impact of context can lead to incomplete or even erroneous conclusions about a program's effectiveness. For example, despite consulting BtF's program manual, a previous evaluation, and seeking input from numerous stakeholders, I had difficulty identifying and operationalising BtF's intended outcomes (section 5.4). During the evaluation, this uncertainty was attributed to BtF's context dependent delivery for individualised case management (Chapters 7 and 8). Evaluation methods that disregard context, and do not allow emergent data collection and analysis would not have noted the diverse experiences and outcomes of participants. In many cases, such an evaluation would deem the program unsuccessful. However, my realist evaluation suggested that a strength of BtF was its ability to offer individualised support to each participant based on their needs and, in this vein, BtF was successful.

Notably, the role of cultural values is not homogenous across programs, policies, and practices that are designed for First Peoples. Reinforcing, learning, practicing, or establishing cultural values may be an outcome in other programs targeted to support First Peoples (e.g., Marchetti & Nicholson, 2020). For such programs, it would be integral to develop a measure to be able to demonstrate the change in participants. In some programs, the specific aim may be to learn cultural values. In other programs, cultural values may be used as an intermediate outcome that leads to positive change. Programs of the latter description are common in the criminal justice system (e.g., Howard-Wagner & Evans, 2020; Marchetti & Nicholson, 2020; SHINE for Kids, n.d.). Learning or reconnection to culture is viewed as a way to address deeper issues in participants. In realist terms, cultural values can be a context, mechanism, or outcome. This relationship would need to be articulated and demonstrated in each programs' evaluation.

Critically, a realist approach cannot be classified as culturally appropriate without consciously embedding First Peoples perspectives, experiences, methods, and methodologies. I specifically set out to explore whether First Peoples perspectives, experiences, methods, and methodologies could be embedded within the realist approach to evaluation. I used an Indigenous standpoint theory, data collection, and analysis (sections 4.5, 5.3, 6.5). I used an ethnographic approach, yarning modalities, and inter-relational factors within my methodology. I noted contextual factors that arise from First Peoples experiences and consciously embedded First Peoples' voices in the evaluation. These were deliberate steps I took to ensure the evaluation reflected the experiences of the participants, employees, and the community. Consequently, the realist approach to evaluation can only be as culturally appropriate as evaluators allow.

These observations have broader implications for establishing culturally appropriate evaluation strategies for programs and policies directed towards underserved and minority populations. Within models of evidence-informed practice, there is ambivalence regarding the place of cultural differences in program delivery, and the extent programs need to adapt to accommodate cultural differences (Elliot & Mihalic, 2004; Lau, 2006). Many EBP models do not seek to elaborate on mechanisms; however, this evaluation allowed me to articulate the ways cultural values were central to service delivery, how culturally dependent variables influenced engagement, and what was valued by the participants, caseworkers, and community members. For example, cultural values were embedded throughout the development, implementation, and ongoing improvement of BtF (Chapter 9). Embedding First Peoples perspectives allowed BtF to be responsive to local issues and relationships. If any of the mechanisms were absent throughout the development of BtF, the program and aim of the program would be different. The outcomes demonstrate the importance of culture in service delivery and support the necessity to consider culture within evidence-informed practices.

10.3.2. Supporting families experiencing parental incarceration

One of the main aims of this thesis was to examine how the realist approach could strengthen evidence-informed support for families impacted by parental incarceration. Parental incarceration research has predominately focused on measuring the impacts on children/families and identifying moderating and mediating factors (section 2.4). This body of research has led to recommendations for both structural changes and program delivery (section 2.4.4). This thesis demonstrated how BtF addressed individual needs and macro level complexity during reintegration. Reintegration is a critical point in the criminal justice system that has been acknowledged for some time (Borzycki, & Baldry, 2003), yet still lacks an evidence-informed approach. Consequently, this

thesis contributes to bridging the gap between research and practice, which can inform strategies for SHINE and reintegration support.

This thesis provided examples of three factors in supporting families with a parent in prison:

Culturally appropriate support

Research examining the impacts of parental incarceration have identified variations between populations, particularly around the impact on hyper-incarcerated minority groups (Ball, 2009; Dennison et al., 2014; Wildeman & Turney, 2014). This has led to recommendations for culturally relevant interventions within the field (Graham & Harris, 2013; Miller, 2006). However, evaluations or studies of best practice for culturally relevant parental incarceration interventions are lacking.

This thesis provides an example of a program specifically supporting First Peoples with a parent in prison. Similar to other First Peoples reintegration programs (Haswell et al., 2014; Howard-Wagner & Evans, 2020), BtF has been developed as a strengths-based approach, identifying key mechanisms to support families, such as strengthening kinship networks and including Elders. This thesis has also emphasised the key role that culture has as a program mechanism (Chapter 9). Identifying program mechanisms has significant implications on program design and development. Therefore, this thesis provides a key example of how programs need to be developed in a culturally relevant way.

Throughcare

In this thesis, I examined how a small organisation delivered a throughcare (pre- through post-release) program. Throughcare has been identified as a best practice model in supporting reintegration (Borzycki, & Baldry, 2003; Day et al., 2019; Seiter & Kadela, 2003) and the throughcare model was identified as a preferred model for Indigenous people in the realist synthesis (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, 2012; Baldry et al., 2008; Williams, 2015). However, research is inconclusive on the effectiveness, strengths, weaknesses, and barriers for this model (Day et al., 2019; Eddy et al., 2019). This thesis provides key insights in managing a throughcare model.

A barrier faced by BtF in delivering throughcare was navigating multi-level issues across individual, interpersonal, infrastructural, and institutional contexts. This is consistent with the literature where the source of divergences in parental incarceration stem from multiple levels across personal (Dallaire, 2007a) institutional (Gordon & MacGibbon, 2011) and policy levels (Besemer & Dennison, 2018). Moreover, evidence supports that best practice approaches for parental incarceration interventions requires a multilevel prevention strategy with a complementary set of

programs (Eddy et al., 2019; Kjellstrand, 2017). BtF provided key strategies to overcome some of these barriers, such as developing relationships between an NGO (SHINE), MNCCC, and the community from the development of the program to implementation, and throughout delivery (Chapter 4). However, there remained some barriers; the most prominent being the availability of services for participants (section 8.3.1). As Eddy et al. (2019) and Kjellstrand (2017) suggest, a complementary set of programs would be necessary to support a population with diverse needs, and this would require a concerted effort to provide culturally appropriate programs - particularly federal and state social support policies. The availability of programs within Australia's regional areas was limited. Availability impacts participants in these areas receiving support within their hometowns close to their social support networks. This should be considered in any outcome measures assessing the effectiveness of case management.

Moreover, throughcare require building networks with services. This is a time-consuming process but essential for service delivery. Throughcare service providers need to know what services are available to make referrals; however, they also need to be seen as a reputable and respected program to actively engage within this wider network of support services within local and state communities. Services that rely on indeterminate, short-term funding are severely impacted in the ability to make connections. This is particularly evident in First Peoples programs where people get suspicious of the longevity of programs as well as the 'seagull syndrome' where people from outside a local community come in to deliver services that need high levels of interpersonal relationships to operate (Porter, 2017). For BtF, both caseworkers had strong connections to the community before they joined BtF – no amount of training or promotional endeavours can substitute for a lifetime of community connections and knowledge that the caseworkers brought to the program. Building community connections is a time-consuming process that needs to be reflected in workloads.

Another issue faced by BtF within the throughcare model was the ability to follow-up with participants. Finding methods to stay in contact with families when a parent returns home is particularly important, as this is a key program component of BtF. After BtF caseworkers completed the final needs assessments, there was not a system in place to follow-up with participants. As with other reintegration programs, there was a significant decline in the number of families that stayed in contact with BtF after release. There are limited studies identifying the long-term uptake of throughcare programs. There are institutional level policies that could improve this; BtF caseworkers did not have the time or resources to follow up participants. Employing more caseworkers to ensure there is adequate workload dedicated to support people could improve uptake. BtF had existing processes to identify families' needs and connect them to appropriate services (e.g., needs assessments). However, the implementation of databases specialised in supporting case

management would assist caseworkers to contact participants at specific times to ensure they have accessed services and to identify alternate issues that they may need support with. Moreover, some families prefer to cut ties with connections from prison after returning home, including support services such as BtF. This component of throughcare requires further research.

Mentorship

There was widespread interest in embedding a mentorship from past participants within BtF. The value of embedding the voices of people with lived experience in service delivery is becoming recognised (De'Ath et al., 2018; Doyle et al., 2021). In this evaluation, the two mothers that returned to the program as mentors played a significant role in BtF in sharing experiences, but there was also a possibility of people who had returned home to return to BtF to share their experiences. This would provide an opportunity for current participants to hear stories from people with similar experiences. There are some notable issues that arise from past participant mentorship, such as parole conditions, the impact of community stereotypes in supporting these opportunities, and ensuring organisations can move beyond tokenistic roles (De'Ath et al., 2018). However, supporting this component of a program would have a number of beneficial impacts including maintaining community networks post-release.

10.3.3. Complex service delivery

The two main aims of this thesis focused on how the realist approach accounted for complex service delivery and the impact of contextual issues for First Peoples programs (Markiewicz, 2012; Porter, 2017; Productivity Commission, 2020) and parental incarceration support (Graham & Harris, 2013; Henson, 2020; Turanovic et al., 2012). Consequently, I made significant observations on strategies to strengthen programs addressing highly contextual and complex issues. I address three areas relating to: (i) the 'puzzle' network of services, (ii) understanding mechanisms, and (iii) the infrastructural context.

Service delivery as a puzzle: Identifying and valuing each piece

Complex interventions tend to sit within a wider network of services. BtF supported families experiencing social disadvantage, trauma, drug use, and racism. These issues are complex on their own and require long term approaches (e.g., Atkinson, 2002; Head, 2008; Moresu-Diop, 2012; Williams, 2015). In terms of service delivery, it would be near impossible to address each of these

issues within one program. Consequently, families can be seen as needing to piece together a puzzle, and service providers can be depicted as providing a piece of that puzzle.

In this thesis, I demonstrated how small-scale, community-based programs play an integral role in the larger service delivery puzzle, particularly during throughcare. For BtF, this is exemplified in their case management. As described in Chapters 7 and 8, the caseworkers identified issues the participants were facing and helped them navigate services to address these issues. Moreover, I identified cultural ways of interacting as crucial for engaging and supporting participants that participants found unique compared to other support providers. BtF provided an important and distinctive piece in the puzzle that was not filled by other services.

The 'service delivery puzzle' characterises the integrated and accumulative nature for supporting complex issues. Small programs like BtF can provide a piece of the puzzle, but to place the responsibility of outcomes such as intergenerational offending (section 5.4) on a small-scale program is misguided without considering the scope of the context that BtF is working within. Foremost, funders need to be realistic about the expectations and outputs of small-scale, community-based programs (Morgan & Homel, 2013). It is unrealistic to expect an eight-week program on short-term soft funding to significantly address trauma and complex issues on its own. This was exemplified by the need to identify intergenerational offending as an outcome measure during the grant proposal stages and consequently in report writing (section 4.4; section 5.4.3, question 1a). Identifying and valuing short-term goals and how these goals contribute to the puzzle would greatly benefit service providers, funders, and participants. Consequently, an array of accessible services is needed to address the array of issues families face. If there are no services for case managers to refer the participants to, then the participants' needs would be unmet.

Understanding mechanisms

In this thesis, I demonstrated the importance of understanding how mechanisms work, particularly when disparate participant outcomes occur. The cause of disparate outcomes in social programs between First Peoples and non-Indigenous people is contentious (Davis, 2016; Porter, 2017). Additionally, the highly contextual nature of parental incarceration has contributed to inconclusive results across best practice evaluations (Eddy et al., 2019; Graham & Harris, 2013; Henson, 2020). Articulating program mechanisms informs why these disparate outcomes occur and in turn strengthens evidence-informed practice.

However, there are difficulties measuring mechanisms. Jagosh (2019) refers to an iceberg to depict realist approaches to evaluation; and mechanisms occur in the submerged ice which can be difficult to observe in empirical reality (Figure 3.2 section 3.3.1). For BtF, this difficulty is particularly evident for the process of 'planting the seed' – a pedagogical approach on indirect teaching (section 7.3; 9.3.5). On numerous occasions, the caseworkers and I talked specifically about how they could measure and convey the changes that they see in participants. This was usually within the same conversation as planting the seed. The caseworkers saw changes in parents in prison, which included things like engagement in sessions, contributing to discussions, or how participants carried themselves. In a past cohort, the caseworkers described how one participant would arrive late, not share any stories, and had low levels of personal grooming. The caseworkers would 'plant seeds' by sharing stories of how keeping positive inside can change a parent's mood and linking this with contributing to the group sessions. As the eight-week program continued, the participant would be the first person to arrive at the sessions, contribute to every topic, and would dress up for sessions. It was a process and change in personal growth that the caseworkers had not been able to previously convey but wanted to capture in an evaluation. Essentially, the process of 'planting the seed' and the resultant outcomes were hard to measure empirically and could be overlooked when recidivism measures are prioritised in correctional-based programs.

The difficulties in measuring change are not unique to BtF. Most social programs have difficulty identifying and reporting outcome measures and program logic let alone mechanisms. Planting the seed triggers a process in a participant's thought patterns. This makes it difficult to measure because participants may or may not be triggered by a seed and will react differently to different seeds. In practice, this means the processes that BtF are based on are hard to observe and measure. If caseworkers were required to report on subjective measures, reports may be biased or not comparable between staff. Nonetheless, it is still possible to transfer pedagogical ideals, such as not relying on verbal directions, understanding the benefits of the program within a community level, and favouring visual and imagery-based learning materials. Additionally, as the prior evaluation had done, reporting on the involvement of Elders and the role of caseworkers can demonstrate their value and input into the program. This could be basic measurements of attendance, but incorporating ongoing feedback from participants, Elders, community members, and caseworkers would allow First Peoples perspectives in a program's ongoing improvement.

Despite these difficulties, the importance of identifying mechanisms was evident in this thesis in the role of cultural values. The evaluation pronounced *how* cultural values are used as a mechanism in program delivery (Chapter 9). Many evaluation approaches do not aim to identify or

measure how a program works, and even fewer evaluation approaches allow evaluators to assess emergent mechanism or outcomes (White & Willis, 2002). Understanding mechanisms was critical in this evaluation, as reinforcing cultural values was initially identified as an outcome. It was only through the evaluation that I observed how cultural values were being triggered (Chapter 9). Additionally, the evaluation demonstrated how a realist evaluation framework can be used to demonstrate *why* cultural values are important as a program mechanism. As an ideal, cultural values should be prioritised in service delivery, particularly when considering self-determination (section 9.3.1). But this evaluation demonstrates that cultural values go beyond an ideal and plays a critical role in participant engagement and completion (section 9.3).

Moreover, understanding how mechanisms operate and interact with contextual factors can explain differential participant outcomes and how to address this. For example, one of the identified mechanisms in BtF was to *facilitate communication within family to support reintegration* (section 7.3.2); however, this was triggered differently for each family and participant. Some families had ongoing and frequent communication and were blocked from continuing this communication by macro level impediments, such as imposed AVOs. Other families did not have any communication with their family members, and the participation of the kinship participants provided an opportunity to rebuild relationships. The context impacts how various mechanisms were triggered, shaping what the participants achieved. Understanding individual differences in how specific mechanisms are triggered and how they interacted with the contexts is key to fully understanding, measuring, and reporting outcomes. This also impacts on reporting whether outcomes are achieved. For example, in this evaluation, if reinforcing cultural values were measured as an outcome, the final report would be negative because participants did not cite the transfer of cultural values as an outcome, and the content of the program did not focus on teaching or transferring cultural knowledge. On the contrary, cultural values acted as important mechanisms in BtF (Chapter 9). Overall, understanding and reporting on mechanisms is important in building the evidence base for BtF, and for helping to articulate the relationships necessary to facilitate complex service delivery.

Infrastructural support

Infrastructural contexts refer to the social, economic, and cultural settings of an intervention that affect program operations (Pawson, 2013). Numerous structures, policy directions, and values directly and indirectly impact BtF. Considering all of these is beyond the scope of any evaluation. Here I provide two implications arising from this thesis concerning infrastructural support of social programs.

The first example relates to funding requirements and top-down government approaches. Throughout my fieldwork, BtF were required to complete reports or provide data that demonstrated effectiveness. Requests were instigated for several reasons but were primarily based around funding reports and promotional events. As BtF supports people in prison, the outcomes are usually re-offending rates. Recidivism is a difficult statistic to establish (Payne, 2007), particularly for BtF who do not have access to official records and are not informed if participants return to correctional facilities. Alternate reporting measures were also inappropriate. BtF was funded under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (section 4.4.3) - a federal government funding grant scheme. Within the one grant, BtF was funded as an education program. The standardised reports provided to the funders did not distinguish between the programs. These reports targeted education outcomes and required each child's school reports. This implied that BtF – that focused on reintegration – primarily and directly impacted the school grades of children who were not directly involved with BtF.

The two primary outcomes imposed on BtF – re-offending and children's schooling- were not the original outcomes during program development. For re-offending, BtF had a perspective that people can make mistakes, and if a parent returned to MNCCC, the caseworkers would reach out and ask them to return to BtF. This occurred with two parents who were a part of this evaluation. For children's schooling, although BtF focused on benefitting the child, there were several factors (most outside the scope of BtF) that would need to be addressed before a change is evident within school report cards. Such a requirement of funding reporting is an example of a top-down approach compared to a community-driven, self-determined result. That is, if BtF were to try and achieve the expectations of reporting, the caseworkers could channel their efforts into finding tutors for children. However, the caseworker's approach is to work with the family to identify the family's needs; there was only one family that had asked for assistance with schooling, and this was for supporting the child's disability. This is a symptom of the "seagull syndrome" (Porter, 2017) where 'expert knowledge' overshadows 'local knowledge' in representing what BtF is doing and what outcomes are important. Overall, such requirements can impact on the quality-of-care BtF can provide to families and can misrepresent the program.

The second implication concerning infrastructural support was how state and federal policy impacted program effectiveness. The funding available for BtF was based on the needs identified by the government. Additionally, the caseworkers had to be aware of how policies would impact families. For example, one morning I came into the centre and three caseworkers were ringing participating families. The state government proposed a law restricting the number of cars that

could be parked in front of a house. The caseworkers were aware that many families visit relatives. They wanted to give people a warning to avoid fines or unwanted attention by police, particularly if the participants are targeted by the police. This gives an example of how polices are pervasive and have a way of impacting families even if that is not the intention and can disproportionately disadvantage First Peoples.

Moreover, infrastructural contexts significantly impacted BtF's case management delivery. This is acknowledged in the parental incarceration literature where Murray et al. (2014) identified how national approaches to support services affected parental incarceration outcomes; countries that prioritised effective social support services found that families impacted by parental incarceration had less adverse outcomes. This was supported by Besemer and Dennison (2018) who found carers with incarcerated partners in Australia had comparably less severe forms of social exclusion than parents in the US. Despite Australia's social support system, in the realist synthesis, the lack of culturally appropriate support services was identified as an ongoing issue for reintegration (Baldry et al., 2008; Moresu-Diop, 2010; Williams, 2015). Referrals rely on service availability and accessibility, particularly in regional and remote areas. This places BtF within a much larger interdependent network of support services that is beyond SHINE's control but directly impacts program effectiveness. Moreover, for services, navigating these networks takes time, both to identify and link into. During the evaluation, significant time went into linking into established networks, understanding opportunities across multiple jurisdictions, and informing other services about BtF. Inevitably, strengthening social support services and networks with accessible and high-quality programs would have positive impacts for families experiencing parental incarceration.

10.3.4. Evaluation Design

The final area this thesis informs is evaluation design, particularly for highly contextual service delivery. I address three specific areas: (i) methodological insights from combining a realist synthesis and evaluation, (ii) broader findings of evaluating complex interventions, and (iii) the advantages of database management.

Combining a realist synthesis and realist evaluation: Accommodating change

The approach adopted in this thesis of administering a realist synthesis prior to a realist evaluation can inform future choice of methodology. The realist approach to evaluation has risen to significant prominence within evaluation and evidence-informed practice (HM Treasury, 2020; Marchal et al., 2012). The realist evaluation was developed before the realist synthesis. As realist approaches developed, the utility of realist syntheses included a targeted and directed method to

inform a realist evaluation (Wong et al., 2013). At the commencement of this thesis, this was an emerging and novel practice, and in the intervening years there have been several projects that have employed this approach (e.g., Birch, 2015).

This thesis demonstrated that running a realist synthesis prior to a realist evaluation can be a valuable process for several reasons. First, the realist synthesis allowed me to establish rapport with key stakeholders prior to the evaluation. This was particularly beneficial as the evaluation method (ethnography) was relatively intrusive and BtF focused on sensitive matters. Developing rapport was key for me in identifying patterns and concepts that would not have been possible with a short-term evaluation method. Additionally, the synthesis allowed me to understand BtF in realist terms at a much earlier stage than at the same time as running the evaluation. Moreover, the realist synthesis allowed me to establish how the evaluation and outcomes informed the wider literature and practice. This is particularly important when considering most evaluations are not released and remain as grey literature inaccessible to the public or other program developers (Morgan & Homel, 2013). Understanding the field prior to the evaluation not only benefited the program by informing the evaluation, but also contributed to the wider understanding of issues the program is addressing. In this case, the evaluation has given great insight into supporting families with a parent in prison, and particularly for families who belong to an over-incarcerated minority population.

I also identified an issue that should be considered for future evaluations, in that there were significant changes in the CMOs identified in the realist synthesis compared to the realist evaluation. These included a refinement of the outcome of *strengthening families* to focus on issues arising from reintegration (section 7.2); removing *cultural values* as an outcome to understand this as an underlying program mechanism (Chapter 9); and the inclusion of advocacy as an important mechanism in establishing support networks (section 8.2).

These differences between the findings of the realist synthesis and realist evaluation may be attributed to several factors. First, due to time constraints, I completed a rapid review (Saul et al., 2013). Greater time and involving further expertise (such as an advisory board) may have provided greater insight during the realist synthesis and in turn provided a clearer picture of how BtF would be administered in real time. Conversely, my evaluation incorporated methods that gathered in-depth data on BtF (Chapter 6). Consequently, the realist evaluation unveiled BtF's CMOs that the synthesis could not achieve alone.

Several lessons arise from completing a realist synthesis prior to an evaluation. A rapid realist synthesis is more likely to use resources that could be dedicated to an evaluation of a small-

scale program. Therefore, evaluators should be aware of the resources required to run a synthesis and of the limitations associated with relying on a synthesis that was constructed with limited resources. The greatest insight was that the realist approach is iterative and thus allowed me to refine the program theory over time. Many evaluation approaches do not allow for this kind of reflexivity (Biesta, 2007; Cherney, & Sutton, 2007; Guenther et al., 2010), which could be detrimental and potentially lead to erroneous interpretations. In this case, the realist approach greatly adds to strengthening knowledge translation of programs. Evaluators should be open-minded to refining CMOs. This is one of the key strengths that is advocated within the realist approach; that is the process of ongoing improvement and emergent theories (Wong et al., 2013; Wong et al., 2016). Refining theories is imperative to identify the outcomes, how they are achieved and how context impacts the program to convey a true representation of the program.

Evaluating context dependent programs to demonstrate complexity

Unsurprisingly, BtF operated in highly contextual environments which had significant consequences for administering the evaluation. Throughout the realist synthesis, I had difficulty establishing CMO configurations (sections 5.3; 5.4). Pawson (2006; 2013) differentiated individual, interpersonal, institutional, and infrastructural contextual factors. After the realist synthesis, I noted that for BtF the factors from these levels were interwoven and interdependent, which were resultantly symbolised as cogs in BtF's program logic (Figure 5.8, section 5.5). I adapted Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model as a framework to navigate these contextual issues as PPCT was used in parental incarceration literature (Arditti, 2005; 2015; Dennison et al., 2017; Poehlmann et al. 2010).

Pawson (2013) cautioned that systems theory "embellishes rather than deals with the burden of complexity in evaluation research" (p.60). However, to ignore the established highly contextual nature within parental incarceration and First Peoples justice literature (Chapter 2) would have been misguided. In reporting the evaluation, I was conscious to avoid nuances about context that were not generalisable, particularly as I had a relatively small sample. Rather, I focused on articulating BtF's context, its complexity, and how this impacted program logic. For BtF, the program's basis derived from contextual factors stemming from colonisation of First Peoples (including the basis of BtF's funding). Outcomes varied significantly across participants and were, in large part, reflective of each individuals' specific goals during reintegration. Moreover, this complexity led to the reliance on flexible service delivery. BtF was adapted to cater to mothers and fathers, differing kinship participant relationships, different ages and needs of children, different

geographical areas and in turn regional program delivery, and in adapting to different individual and family strengths and needs. Consequently, context was a driving force in determining a family's needs and in turn determined the outcomes and mechanisms. Context impacted the delivery of BtF itself.

Flexible service delivery is not an excuse to forego rigorous evaluations. *Multi-systemic Therapy* (MST) addresses the multiple causes of antisocial behaviour among juvenile offenders (Henggeler et al., 2009). Like BtF, MST provides individualised and family-based support. Although MST has a multi-faceted service it is one of the most researched and evaluated programs (Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development, n.d.). MST has benefitted from extensive funding, which assists in this evidence base; however, there are adaptable insights. For example, BtF could incorporate measures within their established administrative protocols - like the enrolment interview and exit interview - to measure differences. Over time, the number of participants could lead to quantitative analyses of the program's effect. This has been done for families experiencing parental incarceration. For example, Brunton-Smith and McCarthy (2017) measured family attachment on re-entry by administering surveys at the reception to prison, two weeks from release, and two months after release. Family attachment was measured on a five-point Likert scale on four questions: (i) feel close to my family; (ii) I want my family to be involved in my life; (iii) I consider myself a source of emotional support for my family; (iv) My family is a source of emotional support for me. This measure provides an example of how rigour can be brought into data collection with brevity.

In realist terms, the context is expected to impact how mechanisms work. For example, families had varying levels of communication when they enrolled in BtF (see Chapter 7). This changed how and to what extent the mechanisms worked. The caseworkers may aim to remove barriers, such as varying an AVO, to allow families to communicate. Other families may need guidance on the issues that may arise during reintegration, so facilitating topics to talk about may be valuable. However, other family members may not want to communicate, and this fell outside the capabilities and resources of BtF. This was BtF's way of adapting and recognising that families have a long history before they arrive at the program and the caseworkers had to use individual and interpersonal contexts to achieve the outcome of *strengthening positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration*.

The relationship that is not as clearly drawn out in the realist model is the effect context has on the outcome. BtF was designed to be responsive to the families' needs, and therefore the intended outcomes vary or can even change in priority for participants throughout the course of their involvement in BtF. For example, Djalu was highly engaged in BtF until another inmate linked to

a family member's murder was transferred to MNCCC. Djalu's personal context shifted his priorities from taking steps to building family relationships to that of personal safety. It is important to acknowledge how context can shift whether the outcomes a program aims to achieve is appropriate or whether a program can achieve its intended outcomes.

Overall, using systems theories (like PPCT) can inform evaluations, but evaluators need to be mindful to identify the most impactful contextual factors for the program and how the factors operate. Evaluations that articulate the impact of contexts provide a more accurate and efficient template to employ strategies for a program's ongoing improvement. For example, BtF's program logic (Figure 10.1) can be shown to other services or funders to convey that the program is not 'off-the-shelf' and how these contextual considerations need to be addressed during implementation as well as through the duration of BtF, including identifying outcomes. To do otherwise would oversimplify the program and provide misleading expectations of program outcomes. Additionally, evaluations that identify how contextual factors operate can inform best practice in the field. Flexibility, adaptation over time, and responding to individualised case plans was fundamental to BtF's program delivery. Without these key characteristics, BtF would not be functional. Flexibility and individualised service delivery models have been key characteristics in other case-management based service delivery in the criminal justice system (e.g., MST, Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development, n.d.). Going forward, these characteristics should be incorporated into data collection, evaluations, and outcome measurements to illustrate BtF's impact, and inform best practice for reintegration programs.

Database Management

BtF demands specific evaluation structures, data collection, and data monitoring so that the program's complexity can be captured and conveyed. Appropriate databases would assist in achieving these goals. A database designed for case management would increase the quality of data collected and clearly demonstrate the range of services that need to be reported for BtF outputs. This could include community engagement activities, how participants are supported, and provide prompts for following up with families. Moreover, BtF was originally established with an administrative assistant who assisted in recording activities (section 4.4.3). This was a time-consuming process but was an effective way to demonstrate the range and number of activities required to support families. BtF no longer had an administrative assistant, and the caseworkers get limited time to record all their service outputs. Moreover, the caseworkers indicated that the updated system had required them to learn a new database that at times did not meet the needs of

BtF. BtF is the only throughcare program administered by SHINE. A database receptive to the needs of BtF is required to meet reporting standards.

10.4. Limitations

While this study provides rich observations, limitations should be noted. The limitations can be categorised around (a) research design; (b) strengthening outcome measures; and (c) generalisability.

First, my research design has notable limitations. For the realist evaluation I had limited resources and could not continue data collection with the same cohort from the point of being accepted through to the end of case management one-year post release. The resources to follow-up post-release would have been extensive given the parents returned to a breadth of locations that were geographically wide-ranging. I interviewed incarcerated parents and kinship participants before and after the eight-week in-prison program, but not once a parent had returned home. Therefore, I did not observe whether the same participants engaged with case management, stayed in contact with SHINE, applied concepts from the eight-week program, or re-offended. I did observe case management of the participants during the eight-week program as well as post-release engagement of past participants who had returned home. However, gathering data from the same participants would have provided a clearer understanding of the impact of BtF. Additionally, my research design incorporated a small sample size. I only considered the experiences of one group offering, which included 15 family dyads. Incorporating the experiences of participants in other rounds may have provided a richer understanding of BtF, and minimised temporal impacts. Data from other participants could have been recorded via less time-intensive research methods, such as culturally appropriate surveys and in collaboration with SHINE and the caseworkers. Notably, however, the aforementioned methods would have limited the richness of data, particularly on contextual observations. Interpreting the results should be considered within these limitations, particularly in considering generalisability and long-term impacts.

Second, there were limitations regarding outcome measures, particularly in incorporating quantitative data. I originally intended to include BtF's administrative data (section 6.4.3) which would have included the details of the cohort that completed BtF over the 18-month funding period (approximately 50 family dyads); unfortunately, the data was unviable. Realist evaluations value quantitative analyses (Pawson & Tilley, 1997), and a quantitative component in this evaluation would have strengthened it. For example, the CMOs established through the interviews,

observations, and documents of this evaluation could have been cross-checked with the data from the wider sample. This would have been particularly helpful in assessing the impact of the case management as I was unable to follow-up with the cohort post-release. While it may have been informative to a quantitative analysis via culturally appropriate measures before and after the program (such as Fitzpatrick et al., 2019), my small sample size would have limited the ability to conduct inferential analyses. The inclusion of quantitative analysis could be considered in future research.

Finally, there are limitations concerning generalisability. My evaluation was an ethnographic case study approach and case studies inherently have limitations around generalisability as the researcher focuses on one example (Reeves et al., 2008). I evaluated one program in a set of systems that produce heterogenous experiences. This may limit generalisability for other programs supporting families with parents in prison. As the aim of this thesis was to consider the compatibility of the realist approach to evaluations for First Peoples programs, I should note the generalisability of the research design. Notably, an ethnographic approach requires extensive resources and may not be feasible for programs with limited time, resources, and evaluation skills. This may limit the adaptability of research design. However, the case study allowed me to conduct an evaluation of one program which is more reflective of how small-scale programs like BtF administer evaluations. This provides insights into challenges that may be faced through an applied example of a realist evaluation.

Additionally, BtF's selection criteria also limits generalising the findings to understanding parental incarceration. BtF was designed to support families that have relatively strong relationships prior to the program. Family support is one of the most influential factors for positive reintegration (Bazemore & Erbe, 2003; Brough et al., 2003). Not only do all family members need to agree to participate, BtF is also voluntary. Voluntary participation or an individual's desire for change significantly contributes to engagement and successful outcomes (Farabee et al., 1998; Gideon, 2010; Hiller et al., 2002). Overall, the outcomes of this evaluation as well as this evaluation's design should be considered within these limitations.

10.5. Future Research

Parental incarceration research has grown significantly in the past 15 years; but many areas would benefit from further research, including developing an intervention evidence-base. Research indicates parental incarceration impacts people over their lifetime and intergenerationally (Murray

et al., 2014; Wildeman & Turney, 2014). However, there is a distinct lack of an evidence-base for medium- and long-term support. In practice, programs have tried to address long-term support with throughcare models like BtF, however, the evidence-base for this is inconclusive (Day et al., 2019; Eddy et al., 2019). BtF's long-term outcome – as with other parental incarceration programs - is to disrupt intergenerational offending. However, this is difficult to assess. Like BtF, most programs are funded on short-term grants (Morgan, & Homel, 2013). The funding grant won by BtF during this thesis covered operational costs for only 18 months, inclusive of this evaluation. With uncertainty in program continuity, measuring medium, long-term, and intergenerational outcome measures is not feasible. Further research could inform how to disrupt intergenerational offending. Specific to this thesis, it would be beneficial to engage past participants, kinship participants, and children to understand the medium- and long-term impacts of BtF, including the benefits of case management, intergenerational impacts, the reasons families do not engage with services after returning home, and strategies to increase engagement post-release. Longitudinal studies would provide an assessment of the effect of BtF's pedological approach of 'planting the seed', which is based on self-reflection over time. Following-up with participants would identify useful 'seeds' and what environments encouraged 'germination'.

The impact of parental incarceration on the child is considered within parental incarceration literature (Foster & Hagan, 2007; Hughes et al., 2017); including gendered differences between daughters and sons (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2003). Notably, this difference was not considered widely within the citations of the realist synthesis. The voice of children being affected by parental incarceration is under reported and this is even scarcer in studies developing evidence-informed interventions. Although BtF does not engage directly with the child, the focus was always on developing strategies that were best for the children. Unfortunately, this thesis did not have the scope or resources to include children or consider differences in how parental incarceration might affect daughters versus sons. Future research would benefit from incorporating perspectives of young people or people with lived experience of parental incarceration.

Further research should also inform the role of cultural values as program, policy, and practice mechanisms. I identified the role of culture as a mechanism after data collection. As practiced in realist evaluations, if I had identified the role of culture during data collection, I could have analysed this in greater detail (Wong et al., 2016). However, in suggesting this, mechanisms predominately function at an unconscious level (Jagosh, 2019), which is difficult to empirically measure. Nevertheless, the role of culture as a mechanism has significant impacts on understanding program service and delivery (O'Donoghue, 1997). Significantly, supporting cultural values in service

delivery promotes the value of self-determined programs and provides an opportunity to demonstrate why certain practices or values are necessary. Further research would be beneficial.

I identified several studies where Indigenous communities from Australia and internationally were using the realist approach to evaluation (section 3.3.2.5). This thesis demonstrated how realist approaches can be used for programs impacting First Peoples. Further research could assess how the realist approach can be used in different program areas for Indigenous Peoples, including in areas outside criminal justice. Moreover, there may be benefits in understanding how a critical realist perspective can contribute to realist evaluations involving First Peoples. Although Pawson and Tilley (1997) embedded realist evaluations within scientific realism and explicitly diverged from critical realism, some subsequent realist evaluands have found value in using a critical approach. For example, de Souza (2013) emphasised the impact of pre-existing contexts on social programs and how these impact program mechanisms. This may inform evaluations involving First Peoples; the cultural variable I identified during this evaluation (Chapter 9) could be framed as contexts pre-existing BtF which impacted the experience and agency of BtF and the participants. Moreover, there are First Peoples scholars who have adapted critical realism within their work (Sarra, 2014; Smallwood, 2015). Critical realist approaches may contribute to future evaluation research, particularly in assessing how settler-colonialism and past and present infrastructural contextual issues (sections 2.2 and 2.3) affect current First Peoples programs and in turn First Peoples participants.

10.6. Conclusion

There were two overarching aims of the thesis. The first aim was to identify the extent a realist approach to evaluation could assist in understanding how unique contexts and mechanisms for First Peoples effect outcomes in justice programs. I demonstrated that the realist approach can be used to highlight contextual factors that impact First Peoples program delivery, allow evaluands to embed Indigenous perspectives and methods, and articulate the importance and role of cultural values in service delivery which can function as a mechanism. However, evaluators must make deliberate choices to make the evaluation culturally appropriate.

The second aim of this thesis was to identify the extent that a realist approach to evaluation could assist in understanding the context, mechanisms, and outcomes that impact parental incarceration programs. In this thesis, the realist approach allowed me to demonstrate how a small-scale program addressed highly contextual issues related to parental incarceration. Specifically, the

approach allowed me to demonstrate how understanding program mechanisms and the impact of context driven service delivery strengthened support for families while also informing research and policy advice on improving integrated service delivery to support people who are returning home from prison.

Overall, this thesis has strengthened evidence-informed practice in several ways. First, the thesis has supported SHINE in their ongoing improvement of Belonging to Family. The outcomes can also inform effective strategies for other service providers in Australia and internationally. Additionally, the methodology I employed can inform evaluation practices and provides a working example of how a realist approach to evaluations can bridge gaps in research and service delivery. Overall, the thesis has strengthened the evidence-base for social justice service delivery, particularly for reintegration, parental incarceration, and culturally informed programs.

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Appendix A: Realist Synthesis: Data extraction matrix

Stage 1 and 2

Document details
Title
Author
Date published
Type of publication
Reference
Outcome
What outcomes are discussed
Comments
Mechanisms (How does the program change reasoning or behaviour)
What mechanisms discussed?
Comments
Context
What contextual factors are discussed
Comments
Is there evidence of the interaction between the context and the intervention?
Other comments

Stage 3

Document details
Reference
Type of publication
Aim of article
Intervention details
Name of intervention
Type of intervention
Pre, post release, both
Who are the participants?
Mothers or Fathers?
Duration of program
Year of intervention
Location
Partners
Funders
Research details
Sample size
Baseline
Time of evaluation to intervention
Comparison groups
Costs and grants
Research method
Outcome
What outcome measures are shared with BtF?
Are there other stated outcomes
What is the evidence of the impact of the program?
Mechanisms (How does the program change reasoning or behaviour)
What mechanisms are shared with BtF?
Are other mechanisms reported?
What is the evidence of the impact of each mechanism?
Context
What contexts are pertinent to BtF?
What other contextual factors are reported
Is there evidence of the interaction between the context and the intervention to promote best practice?
Is there evidence of the interaction between the context and the intervention negatively impacts outcomes?
Other comments

Appendix B: Realist synthesis: Included studies, Stage 1 and 2

#	Description	Purpose of document	Document Type	Aim of document	Availability	How does the document contribute to synthesis?					
						Issue BtF addresses	CMO- Family	CMO- Culture	CMO- service delivery	CMO- context	CMO- outcomes
1	Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding application	Admin	Funding application	Secured funding for BtF. Describes BtF, the education program, expansion to Townsville, links to funding aims.	In house	x	x	x	x	x	x
2	BtF website	Promo	Website	Information provided for the public about BtF including aims, enrolment information, eligibility	Public		x	x	x		x
3	BtF brochure	Promo	Brochure	Information provided for the public about BtF including aims, enrolment information, eligibility	Public and inmates		x	x	x		x
4	BtF website- further details	Promo	Website	Greater detail of how BtF works and information about the artwork	Public	x					x
5	BtF referral Form	Admin	Form	Potential participants complete form for initial acceptance	In house					x	
6	Meeting notes with CEO SHINE from 28/4/2015	Communications	Notes	After funding, outlines initial plans of delivering BtF and the education program in Kempsey and Townsville, including projected participation levels	Personal correspondence	x				x	

7	Speech of previous participant	Other	Speech	Speech given by a former participant describing his experience in the program	In house		x	x	x		x
8	Excel file of former information	Admin	Excel file	The caseworkers developed their own file to collect information about participants. This includes the titles only. They progressively stopped collecting the data as SHINE rolled out a new database	In house					x	
9	BtF Program Manual	Admin	Manual	Outlines the weekly exercises for BtF	In house	x	x	x	x	x	x
10	BtF Evaluation_framework	Admin	Evaluation	Outline the evaluation framework of original funding (2011-2013)	In house	x	x	x	x	x	x
11	BtF Evaluation_Year 1_Jan 2011	Admin	Evaluation	Interim evaluation provided in Jan 2011	In house	x	x	x	x	x	x
12	BtF Evaluation_Year 2_ March 2012	Admin	Evaluation	Interim evaluation provided in Jan 2012	In house	x	x	x	x	x	x
13	BtF Evaluation_final_Jan 2013	Admin	Evaluation	Final evaluation 2010-2013	In house	x	x	x	x	x	x
14	Workshop (Brisbane)	Communications	Notes	Summary of workshop held with KL, SD, NT, BC, LG, SK, CV	Personal notes	x	x	x	x	x	x
15	Site visit	Communications	Notes	Summary of site visit by KL with BC, LG, SK, RB	Personal notes	x	x	x	x	x	x
16	BTF_Powerpoint_outreach	Promo	Outreach	PowerPoint created for caseworkers to inform people who may be in contact with their clients about the work of SHINE and BTF	In house	x	x	x	x	x	x
17	BTF_Schedule, Procedure, and dates	Admin	Admin	Form that BTF completes to gain access to the MNCCC	In house	x				x	

Appendix C: Realist synthesis: Included studies, Stage 3

#	Study	Population	Article Type	Aim of article	Research method	Contribution							
						Reintegration	Program eval	Context	Impact of prison	Eg. program	Community	Family practices	Maintain contact
18	ATSILS (Qld) (2012)	Qld ATSI (incarcerated)	Discussion piece	Describes the Prison Throughcare Program run in Qld prisons which supports inmates pre-post release with individual case management	N/A	X				x			
19	Atkinson (2002)	Qld ATSI (not incarcerated)	Primary Research (PhD)	Identifies the effects of intergenerational trauma. Specifically looked at the context of violence consequent experience of trauma; and the individual road to recovery	Interviews and ethnographic study in a central Queensland coastal town			x		x			
20	Atkinson et al. (2010)	Some focus on ATSI people and communities; role of incarceration identified	Review (Book chapter)	Focuses on how the effects of experiencing trauma are transmitted within and across generations, and how whole communities can be affected by a single experience of trauma by a single member of a community.	Review article			x	x		X		
21	Atkinson (2008)	Indigenous men (violent incarcerated)	Primary Research (PhD)	Developed a measure for Aboriginal Australian trauma and tested on 58 incarcerated men to measure the impact of traumatic stressors and generational transmission on behaviour	Developed measure and interviewed 58 men in focus groups			x	x				

22	Baldry et al. (2008)	Indigenous women post release	Primary Research	Explores the needs of Aboriginal women with dependent children post release in NSW. Identifies gaps in services and types of services - leads to a need for individual holistic, culturally appropriate throughcare.	Interviews n=17 Aboriginal women, and n=27 surveys from service providers	x							
23	Baldry & McCausland (2009)	Indigenous women post release	Critical analysis	Uses a decolonisation, human rights, and social justice lens to establish the need for Aboriginal-women specific model of reintegration. - identifies effective principles as throughcare, holistic service, and self-identified needs.	critical analysis of research	x		x					
24	Bazemore & Erbe (2003)	Young people reintegrating from detention centre	Review Article	Places focus on the links to community during the time of reintegration. Past research has focused on risk/protective factors of the offender. This article draws together research from restorative justice and social bond theory to show that informal social bonds and support is important in reintegration. Identifies reintegration as a growing area outside the control of parole.	Review article	x		x			x		
25	Brough et al.(2006)	Brisbane, Logan, Ipswich ATSI (non-incarcerated)	Primary Research	Explore the influence of ATSI identity on social capital - distinguishing between bonding (close) and bridging (acquaintances) capital. Social bonds are strong and represented as familial and community connections. Colonisation has impacted on accessing social bridging capital.	Focus groups and in-depth interviews n=100 ATSI engaged in community orgs. Conducted by ATSI community workers			x			x		

26	Brown & Bloom (2009)	Mothers on parole from Hawaii (53% are Native)	Primary Research	Understand mother's experience during parole. Demonstrates issues facing all parolees are present (housing, poverty, education) but mothering is prioritised and made harder by the conditions of parenting prior to prison. Identifies the limited ability of individualistic, cognitive based programs that don't address environmental factors/realities. Demonstrates need for holistic wrap-around services responsive to the individual and their community.	Mixed method - 203 administrative data, and 25 interviews	x		x					
27	Calma (2004)	Indigenous women post release	Report with primary research	Research was conducted in response to the Social Justice Report 2002 in identifying high numbers of Indigenous women in prison and the lack of post release support. Identifies national landscape of support during transition. Recommends a co-ordination of services.	Consultations with post/incarcerated ATSI women, ATSI and other community org., gov dep., and academics via focus groups, public forums, individual meetings.	x	x	x		x	x		
28	Christian et al. (2006)	NY State, observations general pop., interviews Black & Latino	Primary Research	Understand costs and benefits of keeping in contact with incarcerated family members. Demonstrates need to include extended family/relations in analyses. Demonstrates social and economic stress to maintain contact. Also, difficult to maintain all aspects of their lives on top of keeping in contact.	Mixed method - 200 hours of observations at a family group plus 5 bus rides, and 19 interviews			x	x			x	x
29	CIRCA, Markiewicz Assoc., & AGD (2014)	Indigenous Australia	Primary Research	Part B of a 5 part Australian Gov evaluation on ATSI justice programs. Part B looks at 8 programs focused on Offender Support and Reintegration. Provides a good practice framework for the 8 programs which had been selected as "promising"	LitR: evaluation and monitoring evaluation to 8 programs inclu. consultations and document review	x	x	x		x			
30	CSNSW (2016)	NSW	Report	Collection and description of the programs offered throughout prisons in NSW	N/A	x				x			

31	Day et al. (2006)	SA, Indigenous men (incarcerated)	Primary Research	Points out need for primary & tertiary prevention. - identifies lack of relevance for mainstream programs and need to understand cultural difference - social, political, and cultural meanings in the experiences of anger - demonstrates behaviour you are trying to change can be caused by different catalysts depending on one's identity. This effects program delivery.	Interview and two story-based narrative with n=14 men to explore reactions to situations to induce anger in themselves and another		impacts	x		impacts			
32	Dennison et al. (2014)	Qld Indigenous incarcerated men	Primary Research	Examined identities of incarcerated ATSI fathers and barriers to maintaining relationships with children. Demonstrated generative impact of fathers and the impact their upbringing had on their own fathering experience (including family life, antisocial behaviour, broken relationships, unemployment, poor education, alcohol, and drug abuse, kinship ties, culture and spirituality.	Interviews with 41 Indigenous fathers in prison			x	x				
33	Gilbert & Wilson (2009)	Indigenous Australia	Review	Draws on international research to identify good practice for re-entry and Indigenous re-entry evidence from CAN, NZ, AUS	Review article	x		x					
34	Haswell et al. (2014)	Indigenous women returning home from custody	Primary Research (Evaluation)	Pilot project to find an appropriate model of community care to support ATSI women leaving custody. Details barriers and enablers at structural, organisational, and program levels. Offers a proposed evaluation model for post-custodial transition arrangements in other places	LitR, 3 case study sites reviewing project scope/existing doc/qualitative data, meta-synthesis of findings	x	x	x	x				

35	Heath et al. (2011)	Indigenous Australia	Review Article	LitR: parenting practices of ATSI peoples aimed to assist Family Therapists. Links to: the historical context on parenting, parenting values, parenting practices (learning and education, sleeping and feeding, discipline, relationships, development of self-worth, identity, and emotional regulation), resilience.	Literature review			x				x	
36	Indig et al. (2010)	Aboriginal NSW inmates	Primary Research	Analyses the answers of Aboriginal inmates in the 2009 NSW Inmate Health Survey. Demonstrates the difference to non-Aboriginal inmates in social determinants, family history, offending behaviour, violence, drug use, mental health, chronic disease, blood borne viruses, sexual health, and health services utilisation.	8 yearly cross sectional survey (focusing on Indigenous (n=312) men (n=259) and women (n=53))	x		x					
37	Krieg (2006)	Indigenous Australia	Discussion piece	Overview of how incarceration has negative impacts on social and health outcomes. Calls for an integrated, community run approach.	N/A	x		x	x				
38	Lohoar et al. (2014)	Indigenous Australia (general)	Primary Research	Explores the characteristics of traditional ATSI cultural practices that contribute to effective family functioning leading to positive effects on children and communities	Literature Review Focus groups with 16 Aboriginal participants across 4 focus groups			x				x	
39	Martinez & Christian (2009)	USA (80% Black), former incarcerated (within 90 days) and a family member	Primary Research	Gain an understanding of how residence impacts the perceptions and exchange of informal support. Shows how residential context can impact support mechanisms and thus impacts how to facilitate resettlement.	In-depth interviews with 6 dyads of recently released male prisoners and a family member	x		x				x	x

40	Moresu-Diop (2010)	Indigenous Qld and NZ	Primary Research	Examines what is available, is it appropriate, and ways forward Indigenous prison programs, including culture-as-rehabilitation options. Found that mainstream programs were culturally inappropriate, and there was a lack of Indigenous and gender specific programs, and the need for pre- and post- release support.	21 interviews - Indigenous Qld NZ prisoners plus services	x		x					
41	Munro-Harrison et al. (2016)	Aboriginal male inmates in VIC	Review article of pilot program	Describes an education program set up for Aboriginal inmates in VIC. 2-hour weekly student mentor meets with inmates. Inmate lead sessions including advice on post-release.	N/A	x		x		x			
42	Payer et al. (2015)	NT Indigenous communities	Primary Research	Identify prevalence of Indigenous people in prison from remote communities at a point in time Describe what this does to the demographic and social fabric of small remote communities	Quantitative- Poisson distribution statistical probability analysis	x		x	x				
43	Poroch (2007)	Aboriginal ACT, incarcerated	Primary Research	Establish a best practice model for supporting Indigenous inmates in anticipation of the first prison to open up in the ACT. Focuses on addressing needs from intake from a holistic view focusing on health	Literature review and 78 interviews (22 ex-prisoners, 17 family members, 30 org reps)	x		x	x				
44	Poroch (2011)	Aboriginal ACT, incarcerated	Primary Research	1. What specific health and SEW needs of the ATSI in the AMC and are they being met? 2. What specific health and SEW needs required by the family when a family member is in the AMC and on release, and are they being met? 3. How can the health and SEW needs of ATSI in AMC and their families be accommodated?	24 interviews: 12 inmates (10 male, 2 female); 3 female family members; 9 reps of organisations	x	x	x		x			

45	QCS Qld Gov (2010)	Qld Indigenous inmates	Primary Research	RQ: What is known about the rehab of ATSI offenders?; What are some of the considerations in delivering programs to Indigenous offenders?; How is QCS responding to the rehab needs of Indigenous offenders?; Completion rates?; How do QCS and gov improve?	Literature review, QCS administrative data, qualitative data collected as a part of an internal service delivery review	x				x			
46	Rossiter et al. (2017)	Aboriginal male inmates in NSW	Primary Research	Examine the experiences of Indigenous men with a parenting program. The format and content were relevant, the role of the facilitator was important, and the environment was safe. The program acknowledged their culture and roles	Appreciative inquiry interview 28 ATSI men, with strengths-based approach to generative fathering		x			x			
47	Salomone (2005)	Indigenous Women WA	Discussion piece	Describes the Boronia Pre Release Centre for Women - a minimum security centre set up in WA as a transition way for female inmates	N/A	x				x			
48	Shinkfield & Graffam (2009)	Australian released prisoners (no demographics provided)	Primary Research	Longitudinal analysis of prisoners 1 month pre to 4 months post focusing on changes to identified variables known to impact reintegration. Variables are described as intrapersonal, Subsistence (housing/employment/money), and support condition (#people who supported/level of practical support/emotional support). Health and drug use increased with other supports did not change.	Questionnaire: 79 adults prisoners (54 male, 25 female) 1 month pre-release then 36 prisoners 1-4 weeks and 19 prisoners 3-4 months post-release	x		x			x		
49	SPRINT Project Team (2013)	Indigenous (post release and family, services)	Primary Research	Phase 1- LitR on primary health care and social support for Aboriginal people post release Phase 2- linked data-set from NSW comparing Indig vs non-Indig for morbidity and hospitalisation 5 years post release Phase 3- Qual interviews focusing on factors influencing access to services	(1) systematic LitR (n=45); (2) n=1750 (685 non; 285 Ind), descript. , uni- & multi variate (3) 29 in-depth interviews (12 inmates, 9 family, 8 comm. service provid.)	x		x			x	x	

50	Vivian & Priest (2012)	Two NSW Aboriginal communities	Primary Research	Explore factors (focusing on social, cultural, and economic) that impact on rates of crime in six communities in NSW with significant Aboriginal populations. This is the third of 3 reports that compare two communities with demographically comparable but markedly different crime rates. (Kempsey is high, Gunnedah is low)	Qualitative- 63 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with community members and reps of orgs, and attended community meetings	x		x					
51	Walker & Shepherd (2008)	Indigenous Australia (general)	Review article	Examines the contemporary evidence base that provide insight into the protective effects and risks that influence forms of functioning among Aboriginal families	Literature review			x				x	
52	Willis & Moore (2008)	Violent male Indigenous Australian offenders	Gov Report (Primary Research)	Prevalence and characteristics of violent offenders comparing Indigenous status and recidivism. Detail the characteristics and uptake of programs that violent offenders complete	Admin data (readmissions and program inventory) Interviews with prisoners, stakeholders (Qld, NT, SA, WA) and ex-prisoners (WA)	x							
53	Williams (2015)	Indigenous (post-release and family, services)	Primary Research (PhD thesis)	Explore post-release social support from an urban Aboriginal perspective; focusing on the role in preventing reincarceration. Identified connective, practical, emotional, and spiritual post-release supports; timeliness; relationships. Uses ecological perspective in an Aboriginal perspective.	36 in depth interviews; 12 ex-prisoners > 2 yrs; 12 interviews with ATSI service providers; 12 ATSI support people.	x		x			x		

Appendix D: Information Sheets

Incarcerated Parents

Griffith UNIVERSITY

Evaluation Project: Belonging to Family
INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENT

Project Team

Professor Anna Stewart
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Krystal Lockwood
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Phone: (07) 3735 1172
Email: krystal.lockwood@griffithuni.edu.au

Why is the project being conducted?

You are invited to take part in this evaluation project because you are participating in the Belonging to Family program managed by SHINE for Kids. SHINE have formed a partnership with Griffith University and a student investigator will run an evaluation of Belonging to Family.

Belonging to Family aims to support First Nations families that have a Mum or Dad in the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre. This project aims to understand the experiences of families during a parent's release from prison and understand how programs like Belonging to Family can support families during this time.

What you will be asked to do

With your permission, the student investigator will:

- Hold 3 interviews with you that will take approximately 1 hour each. We will also hold interviews with kinship carers and children participating in BtF as well as community members supporting the program.
- Analyse the administrative information that is collected by SHINE;
- Observe the sessions during the 8-week program;

Further information about parent interviews:

Parents will be involved in three interviews; before the 8-week program, after the 8-week program, and 12 months after release from prison. If you agree to be contacted throughout the evaluation, you can still change your mind when the project team contact you. The interviews ask questions about;

a. Your experiences, contact, and relationship with your family in relation to the imprisonment.
b. People or services in your family's life that have supported you during the imprisonment, or services that you believe could have supported you.
c. Aspects of Belonging to Family that have impacted you and your family.

Audio recordings

The project team will ask your permission to audio-tape the interviews. Audio-recordings are not compulsory and will not be used if you would prefer not to have a recording. The audio-tape will not contain your name and will only be used for the purposes of this evaluation only. The audio-tape will be erased after it has been transcribed. All transcripts will be kept in a password protected computer file.

(Continued: Information Sheet, Incarcerated Parents)

Griffith UNIVERSITY

The basis by which participants will be selected or screened

SHINE for Kids will run the 8-week BtF program four times from July 2015 to July 2016. The student investigator will evaluate the experiences of the parents, kinship carers, and children that are participating in BtF from one of the four 8-week blocks.

The expected benefits of the project

Service providers, policy makers, and researchers currently know very little about how parental imprisonment and re-entry affects families, particularly for First Nations families. Your views can make a significant contribution to understanding this process and allow the project team to make informed recommendations for service providers of families with a parent in prison. Your contribution to the evaluation will also help SHINE improve the Belonging to Family program.

Risks to you

Talking about the experiences of having a parent in prison could be difficult and upsetting. Please let us know if you do not want to answer a question, want to end the interview, or would like to take a break; there are no consequences to ensuring you are comfortable. The project team will see how you are feeling throughout the interview and take regular breaks. If the project team believes that you are becoming upset, the interview will be stopped immediately.

We will provide you with the contact details of free counselling services and culturally appropriate support services in your community. You may contact any of the services if you wish to talk to someone after the interview.

Your confidentiality

The information you provide to us is **confidential** and will not be discussed or used outside the project team. **However, please be aware that the project team are required to disclose information if you inform us that someone is being hurt, if your safety is at risk, or if you provide information about a previously undetected crime that identifies the person or persons concerned.**

All information that is collected during the evaluation will be stored in password protected computer files. Only the project team will have access to this information. All data will be securely stored for a minimum of five years before being destroyed.

We will assign the information you give us a unique code so we can link all of the information you provide throughout the project. During the evaluation there will be a file where your name and contact details will be alongside your unique code. This file will be kept separate from all other information in a secure, and password protected location that only the project team will have access to.

Your details and any identifiable information about you will be removed from all published work that results from this evaluation project.

(Continued: Information Sheet, Incarcerated Parents)

Griffith UNIVERSITY

Your participation is voluntary

You participation in this evaluation project is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your enrolment in the Belonging to Family program, or your relationships to SHINE for Kids, the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre, or Corrective Services NSW.

There is no penalty or consequence if you do not want to participate in this evaluation or withdraw at any time during the project.

Questions / further information

If you have any further questions or require more information about this study, please contact Krystal Lockwood whose contact details are at the top of this Information Sheet.

The ethical conduct of this project

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on (07) 3735 4375 or **research-ethics@griffith.edu.au**.

Feedback to you

The findings of this project will be reported when all data are collected and analysed which will occur from 2018. Please contact Krystal Lockwood if you would like to receive a report or summary of this project.

Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone (07) 3735 4375.

Family Members

Evaluation Project: Belonging to Family
INFORMATION SHEET FOR KINSHIP CARERS

Project Team

Professor Anna Stewart
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Why is the project being conducted?

You are invited to take part in this evaluation project because you are participating in the Belonging to Family program managed by SHINE for Kids. SHINE have formed a partnership with Griffith University and a student investigator will run an evaluation of Belonging to Family.

Belonging to Family aims to support First Nations families that have a Mum or Dad in the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre. This project aims to understand the experiences of families during a parent's release from prison and understand how programs like Belonging to Family can support families during this time.

What you will be asked to do

With your permission, the student investigator will:

- Analyse the administrative information that is collected by SHINE;
- Observe the sessions during the 8-week program;
- Hold 3 interviews with you that will take approximately 1 hour each. We will also hold interviews with the family members and children participating in BtF as well as community members supporting the program.

Further information about kinship carer interviews:

Kinship carers will be involved in three interviews; before the 8-week program, after the 8-week program, and 12 months after the parent has been released from prison. If you agree to be contacted throughout the evaluation, you can still change your mind when the project team contact you. The interviews ask questions about;

a. Your experiences of having a family member in prison
b. People or services in your family's life that have supported you during the imprisonment, or services that you believe could have supported you.
c. Aspects of Belonging to Family that have impacted you and your family.

Audio recordings

The project team will ask your permission to audio-tape the interview. Audio-recordings are not compulsory and will not be used if you would prefer not to have a recording. The audio-tape will not contain your name and will only be used for the purposes of this evaluation only. The audio-tape will be erased after it has been transcribed. All transcripts will be kept in a password protected computer file.

(Continued: Information Sheet, Family Members)

Griffith UNIVERSITY

The basis by which participants will be selected or screened

SHINE for Kids will run the 8-week BtF program four times from July 2015 to July 2016. The student investigator will evaluate the experiences of the parents, kinship carers, and children that are participating in BtF from one of the four 8-week blocks.

The expected benefits of the project

Service providers, policy makers, and researchers currently know very little about how parental imprisonment and re-entry affects families, particularly for First Nations families. Your views can make a significant contribution to understanding this process and allow the project team to make informed recommendations for service providers of families with a parent in prison. Your contribution to the evaluation will also help SHINE improve the Belonging to Family program.

Risks to you

Talking about the experiences of having a parent in prison could be difficult and upsetting. Please let us know if you do not want to answer a question, want to end the interview, or would like to take a break; there are no consequences to ensuring you are comfortable. The project team will see how you are feeling throughout the interview and take regular breaks. If the project team believes that you are becoming upset, the interview will be stopped immediately.

We will provide you with the contact details of free counselling services and culturally appropriate support services in your community. You may contact any of the services if you wish to talk to someone after the interview.

Your confidentiality

The information you provide to us is **confidential** and will not be discussed or used outside the project team. **However, please be aware that the project team are required to disclose information if you inform us that someone is being hurt, if your safety is at risk, or if you provide information about a previously undetected crime that identifies the person or persons concerned.**

All information that is collected during the evaluation will be stored in password protected computer files. Only the project team will have access to this information. All data will be securely stored for a minimum of five years before being destroyed.

We will assign the information you give us a unique code so we can link all of the information you provide throughout the project. During the evaluation there will be a file where your name and contact details will be alongside your unique code. This file will be kept separate from all other information in a secure, and password protected location that only the project team will have access to.

Your details and any identifiable information about you will be removed from all published work that results from this evaluation project.

(Continued: Information Sheet, Family Members)

Griffith UNIVERSITY

Your participation is voluntary

You participation in this evaluation project is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your enrolment in the Belonging to Family program, or your relationships to SHINE for Kids, the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre, or Corrective Services NSW.

There is no penalty or consequence if you do not want to participate in this evaluation or withdraw at any time during the project.

Questions / further information

If you have any further questions or require more information about this study, please contact Krystal Lockwood whose contact details are at the top of this Information Sheet.

The ethical conduct of this project

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on (07) 3735 4375 or **research-ethics@griffith.edu.au**.

Feedback to you

The findings of this project will be reported when all data are collected and analysed which will occur from 2018. Please contact Krystal Lockwood if you would like to receive a report or summary of this project.

Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone (07) 3735 4375.

Service Providers and Community Members

Evaluation Project: Belonging to Family
INFORMATION SHEET
FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Project Team

Professor Anna Stewart
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Krystal Lockwood
Student Investigator
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Griffith University
Phone: (07) 3735 1172
Email: krystal.lockwood@griffithuni.edu.au

Why is the project being conducted?

You are invited to take part in this evaluation project because you are a service provider or community member that can inform the project team about the Belonging to Family program managed by SHINE for Kids. SHINE have formed a partnership with Griffith University and a student investigator will run an evaluation of Belonging to Family.

Belonging to Family aims to support First Nations families that have a Mum or Dad in the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre. This project aims to understand the experiences of families during a parent's release from prison and understand how programs like Belonging to Family can support families during this time.

What you will be asked to do

With your permission, the student investigator will:

- Observe the sessions during the 8-week program;
- Hold an interview with you as a service provider or community member supporting Belonging to Family.

Further information about the service provider interviews:

Service providers and community members will be asked to participate in an interview. The student investigator may contact you again with a follow-up interview. If you agree to be contacted throughout the evaluation, you can still change your mind when the project team contact you. The interviews will ask about;

a. Your perspective of families experiences of having parent in prison.
b. People or services that impact families during the incarceration.
c. Aspects of Belonging to Family that impact the participating families.

Audio recordings

The project team will ask your permission to audio-tape the interview. Audio-recordings are not compulsory and will not be used if you would prefer not to have a recording. The audio-tape will not contain your name and will only be used for the purposes of this evaluation only. The audio-tape will be erased after it has been transcribed. All transcripts will be kept in a password protected computer file.

(Continued: Information Sheet, Service Providers and Community Members)

Griffith UNIVERSITY

The basis by which participants will be selected or screened

SHINE for Kids will run the 8-week BtF program four times from July 2015 to July 2016. The student investigator will evaluate the experiences of the parents, kinship carers, and children that are participating in BtF from one of the four 8-week blocks. The evaluation will be informed by service providers that administer the program and community members that have a professional relationship with the participants.

The expected benefits of the project

Service providers, policy makers, and researchers currently know very little about how parental imprisonment and re-entry affects families, particularly for First Nations families. Your views can make a significant contribution to understanding this process and allow the project team to make informed recommendations for service providers of families with a parent in prison. Your contribution to the evaluation will also help SHINE improve the Belonging to Family program.

Risks to you

Talking about the experiences of having families that have a parent in prison could be difficult and upsetting. Please let us know if you do not want to answer a question, want to end the interview, or would like to take a break; there are no consequences to ensuring you are comfortable. The project team will see how you are feeling throughout the interview and take regular breaks. If the project team believes that you are becoming upset, the interview will be stopped immediately.

We will provide you with the contact details of free counselling services and culturally appropriate support services in your community. You may contact any of the services if you wish to talk to someone after the interview.

Your confidentiality

The information you provide to us is **confidential** and will not be discussed or used outside the project team. **However, please be aware that the project team are required to disclose information if you inform us that someone is being hurt, if your safety is at risk, or if you provide information about a previously undetected crime that identifies the person or persons concerned.**

All information that is collected during the evaluation will be stored in password protected computer files. Only the project team will have access to this information. All data will be securely stored for a minimum of five years before being destroyed.

We will assign the information you give us a unique code so we can link all of the information you provide throughout the project. During the evaluation there will be a file where your name and contact details will be alongside your unique code. This file will be kept separate from all other information in a secure, and password protected location that only the project team will have access to.

Your details and any identifiable information about you will be removed from all published work that results from this evaluation project.

(Continued: Information Sheet, Service Providers and Community Members)

Your participation is voluntary

You participation in this evaluation project is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect any existing or future your relationships with the family members, SHINE for Kids, the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre, Corrective Services NSW, or Education NSW.

There is no penalty or consequence if you do not want to participate in this evaluation or withdraw at any time during the project.

Questions / further information

If you have any further questions or require more information about this study, please contact Krystal Lockwood whose contact details are at the top of this Information Sheet.

The ethical conduct of this project

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on (07) 3735 4375 or **research-ethics@griffith.edu.au**.

Feedback to you

The findings of this project will be reported when all data are collected and analysed which will occur from 2018. Please contact Krystal Lockwood if you would like to receive a report or summary of this project.

Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone (07) 3735 4375.

Appendix E: Consent Forms

Incarcerated Parents

Griffith UNIVERSITY

Evaluation Project: Belonging to Family
CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

Project Team

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Krystal Lockwood
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Griffith University
Phone: (07) 3735 1172
Email: krystal.lockwood@griffithuni.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information regarding this project. In particular I have noted:

What I will be asked to do:

Interviews

- I understand that my involvement in this project will include three interviews that will take approximately 1 hour each;
- I understand that the interviews will be held;
  - before the 8-week *Belonging to Family* program
  - after the 8-week *Belonging to Family* program, and
  - 12 months after my incarcerated family member has been released from the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that the interviews will ask me questions about my experiences and those of the children I care for, relating to their parent's imprisonment, including circumstance prior to the imprisonment;
- I understand that the interviews will ask me questions about my experiences and those of the children I care for, relating to our participation in *Belonging to Family*;
- **I understand that I will be provided a list of counselling/support services available to me should I become upset or distressed during or following the interview;**
- I understand that I can provide my permission to participate in the interview by circling 'yes' or alternatively I can circle 'no' if I do not wish to participate.

Yes	No
Signature:	

(Continued: Consent Form, Incarcerated Parents)

Griffith UNIVERSITY

Audio-taping

- I understand that the interviewer will ask my permission to audio-tape the interview;
- I understand that the audio-tape will not contain my name and will only be used for the purposes of this project and that once it is transcribed that it will be erased;
- I understand that I can provide my permission to audio-tape the interview by circling 'yes' or alternatively I can circle 'no' if I do not wish to have my interview audio-taped.

Yes	No
Signature:	

Program observations

- I understand that a member of the project team will be present during Belonging to Family's 8-week program.
- I understand that the member of the project team will make general observations about how the program works and not about individual participant's behaviour.
- I understand that I can provide my permission for the program observations by circling 'yes' or alternatively I can circle 'no' if I do not wish the project team to make direct observations about my contribution into the program sessions.

Yes	No
Signature:	

Administrative Data

- I understand that the project team will have has access to the administrative data collected by SHINE for Kids and Corrective Services NSW.
- I understand that all administrative data will be stored in a secure and password protected file. My name and contact details will be removed and replaced with a unique identifier.
- I understand that my name and contact details will be stored in a separate and secure location.
- I understand that I can provide my permission for the project team to access the administrative data from **SHINE for Kids** by circling 'yes' or alternatively I can circle 'no' if I do not wish the project team to access my administrative data.

Yes	No
Signature:	

(Continued: Consent Form, Incarcerated Parents)

Confidentiality

- I understand that the information I provide is confidential;
- **I understand that if I disclose that someone is being hurt, if my safety is at risk, or if I disclose information about a previously undetected offence that identifies a person or persons concerned, that the project team may be legally obliged to pass this information on to the authorities;**
- I understand that the project team will use a unique identifier with the information that I provide and that only the project team will have access to this data;
- I understand that should I agree to take part in follow-up interviews that the project team will need to record my name and contact details with my unique identifier to contact me at a later date. I understand that my contact details will be kept separate from any information I provide during the interview;
- I understand that any information resulting from this project will not be published or presented in a way that will identify me.

By signing below, I confirm that:

- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this project;
- I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that my participation will in no way impact upon the service I will receive from *SHINE for Kids*.
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the project team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that the data that I provide in this evaluation can be used in any future research projects that are an extension of, or closely related to, this project;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 4375 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

Name	
Signature	
Date	

Family Members

Griffith UNIVERSITY

Evaluation Project: Belonging to Family
CONSENT FORM FOR KINSHIP CARERS

Project Team

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Email: krystal.lockwood@griffithuni.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information regarding this project. In particular I have noted:

What I will be asked to do:

Interviews

- I understand that my involvement in this project will include three interviews that will take approximately 1 hour each;
- I understand that the interviews will be held;
  - before the 8-week *Belonging to Family* program
  - after the 8-week *Belonging to Family* program, and
  - 12 months after my incarcerated family member has been released from the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that the interviews will ask me questions about my experiences and those of the children I care for relating to their parent's imprisonment, including circumstances prior to the imprisonment;
- I understand that the interviews will ask me questions about my experiences and those of the children I care for, relating to our participation in *Belonging to Family*;
- **I understand that I will be provided a list of counselling/support services available in my community should I become upset or distressed during or following the interview;**
- I understand that I can provide my permission to participate in the interview by circling 'yes' or alternatively I can circle 'no' if I do not wish to participate.

Yes	No
Signature:	

(Continued: Consent Form, Family Members)

Griffith UNIVERSITY

Audio-taping

- I understand that the interviewer team will ask my permission to audio-tape the interview;
- I understand that the audio-tape will not contain my name and will only be used for the purposes of this project and that once it is transcribed that it will be erased;
- I understand that I can provide my permission to audio-tape the interview by circling 'yes' or alternatively I can circle 'no' if I do not wish to have my interview audio-taped.

Yes	No
Signature:	

Program observations

- I understand that a member of the project team will be present during Belonging to Family's 8-week program.
- I understand that the project team will make general observations about how the program works and not about individual participant's behaviour.
- I understand that I can provide my permission for the program observations by circling 'yes' or alternatively I can circle 'no' if I do not wish the project team to make direct observations about my contribution into the program sessions.

Yes	No
Signature:	

Administrative Data

- I understand that the project team will have has access to the administrative data collected by SHINE for Kids.
- I understand that all administrative data will be stored in a secure and password protected file. My name and contact details will be removed and replaced with a unique identifier.
- I understand that my name and contact details will be stored in a separate and secure location.
- I understand that I can provide my permission for the project team to access the administrative data by circling 'yes' or alternatively I can circle 'no' if I do not wish the project team to access my administrative data.

Yes	No
Signature:	

(Continued: Consent Form, Family Members)

Confidentiality

- I understand that the information I provide is confidential;
- **I understand that if I disclose that someone is being hurt, if my safety is at risk, or if I disclose information about a previously undetected offence that identifies a person or persons concerned, that the project team may be legally obliged to pass this information on to the authorities;**
- I understand that the project team will use a unique identifier with the information that I provide and that only the project team will have access to this data;
- I understand that should I agree to take part in follow-up interviews that the project team will need to record my name and contact details with my unique identifier to contact me at a later date. I understand that my contact details will be kept separate from any information I provide during the interview;
- I understand that any information resulting from this project will not be published or presented in a way that will identify me.

By signing below, I confirm that:

- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this project;
- I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that my participation will in no way impact upon the service I will receive from *SHINE for Kids*.
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the project team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that the data that I provide in this evaluation project can be used in any future research projects that are an extension of, or closely related to, this project;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 4375 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

Name	
Signature	
Date	

Service Providers and Community Members

Griffith UNIVERSITY

Evaluation Project: Belonging to Family
CONSENT FORM
FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Project Team

Professor Anna Stewart
Senior Investigator
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Griffith University
Phone: (07) 3735 5784
Email: a.stewart@griffith.edu.au

Krystal Lockwood
Student Investigator
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Griffith University
Phone: (07) 3735 1172
Email: krystal.lockwood@griffithuni.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information regarding this project. In particular I have noted:

What I will be asked to do:

Interviews

- I understand that my involvement in this evaluation project will participating in an interview that will take approximately 1 hour;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that the interviews will ask me questions about my perspectives of parental incarceration, how parental incarceration impacts families, and about the program *Belonging to Family*.
- I understand that I will be provided a list of counselling/support services available in my community should I become upset or distressed during or following the interview;
- I understand that I can provide my permission to participate in the interview by circling 'yes' or alternatively I can circle 'no' if I do not wish to participate.

Yes	No
Signature:	

Follow-Up Interviews

- I understand that I will be asked permission to be contacted for a follow-up interview during the duration of this evaluation project;
- I understand that this will require me to provide my contact details;
- I understand that my contact details will be kept separate from any information that I provide during the interview;
- I understand that even if I agree to take part in the follow-up interview that I can change my mind when I am contacted and there will be no consequences.
- I understand that I can provide my permission to be contacted for a follow-up interview by circling 'yes' or alternatively I can circle 'no' if I do not wish to be contacted;

Yes	No
Signature:	

(Continued: Consent Form, Service Providers and Community Members)

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Audio-taping

- I understand that the interviwer will ask my permission to audio-tape the interview;
- I understand that the audio-tape will not contain my name and will only be used for the purposes of this project and that once it is transcribed that it will be erased;
- I understand that I can provide my permission to audio-tape the interview by circling 'yes' or alternatively I can circle 'no' if I do not wish to have my interview audio-taped.

Yes	No
Signature:	

Program observations

- I understand that a member of the project team will be present during Belonging to Family's 8-week program.
- I understand that the investigator will make general observations about how the program works and not about individual participant's behaviour.
- I understand that I can provide my permission for the program observations by circling 'yes' or alternatively I can circle 'no' if I do not wish the project team to make direct observations about my contribution into the program sessions.

Yes	No	Not applicable
Signature:		

Confidentiality

- I understand that the information I provide is confidential;
- **I understand that if I disclose that someone is being hurt, if my safety is at risk, or if I disclose information about a previously undetected offence that identifies a person or persons concerned, that the project team may be legally obliged to pass this information on to the authorities;**
- I understand that the project team will use a unique identifier with the information that I provide and that only the project team will have access to this data;
- I understand that should I agree to take part in follow-up interviews that the project team will need to record my name and contact details with my unique identifier to contact me at a later date. I understand that my contact details will be kept separate from any information I provide during the interview;
- I understand that any information resulting from this project will not be published or presented in a way that will identify me.

(Continued: Consent Form, Service Providers and Community Members)

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By signing below, I confirm that:

- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this project;
- I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that my participation will in no way impact upon the service I will receive from *SHINE for Kids*.
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the project team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that the data that I provide in the evaluation project can be used in any future research projects that are an extension of, or closely related to, this project;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 4375 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

Name	
Signature	
Date	

Appendix F: Field note guide template

Field notes, BtF evaluation Date:

Today's main activities:

Location: Activity: CMO relevance?	Time:
Location: Activity: CMO relevance?	Time:
…	

Reflections on CMOs

How and to what extent did Belonging to Family strengthen positive family relationships?
To what extent did BtF improve communication within family? Which context influenced this mechanism?
To what extent did BtF make participants consider the role they have in the family? Which context influenced this mechanism?
To what extent did BtF make participants consider views of other family members? Which context influenced this mechanism?
How and to what extent did Belonging to Family improve participant's support networks through culturally appropriate services and the community?
To what extent did BtF participants learn about support services and access those services that they need? Which context influenced this mechanism?
To what extent did BtF participants feel supported by their social community? Which context influenced this mechanism?
How and to what extent did Belonging to Family reinforce cultural values?
To what extent did BtF show support from First Peoples community? Which context influenced this mechanism?
To what extent did BtF shows support from peers? Which context influenced this mechanism?
To what extent did BtF reinforce cultural values? Which context influenced this mechanism?

Other notes (e.g. unintended consequences)

Appendix G: Interview Schedules

Initial Interview

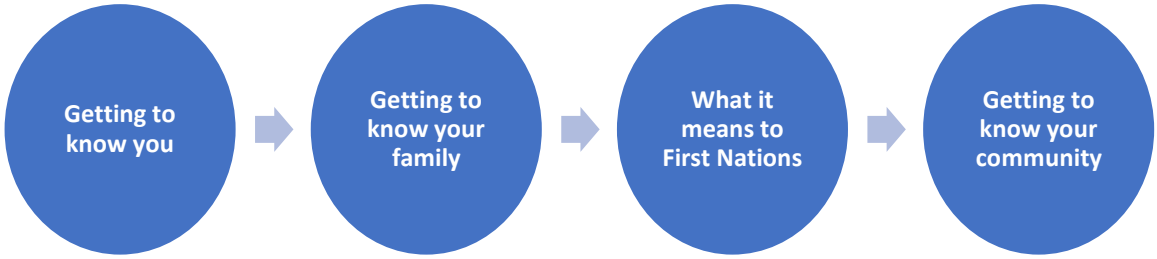
Evaluation Project: Belonging to Family

Why am I interviewing you?

I hope to get an idea about the experiences of families with a parent in prison and understand how programs like Belonging to Family can support families during this time.

What type of questions will I get asked today?

The questions are based on the aims of the BtF program. Today we will talk about 4 topics.



How long will the interview take?

This is the first interview. The interview will take about **1 hour**. Please let me know if you would like a break during the interview.

Transition:

I would like to start by getting to know you and what you would like to get out of BTF.

1. Getting to know you

1.1 Where are you from?

- 'Can you tell me about yourself?'
- 'How would people describe you if they know you well?" (why would they say that? Do you think that's true?

1.2 How did you hear about BtF?

1.3 What in particular made you want to join?

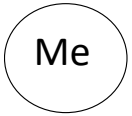
- What do you hope to get out of the program?
- What sorts of things do you hope to learn about?"

Transition

BtF also focuses on your family and people close to your family. I would like to get to know the things that make up and matter to you and your family, what it's like, the things you would say if you were describing the family to somebody who didn't know you.

We are going to talk about your family and friends using this map. You are in the centre and we can draw on your family and friends. (Ask following questions while filling in the map)

2. Getting to know your family



(Getting to know your family continued)

2.1 Let's start with your kids? (list each child)

Prompts:

- Who are close to your kids? Parents, carer
- What is the relationship like between your child and the kinship carer?
- Did you live with {kinship carer and children} before you came to prison?

2.2 How about people who you are close to?

Prompts:

- How long have you known him / her?
- Does he / she know the children well?
- {If this is a romantic partner} is this someone who has lived with you in the past?
- Is this someone the children have lived with?
- How do you support each other?

2.3 Who will be involved in BtF?

2.4 When you think of your family, what words or phrases come to mind?

2.5 What things are you proud of {your children}?

Prompts:

- Can you tell me a moment with {child} you really enjoyed?
    - Where were you?
    - What were you doing?
    - Does this happen often?

2.6 Are there things about {each child} that you worry about?

Prompts:

- School, friends, anything that they will struggle with
- Are you able to do anything to help with that at the moment?
- Are there other things you will be able to do to help them after release?

(Getting to know your family continued)

2.7 What's it like being a mum/dad?

Prompts:

- What things are you good at as a parent?
- What does being "a good parent" mean to you?
- What do you think are the things that good parents do?
- Where did you learn to be a parent?

2.8 What's challenging about being a mum/dad?

Prompts:

- Can you give an example of a time you found it difficult to be a parent?
  - How did you react?
  - How did the child react?
  - How did you feel about it afterwards?
  - Did you feel you would handle it differently next time?

2.9 If we think about (kinship carers in BtF), do you know how they feel about your imprisonment? If so, what do they feel?

2.9.1. How would you describe your (kinship carer's) relationship with you before you came to prison?

2.10 If we think about your children, do you know how they feel about your imprisonment? If so, what do they feel?

2.10.1 How would you describe your children's relationship with you before you came to prison?

2.11 How do you feel about being in prison?

Transition

BtF supports Koori families and First Nations culture is important to the program. I just wanted to ask a few questions about what it means to you to be a First Nations person.

3. What it means to be First Nations

3.1 For you, what does it mean to be (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander)?

Prompts

- What types of things do you associate with being (Aboriginal)?
    - Is this positive, negative?
- What do you think other people associate with {being Aboriginal}?
    - Would you agree?

3.2 What is it about being (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) that you would you like to pass on to your children?

Prompts

- Why would you like to pass this on to your children?
- Do you think you are prepared to pass this on to your children?
- Do you think there would be any problems with passing this on to your children?

3.3 What is important to include in programs like BtF that support (Koori families}?

Transition

Finally, BTF focuses on your connection to your community. So I'd like to find out a bit about your community, where you were living before you came to prison and where you live when you are released.

4. Getting to know your community

4.1 First off, can you tell me a little bit about your community?

- What does community mean to you?

4.2 Do you think people in your community will treat you differently when you go home?

4.3 Do you know of any services that can support you when you go home?

4.4 Do you think service providers in your community will treat you differently when you go home?

4.5 Have you thought about what you are going to do when you are released?

4.6 Is there anything that you think will be difficult when you get released?

4.7 What are you looking forward to the most?

Closing

Thank you for your time and talking to me today. Your views are really important to understanding how we can improve supporting you and your family.

You will see me during the program, so if you have any other questions or if you think of something else about the things, we have talked about today just let me know.

I will also arrange our second interview after the 8-week program.

Thank you once again.

Follow-up Interview

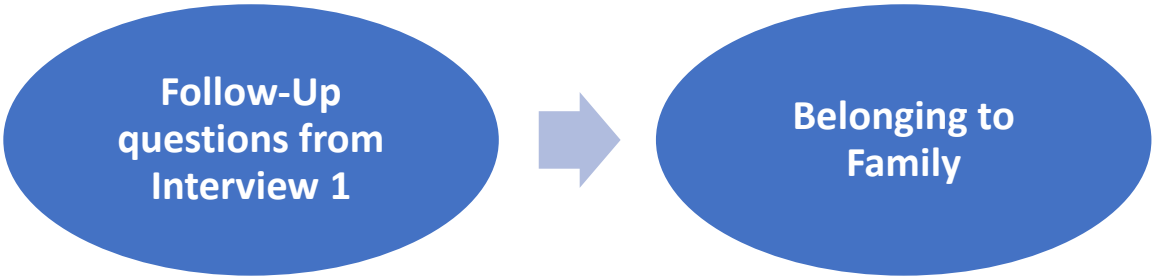
Evaluation Project: Belonging to Family

Why are we talking today?

This is the second interview in the BtF evaluation. I hope to get an idea about your experience with Belonging to Family so far and understand how we can support families.

What type of questions will you get asked today?

The questions are about the aims of Belonging to Family. Today we will talk about 2 topics.



How long will the interview take?

The interview will take about **1 hour**. Please let me know if you would like a break during the interview.

Follow-Up Questions: Family

Transition

We talked about your family in the first interview. These questions may sound familiar. This will be to understand the impact of the 8-week program.

(Bring out and talk about the map drawn in the first interview)

1.1 Let's start with your kids?

Prompts:

- Who are close to your kids? Parents, carer
- What is the relationship like between your child and the kinship carer?

1.2 How about people who you are close to?

Prompts:

- Does he / she know the children well?
- How do you support each other?
- Do you believe you communicate well? Why?

1.3 When you think of your family, what words or phrases come to mind?

1.4 What things are you proud of {your children}?

1.5 Are there things about {each child} that you worry about?

Prompts:

- School, friends, anything that they will struggle with
- Are you able to do anything to help with that at the moment?
- Are there other things you will be able to do to help them after release?

Follow-Up Questions: Family

1.6 What's it like being a mum/dad?

Prompts:

- What things are you good at as a parent?
- What does being "a good parent" mean to you?
- What do you think are the things that good parents do?
- Where did you learn to be a parent?

1.7 What's challenging about being a mum/dad?

Prompts:

- Can you give an example of a time you found it difficult to be a parent?
  - How did you react?
  - How did the child react?
  - How did you feel about it afterwards?
  - Did you feel you would handle it differently next time?

1.8 (identify the kinship participant on map) If we think about (kinship carers in BtF), do you know how they feel about your imprisonment? If so, what do they feel?

1.8.1. How would you describe your (kinship carer's) relationship with you before you came to prison? And now?

1.9 If we think about your children, do you know how they feel about your imprisonment? If so, what do they feel?

1.9.1 How would you describe your children's relationship with you before you came to prison? And now?

1.10 How do you feel about being in prison?

Follow-Up Questions: Being First Nations

Transition

BtF supports Koori families and we talked about what it means to be Koori in the first interview. These questions may sound similar. This will be to understand the impact of the 8-week program

2.1 For you, what does it mean to be (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander)?

Prompts

- What types of things do you associate with being (Aboriginal)?
    - Is this positive, negative?
- What do you think other people associate with {being Aboriginal}?
    - Would you agree?

3.2 What is it about being (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) that you would you like to pass on to your children?

Prompts

- Why would you like to pass this on to your children?
- Do you think you are prepared to pass this on to your children?
- Do you think there would be any problems with passing this on to your children?

3.3 What is important to include in programs like BtF that support (Koori families}?

Follow-Up Questions: Community

Transition

We talked about your community in the first interview. These questions may sound similar. This will be to understand the impact of the 8-week program.

3.1 Can you tell me about your community?

- What does community mean to you?

3.2 Do you think people in your community will treat you differently when you go home?

3.3 Do you know of any services that can support you when you go home?

3.4 Do you think service providers in your community will treat you differently when you go home?

3.5 Have you thought about what you are going to do when you are released?

3.6 Is there anything that you think will be difficult when you get released?

3.7 What are you looking forward to the most?

Belonging to Family

4.1 What did you like about BtF?

4.2 Was there anything that you have learnt or found useful during the program?

4.3 How did you find:

- **{caseworkers}**
- **Elders**
- **painting**
- **Groupwork**

4.4 Did BtF allow you to consider how prison has impacted your family?

4.5 Do you think BtF helped you talk to your family about prison and your relationships?

4.6 Has BtF changed how you feel going back home, when you get out?

Prompt for service providers, community

4.7 Is there anything that you would like to change about BtF?

4.8 Is there anything else that BtF have helped you with that we haven't talked about?

Appendix H: Realist Evaluation: Document Analysis

#	Description	Purpose of document	Document Type	Aim of document	Availability
1	"Call for Mid North Coast gaol feedback" 17 Nov 2016, The Macleay Argus	Media	Newspaper article	Promotion of the expansion of the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre	Public
2	BtF – post 8-week program case management form ("Issues you are dealing with")	Participant form	BtF form (hard copy)	Identify issues that need to be addressed for case management	Program document (not public)
3	BtF timetable: ("SHINE for Kids 'Belonging to Family Program")	Participant display folder	Program document (hard copy)	Outline the weekly content of BtF	Program document (not public)
4	("Group Rules")	Participant display folder	Program printout (hard copy)	Group rules were discussed during the first week and decided by the incarcerated fathers (document 4a) and mothers (document 4b)	BtF participant generated document (not public)
5	"The Five Love Languages explained" & "Love Tank Questionnaire"	Participant display folder	Program document (hard copy)	Explain an activity that was provided in the program (Week 1). The exercise helps people talk about relationships.	Program document (not public)
6	"Group Answers / Session 2"	Participant display folder	Program printout (hard copy)	The answers from the parent's groups and carer's groups are typed out after the session and then provided to the parents in the following session. (Document # 6a:fathers; 6b mothers)	BtF participant generated document (not public)

7	"Elders words"	Participant display folder	Program printout (hard copy)	An Elder spoke to the mothers group. I was asked to print out the speech so the groups could keep a hard copy for their folders.	Program document (not public)
8	"Group Answers / Session 4"	Participant display folder	Program document (hard copy)	The answers from the parent's groups and carer's groups are typed out after the session and then provided to the parents in the following session. (Document # 8a:fathers; 8b mothers)	BtF participant generated document (not public)
9	"Group Answers / Session 6"	Participant display folder	Program document (hard copy)	The answers from the parent's groups and carer's groups are typed out after the session and then provided to the parents in the following session. (Document # 9a:fathers; 9b mothers)	BtF participant generated document (not public)
10	"Group Answers / Session 6"	Participant display folder	Program document (hard copy)	The answers from the parent's groups and carer's groups are typed out after the session and then provided to the parents in the following session. (Document # 10a:fathers; 10b mothers)	BtF participant generated document (not public)
11	"Helping young people shine", The Koori Mail newspaper article	Media	Newspaper article	Article that was published when I was collecting data that outlines the programs offered to Indigenous people by SHINE.	Public
12	Email Correspondence between MNCCC and BtF caseworkers	Procedures	Email	Emails that outlined the role I was taking in BtF and why I was entering MNCCC. Demonstrated the relationships that were established and introduced me to a number of people at MNCCC.	Private correspondence
13	Email Correspondence between Townsville CC and BtF caseworkers	Procedures	Email	Emails that outlined the role I was taking in BtF and that I may possible	Private correspondence

				go the Townsville. Demonstrated the relationships that were established and introduced me to a number of people at Townsville CC and BtF.	
14	"Early Intervention Belonging to Family (BTF) Program"	Funding application	Details for proposed program	Outlined a future funding application to fill a gap that was identified by the BtF caseworkers in the delivery of BtF. Focuses on DV and intervention prior to incarceration.	In-house
15	NAIDOC flyer	Advertise activities	Flyer	Detail NAIDOC activities in MNCCC that I attended.	In-house
16	BtF referral form, completed by all incoming participants	Admin	Form	Participants completed forms for acceptance into BtF	Confidential, kept securely by BtF
17	BtF Program Manual (updated)	Admin	Manual	Outlined weekly exercises for BtF, including instructions for caseworkers. This was updated from the manual I had during the realist synthesis whilst I was collecting data for the evaluation.	In house
18	"Putting your child first"	Educational	Instruction book	A book published by SHINE to provide information for families experiencing parental incarceration	Public
19	Notes from access to case management system	Systematic field notes	Notes	The caseworkers used a case management system incrementally. I took notes on the system and set-up.	Confidential, kept securely by BtF

Appendix I: Realist evaluation: Research questions and coding

Outcome 1: Strengthening positive family relationships			
Research questions	Coding		
1. How and to what extent does *Belonging to Family* strengthen positive family relationships?	O1_FAM		
	Mechanism coding	Context coding	
a) To what extent does BtF improve communication within family? Which context influenced this mechanism?	O1_FAM_M1_COM	INDIV_<insert mechanisms code> INTER_<insert mechanisms code> INFRA_<insert mechanisms code> INSTIT_<insert mechanisms code>	
b) To what extent does BtF make participants consider the role they have in the family? Which context influenced this mechanism?	O1_FAM_M2_ROLE		
c) To what extent does BtF make participants consider views of other family members? Which context influenced this mechanism?	O1_FAM_M3_VIEW		
Outcome 2: Improve participant's support networks			
Research questions	Coding		
2. How and to what extent does Belonging to Family improve participant's support network for?	O2_NET		
	Mechanism coding	Context coding	
a) To what extent does BtF participants learn about culturally appropriate support services and access those services that they need? Which context influenced this mechanism?	O2_NET_M1_SERV	INDIV_<insert mechanisms code> INTER_<insert mechanisms code> INFRA_<insert mechanisms code> INSTIT_<insert mechanisms code>	
b) To what extent does BtF participants feel supported by their social community? Which context influenced this mechanism?	O2_NET_M2_SOC		
Outcome 3: Reinforce cultural values			
Research questions	Coding		
3. How and to what extent does *Belonging to Family* reinforce cultural values?	O3_CUL		
	Mechanism coding	Context coding	
a) To what extent does BtF show support from First Peoples community? Which context influenced this mechanism?	O3_CUL_FPC	INDIV_<insert mechanisms code> INTER_<insert mechanisms code> INFRA_<insert mechanisms code> INSTIT_<insert mechanisms code>	
b) To what extent does BtF shows support from peers? Which context influenced this mechanism?	O3_CUL_PEER		

c) To what extent does BtF reinforce cultural values? Which context influenced this mechanism?	O3_CUL_CV		
Unintended outcomes			
Research questions	Coding		
4. What are *Belonging to Family's* unintended outcomes?	O4_UNI		
	Mechanism coding	Context coding	
What are the mechanisms and pertinent contexts?	O4_M1 O4_M2 O4_M3	INDIV_<insert mechanisms code> INTER_<insert mechanisms code> INFRA_<insert mechanisms code> INSTIT_<insert mechanisms code>	

Appendix J: Example of Informant-by-Variable Matrix

Template: Overall matrix

			Outcome 1: Strengthen Family Bonds			Outcome 2: Network				Outcome 3: Cultural identity				Notes (+unintended)
Family 1	Parent Inside		Mechanisms	Context	Follow-up		Mechanisms	Context	Follow-up		Mechanisms	Context	Follow-up	
		1				1				1				
		2				2				2				
		3				3				3				
		Sum				Sum				Sum				
	Carer	1				1				1				
		2				2				2				
		3				3				3				
		Sum				Sum				Sum				
Family 2	Parent Inside		Mechanisms	Context	Follow-up		Mechanisms	Context	Follow-up		Mechanisms	Context	Follow-up	
		1				1				1				
		2				2				2				
		3				3				3				
		Sum				Sum				Sum				
	Carer	1				1				1				
		2				2				2				
		3				3				3				
		Sum				Sum				Sum				

(Table continues with family 3-15 and stake holders 1-5)

Abbreviated extract: David and Grace

(shaded yellow area in overall matrix above)

		Outcome 1: Strengthen Family Bonds		
		Mechanisms	Context	Follow-Up Interview & Observations
David	Communication	Baseline: - Regular visits and contact with children, including writing weekly letters - Identified difficulty in participating in parenting (despite regular communication) - Did not want to share experiences (of time at MNCCC) with Grace or children	Individual: identified drug dependency as an ongoing factor in disrupting his role as an active father Interpersonal: extended family had severed ties with the incarcerated father and their mother; step father was not supportive. Influence of negative social network (peers) Institutional: MNCC visiting (girlfriend banned, children apprehensive). Disruption to parenting: *Being active as a parent whilst in custody can be hard. You're pretty much left with your own*	Started conversations with the Grace based on the BtF content (opened content for reintegration): ***David***: I've had conversations with mum after certain days. It opened up the communication channels. Before it was more or less, I deal with my stuff in here, she takes care of stuff out there. She makes the decisions for the children, I'm just left in here making the decisions for me at the time. Whereas we're now able to talk about what the kids need and what decisions need to be made and discuss that together. She's trying to keep me more informed as to what's going on out there. I'm trying to allow her to see that this place isn't all horror and violence and that like the movies.
	Your role	Is proud of role of father: "*The unconditional love. Being able to give it and being able to receive it too.*" However, recognises there is a negative role that he has: "*An upstanding citizen might call us - both my girlfriends and myself - negative type influences on the children.*"		Unchanged - Did identify that upon release, there would need to be a transition period to work on himself before taking full custody (to remain with Grace)
	Other's view	-Heavy reliance on Grace (for guardianship, housing, special needs of children) - Was aware of impacts on children, however felt the children would show resilience: *It doesn't seem to matter how much I have done wrong. Not to my children or by my children. But they're still aware of wrongs. They still love me no matter what and the same can be said*		Unchanged - Identified benefits of working in a groupwork with other fathers (learning and teaching each other)

	Overall	Primary outcome for BtF: show support of parenting for Family Court (Long term: gain full custody)	*imagination as to how to be that role*. Infrastructure: Family Court, guardianship (main purpose of completing BtF)	- Letter of support from BtF for Family Court - Supported family visit at graduation (with parents and children of the incarcerated parent) - Refocused communication around reintegration
Grace	Communication		Individual: drug dependency (as above); Grace has extensive parenting experience (foster carer) Interpersonal: extended family (as above); minimal engagement with children's mothers); notes supportive of David Institutional: visiting (as above) Infrastructure: Family Court (as above)	- Apprehension for visits with children - Regular communication (phone) – noted expense and time - Worried about wellbeing of David (*incident noted*)
	Your role			- Guardian (x1); seeking full guardianship (x2) - Continued role of support: *Well we thought we had supported him right through. But you can only support as much as you can, it's up to him now. Like financially I've supported him, emotionally I've supported him. He wouldn't have a roof over his head if it wasn't for us. I'm not looking for any pats on the back, but I'm just saying I'm the one that's kept putting him back on his feet. When he comes out, I won't be able to do it. I've got eight children to raise, you know the finances. Like I'm still supporting him while he's in there at the moment, sending money for him and that*
	Other's view			Unsure of whether David understands extend of support: *Well I thought I was helping by being there unconditionally all the time. But then it got worse. It was, oh well mum will pay the rent because I haven't paid it. Because the place was in my name as well, so it was my credit rating*
	Overall			Primary outcome for BtF: show support of parenting for Family Court NB: Grace gained full custody of children during the BtF sessions. They had indicated they wanted to remain this way.

Appendix K: Observed outcomes by family dyad: Strengthening positive family relationships for a parent's reintegration

Incarcerated Parent	Long term goals	Observed outcomes: BtF	Quote or field notes	Observed barriers	Observed strength
Kirra	- midterm: move one child from foster to kinship care - long term: gain custody of children	- supported family visit at graduation (with parents of the incarcerated parent) - attempted contact with child (in state care) - establish ways to connect with her children (refocus on her children) - identified the impact she was having on her children (wanting to stay away from drugs)	***Mother***: "Doing this course, it really turned me around. I know and I know I can do more things, better things, for my kids than what fucking drugs can do for me. I can go back to my pop's house and if one of my old friends come, I could just say no, look, just stay clear of my path because I don't want to go down that road again. I'm focussing on my kids now. I know I can do better for me and for them. I could just be a bigger person and say no this time."	- Restricted visits with child (state care policy) - concerns about the child in current foster placement (mental and social wellbeing) - identified drug dependency as an ongoing factor in disrupting role of mother	- frequent contact with parents - already has one child in kinship care
Marli	- Have child visit while in custody (DoCS approval) - Gain custody or visitation rights with child on release	[note mother was transferred prior to follow-up interview] - Liaising with DoCS for in-person visits - letter of support for court - was able to deliver photos of child to mother - Kinship participant felt supported by BtF in navigating system to maintain family connections	***Kinship participant***: [The biological father/primary carer] just took off and I couldn't get hold of him for about three or four weeks, and that's what I told [BtF caseworker] and as soon as I told [BtF caseworker], he rang [DoCs case manager] and then the very next day [the father] rang me up. So it took [BtF] to get onto [DoCS case manager] to say look, what's [the father] doing?	- DoCS was actively involved in restricting access between incarcerated parent and her children - family are 2 hour drive from MNCCC. Mother was transferred to Sydney – lead to limited in-person visits - restricted visits from child for both incarcerated mother and kinship participant who participated in BtF	- frequent family visits prior to transfer (father and sister) - support and contact with many family members (eg. written correspondence, letters for court offering monetary support for bail)

Allyra	- re-establish connection with adult children - establish social connections (from extended family)	- supported family visit at graduation (with nephew of incarcerated parent) - caseworkers maintained contact with children (through calls) when the mother was unable to	***Mother***: The fact that you called my kids and that, that was a good thing. Because when I couldn't, [caseworker] was still calling them and checking in on them and giving me an update. That was really good, yeah. They got [nephew] here for me. That just blew my fucking mind. I was like, wow. Oh my God. I was so happy.	- two of her adult children have severed ties with her. One of these adult children were the mother of the grandchild that the mother wanted to connect with	- support from extended family (apart of graduation)
Evonne	- Re-establish contact with child and partner - live with child - parenting skills (conflict resolution)	[note mother was transferred prior to follow-up interview] - attempted contact with estranged partner and child	***Mother***: Just build a really good relationship. I want to be back with them when I, after I get out. Live with them again and be a better mother and just learn how to stay with them, you know, instead of having a row and then leaving	- no communication with ex-partner prior to program (but did have communication prior to incarceration) - limited money to make phone calls inside - her child has limited contact with her extended family (different town) - identified drug dependency as an ongoing factor in disrupting being a role of mother	- prior to incarceration, the mother did not have custody but did have regular visits with her child and was involved in decision making
Bindi	- Re-establish contact with child and her mother and step-dad	- support with DoCS to be placed with the incarcerated mother's parents	***Mother***: "That they got my son back in my mum's care, and they got him off the system. Majorly. That was awesome."	- no communication with kinship participant prior to program. Limited communication with child (DoCS) - BtF attempted to involve the mother's parents in BtF, however they said they no longer wanted to be in contact with the mother	- the mother had strong connections to community members (community connectedness) - her child had secured a place with the incarcerated mother's parents during the BtF sessions

Rianna (repeat participant)	- work on self in order to provide a positive role model for her son	- identified steps to help her become a role model for her child	***Mother***: …at the start I was doing it for [my son]. He was my motivation. But now, just doing a couple of the groups, I'm doing it for me. They would say that to me at the start and I'd be like whatever, I'm doing it for my son, but now I'm doing it for me. I forget exactly how it went, but we done the pros and cons about using. So the pros about all the good things and all the bad things, and then looked at the long-term and short-term effects of it. So the cons were all long-term and all the pros were all short-term, so what we're chasing is all short-term but it's got long-term effects. It was a good way to switch it. It was really eye-opening.	- limited communication with children and partner prior to program and while incarcerated - identified drug dependency as an ongoing factor in disrupting role of mother (one of the steps to address in self care)	- had identified positive family networks (particularly the incarcerated mother's father) - had gained enrolment into programs/courses to help achieve steps to becoming a role model
Mia (mentor)	- regain support network on release to help maintain healthy relationship with extended family	- supported family visit at graduation (with parents and extended family of the incarcerated parent) - first time she had met her grandchildren (born during her incarceration) - incarcerated mother identified how her actions had adversely impacted her family – had identified ways to change past behaviours	***Mother***: Well as a participant I liked it because it showed me that you don't realise how much you hurt your kids or hurt your family or the ones that love you. You don't realise until you actually do the course and when they ask their questions, like I said you don't know who they're from but when you hear what they say it's sad. Because you don't realise when you're on the drugs and that, but when you're off them and hear them it makes you not want to go back to the drugs and just you know what I mean, go home and be with your family.	- will be moving back to a different town then where the extended family live (stated this would be difficult) - would be living without her partner for the first time (identified this as a new beginning)	- strong connection with extended family (travelled to attend graduation) - had an established support network to take steps to work on herself
Lenah (mentor)	- maintaining connection with family (still had >1year on sentence)	- supported family visit at graduation (with parents and children of the incarcerated parent)	***Mother***: …it was so cool that they were asking us questions and then they were asking the same questions to the families and were getting the feedback. It was just	- the children were still in the process of finding support services (with the help of BtF)	- kinship participant gained custody of children

	- independent living with children	- reinforced family connections; felt that the caseworkers cared about the family (listened) - gained a new perspective of kinship participant's feelings (ie wanting to help)	so amazing to get that feedback because us girls as a whole are thinking they hate us, we're failures, we're this, we're that. Whereas when we were getting the feedback it's not that - it's not what they're feeling. Maybe some parents, but the majority, no. It was - we just don't know how to help them. We need - we want to support them, but they push us away. We'll always love them. It was like, wow. Then after I started understanding this, I felt okay, maybe one of them is my mum and dad and I need help. I don't know how to help - I want to help my family but I don't know how to help them from in here.	- one of the children had a difficult relationship with the grandmother (one of the current primary caregiver) - was worried of drug dependency and how this had impacted the role of being a mother in the past	- kinship participant had the resources to support children (although this was difficult eg refinanced mortgage) - regular visits and contact with children
Djalu	- Re-establish contact with child and partner	- attempted contact with ex-partner and child	***Father***: But if [the ex-partner] doesn't want nothing to do with me because I come to jail and that, I can understand that. But don't try and hold my little girl against me, hey. Because that's the thing that hurts me most. Yeah. Like, well you know, I'm saying, yeah I'm coming home and that and she's like, you probably haven't even changed. I said, I've done courses and that and I am trying to change. But yeah, she just - I don't know, she must think I'm just lying about stuff	- the ex-partner did not want to participate in BtF and was non-responsive to contacts - kinship participant identified a need for the incarcerated father to attend counselling (grief) - kinship participant identified drug and alcohol dependency as an ongoing factor in disrupting his personality	- strong connections to culture based community programs and appropriate support - strong connections to Elders and community members (for support)
Lue	- Re-establish contact with child, partner and parents	[note father was transferred prior to follow-up interview] - supported connections to parents of incarcerated parent (previously limited)	***Kinship participant***: …Mother doesn't talk to me. Eldest son doesn't talk to me. [another son] lives here, the 28 year old, and his girlfriend, which is good, and the two boys. So we're sort of our own little pod, and that's it. We were such a big family. [my husband] has sisters too and	- extended family had severed ties with the incarcerated father and their parents - brother had severed ties with the incarcerated father	- strengthened connection with kinship participant

		- kinship participant felt support by BtF (recognised as lacking elsewhere)	they don't talk to me, they talk to [her husband]. I think there's a lot of blame there. They blame me for being a bad parent for the way [the incarcerated father] turned out. Anyway, yeah, maybe I was, I don't know. As if you'd wish for your kid to end up in jail.	- ex-partner had changed numbers (was not able to contact son) - kinship participant identified drug and alcohol dependency as an ongoing factor in disrupting his personality, including being an active father	
David	- full custody of children	- letter of support for family court - supported family visit at graduation (with parents and children of the incarcerated parent) - had started conversations with the kinship participant based on the BtF content (opened content for reintegration)	***Father***: I've had conversations with mum after certain days. It opened up the communication channels. Before it was more or less, I deal with my stuff in here, she takes care of stuff out there. She makes the decisions for the children, I'm just left in here making the decisions for me at the time. Whereas we're now able to talk about what the kids need and what decisions need to be made and discuss that together. She's trying to keep me more informed as to what's going on out there. I'm trying to allow her to see that this place isn't all horror and violence and that like the movies.	- extended family had severed ties with the incarcerated father and their mother - step father was not supportive - kinship participant gained full custody of children during the BtF sessions. They had indicated they wanted to remain this way. - identified drug dependency as an ongoing factor in disrupting his role as an active father	- regular visits and contact with children, including writing weekly letters
Jarrah	- Have an active role in his children's lives (has seven children with three mothers) - address drug dependency so he can focus on the children	- Amend AVO for family contact - was able to deliver photos of family to father - learnt strategies and ideas for parenting	***Father***: Just be with my kids, man. Yeah. Start being a proper father, you know. Not get on the Ice, not drink around - just try and be there for my kids, you know. Be there for the mother. Be there for, you know. She's out there now, she's got three kids, a little one now. The other ones you	- identified drug dependency as an ongoing factor in disrupting his role as an active father	- strong connections to extended family - is still in contact with the mothers of his children (ie was not removed completely from the children's lives)

		within the group sessions	know - these kids are growing - these kids are getting a bit older now. So like they're getting a bit older, but I haven't really been there for them. You see what I mean, so they don't really know me. I don't really know them because I haven't been there which is - that's a bit disappointing. It's letting my kids down you know. It's letting myself down as well. But I just hope it all changes when I get out. Talking in a group, talking about things and what we want to do - about what to do so our relationships can become better, and what to do for our kids so we can become better fathers.	- had a limited role in the lives of his children prior to incarceration	
Adam	- be a role model for the children - be an active parent	- Amend AVO for family contact - First visit and family photo with newborn child - supported family visit at graduation (with partner and children of the incarcerated parent) - has identified a step by step process for a positive reintegration	***Father***: I want to, like I said, take it step by step before I even look for a job, before I even think of a job, because I've got two kids that I've now got to, you know, think about. Even though I've got the job is on the agenda of the list, is one of the main things to support them, but you know, I want to be a dad before I even get a job. Like it's hard to - yeah, it's hard in a way, but it's something - it's manageable, something I can do. I know, I'm easy to do it - I can do it, willing to do it.	- identified drug dependency as an ongoing factor in disrupting his role as an active father	- identified strong connection to partner and two children. - strong connection to community and extended family - planned to return to family home on reintegration
Warwick	- be a role model for the children - be an active parent	- supported family visit at graduation (with mother, partner and children of the incarcerated parent)	***Father***: Just before I come in I was pretty bad on drugs and I wasn't with my family that much. I got kicked away from up my in-laws for six months. I wasn't [allowed near] the kids so I wasn't going to the kids because of DoCs and yeah, just the ice, it just took me away from everything, my	- identified drug dependency as an ongoing factor in disrupting his role as an active father	- identified strong connection to partner and two children. - planned to return to family home on reintegration

			mum, my brothers. They didn't want me next to them and it took me to come in here to realise what I was really like, because I thought I was still the same person but I wasn't. What I learnt [in BtF]- just what's more important in my life you know what I mean, besides drugs, being with my family.		- strong connection to community and extended family
Bob (repeat participant)	- Full custody of children - taking steps to address personal issues (particularly around drug dependency)	- Advocacy for family court - group work helped to identify steps in being an active father	***Father***: it's got me at a decision where I – it's got me at a place where I know what I need to do, yeah. I know what I need to do to stay the fuck out of jail and just be with my kids. If I'll be with my kids I'll stay out of jail.	- identified drug dependency as an ongoing factor in disrupting his role as an active father - identified the need for rehab but an unwillingness to be involved	- children are in kinship care, this has allowed contact while in prison - can live with children and kinship participant [sister, who was also primary carer] on release

Appendix L: Refined mechanism: The incarcerated parent considers the role and impact they have in their family

Incarcerated Parents	Roles in family (quote of initial interviews)	What the parents got out of BtF (quotes from follow-up interviews)
Mothers		
Kirra	Just having my babies. Being around them, and watching them grow up. Just seeing them changing year by year in the school as they're getting older…it just breaks my heart I can't be there….that's another thing I'm doing my head in over, yeah. I think that every time I tell him something I always do the opposite because of fucking drugs.	I'm scared that I could be back on the drugs. But like I said, I've got mind over matter. Doing this course, it really turned me around. I know I can do more things, better things, for my kids than what fucking drugs can do for me. I can go back to my pop's house and if one of my old friends come, I could just say no, look, just stay clear of my path because I don't want to go down that road again. I'm focussing on my kids now. I know I can do better for me and for them. I could just be a bigger person and say no this time.
Marli	Seeing my kid smile, I love being a mum. Yeah, loved getting up in the middle of the night, feeding him, change nappies, everything, just everything.	
Allyra	Being a mum is pretty awesome but far out, when you're a nan that's a whole new meaning on it… I don't want them to come in here, I want to be the fucking one that does all this. I don't want this for my kids, I want them to be better than what I could be, better than what they think they could be.	Just going to someone with a problem, rather than fucking picking up the ice pipe and having a puff. Talking about it, dealing with it, staying off the drugs, staying healthy, staying focused. Yeah, focused on what's important and that [my kids] their important.
Evonne	Just watching her grow up. Yeah, getting bigger and bigger each year…she's a big girl, really smart, and her father says - he even spins out and he says gee we've got a nice girl, you know, compared to us two, on the drugs and fucked up lives and that.	
Bindi	I was a good parent before. I know how to keep a house running, and kids getting up for school, and providing for them, and just being there every day…So, that to me shows me that I played a big stability in his life. He knew every day no matter what, my mum's coming to pick me up. Like she might say to me, oh I'm going to be here for a few hours. I've got to go to TAFE, and go pay some bills, and then I'll come back and get you, and I always went back and got him.	Just talking with other families because I don't really speak with mine that much, yeah you get to see the effects [of prison]. I'm sure the feedback that all came back from my mum was involved with that as well. So yeah it was good to know. I can relate with people.
Rianna (repeat participant)		Having a home. Having my career to look forward to, and most of all, having my son back. The love of my life. The reason I breathe. Having him back and just having my dad proud of me and me being able to do something to help him. That's what I'm looking forward to.

Mia (mentor)		Well as a participant I liked it because it showed me that you don't realise how much you hurt your kids or hurt your family or the ones that love you. You don't realise until you actually do the course and when they ask their questions, like I said you don't know who they're from but when you hear what they say it's sad. Because you don't realise when you're on the drugs and that, but when you're off them and hear them it makes you not want to go back to the drugs and just you know what I mean, go home and be with your family.
Lenah (mentor)		I know what they're [kinship participants] going through as in looking after the kids and all that, but it's like, understanding what they're feeling emotionally, okay, on the outer they're looking after the kids, but what they're feeling emotionally for me and what they'd want as a - what's their goal in the end. Because I think oh now they've got my kids, they'll never want me to have my kids back and things like that. But it's not true. They want me to work hard and they want me to prove to them that I am stable enough to have my children back. In the long haul that's what they want. It's nice to hear that.
Fathers		
Djalu	[The best thing about being a dad] is just actually being there for her as a father, you know? That's just one of the best things I want to do, is to be there for her. More than anything, you know? She means the world to me, so yeah, that's - yeah. Spend some good quality time with her. Just to get that bond back up, you know? Because I've missed out on a couple of her years growing up. So to be there for her, and to get her trust back. Yeah. Which, you know, so, because I've - a couple of times I've let her down. I wasn't there for her. But to get her trust back is going to be really rewarding for me.	For me it's the drugs and the alcohol. Once I get the support and that I need, I'll be right, yeah. It'll just - I'll do my parole. I've got nine months of it. Then after that I'm just - I'm free but that doesn't give me an excuse to go and muck up again. You know what I mean. So once I'm free, I'm just going to keep my head clean and keep my nose out of trouble and I'll be right…Yeah. Because I know my daughter. She loves me. I love her. I love her dearly, and I just want to get off the drugs and that, and be there for her.
Lue	Knowing he's mine. There are a few good things, but - I haven't been much a part of his life over the last [six months] so I've got a lot to look forward to I suppose…He hasn't seen me for that long, so - at least I used to have phone contact too so he used to hear me and talk to me.	
David	Knowing also that I've possibly done something right in my life. All the things I was good that I may have put my children and myself in a situation where they could have been at risk in the end part there. But up until that point I was always a very good dad. I was a natural dad and it did come easily to me taking	I hope it's helped my family as far as letting them understand and see some of the difficulties that I've faced. It's opened communication. That's a first step to making change in the future as far as I can tell. You've just got to keep it up. There's always going to be difficulties and

	care of my children. There was that natural protective instinct. There was that - I provided for them and they were my whole life.	little challenges and stuff. If we don't talk about it, well we are on our own…
Jarrah	It's good being a dad, but if you're not being a dad - if you're not actually being a father to your kids, you're not really a dad, you see what I mean. So, you can't really feel good about something that doesn't - that's not really there. So you really - you're a non-existing father. You only exist as a father that just is - as a kid would say, well he is my dad, but he's not really my dad, do you see what I'm saying. Because there's - seeing a kid born is probably the greatest thing that you ever would experience in any sort of way, of seeing something happen. But being a father and not actually being there for the kids, it's not good at all.	[I need to] be there for them, yeah. Having nothing to do with the drugs, having nothing to do with criminal life. Not coming back to jail, just being a father and being there for the kids. Being like a role model for example, being something for a kid to look up to and go, well he is my dad, that is the dad that I want in my life.
Adam	Seeing their faces, really. Watching [son] grown up, and watching me grow up, it's like watching me grow up again. I haven't been home with [daughter] yet. Yeah, I just see my little sister in [daughter]…No, not too sure [of challenges]. Yeah there's going to be challenges but I haven't been home. I've always been on the run and stuff. But I want to change that. Want to be home with them and that.	I want to, like I said, take it step by step before I even look for a job, before I even think of a job, because I've got two kids that I've now got to, you know, think about. Even though I've got the job is on the agenda of the list, is one of the main things to support them, but you know, I want to be a dad before I even get a job. Like it's hard to - yeah, it's hard in a way, but it's something - it's manageable, something I can do. I know, I'm easy to do it - I can do it, willing to do it.
Warwick		Just before I come in I was pretty bad on drugs and I wasn't with my family that much. I got kicked away from up my in-laws for six months. I wasn't [allowed near] the kids so I wasn't going to the kids because of DoCs and yeah, just the ice, it just took me away from everything, my mum, my brothers. They didn't want me next to them and it took me to come in here to realise what I was really like, because I thought I was still the same person but I wasn't. What I learnt [in BtF]- just what's more important in my life you know what I mean, besides drugs, being with my family.
Bob (repeat participant)		It's [BtF] got me at a decision where I – it's got me at a place where I know what I need to do, yeah. I know what I need to do to stay the fuck out of jail and just be with my kids. If I'll be with my kids I'll stay out of jail.

Appendix M: Observed outcomes by family dyad: Improve participant's support networks

Reference	Stated long term goals	Observed outcomes: BtF	Quote or field notes	Stated and observed barriers	Stated and observed strength
Kirra	- Job - TAFE courses - disassociate with certain peers - rehabilitation (drugs) - independent housing - counselling (mental health)	- attempted contact with child (in state care) - Reinforce connections with Elders	***Mother***: [The Elders] seen us grow up too. They would have seen a big change. "She was a little cunt when she was on drugs. Coming down and seeing her do this course, it's a big change for her." It is very good change for me. I realised there is a lot I can do and that I will do when I get out, because of [BtF].	-Lives in small town – limited opportunities and close social networks -Restricted visits with child (state care policy) - Incarcerated parent's chronic health issues - Limited contact with children - Has worries about a decline in children's mental health	- Incarcerated parent has frequent contact with her parents and can live with them on release - has clear goal set and identified pathways (eg local TAFE contacts) - identified positive role models (social network)
Marli	- Job -Independent housing - Custody of child - counselling (drug and from death of baby)	- letter of support for court - advocate, liaising with state care case manager - contact on outside for linking to support services (incl., mental health)	***Mother***: "Before I came in here I know that [my child] was fitting and was up at the hospital, but I wasn't able to see him because of DoCS being involved. But as I said me and [my partner] don't talk. I know nothing [about her child]. That's why it's good for [BtF caseworkers] to get involved so it's some sort of authority like a tie to me, that they can step in with DoCS."	- Bail was revoked - DoCS case management - delayed counselling services - Transferred to Silverwater correctional centre (Sydney) leds to less contact from family - No visits from child in prison (due to a DoCS order)	- supportive father (eg. housing when released) - previous positive employment experience
Allyra	- Secure housing - Secure place in supported residential program	- advocacy for accommodation (extend rental subsidy) - secured housing on release	***Mother***: Just made me more helpful about release. Yeah. Gave me more tools to deal with issues. So yeah. Give me a bit of hope where I had none to start with initially. I was like, oh I'm fucking doomed. Here we	- noted influence of people within her community (negative peer influence)	- gained a place in a supported residential program on release - secure housing

			go again, roller coast ride of jail. But every day I get closer to it looking more and more like it's not going to be like that. Yeah, it was really good…Just going to someone with a problem, rather than fucking picking up the ice pipe and having a puff. Talking about it, dealing with it, staying off the drugs, staying healthy, staying focused. Yeah, focused on what's important and that there, that's important. I think I've got to go.	- mentioned that some people treat her negatively (stigma from past behaviour) - tensions with daughter (currently living in her house)	- had gained work qualifications at MNCCC and keen to continue - Support from extended family (same to graduation
Evonne	- visitation with child (in MNCCC) - travel and do seasonal work	No observable outcomes [did not finish BtF, early transfer and no follow-up interview]	***Mother***: "I just want to get another place, a new place, and then settle down again and try to stay away from my old friends and using drugs."	- her partner (who has custody of children) severed ties with her - Only attended three sessions - was transferred to another correctional centre prior to release - staying away from "old friends" - staying off drugs (no plans in place)	- past achievements – secured own housing, had work, made new networks to live in the same town as her daughter - close relationship her mum and extended family (although most live in another town) - car licence
Bindi	- place in residential program	- support for successful placement in a residential support program - support with debts (electricity)	***Mother***: "They got my electricity money back for me which paid for me to do [residential program]…He's like you owed 900 and something dollars on my second day there and I hadn't even got my crisis payment yet. We rang up the bank and in the bank it was the 680 bucks from the electricity place. So, that went straight on to that, paid for my [residential stay]. So, everything that you guys set out to do, it might have taken a little bit of a time…But	- during BtF, she gained access to a residential program, but ran away. - her parents (who have custody of children) severed ties with her	- strong network with Elders (actively sought for support) - actively seeking counselling - actively seeking support for drug rehabilitation

			everything you said you were going to do, you did. "…just for them to acknowledge you out in the community too and say hello, and come have a yarn, introduce you to their sister, or their brother."		
Rianna (repeat participant)	- Secure place in supported residential program - Career aspirations (nursing)	- support for successful placement in a residential support program - advice for nursing career and training	***Mother***: "If it wasn't for them [BtF caseworkers], I wouldn't be here doing this program. I'd be probably still in jail doing my sentence."	- Negative peer influences (led to a breach in parole) - restricted access to programs in regional hometown	- Identified some supportive peers - Contact with family members - clear career aspirations
Mia (mentor)	- own house - establish life/identity without ex-partner - reconnect with AMS - driving licence - new car	No observable outcomes. [Mother had established and positive connections prior to prison that she intended to resume. She also had a longer sentence, ie. Release date was @5-6 months]	***Mother***: "Getting my house, getting my license, getting a car and just getting my life back, yeah." "…I'm going to be by myself… that's sad saying it. I've never been by myself for people to see me by myself… They've always known me as [ex-partner]'s girlfriend or [ex-partner]'s missus or [ex-partner]'s wife… I'm determined that I'll get their sis"	- establishing new networks - had indicated that housing would be a long wait	- established and positive ties with support services in hometown with local Aboriginal Medical Services (eg health service, counselling, social worker)
Lenah (mentor)	- own house - custody of children - ongoing support for children - working in a community service role	- facilitating support for child including education (autism), counselling (for, PTSD, rape) - locating funding sources - phone calls to daughter (talking to community members)	***Mother***: Clive and Thelma - I done the course and I asked them after a couple of sessions - I felt comfortable enough with them. They're really good people… I just told them everything… They went to my house. I was like, oh my god, that is so amazing… [caseworkers] have helped him do all that. They've helped him get through	- locating ongoing funding/ resources for high needs children - drug dependency in the past – learning coping mechanisms - applying parenting skills when released (recalled learning from Mothering at a Distance)	- children in care with grandparents who have resources to care for them (eg, they mortgaged their house to add extensions) - has acquired a number of skills through employment (was a manager)
Djalu	- counselling (grief) - drug rehabilitation	[did not finish program] At the time of the end of the evaluation, the kinship	***Father***: "So if we're starting to go downhill outside, they're going to come - they said that we could ring them any time, and	- disrupted attendance to BtF due to	- family members volunteer at MNCCC & BtF

		participant indicated they were going to work with the caseworkers to find counselling support	they'll help us out. Even if we're going through more courts and that, they would be there for us and that, which is pretty good. Because there was one inmate that was in our class, and he said that when he got out, SHINE for Kids helped him out too, on the outside. When he went to court and that, they went to court with him, which I reckon is pretty good, you know? Especially if you don't have anyone with you, and supporting you. So it's good that they're supportive like that."	extenuating circumstances - limited custody to child prior to incarceration - ex-partner (mother of child) did not participate in BtF - identified significant life events and impacts on mental health but had not of yet sought counselling	- musician - had secured housing with parents (parole approved)
Lue	- independent housing - linking to work (is a qualified carpenter) - applying courses (EQUIPS ie anger management)	At program completion, the caseworkers were liaising with housing	***Kinship participant***: "You guys - Indigenous Help is the only help we've got ever…it's only you guys that bother. Other people say it's just the way it is. No, you guys are the only ones that have ever. Anywhere, it's only been the Indigenous Help ever…and we need that help when he gets out of jail"	- the events leading to incarceration had distributed family relationship (siblings developed severe anxiety; one brother is estranged) - worry of bad influence (from passed peers)	- qualified carpenter - supportive family (financial support, housing, have had constant calls)
David		- letter of support for family court	***Father***: "Men's Shed,of course you've got Community Health Drug and Alcohol, the campus clinic, Dave Fredericks. Burnside UnitingCare as a mediator between FaCS and myself as well. New Horizons, I've heard they're pretty good. Beyondblue, depression, that's something that's been a part of a lot of people's lives, and probably will be part of my life again down the track. Not everything is going to go my way. Employment agencies, I guess possibly. I don't like the idea of working…between everybody that I already know who already	- During data analysis, he was released but returned to prison - incarceration had impacted extended family ties - kinship participant wanted help with connecting to culture	- Regular contact with his mother and children - prepared a speech in the final session - had an independent living arranged at the time of the evaluation - on release there would be no parole - writes to children weekly - the kinship participant was familiar with services available

			support me, I can get referrals and branch out and have more people to support me."		
Jarrah	- drug rehabilitation - counselling (grief)	- Amend DVO for family contact - [new charges set release date for 3 years]	***Father***: "I just don't want to - I just don't want to get back on the drugs man. That's the main thing that's scaring me, man. Coming to jail doesn't scare me. Sometimes I want to come to jail to get off the stuff. But the scary thing is leaving this place, and it's fun to say, well an inmate is not scared to go to jail, but he's scared to leave. It should be back to front." ***Father***: "Just get rid of all the idiots out of my life. Just - sorry to swear - but to piss - yeah, just get rid of them - piss off out of my life….Well back to [hometown], but I want to move away from [hometown], and then it comes down to - well it doesn't really matter where you move to, because there's going to be the same sort of people wherever move"	- Peer influences - Situational influences - Had history of being targeted by police - drug dependency - sentence was extended	- partner has house (post-release) - artist - An Aunty volunteers with the program
Adam	Aimed to take things step by step. Wanted to be a role model first and then seek employment, address any issues, and may move town.	- Amend DVO for family contact - [had a Juvenile Justice case management worker who was continuing to deliver support, including securing a house for the family]	***Father***: "[Home town], it's a good community, it's just the people that are in it and the negative that people bring to it, that they have to take like [hometown] name for crime hotspots and that, on the news and stuff like that. It's not really known for crime hotspots, you know, it's just that - government does give enough benefits and stuff." ***Father***: "…there'll be support there, because I'm just saying, my old [Juvenile Justice caseworker] just come up and see me, he was talking about this program	- returning to small town leads - smaller opportunities for work and services - Had history of being targeted by police (small town)	- numerous qualifications for work (hospitality) - regular contact with partner and children - housing available post-release (with family) - support from extended family - ongoing case management with Juvenile justice (positive relationship developed) - athlete

			[BtF]. His name's [insert name], is a good program [the case management], like he explained BtF to me and that, he's helping [partner] get a house and whatnot and it's a good program."		
Warwick	-drug rehabilitation - applying lessons from an aggression program	- [extended sentence, longer release date] - letter of support for court session	***Father***: Yeah, just the drugs, it's hard to stay away from the drugs. That took me to come here to realise what I am really missing out on you know? It's not the drugs you know what I mean, because there's shit in here you know what I mean? But yeah, it's my family, missing out on family heaps, especially the kids.	- peer influences - Past DoCS intervention - tensions with in-laws - wanting to move towns (away from supportive family)	- support from extended family - housing available post-release (with family) - athlete - the father's mother is familiar with support services (past DoCS worker) - cultural knowledge
Bob (repeat participant)	- Independent housing - full custody of children - drug rehabilitation	- Advocacy for family court - set up opportunity for rehabilitation	***Father***: "When I went to the court Clive was the only one that came down. He came down for court and that to help us - back us up and that…Clive and that went in to bat for us and they got us access to the kids as long as we're not on drugs, we got mad access to the kids… and Clive hooked us up with mad rehabs"	- does not identify drugs as an issue (this led to a revoked custody order)	- supportive family (eg. housing when released) - keen to use BtF as an ongoing support service - artist