Disenfranchised grief in the disenfranchised:

A socioecological intersectional model of the loss, trauma and bereavement experiences of young men in prison.

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of PhD by Publication

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Declaration of Authenticity

This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

In relation to previously published material, the author is the sole author of these works, unless otherwise specified in Chapter 3. The extent of the author's contribution to these works is as specified in Chapter 3.

Signed: 

Date: 15th November 2022

Acknowledgements

This has to start with my Dad, Ian, who died too young and missed out on so much and who I miss every day. I often wonder whether, without him, my bereavement research and consequently this thesis, would ever have existed. Around the time that my Dad was dying I was tasked with reviewing the case files of hundreds of children and young people in conflict with the law. I am sure it is no coincidence that their many bereavements seemed so salient at the same time as I was going through one of the most significant bereavements in my own life. I've always been honest enough with myself to realise that I bring my own subjectivities and experiences to my research, but I will never know whether I would have placed such an emphasis on bereavement if I had been undertaking this task at a different time. But I am glad I did, as my subsequent research confirmed that loss and bereavement was a defining feature in the lives of these marginalised and vulnerable young people and the rest, as they say, is history.

I must also mention my other Dad, Sunil, whom I never really had the chance to get to know, but whose loss has still been felt so keenly and has had such an impact on my own identity and how I think and feel about loss. But it's not just those who are no longer here that have spurred me on with this thesis. I must thank my Mum, Sharon, for always being there throughout everything, and for never failing to tell me (and anyone she ever meets) how proud she is of me. To my husband, Bruce, for putting up with me working evenings and weekends and for keeping me on track by reminding me that the best PhD is a completed PhD. And thank you so much to Rohan, whose very existence makes me want to change the way the world is and who must have been so tired of the refrain 'Mummy's got to work'. There's lots more time to play now!

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Abstract

This is a submission for the degree of PhD by Publication. The thesis draws upon five previously published papers (three journal articles and two book chapters) about the loss, bereavement and trauma experiences of young men in prison. The thesis identifies and summarises the themes that connect and cohere the papers: the multiple and persistent experiences of loss and disenfranchisement, driven by gender norms, shame, stigma and marginalised identities. While the thesis confirms both the presence and relevance of disenfranchised grief for young men in prison, it also recognises that the concept may not sufficiently capture the intensity of the young men's multi-layered experiences, which carry added meaning for young men who are undertaking the key developmental transition to adulthood in the restricted environment of a prison. Disenfranchised grief has historically been studied from a single-issue perspective, rather than exploring the complex interactions and impacts of multiple disenfranchising scenarios. Thus it became apparent that a more contextual and dynamic understanding of disenfranchised grief was needed to better account for the lived experience of these young men in prison.

Drawing from both Intersectional Theory and the Socioecological Model this thesis presents a unique socioecological intersectional model of disenfranchised grief in prison in order to depict the multiple and systemic drivers of disenfranchised grief, and to incorporate *who* is being disenfranchised, *where* this is happening, *how*, *why* and by *whom*. The drivers of disenfranchised grief were located across multiple systems, such as the self, family, institutions and public policy, and included the loss, harm and marginalisation cased directly by the justice system itself. In this way the thesis confirms and extends the concept of disenfranchised grief, as well as provides insights into the challenges and locations for responding to disenfranchised grief for young men in prison.

Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction

Loss and grief touch us all, these experiences form part of the rich fabric of life. As we develop and grow, we encounter change. With change we face losses, some big, some small, some that leave a lasting legacy and others that are forgotten with the passage of time. While loss and grief are not unique to specific sections of society, the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted that inequalities in life are also reflected in death (Marmot, Allen, Goldblatt, Herd, & Morrison, 2020) and we know that disadvantaged children shoulder a disproportionate share of the bereavement burden (Paul & Vaswani, 2020). My work as Research Fellow at the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice has frequently focused on the marginalisation and disadvantage of children and young people in conflict with the law, in particular those who find themselves deprived of their liberty. To me, this disadvantage is observed so keenly in their significant experiences of loss, bereavement and trauma, among the many other adversities they have faced.

The experiences of the young male participants in my prison research have never failed to move me; the incredible losses that they have borne, often unnoticed or unsupported, and for which they have often been excluded or punished. I have learned over time that this goes beyond simple unawareness or indifference, but instead results from a "…more or less active process of disavowal, renunciation and rejection" (Corr, 2002, p. 40) which has been termed 'disenfranchised grief' (Doka, 1989). Disenfranchised grief is defined as "…the grief experienced by those who incur a loss that is not, or cannot be, openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported" (Doka, 1999, p. 37) and the phenomenon echoes clearly throughout my research. As one of my research participants told me, taking part had provided him with a rare opportunity to reminisce about his loved ones and to talk about a subject that is frequently shrouded in shame, stigma and societal reticence. By bearing witness to the young men's pain and acknowledging their losses, I hope my research has taken one small step towards enfranchising their grief. But once told, the stories of my participants cannot, and must not, be forgotten. There is a need to shift societal awareness regarding the bereavement experiences of vulnerable groups (Bindley, Lewis, Travaglia, & DiGiacomo, 2019) and I have long been left with a sense that is my duty to ensure that this work continues to have an impact on policy, practice and knowledge. This sense of responsibility, along with a desire for continued personal and professional development, has led me to this thesis.

I set the scene for this thesis by first reflecting upon the purpose and process of a PhD by Publication (Chapter 2), and by providing a summary of each of the works included in the portfolio (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4, I reflect briefly upon the contribution to knowledge, policy and practice that the papers have made in order to document their significance as papers in their own right. Chapter 5 then returns to the body of work as a whole to identify the key thematic linkages across the papers: disenfranchised grief, prison masculinities and stigma.

In this chapter I also situate these themes within a brief summary of the relevant literature to provide a theoretical and conceptual background. This chapter confirms the salience of disenfranchised grief for young men in prison but questions whether the concept sufficiently captures the intensity of their experiences. Disenfranchised grief has historically been studied from a single-issue perspective, rather than exploring the complex interaction and impact of multiple disenfranchising scenarios. Chapter 6 then assimilates and develops these themes by bringing together intersectionality and socioecology to provide a Socioecological Intersectional model of disenfranchised grief that is rooted in the lived experience of some of the most marginalised young people in society. By drawing these models together, my analysis provides a more contextual understanding of how the multi-layered, situational and systemic drivers of disenfranchised grief can operate. This chapter brings a new conceptual clarity to disenfranchised grief, confirming its continuing relevance in a post-pandemic world but identifying the bi-directional processes that interact to disenfranchise and shape identity. The model therefore extends our understanding of disenfranchised grief beyond a narrower conceptualisation often based on a single disenfranchising scenario or identity, to one that better captures the intensity and interactions within the young men's experiences.

Chapter 2. The PhD by publication - a journey towards doctoralness

There is general agreement that the crucial, defining quality of the doctorate is that it must display originality and it must constitute a contribution to knowledge (Park, 2005), regardless of which of the many diverse routes to a doctorate is taken (Merga, Mason, & Morris, 2020; Niven & Grant, 2012; Peacock, 2017). My work has uncovered new knowledge, shining a spotlight on the loss, bereavement and trauma experiences of young men in custody that had previously been underexplored. Yet, my role as a researcher at the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice positions me (at times uncomfortably) between policy, practice, academia and lived experience and so the focus of much of this research has been to produce outputs that emphasise accessibility and distillation of knowledge into practical applications. I found myself questioning whether my work had sufficiently contributed to knowledge and theory in the way that is expected of a PhD, or whether the path was the right one for my research.

The PhD by Publication consists of a portfolio of four to six published works, plus a contextualising thesis or 'Critical Appraisal'. While the PhD by Publication is becoming a more common route to a doctorate, it has yet to be fully established or accepted as meeting the traditional PhD 'gold standard' (Lee, 2010; Park, 2005). Despite offering a pragmatic approach (Niven & Grant, 2012), a central concern is whether a doctorate based on a series of short pieces of writing could generate sufficient depth or engagement with the topic (Lee, 2010). There is also the potential for theoretical, conceptual or methodological incoherence (Merga, Mason, & Morris, 2020; Niven & Grant, 2012).

Yet I used the word 'journey' towards a PhD by publication deliberately and with purpose. The process of PhD by Publication afforded me the opportunity to do more with my publications, to revisit, review and rethink with the benefit of hindsight, experience and a deeper understanding of the literature. This level of sustained engagement with a topic, over a period of many years, certainly provides ample opportunity for depth of scholarship. The papers in this portfolio build on each other, expanding from a narrow definition of loss arising from death, through to a broader conceptualisation of loss and the relevance of trauma. And while each of the papers engage with the topic of disenfranchised grief, either directly or indirectly, it was only when I reviewed the works as a whole that the extent of the shame, stigma and marginalisation of loss, bereavement and trauma within this population became apparent.

My other initial apprehension was that, if the thesis simply offered a space to document the knowledge that already existed within my publications, there might be limited scope for personal and academic development. This concern was unfounded. Instead, I have learned that the PhD by publication "…privileges accounts of the process of knowledge building and of descriptions of the gradual emergence of 'doctoralness' in the person of the researcher" (Niven

& Grant, 2012, p. 105). Niven & Grant (2012) suggest that the term 'PhD *with* publications' is therefore more appropriate than *by* publication. The thesis then not only integrates, but identifies and constructs a 'meta-narrative' that connects, coheres and transcends the original publications (Nikander & Piattoeva, 2017; Niven & Grant, 2012).

It is this meta-narrative that forms the crux of this thesis. While each paper, singularly, made an important contribution to knowledge, the process of undertaking the PhD by Publication provided the physical and conceptual space in which this meta-narrative could be teased out. Chapter 5 connects and coheres the papers by highlighting the many losses and experiences of disenfranchised grief in the lives of young men in prison, driven by shame, stigma and prison masculinities. This *connecting* process is taken a stage further in Chapter 6, where the thesis *transcends* the original publications by drawing from Intersectional Theory (Crenshaw, 1989) and the Socioecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to depict the multiple and systemic drivers of disenfranchised grief. The socioecological intersectional model presented in this thesis both confirms and extends the concept of disenfranchised grief, and makes a significant contribution to our understanding of disenfranchised grief, over and above simply providing a thematic linkage between the original papers.

Chapter 3: The portfolio of papers

This chapter provides a short overview of the five papers that are included in the portfolio, with a focus on the primary contributions that the papers have made. The papers, although related, were not written to be a series of linked papers, nor with the PhD by Publication in mind. Each of the three journal articles arose from separate empirical research studies, and the two book chapters provided the opportunity to assimilate my knowledge, thinking and evidence at the time of writing, within the context of wider theory and literature. Thus the works have been selected not only because of their contribution, but also because of their part in a journey of research, reflection and assimilation.

The Ripples of Death (Paper 1)

Vaswani, N. (2014). The Ripples of Death: Exploring the bereavement experiences and mental health of young men in custody. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice,* 53(4), 341-359. Contribution 100%.

This paper explores the prevalence and experience of bereavement among young men (aged 16-21) who were resident in a Young Offenders Institution (YOI) in Scotland, and has been included in the portfolio as it provides the foundation upon which the other papers have been built. This paper has been the most influential in terms of policy, practice and academic advancement, and has received greater emphasis in this portfolio as a result. I was the sole contributor to this paper, undertaking the design, fieldwork, analysis and writing.

The research was a mixed-methods design, involving a survey of 33 young men and semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 11 bereaved young men (self-selecting from the initial survey participants). The analytical approach, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), was suited to a project of this scale and focus as it is best achieved through small, homogenous and purposive samples, in order to explore the phenomenon in depth (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2012). IPA also aims to explore in detail how participants make sense of their personal and social world (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). The approach is *phenomenological* in that it explores personal perceptions without trying to establish objective fact and it is *interpretative* in that the researcher is trying to understand the participant's internal world. Smith and Osborn (2012) note that this interpretative process gives an active role to the researcher in that "…access depends on, and is complicated by, the researcher's own conceptions; indeed these are required in order to make sense of that other personal world through a process of interpretative activity" (p53). In this respect, IPA is appropriate for bereavement research, which is especially susceptible to the subjectivities of the researcher, given the near universal yet intensely personal nature of loss and bereavement (Rowling, 1999; Woodthorpe, 2009). I presented the findings thematically to ensure anonymity to young and often vulnerable participants, as well as being

mindful of, and sensitive towards, those who had been harmed by the young men. Thus, despite IPA encouraging participants to provide a full and in-depth account of their experiences, their individual differences, stories and contexts may be more obscured than if, for example, a case study approach had been used.

This study was a critical learning experience for me in conducting bereavement research, in that it was a reminder of societal anxiety in talking about death but also, importantly, that the young men were willing and able to talk about their bereavements. As evidenced in the paper, the discomfort of participation was worth the benefit of telling their story: *"It's actually been really good, see even just this, just answering a few questions, speaking about it, bringing back up some of the memories and stuff you know…"* This gave me the confidence, indeed even the impetus, to proceed with research on such a sensitive topic in a challenging environment.

The key finding from this paper was the prevalence of bereavement (91%) and the extent of traumatic, multiple and parental deaths among the young men, marking bereavement as a significant feature in their childhoods. Revisiting the paper through the lens of disenfranchised grief, the theme is implicit throughout, although it is telling that the phrase does not appear at all, reflecting the parameters of my engagement with the concept at that time. Doka (1999, 2002b) outlines a number of different circumstances where grief may be disenfranchised: where the loss is not recognised; the relationship is not recognised; the griever is not recognised; the circumstances of the death are not recognised and the way of grieving is not recognised. That this research was approached without any predetermined theoretical frame to guide the conversations, yet each of Doka's circumstances were powerfully evident in the young men's testimonies, adds weight to both the relevance and validity of disenfranchised grief in these young men's lives.

A Catalogue of Losses (Paper 2)

Vaswani, N. (2015). A Catalogue of losses: Implications for the care and reintegration of young men in custody. *The Prison Service Journal*, 220, 26-36. Contribution 100%.

This paper has been included in the portfolio as it extended the conceptualisation of loss to non-death losses and explicitly introduced the concept of disenfranchised grief. This appears to be the first time that this concept had been applied to young people in custody, as disenfranchised grief is more commonly discussed in relation to the family members of those in prison (see, for example, Arditti, 2005), possibly reflecting a wider societal view that those inside prison are less deserving of grief.

The research involved secondary analysis of 23 semi-structured interviews with young men aged 16-20 in custody. Much of the fieldwork was undertaken by colleagues, but I was the sole contributor to this specific paper. The interviews had been conducted for the purpose of

documenting the young men's journeys to prison, rather than exploring their experiences of loss. Thus, although the interviews did not directly address loss, I identified that loss was prominent in their accounts, and used a deductive thematic approach to reanalyse the data as well as prepared, submitted and revised the manuscript.

The approach poses both benefits and challenges for our understanding of loss within prison. Undertaking loss research as part of a more general approach means that the data is gathered without any preconceived theoretical framework (Ribbens McCarthy, 2005) and secondary analysis can apply a new perspective to the original research as well as prove useful when the subject is sensitive (Long-Sutehall, Sque, & Addington-Hall, 2011). That these narratives of loss were unprompted signals its importance for young men in prison, and may have provided a more inclusive research setting for participants for whom the expectation of talking about loss may have been off-putting. However, at the same time, bereavement and loss can be viewed as 'taboo' subjects, and by not asking participants directly they may have felt that they did not have 'permission' to speak about such topics, thereby disenfranchising their grief. It is notable that loss through death was seldom mentioned, and their accounts of loss sometimes lacked a depth that may have surfaced through more direct engagement with the topic.

Despite this, the full range of Doka's (1999) disenfranchising scenarios are also evident in this paper. In particular, circumstances where the loss is not recognised (which were less prominent in Paper 1) came to the fore, evidenced by the wide range of non-death losses in their experiences. The primary output from this paper was a typology of losses experienced by the young men that were also in some way related to their 'prisoner' identity. This typology involved four overarching classifications of loss: loss of future; loss of relationships; loss of status and loss of stability. The intention of providing such a framework was to increase the understanding and application of loss as a factor that shapes the prison experience.

<u>Beyond Loss of Liberty (Paper 3)</u>

Vaswani, N. (2018). Beyond loss of liberty: How loss, bereavement and grief can affect young men's prison journeys. In: S. Read, S. Santatzoglou, and A. Wrigley. (Eds.) *Loss, dying and bereavement in the criminal justice system* (pp.177-187). Abingdon: Routledge. Contribution 100%

This chapter brings together the findings from papers 1 and 2, and provides a short review of the literature. It has been included in the portfolio because it positions the earlier works more firmly within the wider literature relating to desistance and rehabilitation; masculinities; help-seeking; and trauma. In doing so, and in viewing the experiences of young men in prison through the lens of loss, the chapter offers new perspectives on how justice institutions contribute towards the multi-layering of loss and disenfranchisement. Importantly, it begins to

think through the mechanisms by which loss can interface with the justice system and shape justice and other related outcomes, including: loss of attachments, loss of agency and loss of hope. The chapter summarises how the complexity and accumulation of losses among young men can be associated with behaviours that cause them to come into conflict with the law. It brings to the fore the institutional context of dealing with loss and grief, including how the justice system not only exacerbates loss, but also creates loss in both unintended and deliberate ways, and disenfranchises grief through providing an inhospitable environment for adjusting to loss.

It's Knowing the Right Things to Say and Do (Paper 4)

Vaswani, N. and Paul, S. (2019). It's knowing the right things to say and do. Challenges and opportunities for trauma-informed practice in the prison context. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice, 58*(4), 513-534. Contribution 75%, including: undertaking much of the preceding background research, as well as conceptualising the paper and leading on the analysis and writing.

This paper was produced as part of a larger study evaluating the impact of trauma, loss and bereavement training; the implementation of a specialist service in a YOI, and steps towards trauma-informed practice within the establishment. Initial analysis for the funder's report revealed that, although welcome, the changes in the YOI raised a number of challenges (both personal and professional) for staff.

To explore this in more depth I purposefully re-interrogated the study data for themes relating to trauma-informed practice. Data included pre-and-post training questionnaires completed by 208 staff; transcripts from three focus groups involving a total of twelve staff, and ten semi-structured interviews that had been held with managers and service providers. Thus there was a hybrid approach to the analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) with an inductive first stage (the funder's report), and a deductive secondary analysis, using a template based upon themes from both the literature and the original analysis. This once again poses both benefits and challenges to this paper, as the themes that were identified in the initial evaluation benefited from specific attention in the later analysis, but the original approach to data collection was not designed to support a more in-depth exploration of the realities of trauma-informed practice.

This paper broadened the scope of the works further to reveal the impact of trauma, loss and bereavement within the prison setting, not only for those people deprived of their liberty, but also for the staff who work there. The paper reported that while there were opportunities for the implementation of trauma-informed practice within the prison, there was a significant gap

between espoused policy intentions and the realities of custom and practice. Othering, detachment and withdrawal among the staff group, as well as organisational culture and attitudes towards prison and punishment were incompatible with trauma-informed care. This, alongside insufficient support for staff working with loss, bereavement and trauma on a daily basis cemented my understanding of prison as a traumagenic environment, one which creates more harms than it resolves. In presenting this evidence, the paper highlighted the potential mechanisms by which actors within the justice system might disenfranchise the grief of the young men in their care, as well as how staff also experience disenfranchisement at the hands of the 'system'.

Trauma, Masculinity and Trauma-Informed Practice (Paper 5)

Vaswani, N., Cesaroni, C., and Maycock, M. (2021). Incarcerated young men & boys: Trauma, masculinity & the need for trauma-informed gender-sensitive correctional care. In: A. Cox & L. Abrams (Eds.) *International Handbook of Youth Imprisonment*. Cham: Palgrave. Contribution 70%, including: bringing a focus on the interactions between trauma, masculinities and prison; writing the first draft; and leading on subsequent revisions.

"Disenfranchised grief is endemic in traumatic loss" (Doka, 2017, p. 377), and this chapter has been included because it brings together the literature on three key themes of trauma, bereavement and loss; masculinities; and prisons into one place. By positioning the literature in this manner, it highlights the interaction between them in a way that has received limited attention in the past. The chapter draws attention to the bi-directional and compounding influences of trauma, masculinities and prison on engagement with therapeutic interventions and ultimately recovery, growth and reintegration. A model is provided to clarify the complexity and relationships between these influences. In this sense, the chapter gathers together the themes arising from the previous works, but also helps contextualise and deepen understanding of the drivers of disenfranchised grief and trauma. The chapter therefore began to pave the way for this thesis by considering the interaction and processes between systems.

Chapter 4: The significance of the works to date

The papers identified loss, bereavement and trauma as prominent issues for young men in prison, and in particular the presence of disenfranchised grief among this population. Masculinities and the role of justice institutions were identified as key drivers of disenfranchisement. To date, this in itself has made a contribution to knowledge and a significant impact on policy and practice. Together, the papers have been formally cited 110 times, despite Paper 5 being embargoed until June 2022. This includes self-citations as each paper has been used to underpin subsequent works. Excluding self-citations, the works have been cited 89 times in international journals, book chapters and theses. The individual papers have informed works in fields as diverse as: prison studies (including prison chaplaincy and prisoner education); nursing (prison palliative care); sociology (the sociology of loss); youth and criminal justice (resettlement; youth offending); and residential childcare. Geographical reach includes the UK, Europe and the USA.

In addition to these academic citations, the papers have been cited numerous (less quantifiable) times in the grey literature. Examples include: a literature review about loss and bereavement in individuals experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage (De, 2018); an article about bereavement for the Probation Institute (Rutter, 2021); and 'A Road Less Lonely' which sets out a public health approach to death, dying and bereavement in Scotland (Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care, 2018). In addition, the papers have been cited in student assignments, informing both current learning and, potentially, future practice, and downloaded 1,448 times from 'Strathprints', the University of Strathclyde's open access repository.

The papers have also had a direct impact on policy and practice across Scotland and the UK. This is most directly evident at HMP & YOI Polmont where the research has been cited in the Strategic Vision for Young People (Scottish Prison Service, 2014, 2021); underpinned awareness training for the entire staff group; and prompted the implementation of a specialist trauma, bereavement and loss service in 2015, which had received 709 referrals by the end of 2021. The then Governor of HMP & YOI Polmont credits Paper 1 as a pivotal moment in reshaping the prison's whole approach: "*Nina's work revealed the depth of trauma associated with bereavement experienced by young people in custody in a way which had not previously been apparent and was the foundation for my thinking both in creating the subsequent 'learning establishment' agenda and in the design of training to move towards a more trauma informed approach*" (Brookes, personal communication, 2019).

Other examples of policy and practice impacts include: informing the development of a guide for Criminal Justice professionals in England and Wales (Read, Santatzoglou, & Wrigley, 2019); dissemination through inputs for students, practitioners and policymakers across the

UK, including hosting a conference for 100 practitioners; and citation in the Scottish Government's trauma-informed practice toolkit (Homes & Grandison, 2021). In addition, although not directly citing the paper, both the Scottish Government's Preventing Offending Strategy (2015) and Mental Health Strategy (2017) refer to bereavement among young offenders as key priorities. Neither of the preceding strategies, published in 2008 and 2012 respectively, mention this, suggesting greater awareness of the issue in wider policymaking.

There has also been increased discourse in more public arenas about loss and bereavement among young people, including: a National Theatre of Scotland funded project using evidence from the research as a springboard for a mainstream theatre production (the production was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions); press coverage (Reynolds, 2014); and guidance notes for the Bereavement Charter for Scotland. The impact of the combined works was acknowledged in the HaSS Impact Prize for 'Outstanding Impact on Policy' awarded in 2019.

I can therefore already demonstrate considerable impact from the papers included in this portfolio. However, as outlined in Chapter 2, the process of PhD by Publication offered me the opportunity to revisit these publications and to consider their theoretical and practical implications in more depth. And while each of the papers in the portfolio directly or indirectly engaged with the topic of disenfranchised grief, it was only when the papers were brought together and reviewed as a whole that the true extent of this disenfranchisement emerged. It became apparent that simply acknowledging disenfranchised grief as an issue for young men in custody was not sufficient to capture the experiences that they were articulating. While Doka (2002b) acknowledges that the concept of disenfranchised grief provides a much needed sociological perspective on grief, the evidence from my papers suggested that the drivers of disenfranchised grief were located across multiple systems on multiple occasions, and that a deeper understanding of the *who*, *where*, *when, why* and *how* of disenfranchised grief was required.

Bordere (2016) observes that where grief is disenfranchised, it naturally follows that it is under-researched and Doka himself notes (2008, p. 236) that "… there is a pressing need for research that really describes the particular and unique responses to different types of losses; compares reactions, outcomes and problems associated with these losses…". Responding to these gaps, I draw from both socioecological and intersectional theory to present a socioecological intersectional model of disenfranchised grief which offers a broader conceptual framework from which to better locate, understand, and respond to the drivers of disenfranchised grief. In order to do so, I will first identify and outline the themes that connect each of the papers.

Chapter 5. Positioning the connecting themes within the literature

As part of my process for this thesis I immersed myself in my papers and, to help focus my thinking, wrote a summary of each paper that encapsulated the methodological approach, the key findings and my early reflections. The connecting themes explored in this chapter (disenfranchised grief; prison masculinities; shame and stigma) were identified from these re-readings, but also from the development of my own knowledge in the intervening time between publication and thesis, and from critical reflections and discussions with my supervisors.

Following this, I undertook a review of the literature on these themes to further develop my understanding of these concepts and to refine my ideas. While my prior engagement with the literature, and the scope of this thesis, meant that this review was not fully systematic, it was comprehensive and included a targeted search of key databases, including: APA Psycinfo, ASSIA, and Proquest as well as a manual search of reference lists and citations of key texts. I then returned once more to my papers and reviewed them more systematically, using NVivo 2020 software to apply a deductive coding framework based on the pre-determined themes to formally classify these themes both within and across my outputs.

What follows in this section is, by necessity, a short summary of the literature relating to these themes. Bounded by the available word count I focus briefly on the key theories, texts or scholars within each theme and position my papers within this theoretical context by providing evidence to highlight where my research aligns or contradicts with the established literature.

Disenfranchised grief

Disenfranchised grief first emerged from Doka's (1989) observation of the grief of individuals whose ex-spouse had died, which was unexpected both in its intensity and in its marginalisation by others. As Doka noted, every society has rules and norms that frame grieving, including specifying who, when, where, how, how long, and for whom people should grieve (Doka, 1989, 1999, 2008, 2002b). These rules are often evident in workplace or public policies, such as the deaths that are eligible for bereavement leave (Harris, 2010), or who is entitled to bereavement support benefits (Simpson, 2019). The rules are also strongly related to rituals that structure and support expressions of grief (Doka, 1999, 2002b). In this way, the social and cultural grieving rules are not just a factor in grief, but an integral part of the process (Brabant, 2002). This attention to the social and relational aspect of grief has historically been overlooked in favour of psychological perspectives (Brabant, 2002; Doka, 2008; Thompson, 2020) and is one of the reasons why the theory of disenfranchised grief has been so readily, and often uncritically, accepted (Brabant, 2002; Robson & Walter, 2013).

Loss and grief that falls outwith these socially acceptable margins is liable to be disenfranchised. Doka (1999, 2008, 2002b) identified a set of disenfranchising scenarios

which included bereavements where: the *relationship* is not recognised (e.g. same-sex partners; a pet); the *loss* is not acknowledged (e.g. psychosocial losses arising from brain injury or addiction); the *griever* is disregarded (e.g. the very young or those with learning disabilities); and the *circumstances* of the death are stigmatised (e.g. murder, suicide, overdose). Finally, the *way in which people grieve* can be disenfranchising if it contravenes social norms and expectations (e.g. undemonstrative grievers, or prolonged negative emotionality). Disenfranchising the emotions of grief (e.g. anger, guilt, powerlessness) often intensifies them (Corr, 2002; Doka, 2002b) and disenfranchised grief can cause distress by restricting individual expressions of grief as well as options for formal or informal support (Bindley et al., 2019; Doka, 1999, 2008, 2002b). Doka (2002b, p. 17) expresses this as a paradox in that "…the very nature of disenfranchised grief creates additional problems for grievers while removing or minimizing their sources of support." Disenfranchised grief is now considered relevant to a range of losses as diverse as: miscarriage (Lang et al., 2011); adolescent relationship breakdown (Kaczmarek & Backlund, 1991); pet death (Cordaro, 2012); and transplant failure (Gill & Lowes, 2014).

Yet the theory of disenfranchised grief was formulated during, and undoubtedly shaped by, the AIDS crisis of the 1980s where deaths were shrouded in secrecy, stigma and homophobia, removing the right to mourn from many gay men (Shernoff, 1997). Societal norms have shifted dramatically over the ensuing four decades, particularly with respect to increased acceptability of diverse intimate relationships (Huchet-Bodet, Albakri, & Smith, 2019). At the same time, bereavement theories have continued to evolve, with a move from simplistic or linear models of 'grief work' (Hall, 2014; Parkes, 1998; Rothaupt & Becker, 2007), to perspectives that recognise the individual and pluralistic nature of grief. These perspectives caution against pathologising grief by calling into the question the existence of 'abnormal' or 'complicated' grief' (Bonanno, 2001; Rothaupt & Becker, 2007). This caused me to question whether the concept of disenfranchised grief retained currency when there was increased awareness, tolerance and understanding of grief in all its forms. Furthermore, the devastating bereavement burden caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the effect of public health restrictions on traditional bereavement rituals and social support have led to increased awareness in society, directly or indirectly, about disenfranchised grief. There has subsequently been a proliferation of papers in this context (see, for example: Albuquerque, Teixeira, & Rocha, 2021; Bronstein, Schaeppia, Timm, & Tinkham, 2021; Kokou-Kpolou, Fernández-Alcántara, & Cénat, 2020; Rabow, Huang, White-Hammond, & Tucker, 2021; Wallace, Wladkowski, Gibson, & White, 2020). This also caused me to contemplate whether disenfranchised grief, previously a marginalised experience, had in fact become 'mainstream'.

Although my research took place before the COVID-19 pandemic, I ultimately concluded that disenfranchised grief remains very real and very relevant for young men in prison. While

disenfranchised grief may be an experience that is increasingly recognised and shared by others, the evidence presented in this thesis highlights that when disenfranchised grief occurs in a population that is already so significantly disadvantaged and marginalised, the experience is intensified. All of Doka's disenfranchising scenarios are discernible in my research, and these scenarios did not occur just once but on multiple occasions, both cumulatively and, at times, concurrently. Firstly, the *relationship is not recognised*. Notably, the young men described extended family networks, with aunts, uncles, cousins and other family members playing important roles in their upbringings which did not align with those relationships officially 'approved' by the system. Important relationships were not recognised (e.g. the death of an aunt who had been a source of support), or institutional rules placed a value on relationships that was not felt in real life, such as the death of a biological father from whom a young man had been estranged for some time. This inhibited their participation in bereavement rituals, an important public acknowledgement of grief.

> It's hard to grieve for somebody that you don't really know. . .there's not a great pain, there's no a great sense of loss which is . . . it feels strange to say that you know, it's just he wasnae as much of a significant figure in my life to really affect me that badly. (Participant, Paper 1)

> Young men understood why the rules were in place, but expressed the view that funeral attendance should be made available for more than just the immediate family. (Author, Paper 1)

Circumstances where the *loss is not recognised* were evident from the wide range of non-death losses documented in Paper 2. Loss of freedom may have been the most obvious, but equally important were loss of relationships, loss of status, loss of stability and loss of a future. While death is frequently seen as the definitive loss by virtue of its permanence, it is also almost universally experienced, accompanied by rituals and social support and, as a result of its predominance, may encounter less stigma than other forms of loss. The ambiguity in many non-death losses, for example where a parent is *physically* present but *psychologically* absent means that these types of losses are susceptible to being disregarded (Boss, 2010).

> Obviously my father's been in prison for nearly five years and I've got nobody to follow by, no role model so I had nobody…I've got a Mum but I don't class her as a mum because I don't feel like I've had a mum. (Participant, Paper 2)

Other losses, especially those associated with illegality and imprisonment, may be unintentionally overlooked or purposefully disregarded as an expression of disapproval. Loss of freedom, for example, may be viewed as the 'just deserts' of the criminal justice system, a necessary component of doing time for one's crime. There are added complications when the person grieving is also responsible in some way for the death of their loved one (Corcoran, 2018). Neimeyer and Jordan (2002) describe disfranchised grief as an empathic failure and when those in prison are reduced to an underserving other (Corcoran, 2018; Rowe, 2011), not being able to participate in bereavement rituals or attend the bedsides of dying loved ones can be viewed without compassion. The young men in my research found that they were not

recognised as a *griever*, often because of their status as a prisoner, or because of staff attitudes towards prison, punishment and rehabilitation.

> There's definitely things that need to be changed, people's attitudes towards the young boys, a lot of the language needs to change. (Participant, Paper 3)

Paper 1 highlighted that the *circumstances* of the deaths were also disenfranchising as there was a high level of traumatic loss, such as deaths caused by suicide, overdose or murder. These traumatic losses can be more stigmatising as they provoke additional feelings of shame, discomfort or horror in the bereaved or in wider society (Chapple, Ziebland, & Hawton, 2015). Lastly, the *way* the young men managed (or did not manage) their grief was a source of both disenfranchised grief and their marginalisation in society. Young men frequently described a way of grieving that caused them to become entangled with the justice system, almost universally involving substance use, anger, withdrawal and aggression. These expressions of grief were frowned upon by society and implicated in the young men's imprisonment. Once inside, the structures and restrictions inherent in the regime regulated acceptable modes of grieving, forbade their usual coping mechanisms and constrained sources of support.

> Too much time to think. There's no enough things that you can do to get oot and like take your mind off it. Outside there's always something, people will turn tae drink, some people will go to work, go shopping, something like that but in here you cannae do nothing, nothing man, you're just stuck watching the telly. (Participant, Paper 1)

The portfolio confirms Doka's scenarios, and that the presence of disenfranchised grief is a significant issue for young men in prison. But in this thesis I extend Doka's theory, by identifying that disenfranchised grief is intensified among young men in prison because of their multiple losses and disenfranchisements, as well as factors relating to: who is being disenfranchised, where this is happening, when, why, how and by whom. Disenfranchisement was found to be situational, systemic and driven by masculinities, shame, stigma and marginalised identities. This situational contextualising of disenfranchised grief has hitherto been underexplored and it is to these topics which this thesis will now turn.

Prisons and prison masculinities

The disenfranchisement of grief has been described as "…an act of oppression that has significant clinical implications" (Reynolds, 2002, p. 355). If disenfranchised grief can be a political choice, or an abuse of power, then no more so than in prison, that most oppressive of contexts. Yet disenfranchised grief has rarely been considered in prison populations, with only a few known exceptions (Lane, 2015; Masterton, 2014; Simanovic, 2021). Simanovic (2021, p. 192) in her study of adults concludes that the context of imprisonment is "antithetical to the essence of bereavement". Disenfranchised grief has never previously been applied to young males in prison despite their additional disenfranchisement by virtue of their age, gender and

lower status in society. In this section, drawing on theories of masculinity and the concept of prison as a traumagenic environment, I share my analysis that the prison environment amounts to a systemic disenfranchisement of grief, with prison masculinities a key factor.

In the three decades since it was first published, Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity has heavily influenced the study of masculinities. The hegemonic ideal is often deemed to be that of a white, cisgender, heterosexual male who values and embodies strength, stoicism and ambivalence (if not hostility) towards femininity (Evans, 2018). While Connell did not view the hegemonic ideal as 'normal' in a statistical sense, as very few men live up to that standard, it is seen as normative in that all other masculinities are hierarchically positioned in relation to it (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In this way hegemonic masculinity can restrict men's performance of masculinity to a narrow range of behaviours and legitimate unequal gender relations between males and females, or between males (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2018). While hegemonic masculinity may often be associated with violence and aggression (Evans, 2018), the dominance of this form of masculinity over others is rarely established by force, but through a more subtle power manifest through cultural influence or discursive persuasion (Messerschmidt, 2018) including via sporting or celebrity role models (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Moran, 2016), or the marginalisation, othering and delegitimisation of other masculinities (Bird, 1996; Christensen & Jensen, 2014; Jensen, 2010). The constraints that masculine norms place on men's behaviour have considerable implications for their health and wellbeing, in that they can also restrict men's help-seeking behaviours for physical, emotional or psychological problems, including grief (Galdas, 2009; McNess, 2008; Moran, 2016; Yousaf, Popat, & Hunter, 2015). Masculine norms can therefore significantly disenfranchise grief by limiting acceptable modes of grieving and restricting access to social support.

Yet masculinities are not a fixed state or trait. Many scholars have noted that masculinities are often temporary and dependent upon the social context (Evans, 2018; Messerschmidt, 2018; Ricciardelli, Maier, & Hannah-Moffat, 2015). With more than 95% of the UK prison population comprised of men (Ministry of Justice, 2021; Redmond & Palmer, 2020; Scottish Prison Service, 2020) prison is a valuable site for the study of masculinities. Despite, or perhaps because of, their predominance, Sloan argues that men are rarely foregrounded in penal scholarship because "…they are 'seen' (whilst simultaneously going 'unseen') as the norm, the stereotype and the population that prison was designed for in the first place" (2018, p. 123).

Prison masculinities research tends to draw heavily on hegemonic masculinity theory. It has been argued that the jostling for position in the hierarchy of masculinities, particularly for men who are stigmatised in some way or who feel the need to reassert their masculinity (Coston & Kimmel, 2012; Messerschmidt, 2018; Roberts, 2018), can lead to aggression, violence and an increased risk of coming into conflict with the law. In this way, the hegemonic masculine ideal

that is seen to dominate the performance of masculinity in prison (Maguire, 2021; Morey & Crewe, 2018) can also be seen as a reflection of the masculine norms imported from outside of prison. Others note that imprisonment itself is emasculating (De Viggiani, 2018; Gueta, Gamliel, & Ronel, 2021) and that the prison environment reinforces, or necessitates (superficially at least) adherence to the hegemonic prison code in order to adapt, assimilate and survive what Sykes (1958) referred to as the 'pains' of imprisonment. Those who offer an integrated perspective (Morey & Crewe, 2018) recognise that both importation and adaptation factors may be at play in constructing prison masculinities.

Regardless of the source, it is clear that prisons are predominantly 'hypermasculine' spaces where hegemonic norms often intensify displays of violence and aggression (Maguire, 2020, 2021; Morey & Crewe, 2018; Umamaheswar, 2020) and suppress the expression of emotion or vulnerability (De Viggiani, 2018; Gueta et al., 2021; Umamaheswar, 2020). This is noted to be more extreme in establishments that house young people (Gooch, 2019; Maguire, 2021; Sim, 1994) where masculine identities are still being forged and are more susceptible to pressure or influence. Even men who have not internalised these norms and are able to enact more nuanced or more authentic masculinities in other spaces feel the need to put on more of a front while in prison (Evans, 2018; Gueta et al., 2021; Umamaheswar, 2020)

These masculinities are also reflected in the wider prison culture which reinforces these behaviours, with prison staff projecting an air of toughness and machismo, and a custom of 'suffering in silence' (De Viggiani, 2018). Furthermore, the formal machinations of the regime discourage help-seeking even among men who wish to receive support. Participants in Umamaheswar's (2020) study of incarcerated men in the US were unable to seek help for fear of being placed on suicide watch; and Earle (2018) describes a rehabilitative approach within prisons that emphasises self-reliance and self-sufficiency. The prison regime also removes people's choice in when and how they grieve, and the restrictions on rituals are disenfranchising as "bereavement rituals are intended precisely to seek or provide social recognition, legitimation and support in times of grief" (Corr, 2002, p. 52).

However, masculine identities continue to evolve in line with socioeconomic and cultural shifts (Morey & Crewe, 2018) and the theory of hegemonic masculinity has come in for criticism for not reflecting these changes (Anderson & McCormack, 2018), or for perpetuating stereotypes of men (Roberts & Elliott, 2020). Even Connell did not consider the definition of the hegemonic ideal to be fixed and proposed that it was "perhaps possible that a more human, less oppressive, means of being a man might become hegemonic…" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 833). Again this caused me to question, if there has been a shift in men's practices of masculinities to be more inclusive and emotionally open (Anderson, 2010; Anderson & McCormack, 2018), whether masculine norms cease to be a fundamental driver of disenfranchised grief. And if grieving is now recognised as highly individual then was I

potentially complicit in disenfranchising grief by viewing the silent and stoical approach so typical of prison masculinities as suboptimal in some way?

Yet men continue to fare poorly in relation to any number of health and wellbeing outcomes, including: deaths by suicide, road traffic accidents and interpersonal violence, as well as substance misuse, gambling and risk-taking related injuries (Rice et al., 2021; Rice, Purcell, & McGorry, 2018). Although within prisons there may be a hint that underlying masculinities are softening (Maycock, 2018), at present it appears the mask of hegemonic masculinity rarely slips for long (Buston, 2018; Umamaheswar, 2020) and it is clear that alternate masculinities are not yet available to all men in all settings (Maguire, 2020). Anderson and McCormack (2018) reflect that a greater understanding about the success of inclusive masculinities in other contexts is still needed, and call for research that engages with the intersection of masculinity and criminology (among other fields). This suggested to me that gender norms remain hugely influential and that a better understanding of the role of (prison) masculinities in disenfranchised grief is needed, especially as young men are underrepresented in bereavement research (Saghari, 2020).

While it was not until Paper 5 that my work directly addressed masculinities, my analysis revealed that the theme of masculinity, and its interaction with both prison and grief, was conspicuous in the narratives of the young men who talked about their male role models, and the importance of strength and stoicism in the face of adversity. Young men also adopted the role of 'protectors', not wanting to share their distress for fear of upsetting family members who were also grieving.

> I mean I've never seen my dad cry . . . when ma Granda died I didn't see him greet, when ma Gran died I didn't see him greet. (Participant, Paper 1)

The young men imported these masculine codes from their communities, which were intensified in the prison environment, even among young men who were able to enact a broader range of masculinities on the outside. This reluctance to talk about death and bereavement rarely appeared to be a genuine preference, but was often a consequence of wider struggles with power, control and masculinities in their social and institutional environments. This way of being a man had implications for how they experienced, sought help for, and recovered from loss and grief and thus contributed to their disenfranchisement.

> Some people really try and put on a brave face, I haven't seen anyone cry…because you don't want to show anything like that for reputation or something like that (Participant, Paper 1)

> I spoke to him about the referral and he asked me not to, just because he didn't want, it's a sign of weakness . . . He said that he really wants to do work but not in prison so he'll wait until he's in the community to address that. (Participant, Paper 4)

Paper 4 revealed that these masculine codes were shared and reinforced by prison staff, who also witnessed and experienced loss, bereavement and trauma on a regular basis, but equally found themselves in an environment that was not conducive to dealing with these experiences.

> I don't know about the rest of the officers but I found a hanging and I kept everything in to myself until I went on that [bereavement] course and then it all came out how I felt at the time, how I felt after it (Participant, Paper 4)

> There must be incredible pressure I think, not to appear soft, or too aligned with the young men (Participant, Paper 4)

Paper 5 drew attention to the bi-directional and compounding interactions between trauma and loss; masculine identities; and prison.

> Trauma shapes masculinity as the very nature of trauma calls into question traditional notions about what being a man entails in that "at the core of most traumatic experiences are overwhelming states of fear, helplessness and vulnerability. These states are extremely difficult for anyone to deal with, but they carry an added message and burden for male trauma victims" (Mejia, 2005, p.38). (Author, Paper 5)

> We have also noted that masculinity can exacerbate trauma symptoms and reduce help-seeking and responsiveness to available treatments (Author, Paper 5)

In outlining the implications for help-seeking, engagement with therapeutic interventions and, ultimately, recovery, growth and reintegration, Paper 5 concluded that:

> …that there is a pressing need to better understand how prison masculinities interface with trauma-informed care. (Author, Paper 5).

It was clear that intense shame and stigma about mental health, vulnerability and emotional distress were central features of these masculine identities and were powerfully involved in the disenfranchisement of grief. As a result, shame and stigma were subsequently identified as important connecting concepts that warranted specific attention in this thesis. This will be the focus of the following section.

Shame, stigma and marginalised identities

Stigma is a key concept in this thesis as it stems from, but also connects and shapes, the young men's gendered experiences, prison experiences and bereavement experiences.

The term stigma originated in Ancient Greece, and referred to the physical marks placed on a person's body to denote something shameful about their character (e.g. a 'criminal' or a 'slave'), but later came to denote the 'disgrace' attached to such characteristics rather than the branding itself (Goffman, 1963/2009). Goffman believed that the physical, moral or ethnic attributes that marked a person out as different from what was socially desirable or acceptable discredited a person and turned other people away from them. He observed that "by definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we

exercise varieties of discrimination through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances" (Goffman, 1963/2009, p. 5). In this way stigma is produced in social interactions and is based on the prevailing social norms and attitudes within a given situation, rather than emerging as a result of an individual's character or attributes per se (Goffman, 1963/2009; Tyler, 2020).

In unpacking the processes of stigma, Link and Phelan (2001) conceptualise stigma as having four key components: the first involves perceiving and labelling human differences (often on an oversimplified and binary axis e.g. black/white etc.); secondly these labelled individuals or groups are linked to negative stereotypes via social and cultural norms (good/bad etc). These stereotypes facilitate the third dimension of stigma, a separation of 'them' and 'us', and the fourth component is a culmination of these processes in status loss and discrimination. As Link and Phelan remark "…when people are labeled, set apart, and linked to undesirable characteristics, a rationale is constructed for devaluing, rejecting, and excluding them" (2001, p. 370). Shame arises when the individual internalises these experiences of stigma and can result in self-stigma (Vogel, Heimerdinger-Edwards, Hammer, & Hubbard, 2011)

Shame and stigma are an inherent part of the prison experience, whether as a deliberate element of retributive justice (Austin, 2004) or as a result of the internalising of negative perceptions and stereotypes (Moore, Milam, Folk, & Tangney, 2018). While Goffman acknowledged that stigma acts as a form of social control, Tyler (2020) argues that his understanding of stigma downplays the power involved in active stigmatisation and that stigma serves a social, political and economic function. Tyler's description of stigma as the structural application of power designed into systems as a purposeful strategy by government is important when considering socioecological and intersectional perspectives of disenfranchised grief, which I shall return to in Chapter 6. However, it is this marginalisation (and the application of stigma power) that adds to the layering of loss and disenfranchised grief for the young men in my research.

Neither shame nor stigma were specific foci of any of the papers, yet each paper connected with the concepts in some way. With childhood experiences of adversity, exclusion, rejection and stigmatising bereavements, alongside the lasting influence of masculine socialisation and the ultimate 'deviance' of a prison sentence, these young men lived marginalised lives almost entirely outwith social 'ideals' - shame and stigma were inevitable elements of their developing identities. Furthermore, locating their specific experiences in time (adolescence) and place (prison) highlighted how shame and stigma are intensified and cemented. Adolescence is a developmental stage focused on the formation of identity and independence, while at the same time characterised by a desire to 'fit in'. Adapting to prison life also requires assimilation into prison norms. Therefore the impact of shame, stigma and imprisonment at this specific time

can be amplified and have long-lasting effects on identity (Goffman, 1963/2009; Ogilvie & Lynch, 2001).

I earlier explained that the young men in prison were not always recognised as grievers or permitted to take part in bereavement rituals. Even over and above these formal prison rules, young men were often excluded from participating in pre and post death rituals because of the shame and stigma of being in prison. In Paper 2 one young man described how, since entering custody, his family and girlfriend no longer spoke to him, severing most of his ties and social support. In Paper 1 another young man, at the request of his family, was asked not to tell his ailing Grandmother the truth about his whereabouts:

> I just hope she can hold on for another 10 months so I can get out of here and see her at least for one last time…She doesnae even know where I am, she thinks I'm doon in England working. (Participant, Paper 1)

Paper 5 explored the relationship between masculinity and trauma (including traumatic loss) and reported that men are more likely to experience shame and stigma from trauma, which is compounded by the stigma associated with help-seeking.

> Experiencing trauma, along with the entirely human responses to such an experience, often leave men feeling stigmatised, humiliated and ashamed, resulting in exaggerated displays of heteronormative and traditional displays of masculinity in an attempt to reassert power and control (Ellis et al., 2017, Elder et al., 2017). (Author, Paper 5)

In a similar vein, (Doka, 2002a) describes the double bond of stigmatised deaths. Disclosing a stigmatising death (e.g. from an overdose) may cause a griever be judged or rejected (rather than supported), but without disclosure the griever also denies themselves any chance of social support. Similarly, Kauffman (2002) implicates the self in disenfranchised grief, in both internalising socially driven disenfranchisements, but also as the source of disenfranchisement itself. Disenfranchised grief increases the risk of self-disenfranchised grief in subsequent losses (Kauffman, 2002) and has a particular bearing on a population who are already marginalised, shamed and ashamed:

> I don't even want to put my face into the community, I was ashamed of myself. I still am to this day. (Participant, Paper 2)

Many of the young men felt that the requirement to attend funerals in handcuffs was deeply embarrassing and all felt it conveyed a lack of respect to the deceased. Thus most declared that, in these circumstances, they would not attend this important bereavement ritual despite being one of the few places where an outward expression of grief was socially sanctioned.

> I wouldn't like to go cos it's embarrassing going in cuffs and all that, that's the highest thing of disrespect in my book. Going to somebody's end of life, going to somebody's funeral with handcuffs? Nah. It's disrespectful. I'd never do it. I don't know if I'd regret it or no but in my mind that's the decision I would make so I'd need to live with it. (Participant, Paper 1)

While shame and stigma are important for understanding disenfranchised grief, and self–disenfranchised grief in particular, it is also important to acknowledge that "…the conceptual understanding of stigma inherited from Goffman, along with the use of micro-sociological and/or psychological research methods in stigma research, often side-lines questions about where stigma is produced, by whom and for what purposes" (Tyler and Slater 2018, p721). As disenfranchised grief is inherently connected with stigma, I suggest that we also need to apply these same questions to disenfranchised grief in order to fully grasp its impact on young men in prison. It is to this task that this thesis will now turn.

Chapter 6. Developing a deeper understanding of disenfranchised grief: applying a socioecological intersectional framework

In Chapter 5, I identified the significance of disenfranchised grief for young men in prison and outlined the active processes of shame and stigma, along with gender norms, that were operational in disenfranchised grief. Yet the young men in my research had experienced multiple losses and had been marginalised on multiple occasions. While disenfranchised grief was clearly resonant with their experiences, it appeared to me that the intensity and impact of their experiences was not fully captured by the concept. I was not the first to grapple with this issue. Simanovic (2021) describes a 'fragmented grief' among the participants in her prison research, one that was delayed, denied and suppressed due to the context in which they grieved. I would suggest that this grief is fragmented precisely because it is disenfranchised. Lane (2015), reflecting on her work as a prison Chaplain, also recognised the added complexities of grief in prison due to the accumulation of losses and the constraints of the prison environment. Lane (2015, p. 132) observed that "grief and loss experienced prior to and during imprisonment became magnified on top of the loss of freedom", referring to this double sense of loss as '*imprisoned grief*' which she viewed as broader than disenfranchised grief. While I also recognise Lane's concept of imprisoned grief, my research suggested to me that even a 'double loss' did not adequately describe the extent of loss, grief and disenfranchisement that my participants experienced. In this chapter I suggest that it is not the concept of disenfranchised grief *per se* that is the problem, but the limited way in which it has been, to date, researched and understood.

Disenfranchised grief has frequently been studied from a single-issue perspective, based upon the presence of a particular disenfranchising scenario (e.g. the death of a pet). Latterly Doka (2008) has acknowledged that these scenarios are neither exhaustive nor exclusive, and that more than one disenfranchising scenario might be in play at one time (Doka, 2008) but this has not been explored in depth. Some attention has been paid to gender, identifying a 'double bond' for men, in that they are expected to be strong, and are more likely to adopt an instrumental (i.e. cognitive or behavioural) approach to grieving, while at the same time facing a societal bias towards intuitive (i.e. emotional) grieving as a more accepted or understood way of grieving (Doka & Martin, 2002). Doka and Martin also acknowledged that where a person grieves can be temporarily disenfranchising, for example at school or at work: "in other words, one can grieve – but not here, not now" (2002, p. 344). However, beyond acknowledging the complexity of these issues, there has been little scholarship that actively explores the impact of multiple disenfranchising scenarios on grief and identity, and the field has only relatively recently taken into account wider structural or systemic issues in the experience of (disenfranchised) grief (see, for example: Baker, Norris, & Cherneva, 2021; Pabon & Basile, 2021).

In this chapter I first draw upon scholarship that will help account for the multifaceted identities and many oppressive contexts that influenced the young men in my research, namely Intersectional Theory (Crenshaw, 1989) and the Socioecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). I then apply both of these theories together to provide a unique *socioecological intersectional* model of disenfranchised grief in prison that, while remaining true to the original concept, more fully considers the individual, social, institutional and cultural drivers of disenfranchised grief. In doing so, this thesis enhances knowledge about disenfranchised grief and, by identifying the sources of disenfranchised grief, also identifies where policy and practice attention should be directed in order to address and minimise disenfranchised grief in such a marginalised population.

Intersectional Theory

The limitations of understanding marginalisation through a single-issue analysis have previously been documented in what has become known as Intersectional Theory (Crenshaw, 1989). The concept of intersectionality stemmed from the work of feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw who highlighted (1989, p. 140) that the "…dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis" and that such a narrow focus did not reflect the additional complexities of experiencing racial and sex discrimination (often *simultaneously*) as a Black woman. Importantly, Crenshaw (1989, p. 140) also noted that "…the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism…" and the explanatory power of Intersectional Theory lies in the fact that its effects go beyond simply being the sum of multiple overlapping identities, but instead transform our understanding of the complex realities of discrimination and marginalisation.

In contrast to critiques that Intersectional Theory lacks applicability outside of the experience of Black women, intersectionality has expanded to incorporate other identity characteristics such as age, class, disability, sexual orientation and mental heath (Anthias, 2013; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Donley & Johnson, 2021). Thus an intersectional lens offers a theoretical and methodological approach suitable for the field of masculinities studies, one that can help identify and analyse the complex differences and inequalities between men, as well as between men and women (Christensen & Jensen, 2014). Intersectionality can provide additional insights into the theory of hegemonic masculinity as it strengthens understanding of how some masculinities are subordinated and others elevated (Christensen & Jensen, 2014).

Moreover, Barney and Yoshimura (2020) argue that grief is not a temporary passing event or a state but an evolving part of one's identity that involves ongoing meaning reconstruction. As the field of grief studies increasingly recognises grief as being shaped by environmental and sociocultural norms, intersectionality is seen as "uniquely positioned as a framework to

interrogate how individuals make meaning of loss, while also implicating the very structural realities that are central to these responses." (Thacker & Duran, 2020, p. 8). Barney and Yoshimura (2020) call for research that examines how the co-occurrence of multiple sources of disenfranchised identity interrelate with the experience of grief. By understanding how disenfranchised identities are formed, it is possible to better understand the implications of this identity on the experience of grief. Thus it became apparent that applying an intersectional lens would enhance understanding of the drivers of disenfranchised grief, and offer a useful and novel perspective on the complexity of how grief is experienced as a marginalised young man in prison. Despite this, there has been very little scholarship on intersectionality and disenfranchised grief, even though identity characteristics (e.g. age, sexual orientation, disability status) are a factor in disenfranchised grief, and it has been acknowledged that there are identity-related losses associated with being assigned a marginalised status and identity (Thompson, 2020).

Bindley et al. conducted a review of 15 research studies exploring adults' experiences of structural and social inequalities following anticipated bereavement after a life-limiting illness. They found that "specific groups of bereaved individuals may be disadvantaged in multiple ways, due to varied dimensions of their structural vulnerability." (2019, p. 12) and that bereavement in and of itself contributed to structural vulnerability. The review pointed to overlapping experiences of social and structural inequity, for example, in relation to age, gender, ethnicity and non-heterosexual identity. However, in reality this often meant a focus on the bereavement experiences of those who were older, female, identified as gay or who were living in poverty. While much can be learned from these experiences, including experiences of disenfranchisement through bureaucracy and lack of compassion in policies, systems, organisations and structures, their experiences tell us little about grieving while an adolescent male in prison. Acknowledging this, Bindley et al. (2019, p. 14) conclude that there remains a "need for focused research into extremely disenfranchised populations who are likely to experience structural vulnerability in bereavement, and may be somewhat 'hidden' from the gaze of formal health care and specialist palliative care providers."

While Intersectional Theory did not explicitly inform my papers at the time of writing, my research highlighted the added complexities of overlapping identities such as being a young male in prison. My papers recognised that adolescents already have reduced power, agency, autonomy and are in a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood in which the primary task is the establishment of independence and identity (Erikson, 1968). The custodial experience (and the losses associated with it) can disproportionately affect these developing identities, influencing how both adult and masculine identities are formed and enacted; how loss, grief and trauma are experienced; and how recovery does, or does not, unfold.

> With young people already afforded a lower status in society by virtue of their age, young prisoners can be further marginalised by the shame and stigma caused by their offence" (Author, Paper 3)
>
> Once incarcerated, the interplay between youth, trauma, masculinity and prison becomes ever more complicated. (Author, Paper 5)

An intersectional lens thus proved useful in documenting and understanding the marginalised identities present in my research. My participants' identities, and their disenfranchised grief, were the product of gender norms, stigma, marginalisation and exclusion that stemmed from interpersonal interactions and from the wider structures and inequalities at play in their lives. But I was aware that their identities were also shaped by where they were situated in place and time – in transition to adulthood while being incarcerated in a total institution (Goffman, 1968), designed to resocialise, restrict and reshape identity (Warr, 2020). Intersectional Theory could only *implicitly* account for these situational factors that extended beyond demographics but also contributed to their disenfranchised grief.

Intersectional Theory has been criticised for an over-emphasis on demographic differences and for the risk of being utilised simply as a reductive list of identity categories (Anthias, 2013). There are also concerns that its widespread acceptance into academic and political spheres has reduced intersectionality to little more than a buzzword (Davis, 2008). Knapp (2005) suggests that 'fast traveling theories' such as intersectionality become readily accepted because the complexity of their arguments can be simplified, but that this occurs in ways that often misrepresent the initial intent. While Crenshaw and colleagues continue to caution that intersectionality "…is not exclusively or even primarily preoccupied with categories, identities and subjectivities" (2013, p. 797) and is instead concerned with structures of power, exclusion and inequality, it appeared that I needed a more comprehensive way of articulating explicitly *where* the drivers of disenfranchised grief were situated and *how* these intersectional identities were formed to more adequately explain the phenomenon of disenfranchised grief within my research. Similarly, when documenting the stigma, shame, blame culture and the role of state authorities in disenfranchising the grief of Black American families bereaved by homicide, Martin (2013) observed that there is very little literature that connects these social processes to intersectional identities. One such framework that depicts and organises the dynamic interrelations and processes between individuals and their environmental contexts is the socioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1992).

The Socioecological Model

The socioecological model (SEM), first articulated by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979, marked a paradigmatic shift in theories of child development, from a psychological emphasis on the individual, to a perspective that takes into account both the individual, their environment and the interplay between them. As Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 4) remarked "the detection of such wide-ranging developmental influences becomes possible only if one employs a theoretical

model that permits them to be observed." The socioecological model depicts the child at the centre of a series of nested and interconnected systems. The system in closest proximity to the child is called the *microsystem* and typically involves family, friends and others (e.g. class teacher) who have an immediate impact on the child's daily life. The *mesosystem* reflects the connections and interrelations within and across systems. The *exosytem* encompasses more distal factors that exert an influence on the child, regardless of whether or not the child has direct contact with these settings. At this level factors include: extended family, the school system, local services and organisations. The *macrosystem* reflects the societal and cultural context, including public policy and socioeconomic conditions. Later Bronfenbrenner (1992) added the *chronosystem* to capture the influence of developmental and life course transitions as well as changes within the sociocultural context (e.g. major life events such as the transition to school, or the emerging influence of social media in the lives of children).

The socioecological model is viewed as having value across disciplines and, like intersectionality, has since been applied to a diverse range of experiences, such as youth suicidality (Standley, 2020), bullying in school (Lim & Hoot, 2015) and physical activity levels (Casey, Eime, Payne, & Harvey, 2009). Bronfenbrenner continued to refine the model until his death in 2005, and later placed greater emphasis on the individual as an active, rather than passive, influence on their own development and systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Critiques of the SEM suggest that the framework is often applied in simplistic terms, and not in ways which reflect Bronfenbrenner's intention nor the evolution of his theory (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009; Tudge et al., 2016). The final iteration of his model was redefined as "… a four-element model, involving the synergistic interconnections among proximal processes, person characteristics, context, and time (the PPCT model)" (Tudge et al., 2016, p. 428) and it has been argued that this version of the theory has been relatively overlooked in both clinical and research applications (Tudge et al., 2009; Tudge et al., 2016).

PPCT does not discard the elements of the earlier socioecological model, but places greater emphasis on the role of proximal processes as drivers of development. Proximal processes (P) were defined as regularly occurring reciprocal interactions between the individual and the people, objects and symbols in their (mainly immediate) context (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Person characteristics (P) included age, gender and ethnic background. Context (C) centred the person within the nested systems outlined above. The proximal processes provide the mechanism by which the characteristics of both person and context affect each other over time (T) (Merçon-Vargas, Lima, Rosa, & Tudge, 2020).

The socioecological model has rarely been applied to grief. In one of the earliest applications to disenfranchised grief, Arditti (2005) used the socioecological model to illuminate the impact of parental incarceration on families and children. She highlighted that "… an ecological framework provides interpretive power in terms of contextualizing the experience of

imprisonment and highlighting the interrelatedness of social problems such as crime and poverty" (p. 252). More recently, a systemic review of 46 papers (Obst, Due, Oxlad, & Middleton, 2020; Obst, Oxlad, Due, & Middleton, 2021) revealed the variability in men's grief experiences following pregnancy loss and mapped the factors that moderated the grief experience across systems in an adapted socioecological model. These included: personality style or level of attachment to the baby (individual); the quality of the partner relationship and support networks (interpersonal); stigma surrounding miscarriage and social norms pertaining to the expression of male grief (community) and maternity care and support services that did not include men (public policy). Their research identified a 'double disenfranchisement' for grieving fathers, in that both the nature of the loss, and their position as a male parent contributed to their disenfranchisement. In viewing the grief experience "not…as an individual response but as part of a wider socio-ecological process" Obst et al. (2020, p. 11) highlight that grief is shaped by a complex system of interacting factors and make an important contribution in identifying both the existence and source of disenfranchisement. However, the authors recognise this is an emerging model that requires refinement, especially among more diverse samples of men.

In a paper that illustrates how proximal processes can play out in disenfranchised grief, Pabon and Basile (2021) described the experiences of three Black boys following the murder of their friend. They identified multiple indicators of disenfranchised grief that were "…due to disruptions to proximal processes, leading to further misalignments across the boys' ecological systems (2021, p. 9). These processes included: the normalisation and dismissal of the trauma of Black male homicide; the denial of opportunities to grieve; and a lack of culturally appropriate interventions. These processes occurred across different settings such as school, the community and the media.

In the same way as Intersectional Theory, the socioecological model did not explicitly inform my papers at the time of writing. Yet the works acknowledge the huge implications that the familial, institutional and cultural contexts of the young men had for their disenfranchised grief.

> It was clear that when a bereavement did occur, the realities of prison life interrupted all aspects of the grieving process. (Author, Paper 1)
>
> I've had a really bad upbringing, I've not had the support that normal children should have from the minute they're born to the minute they leave the house. (Participant, Paper 2)

A socioecological intersectional approach

The merging of Intersectional Theory and SEM has been termed a 'socioecological intersectional framework' (Block, Hourani, Sullivan, & Vaughan, 2021). Such an approach has only very recently been utilised, but has begun to emerge in varying contexts such as gender-based violence (Block et al., 2021) and suicidality (Standley, 2020). While Intersectional Theory and the SEM independently enhance our understanding of disenfranchised grief, there are clear mutual benefits to both perspectives in applying the models together.

If intersectionality is more about structures of inequality rather than identity characteristics (Cho et al., 2013), then applying the SEM to intersectional identities might help identify the source and nature of these inequalities and reduce the tendency towards oversimplification of Intersectional Theory. Seng, Lopez, Sperlich, Hamama, and Reed Meldrum (2012) also observe that within identity clusters, people are not homogenous and that "…there are multiple levels at which the effects of intersectionality may impinge on the individual and may be measureable, a consideration consistent with multi-level socioecological models of human development…" (p. 2438). As a result, Seng and colleagues propose operationalising intersectionality using the SEM as an organising framework. The SEM also brings a developmental lens to Intersectionality, providing additional clarity in this thesis to the special transitional phases of adolescence and adjustment to prison on identify formation.

There are also added benefits for the SEM in applying the models together. Bringing an intersectional lens to the SEM can help engagement with the later PPCT version of the model, by placing a greater emphasis on both the person and the processes that shape them, as well as the influence that the person exerts on their environment through processes of interaction. Nadan, Spilsbury, and Korbin (2015) suggest that intersectionality can therefore aid understanding of the range of societal processes and structural sources of discrimination at the macro level, while providing a way of understanding how individuals experience their own intersecting identities at the micro level. Thus intersectionality foregrounds the individual experience of disenfranchised grief, and provides a deeper understanding of marginalised identities, which helps to illuminate the structural drivers of disenfranchisement that may have not been identified through application of the SEM alone.

It is clear that "in addition to their unique contributions, the integration of intersectionality and a socioecological model provides powerful opportunities to impact research, practice, and policy" (Standley, 2020, p. 5). Yet despite Thacker and Duran (2020, p. 8) calling for research that examines "…how overlapping axes of power establish cultural norms that inhibit access to or disenfranchize diverse types of mourning and contribute to divergence from culturally-normed grief expressions" there has been no literature as yet available that actively applies a socioecological intersectional approach to disenfranchised grief. The evidence presented

earlier in this thesis suggests that adopting such an approach would advance understanding of the relationship between the individual experience and the systemic drivers of disenfranchised grief.

Developing a socioecological intersectional model of disenfranchised grief

In her work on health inequalities, Evans (2019, p. 252) proposes that one method of incorporating socioecological systems in to intersectional models is to "…consider the role of context in shaping the meaning of intersectional social positions, the advantages or disadvantages they confer, the performance of those intersectional social identities and/or the physical, social, economic and political conditions individuals are exposed to…" I have adopted this approach by applying the most recent iteration of the SEM (the PPCT model) to explore how the young men's intersectional identities and personal characteristics shape, and are shaped by, proximal processes in their immediate, and more distal environments. The model (Figure 1) assimilates the bi-directional processes that disenfranchise grief (*proximal processes*); the lived experience of individual intersectional identities (*person*), the locations of the drivers of disenfranchisement (*context*), and, lastly, highlights the importance of developmental and situational transitions, as well as individual biographical histories of repeated loss and disenfranchisement (*time*).

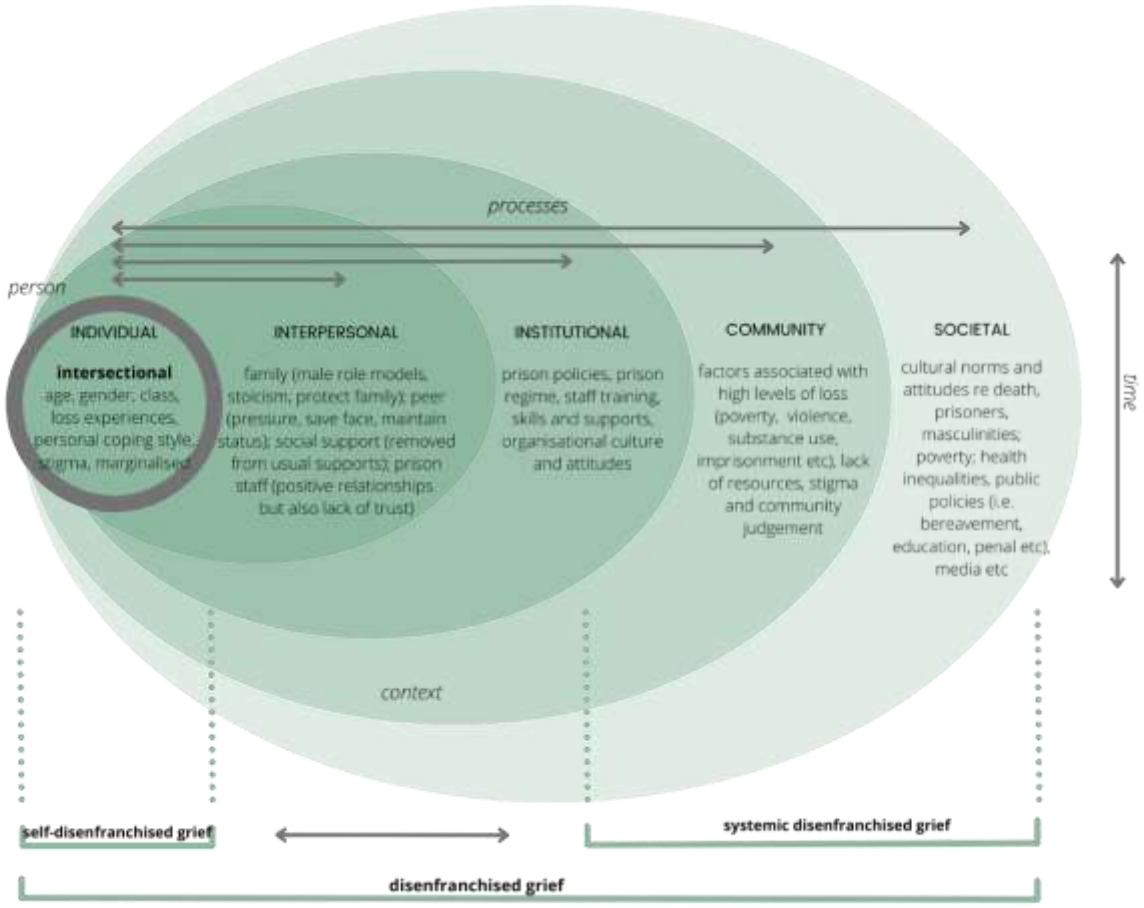

Figure 1. A Socioecological Intersectional Model of the Disenfranchised Grief of young men in prison

In this section I explain this model by consolidating the evidence presented earlier in this thesis to outline the proximal processes that are at play and how they bridge the different systems and contexts (individual; interpersonal; institutional, community; and societal/policy) to shape identity and disenfranchise grief. The model importantly distinguishes between self-disenfranchised and system-disenfranchised grief within the wider concept of disenfranchised grief, but additionally recognises the bi-directional processes between them, whereby system-disenfranchised grief can be internalised into an individual's sense of self, forming a disenfranchised identity that in turn can shape system responses.

Proximal Processes

While Bronfenbrenner conceived of proximal processes as having positive effects, Merçon-Vargas et al. (2020) expanded the concept to include detrimental or harmful interactions that can lead to developmental dysfunction. As outlined in Chapter 5, shame, stigma and marginalisation have been identified as important drivers of disenfranchised grief, exacerbated by gender norms. I propose that these are key *proximal processes* for young men in prison, typically enacted through othering, detachment and exclusion in their environments. However, unlike Bronfenbrenner, I conclude that these processes were not predominantly located in the immediate social environment (as outlined later when I consider *Context*) but occurred throughout the young men's ecosystems. These processes occurred over time throughout their interpersonal relationships, within institutional (school, care and prison) and public policies, and within society, leading to a shamed and marginalised identity.

As proposed by Bronfenbrenner, these processes were bi-directional, with the impact of such an identity shaping how the individual engaged with and was received by their environment. For the young men in my research, this resulted in a vicious circle, whereby these processes served to disenfranchise their grief, but their individual responses to this disenfranchisement (anger, substance misuse, detachment) caused them to be further marginalised. Just as Pabon and Basile (2021) observed, this disruption in proximal processes effectively meant that these already marginalised young men were punished for their (disenfranchised) grief. This disruption may be more severe for young men in prison, as being confined to a total institution leaves them adrift without many of the cultural or familial buffers that existed for the boys in Pabon and Basile's study.

> My Mum doesn't talk to me. My Dad talks to me but my Mum, Gran and sister don't talk to me. (Participant, Paper 2)

> I said to them [school] I was sorry, it was a moment of madness, I want to come back and they said 'no' and I got kicked out. (Participant, Paper 2)

> This pervasive culture….clearly had a bearing on any form of work that relies on trust and relationships… Detachment and depersonalisation were sometimes applied as coping strategies in that the young men were held at arm's length. (Author, Paper 4)

Person

The young men, as noted earlier, had identities shaped by age, gender, class and their prisoner status. Being a member of a structurally disadvantaged group increased the risk of encountering loss (Paul & Vaswani, 2020; Thompson, 2020) and often limited acceptable responses to loss. Thompson (2020, p. 53) concluded that "there is no doubt that there are many losses associated with the various ways in which discrimination and oppression have an impact on identity." The young men's masculine identities; their repeated exposure to multiple and traumatic losses; and shame and guilt were implicated in their disenfranchised and, in particular, their self-disenfranchised grief. For example, their experiences and coping mechanisms often caused them to detach and withdraw, limiting their access to social support for their grief.

> I've certainly not cared about people as much, because after losing friends, and losing friends before, I was probably wondering 'why is this happening to me?'. (Participant, Paper 1)

> I just didnae bother with anything, even the police they didn't scare me, they didn't bother me anymore. (Participant, Paper 1)

The young men's modes of grieving were also often characterised by anger and substance use, responses which also caused young men to be rejected and were implicated in their contact with the justice system. The subsequent punishment of their grief was also disenfranchising.

> The more I drank the more I wouldnae think of him basically…Not to forget about him, but forget about that [death]. (Participant, Paper 1)

> Like I don't think I would be here if my Gran didnae die because my behaviour kinda changed, I'd no been in prison before … but after my Gran died everything got worse just from there. (Participant, Paper 1)

Context

At the *interpersonal* level there were processes and norms within family and peer networks that acted as drivers of disenfranchised grief. A reluctance to talk about death and grief was common within this system (and was a reflection of societal norms and attitudes in the more distal systems). This often started earlier in childhood due to a desire to protect children but continued over time and was reflected back in the young men's desires to also protect their families by withholding their distress. The male role models available to the young men demonstrated stoicism and strength and these masculine identities, as well as shame and stigma, reduced the social support available to the young men.

> Stoicism was evident among many of the young men, who felt it was best that they just 'get on with things' and often displayed a dispassionate attitude towards death. Many young men took their cue from their parents, particularly fathers, in that feelings towards the event were bottled up. (Author, Paper 1)

> …the barriers of shame and stigma on both sides of the relationship also proved challenging, and could disrupt even previously solid relationships, let alone already fragile ones. Some young men did not want their families to see them in prison, others were rejected by their families because of their behaviour. (Author, Paper 2)

Within the *institutional* system, as outlined earlier, the role of prison masculinities was a key driver of disenfranchised grief, but so were features related to the prison environment itself and its institutional purpose of punishment (again, interconnected to the societal system and penal policy). The regime was disenfranchising in both practical and less tangible ways. The sheer volume of need in the prison often meant that staff could not respond to the young men in the way they wanted to. There was an implicit necessity to prioritise the running of the institution over supporting an individual's grief and, while this is perhaps predictable, it also serves to disenfranchise grief. Staff in the prison environment were also often not in a position to acknowledge the young men's grief, due to factors relating to training and skills, organisational supports and their own coping mechanisms that relied on detachment and othering.

> The issue we have with death and stuff … or bereavement or trauma, you're scared because we don't have supervision at the back of us so although you want to ask the question you don't because you're thinking where will this lead to? (Participant, Paper 4)

> We need to acknowledge the emotional impact of the work . . . the impact of working in an institution…When you have workers say to you "I don't understand the stuff about feelings because I have no feelings when I come into work whatsoever, I switch the feeling bit of my brain off". (Participant, Paper 4)

Imprisonment also imposed an unnatural distance from everyday life that restricted grieving as, although it often concealed the immediate painful reality, it also delayed grief and blunted emotions (Lane, 2015).

> I've got a couple of friends that I've no really grieved for yet. Because I've been away and had that detachment then I think it's made it easier because I've no been face-to-face but I think that with being so detached comes a kind of numbness (Participant, Paper 1)

The papers underlined that *community* factors such as high levels of violence, substance use and poverty contributed to an increased risk of multiple and traumatic loss, and that scarce resources and interventions in disadvantaged communities limited the supports that could be offered to respond to grief. The young men found that their ways of being a man, or ways of responding to grief and trauma, caused them to be rejected and excluded in their communities. These behaviours were also likely to have an effect on others in their communities, contributing to wider ripples of loss and trauma in the community. The application of stigma power also led to a loss of prosocial activities, education and employment opportunities through disclosure requirements and discrimination. This resulted in a loss of hope for their 'future possible self' (Markus & Nurius, 1986), which in turn further contributed to a shamed and marginalised identity.

> There are also losses that are related to the ramifications of having a criminal and custodial record. Such losses include the very real loss of education and employment opportunities, and by extension, the loss of future hopes and ambitions... (Author, Paper 3)

> I felt angry at the guy that killed him … for a long time, I know who it was, I've came across them a few times … not long after I came across him and all I thought was 'revenge'. (Participant, Paper 1)

In the *societal system* the model highlights the wider inequalities, discrimination and policy decisions that influence all other systems and disenfranchise grief, and is where stigma power is most keenly felt. At the policy level this includes penal policy and practice that prioritises punishment over other justice purposes, as well as health inequalities that see disadvantaged children at significantly greater risk of experiencing the death of a parent or sibling (Paul & Vaswani, 2020). From a cultural perspective, this system encapsulates the attitudes and norms in relation to masculinity and grief that were imported into and amplified within the prison environment, as well as societal attitudes towards those who offend, and a press media that is often hostile towards human rights and compassion for people in prison.

> We're in here to do our time, we're in here to get punished by taking away our freedom, and we're not in here to get punished by the staff members. (Participant, Paper 2)

> These findings confirm that a truly trauma-informed approach is not possible in an environment that is shaped by a criminal justice system that has punishment at its core, either in policy or practice. (Author, Paper 4)

Despite occurring within more distal systems than Bronfenbrenner proposed for proximal processes, community and societal processes were a considerable driver of a marginalised identity and disenfranchised grief. Indeed, as Arditti (2005, p. 252) observed in her work with families, "relative to incarceration, the macrosystemic context likely takes on a heightened saliency given the highly stigmatized nature of incarceration and powerfully shapes the emotional life of the family." Thus while the model confirms the importance of proximal processes in both forming intersectional identities and in disenfranchising grief, it identifies that reciprocal processes equally align with systemic as well as interpersonal and everyday drivers of disenfranchised grief.

Time

Lastly, the concept of time, in the form of biographical histories characterised by repeated losses over time, and also key life transitions, is crucial to our understanding of identity formation and disenfranchised grief among young men in prison. The numerous losses, and experiences of shame, stigma and marginalisation that occurred on multiple occasions, within multiple systems and across developmental stages intensified the experience of disenfranchised grief. The young men were also at a pivotal moment on the transition to adulthood, as well as transitioning between ecological systems (i.e. between community and

prison), although their intersectional identities and ecological systems placed considerable constraints on the accomplishment of these tasks. This rendered them more impressionable to key influences such as prison masculinities and stigma, which in turn served to disfranchise their grief and reinforce their marginalised positions in society.

> But with youth at a crucial stage of transition to adulthood, the need to assert independence and establish identity and status can lead to an extra emphasis on the performance of aspects of certain masculinities such as physical strength, aggressiveness and bullying. (Author, Paper 5)

> It is clear that loss and grief can affect every stage of a young person's journey to, through and from prison. (Author, Paper 3)

Using intersectionality and the PPCT model in this way to draw attention to the multitude of sources and locations of disenfranchised grief, and the processes by which grief is disenfranchised, helps us to better understand how grief is experienced by young men in custody. In doing so it also enhances our understanding of disenfranchised grief beyond a single-axis or narrow conceptualisation and provides a framework by which disenfranchised grief might be explored (either empirically or clinically) in other marginalised or disenfranchised populations.

Chapter 7. Conclusions and Implications

The evidence presented here confirms the presence and significance of disenfranchised grief for young men in prison. Nevertheless, early on in this thesis I identified that a more contextual understanding of disenfranchised grief was needed to fully capture the young men's experiences: the *who*, *where*, *when*, *why* and *how* of disenfranchised grief. The socioecological intersectional model presented here helps us to respond to these questions, and draws attention to the nuances of self-disenfranchised and system-disenfranchised grief for young men in prison.

The model explains how the young men in my research were disenfranchised across multiple systems by their own shame and self-stigma, by their interpersonal relationships and role models, by the everyday restrictions of the prison regime as well as its institutional culture and values. Importantly it was not just their immediate contexts that disenfranchised grief. Cultural and gender norms restricted modes of grieving, and societal attitudes towards those who violate social norms limited compassion for people grieving in prison. Health and social inequalities in society increased exposure to repeated and traumatic loss in disadvantaged communities. Wider shame and stigma from growing up in these communities reinforced structurally marginalised positions and contributed to internalised shame and self-disenfranchisement. The effects of public policy decisions, from bereavement policies about what constitutes an important death, to justice policies that deem a (harsh) prison experience an appropriate response to what are often expressions of loss, grief and trauma, also contributed to disenfranchised grief. The sheer weight of these experiences that occurred repeatedly throughout the lifecourse, but especially during the formative years of adolescence, often resulted in a marginalised, disenfranchised identity. The bi-directional processes between systems reinforced and intensified these experiences as relationships, institutions and communities reacted punitively to the anger, shame and grief of marginalised and disenfranchised young men.

In highlighting these processes, the model helps to articulate the social structures and practices which have disenfranchised the young men throughout their lives, but especially in times of grief. My theoretical contribution is significant because it provides a more comprehensive model of disenfranchised grief specifically for young men in prison, but also because it provides a more general framework which can potentially be applied to help identify and understand disenfranchised grief in other marginalised populations. Doing so can help provide a much needed account of both the power of social and institutional forces *as well as* individual identity and human agency in (disenfranchised) grief (Thompson, 2020b). In this way, this thesis both expands the concept of disenfranchised grief, and provides a method by which we can continue to explore, understand and develop the concept further.

Implications for research

This thesis helps to address important gaps in bereavement research where there remains a need for broader sociological perspectives, more child and young–person centred research and unmet knowledge needs relating to supporting bereaved young adults as they experience life transitions (Penny, 2020). Research that continues to address these broader issues, as well as research to further refine and develop the model is required. More specifically:

- The model offers greater clarity about disenfranchised grief in restricted contexts, and in the total institution of a prison. However, research to further enhance knowledge and understanding of the interaction between prison, masculinities, stigma and disenfranchised grief is still needed. Future research should directly address these topics with young men, to understand their perspectives and insights and the model will prove useful in shaping future research questions and research instruments on these issues. The model also provides a method by which researchers can directly explore the experience of bereavement and grief in prison with young men by providing a template for mapping and documenting the factors that support or disenfranchise the experience of grief. Over time, such research will also help to monitor any organisational or societal culture change in relation to supporting a more compassionate environment within which to grieve.

- Importantly, the model presented here should be used as a framework to guide future research rather than as a prescriptive interpretation of the young men's experiences. The use of thematic analysis or the thematic presentation of findings in the papers included in the portfolio may have sacrificed the distinctiveness and depth of individual stories and experiences in the interest of identifying shared meanings and commonalities. Future research that uses the model in this way will help to identify additional (or different) drivers of disenfranchisement than those that were present for the young men in my research, or that were obscured in the resulting thematic outputs. Future research should also consider methods and presentations that remedy some of these limitations by illuminating the individual experience.

- Further research that accounts for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on disenfranchised grief in prison will be essential in bringing this knowledge up-to-date, as public health and prison visiting restrictions may simultaneously have increased the likelihood of experiencing disenfranchised grief, and improved societal awareness and understanding of the phenomenon and its effects. The model can be used to guide this research, mapping the impact of COVID-19 on individuals, communities, institutions and policies, as well as locating experiences in a specific pandemic time-period.

- The model will likely have relevance with other marginalised populations and in other restrictive settings such as care institutions, but would benefit from further empirical testing. This might include, for example, testing the model with women in prison, LGBTQ+ populations; care experienced individuals, or people from minority ethnic backgrounds; as well as testing the model in other less obviously restrictive contexts such as schools, or in community justice settings.

Implications for policy and practice

The thesis also makes a contribution to policy and practice as, in drawing attention to the devastation and dehumanisation caused by the denial of grief, the evidence brings an important human rights lens to the experience of grief which brings an urgency to the need for policy and practice attention. By recognising the right to grieve for everyone who is bereaved, but especially those who find themselves the most marginalised, "…without the oppressive factor of shame and the inhibition caused by external social constraints which may have the potential to suppress adaptive, but socially uncomfortable or stigmatized responses" (Harris, 2010, p. 243) policy and practice can go some way towards enfranchising grief. In enhancing understanding of where the drivers of disenfranchised grief are situated, the model frames responses to grief as being necessary across the individual's wider environment. Armed with this knowledge, it becomes evident that it is not sufficient to simply support intervention or recovery at individual, or even familial, levels without addressing both the systemic causes of disenfranchised grief and the systemic barriers to intervention. Indeed, with disenfranchised grief occurring at societal and structural levels there is a responsibility for those in power to acknowledge and address the harms caused by the system. Applying the model offers insights into the range of responses that may be necessary to achieve this goal, including:

- **Individual:** The model can be used in practice to directly explore, acknowledge and understand the depth and impact of marginalisation and disenfranchisement with individuals, as well as identify sources of support and resilience. Bereavement (and other) supports should actively seek to enfranchise grief and individual interventions should explore and understand the role of intersectional identities, and masculinities in particular, on loss, grief and recovery. This should be emphasised in training and other professional development activities for practitioners in this area, including therapeutic, third sector and justice professionals

- **Interpersonal:** This relational level is crucial for the provision of informal bereavement support, which should be sufficient for the vast majority of bereaved individuals. However, this requires family or peers to have the confidence, skills, language and capacity to

respond appropriately to grief. Accessible information and resources for families and peers are required, in order to educate and underpin informal supports. At the same time, disenfranchised grief is produced in relationships and bereavement interventions should explore family dynamics and practices that perpetuate disenfranchised grief. Macro level policies will have an influence here in ensuring that government policies (such as health or economic policies) foster resilience and create sufficient capacity in family and other interpersonal systems to be able to respond empathetically, rather than these policies adding another layer of family stressors.

- **Institutional:** While disenfranchisement occurred across all systems, the institutional level of prison was the locus where the harms of loss, disenfranchisement, shame and stigma converged and crystallised. It is evident that prisons are engine houses of loss and, in many respects, loss and marginalisation appear to form part of their raison d'etre. As Paper 5 concludes, these harms and losses are not going to be addressed while we have an expansive prison estate at the heart of our justice system, and it is clear that significant reforms are needed to develop a more compassionate justice system, that has its roots in social justice and does not further disenfranchise. The use of prison should be greatly reduced and carceral institutions should engage in a process of organisational development that reflects on the aspects of prison life that unnecessarily disenfranchise grief including organisational culture; and staff training, support and practices.

  In the interim, and mindful of Mathieson's (1986) caution that short-term reforms should nudge towards the process of dismantling, rather than risk perpetuating and cementing the very institutions they are trying to change, I would propose reforms that allow grief and humanity to flow through the prison walls, in both directions. This might include greater use of private visits from family or loved ones to break the news of a death; updated policies on bedside and funeral attendance to reflect a broader understanding of attachments and relationships; maximising the use of technology where necessary (e.g. the live streaming of funerals); increased mobility to facilitate participation in other bereavement rituals such as graveside visits, or providing peaceful places of remembrance within the institution. Furthermore, bereavement experiences and needs should be assessed upon reception to custody, and the necessary support offered or signposted to, as well as a bespoke plan for triggers, anniversaries and memorials agreed with the individual. Greater emphasis on diversion and community justice rather than custodial disposals is also needed, and the incorporation of bereavement needs should be standard within all justice social work assessments, and considered as a potential mitigating factor in sentencing.

- **Community:** There is a need for increased understanding about the role of the community in enfranchising grief and minimising the harm of multiple losses, as well as community education and capacity-building efforts to support communities to respond appropriately to grief, such as public information and the provision of information and resources. Yet while communities continue to reel from policies that exacerbate austerity and inequalities, as well as community and poverty stigma and the ongoing impact of COVID-19, communities are likely to remain fragile while also collectively grieving multiple losses. Interventions aimed at reducing inequalities through the provision of adequate community resources such as employment opportunities are needed, as are services that aim to support bereavement or reduce community harms such as violence, addiction and imprisonment. Efforts to reduce stigma and marginalisation by encouraging community cohesion and understanding might include shared community spaces and services; peer support; and intergenerational practices which can help to repair and build social trust as well as respond to grief and disenfranchisement.

- **Societal/Policy:** Urgent action to reduce health and social inequalities is needed as well as inclusive and compassionate policies (justice, health, education and bereavement) that actively consider bereavement and do not disenfranchise or stigmatise the effects of these inequalities. Steps towards social and cultural change in relation to talking about death, dying and bereavement, and challenging attitudes to help-seeking, especially with children or with young men will be crucial in underpinning wider change. While such change will not come easily, and will take considerable time, universal efforts such as incorporating death, bereavement and grief into the educational curriculum from early years onwards; and a public information campaign about how everyone in society can support those who are bereaved, will begin to lay the groundwork from which change can occur.

As a final reminder that inequalities in life are reflected in death, and there is a need to ensure that grief and bereavement support become an inalienable human right, I close with the words of Carl Sandburg in his poem *The Right to Grief* (1912):

Very well,
You for your grief and I for mine.
Let me have a sorrow my own if I want to.

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Appendix: The portfolio of papers

Due to issues of copyright, the publications are not included in the digital version of this thesis. Links to the published or institutional repository versions have been provided as appropriate.

Paper 1:

Vaswani, N. (2014). The Ripples of Death: Exploring the bereavement experiences and mental health of young men in custody. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, *53*(4), 341-359. https://doi.org/10.1111/hojo.12064

Paper 2:

Vaswani, N. (2015). A Catalogue of losses: Implications for the care and reintegration of young men in custody. *The Prison Service Journal*, 220, 26-36. https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/PSJ%20220%20July%202015.pdf [Open Access]

Paper 3:

Vaswani, N. (2018). Beyond loss of liberty: How loss, bereavement and grief can affect young men's prison journeys. In: S. Read, S. Santatzoglou, and A. Wrigley. (Eds.) *Loss, dying and bereavement in the criminal justice system* (pp.177-187). Abingdon: Routledge. https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/63680/

Paper 4:

Vaswani, N. and Paul, S. (2019). It's knowing the right things to say and do. Challenges and opportunities for trauma-informed practice in the prison context. *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, *58*(4), 513-534. https://doi.org/10.1111/hojo.12344

Paper 5:

Vaswani, N., Cesaroni, C., and Maycock, M. (2021). Incarcerated young men & boys: Trauma, masculinity & the need for trauma-informed gender-sensitive correctional care. In: A. Cox & L. Abrams (Eds.) *International Handbook of Youth Imprisonment*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave. https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/77390/