

THE MAD, THE BAD AND THE SAD:
LIFE COURSES OF CONVICT WOMEN TRANSPORTED TO VAN DIEMEN'S LAND

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Introduction

The convict records of Tasmania—the paper panopticon—capture the lives of convicts only for the time that they came under the surveillance of the penal system. Their lives before and after sentence have rarely been visible, yet vital clues as to their families and backgrounds were collected in the ‘indents’ of their characteristics on arrival in Tasmania; and the tools to discover what became of them on release are now being widely digitised. For the first time, a population study of the life course of men and women transported as convicts to this British colony is feasible and since 2007, the Founders and Survivors project funded by the Australian Research Council has been building the database to begin to answer some larger questions about the system and its subjects.¹ This paper tests some of the methods and analytical strategies adopted to extract useful knowledge from complex, detailed historical data.

Around 70,000 men, women and children were transported as convicts to Van Diemen's Land between 1803 and 1853 and the records of their characteristics and behavior under sentence are more complete than their equivalents for other British penal colonies, including New South Wales. Furthermore vital registration began early in Tasmania (in 1838) and in the nearby colonies where convicts most commonly settled after release so that, with digitized records, it is increasingly possible to trace their lives after sentence.² This is enhanced by the innovative historical newspaper digitization of Australian newspapers by the National Library of Australia (TROVE) and the expansion of genealogical and digital historical resources in the United Kingdom. None the less, the human labour effort remains intensive and Founders and Survivors has been able to draw on an army of skilled volunteers who have researched convicts'

genealogies and historical contexts. This crowd-sourced work, using Google Docs as a research platform with links to convicts' archival records and digitized images, has been largely organized around the researching of whole shiploads—cohorts—to produce a reference population of 17,038 convicts researched and coded, comprising 11,688 men and 5,358 women. This paper concerns a subsample of 3,979 women, around 25 per cent of the total number of women transported.

Research Aims

The project aims to reconstruct and analyse the life courses of the convicts both as a study of a uniquely recorded population and of the impact of the British penal system in the Australian colonies on its subjects. The life course study has been framed around two key demographic measures of human “success”: length of life and family formation. It divides the convict's life course into three stages: life before sentence including place of origin, family support, human capital and biological capital as measured by height; experience under sentence including reactive behavior and accumulated insults to body and mind; and life after sentence. Family formation is understood not just as a biological and affective function, but also as a measure of the economy and society in which an ex-convict had to make a life. Could that convict—man or woman—form and sustain a household in that social and economic context that would in turn produce a second and third generation? Given those two fundamental measures of human “success”, what were the relative significance of the three life stages constructed in the convict's life course by the fact of conviction and transportation on the outcome of their lives? How important respectively were early life influences, experience under sentence and its insults and stresses, or the difficulties of life after sentence bearing the stigma of convictism—the ‘hated stain’—in the individual's life course? In other words, what impact did transportation and penal servitude have on the system's subjects?³

Framing the penal system

For all its cruelties, the convict system was an institution regulated by the English Common Law and designed for rehabilitation as well as punishment.

Unlike slaves, convicts retained legal rights, their punishments were ordered by a magistrate after a hearing, and their felonies within the system went before courts of law and juries. They could earn money when on a ticket of leave and they could take legal action on their own behalf. This is not to argue that many did not suffer injustice, extreme cruelty and arbitrary rule. However, even more important, unlike slaves, convicts could aspire to and earn freedom. Once they completed their sentence, they were free again; if they received a Conditional Pardon, they were free provided they did not return home; even if they had life sentences, good or meritorious behavior could secure forgiveness and liberty.⁴

All they needed to do was to submit to convict discipline, work conscientiously, hold their tongues, defer to their betters, remain sober, avoid public houses and brothels, not wander off or abscond, attend church reverently, not fall pregnant, not be caught in *flagrante delicto* and not commit a felony. The paper panopticon minutely recorded the progress of their moral career, to use Goffman's term.⁵ As a 'total institution' it was both a means of management and a moral laboratory. Convicts' 'characters' and temperaments were tested and those with strong self control, who could manipulate the cultures of deference and dutifulness expected of nineteenth social subordinates, who could play a role were rewarded with an unblemished conduct record and sometimes early release. Some, like Maria Drake, per the *Margaret* 1843, were still capable of evil: after protestations of innocence and mistaken identity for her crime of deception in London, she did not put a foot wrong until 1858, when as a free woman under the name of Maria Thompson, she attempted to poison a boy and his mother with a cake laced with arsenic. In court she was elegantly dressed, as she had been in the Old Bailey in 1841, and the courtroom so packed with fascinated gawkers that the floor threatened to collapse. She was sentenced to death.⁶

Submitting to convict discipline was beyond many, especially, as Lucy Frost has so movingly shown, convict servants faced unending harassment, bullying and exploitation.⁷ This was particularly so during the first penal regime known as assignment, when convicts were assigned to employers and the discipline and management of convicts was effectively outsourced and only secondary

offenders were under the surveillance of prison regimes. The shift to the probation system in 1841 brought greater uniformity of practice, better record keeping and a new focus on punishment of the mind and reformation of the soul rather than punishment of the body. Solitary confinement replaced the lash for men, and incarceration in the female factory, isolation and silent treatment became more common for women. The ultimate, and rare, punishment for women was head shaving.

The Data

The 3,979 women arrived on 27 ships between 1825 and 1853, nineteen of them collecting prisoners from English and Scottish gaols and departing from English ports, and eight, between 1843 and 1853 sailing direct from Ireland, spanning pre and post-Famine society. Volunteer researchers working online using multiple archival and genealogical resources endeavoured to reconstruct their lives before sentence from information about trials, family records and the convict indents; coded their time under sentence after deciphering their digitized conduct records; established links of marriages, in particular through the Convict Department's permissions to marry records and searched for marriages, children and deaths in vital registrations and sightings in historical reports. The Government encouraged convicts to marry as a means of socialization and colony building, and with the high sex imbalance in the population, convict women had a high marriage rate in Tasmania. Women who were to become 'mothers of the colony' typically were transported in adolescence from rural settings, and were quickly married after arrival. They were then assigned to their husbands and could settle down to family life.

Place of birth and place of conviction were corrected from what were phonetic transcriptions of oral testimony by the convict at the taking of the indent and coded carefully for the type of formal economy and crime economy: ranging from villages, to market towns, to industrial communities and cities, to port cities (Liverpool, Bristol, Plymouth, Southampton, Belfast, Cork, Glasgow and Edinburgh), London as a category of its own, and overseas. For women in particular, these categories selected out those environments where prostitution

was more common and where women were more likely to be unsupported by kin and community. We also looked at the degree of mobility between birth place and conviction place, coded for being vagrant, 'on the town', for family composition reported by the convict (usually consistently available only after 1841), religion, literacy, skill level, age, height and type of crime. Theft of food or animals was separated from larceny of goods for sale or pawn and of theft from the person, which was most often committed by prostitutes.

Throughout the period, hard labour, which could be onerous and painful, was the most common insult on the body. Therefore we have framed the penal system as a stress regime where convicts' reactions to stress and provocation and experience of punishments can be calibrated as degrees of reactive behavior, beginning with zero and advancing in a hierarchy from insolence, refusal of orders, violence to clothes and furniture destruction as the mark of desperation; and degrees of insults to body and mind coded from 0 to 5, and taking into account the amount of hard labour, days in solitary and so on. The conduct offences were coded for behavior that might be indicative of character and temperament: drunkenness, sexual misconduct, violence and absconding. Finally the frequency of offending was coded. Often this corresponded with the degree of insults, but not always as was often the case with older women who drank to excess but who were lightly punished with fines. Solitary confinement and silent treatment were appallingly administered, with convicts confined in total darkness with only two buckets—one for food and one for toilet. Many came to regard the silent treatment as worse than physical pain and once it was adopted in the London holding prisons, convicts were so disoriented and disturbed that they would do almost anything to qualify for transportation.

All the coding and historical research was authenticated by the research team and adequate referencing was demanded of those creating new entries in the master database. Identifying convicts outside the penal system was complicated by common names, by a significant rate of breakdown of convict marriages and the tendency to quickly remarry on widowhood, but especially by the high incidence of common law relationships. More than half the male convicts over

the transportation era, ultimately left Tasmania; women were more likely to remain on the island. When death certificates were identified, researchers had access to the transcriptions to 1899 for Tasmania and the project purchased those from Victoria and New South Wales. Other jurisdictions proved too expensive but had much lower numbers of found convicts. The Australian indexes vary in their detail from state to state and searching remains patchy for Queensland and Tasmania after 1899. We would expect the success rate to improve over time with new records becoming available.

Results

Background characteristics

Table 1 shows the background characteristics of the sample of 3,979 women transported to Tasmania. Forty per cent of the women were born in England, 41 per cent in Ireland, 15 per cent in Scotland and 3 per cent in other places. Forty-two per cent were born in a village, 26 per cent in a town, while 18 per cent were convicted in a village and 34 per cent convicted in a town. The vast majority of the women were convicted of some form of theft. The average age of the women was 27 years. Twenty-nine per cent could read and write and 63 per cent were unskilled. One-quarter were on the town before conviction. Fifty-eight per cent were transported during the Assignment Period and 42 per cent during the Probation period.

Pre-transportation mobility

The population was highly mobile, with between 43 and 51 per cent of the women born in England, Ireland, Scotland or other British Isles being convicted in a place other than their birthplace (not shown). Table 1 also displays a logistic regression showing odds ratios ($\exp(B)$) of the likelihood of women being convicted outside their birthplace by background characteristics. Results significant at the 5 per cent level are highlighted in gray.

The Irish and Scots were more likely to have migrated than were the English. Those born in a village were the most likely to have migrated, with the likelihood falling in more urbanized areas. Those convicted in London were the most likely to have migrated, those convicted in a village the least likely. These signal the

general trend of migration from country to city.

Those convicted of theft of food or animals were the least likely to have migrated. Older women, more literate women, women on the town and women transported in the earlier period were more likely to have been convicted outside their birthplace.

Similar results were found when analysis was restricted to women born in Ireland (not shown).

Table 1. Background characteristics of sample of transported women (percentage distribution); and logistic regression: place of conviction is different from birthplace (migration)

Characteristic	Percentage distribution	Logistic regression: migration		
		Exp(B)	Sig.	
Country of birth n=3,825	England	40.4		
	Ireland	41.2	1.26	0.065
	Scotland	15.4	1.50	0.009
	Other British	2.0	1.22	0.545
	Other	1.0	--	0.998
Place of birth n=3,835	Village	41.8		
	Town	25.5	0.74	0.010
	Industrial urban	7.5	0.30	0.000
	Port city	15.3	0.20	0.000
	London	8.7	0.02	0.000
	Other country	1.1	--	0.999
Place of conviction n=3,911	Village	18.3		
	Town	34.0	1.87	0.000
	Industrial urban	10.4	3.84	0.000
	Port city	21.7	4.11	0.000
	London	15.6	28.32	0.000
Crime n=3,904	Larceny from the person	19.8		
	Theft of valuables/burglary	62.0	0.84	0.125
	Theft of food	2.9	0.47	0.005
	Theft of animals	6.0	0.52	0.001
	Robbery under arms/highway robbery	1.6	1.17	0.655
	Political/protest	0.1	0.00	0.999
	Forgery/counterfeiting	2.2	1.63	0.146
	Arson	2.6	1.11	0.665
	Infanticide	0.5	0.48	0.220
	Homicide	1.1	0.63	0.265
	Other	1.0	0.60	0.183
Age	Average 27.3 years		1.02	0.000
Literacy n=3,388	Nil	35.4		
	Read only	35.6	1.21	0.069
	Read and write	29.0	1.33	0.019
Occupation n=3,641	Unskilled	63.0		
	Semi-skilled	27.8	1.11	0.318
	Skilled	9.1	1.19	0.299
On the town n=3,780	No	75.4		
	Yes	24.6	1.25	0.033
Year of transportation n=3,979	1825-45	57.6		
	1847-53	42.4	0.77	0.006

Pre-transportation marital status and birth-family status

Tables 2 and 3 show pre-transportation marital status and birth-family status of the sample. Most women (84–91%) under age 25 years were single. Fewer than half the women aged 25+ years were married, ranging from just over a quarter of English and Irish women transported during the Probation period to 46 per cent of Scottish women transported during the Assignment period. More than a quarter of young women had no parents. Of women aged 25+, almost half the English, two-thirds of the Irish and 60 per cent of the Scots had no parents; between 8 and 21 per cent had no extant birth family.

Table 2. Pre-transportation marital status by country of birth, transportation period and age

Country of birth	Year	Age	Pre-transportation marital status (%)				Total	N
			Single	Married	Widowed			
England	1825-45	13-24	90	8	2	100	616	
		25-70	34	39	26	100	493	
	1847-53	13-24	91	7	2	100	236	
		25-70	47	28	25	100	186	
Ireland	1825-45	13-24	84	14	2	100	243	
		25-70	36	32	32	100	339	
	1847-53	13-24	90	7	3	100	492	
		25-70	52	27	21	100	486	
Scotland	1825-45	13-24	91	7	2	100	182	
		25-70	31	46	22	100	181	
	1847-53	13-24	88	10	2	100	111	
		25-70	39	37	24	100	110	

Table 3. Pre-transportation birth-family status by country of birth, transportation period and age

Country of birth	Year	Age	Pre-transportation birth-family status (%)					Total	N
			None	Siblings only	Mother alive	Father alive	Both parents alive		
England	1825-45	13-24	6	18	26	32	18	100	245
		25-70	13	35	20	21	10	100	210
	1847-53	13-24	5	21	20	20	34	100	235
		25-70	10	38	21	14	17	100	178
Ireland	1825-45	13-24	5	28	20	25	21	100	186
		25-70	21	43	17	12	7	100	237
	1847-53	13-24	6	36	25	17	16	100	423
		25-70	13	50	17	14	7	100	368
Scotland	1825-45	13-24	5	13	18	39	25	100	61
		25-70	15	47	20	11	7	100	55
	1847-53	13-24	6	32	23	27	13	100	111
		25-70	8	50	23	8	10	100	98

Survival and causes of death

Life tables for the convict women—taking into account age at transportation and age at death—indicate that future life expectancy at age 20 was much lower than that for comparable populations by between 4 and 13 years. However for convict women who survived to their 50th birthday, future life expectancy was similar to that of comparable populations.

Table 4. Future female life expectancy in years—convicts, Tasmania, and England and Wales—given survival to exact age 20 years and exact age 50 years

Future life expectancy given survival to:	Convicts				Tasmania	England & Wales
	1825–39	1841–44	1845–50	1851–53	Second half of nineteenth century	
exact age 20	31	29	37	33	42	41
exact age 50	19	18	20	19	21	20

Convict women in the sample were three times as likely to die from murder, twice as likely to die from suicide and a third more likely to die from accidents than the general Tasmanian female population (not shown).

Fertility

Convict women who survived to age 45 had an average of 3.76 recorded births each. Those who arrived 1825–39 had the fewest average births: 3.42. Those who arrived 1851–53 had the most: 4.24. For England and Wales, average number of births is estimated to decline from 5.75 in the early nineteenth century to around 5 by 1870 (not shown).

Behaviour and punishment under sentence

Logistic regressions for characteristics related to behaviour and punishment under sentence are shown in Tables 5 and 6. Irish and Scottish women convicts had more conduct offences and alcohol-related offences compared to the English. The Irish had more reactive and violent reactive behaviour while Scottish women accumulated more insults and were more likely to abscond. Women convicted in a village were better behaved on all measures. Those convicted in a port city or London were more likely to have violent reactive behaviour. Those convicted of stealing food or animals were better behaved. Those convicted of larceny from the person were the worst behaved except for the ‘other’ category of crime.

Table 5. Logistic regressions: behaviour under sentence

		6+ conduct		3+ alcohol		Any reactive		Violent reactive	
		Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.
Country of birth	England	1.55	0.001	1.77	0.001	2.14	0.000	2.43	0.002
	Ireland	1.71	0.001	1.90	0.001	1.33	0.072	0.77	0.530
	Scotland	1.25	0.520	1.76	0.174	1.48	0.229	1.23	0.795
	Other	0.31	0.218	0.64	0.690	1.31	0.754	0.20	0.312
Place of birth	Village								
	Town	1.19	0.150	1.15	0.361	1.28	0.029	1.27	0.398
	Industrial urban	1.91	0.003	1.22	0.469	1.58	0.036	2.26	0.087
	Port city	1.54	0.003	1.54	0.014	1.14	0.369	1.20	0.564
	London	1.09	0.692	1.30	0.295	1.06	0.782	0.90	0.816
	Other country	5.35	0.062	1.93	0.521	1.27	0.771	7.01	0.127
Place of conviction	Village								
	Town	1.77	0.000	1.52	0.055	1.73	0.000	1.90	0.122
	Industrial urban	2.04	0.002	2.53	0.001	1.61	0.025	2.30	0.132
	Port city	2.15	0.000	2.46	0.000	1.79	0.000	3.40	0.007
	London	2.26	0.000	2.48	0.000	1.78	0.002	2.97	0.022
Other country	0.00	1.000	0.00	1.000	0.00	1.000	0.75	1.000	
Sentence	7 years								
	8-12 years	0.94	0.622	1.03	0.840	0.93	0.512	0.95	0.846
	14-15 years	1.34	0.085	1.63	0.011	1.07	0.677	1.11	0.760
	Life	1.38	0.202	1.86	0.032	1.00	0.998	1.10	0.851
Crime	Larceny from the person								
	Theft of valuables/ burglary	0.81	0.055	0.68	0.005	0.88	0.257	0.83	0.445
	Theft of food	0.44	0.010	0.29	0.007	0.54	0.019	0.28	0.226
	Theft of animals	0.31	0.000	0.18	0.000	0.51	0.001	0.61	0.401
	Robbery under arms/highway robbery	0.73	0.361	0.69	0.371	1.18	0.615	2.07	0.188
	Political/protest	0.00	0.999	0.00	0.999	0.77	0.794	0.00	0.999
	Forgery/ counterfeiting	0.44	0.023	0.40	0.028	0.50	0.036	0.62	0.548
	Arson	0.51	0.033	0.20	0.010	0.70	0.168	0.30	0.254
	Infanticide	0.00	0.999	0.00	0.999	0.32	0.151	0.00	0.999
	Homicide	0.55	0.199	0.57	0.285	0.84	0.687	0.00	0.998
	Other	2.35	0.020	1.31	0.549	2.47	0.021	2.87	0.120
	Age		0.98	0.002	1.05	0.000	0.99	0.004	0.94
Literacy	Nil								
	Read only	1.08	0.479	1.03	0.825	0.95	0.639	0.97	0.895
	Read and write	0.95	0.658	0.91	0.559	0.81	0.077	1.21	0.481
Occupation	Unskilled								
	Semi-skilled	1.23	0.049	1.32	0.029	0.99	0.898	1.05	0.835
	Skilled	1.01	0.955	0.91	0.648	0.69	0.023	0.92	0.830
On the town	No								
	Yes	1.52	0.000	1.46	0.005	1.33	0.005	0.92	0.716
Period of transportation	Assignment period								
	Probation period	0.62	0.000	0.63	0.000	0.43	0.000	0.65	0.063

Table 6. Logistic regressions: absconding and punishment under sentence

		Absconded		Any insults		Multiple punishments	
		Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.
Country of birth	England						
	Ireland	1.23	0.141	0.85	0.231	1.00	0.991
	Scotland	1.42	0.030	1.97	0.000	0.96	0.924
	Other British	0.85	0.656	1.00	1.000	2.26	0.229
	Other	0.78	0.800	0.83	0.828	0.11	0.175
Place of birth	Village						
	Town	1.05	0.698	1.11	0.371	0.73	0.279
	Industrial urban	1.96	0.002	0.96	0.869	2.56	0.048
	Port city	1.16	0.336	1.00	0.991	1.12	0.744
	London	0.90	0.626	0.83	0.404	1.18	0.691
	Other country	1.03	0.977	0.79	0.783	11.89	0.052
Place of conviction	Village						
	Town	1.10	0.517	1.61	0.000	1.64	0.244
	Industrial urban	1.07	0.772	2.09	0.001	0.51	0.295
	Port city	1.18	0.343	1.96	0.000	1.57	0.351
	London	1.04	0.838	2.52	0.000	1.89	0.196
Other country	0.00	1.000	0.00	1.000	0.26	1.000	
Sentence	7 years						
	8-12 years	0.97	0.777	1.32	0.017	1.01	0.975
	14-15 years	1.56	0.010	1.24	0.235	2.17	0.012
	Life	1.54	0.095	1.44	0.173	1.15	0.802
Crime	Larceny from the person						
	Theft of valuables/burglary	0.86	0.203	0.89	0.331	0.45	0.001
	Theft of food	0.72	0.252	0.56	0.018	0.00	0.996
	Theft of animals	0.61	0.018	0.40	0.000	0.25	0.034
	Robbery under arms/highway robbery	1.02	0.949	1.46	0.345	1.40	0.551
	Political/protest	0.86	0.893	1.98	0.556	0.00	0.999
	Forgery/counterfeiting	0.92	0.806	0.61	0.121	0.63	0.478
	Arson	0.58	0.043	0.77	0.281	0.00	0.996
	Infanticide	0.00	0.998	0.10	0.001	0.00	0.999
	Homicide	0.51	0.145	0.57	0.179	0.00	0.998
	Other	1.06	0.884	2.62	0.041	0.64	0.674
Age		0.96	0.000	0.98	0.000	0.97	0.016
Literacy	Nil						
	Read only	1.07	0.541	1.16	0.158	1.13	0.607
	Read and write	1.13	0.348	1.10	0.433	0.70	0.231
Occupation	Unskilled						
	Semi-skilled	1.03	0.770	1.47	0.000	0.58	0.055
	Skilled	0.88	0.450	1.00	0.998	0.43	0.082
On the town	No						
	Yes	1.53	0.000	1.60	0.000	0.62	0.063
Period of transportation	Assignment period						
	Probation period	2.67	0.000	0.70	0.000	0.28	0.000

Those who were older at transportation had fewer conduct offences but more alcohol-related offences, less reactive behaviour, less violent reactive behaviour, fewer abscondings, and less accumulated insult. Those who were 'on the town' before transportation had more conduct offences, alcohol-related offences, reactive behaviour, abscondings and insults. Those who arrived during the Probation period had fewer offences, reactive behaviour and insults, but were more likely to abscond.

Table 7. Logistic regressions: life outcomes; Cox regression: mortality

		Marriage after transportation		Births after transportation		Grandchildren		Traced to death		Mortality	
		Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.
Country of birth	England										
	Ireland	0.51	0.000	1.46	0.018	1.10	0.640	1.02	0.900	1.16	0.110
	Scotland	0.85	0.444	1.50	0.035	2.07	0.002	1.19	0.294	1.15	0.189
	Other British	2.17	0.221	1.12	0.791	1.09	0.868	0.74	0.406	1.25	0.353
	Other	1.45	0.745	1.28	0.828	0.53	0.704	1.99	0.562	1.05	0.926
Place of birth	Village										
	Town	0.78	0.086	0.99	0.948	0.87	0.412	0.94	0.621	0.90	0.139
	Industrial urban	0.59	0.087	1.02	0.952	1.12	0.719	0.92	0.700	1.12	0.456
	Port city	0.75	0.116	1.12	0.505	0.88	0.582	0.92	0.591	1.02	0.820
	London	0.43	0.002	0.89	0.626	0.89	0.690	0.83	0.380	1.27	0.082
Other country	0.21	0.163	0.99	0.990	0.29	0.455	0.37	0.408	1.17	0.762	
Place of conviction	Village										
	Town	0.87	0.404	0.76	0.082	0.84	0.397	0.95	0.672	0.96	0.683
	Industrial urban	1.54	0.147	0.62	0.060	0.70	0.271	0.87	0.508	0.96	0.753
	Port city	1.06	0.796	0.58	0.006	0.73	0.255	1.07	0.714	0.98	0.863
	London	1.29	0.298	0.62	0.034	1.23	0.483	1.37	0.117	1.03	0.814
Other country	--	1.000	--	1.000	0.00	1.000	--	1.000	20.77	0.005	
Sentence	7 years										
	8-12 years	2.07	0.000	1.04	0.757	0.87	0.427	1.13	0.296	0.91	0.206
	14-15 years	1.79	0.015	1.64	0.018	1.00	0.988	1.15	0.424	1.20	0.107
	Life	3.31	0.002	1.16	0.633	2.28	0.022	1.79	0.024	1.15	0.379
Crime	Larceny from the person										
	Theft of valuables/burglary	1.02	0.902	1.31	0.041	1.43	0.049	1.15	0.225	0.87	0.082
	Theft of food	1.76	0.104	1.77	0.066	2.54	0.009	1.27	0.346	0.82	0.229
	Theft of animals	1.22	0.426	2.39	0.000	1.48	0.195	1.61	0.016	0.82	0.105
	Robbery under arms/highway robbery	2.50	0.156	0.68	0.360	0.91	0.879	1.20	0.624	0.62	0.040
	Political/protest	0.32	0.259	0.34	0.382	0.00	0.999	1.24	0.826	1.98	0.243
	Forgery/counterfeiting	1.17	0.722	1.44	0.366	0.64	0.447	0.71	0.301	1.04	0.853
	Arson	1.54	0.295	2.21	0.025	2.78	0.008	1.02	0.938	0.76	0.100
	Infanticide	1.70	0.631	3.39	0.144	1.88	0.393	1.41	0.630	0.56	0.174
	Homicide	0.48	0.168	1.31	0.594	0.81	0.741	1.31	0.548	1.01	0.959
	Other	0.90	0.806	2.05	0.112	0.44	0.310	0.94	0.867	0.68	0.151
Age	0.95	0.000	0.87	0.000	0.93	0.000	1.01	0.183	0.99	0.043	
Literacy	Nil										
	Read only	0.79	0.067	0.87	0.249	0.82	0.209	1.07	0.545	1.10	0.166
	Read and write	0.88	0.389	0.95	0.701	0.87	0.445	0.97	0.810	1.00	0.980
Occupation	Unskilled										
	Semi-skilled	1.24	0.112	1.12	0.342	0.69	0.020	0.99	0.929	1.01	0.858
	Skilled	0.97	0.862	0.85	0.411	0.83	0.456	0.92	0.640	1.21	0.090
On the town	No										
	Yes	0.89	0.385	0.54	0.000	0.67	0.013	0.95	0.629	1.32	0.000
Period of transportation	Assignment										
	Probation	1.54	0.000	1.53	0.000	1.52	0.002	0.89	0.183	0.92	0.068
Number of alcohol-related offences	0.93	0.000	0.91	0.000	0.88	0.002	0.98	0.331	1.02	0.044	
Reactive behaviour	None										
	Insolence, bad language	0.83	0.141	0.93	0.523	0.74	0.053	0.86	0.158		
	Refusal to work	0.70	0.046	0.78	0.157	0.49	0.005	0.73	0.034		
	Tearing clothes etc	0.38	0.042	0.49	0.170	0.17	0.099	1.54	0.419		
Threats or violence	0.67	0.131	0.81	0.414	0.62	0.182	0.81	0.339			
Marital status	Single										
	Married	0.62	0.001	1.16	0.288	0.93	0.703	0.88	0.275		
	Widowed	0.99	0.954	1.02	0.934	0.95	0.845	1.11	0.477		
Married after transportation	No										
	Yes			2.77	0.000	8.83	0.000	1.55	0.000		

Life outcomes: marriage, births, grand children, traced to death, mortality

Regressions related to life outcomes are shown in Table 7. The Irish were less likely to marry but more likely to have children (controlling for marriage) than were the English. Scottish women were more likely to have children and grandchildren than were the English.

Those born in London were less likely to marry than were those from a village. Those convicted in a port city or London were less likely to have children than were those convicted in a village. Those convicted of larceny from the person were less likely to have children and grandchildren.

Older women at transportation were less likely to marry, to have children or grandchildren. Women who had been on the town were less likely to have children or grandchildren, and had higher mortality.

Those with more alcohol-related offences were less likely to marry, to have children or grandchildren and had higher mortality. Women who reacted by refusing to work or tearing clothes were less likely to marry. Women who were married when they were transported were less likely to marry after transportation.

Discussion

On the key measures of life span and family formation, transportation exacted a penalty on convict women, they died earlier, particularly those who died before the age of 50 and they had fewer children. Their lives were more perilous: they were three times more likely to be murdered than the general female population of Tasmania, twice as likely to take their own lives and more vulnerable to death by misadventure. For the most vulnerable, life was nasty, brutish and short.

The extreme difference in life expectancy between those who died before 50 years of age, ranging from 4 to 13 years in average life expectancy points to a critical divide in emancipist society, one that reflected the wider society: between what they called at the time, the 'respectable' and the 'rough' or casual poor.⁸ Those who died young were those who reacted most to convict discipline, who drank more, who protested more, who infringed against sexual mores. The

logistic regression revealed that those who were noted to have been 'on the town' before transportation were more disturbed under sentence, were less likely to marry, have children and live beyond the age of 50. The other group who were similar were those convicted of stealing from the person, a common offence among prostitutes. These convicts were convicted predominantly in those centres where the crime economy sustained large numbers of prostitutes: London and port cities that were service and transit economies with large populations of unattached males, casual employment, service and opportunistic businesses. They were magnets for migrants, for runaways, for the destitute and the homeless as well as for the ambitious and hopeful. By contrast, convicts from villages who were convicted near their native place, who stole food or animals, were the best behaved within the system and the most 'normal' or 'respectable' outside it. This could be interpreted 'morally' as a difference in character, in degree of criminality, of psychological dysfunction. The 'rough' were individuals less in control of their emotions and desires. They refused to defer, bow their heads and comply. The rebels have been somewhat celebrated by historians for their 'feistiness' and resistance, for exercising their 'agency' under oppression.⁹ That could have been the case in many ways, but it was imprudent. It displayed poor survival skills within a total institution, where there were clear lines of ultimate escape. Their 'reactive behaviour', however understandable, was unwise and 'smarter' convicts knew that and worked their way out of the system.

The criminal records of the women convicted changed over time, with more women from port cities and urban areas in the assignment period, and many more country women from Ireland after 1846. The non-urban Irish were the least likely to have been 'on the town' and presented in Van Diemen's Land with plentiful potential husbands among the Irish men transported in addition to the English and Scots, married better and had more children. Those who arrived after 1850 were the most likely to abscond or disappear as the convict system collapsed under the mass departure of convicts and emancipists for the mainland and its gold rush.

'On the town' nearly always indicated that the woman was living from selling

sex, but not universally. Mary Ann Henry, born Liverpool in 1821 and convicted there in 1845 of stabbing another woman, had been 'on the town' for eight to nine years, since she was 16, but living from prostitution for only two. Her mother was widowed, and she had three other siblings living in Liverpool.¹⁰ Other women, not described as 'on the town' were still picking up men and taking them home before robbing them. The line between casual and fulltime prostitution and exchanging sex for food, drink or favours, was porous. The phrase 'on the town' itself really meant 'without a household' in a society where survival, especially for women and children depended on being a member of a household that sustained them either as a family member or as a servant. Those without a household were entitled, by the Poor Law certainly still in rural areas, to support from the parish: to be 'on the parish'.¹¹ Therefore two characteristics of the female population in this sample are significant: first that overwhelmingly they were women without male breadwinners—they were single or widowed, especially if they were over 25; and second that they were more likely than men to have left their native place and to have been convicted away from their parish of settlement. The rural equivalent of 'on the town' was exemplified by the exclusion of itinerant female agricultural labourers from contact with the farmer's family, lest they 'contaminate' the women folk. Homeless agricultural people were 'rough' and not respectable, like tinkers, travellers and gypsies.¹²

Therefore their offending was part of a pattern of homelessness, disconnection from kin and community, abandonment, desertion and often, cruelty and abuse. Unprotected women and were raped, beaten and abused. Their illegitimate children rarely survived if they attempted to keep them in their own care. There are glimpses and hints of abusive childhoods, both sexual abuse and mental and physical cruelty. Girls who were on the town in cities were often runaways, as they are still. Or their families were too destitute to support them. Many would have been servants who had been seduced, impregnated and cast aside having 'lost their character' and the written references that were a woman's passport to employment. Failed *de facto* relationships are noted in the indents and women became partners in crime with their sexual partners. But there were also female criminal gangs—such as the infamous 'Potteries' gang who operated in the

Midlands.¹³ Street women often worked in teams for stealing both from the person and stealing items for pawn or sale. Among the convicts were wild, angry, 'delinquent' girls, then as now, enraged by abuse, quick to anger and take offence. Their socialization made compliance within a total institution exceptionally difficult, unlike the 'smarter' calculating thieves who had carried out more pre-meditated thefts from their mistresses' premises.

Being 'on the town' therefore implied a level of deprivation, physical exposure, irregular food, excessive alcohol, disease and violence that was the consequence of being without a household and a male protector. Finally, there was the danger of sexually transmitted diseases and the low fertility and significantly lower life expectancy of this sub-population among the Tasmanian convict women, suggest the terrible penalty paid for prostitution in pelvic inflammatory disease and syphilis. Indeed for a time, syphilitic women from the locked ward at London workhouses were sent to Van Diemen's Land to relieve the burden on the service.¹⁴ And once in the convict system, damaged women continued to react flare up and be 'insolent', disobey orders, refuse to work, run away, get drunk and seek quick money in a brothel. Much convict misbehaviour such as staying out after hours was in fact forming sexual relationships that, if the parties' records warranted it, ended in a convict marriage. The highly reactive behavior that was more disturbed was of a different order.

Therefore, this early analysis is suggesting that early life and pre-transportation factors were often the most significant in determining the level of insult suffered under sentence and the quality and length of life after sentence. Of course individuals did not conform to this trend: they took their transportation as an opportunity for a new life, and found real happiness in marriage and family. Their self-discipline and capacity to form lasting relationships were admirable; their less fortunate sisters too often had sad and broken lives that ended in alcoholism, madness and isolation.

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