Learning to Desist

Exploring the relationship between engagement in prison education and desistance from crime

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Declaration

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP:

I, Fiona McGregor, declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Education, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney. This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution. This research is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the relationship between the engagement in prison education and desistance from crime. As a practitioner, I saw a disconnect between the growth learners appeared to experience over time in class and the dominant deficits-based policies, curriculum and pedagogical practices. Education was being understood as a criminological factor based on neoliberal ideas around increased employability leading to reduced reoffending. It felt such an understanding may not sufficiently capture the value of education for learners in prison nor its impact. This thesis applies the theoretical lenses of learning and desistance to adult male learners' experience of intensive prison education to develop a more robust understanding of its impact on incarcerated learners and the value of quality education within prisons.

Significantly, this thesis adopts atypical prison education research methodology, drawing on a strengths-based, more socially-just Appreciative Inquiry approach, together with ethnographic case study and thematic analysis to explore the self-identified best learning experiences of and impact on thirteen adult male learners in full-time basic skills education. The unique purpose-built Intensive Learning Centre in a medium security prison in New South Wales provided an exceptional opportunity to research the learning process when the conditions of learning space, program, staff relations and equal pay opportunities are optimal.

Findings indicated that even the most reluctant learners seemed to experience attitudinal shifts towards their capacity to learn, capabilities, and both the desire and ability to desist from crime. Three key themes of *Being*, *Becoming* and *Belonging* were identified as significant to the learners, especially in relation to their experiences of place, culture, identity and basic skills acquisition which were bound by a sense that the educational space, programs and relationships were profoundly normalising and emancipatory.

This thesis shows that engagement in high-quality prison education, even at the basic skills level, within fit-for-purpose learning spaces does much more than increase learners' employability by raising their literacy and numeracy levels to a 'functional'

standard. In addition, basic-skills education in prison can support the development of learners' hope, capability, agency, empathy and an interest in civic engagement – characteristics mirrored by successful desisters. Accordingly, this has important implications for prison education policy, programs and pedagogy as well as staff professional development. This thesis suggests that understanding desistance as a learning process and learning as a capability-building process beyond employability may help us support our learners better, develop and deliver better prison education and, ultimately, better prisons in which the desistance process can be catalysed and assisted.

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Abbreviations

AEVTI	Adult Education & Vocational Training Institute, the Registered Training Organisation within CSNSW responsible for most education and training of prisoners at the time this research was undertaken (it was subsequently and almost exclusively subcontracted out to private providers from January 2017).
CEO	Corrections Education Officer
CSNSW	Corrective Services New South Wales
DOC	Designing Out Crime Centre, School of Design, Architecture and Building, University of Technology Sydney.
ILC	Intensive Learning Centre
NSW	New South Wales, Australia
SCEO	Senior Corrections Education Officer (Education Manager)
SMAP	Special Management Area Placement
UTS	University of Technology Sydney

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Introduction

This thesis aims to examine the value learners find in basic skills education in prison and to explore the relationship basic prison education might have with desistance from crime. Much has been made of the 'transformative' power of prison education, particularly higher education, to reduce recidivism (Chappell, 2004; Stevens & Ward, 1997; Burke & Vivian, 2001; Pike, 2013; Fabelo, 2002; Stocks, 2012; Harer, 1994, Szifiris, 2017; Bennalick, 2018), but less so about those engaged in basic skills (Nichols, 2016; Garner, 2017; Warner, 1996; Behan, 2014). Even less has considered the relationship between learning and desistance from crime as most desistance literature focuses on the experiences of those post-release. Within a critical education theory framework, this thesis considers the process of learning at basic or entry level, examining how it might support the process of desistance among those still incarcerated.

Education is considered to be a human right for all, including prisoners[1]. Principle 6 of the United Nations Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners (1990) states: 'All prisoners shall have the right to take part in cultural activities and education aimed at the full development of the human personality.' This is reinforced by the UN Special Rapporteur's special report on prison education:

> Human dignity, core to human rights, implies respect for the individual, in his actuality and also in his potential. As education is uniquely and pre-eminently concerned with learning, fulfilling potential and development, it should be a fundamental concern of education in detention, not simply a utilitarian add-on should resources allow it. (Muñoz, 2009:7)

Implicit within the rhetoric is a humanist approach to education; a sense that even

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[1] For a detailed discussion of education as a right/human right, see Vorhaus (2014) *The Prisoner's Right to Education: a philosophical survey*.

within prison, learners can flourish and fulfil their potential. In this sense, the purpose of education in prisons would be no different to that in the community. For example, Dewey (1916:362, 363), asserted the dominant vocation of all human beings at all times is living – intellectual and moral growth' and '[m]oreover, the discovery of capacity and aptitude will be a constant process as long as growth continues.' Dewey's influence on modern, western education systems is pervasive, and notions of personal growth and lifelong learning are both widely accepted and deeply embedded (Fallace, 2011; Biesta & Miedema, 1986; Hunt, 1981).

The focus on personal growth and development can, however, ignore social injustice and inequity. Questions should always be asked about the purpose of education more widely and of prison education in particular. Literacy has long been associated with access to social and economic inclusion and political empowerment and as such is mentioned specifically in Rule 91 of the Mandela Rules (2015):

> The education of illiterate prisoners and of young prisoners shall be compulsory and special attention shall be paid to it by the prison administration.

Literacy education is never without context and never neutral (Macedo, 2000), however, and curriculum, content and progression pathways, particularly when increasingly restricted in scope, can all become a form of social control:

> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity of it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.
> (Shaull, 1970)

In her Nobel Prize Lecture, Ostrom (2009:435-6) challenges us to think about public institutions in a different way:

> [...]extensive empirical research leads me to argue that instead, a core goal of public policy should be to facilitate the development of public institutions that bring out the best in humans.[2]

Ostrom suggests the purpose of public institutions, like schools, hospitals and even *prisons*, is to help people flourish and develop their full potential. While this seems typically Scandinavian in its radical socialism, this concept of public institutions existing in order for humans to flourish is alive and well in Australia. Indeed, the Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008:7) articulates this, stating its first goal is that the public institutions of Australian schools will:

- promote a culture of excellence in all schools, by supporting them to provide challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all students to explore and build on their gifts and talents
- promote personalised learning that aims to fulfil the diverse capabilities of each young Australian.[3] (emphasis mine)

In response to the Melbourne Declaration, a capabilities approach to education has been developed, articulated in the Australian Curriculum, implemented in 2010. The impact of Freire's (1970) work within mainstream education has been substantial and far-reaching. It has, undoubtedly, affected Australian education evidenced by the inclusion of 'critical and creative thinking' as a key general capability. Freire (1970) and Giroux (1983), both highlighted the importance of education, particularly literacy along with critical and creative thinking, in order to equip learners with the skills they need to question, challenge and change dominant ideology and social inequity. Both were convinced education could be transformative, but it was less the individual who

[2] Ostrom was awarded the Nobel Prize for her work on economic governance, in which she showed that common resources can be successfully managed without government regulation or privatization.

[3] http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf, p7, retrieved October 2015.

needed to change and more that society needed to be changed by literate, articulate groups of co-learners/workers who could challenge the status quo. As such, the combination of literacy/ies and critical thinking skills is emancipatory (Freire, 1970).

In recent years, education provision has changed significantly in Corrective Services New South Wales' (CSNSW) prisons. At the time this research commenced, basic skills prison education was delivered by staff directly employed by CSNSW, working within its Registered Training Organisation (RTO) responsible for prisoner education and training, called the Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute (AEVTI). To be eligible for employment as a teacher within CSNSW prisons, staff needed to be qualified teachers and to hold a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

The end of 2016 signalled the end of education provision as it was known, resulting in a raft of redundancies for teaching staff whose jobs no longer existed. Of the 152.5 existing teaching posts, 132.5 were deleted (NSW Teacher's Federation, 21 October 2016, https://www.nswtf.org.au/news/2016/10/21/petition-debate-fires-state-parliament.html). While some of these positions were converted to clerical, non-teaching positions within education (to assess and enrol inmates in appropriate courses), most of the teaching posts were deleted in order to outsource the provision of prison education to a private contractor from the beginning of 2017. The contractor was not required to provide staff with teaching qualifications but could employ casual trainers to deliver basic skills throughout CSNSW prisons. As of 2019, just 25 teaching posts (all attached to Intensive Learning Centres) remain across four prisons in CSNSW. Those posts still require a teacher to hold a teaching qualification and Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. The units of competency they deliver are the same as those delivered by their casual private counterparts across the rest of the prison estate. In this regard it is interesting to reflect on Dewey's (1916:15) distinction between training and 'educative teaching', suggesting that training effects changes 'in outer action' whereas education affects change 'in mental and emotional dispositions of behaviour.' While this distinction might be simplistic, it does point to

educative teaching as being broader, developing wider capabilities than training, which may focus on specific skills, evidenced as measurable outcomes[4].

Against the critical, capabilities approach to education and Principle 6 of the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners (1990), prison education within CSNSW appears to be out of kilter. Within CSNSW prisons, the provision of only basic education to a Certificate II level and lack of more academic pathways can be seen as a form of social control, of keeping prisoners always 'under the upper hand' (Sheeran, 2011:1), reflecting a belief they will either never amount to, or are undeserving of, anything more:

> The idea still prevails that a truly cultural or liberal education cannot have anything in common, directly at least, with industrial affairs, and that the education which is fit for the masses must be a useful of practical education in a sense which opposes useful and practical to nurture of appreciation and liberation of thought. (Dewey, 1916: 301)

Perhaps this is why, when deciding about the future of prison education in NSW, it appears that no one sought the learners' opinions about the impact of their own learning on their attitudes, values, identity and both the motivation and ability to desist from crime. No one seemed to ask them what they thought was important about education or under which conditions they felt they learned best. Given there were approximately 13,000 learners in prison education in 2017-2018 in CSNSW, this seems an astonishing oversight. It is hoped this thesis, in a small way, contributes towards redressing this imbalance, allowing space to explore what learners feel prison education is for and how it might best be planned and delivered. Asking the prisoners may help us begin to unlock the 'black box' Mackenzie (2009:29) identified

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[4] It is important to note that this thesis is concerned with prison education, as opposed to vocational training, at a basic skills level. The International Corrections & Prisons Association has developed two Founding Statements which tease out their differences and implications for prison administrators which can be found via these links:

https://icpa.org/about-us/founding-statements/education/

https://icpa.org/about-us/founding-statements/vocational-training-and-employment/

and understand *why* prison education seems to be so effective at reducing recidivism. Within a critical education framework, this thesis considers the learners' experience of and ideas about prison education to be the essential starting point.

Structurally, this thesis is shaped not just by theory but also by practice. As a prison educator, my background and experience, particularly of the disconnect between mainstream education and prison education, has had a bearing on the way this thesis has been conceived, impacting on how the research questions are arrived at and framed as well as how the data is gathered, interpreted, and re-presented. *Chapter 1: Transforming the Landscape of Learning: the back-story* outlines the specific context of this thesis, outlining my professional and personal background where relevant. In terms of a research reflexivity, this short chapter has an important function within this thesis setting the scene, explaining the research site, its significance and my position in relation to it.

Chapter Two: Reformation, Reading, Rehabilitation and Recidivism: a broad sweep of the literature offers an overview of the multiple strands of literature that are of importance, fanning them out to identify existing gaps in the literature and assumptions that need to be tested. In particular, this chapter traces prison education from the days of the earliest prison reformers, outlining the connection between religious understandings of reform and reading as an activity that signified empowerment of the individual. The idea of reform is linked to the notions of rehabilitation (often medicalised and influenced by 'audit' culture) and considered in relation to notions of transformation within prison and adult education.

Consideration is also given to developments in education philosophy and its impact on policy in mainstream education, highlighting the gap that has widened between the mainstream and prison education. It is suggested that this separation of prison education away from mainstream education in NSW prisons may occlude the impact of education on the social, and emotional development of adult learners in basic skills education in prison.

Despite the fact this thesis is in the field of adult learning, I refer to pedagogy rather than andragogy throughout this thesis. This is because, it reflects the shift towards learning and away from age-specific education (see, for example, Biesta, 2007) and also it can be argued that the assumptions about the uniqueness of adult learners described in the literature about life experience and a vocational focus are, largely, found to be unhelpful and rather artificial. Most of the children I worked with in juvenile prison had more 'life experience' in their teens than I have experienced in my lifetime and, like adults, almost all children I have taught have needed to know the reasoning for learning something. Additionally, the distinction of the teacher as facilitator and focus on self-directed learning, common to adult education literature, as opposed to teacher-centred pedagogical practice in schools is now much less clear. While there is certainly still a significant amount of 'chalk and talk' teaching in schools, the drive within the Australian Curriculum (2010) is for student-centred learning which conceptualises the teacher as facilitator. The distinction between the education of children and adults has resulted in the separation of compulsory education from post-compulsory education creating differences in quality and purpose, funnelling adult education at a basic level down a more vocational path, which, as has been argued, can be seen as a form of social control (Collins, 1988; Warr, 2016; Freire,1970; Foucault, 1977; Giroux, 1983). Furthermore, it is Freire's concept of "the role of pedagogy as part of the broader struggle for and practice of freedom" (Giroux, 2017:19) that is pertinent to this thesis and its position within a critical theory conceptual framework, so I have chosen to use pedagogy rather than andragogy when referring to educational practice.

Chapter Two goes on to consider the process of desistance of crime and characteristics that have been identified as common to successful desisters. It maps these characteristics against those identified as common to successful learners. It suggests that the agency, hope and learner identity, together with capabilities such as interpersonal and social skills, critical creative thinking, ethical understanding and intercultural understanding gained by engagement in quality learning experiences may support desistance from crime.

Chapter Two points to the gaps in the literature and where desistance and learning theory may overlap, showing how the following research questions have arisen:

- How do prisoners experience basic skills education?
- What value (if any) do prisoners find in basic skills education?
- What skills/capabilities do prisoners develop when they engage in a quality basic skills education program in prison?
- How does/can prison education support learners' progression towards desistance from crime?

Chapter Three: Thinking About Methodology outlines the methodological choices made within this thesis, providing the justification for their selection as methods of inquiry. Methodologically, this research is an ethnographic case study using an Appreciative Inquiry approach. As learning and desistance are both strengths-based processes, Appreciative Inquiry was highly appropriate as a strengths-based research approach which consciously disrupts the deficit discourse (Scott & Armstrong, 2018) and has an impressive precedent in prison research (Liebling, Price & Elliot, 1999). Thirteen learners were tracked over the six months of their learning program and interviewed at the beginning, middle and towards the end of their formal course. Questionnaires about academic identity, development of social and emotional learning as well as a 'belief in redeemability' were also completed at the same intervals, however, as the experiences of learning related by the learners in interview provided such rich and thick data, their interviews become the focus of the data and the data from questionnaires is presented more briefly within the Appendices.

Braun & Clarke's (2006, 2012, 2013) six-phase Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach underpinned by qualitative philosophy (Kidder & Fine, 1987) has informed the data analysis process and technique within this thesis as a method which is particularly well suited to addressing questions about a group's lived experience (Braun et al, 2019) of learning in prison and how that might support the process of desistance from crime. Data was transcribed and manually coded by the researcher, with some checks from critical friends. The data is presented in a traditional format with borrowings from portraiture to acknowledge the processes of meaning-making that

occurred between researcher and participant and continue to be made by the reader here. I have adopted a less traditionally academic style that is more personal style emphasise my use of personal observations and reflection, drawing on emotion as a data source, as per Jewkes (2013). It is also hoped this style may make this thesis more readable to those without academic training.

As the experiences of the learners is paramount in this thesis, *Chapter Four: The People* provides a description of each of the thirteen learner participants. This short chapter is included to introduce the participants to the reader in order to help identify and follow the thirteen voices that speak within the findings. My aim is to privilege the voice of the learner throughout this thesis, for this is where the heart of the matter lies. Accordingly, I use quotations heavily throughout the findings and include two portraits of quite different learners in the Chapter Five to illustrate to the reader what I have found and how I have gone about making meaning of it all, which of course gives the reader space to interpret differently and, perhaps, totally disagree. It is important to note that I use the term Indigenous throughout this thesis to refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.

The inclusion of this chapter introducing the participants is not only to keep track of the speakers but is also ethically important to highlight the contribution of the participants to this thesis and resist the temptation to 'other' them because they are prisoners. It's important to understand them simply as people. Accordingly, they are not described in terms of what crime they have committed nor their sentence length. Such information was not sought as it was not relevant to this inquiry and, moreover, risked judgement being made on the basis of offence committed, which in turn may result in the account of their learning experience being devalued or distrusted. This chapter, together with the more detailed portraits provided in the Appendices are used to give a sense of a complex person who cannot and should not be defined simply as an 'offender' but as so much more.

Chapter Five: Being, Becoming and Belonging presents the findings grouped into three main themes which are underpinned by sub-themes such as the importance of place, basic-skills learning, culture and identity. The concept of normalisation is important

within this section as the meaning differs according to its usage. Within critical theory, normalisation usually refers to coercion to accept the dominant attitudes and values of a society. Freire (1970) and Giroux (1983) show how education can be used as a process of normalisation to produce what Foucault (1977) calls 'docile bodies.' Within prisons, normalisation sometimes underpins the policy and practice of rehabilitation, with prison education seen as a rehabilitative, normalising enterprise. However, within the ILC, learners referred to education as an emancipatory experience they found 'normalising' in the sense that it helped them feel as though they were not in prison but in the 'normal' world outside. Within the ILC, they felt they could be 'normal' rather than 'just a crim'. Their description of the ILC as normalising is much more aligned with the Scandinavian principle of normalisation, based on a desire to make prisons humane rather than *for* punishment (Fransen, 2017). Normalising is equated with a sense of freedom and well-being rather than oppression and punishment. Within this thesis, it is important to note the term 'normalising' is used in the two different ways, depending on who is using it.

Within the ILC, prisoners are actively framed as 'learner' by the staff and other learners, and the learners' experience of identity within the ILC was significant. The literature suggests that engagement in prison education provides learners with a new identity (as 'learner' or 'student') which, in turn, helps support the development of a non-offending identity, essential for the process of desistance. Learners' experiences of identity within the ILC appeared to be rather more nuanced, covering a spectrum from those who reported never identifying as an offender to one learner who overtly resisted a non-offending identity. His case study is specifically included as an important story of the tiny, incremental shifts in thinking that appear and the tension experienced by a learner whose framework of reference is being challenged by his learning experiences in the ILC, even in a short space of time. That learner's eventual exclusion from the ILC is also an important story for administrators and policy makers about withdrawing education as punishment.

Chapter Six: A Learning and Desistance as Entwined Processes discusses the findings in relation to the research questions. The findings around identity, capabilities and culture suggest that the learners find value in prison education that reaches past

beyond employability. Despite its constricted curriculum within a restrictive prison regime, teachers found ways to teach beyond vocationally-related matters and provide learning experiences that were strengths-based and capability-enhancing rather than deficits-based. These learning experiences appeared to be the most valuable as learners linked these moments to the development of agency, critical thinking, hope and a non-offending identity; all of which support desistance from crime. This chapter explores the discrepancy between the trend for a narrow vocational-training approach to basic skills education in CSNSW prisons and the findings that broader learning experiences that focus on the capabilities necessary for social inclusion and well-being (in its broadest possible sense) are more likely to support the process of desistance from crime. A claim is made for a capabilities model within prison education in CSNSW to support a more socially-just, culturally relevant and responsive model of education that supports human dignity and equality and also supports the process of desistance from crime. Consideration is given to important questions of whether the process of desistance can be considered to be a process of learning, whether it is possible to learn to desist and whether prison education should be compulsory. Consideration is also given to the implications of a capabilities model on the design of prison education spaces, and, perhaps, of whole prisons.

In conclusion, Chapter Seven: *What helps?* replaces the question 'What Works?' with 'What Helps?' (McNeill, 2017), importantly steering the discussion about prison education away from the deficits-based medical model of prescription and dosage to one of capability building. The suggestion is made that it could be more helpful for CSNSW to look again at the its conceptualisation of the purpose of prison and, subsequently, the purpose of prison education. The gap between prison education and mainstream is found to be unhelpful, further isolating incarcerated learners, which in turn hinders rather than supports desistance. Understanding how learning can support desistance from crime implies that the value of prison education needs to be understood in terms of its ability to support the development of agency, hope and critical and creative thinking that may well challenge the status quo. To implement a model of education that allows learners the freedom to be their fullest, ever-

expanding self; to change not just their own thinking but also society itself takes courage, particularly within the risk-averse culture of prison management and in environments where the retention of power and control is critical.

It is hoped this thesis provokes thought, invites dialogue and has a significant impact on who, how, what and why we teach and learn in prisons. Most of all, I hope this thesis moves the reader as it provides a glimpse of the joy and importance of learning amongst society's hidden students. I also hope it shows why learning in prisons is so very much worth thinking about as a potentially powerful process that is both entwined with and supportive of desistance from crime and how we might be able to do it better.

1 Transforming the Landscape of Learning: the back-story

We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference.
(Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 1916)

…pragmatism needs to be tempered by ambition and a new vision for prisons that puts learning at its heart.
(O'Brien *The Learning Prison*, 2010)

1.1 Introduction

While this research project is based in a relatively recently opened prison on the mid-central coast of New South Wales, the idea for this research project started germinating about ten years ago in a different prison a five-hour drive south on the western outskirts of Sydney. At that time, I was working as a teacher in prison education, specifically in the Intensive Learning Centre (ILC) with young adult male offenders aged 18-25. The experience of working there and elsewhere in prison education over the years has a strong bearing on the story of this thesis and has become an important factor of it.

This chapter outlines my professional history in prison education as it relates to teaching within the first ILC in NSW from 2005 because that experience within an almost closed, collegiate system, contrasted sharply with my experience of the more usual prison education available. In turn, these contrasting experiences sparked an interest in what prison education is for and how it can be done better, ultimately leading to the commencement of this research.

My experiences as a practitioner have led to a deep interest in understanding the value prison education has to learners in prison. Describing my history and the context of the ILC indicate my positionality within the research. Outlining key

moments is necessary, like pinning my colours to the academic mast. This short chapter outlines my professional journey to this point which influences the research questions, impacts on methodological choices and affects the way meaning is made in this thesis, all of which are more fully discussed in subsequent chapters.

In particular, time is taken in this chapter to outline the historical background of a new ILC in a medium security prison in NSW, which opened in 2014. I was involved in the design and build of that centre, which was selected as the site of the fieldwork for this thesis. While the selection process is more fully described in Chapter 3 within the context of methodology, it is important to declare my history with and ongoing interest in this unique carceral learning space. Photographs have been included of the ILC to help the reader understand the physical/geographical context of the research site and its importance within the learning landscape in CSNSW prisons.

1.2 Professional History in Prison Education

I joined Corrective Services New South Wales (CSNSW) as a literacy teacher in 2004. I had taught in prisons before, so was not surprised to find the experience characterised by: brevity (education was mostly accessed after the 'working' day); disruption, due to prison lock-downs or teacher shortages; transition, as learners were moved in and out of the prison; and fragmentation, due to programs not always being available in other jails. Trying to develop and deliver programs for a highly transient population of learners has always been a challenge for prison educators, in Australia and beyond (Czerniawksi, 2016; Gillies et al, 2014; Pike, 2013; Farley & Pike, 2016).

The 2004-2005 CSNSW Annual Report stated there was a daily average of 8927 prisoners, with a total of 14,629 prisoners received into NSW prison custody, however there were 139,400 movements of prisoners between prison, court, hospital and 'other' places — 40,214 of these movements were between prisons. In the same 2004-5 year, the education provider, a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) within

CSNSW called the Adult Education and Vocational Training Institute (AEVTI), reported that a monthly average of 4593 prisoners had received education services, resulting in the annual achievement of 5321 individual educational modules being completed across the year. As a result of the high transition of learners between and without prisons, only 27 learners across the year gained a full certificate in education at a Certificate I or II level, representing approximately 0.5% of learners[5]. Given the highly transitional nature of the prison population, it is unsurprising that most of the learners were not able to complete full certificates prior to transfer to another jail or being released back to the community.

What this looked like in the prison classroom was predictable only by its unpredictability. A class could have different learners from day to day. Teachers were never quite sure who would be on the roll for the day as offender learners, even those close to finishing a qualification, could be 'shipped out' without notice to another jail — sometimes, ironically, to complete a 'pre-release program', at the expense of their education qualification. It was obvious that such high levels of movement and disruption and lack of continuity of education significantly and adversely affected both the quantity of education a learner in prison could access and also the quality of delivery teachers could provide. It was disheartening and frustrating to see our students leave suddenly without completion and have nothing to show for their progress in class that may have had any currency in the community or even at other jails, particularly when we could see students making real improvements.

The directive was, as it remains, to focus on those with the lowest levels of literacy and numeracy as they had the 'greatest need'. Full Certificate III level completions were extremely rare as, besides all the logistical difficulties mentioned above, the Certificate III qualification was offered in very few prison education centres, and in fact eventually dropped off AEVTI's scope of delivery altogether. As a result, for many

[5] The figure of 0.5% is calculated on the monthly average of enrolled learners at 4593.

teachers, the grinding impact of extremely high student turnover, resulting lack of course completions, the lack of digital technologies and internet connectivity characterising most exciting developments in mainstream education in the community, the lack of a progression pathway to tertiary education, the lack of professional development and the accompanying erosion of staff motivation, took their toll (Kamrath & Gregg, 2018). Prison education often looked disappointingly unimaginative as teachers struggled to keep delivering a roll-on, roll-off course without a stable body of learners, internet access, digital technologies and, perhaps, genuine support within the prison (Czerniawski, 2016; Prison Reform Trust, 2013; Rogers et al, 2014[6]). I felt my own motivation and professional skills diminishing over time, disappointing myself in the process. It was not uncommon to hear negative comments from skeptical prison officers such as 'I don't know why you bother, it doesn't make any difference' or to be quietly obstructed getting learners from the wing to education. For some, there was no conviction that education would have any positive impact on learners' lives, so the provision of prison education was, in their opinion, a waste of time. The conflicting beliefs between educational and custodial staff about education and inmates are not unusual within prisons, and as custodial staff generally have more power, teachers can become overwhelmed and demoralised by the lack of support from the wider establishment.

1.3 The Intensive Learning Centre

It is against this backdrop that the first ILC was developed in NSW as the brainchild of the then Corrective Services Commissioner, Ron Woodham, who had wanted to establish a 'school' for young adult offenders in CSNSW custody. The ILC opened in

[6] It is noted that none of these references refer to prison education in NSW. Significantly, there is no provision in NSW for the independent assessment of the quality of education delivered in prisons as there is, for example, in Western Australia, where education is part of the inspection schedule by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services, or in England and Wales by Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons.

June 2004. Its purpose did not differ from the department's overall purpose for education: to develop literacy and numeracy skills in order to raise the employability of young adult offenders, giving them a better chance of getting a job on release and, therefore, lowering the chance of recidivism. The key point of difference was that learners attended full-time at the ILC, Monday to Friday, and were paid to attend at the same rate as those working in prison workshops so they were not financially disadvantaged by choosing to engage in full-time education. This conveyed a strong message about the importance of education, raising its status from below Corrective Services Industries and placing it on an equal footing.

Enrolment in the ILC required an inmate to have at least six months to serve on his sentence and each ILC student was ring-fenced to stay at JMCC in order to complete their Level 1 or 2 qualification. Full certificate completions were expected. The transfer of a student prior to certificate completion was relatively rare and the only justification for such an interruption was a serious security breach/concern. ILC classes were, therefore, stable with very few disruptions due only to court appearances or hospital visits.

Interestingly, teachers had to apply specifically to work in the ILC, even if they had already successfully applied to teach education within the prison. The aim was to build a reliable team of teachers to ensure delivery of target teaching hours in the ILC to service the needs of the students. ILC learner completion rate was 85% (CSNSW Annual Report, 2005-6; Banfield et al, 2007; Wynes, 2007), matched by a student retention rate of 85-90%. Generally, the 10% who did not stay to continue their learning journey were those who were being released, being transferred to another prison or had completed their program to the highest available level. This compared favourably with the much lower rates of retention and higher student turnover in general education in the prison. With stability of staff and students in the ILC and class sizes of a maximum of twelve learners, but averaging eight, there was tremendous opportunity to really develop a quality teaching and learning process within a small learning community, and the seven years spent teaching in that first ILC were a privilege and pleasure.

The original small ILC was located in the modified 2000 Sydney Olympics Athlete's Village which had been relocated into the prison and turned into the ILC with five classrooms, staff office spaces, a library and outside recreational grassed space in which students could spend their break times. While it wasn't perfect, it was configured differently to other prison areas and quite well suited for learning. The high retention rates of ILC teaching staff and students at the ILC, its size and relatively remote geographical location within the prison allowed it to develop a strong, distinct culture of its own and a real sense of collegiality among students and staff. It also benefitted from the allocation of dedicated uniformed officers who were supportive of education.

As the staff worked together over the years, the program evolved in both its purpose and delivery, and we noticed a number of interesting phenomena that existing prison education research didn't fully explain. We noticed that our students changed over the course of time in the ILC. They became calmer, more focused, motivated learners. They were kinder, more open to and tolerant of the opinions of others. They took more pride in their work and themselves. They took more learning risks, engaging in learning activities they would not have dared to try earlier. They began to talk hopefully of their future and, interestingly, they wanted to stay in learning. They talked less about crime.

It wasn't just the teachers who noticed. Other prison staff commented on the changes they saw. Custodial officers would approach us to say they had noticed a change in inmates who had been troublesome on the wing prior to enrolling in the ILC but had now settled down. The prison psychologist commented regularly that she could not believe the positive changes occurring among inmates who were ILC students. She commented on 'remarkable transformations' in particular among inmates who were working with her through serious and complex issues. Staff delivering Offending Behaviour Programs also commented that they 'could tell who has been to the ILC' because these inmates were more engaged and open to the learning experience offered in the OBP, as well as more 'polite' and 'better in class'. The Corrective Services Industries manager at the jail also commented his instructors were delighted to get ex-ILC students in their workshops as they were almost always

‘better workers. The CSNSW Annual Report (2005-6:18) seemed to suggest these changes were not imagined:

> … initial results meet the target levels of improved skill levels in a range of basic and vocational competencies, plus improved behaviour and attitudes in both classroom and workshop settings. Data from the Department’s Corporate Research, Evaluation and Statistics Unit indicates improved behaviour post completion, as measured by decreases in disciplinary charges, decreases in positive urine tests, and improved security classifications.

We discussed our students every lunchtime, in particular the changes we were seeing, and began to wonder if it was the combination of stability of teaching team, status of the program that ‘ring-fenced’ the students and the same level of pay given to ILC students, which allowed our students to fully engage as ‘students’ rather than ‘offenders’. We wondered if the pro-social modelling demonstrated by the staff, both uniformed and teaching, who worked in the ILC and the learning opportunities on offer created the ‘hooks for change’ (Giordano et al, 2007). We wondered about the impact of these changes.

At the same time, there were other staff who were keen to establish that such changes were only ‘apparent’ and ‘temporary’ if they existed at all. We were often told by custodial staff, ‘You see the best of them here, but we see the worst of them, the *real* them, when they’re back on the wing.’ I wondered if the changes we saw in our learners *were* real, even if only temporary or only in that learning environment. I wondered if the ILC gave these young men a safe place to practice being their ‘best self’, or many versions of their ‘best selves’ to try on a new non-offending identity or multiple identities essential to the desistance process, and provide them with an opportunity to reconstitute self as learner rather than offender.

My colleagues and I began to wonder whether the power of education, then, was not *just* in whether it raised literacy/numeracy skills and, therefore, employability. Beyond the development of academic competencies, we saw the development of emotional

and social competencies too, despite not being explicitly taught. We began to see change when the focus shifted from skills deficits to a process of capability building, without reference to offending behaviour. It seemed there was much more positive change going on than recidivism rates would imply. The only measures of the effectiveness of the ILC program were certificate completions and one early commissioned study that found enrolment in the ILC made no difference to recidivism rates (McHutchison, 2009). As a group of teachers witnessing the kinds of progress we saw occur in our learners in their unique learning space, this finding did not match our experience nor, we felt, the experiences of our learners. We felt strongly that recidivism rates simply could not capture the changes we believed we were seeing and the learners felt they experienced, as their reflective learning journals suggested.[7]

1.4 Education in the Community

At the same time, I had three young children, two of whom entered the public primary school system in NSW. I became aware of what 'mainstream' education looked like for leaners outside of prisons and painfully conscious of the lack of resources, particularly digital, for learners inside prisons as well as more aware of how tired our pedagogies were 'inside'. Perhaps most strikingly, however, was the disconnect I saw between the strengths-based approach to education in the mainstream and the deficits-based approach in prisons. This resulted in vastly different pedagogies employed in the inquiry-based learning that was becoming more embedded in mainstream education, articulated in the Australian Curriculum framework and its underpinning Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians as opposed to the narrow, more prescriptive teaching expected in

[7] ILC students completed Reflective Learning Journals as part of their literacy coursework over the length of their learning program. These were read and responded to by literacy teachers who discussed the learning and changes being evidenced within the journals.

prisons to address literacy and numeracy ‘deficits’. My children were experiencing an Australian Curriculum education clearly articulated as one that aspires to build capabilities:

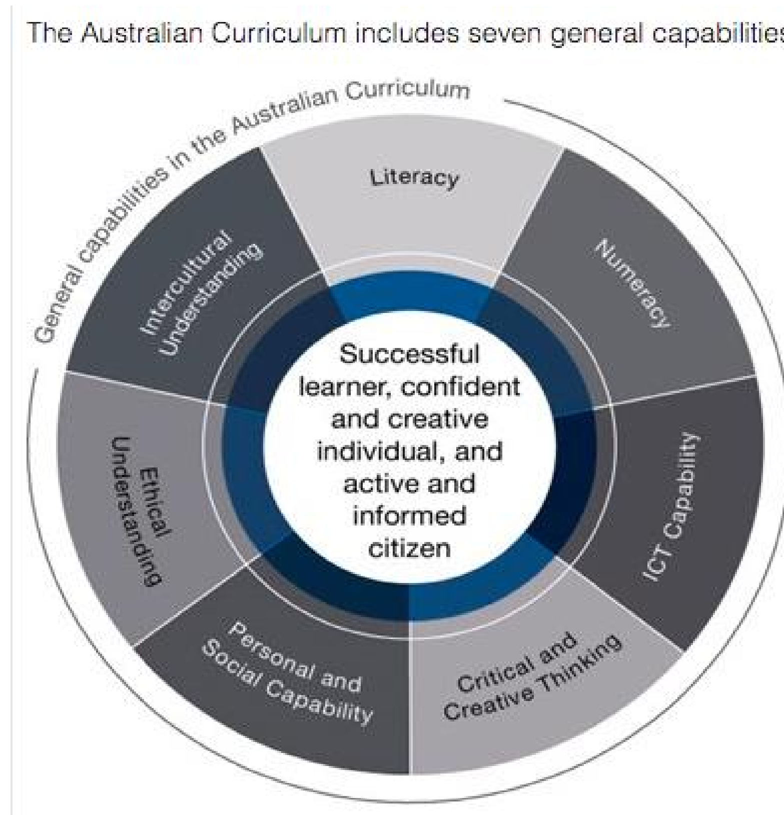

Figure 1 General Capabilities articulated in the Australian Curriculum

In contrast, prison education remained remedial, to address deficits, rather than build further capabilities (AEVTI, CSNSW webpage 2015). My children’s learning experience in school contrasted sharply with that of learners in prison, highlighting that education was both valued and practiced differently. It was apparent that the difference could not just be attributed to the differences between adult and younger learners, but that the core philosophy of the purpose and value of education was fundamentally different and so, therefore, was pedagogical practice. I wanted to understand those differences and know more about strengths-based pedagogies in order to better support my learners and revitalise my own practice.

1.5 Designing a New Intensive Learning Centre

At the end of 2011, the original ILC closed as the prison was re-rolled. I was fortunate enough move to a position as Senior Project Officer: Education Development and Innovation for CSNSW's AEVTI, the RTO responsible for policy of prison education in public and private jails in NSW, and the delivery of prison education in public CSNSW jails. My main task was to oversee the design and build of a new ILC at a prison that had opened in 2004. To be able to design a learning space that reflected developments in 21st century teaching and learning in the community that would continue to support the sorts of positive changes we had seen in our learners at JMCC was an immense challenge and privilege. Fortunately, CSNSW already had a working relationship with the Designing Out Crime team at UTS, which responded enthusiastically to the brief (McGregor, 2012). Drawing on the work of Cottam et al in Learning Works: the 21st Century Prison (2002), Heppell's work with 21st-century learning spaces (2004, 2009, 2012), the Learning Spaces Framework (MEECTYA, 2008) and Education.au's document *21st-century learning spaces* (2009), the brief specified the learning centre should *not* look prison-like or like a traditional school, but be a place that, by design, fosters valuable and empowering capabilities for both staff and students, such as creativity, critical thinking, communication, ICT literacy, citizenship, personal and social responsibility, problem solving, decision-making as well as literacy and numeracy.

Much joint work was undertaken to conduct a robust process of consultation with all stakeholders including senior management, custodial and teaching staff and learners. A design was agreed for a new-build learning centre that supported 21st century pedagogy and learning that just happened to be secure (rather than a secure building in which education happened to be delivered). Built by inmates at an open prison (who gained building qualifications in the process), the fabricated units were then transported by truck and lifted into position over the prison walls by a crane.

Figure 2 Pre-built ILC module being craned into position[8]

Figure 3 Site map of the Intensive Learning Centre

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[8] Image source: https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/young-architect-jess-tse-designs-wing-of-maximum-security-prison-in-victoria-20150113-12mzq7.html

The new ILC opened in 2014 and looked notably different to anything that had gone before. Photographs have been included to give some sense of how different this learning space was from the usual and often unsuitable spaces allocated to education with prisons:

Figure 4 ILC classrooms and congregational space

Figure 5 ILC Learner drinks station, open deck and classrooms

Designed to support collaborative learning, be culturally appropriate and encourage creative teaching and learning, the space was also designed to be agile, flexible and

allow connection with nature visually and also spatially in landscaped gardens. Glass bi-fold doors, wooden decking, views to the trees beyond the prison fence and the limestone yarn circle were important elements of a learning space that was as good as that found in the community.

Figure 6 ILC Yarn Circle

Figure 7 Reverse view of the ILC Yarn Circle (accommodation units in background)

The Post-Occupancy Evaluation completed by DOC team (2014) indicated the space supports positive change in learners, allowing them to take on the identity of learner as an alternative to 'offender'.

Figure 8 In the ILC classroom with industrially designed desks and soft furniture in the reading corner

Figure 9 Robust soft furnishings for comfortable reading

Figure 10 Playing Scrabble

Figure 11 Inside the ILC classroom at the interactive whiteboard

Figure 12 Inside the ILC classroom at the interactive whiteboard

Despite my increasing awareness of and dissatisfaction with the deficits-based approach to prison education and the exclusive focus on raising employability rather than building wider capabilities, my experience as a prison educator was positive, characterised by relationships built, the occurrence of learning, attitudes shifting and pro-social choices being made evidenced in conversation and by behaviour. Those changes in our learners, observed and discussed by my colleagues and I, were not captured by certificate completion rates or recidivism rates. They weren't really accounted for in the research until I stumbled upon the work of desistance theorists. That had a profound impact. It explained how we could observe small, yet significant positive changes in our learners and reconcile these with subsequent lapses, even being returned to prison. We weren't necessarily wishful thinkers or teachers who naively misplaced trust in our students. It was possible that the progression we were seeing in our learners was real and sustainable, even if more hidden in the wider regime outside education.

The more I learned about the process of desistance from crime and the traits that identify a successful desister, the more it made sense of my prison educator experience that active engagement in relevant and meaningful learning stimulates and supports the kinds of cognitive development as well as the emotional and social

capabilities necessary to successfully engage in and navigate the desistance process. It is this relationship between learning and desistance, specifically, that became of interest. I wanted to know whether the process of desistance could be understood as a *learning* process and, consequently, how prison education and other programs could better support the process of desistance

1.6 Conclusion

The unique space of the ILC in NSW allows us a rare and exciting opportunity to research what happens within an environment predominantly designed to support the learning process, to consider whether the delivery of quality 21st century learning opportunities is naturally supportive of desistance and to identify whether the development of a specific pedagogy of desistance is possible or necessary. Do we need to develop specific ways of teaching to support desistance, or, by implementing 21st century teaching and learning skills, is desistance automatically supported? Is engaging in high-quality learning inherently supportive of desistance? If so, how? If not, can we identify what is supportive and develop pedagogies to help our learners learn to desist?

These are the experiences and questions which, though the research questions have since evolved, began the journey towards this thesis, drawing together theoretical threads of learning spaces, the purpose of education and its value, learner identity, desistance and pedagogical practice. Having brought these threads together, they are unpicked somewhat in the next chapter, which provides a broad sweep of the literature and builds the conceptual framework of this thesis.

2 Reformation, Reading, Rehabilitation and Recidivism: a broad sweep of the literature

2.1 Introduction:

Over the years, prison education has been thought of as a sort of nexus where the prisoner can learn both literacy and how to reform. From the beginning of mass literacy, starting in Europe with the Reformation, the notion of moral correction has been embedded in reading which has lent itself to prison education. Literacy has been spliced with the notion of re-formation in prison education from its earliest inception, with the intention of transforming the prisoner into a converted, God-fearing, law-abiding, compliant citizen. The legacy of Protestant theology pervades western education, especially in prisons, and also informs the 'Rehabilitative Ideal' (Allen, 1978) which impacts on prison education. Even today, the Reformation still impacts on the relationship between engaging in basic skills (literacy and numeracy) education in prison and notions of re-formation of identity, rehabilitation and desistance from crime.

How and what we teach people to read reveals much about power within society. As Luke (1988:80) states:

> Literacy instruction is not a politically or culturally neutral activity: Research in social and curricular history indicates that it is not a simple matter of inculcating neutral, unquestionably valid skills, but that a selective tradition is at work.

It is important to trace the selective tradition(s) at work within prison education and understand the attitudes and values embedded therein. While the Protestant God of the Reformation may have been replaced (at least in part) in modern, capitalist Australia by the economy, the influence of the Protestant drive for mass literacy is still evident and linked as Mosher (2016:297) suggests to economic success:

> Weber's observation of a link between Protestantism and economic success is that it was Protestantism's promotion of literacy that led to higher economic performance and not religion induced behavioral or cultural changes (Becker and Woessmann 2009; Easterlin 1981:13; Grinin and Korotayev 2015:179-186)

Tethered to literacy and the Protestant work ethic within the prison context, are the notions of rehabilitation and reformation. Within the Australian context, a 'reformed' prisoner is one who has become literate and, adopting middle-class (law-abiding) values, gets a job, becomes a productive citizen and makes a positive contribution to the economy on release. Overlaid with a medical model of rehabilitation, the rhetoric around prison education becomes one of 'treatment' and 'dosage' (for example, Davis et al, 2014: 113). Tracing the locus of power within prison education policy and practice, focusing on literacy, is interesting, revealing and leads us to the Reformation as a surprisingly relevant starting point.

Having positioned this research within a more personal context in the previous chapter, this chapter identifies the historical context of prison education and key issues raised within prison and wider education literature, including some of the important gaps out of which the research questions have arisen. Reviewing the literature for this research project covers sizeable and diverse areas including prisons, education, adult learning, prison education and the desistance paradigm. This chapter offers a broad overview of punishment and prisons, education and desistance, examining prison education as a politically-loaded 'rehabilitative' activity. Prison education literature, largely arising out of the US, UK and Australia, is reviewed to identify the value policymakers and administrators find in prison education. Contrasted with the value found by those who have lived experience of prison education and organisations who advocate for better quality education in prisons, this chapter explores the gap between.

This chapter starts by exploring the historical connection between prison education and Protestant theology as a way of explaining the long-established emphasis on basic literacy within the prison education curriculum and establishing the link between notions of 'rehabilitation' and literacy. Additionally, it considers the implications of the potentially oppressive notion of 'transformation' embedded within Adult Learning theory in the context of prison education.

The chapter then turns to desistance theories[9] and the conceptualisation of the process of desistance as a slowing down of crime to its eventual cessation. It focuses more narrowly on where the key change processes, education and desistance from crime, appear to intersect, identifying similarities between the traits of successful desisters and successful learners and considering the implications.

This chapter concludes with a consideration of whether research exploring why and how prison education may 'work' to reduce reoffending may not fit well within the conventional 'what works' research approach. It suggests the desistance paradigm may broaden and deepen our understanding of the value of education in prison and also require a more appropriate framework for prison education research. The chapter ends with an articulation of the research questions arising from the broad sweep of literature.

2.2 The Reformation and Reading

It may seem strange to go back to 16th century England in a thesis about prison education in Australia in the 21st century, however the Reformation casts a long and important shadow over prison history, education and prison education, influencing

[9] It is fully acknowledged there is no single, comprehensive Desistance Theory. Rather, what I refer to as Desistance theory within this thesis is the established body and emerging research around the process of desistance from crime that is better known as the Desistance Paradigm (McNeil, 2006).

significant changes that, even now, have a particular bearing on the evolution of prison programs and education, as well as notions of rehabilitation. The legacy of Protestant theology in western education is extensive (some argue that it has never really ended), focusing on increasing literacy and developing a strong work ethic (Green, 2009; Tröhler, 2012). Conceptually, it has infused prevailing notions of individual reform, modern understandings of 'offender rehabilitation' and both the purpose and content of 'good' prison education.

As a religious movement in 16th century Europe, the Reformation called into question the authority of the Catholic Church and saw the rise of Protestantism, Unitarianism, Calvinism and Lutheranism. Theologically, there was a crucial shift that impacted directly on reading in terms of access to religious works and learning how to read them. The Reformers did not believe the laity needed a priest or the Pope to intercede on their behalf nor act as 'enforcement agent' between them and God (Arruñada, 2010:890). Neither did the Reformers believe the laity required priests to read and interpret the scriptures on their behalf. While of course education was, for many years, only accessible by the aristocracy and most religious writings were in Latin, over time access to religious texts was opened up as the Bible was translated into English[10] and as printing presses developed, culminating in the first printed King James Bible published in 1611. Together with a growing interest in reading for one's self and the rise of the public school in northern Europe in the 19th century, literacy levels rose (Becker& Woessmann, 2009). This was a result of more enrolments in primary schools (Becker & Ludger, 2010) and more public spending on schools. Consequently, there were higher educational achievements, even among traditionally 'illiterate' conscripted soldiers (Boppart et al, 2013), and increased capability across reading, numeracy, history and essay writing (Boppart et al, 2014). This rise of literacy was, at least theologically, grounded in a sense of empowerment of the 'common man'.

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[10] John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English in the 14th century and from 1525, William Tyndale translated the Old and New Testaments which in turn largely became King Henry VIII's 'Great Bible' in 1539.

2.3 Reading and Rehabilitation

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) describes punishment through the period of the Reformation as that which was inflicted on the body to pay for offences committed, suggesting our western, modern prison system was born in the early 19th century and remains largely unchanged. This 'new' model of prison developed as a result of reformers' protests that public physical punishment, torture and executions were 'barbaric' (Howard, 1777). The reformers, such as John Howard[11] and Elizabeth Fry[12], were often of strong Evangelical or Quaker faith. Consequently, the 'reformatory' or 'penitentiary' which emerged in the early 19th century in England aimed to save the body of the prisoner from public physical punishment/execution by instead paying the price of incarceration. Their theology meant the reformers sought not just to save the physical bodies of 'sinners' but also to save the prisoner's soul from a life of crime and eternity of damnation, through instruction leading to moral/spiritual transformation (Fry, 1817).

The purpose of prison, then, shifted from a holding place pending judgment and physical punishment to a dual-purposed place of (a) containment in order to protect the body of the prisoner from physical punishment and (b) to offer instruction/training that would trans-/re-form the soul of the prisoner in order to live a good, morally upright life. Elizabeth Fry's model of prison reform included the establishment of the first 'school' for both women and their children in prison which provided religious instruction to effect personal redemption and vocational training and materials (mostly sewing) so women would be able to earn their own living

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[11] The Howard League for Penal Reform, known today as The Howard League, was established in 1866 and named after the influential Evangelical John Howard, who in 1777 condemned the English prison system as barbaric. (Howard League for Penal Reform, http://www.howardleague.org/johnhoward/, retrieved December 2018; Howard, J. 1777).

[12] Elizabeth Fry, a Quaker, is widely considered the most influential prison reformer and is attributed with starting the first prison school (The Association for the Improvement of the Femaie Prisoners in Newgate), in 1817. (Howard League for Penal Reform, http://www.howardleague.org/elizabethfry/, retrieved December 2018; Cooper, 1981; Craig, 2006)

(Cooper, 1981; Craig, 2006).[13] From its earliest days the modern prison in England, the US and Australia has made provision to educate inmates in order to 'reform' their 'fallen' characters, to teach literacy in order to read the Bible to support that 'reform' and to provide vocational training in order to support a good worth ethic and develop a responsible citizen.

Prison education has, therefore, been entwined with notions of reformation of character since the earliest days of prison reform. It must be noted that Foucault (1977) attributes prison reform more to the interests of an increasingly capitalist society emerging in Victorian England rather than individual reformers such as Howard or Fry (Gibson, 2011). While acknowledging the utmost importance of Foucault's work which influences much thinking about knowledge and power in prisons today, it is important to consider the impact of social and cultural influences such as local traditions and assumptions (Kornhauser & Laster, 2014) upon changes in punishment and prisons (Garland, 2001). Consequently, within a review of the ideas permeating policy and practice of prison education from its earliest inception, it is important to consider the effects of Evangelical and Quaker activists on early prison reform (Gibson, 2011: 1046). In particular, the highly impactful notion of 'transformation' embedded in the religious idea of 'reform' and in the 'belief system' of rehabilitation (Cullen, 2006:668) on conceptions of education more widely and on prison education in particular must be considered. Its legacy on adult learning and a conception of education as 'transformative' is more fully discussed below.

The humane and dignified treatment of prisoners recommended by Howard and Fry in the early 19th century quickly gave way to a more austere view that prison should not provide an environment that is 'better' than that experienced by offenders in the community. Whereas Fry brought in clothes for prisoners, particularly women and children, who had very little, it was noted by many with indignation that these clothes were far better than anything the prisoner had had prior to incarceration (ibid, 1981).

[13] It is important to note that in the US, also influenced by Quakers, there are records of inmates being given 'proper books' and Bibles distributed for the instruction of literacy skills at Walnut Street Jail in 1790, with a 'school' being established there in 1798 (Skidmore, 1948:178-9).

Even those contemporaries who initially supported the principles championed by Howard and Fry also desired that prison should be a place of deterrence and discomfort (ibid, 1981). Indeed Ignatieff (1978:83) identifies the chasm between the intentions of the reformers and the 'institutionalisation' of their ideas, describing the 'penitentiary' as 'the bearer of reformers' hopes for a punishment capable of reconciling deterrence and reform, terror and humanity.'

The notion that prison needed to instill terror as a deterrent was influential. In *The Purpose of Criminal Punishment* Banks (2004) outlines the five conceptual 'pillars' of punishment: deterrence, retribution, just desserts, rehabilitation and incapacitation (adding restorative justice as a possible sixth) arising out of two main theories of punishment — utilitarian and retributive. Despite the humanitarian aims of the early reformers to improve hygiene in prisons, the more retributive mood that followed Fry meant even measures taken for the benefit of prisoners began to have repressive, dehumanising outcomes: 'These hygienic rituals in turn became a means of stripping inmates of their personal identity' (Ignatieff, 1981:161).

The emphasis on the different 'pillars' of criminal justice has shifted over the years and at different times in different parts of the world. In the USA, the 'rehabilitation period' seemed to last from 1930 to until the early 1970s. Allen (1978:148) defined the 'rehabilitative ideal' as:

> …the notion that the sanctions of the criminal law should or must be employed to achieve fundamental changes in the characters, personalities, and attitudes of convicted offenders, not only in the interest of the social defense, but also in the interests of the well-being of the offender himself.

Allen (1978: 151) suggests the rehabilitative ideal was based on a 'strong faith in the malleability of human behaviour and human character'. This belief in a person's changeability can be traced back to the Christian principles of the Reformation, especially those of Evangelical strands whereby someone must be 'born again' in order to restore a relationship with God. In the 19th century, however, the rise of

Darwinism and evolutionary theory called into question the position of humanity within the natural world and the notion of a creator God. At the same time, there was rapid development in new areas of knowledge and a burgeoning of sciences such as psychology and criminology. Religious principles of reform and redemption by the grace of God began to give way to the professional expertise of science-based experts such as psychologists, psychiatrists and criminologists, and a more medicalised model of 'reform' known as 'rehabilitation' developed (for extensive discussion, see Davis, 2002; Steinbach, 2016). Jenkins (1982:149) argues the 'Rehabilitative Ideal' was strongly influenced by positivism, linking it with the privileging of scientific theory, the scientific 'expert' and what counts as evidence. Its advocates prided themselves on the implementation of 'humane' techniques, but regardless of technique, the desire was the same — to effect *change* in the individual: 'The criminologist took the convicted offender as a given, and proceeded to think about how a different and better person could be made out of him.'

Beginning in the 1970s, a far more austere, 'retributive period' (associated with mass incarceration) has extended across the US that can also be seen across Australia and in the UK (Allen, 1978; Jenkins, 1982; Gaes, 1999, Rothman, 2016; Drake, 2017). The impact on understandings of rehabilitation has been profound. Whereas the Protestant Reformers believed the individual prisoner was responsible for his or her own spiritual reform by turning to God and accepting his forgiveness (thus turning away from a life of crime), it was understood that the decision to turn to Christ rested with the individual and could not be forced by external pressure. Ideas around rehabilitation have changed substantially and rather crucially. Modern medicalised ideas of rehabilitation create a conundrum: while it is the prisoner's responsibility to strive for rehabilitation, it is the job of justice/custodial 'experts' to decide what suitable 'treatment' will be, even to the point of 'dosage' in order to 'rehabilitate' that individual. Inherent in the concept of rehabilitation is the notion of returning someone to a 'normal' state, for example, after injury, however the word has become so aligned with imprisonment, the Oxford Dictionary defines rehabilitation as the

'action of restoring someone to health or normal life through training and therapy after imprisonment, addiction, or illness'[14] and the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary also defines rehabilitation as the action of 'return[ing] someone to a healthy or usual way of living, or to return someone to good condition', with the example 'the aim is to rehabilitate the prisoners so that they can lead productive lives when they are released.'[15] 'Rehabilitate' becomes a verb — an action done *to* the prisoner to effect their rehabilitation.

The post 1970s rise of mass incarceraton in the US accompanied a swing towards another pillar of criminal justice — incapacitation. However, the dominance of scientific and medical ideology and rhetoric continued to shape thinking around criminal justice. The prioritisation of public safety, underpinned by an 'audit culture' of risk management, began to shift the purpose of prison towards containment in order to protect the public. Advances in the fields of psychology and criminology led to a concept of correction of deviant behaviours/attitudes from the 'norm'. Within such a context, rehabilitation, then, becomes a form of social control, an oppressive rather than emancipatory process. Gibson (2011:1041) refers to Foucault's view of prison as an 'extreme example' of an institution that seeks to employ 'scientific method to discipline and normalize the individual'. As the shift in rhetoric suggests, the model moved from the individual's religious need to turn or return to God, to the need for 'experts' to 'correct' the individual. Collins (1998) and McNeill (2012) outline various guises rehabilitative ideology has undertaken, from the 'penitentiary model' which required the offender to reform self with divine help in meditation and solitude, assisted by the prison chaplain, to the 'medical model' (where programs are developed as 'treatment' to 'cure' offenders of behavioural flaws) through to a model of rehabilitation as 'social learning' which McNeill (2012:5) refers to as the 'reeducation of the poorly socialised' to a more recent Cognitive Deficiency Model,

[14] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rehabilitation

[15] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/rehabilitate

where 'the incarcerated individual is again reduced to a delinquent requiring "correctional" treatment' (Collins, 1998: 105) enforced by 'experts' (McNeill, 2012:5).

While the prisons of Australia, the US and UK have had very different origins and trajectories, notions of rehabilitation have remained remarkably consistent between countries[16]. Indeed, today's prisons in Australia are called 'Correctional Centres'. The legacy of the retributive model is strong in the Australian context (Kornhausen & Laster, 2014) and this is reflected in how rehabilitation is conceptualised nationally. The terms 'Corrective' or 'Correctional' are used less in the sense of moral correction but in terms of correcting 'faulty' thinking/behaviour. It is also reflected in the 'rehabilitative' programs aimed at correcting the 'offending behaviour' and attitudes of those with a custodial sentence generally through the use of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) based programs.

This is not to say the religious model of reformation of the incarcerated individual is preferable to today's model of corrections, but it is important to note a shift in the locus of power from the individual being urged to seek redemption (whose choice it is to turn to God or not)[17] to the 'expert' who decides what 'treatment' is best for the individual (who appears to have little choice about the process) to achieve 'normalisation' (Collins, 1998). The impetus is for externally applied techniques/'treatment' to achieve internal change in the subjects so they are 'rehabilitated', by which it is meant they conform to society's norms. The implications for prison education are significant — not just in the way that education, including

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[16] Throughout this this thesis, when references are made to the Australian, UK and US justice and penal systems, it is with the understanding each is comprised of multiple jurisdictions (state, national/federal) with important differences. For example, while the US has multiple state jurisdictions plus federal jurisdiction, the UK consists of the three separate jurisdictions: Scotland; England and Wales; and Northern Ireland. In Australia, there are nine different departments for prisons in Australia: one for each state/territory, while federal prisoners are held in the prison closest to their home state/territory).

[17] It is acknowledged that coercion to conform can certainly be present and powerful within religious rhetoric, however much Christian theology holds that while God is omnipotent, humanity has free will so the decision to accept salvation or not rests with the individual. God may hold the power to enforce compliance, but he chooses not to do so and allows the individual to make that decision.

prison education, is conceived of, planned and delivered, but also in the way it is researched and discussed.

2.4 Models of Education

While literacy may have started as an emancipatory religious endeavour to allow lay people direct access to the Bible, the Industrial Revolution of 19th-century England with its rural-urban shift saw the rise of the public school as employers needed literate workers. With industrialisation and the rise of capitalism, 'literacy for religious emancipation' became 'literacy for economic prosperity', predominantly that of the captains of industry (Freire, 1970 & 1985; Giroux, 1983). Rather than supporting the poor to rise up out of their poverty, the 'banking' model of education (Freire, 1970), which echoes Dickens' (1854) beautiful illustration of positivist, market-driven education in his depiction of Thomas Grandgrind's school in *Hard Times*, is seen to stifle the imagination and critical thought, protect the social status quo, keep the poor in their 'rightful' place and safeguard those in power (Freire, 1970).

In recent years, this human capital model of compulsory education[18] in the US, UK, Australia and other countries has been characterised by age-classification and streaming, standardisation, narrowing of curriculum, mass assessment of competency-based outcomes, and the development of both national and international 'league tables'. This shift has generated a strong response from educators and theorists, especially the critical theorists who oppose such developments as disempowering for teachers and learners as anti-democratic (see, for example, Giroux, 1983; Freire, 1970), asserting education should be emancipatory, democratic in its fullest sense, allowing people to achieve personal and social change

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[18] Apart from the education of juveniles in prison, most prison education is post-compulsory, however consideration of compulsory education provides a good test of predominant attitudes to and beliefs about education.

to eliminate social inequality. Arguably, the most influential critical theorist is Paolo Freire, whose seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) underpins most work in this area. Concerned with imbalances of power and the use of education as social control, Freire worked in Brazil to develop literacy programs for peasant farmers with the purpose of developing critical thinking and the ability to challenge the status quo. His work was considered so seditious he was exiled. Freire embodied the fact that literacy is not an apolitical concept and "[p]edagogy is never innocent" (Giroux, 2017).

Within Australia, at compulsory school level, the development of standardised K-12 education has continued with the introduction of the Australian National Curriculum (ANC) in 2015 following the introduction of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in 2008. Interestingly, the controversial move to standardisation of curriculum and assessment would suggest a human capital model of education, privileging skills for employment, but the supporting documentation around the curriculum suggests a model of education based on human capabilities and human rights (see Robeyns, 2006, for more detailed analysis of the three models of education: human capital; human rights and human capability). Underpinned by the *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians*, the curriculum focuses on building capabilities that support, yet reach further than, employment. Prior to the new National Curriculum, there had been a focus in compulsory education on the development of functional literacy, numeracy and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) skills, indicative of a human capital model. As noted in Chapter 1.4, while these three capabilities were retained, an additional four general capabilities were added:

- Critical and Creative Thinking,
- Personal and Social Capabilities,
- Ethical Understanding, and
- Intercultural Understanding

Significantly, drawing more from the capabilities-based philosophy of Nussbaum (2009) and Sen (1999) these additional four capabilities add a social, emotional and political dimension to what it means to be 'successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens' (Australian Curriculum, 2018). At a government level, there appears to be a desire to support the development of individuals' capabilities that will allow them not just to function within or contribute economically to society, but to flourish within it, and have the capacity to change it through the development of critical and creative thinking as a general capability, albeit within a practical context of a national curriculum framework and mass assessment. For both Freire and Giroux, critical thinking is considered an essential skill to be taught to adults as democratic practice. Tikly & Barrett (2011:3) explain how the human capabilities approach to education quality 'can be understood in relation to the extent to which it fosters key capabilities that individuals, communities and society in general have reason to value.'

2.5 Prison Education

Within critical theory, Foucault sees power, particularly that exerted in the educational domain, as something that can be used for 'changing abilities and capabilities, and producing docile, and calculable bodies to lead useful lives' (Marshall, 1989:105). The question is 'useful to whom and in what ways?'. Techniques to benefit prisoners, even such as education, can often become techniques of oppression and control depending on the dominant ideology of governments, administrators and the wider society. Over the years, there has been a trend away from the liberal arts model of education in prison to one that is more functional and at the basic level of literacy and numeracy (Warr, 2016). In Foucauldian terms, the shift in type and focus of knowledge/learning 'is the outcome of certain practices associated with social control' (Marshall, 1989: 107). Most prison education is found to embody either a human capital approach or human rights approach (Delaney et al, 2018), contrasting with the capabilities approach being developed in the mainstream.

2.5.1 A Human Capital Approach

Internationally, there is a wide variety of prison education provision and quality. For example, the Singapore Prison Service responds to labour-market requirements and trains prisoners in highly skilled jobs such as graphic design, electronics or multi-media advertising, including television. Compulsory-level education in Changi Prison is provided by qualified secondary teachers who are seconded to the prison from the Ministry of Education for a period of up to four years (Heliwell, 2011)[19]. Pathways exist for prisoners from basic to diploma level (Singapore Prison Service Annual Report 2018; Wong, 2018). In the US, there is wider access to a General Education Diploma and some access to Pell-grant funded college courses within US prisons, such as the Inside-Out program (Drake & Aresti, 2016; Delaney, 2016)[20], while the Learning Together initiative in the UK allows prisoners and university students to learn various university-level subjects together in prison (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016 ; Turner et al, 2019).

Even within Australia there is variety across the jurisdictions in terms of the quality and quantity of education and training available. In the Australian Capital Territory, the Alexander Maconochie Centre (named after a highly influential penal reformer responsible for the Norfolk Island penal settlement from 1840-1844) has approved prisoner use of approved internet sites and email addresses of established

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[19] This was explained to me during a visit to look at education provisions at Changi Prison Visit, 2014. One of the teachers explained he loved working in the prison but was coming up to the end of his four-year secondment and would be returning to mainstream secondary teaching. He explained it was important to rotate the teachers so they did not become isolated from mainstream professional development and teaching practices. It is interesting the responsibility of teaching adults in prison falls to the Education Department rather than further education colleges as is more common in the UK, US or Australia. In Singapore, it is assumed that a high school certificate is most likely to benefit those who have not yet achieved in high school and therefore secondary teachers most familiar with the syllabus and aware of current pedagogical practices have the remit for education at 'The Changi School'.

[20] It is important to note that there is significant variation across the jurisdictions within the US and between the types of prison (federal, state or local). Delaney et al (2016:7) point out that '35% of state prisons report providing college courses', however 'these programs serve just 6% of the total state prison population nationwide.'

educational institutions in order to access further education at a university level. In neighbouring NSW, however, education programs in CSNSW prisons have a much more vocational bent, taking the form of vocational training packages:

- Certificate I in Access to Vocational Pathways
- Certificate I in Skills for Vocational Pathways
- Certificate II in Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways
- Certificate I in Information, Digital Media and Technology

The focus of each core unit is firmly on the world of work and it appears that the work a learner is likely to be able to secure with such skills is also very basic. For example, the core units of the Certificate I in Access to Vocational Pathways are:

- FSKDIG01 Use digital technology for basic workplace tasks
- FSKLRG04 Use basic strategies for work-related learning
- FSKNUM03 Use whole numbers and money up to one thousand for work
- FSKNUM04 Locate, compare and use highly familiar measurements for work
- FSKOCM02 Engage in basic spoken exchanges at work
- FSKRDG04 Read and respond to basic workplace information
- FSKWTG03 Write basic workplace information

Within a Critical Theory approach, the question asked when looking at prison education program and delivery is 'What kind of individual and social transformations is prison education intended to realise?' (Editor, Prison Service Journal, May 2016). It is clear from the CSNSW prison education program that employability is its goal, a dominant theme in the literature around the effectiveness of prison programs including education (Warr, 2016). Often the assumption is made that as employment,

or lack thereof, is a criminogenic factor, equipping prisoners with employment skills such as functional, vocationally related literacy and numeracy skills will address that criminogenic need (Warr, 2016), keep a released prisoner 'busy' (Collins, 1998), largely remove the opportunity to offend and, consequently, reduce reoffending. As a result, the curriculum takes on a strong vocational focus, which is the case in NSW. Indeed, in the ILC, learners are paid for their educational 'work'. Significantly, in 2016, CSNSW made structural changes that brought prisoner education under the umbrella of Corrective Services Industries. As a result, the value of education is seen in terms of its ability to equip learner with the basic skills they need to access Offending Behaviour Programs (so they can be rehabilitated) and equip them to work safely within Corrective Services Industries (so they can contribute to the costs of their incarceration). The notion of employability has narrowed its context from the wider community to that found in the prison workshop:

> Education programs and services provided by CSNSW aim to improve inmates' language, literacy and numeracy skills as well as support their employment with Corrective Services Industries (CSI) and their participation in programs.
> https://www.correctiveservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/Pages/CorrectiveServices/programs/adult-education/education-training-employment.aspx

2.5.2 A Rehabilitation Approach

The conceptual connection between the 'total institutions' of education and prison (Rothman, 1971; Foucault, 1977; Ignatieff, 1978; Goffman, 1968) have been well established, widely cited and are influential in the field of prison research. Both Foucault (1977) and Goffman (1968) focus on the power imbalance built into the institutions of prisons and schools (Giroux, 1983) and describe the negative impacts of these institutions on their 'inmates'. Foucault (1977) points to the irony of an institution such as prison, whose purpose is to 'discipline and punish' the inmate in order to rehabilitate, but focuses predominantly on control and order which, in turn, tends to create conditions that oppose a rehabilitative process and instead serves to

produce criminals. Both schools and prisons, it is argued, wish to control and order their 'inmates', however this purpose is at odds with the rehabilitative ideal in prison and learning in schools. Warr (2016) asserts that by conceptualising prisoners as having criminogenic 'deficits':

> …rehabilitation in this sense is predicated on correcting these deficits and normalising the prisoner…Given this understanding, prison education is re-formulated as an intervention concerned with correcting a prisoner's offending behaviour rather than imparting the skills of knowledge aimed at personal growth, future development and successful integration … Prison education becomes reformulated as a process of rehabilitation and is thus perceived as an intervention in the same way a cognitive skills programme would be.

Both schools and prisons (and, perhaps, schools within prisons) exist to facilitate similar change in an individual's life: prison as 'reformatory' is a place where a character can be re-formed, in a more law abiding citizen; and school as the place where character can be built, strengthened and knowledge and skills acquired to become a good law-abiding, citizen. 'For Foucault, such 'reform' of the individual is simply a process of normalisation shared by parallel institutions including the army, the school, the hospital, and the workshop' (Gibson, 2011:1043). Warr (2016) declares 'most contemporary penal practice, including rehabilitation and education, have evolved as processes of control which serve the interests of the institution and the wider public over that of the prisoner.'

While the religious influence is less pervasive now in current prison policy and practice, the original reformist dual purpose of prison and prison education remains — to contain and to rehabilitate. In modern times, however, the focus has shifted from the personal redemption of each 'sinner' to the protection of society. This is reflected in the cost-benefits rhetoric of much research aiming to justify prison programs' expenditure. While the focus may have shifted, the desire is the same: the offender must *change* and change in the way that society desires. In prison,

rehabilitation is about conformity and therefore prison education is intended to control the individual in a particular way which supports the status quo, preventing it from being challenged.

Incarceration is expected to effect change: a transformation from offender to non-offender is desired by society. This disempowers the incarcerated individual, reducing the opportunity to develop and exercise agency necessary to effect positive change, yet expecting that change to occur. Even a rehabilitation approach can be oppressive when the change demanded does not respect difference and insists power imbalances be accepted. Newman (1993:91) argues that the provision of literacy programs in prison is the morally right thing to do, yet describes a model of prison education for conformity that serves the public, not necessarily the prisoner's, interest:

> A model educational program in prison is a reaffirmation of the moral order within which the *outside* wants the criminally adjudicated to learn to live. A literacy program is society's way of helping *them* to become enough like us so that we can tolerate having them among us. (original emphasis)

2.5.3 *Prison Education as Transformative*

Education Philosophy in the 20th century has been underpinned by a belief in positive individual and social change. From Dewey's concept of Progressive Education (1985), Friere's Emancipatory Learning (1985), to Mezirow's Transformation Theory (1994, 2000), through to Dweck's (1993) Implicit Theories which have become popularly known as Growth Mindset Theory[21], education theorists believe that learning, by definition, involves change. While that change can simply be the acquisition of a new

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[21] Dweck's 'Growth Mindset' theory allows for fluidity. IQ is not fixed but can fluctuate not just on a daily basis but many times a day.

skill or knowledge, the process of learning implies that this acquisition leads to personal or social action (i.e., the rejigging of an existing framework of reference to accommodate the newly acquired skill or knowledge and/or an action arising out of that new skill/knowledge such as tying a shoelace).

Within prison education literature, there seems to be an unequivocal agreement that prison education can be 'transformative' (Pike, 2013, 2019; Kendall & Hopkins, 2019; Merriam, 2013; Duguid & Pawson, 1998; Newman, 1993; Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016; Warr, 2016; Vesey et al, 2009). This could be in part because prison education is an adult learning enterprise and, as such, is largely informed by Mezirow's (1991:161) work on Transformative Learning:

> Transformative Learning involves an enhanced level of awareness of the context of one's beliefs and feelings, a critique of their assumptions and particularly premises, an assessment of alternative perspectives, a decision to negate an old perspective in favour of a new one or to make a synthesis of old and new, an ability to take action based on the new perspective, and a desire to fit the new perspective into the broader context of one's life.

Within the context of education for prisoner rehabilitation, Mezirow strikes a chord with prison educators seeking to help Corrective Services achieve its aim to rehabilitate offenders (Pike, 2013, Behan, 2014). In Knowles' (1984:3-4) work on Adult Learning and Andragogy, he finds 'a general agreement among adult educators that adults are different from youth as learners', and that the 'social role of "worker" is the predominant reason why adults engage in formal learning activities' (Merriam, 2013: 52). Furthermore, the influence of adult learning theory also strengthens the focus on employability as the purpose for prison education. For example, Knowles outlines his assumptions of adult learners (1980:47) including 'An adult accumulates a growing reservoir of experience, which is a rich resource for learning' and 'The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role.' Knowles concluded the experience and social roles of adults centred around work. Thus, the link between vocationally related curriculum with a view to

transforming the learner are forged within Adult Education theory and rhetoric, which has heavily influenced prison education. There are questions about whether what Mezirow describes as 'transformative' learning is simply a noticeable process of growth and development one would expect when experiencing learning. Furthermore, both Knowles and Mezirow have been critiqued for their lack of attention to the importance of the social in the learning process. For both Mezirow and Knowles, learning is an individual activity and the responsibility for transformation lies within the individual regardless of social, economic or political circumstances. For example, Pratt (1993:18) posits that andragogy acts as though the learner 'has risen above the web of social structures and 'does not acknowledge the vast influence of these structures on the formation of the person's identity and ways of interpreting the world.' The model of prison education as rehabilitation often fails to recognise the (often unequal) social structures in which the learners operate. The rhetoric of transformation places the responsibility for change firmly on the individuals and, should failure to rehabilitate occur, the blame lies largely with the 'failed' individual or program deemed 'ineffective' because it did not adequately address criminogenic factors. Although Knowles did, over time, modify his view of adult learners to think of pedagogy and andragogy at either ends of the continuum, the impact of his work has informed the development of Adult Learning Theory and Practice, arguably creating a false impression that andragogy is somehow less politically loaded than pedagogy and that adult learners are substantially different to others[22] .

2.5.4 Prisoner Learner Experiences

Against the backdrop of prison education as rehabilitation/social control, the narratives of those with lived experience of prison education are significant. In

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[22] The distinction between adult learners and those still engaged in compulsory education seems even more arbitrary when, in Australia, the age most children turn in the final year of schooling is 18, which is also the legal age of adulthood.

particular, when interviewed by *The Guardian*, Warr (2012), described the profound impact prison education had on him, not because of the content he learned or basic skills acquired, but because of the informal, dialogic learning that took place when a strict, utilitarian curriculum was *not* enforced. He described expanding his parameters of thought when a prison educator asked the class to consider an iconic photo taken during the Holocaust, which in terms of learning experience 'was the most powerful [he had] even experienced.' Similarly, he had been inspired by a teacher who creatively taught Ancient History and another who taught Philosophy. Having had experience of the formal basic literacy and numeracy classes in prison, Warr asserts it was the less formal, non-accredited courses that affected his personal, educational, cognitive and emotional development. Warr also draws attention to the importance of the development of critical thinking skills, significantly making the link between critical thinking skills and empathy, suggesting critical thinking skills enable a prisoner to make a 'truly transformative narrative change from prisoner to member of society.'

Similarly, MacPherson (2018), writing from behind bars at the time, describes his learning journey as one that positively impacts on his desire to desist, describing his engagement in prison education as a significant 'hook for change' (Giordano et al, 2002). Importantly, MacPherson cites learning about desistance theory as a key factor in shifting his thinking, together with his powerful motivation to become a better man for his son. Metacognition, for MacPherson, has built his capacity to think critically about his own situation and future life (perhaps as an academic) as he progresses towards desistance.

Other qualitative research tells the same story about the impact of education whether it be philosophy (Szirifis, 2017), criminology (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016), higher distance education (Pike, 2013) or basic skills (Nichols, 2016). While learners describe initial motivation to engage in education as something that might help them get a job or pass the time in prison, their experience of education in prison is of a place in which they find respite from the prison regime, have a sense of mental and emotional well-being, feel safe, feel dignified, develop their confidence and agency as they acquire new skills at higher levels, and feel a sense of escape from the relentless role of prisoner. What the learners value about their education can sometimes be at

odds with the philosophy of the administration, policymakers and even researchers. While prison education's purpose may be to reduce recidivism and raise employability, the reality for many learners in prison is that education helps them build capabilities in the social and emotional domains as well as the cognitive. A key pair of research questions in this thesis is:

- How do learners experience basic skills education in prison?
- What value do prisoner learners find in prison education?

2.6 Prison Education Research

Generally, over the past forty years, prison education literature has, with a few exceptions, taken a 'What works' approach in response to the (in)famous work of Martinson (1974) and Lipton, Martinson & Wilks (1975). Interpreted as the 'Nothing Works' research, Martinson et al did not find that correctional programs (among other programs, including CBT-based Offending Behaviour Programs) were effective at reducing reoffending. The reaction against this work was strong and swift. Cullen & Gendreau (2001) describe this research as a 'knowledge destruction technique' because Martinson and others were focused on identifying which programs did *not* work rather than examining what *did* work and why. Described by Cullen and Gendreau (2001) as the 'knowledge construction' technique, the 'What works' literature is characterised by attempts to research and analyse which correctional programs seem to be most effective. Effectiveness is, almost exclusively, measured in terms of reducing recidivism and/or being cost effective (Davis et al, 2014; Piehl, 1998; Chown & Davis, 1986; Davis, 1985; Mackenzie et al, 2000)[23].

[23] 'What works' literature tends to privilege 'scientific' quantitative research methods rather than qualitative and to gauge whether a program 'works' in relation to recidivism rates.

Prison education programs have been included in the 'What works' literature and it is has become generally accepted that offender education can make a statistically significant difference to post-custodial employment and recidivism rates (Aos and Drake, 2013; Davis et al, 2013; Stocks, 2012; MacKenzie, 2006[24]; Vacca, 2004; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Wilson, Gallagher & Mackenzie, 2000; Tracy, Smith, & Steurer, 1998). Some studies have found that 'academic' educational programs are more effective in reducing recidivism than vocational or 'life-skills' programs (Pompoco et al, 2017; Brewster & Sharp, 2002; Cecil et al., 2000; Jensen & Reed, 2006), whereas others argue that engagement with *any* prison education or training program is beneficial for inmate rehabilitation (Ministry of Justice, 2017; Coates, 2016; Gordon & Weldon, 2003; Jancic, 1998; Jenkins, Streurer, & Pendry, 1995; MacKenzie, 2000; Wilson, Gallagher, & MacKenzie, 2000).

As a result, many western governments have increased investment in education within the custodial setting (Davis et al, 2013; Duguid, Hawkey, & Pawson, 1996). In order to maximise the investment in offender behaviour programs and education, much work is being done to identify 'what works' in terms of measurable outcomes, namely in the form of qualifications achieved and employment gained post-release, together with reduced recidivism rates (Hughes, 2012; Pike 2014; Cho & Tyler, 2010) and cost effectiveness (Kaiser, 2010). In New South Wales, Corrective Services specifies '[t]he aim of the Intensive Learning Centres is to reduce an inmate's risk of re-offending through educational achievement as measured by the attainment of nationally accredited certificates.'[25] Conceptually, in NSW, education in prisons is for the purpose of reducing reoffending and learning success is measured in certificates gained.

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[24] Mackenzie found that all prison education 'works' to reduce reoffending except general 'life skills' courses.

[25] https://www.correctiveservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/Pages/CorrectiveServices/programs/adult-education/adult-education.aspx -.

What remains largely unidentified, however, is the specific aspects of an *educational* program's structure, delivery and space that most effectively make a positive difference to offender learners in the custodial setting, especially at the basic skills level. Mackenzie (2006:27) describes this as the 'black box' of prison education, saying 'while overall the evidence indicates that education is effective, more work needs to be done on the questions of whom, when, why and what.'[26]

Kendall and Hopkins' (2019) research around the Shannon Trust's Turning Pages Program is one of the few important exceptions to the general norm of prison education research, linking basic skills learners' experiences of literacy skills acquisition in prison achieved through 'grounded pedagogies' of literacy mentors with changes in identity that reach beyond the classroom and support desistance from crime. Additionally, their work challenges notions of basic skills education as 'treatment' to 'fix deficits', as does Tett's (2016) work on literacy, learning and identity in the community and research on the effect of arts education in prison (2012).

There is a more substantial body of research that indicates the higher the level of educational attainment in prison education programs, the lower the risk of recidivism (Pike, 2014; Fabelo, 2002; Stocks, 2012; Harer, 1994). Indeed, much prison education research has focused on those engaged in higher education in prison (Szirifis, 2018; Duguid et al, 1996; Batiuk, 1997) and in further distance education (Pike, 2014). Less research is focused on those engaged in achieving secondary school qualifications (Dunn, 2014), and less still researches those engaged in basic skills (literacy and numeracy) learning in prisons (Cho & Tyler, 2010), despite the vast majority of prisoner learners being enrolled in education at a basic skills or secondary school level. Within the meta-analyses of prison education research, there is often no distinction between the different types/levels of education being researched, although a distinction between vocational training and education is usually made.

[26] See also Pawson & Tilly (1977) and Duguid & Pawson (1988).

Not only do prisoner learners engaged in education seem to recidivate less upon release, there have been indications that these learners incur less prison charges for misbehaviour while in custody. Pompoco et al (2017:515) found that those who earned high school diplomas or completed college classes were less likely to 'engage in violence during incarceration' whereas those engaged in vocational training and apprenticeship programs 'had no such effect on any type of inmate misconduct examined', however they found that engagement in and completion of either education or vocational training programs reduced the risk of reoffending after three years.

It has been argued that the higher/further prison education research may be flawed or skewed because the participants are not representative of the prison population but, by virtue of the fact they are engaging in education at such a high level, are already much less likely to commit crime on release (Duguid & Pawson, 1998). In short, engagement in higher/further education in prison indicates a prisoner is already somewhat 'rehabilitated'. Just making the decision to enroll in prison education indicates a degree of pro-social proclivity. Additionally, qualitative prison education research without a control group is problematic on the basis of self-selection (Fogarty & Giles, 2018; Cai et al, 2018). For example, Czerniawski (2016:199) rightly points out that the lack of research around the effectiveness of education to reduce recidivism means any number of factors could be at play in the apparent reduction of reoffending by those who have been engaged in prison education:

> Nevertheless, whilst evidence would seem to indicate that if people in prisons receive education there is a subsequent reduction in their recidivism, it is difficult to conclusively claim that it is their education in prison that is responsible for this reduction as it could be that other factors are involved such as increased maturity or post-prison opportunities [...] making it difficult to ascertain the extent to which education itself is the key factor in reducing recidivism.

We still do not know what defines a really effective custodial educational program (Czerniawski, 2016; MacKenzie, 2006; Duguid, 1998; Collins, 1988). Despite this, the privileging of scientific method means that the most respected, influential 'evidence-based' prison education research is quantitative, remaining firmly focused on recidivism rates, all pointing to the fact prison education 'works' but without exploring why. Almost all of these are focused on post-compulsory, post-secondary education and are based in the US or UK. Significantly, they almost all involve large-scale statistical analysis or meta-analysis which do not require setting foot inside a prison. There is much less literature on the relationship between basic skills education in prison education and reoffending, even internationally. Even more surprisingly, there appears to be minimal literature about the potential for basic skills education to support the process of desistance from crime. There is a gap in the literature that seems to explore what 'good' prison education might look like given what we know about desistance. Instead, most of the literature about desistance does not consider the potentially powerful contribution effective prison education delivered by constantly up-skilled professionals might make to the desistance process.

Furthermore, there is a need for research that questions the assumptions inherent in the conceptualisation of prison education as valuable because it reduces reoffending, makes prisoners more compliant, and raises employability so that, when released into the community, ex-prisoners can be 'productive members of society' by making an economic contribution to society. For example, while Cai et al (2019:4) lament 'the paucity of literature that identifies the educational programs that benefits inmates the most', they define the benefits to inmate learners as 'developing the literacy/numeracy skills needed for reentry into an ever-changing labor market.' As a result, their study seeks to identify 'the type, amount and intensity of programs that reduce recidivism.' Conceiving of education as a panacea, a remedy for recidivism and informed by the medical model of rehabilitation, researchers aim to find the optimum "dosage" (Cai et al, 2018) with Davis et al (2013:xxv) identifying 'there is little to no empirical evidence that can help inform policymakers on "how much" correctional education is necessary to produce a change in the desired outcomes.'

As Gould (2018) suggests, we ought to be 'rethinking our metrics'. This thesis aims to look beneath conventional research assumptions to explore, differently, if and how education works at a basic skills level in prison.

2.6.1 Recidivism rates as a measure of program success

One of the problems with the 'What works' literature is that to date, the effectiveness of prison education programs has largely been measured in terms of recidivism and in terms of post-release outcomes such as earnings and employment (Cho & Tyler, 2010).

Recidivism rates are, however, problematic in that there is no clear consensus between researchers about the parameters or even definition of recidivism. It is an inconsistent measure (Jancic, 1998). Even in what is arguably the most influential meta-analysis by Davis, Wilson, Gallagher & Mackenzie (2000), four different measures of recidivism were used across the studies analysed. Almost every research study and criminal justice system seems to have its own definition of recidivism and the timespan in which recidivism is counted. It is, therefore, difficult to understand how recidivism has become such a widely accepted yet loosely defined measure of the success both of prison programs and 'criminality' of those who pass through the criminal justice system. Not only has recidivism become widely accepted, it has become highly prioritised as the 'real' measure of prison program success, perhaps because the quantitative data used to calculate rates of recidivism are much easier to identify and analyse rather than qualitative data about individuals' progression towards that reduction.

Using recidivism as a measure of prison education (and other) programs' effectiveness is also problematic in that it is not process-based. However, to be engaged in education is to be engaged in a process. Learning is achieved over time and often with practice. Recidivism only measures an occurrence — whether someone has not offended/been incarcerated within a particular time period. It does not and cannot measure the *progress* an individual is making towards committing no

further crime (McNeill, 2012). It does not and cannot measure how successful an individual has been within a prison learning program.

Individuals who reoffend or who are reincarcerated would be considered 'failures' according to recidivism rates, and by association, so too the prison programs they have been involved in, however there is still evidence that prison programs do effect positive change. McHutchison (2009) found that students enrolled at the Intensive Learning Centre within John Morony Correctional Centre had significantly less prison charges than those not engaged in education, or those engaged in more part-time education in the prison's 'main' education department, yet found no difference in recidivism rates. Liebling & Maruna (2005:4) suggest this may not be due to the ineffectiveness of education, but because the conditions of the wider prison regime counteract developments made in education:

> One reason for the null findings of so many of the best designed interventions may be that the positive impact of interventions such as education or job training may be systematically undermined by the negative effects of the incarceration process itself.

Cho & Tyler (2010) found that while engagement in Adult Basic Education in prison raised post-release employment rates and earnings, there was no improvement of recidivism rates. In both these studies, education seems to be having some sort of positive impact that is not reflected by reduced recidivism rates, implying recidivism rates are an inadequate measure of progress made. Yet Brewster & Sharp (2002) still assert rates of 'reincarceration seems the most reasonable measure' (315) of program effectiveness and so recidivism rates, however faulty and flawed, still dominate the research studies' methodology and literature as the measure of program effectiveness in terms of 'reducing the risk' of reoffending.

Interestingly, the Ministry of Justice (2017) analysis of 10,000 police records of those who had been engaged in prison education takes a more finely calibrated approach and found that while those who had been in education may have reoffended, they did so less frequently than their counterparts in prison who had not accessed prison

education. Similarly, if those in prison education were charged with another crime, the sentence for those in education was, on average, 120 days less than those who had no access to education. Offending less often and less seriously suggests that those in education in prison were, in fact, progressing towards desistance from crime. The study also found that any involvement in education had a significant effect regardless of whether a certificate was completed or not. This study suggests that engagement in education may have a relationship with desistance from crime. The Desistance Paradigm (McNeil, 2012) focuses on the *process* of successfully ceasing to commit crimes and appears to be a more appropriate way of thinking about how and why the process of learning in prison education may impact on the process of stopping committing crime. This leads to another research question:

- How does/can prison education support learners' progression towards desistance from crime?

In order to begin to be able to answer that question, it is important to turn to desistance literature to understand the process of desistance, the characteristics of successful desisters and identify any ways in which the process of learning may intersect with the process of desistance.

2.7 Understanding Desistance from Crime:

The literature of desistance has emerged over the past 40 years, which has had a profound impact on how we think about people who have committed crimes. McNeill (2012) summarises the ideological shift resulting from the development of desistance theory[27], which strives for a 'more fully interdisciplinary perspective' (2) with

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[27] There is, as yet, no single theory known as Desistance Theory. It is, rather a conceptualisation of the process of stopping offending and, as mentioned, is interdisciplinary. As such, it is more a paradigm (McNeil, 2012) than a cohesive theory, however for ease of use in this thesis, the body of literature will be referred to as desistance theory.

combined insights from disciplines such as criminology, history, philosophy, sociology of law and punishment as well as psychology, psychiatry and social work. Desistance Theory is not singular, there are many different strands as more and better-informed research is undertaken and traits of successful desisters are identified. Perhaps most crucially, McNeill (2012:9) describes the emergence of desistance literature as a response to the increasing recognition of 'the need for another kind of explanatory theory concerned with the aetiology not of crime but of desistance from crime'.

Desistance Theory is implicitly about change. King (2013:376) cites Maruna & Farrall who state "desisters are aware that they are changing and indeed positively wish to change". He also points out that Desistance Theory is firmly grounded in a process of change, but locates the power of that change within the desister and his/her socio-economic/historical/social context, not just within the intervention:

> Desistance-based perspectives stress that the process of change exists before, behind and beyond the intervention' (McNeill, 2013:13, citing their work from 2006, 2009).

In this way, it is different to a notion of rehabilitation as an imposed change process.

The desistance paradigm is essentially a strengths-based approach. Whereas recidivism is a measure of progress towards stopping offending by a single, externally verifiable event of reoffending (and there is a lack of consensus about how that is defined), desistance theorists look at indicators to suggest where an individual might be in terms of progressing towards desistance. An offender measured by recidivism is considered to have failed if he/she reoffends within a particular time frame, however desistance theorists look for other ways of measuring an individual's progression towards a crime-free life. A useful analogy is of a framework that allows a teacher to capture a learner's progress despite the fact s/he may be released before a final assessment leading to a qualification, (a frustrating, all-too-common occurrence for prison educators and learners).

McNeill (2012) suggests there are levels of desistance: primary desistance (where one is forced to stop offending, such as when imprisoned, or hospitalised), and secondary

desistance, which involves being forgiven by society. Giordano et al (2002) and Bottoms and Shapland (2011) define stages of the desistance process. Giordano et al suggest there are four stages, which include an 'openness to change', exposure to 'hooks for change', the availability of a 'conventional self' and the 'reassessment of attitudes to deviant behaviour'. It is not too difficult a stretch to see that these stages can be supported by engagement in quality intensive prison education which can foster an openness to change (an outcome of engagement in the learning process), provide the exposure to and hook for change (inherent in the learning process), and provide an available conventional identity (as learner) which may result in shifting attitudes to 'deviant' behaviour. Indeed, Bottoms and Shapland (2011) suggest there are seven phases of desistance, including a desire to change, thinking differently about self and surroundings, taking action towards desistance, and finally developing a crime-free identity. Again, it is not difficult to see that the act of enrolment in a quality, non-compulsory prison education program can be seen as a demonstration of a desire to change which will, in turn, lead to the student thinking differently about self (as learner) and surroundings (the education area within the prison), taking action towards desistance by continuing enrolment in education and developing a crime-free identity (as learner).

Common to both these stages is the development of a concept of a conventional, non-offending self (which might be developed through inhabiting the role of learner in full-time, intensive prison education) and may involve a knifing off of the past as described by Maruna (2004) or a turning away from a 'feared self' described by Paternoster & Bushway (2010).

Sampson and Laub (1993, 2005) describe 'turning points' in an offender's life that support desistance from crime. Soyer's (2014) narrative study of juveniles in custody suggests that just entering the juvenile justice facility acted as a turning point. Soyer found that they had 'a momentary intention of desistance' (92) and 'an initial cognitive openness for change' (91) but this was not sustained by the experience of juvenile incarceration (91), largely due to the tensions between the conditions required for effective incarceration and conditions required for effective desistance from crime.

Significantly, Soyer (2014:93—4) argues that the narratives of desistance of the incarcerated juvenile offenders she studied were akin to 'new clothes the teenagers are trying on, having not yet decided whether they fit'. This imagining of a future self, of trying on a role of 'desister' echoes our experience with the students in the Intensive Learning Centre at John Morony Correctional Centre, where we felt they were trying on their 'best selves' in the ILC.

While Soyer (2014:97) was disappointed that the juveniles she studied recidivated, she found that, while in custody, 'they had previously developed distinctive ideas of what kind of people they would like to become and how they could implement their personal transformations' , the implication is that relating their past experiences to their current situation may lead to a 'cognitive reconceptualising of self' (Carlsson, 2012) which may then allow for future change.

Giordano et al (2002) suggested a 'theory of cognitive transformation' which was found to be necessary for the desistance process, describing the way successful desisters develop critical thinking that changes the way they think about themselves and offending. Other skills that appear to support the desistance process are resilience (and its associated necessary skills of creating thinking, management of emotions and problem-solving skills), the ability to work collaboratively and optimism for the future.

Rocque (2014) outlines how important maturation is to the desistance process. Significantly, Rocque found that maturation is not only linked to age, but can also be facilitated by programs that support its development. Rocque's diagrammatic representation of the areas of maturation enables us to see how desistance can be supported through the formal process of learning in a prison context — through prison education, Offending Behaviour Programs and vocational training/Corrective Services Industries employment:

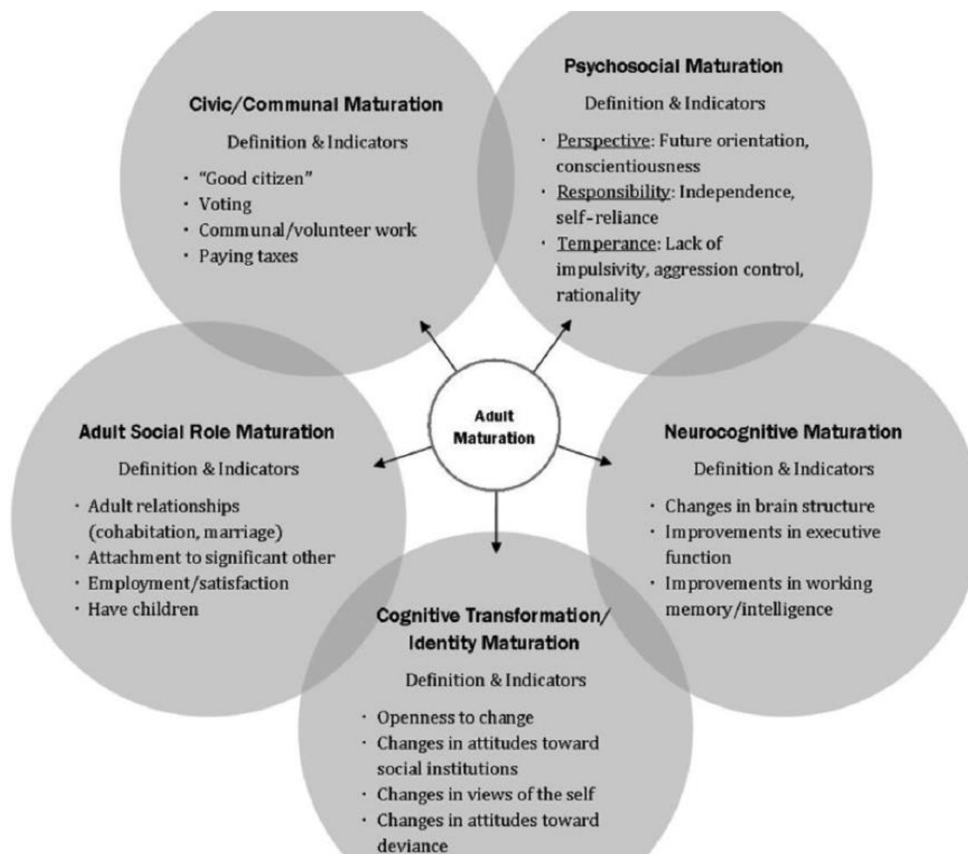

Figure 13 Maturation domains and relationships, Rocque (2014)

Generally, desistance researchers have found the following raft of ten factors common to successful desisters and believe these factors may be necessary to progress towards desistance:

1. **Narrative of self that makes sense of but 'knifes off' the past**

   Maruna (2006, 2001), Goffman (1986), Giordano et al (2002), Gadd & Farrall (2004), Farrall (2005), Vaughan (2007), Carlsson (2002), Soyer (2013) and others have found that successful desisters makes sense of self in terms of 'not being that person any more'. Central to this narrative is the notion of identity transformation — that someone sees themselves as changed and no longer a risk of committing the offence for which they were convicted.

2. **Imagined, achievable non-offending identity**

   Weaver & McNeill (2010); Healy, (2013) and Soyer (2013) identified the importance of the imagined non-offending identity/future identity to the

desistance process. Weaver & McNeill (2010) identity this process in their work in probation services, where much desistance literature is to be found. Indeed, there is some debate over whether desistance is possible within a custodial context given the level of control exerted over and lack of opportunity/agency for prisoners. McNeill (2012) refers to the lack of offending in prisons as 'primary' desistance — where desistance is 'enforced' because individuals do not commit crimes because they lack the opportunity in prison. Having said this, it is well known that prisons present plenty of opportunities to commit further crimes within the institution such as assault, theft or possession of drugs with intent to sell. It could be argued that without agency and freedom of choice, it is impossible to truly desist but others find that the oppressive/repressive nature of the prison regime renders it very difficult to imagine an achievable, sustainable non-offending self. Soyer (2013:105) asserts that 'without being anchored in positive social experiences of non-deviance, imprisonment cannot create opportunities for creative self-transformation and agency,' however Behan (2014) identifies that education in prison provides just that sort of positive social experience, citing Hughes (2009) and Reuss (2009, 1999) in his work: 'Research in other jurisdictions found that students participated in education to develop a new sense of self and mould new identities.' Behan cites Reuss (1999), saying that he "found that it was possible for a new self to emerge in the prison environment' (Behan, 2014: 21). The positive, pro-social impact of being engaged in a community of learning in prison has also been found, particularly by those with lived experience such as MacPherson (2018), Warr (2016) and Hart (2018).

3. Sense of hope for the future — including work and learning opportunities (Farrall & Calverley, 2006; Soyer, 2013; Designing Out Crime, 2015).

4. Sense of agency — having choices and sense of empowerment about own situation (Sampson & Laub, 2005; Giordano et al, 2002; Soyer, 2013; McNeill, 2006 & 2012. McNeill (2012) states "Since desistance is about discovering agency, interventions need to encourage and respect self-determination" (10).

5. **Social inclusion** — perceiving self as part of a community, with the ability to contribute positively to that community. (McNeill, 2014; Uggen, Manza & Thompson, 2006).

6. **Maturation** — there is a well-researched relationship between increasing age and decreasing rates of offending (Sweeten et al, 2013; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Farrall; Farrall et al, 2013) but this does not necessarily mean that offenders simply 'grow out of it' as they get older. Researchers have found there are ways to facilitate maturation separately from age development (Rocque, 2014; Sherman et al, 2002; Piquero, 2008; Laub & Sampson, 1993; Horney et al, 1995; Vergés et al, 2012). Sweeten (2013) finds that 'for public policy this is a promising story, as one need not simply wait for age to have its effect, but can pursue strategies to accelerate desistance from crime' (935).

7. **Strong pro-social bonds with others** (social capital) (Laub et al, 1998; Uggen, 2000; Farrall, 2002, 2004; McNeill & Maruna, 2007; McNeill & Whyte, 2007).

8. **Developing human capacity/capabilities** (social, emotional, academic, vocational etc) (Maruna & LeBel, 2003; Maguire & Raynor, 2006; Carrigan, 2014; Pike, 2014; Bennalick, 2018; Garner, 2017.)

9. **Self-reflection** — changing frames of reference (Soyer, 2012; McNeill, 2012; Bottoms & Shapland, 2011).

10. **Desire to make amends**, undertake generative activity (Maruna, 2001; Behan, 2014). Behan (2014:24) quotes Samuel who saw being engaged in prison education as 'part of a process of change', and of 'making good': It was an 'opportunity, one of the few ways I can make amends to society, to my victim. It is one of the few ways to make amends, some form of amends.'

2.8 Understanding the wider Australian education context

While the learners enrolled at the Intensive Learning Centre are all adults and therefore past the age of compulsory schooling, the decision has been made here to engage with broader learning theory rather than adult learning theory specifically. Within the Australian education context, the current dominant philosophy of learning is embedded within the *Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008:9), which states that it 'recognises that personal and social capability assists students to become successful learners, helping to improve their academic learning and enhancing their motivation to reach their full potential'.This marks a shift in thinking away from 'education for employment' to 'education for fulfilment' that is particularly useful in this research context.

The *Melbourne Declaration* describes the kind of learners it thinks should develop as a result of engagement in compulsory Australian education, however the characteristics it lists for confident and creative individuals could be applied to successful desisters, indicating there may be some overlap between learning and desistance from crime. For example, the descriptor for the General Capability 'Personal and Social Capabilities' can be seen to describe, at least in part, the traits of a successful desister:

> Personal and social capability supports students in becoming creative and confident individuals with 'a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and *personal identity* that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing', with a *sense of hope and 'optimism about their lives and the future*'. On a social level, it helps students to 'form and maintain *healthy relationships'* and prepares them 'for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members' (MCEETYA, 9, emphasis mine).

Given the indicators of desistance, together with Rocque's characteristics of maturation and the Australian Curriculum's characteristics of Personal and Social

Capabilities outlined above, it appears that the processes of learning may support the process of desistance.

2.9 Desistance as learning:

The link between poor educational attainment and history (of truancy/exclusion) and criminal behaviour has been well researched. It is generally accepted that there is a positive correlation, though not necessarily causal, between a person's history of high truancy rates, exclusion from school and/or poor educational achievement and incarceration. From a criminological perspective, this has been important as it is regarded as a factor that influences people to start offending. As a result, there have been many 'preventative' education projects established in the community targeting 'at risk' young people in order to alleviate the criminogenic 'risk factor' of poor educational achievement and lack of engagement in education. Within prisons, the Level of Service Inventory-revised (Andrews & Bonta, 1995) has been developed to assess the likelihood someone will reoffend. Educational attainment is an item on the scale to assess risk of reoffending but education and employment are conflated on the LSI-r scale, suggesting that education and employment work in the same way as criminogenic factors. Consequently, the lack of a robust history in mainstream education and basic skills such as literacy and numeracy are seen as criminogenic 'deficits'. In other words, the link between education and crime is perceived as causal, and so in order to reduce reoffending, the policy in CSNSW is to target those with the lowest levels of literacy and numeracy in order to 'fix' their 'deficits'.

The link between learning and desistance is less well researched. In recent years, however, there is growing interest and recent PhD studies include studies by: Pike (2014) who looked at higher distance education learners in prison; Carrigan (2014) and Cleere (2014) who explored the experience of imprisoned learners in Ireland with regards to the building of their social capital which they found supported desistance from crime; Szifiris (2017) who explored the impact of engaging in university-level philosophy studies in prison and found the engagement supported the development

of new ways of thinking and perspectives that also support desistance from crime; and Bennalick (2018) who explored learning culture within further education in prison, finding the learning culture supported progression towards desistance.

In making the link between processes of desistance and learning, it can be useful to explore the concept of 'assisted desistance' used by King (2013), Healy (2010) and McNeill (2014, 2009, 2006). Assisted desistance is a relatively new concept applied to the process of probation officers working with offenders to support their goals (including the achievement of a crime-free life), build on their strengths and minimise their weaknesses. The literature of assisted desistance shows the importance of the relationship between probation officers and offenders as being instrumental in facilitating the desistance process, more important than the process of probation itself. Working in the field of probation services, McNeill (2009) argues that there are three roles that criminal justice workers need in order to facilitate desistance from crime — they need to be able to develop motivation, opportunities and capacities.

If we consider the role of the teachers, including prison educators, we could also say their role is to facilitate the development of 'motivation, opportunities and capacities' of the students with whom they work. While much 'assisted desistance' literature is located in the world of Probation Services, the role of the teacher and the role of the probation officer are similar in that they facilitate personal development leading to increased self-efficacy:

> Rather than providing 'hands on assistance' in terms of problem solving, probation facilitates personal development such that the probationer may be more able to resolve difficulties on their own. (King, 2013, 8)

The work of Giordano et al (2002), Maruna (2001), King (2013), Healy (2013), McNeill (2014, 2009, 2006) and other researchers interested in the process of desistance support the notion that individuals are capable of significant growth and change, which is also supported by the findings of educational theorists such as Dewey (1916) and more latterly, Gardner (1983) with his 'Habits of Mind', Goleman's (1995) exploration of emotional intelligence and social intelligence (2006), leading to the

work of Carol Dweck (2012). Interestingly, Dweck's most recent work with Shumann (2014) identifies a link between the 'implicit theory of personality' (the belief that personality, including intelligence, can be changed) and the ability of 'transgressors' to accept responsibility for their transgressions, which could provide an important link between learning and Maruna's 'making good', which is a crucial element of successful desistance from crime.

2.10 Learner identity

Given the similarities between the characteristics of a successful learner outlined in the ANC and other educational literature, and the characteristics of a successful desister outlined above, it seems possible to consider desistance as a learning process rather than just a criminological one. Interestingly, Hayman (2012:71) draws the connection between the ANC and development of an identity as learner, suggesting the core curriculum provides a pathway to post-secondary learning options, which cements the role of 'learner' rather than 'offender':

> Aligning core curriculum standards for inmates with generally applicable core curriculum standards and providing broad access to post-secondary education would further the vital learning community principle of emphasising the inmate's identity as a learner.

The concept of learner identity is a critical factor in understanding how engagement in learning may support the process of desistance. So far, the link between prison and education as 'total institutions' is a rather bleak one. Both 'inmates' are oppressed and stifled, while the state exercises control of the 'regime'. However, the school-within-the-prison for inmate learners is far from bleak. Education spaces within prisons are generally the spaces in which prisoners feel noticeably more 'human' and are treated with dignity, where prisoners can forget, for a moment, that they are prisoners and be 'learners' (Designing Out Crime, 2015; Warr, 2016; Pike, 2014; Carrigan, 2013). The Prison Reform Trust (2002) quotes prison learners in England:

> ‘There’s a conscious ethos on this block that we’re students, not inmates’ (local prison)
>
> ‘The attitude of the teacher matters: they don’t treat you like a criminal’ (adult and YOI Cat B prison)
>
> ‘They treat you like a normal person.’
>
> ‘You can forget you are in prison’ (Women’s prison)
>
> (all examples taken from 4.2 Relationships with Education Staff)

Fascinatingly, this data is strikingly similar to that of almost all prison education research and foreshadows some of the findings in Chapter Five. Education appears to have a ‘humanising’ impact within prisons, which are largely de-humanising institutions.

The relationships learners built with their teachers in prisons seem to support the development of a role as ‘learner’. This role may support those two first characteristics of desistance — of being able to assume another role (of learner) that may help ‘knife off’ the past ‘offender’ role.

Crick and Goldspinks’ (2014) work on ‘Learner Dispositions, Self-Theories and Student Engagement’ and Healy’s (2014) ‘Becoming A Desister: Exploring the Role of Agency, Coping and Imagination in the Construction of a New Self’ indicate a link can be made between the concept of self as learner and the construction of a non-offending identity in the process of desistance. Crick and Goldspinks (2014:30) link pedagogy with the development of identity as a lifelong learner, stating how crucial this is for engagement and deep learning. They draw upon the work of Bourdieu and Vygotsky, to identify the ‘powerful link between [learning] dispositions and identity’, describing learning dispositions as:

> the site of development of identity and agency precisely because our learning dispositions are uniquely personal yet socially situated, shaping the

> stories we tell about ourselves as well as framing our future learning trajectories.

Crick and Goldspinks go on to analyse one UK and one Australian study, considering them in terms of learner disposition which they link to self-theories and both an openness and ability to change, referring to Dweck's (2000, 2006) research on learning dispositions and belief in ability to change over time (Crick & Goldspinks, 2014:21). They outline 'learning power dimensions' which:

> provide an individual with a language and information for understanding themselves as learner. These data empower them to challenge, to formulate or re-formulate a self-story that constitutes their learning identity as a particular point in time. (22).

Narrative Theory underpins their work as they assert it is fundamental to the making of meaning of self, experiences and the world and they refer to the work of Sfard and Pusak in that 'learning is a narratable pathway of identity formation' (30).

Healy (2014) also links narrative to identity, but as a desistance theorist rather than education theorist. She draws on Giordano et al's (2002) cognitive transformation theory in which external 'hooks' for change encourage future-orientation, provide access to new pro-social networks and contain a template for meaningful, pro-social identity which are the basis of desistance. She also refers to Maruna et al's (2004) view that secondary desistance is marked by the assumption of the role of 'a changed person', whereas King (2013:332) asserts that this 'changed person' identity is not necessarily assumed prior to desistance in order for desistance to occur, but that this process of assuming a role of changed self is started and can continue even while the individual might still offend, because it is an early part of desistance .

Healy (2014:881) drew upon a 'grounded inductive approach' to identify key themes in offenders' narratives and coded these into Imagined Desistance, Authentic Desistance and Liminal Desistance. It is interesting that the example of 'authentic desister' who is judged as having 'successfully constructed a new self' that is non-offending 'was in the process of completing an educational course in preparation for

a third level qualification and planned to enrol in university the following year'. The question is whether 'authentic desistance' is evidenced by engagement in education or whether engagement in prison education prior to this point had supported the progression towards 'authentic desistance' – or both?

Healy's work, together with King's (2012) 'Transformative agency and desistance from crime' and Stevens' (2012) 'I am the person now I was always meant to be: Identity reconstruction and narrative framing in therapeutic community prisons' have all found evidence of being able to imagine and articulate a non-offending self, even if that self is not yet realised. Healy (2014:886-7) sheds light on the 'early stages of change' and suggests that 'embryonic conventional identities can propel putative ex-offenders towards desistance; but only if the desired identity is highly valued and perceived to be attainable'.

The work in education of Crick and Goldspinks (2014) and Dweck (2000, 2006) on learner dispositions, openness to change and the development of a 'learning self', together with Healy's, King's and Stevens' work in desistance raises the idea that learning spaces[28] and programs in prisons are doing much more than just assisting in the development of literacy and numeracy skills. They could also facilitate the development of self-theory as learner; create spaces where an available conventional role of 'learner' can be 'tried on for size'; and facilitate the imagination of a future non-offending self (which the desistance theorists agree is essential for the desistance process).

Developments in educational research are leading us to think about the process of learning as being much wider than the traditional focus on cognitive skills acquisition. The well-documented necessity for successful students in the 21st century to be problem solvers, creative and critical thinkers, strong collaborators and communicators has led to a new focus on developing social and emotional capabilities in all learners, not just cognitive. The inclusion of these general capabilities identified

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[28] See also Crewe et al (2014) about the emotional geography in prison spaces.

in the Australian Curriculum is exciting because they mirror those identified as facilitating desistance from crime, helping us better understand the relationship between prison education and desistance from crime.

2.11 Why not before now?

King (2012:11) suggests that probation 'prompts individuals to consider how they see themselves and how they would like to be seen — in other words the beginnings of identity change' which is essential for secondary desistance. King (2012:13) suggests 'it would be worth exploring in greater detail how well-equipped alternative providers are for the task of supporting individuals on the journey towards desistance'. Similarly, McNeill (2012:12), in his criticism of the medical metaphor to describe offender programs as 'treatment', uses an educational analogy to describe the way we need to think about desistance:

> To use an educational rather than a medical analogy, developing an approach to rehabilitation focused on understanding and supporting desistance is like developing an approach to teaching focused on understanding and supporting learning.

Given the development of a capabilities model of education articulated in the Australian National Curriculum, this begs the question why prison education has not, until now, been considered an 'alternative provider' of fundamental support to individuals on their earliest journey towards desistance, especially in the light of the interdisciplinary nature of desistance theory?

As aforementioned, desistance theory has had significant influence in the field of Probation services so 'desistance' has generally been considered to start when one *leaves* prison, thus occluding the initial or catalytic work that may be done *in* prisons. Secondly, there have been ongoing issues around the quality of education and training provision in prisons. When questioned why he did not explore prison education's role in the desistance process more, McNeill responded that the quality

of prison education has been patchy, tired and uninspired with a focus on literacy and numeracy (private correspondence with McGregor, 2015). He has a point. The prison education curriculum has been incarcerated as a result of the 'what works' framework and 'deficits-based' approach to education. The reality of prison education is that, being isolated from mainstream education, teachers are isolated from peers and developments in mainstream education, which can result in stale staff and bored learners. Even so, in NSW 8557 learners attended prison education in 2014-15 and were motivated enough to achieve 9458 unit completions.

Czerniawski (2015) found a similar lack of quality education delivery in UK prisons[29], citing recent research:

> The Prison Reform Trust also notes that none of the recent inspections of the quality of educational provision in 24 prisons by the government's English inspectorate for education, Ofsted, culminated in an 'outstanding' assessment and 15 were rated no better than 'satisfactory' (Hewson 2013). Added to this is evidence, based on a questionnaire completed by 278 prison educators working in England, indicating that the prison teaching workforce is, in many cases, disaffected, disgruntled and demoralised by professional insecurity, coupled with a lack of status and autonomy (Rogers, Simonot, and Nartey, 2014.)

With lived experience of UK prison education, Warr (2012) also found it impoverished, suggesting the lack of adequate staffing and resourcing, together with a focus on educational Key Performance Indicators such as low-level certificate completions compromised the quality of education experience in custody[30]. This is not new. At the beginning of the 1930s, in his review of *The Education of Adult*

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[29] Prison education is contracted out to education providers (usually colleges) in England and Wales. The tender process for the prison education contracts is held every four years.

[30] https://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/jan/30/prison-education-failures

Prisoners, McCormick (1931:11-12) found ‘not a single complete and well-rounded educational program adequately financed and well-staffed.’

Of course, there are examples of excellent teaching and learning in prisons around the world[31], but the general picture is of sub-standard delivery due to limited resources and teaching staff with no access to professional development. However, despite multiple pockets of effective, meaningful practice, there is no consistent collection of data around the development of education in corrections, prompting Costelloe to ask, ‘Who quantifies and records developments in correctional education and why?’ (cited in Behan, 2010:2). Similarly, while certain programs have been identified as making a difference to rates of recidivism (Wilson et al, 2000), Foley & Gao (2004) point out that very little is known about the characteristics of these programs. Vorhaus (2014:172) links the lack of, of poor, education provision in prisons to the poor explanation and justification of prisoners’ right to education:

> The absence of a thorough and robust articulation of the justification of the right to education in prison is, perhaps, one reason why the right is not as secure and consistently upheld in practice as it ought to be.

Secondly, the evolution of narrow curricula in response to a ‘What works’ approach that has prioritised employability as the primary aim of prison education[32] resulting in a primary focus on vocational literacy and numeracy. To prioritise employment skills and using employment gained post-release as a measure of individual and program success is also questionable. While there is some research indicating that an outcome

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[31] The Intensive Learning Centre at JMCC was considered a model of good practice, and there is considerable research evidence showing that project-based arts education, usually delivered by specialists brought in from outside is to a high standard. In addition, the US has recently revived its PELL grant system to fund college education for prisoners, and in the UK, the University of Cambridge delivers its accredited criminology course inside HMP Grendon, with university students and lecturers attending the classes with prisoner learners.

[32] There is a tendency to conflate education and vocational training in prisons. The International Corrections & Prisons Association (ICPA) has recently published guidance on the important distinction between them in an effort to clarify prison education need not necessarily be vocational in focus and should provide academic as well as vocational pathways. Please see Footnote 4 and Bibliography for links to these documents.

of education is increased employability, the Prison Reform Trust (2002) points out that in reality, 'Half of all prisoners do not have the skills required by 96% of jobs' (foreword). This is a natural result of both a disconnect between prison education curriculum and the skills required by employers and the reality of increased unemployment rates during a global financial crisis. In other words, the number of prisoners who engage in learning is significantly more than those who achieve sustainable, regular employment on release. Yet the risk of reoffending is significantly reduced. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the factors other than employability within the custodial learning experience that may support desistance from crime.

It is possible to interpret outcomes of prison education such as increased employability, increased maturation and reduced recidivism as a result of progression towards desistance from crime. There has been much research, particularly from the US where higher education has been more readily available to prisoners (through the Pell Grant) showing that the longer a prisoner engages in an education program, and the higher the level of education achieved, the lower the risk of reoffending. This may suggest that reduced reoffending is not necessarily because the inmate has addressed skills 'deficits' and become more highly qualified, but because involvement in a prolonged, quality educational experience with a wide curriculum, the individual has, over time, consciously become a 'learner' and the process of learning has facilitated and perhaps expedited progression towards desistance from crime providing opportunities to develop all ten characteristics of desistance outlined above. In the past few years, there has not been any significant research specifically considering the relationship between prison education and desistance from crime, perhaps because desistance theorists have mainly been professionally interested with post-release experiences, particularly experiences of probation services, rather than experiences of desistance in custody. Additionally, prison education has focused on the development of employment skills to lower recidivism rather than a broader progression towards desistance. This research project aims to address the research gap by exploring the relationship between basic skills prison education and desistance from crime.

Thirdly, because most Australian prisoners are adults whose education is provided by TAFE or an in-house adult education and training organisation, whereas the education department of each state/territory is responsible for education for juveniles, there is a real separation between adult education and compulsory school-age education. Put simply, prison education remains largely isolated and has not yet caught up with developments in mainstream education. The adult education focus has meant that developments in the ANC are not likely to come across AEVTI's radar. It is unsurprising, then, that parallels between the kind of learning outlined in the ANC and the learning required by adult prisoners to successfully desist from crime, have gone largely unnoticed.

However, it is important to separate the arguably poor educational practice in some prisons from the excellent work in others and to focus on the clear theoretical potential of prison education, even at the basic skills level. This thesis explores the relationship prison education may have with desistance from crime and the contribution the process of learning may make to the process of desistance from crime. In exploring the experiences of basic skills learners in an intensive prison education program, attending to themes beyond employability and considering learning within the framework of desistance, this thesis makes a contribution to the small, yet growing body of literature in this area.

Arising from the gaps and challenges identified in the literature, the research questions are:

- How do prisoners experience basic skills education?
- What value (if any) do prisoners find in basic skills education?
- What skills/capabilities do prisoners develop when they engage in a quality basic skills education program in prison?
- How does/can prison education support learners' progression towards desistance from crime?

Identifying suitable methodologies to answer these questions without replicating imbalances of power or employing positivistic methods of inquiry is the subject of the next chapter. Conscious of the ways in which the rhetoric of transformation and rehabilitation can be used for social control, the next chapter considers methodologies that best fit with this thesis ideologically, ethically and practically.

3 About Methodology

The paramount priority of the ethnography of the prison today is without contest *to just do it*. (Loïc Wacquant, 2002)

Ethnography depends on the establishment of ongoing empathetic relationships with others. (Alison Liebling, 2014)

Introduction

Most prison research does not involve going into a prison or meeting prisoners inside. Generally, there are two reasons for this. Firstly, the quest for 'scientific evidence' has resulted in research that privileges capital and human capital. Jewkes (2014:388) refers to an imbalance in prison research, stating 'ethnographic studies are overshadowed by positivist approaches to penology. The impact of positivist prison research has been an almost relentless focus on reoffending rates in order to evaluate program effectiveness, often taking a Cost-Benefit Analysis focus approach (see, for example, Steurer, 2010; Batiuk et al, 2005; Brazell, 2009). In such research, there is no need to enter prison to ascertain reoffending rates or identify whether a 'treatment program' for 'offending behaviour' is cost effective. One can simply analyse records. This is not to say that we cannot learn much from such research — we can and do — but what we see is often 'pixelated' (Jewkes, 2014: 388).

Secondly, the fact that prisons are, typically, very difficult places in which to conduct qualitative research (Wacquant, 2002; Jewkes, 2013, 2014) means time-bound researchers tend to research in environments that are easier to access. Even in the area of prison education, the research has largely been quantitative analysis (see, amongst others, Adams et al, 1994; Davis & Chown, 1986; Stephens, 1995; Aos, Miller & Drake, 2006; Bouffard, MacKenzie & Hickman, 2000; Callan & Gardener, 2007; Haynes, 2006; Hull et al 1995; Nuttall, Hollmen & Staley, 2003). Similarly, meta-analysis has also been a popular methodology to evaluate the effectiveness of prison education in both the US and UK (see Wilson, Gallagher & MacKenzie, 2000; Gaes,

2008) and has often been critical of research that utilises ‘evidence’ which is not ‘scientific’.

As discussed in Chapter Two, there is a raft of quantitative research concluding that prison education ‘works’ to reduce reoffending (Steurer et al., 2001; Hull et al., 2000; Batiuk et al., 2005; Vacca, 2004), but it does little to explain why this may be so. It does not explore the experience of learners in prison. It does not seek stories of the impact engagement in learning may have had or listen to what incarcerated learners find powerful and/or valuable about the learning process. The fact that learning and desistance are processes impacts on methodological choices because, as Wacquant (2002: 388) suggests, big picture statistical analyses are ‘unsuited to capturing process, nuance and contradiction’ whereas qualitative research, and ethnography in particular, can. Quantitative research has tended to analyse participants in large groups rather than individuals — it does not give them a face or a voice. Reason and Rowan (1981: xviii) suggest this is one of the ways in which ‘people are falsified and fragmented’. As a teacher in prisons, I got to know students as real people with hopes, dreams, regrets and good intentions, despite their troubles. Consequently, when researching prisoner learners’ experience, it seems imperative to employ qualitative methodology that sees and listens to individuals as they explain the differences engagement in prison education has or has not made in their lives while incarcerated.

Drawing on Wacquant (2002, 2015) and Jewkes (2013, 2014), this chapter aims to show why prison education research needs to go beyond ‘desensitising’ numbers and why ethnography is the most appropriate methodology available to explore the relationship between engagement in prison education and desistance from crime.

Within prison education literature, learner experiences are generally positive. Most learners who engage in prison education seem to enjoy it for four main reasons: because it helps time pass; because it provides respite from a more oppressive regime beyond the walls of the prison classroom; because learners are treated with respect and dignity; and/or because it helps the development of self (the learners feel they are bettering themselves) (Gordon, 2000). Given research about prison

education is generally positive, telling us prison education 'works' to reduce reoffending and that prisoner learners find engaging in prison education a positive experience, this chapter draws on Liebling's (2004) use of Appreciative Inquiry as a research method which focuses on 'the best of what is' and the 'best of what might be' as a mode of inquiry well-suited to exploring positive, future-oriented processes of learning and desistance from crime and their relationship with each other.

This chapter aims to address what 'research practice need[s] to embrace when it has at its heart the potential to empower and to contribute to end the exclusion of a relatively powerless group of people?' (Humphries, Mertens & Truman, 2000:12). Prisoners are often classified as a vulnerable and oppressed group, due to the power imbalances between prisoner and prison staff, and are often considered voiceless. They are largely invisible, the most excluded people, as they have been removed from society. They can be moved far from home or between institutions with little or no notice and feel they are at the mercy of decisions made by others such as a case manager or parole board. Hidden from the public, prisoners have little chance of being seen and heard. Prison researchers undertaking qualitative work in prisons see and hear these people, witnessing their frustrations and despair at the injustices and cruelties common within an institution of punishment. As a consequence, qualitative prison research often aims to 'empower' the participants, giving them a voice. Voice is an important concept in this thesis as it implies the skills and confidence to articulate and be heard, and can also signify an ability to engage in the dominant discourse in society, which, for marginalised people such as prisoners, can be powerful.

The notion of voice is, however, not unproblematic. Similarly, the notion of empowering participants through research requires examination. Some qualitative prison research, even while trying to draw attention to the lived experience of prisoners, can seek to speak *for* prisoners, a notion Bishop (1998) suggests may be neo-colonial, essentially silencing the participants and presenting the researcher's view as dominant. Questions need to be asked (and answered) about methodology and methods to avoid the colonisation of participants' experiences and reproduction of power imbalances (see also Denzin, 2017).

While there are undoubtedly significant differences in power and authority held by prisoners and prison staff, or even prison visitors (including researchers), it is clear that not all prisoners are powerless nor that prisoners are a homogenous group. Within the prison population, some prisoners may hold considerable power and authority, and depending on the jurisdiction, may be allowed to speak directly to the public[33]. The Australian experience is one in which the prisoner's voice is, generally, muted and anonymous[34]. This chapter outlines methodologies that share, as far as possible in the research context, power between researcher and researched, while ensuring the power and voices prisoner learners *do* have are recognised and respected.

Prison education has an unusual place in a prison regime — one that can promote agency, critical thinking, collaboration, empowerment and strongly pro-social behaviour. As outlined in Chapter 2, learning can be emancipatory, empowering and emboldening learners, raising critical awareness through the development of basic and other skills (Friere, 1970, 1985, 2014; Giroux 1983). Learning can support agency and hope, which I witnessed when teaching in prisons. As a researcher, the challenge is to acknowledge the restriction of choice, inequities and oppression experienced by the learners in prison, while understanding they are agentic, capable men who have much to teach me about their experience of learning. To present these men only as disempowered and voiceless is disingenuous.

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[33] Scotland's Vox Liminis project 'Distant Voices', for example, provides an interface between those with lived experience of the justice system and the wider community. Indeed, the Latin name of the organisation means 'voice from the threshold' and the project's aim is to provide 'a powerful in-between space, where voices can speak to each other, and be heard, despite their differences (https://www.voxliminis.co.uk/about/). Producing songs in the threshold is one way of ensuring prisoners' voices are heard, as is the IRISS Discovering Desistance blog, which allows prisoners such as Kris MacPherson to write guest blogs about their journey towards desistance while they are still incarcerated (https://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/). These notable examples are, however, rare.

[34] Prisoners in Australia are not, for example, generally able to sign or sell their own art, and even here within my thesis, participants' anonymity was enforced as a specific requirement of the research ethics process, despite their desire to be known for their educational progress and achievements. There are some radio programs such as 'Jail Break' that give voice to prisoners, however this is an internal program not broadcast beyond the jail.

It is essential to situate methodology within the literature of prison education and so a brief review of prison education research is given to examine common methodologies and the theoretical frameworks to which they best belong, with a view to justifying methodological choices within this thesis. This chapter is, therefore, concerned with exploring and explaining the methodological decisions made which are conducive to constructing shared meaning and understanding in the process of addressing the research question about whether prison education may support the process of desistance from crime. It also aims to show that, as far as possible within the given limits, methodologies that supported participants' learning, or at least did not impede it, were selected.

The previous chapters have sought to explain who and what this research is for and why it is necessary. Taking a critical approach, this chapter explores why an ethnographic case study using Appreciative Inquiry is, methodologically, well suited to this particular group of participants and most likely to provide answers to the specific research questions. This research is, in a sense, bricolage in that it employs methodologies that have not traditionally been used in prison but are more commonly found in education or organisational management. As a practitioner trying to make sense of my own experience and inviting prisoner learners and other prison educators to make sense of theirs, I draw on Denzin (2017:288):

> One learns about method by thinking about how they make sense of their own life. The researcher as a writer is a bricoleur. He or she fashions meaning and interpretation out of ongoing experience. As a bricoleur, the researcher uses any tool or method that is readily at hand.

3.1 Prison education research

While there has been an increase in qualitative prison education research in recent years, the research projects that seem to have been most influential on policy and

practice have been largely quantitative meta-analyses, with a trend towards large-scale cost-benefits analysis models of research. For example, Davis et al's (2014) meta-analysis and systematic review of literature around prison education remains enormously influential. In her introduction, O'Donnell's rhetoric reveals the privileging of positivist approaches to research and a medical model of prison education as 'treatment' for offending behaviour, that must be administered in correct 'dosage':

> Overall, this study shows that the debate should no longer be about *whether* correctional education is effective or *cost-effective* but rather on *where the gaps in our knowledge are and opportunities to move the field forward.* In that vein, the study argues for a need to fund research that both improves the evidence base that the study shows is lacking and gets inside the 'black box' of interventions to answer questions about the dosage associated with effective programs, the most effective models of instruction and curriculum in a correctional setting, and who benefits most from different types of correctional education programs. Having such knowledge is key to telling us which programs should be developed and funded — which programs will provide the greatest return on taxpayer dollars. (Denise O'Donnell, foreword p ix, emphasis in original text)

The type of research that would provide the best evidence is specified by Davis et al (2014): 'future studies should ideally use such research designs as randomized controlled trials and well-executed quasi-experimental designs.' Davis (2014) also points to research that identifies the optimum 'dosage' of prison education in order to achieve re-entry 'outcomes' that provide value for money for taxpayers. Similarly, Adams et al: 'Large scale multidimensional test of the effect of prison education programs on offenders' behaviour' (1994:434-435) reviewed only the research that had included:

a) a control group
b) random assignment, documented matching of experimental and

control subjects, of methods of statistical control of intergroup differences; and

c) tests of statistical significance between experimental and control groups

The findings of multiple research projects point to a correlation between engagement in prison education and the reduction in risk of reoffending. As a result, prison education has begun to be considered in the same way as offending behaviour programs, being useful in terms of the outcome of reduced recidivism, rather than the flourishing of the individual experiencing learning. This is exemplified in Hall's (2015) statement that 'utilizing education as a means of accomplishing the goals of corrections allows for its use as a tool' (6).

While prison education research in the US is more likely to be quantitative, there have been some key qualitative studies in the UK and Australia. For example, Carrigan (2013) employs life history methodology to explore prisoner perspectives on education in England, recognising the agency and privileging the voice of learners. Pike (2012) explored prisoners' experiences of higher-level distance learning, employing ethnography in her longitudinal study to focus specifically on the experience of transformation, while Bennalick (2018) used ethnographic methods in her mixed methods study of prison-based learning culture. Nichols (2014) explored the experiences of male prisoners in education also using a life history approach while Szirifis (2018) explored philosophy education in prisons in England and Wales. In Australia, Carnes' (2014) influential research 'Unsettling White Noise' explored Indigenous prisoners' experience of prison education drawing on critical race and whiteness theory, together with the Indigenous methodology of yarning, while Garner (2017) undertook a phenomenological study of the experience of using prison libraries.

Desistance research is almost inevitably qualitative as it explores the experience of desistance from crime as a process. There are clear methodological parallels between desistance research and qualitative prison education research as both explore processes and require methodologies suited to researching processes rather

than outcomes. Ethnography lends itself well as a methodology that allows processes over time to be documented and analysed.

3.2 Prison Ethnography

Wacquant's (2002) observation of the 'curious eclipse of prison ethnography' describes the impact of the end of the Rehabilitative Ideal with the rise of the medical/scientific model and prioritisation of human capital on research in prisons. He, and later Jewkes (2013), lamented the lack of ethnographic research as a result of 'a heavily quantitative approach to penology' (14). Understanding ethnography as 'counter to the "official" audit culture' (15), Jewkes urges researchers to engage in ethnography, stating 'it [is] more vital than ever that social scientists go beyond the abstraction and describe the lived experience of imprisonment, the felt effects of which can only be understood ethnographically' because 'the bald statistics conceal complex lives and important stories' (14).

Jewkes (2013) outlines four main reasons ethnography is important for prison research:

1. Numbers can dazzle and desensitise
2. Ethnography implies engagement
3. Ethnography permits the researcher to write themselves into the narrative
4. Resisting the audit culture and the ubiquity of prison psychology

Ethnography is a methodological approach particularly well suited to this research project exploring the relationship between two processes: learning and desistance. O'Reilly describes 'participant observation and ethnography' as being 'especially suited' for researching 'topics which involve examining processes of change, examining negotiated lived experiences [and] topics which see culture as constructed and reconstructed through actors' participation' (O'Reilly, 2005: 29). If we think of learning as a process which leads to change (even if only in terms of 'I now know something I did not know previously'), then the learners are well placed to be able to

describe the process of learning as they experience it. Gaes (2008:7) acknowledges the difficulty of capturing the process of change experienced by learners in prison and isolating education as the cause/catalyst of this:

> Given the logistical problems inherent in doing prison research, it is difficult to measure attitudes or dispositions that may change over time that may change as a result of correctional education, and that may mediate post-release outcomes.

Thinking about methodology a little differently and asking those who experience the processes directly how they experience prison education and any change they feel is directly linked with their learning could be a more fruitful form of research. Exploring how participants experience learning within their specific learning space and culture suggests the researcher needs to enter into that learning space to bear witness to the experiences of prisoner learners. An ethnographic approach allows us to explore our shared humanity with a population that is generally 'othered' by positivist research and, often, the media. Utilising such an approach in this research is consistent with a critical approach and, in some way, an answer to Jewkes' (2013:14) call to 'acknowledge the … humanity inherent in the ethnographic research process we can enrich our work and deepen our understanding of the people and contexts we study without compromising our ability to effectively critique penal systems' .

3.2.1 Limitations of ethnography

Traditionally, ethnography, particularly anthropological ethnography, is usually undertaken over a longer period and researchers immerse themselves in the physical environment of the group being studied in order to research their culture. The implication is that ethnography takes time. It generally takes time to gain access to and become immersed within a culture. This research is, however, an ethnography conducted in three one-week visits over almost six months, so the time span is significantly shorter than traditional ethnographic studies.

Furthermore, traditionally ethnography is conducted by someone who lives within the culture being researched. With very few notable exceptions, prison ethnography is conducted by those who go into the prison on a daily basis, inevitably raising the question if it can be *truly* ethnographic when the researcher gets to go home every night. To what extent can prison ethnographers really 'experience' or be 'immersed' in the field when they are not fully experiencing incarceration? To what extent can researchers experience prison culture if they are not actually incarcerated (Drake et al, 2014)? And to what extent might it matter?

The answer to that is that it depends very much on the research questions being asked (Hammersley, 2014). This research is not so as concerned with exploring life throughout the prison establishment as much as understanding what experiences these particular learners undertake when they are in their learning space over the course of their learning program. Their learning program was roughly six months long and my engagement in fieldwork with the learner participants was for that length of time, in their learning space. In a manner of speaking, the participants also went 'home' every afternoon. They physically left the ILC through a gate and into the adjacent accommodation unit to their cells and communal areas at lunchtime and in the afternoon for recreation time and dinner. I'm not suggesting our 'home' or circumstances are comparable, but simply we shared the same ritual of leaving the learning site every afternoon and returning the following morning. While I don't know what it is like to be incarcerated, I experienced what it was like to inhabit the purpose-built learning space within that prison with the learners. I can describe what that was like for me and I relied on my participants to describe what the experience was like for them, specifically in relation to their learning and perceived progression towards desistance from crime, if any. Although limited by time constraints and without immersion into prison inmate culture, this research is still ethnographic.

As noted in Chapter One, one of the discrepancies I found as a prison educator was between the experience I had of a learner to that which a custodial officer had of the same person as inmate elsewhere in the prison. There was very much a suggestion that teachers could not fully 'know' their learners because we only saw them on their 'best' behaviour, whereas they saw a different (and, by implication) more 'real' side of

the prisoner. This research did not extend to observations of participants in their accommodation. It could be perceived that employing ethnographic methodology only within the prison education space could result in significant difficulties in exploring the differences between behaviour in ILC and in a participant's prison accommodation. However, this research aims to question why prison education 'works' and to identify the factors that seem transformative to the learners. Its main focus is on how participants experience learning within their learning space in the prison, not how they experience being in a cell or in the common area of the accommodation unit, or how those experiences may differ. Having said this, it may prove useful to explore these differences in further research in order to better understand if it in fact exists and, if so, why and how it happens.

One of the main issues around veracity in ethnography is that people do not necessarily say what they mean and observing behaviours gives us insight as to what people 'really think'. On the basis of the emergent data within this thesis, it is possible to argue that, as the participants claim, people do not always behave in ways that reflect what they really think. In fact, not saying what one really thinks could be a survival mechanism in prison. While this is certainly worthy of more research, it does not fall within the confines of this project to examine behaviours and presentation of self on the accommodation units. My focus is on the difference that engagement in high quality, intensive learning program within a purpose-built high-quality learning space makes for learners in prison. The social learning space of the ILC is of particular importance to this project, not how learners experience life in their accommodation units or in the Corrective Services Industry workshop, although the participants certainly make their own comparisons when sharing their learning experiences.

Furthermore, there is a sense in which I am aware that I am engaging with the participants at face value. I am not seeking to 'probe' or 'unearth' but to share understandings and their perspectives on their learning experiences. For this reason alone, I do not wish to focus on behaviour in the accommodation unit and am happy to take their word for it when they tell me of the differences they perceive between how they behave, talk and even think in the ILC as opposed to the accommodation unit.

Indeed, this notion of taking participants at 'face value' could raise questions about reliability of data, particularly when learner participants who are convicted, incarcerated offenders are the major source of data. I have chosen to take my participants' word at face value and to triangulate this with data from teacher participants and questionnaires about social and emotional development. My experience as a teacher working with incarcerated learners has led me to believe that learners in prison are not unlike those I taught in the community, and just as I operate from a position of 'on face-value trust' in the community, so I operate from that position when working in prisons. This does not mean unqualified or indiscriminate trust, which I would neither apply in the community or in a custodial setting, but more what Liebling and others call 'intelligent trust' (O'Neill, 2009; Liebling, 2014) which is essential not only for building relationships through which meaning can be exchanged, but crucial for the development of desistance from crime. Any inconsistencies in interview or data provide room for exploration to arrive at meaning, not to discount a participant's account as untruthful.

3.3 Appreciative Inquiry

In addition to reflexive ethnography, an Appreciative Inquiry approach is especially suited to the research aims and questions. Appreciative Inquiry is traditionally associated with organisational management and improvement with a view to achieving constructive change, used by businesses and big government organisations (see, for example, the work of Cooperrider & Whitney, 1990). Appreciative Inquiry starts with an 'appreciation' of what is working well. It identifies what is best and good in current practice and uses that to inform decisions about what could be even better and how they could be made better in future.

It appears as though Liebling, Price & Elliott (1999) were the first researchers to have applied an Appreciative Inquiry approach to study relationships in prison because they felt prison officers were generally criticised, their knowledge was largely 'problem oriented' and they wished participation in their project to be both more positive and to help officers think in a new, more positive way about the good things

they do. Rather than exclusively focusing on 'deficits and deficiencies' they wanted to find out about 'accomplishments and achievements' (Elliot, 1999). Liebling et al (1999:76) describe their appreciative stance taken in the study as one which 'fosters self-confidence, energy, faith. This can be a more creative and future-oriented process than the type of critical evaluation often carried out in prison'. Similarly, Robinson et al (2013) utilised Appreciative Inquiry as their mode of inquiry for a strengths-based exploration of experiences of Probation Services, finding it methodologically appropriate for research into 'quality' of services, like processes of change and progression towards desistance from crime.

Elliott's argument for Appreciative Inquiry can be seen as relevant within the context of education theory around transformation and growth as well as desistance theory of future orientation and creation of a new 'script' that is different to the past (Elliott, 1999, cited in Liebling et al, 1999: 76). Learning and desistance from crime are both processes of capacity-building and as such are future-oriented. It follows that a methodological approach to research about the intersection of these two processes should allow participants 'emotional space and ability to move into the future'. Additionally, there is a significant raft of prison education research that identifies what is 'wrong' with the system, what the 'barriers to learning' are and how 'difficult' it is to conduct research within the prison context. I do not dispute the findings of these projects, but they are well documented and my interests lie much more firmly in identifying what we learn if we focus on what is 'right' with prison education: what learners in prison feel 'works' for them and why, and whether they feel learning assists them to desist from crime.

In short, an Appreciative Inquiry approach is likely to allow a fuller discussion with participants about what they feel works particularly well for them in the context of prison education and what they feel the impact of their engagement in learning to be. This is because they are asked to describe, among other things, a significant learning incident, what they are proud of achieving and what they think their future might hold as a result of being involved in the learning program at the Intensive Learning Centre.

Furthermore, in a research project that involves the perspectives of prisoners (who are excluded from society and devalued as human beings), of teaching staff (who often feel marginalised and devalued within the prison hierarchy which may prioritise more profitable Corrective Services Industries and Offending Behaviour Programmes that have been developed to tackle specific criminological factors) and prison officers (who often feel misunderstood and under constant attack), a strengths-based approach such as Appreciative Inquiry would seem entirely ethical in terms of being *gentle* with the participants. It allows participants to talk about their successes, which has not been a common approach in prison research. Within a narrative frame of failure that seems to dominate discussions of offenders and offending behaviour, being invited to speak of one's own learning successes without reference to offending behaviour may provide relief to prisoner participants.

I must acknowledge that my experience as a prison educator and commitment to desistance theory as the best explanation of my experience as a prison teacher, together with a personal interest in social justice makes Appreciative Inquiry a good fit for me as researcher. As I read that Liebling et al (1999) find that their Appreciative approach seems to stimulate positive change in the participants (78), I find myself hoping that my project will do the same: that as a method of inquiry, Appreciative Inquiry might create an enjoyable experience for participants that they find valuable and that might be a catalyst for positive change. It is not necessarily 'action research' although it may be on the same spectrum, as the research itself may be a catalyst because it could raise the participants' consciousness of the possibilities and probability of transformation, which might lead to change.

It could be argued that the 'dream' phase of Appreciative Inquiry which asks participants to imagine what a 'best-case' scenario would look like, could lead to unrealistic expectations of the future, echoing Soyer's (2014) concerns about 'artificial' or 'temporary' environments that do not sustain long-term desistance. Liebling et al (1999:80), however, found that the 'artificial' or 'temporary' nature of the prison experience and focus on 'best-case' scenario did not artificially inflate unrealistic hopes:

> It seemed to be the case that, having drawn them into an appreciative reflection of their own situation and their own best experiences, their visions and ideals were conditioned by those best experiences, rather than by some fanciful dreaming. The best imaginable, to put it shortly, was the generalisation of the rare best experience.

Some might question the relevancy of an Appreciative Inquiry approach in that it has been developed for business-based research about organisations and organisational processes rather than individuals. Liebling (1999) makes a sound argument for application of this approach to prison as an organisation and I extend this argument, suggesting that within the wider organisation of MNCCC, there is the meta-organisation of the ILC. I would also argue that learning occurs throughout the whole organisation, regardless of whether it is in education or not. To ask students and teachers about their learning successes would seem entirely appropriate within the context of the ILC as learning organisation in order to answer my question of 'what is the relationship between prison education and desistance from crime', the findings of which would, it is hoped, ultimately improve that organisation.

It could also be argued that taking an Appreciative Inquiry approach ignores things that are not working well or barriers to learning, especially social forces and imbalances of power. As such, it could be argued that Appreciative Inquiry is a method that supports the current status quo within prison education. It is certainly true that asking what works well *now* can be seen to support what currently *is* rather than challenge current practice and suggest what *could be*, however such an assumption appears to rest on the premise that if education in the ILC is working well, it must support the status quo within the prison. The notion of subversive education which challenges the status quo is not new (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983, Lather, 1986b). Appreciative Inquiry provides an approach that allows us to see, by gaining examples of what the learners think is working well for them, whether the learning that is being undertaken supports the power imbalances experienced by learners in prison or subverts them. Additionally, focusing on staff and learners' experiences about their learning and how it is done well can give us an important insight into what

we don't know yet about why education might 'work' and challenge the current accepted view that it works to 'raise employability' by addressing skills 'deficits'.

Indeed the notion of self within the learning or desistance processes points to a concept of the self now, not in order to preserve that self in that historical/cultural/socio-economic context, but to develop towards the sense of a self which could be in future in an alternative cultural/socio-economic context (Vaughan, 2006; Paternoster & Bushway, 2008). Both processes centre on a sense of becoming, of moving into the future with the possibility of having some power to affect that future, so an Appreciative Inquiry approach which encourages participants to imagine alternative future selves and does not focus on what does *not* work may be especially appropriate to research around identity as 'learner' and its bearing on sense of self as 'offender'. Rather than preserving the status quo within the prison, as an approach to researching prison education in particular Appreciative Inquiry can, potentially, enable learner-participants to subvert the stereotypical role of prisoner ('once a crim, always a crim') and to think about themselves as agents with some power upon whom I depend for my data within this research project.

As an approach, Appreciative Inquiry seemed to work particularly well and could account in some way for a prison research experience that was not harrowing nor characterised by resistance and/or aggression. Inviting participants to tell me about their perceived successes invited them to feel proud and while one participant opted out of the second interview (returning for the third interview), all other participants seemed eager to be re-interviewed and claimed to enjoy the experience. The participants were not required to reveal dark secrets about their past or criminal activity and were especially forthcoming about what they thought were their best learning practices as well as what could be done even better. They seemed quick to trust me as researcher and to accept me at face value, often opening up to tell me more than I had asked about, which felt to me like unexpected and much-appreciated gifts. The interview questions and questionnaires all framed the participants as

learners rather than offenders[35], so it is likely this also had a bearing on the interviews in terms of addressing participants as learners, accepting this is who they are already rather than defining them by their past offence.

Consistent with other Appreciative Inquiry studies that research people in their place of work, the fieldwork was undertaken in the students' place of learning, the Intensive Learning Centre at Mid North Coast Correctional Centre. Also consistent with Appreciative Inquiry studies is a Case Study approach and so my methodological approach is to apply an ethnographic Appreciative Inquiry approach to the Case Study of the Intensive Learning Centre at MNCCC. All of these methods are consistent with a critical theory of education, which, drawing on the work of Dewey and Friere, aims to 'radically democratize education in order to advance Deweyean and Freirean conceptions of the development of individuality, the promotion of citizenship and community, and the strengthening of democratic participation in all modes of life' (Kellner, 2003:62).

3.4 Case Study

This research is a Case Study of adult male learners engaged in a full-time, intensive adult basic learning program delivered within an Intensive Learning Centre in a medium security prison in northern New South Wales, Australia. Drawing on Yin's 'five-fold categorisation of case studies' outlined by Dick (2014: 88), the ILC case is longitudinal (undertaken over six months), revelatory (because it a case that is not usually available to study being located in the middle of a medium security prison) and unique because:

1. The learners are paid to attend education as though it was their place of work
2. The learning environment of the Intensive Learning Centre has been purpose built specifically to support engagement in learning and to support the

[35] With the exception of the Belief in Redeemability Scale, which focused on beliefs of 'offenders' to crime.

development of a sense of well-being, by making the learning space seem as unlike prison as possible.

3. The learners attend their classes full time, unlike most prison education which is traditionally offered part time.
4. The learners engaged in the ILC program are housed together in an adjoining accommodation unit. All ILC students reside in A Block. This is unlike other work areas of the prison, where inmates are drawn from multiple accommodation units to work in an area such as textiles or laundry.

Prison education, and research in prison education, is generally fraught with difficulties: a fragmented, largely part-time and transient population whose progress is often impeded, interrupted and/or slow as a result. This research project was located in a program where students attend full-time as part of their prison working day, so they are paid to be there as though it is their place of work. It is felt this factor was likely to impact upon the strength of sense of 'self' as learner and that the intensive learning context was likely to show results more quickly than in other prison education settings (and achievement results support this). It was also likely to produce more/richer data within a shorter time frame, which is likely to be more suitable for the time frame of the PhD.

Yin (1981:58) suggests:

> As a research strategy, the distinguishing characteristic of the case study is that it attempts to examine: (a) a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

The context is of critical importance within this research project as it is concerned with exploring the relationship between learning in prison and desistance from crime. As the Intensive Learning Centre sits in the middle of the prison, the phenomenon of learning cannot be divorced from its context, rather the context of incarceration has an essential bearing on and relationship with the phenomenon of learning. Yin (2013)

states a case study 'should examine the likely interaction between the case and its context' (321). The interaction between case (Intensive Learning Centre learners) and context (Intensive Learning Centre in prison) — of the 'phenomenon-context entanglement' (Yin, 1982: p86) — is an important factor of this research.

It is important to clarify that this research makes no attempt to evaluate the Intensive Learning Centre program but is instead focused on exploring the experiences of learners as they progress through their learning program over time.

This Case Study of learning over time experienced by Intensive Learning Centre students is bounded geographically (within the ILC, within the prison). It is also bounded temporally as I was given a clear directive by Corrective Services New South Wales to complete all fieldwork by December 31, 2016 due to changes in upcoming education provision.[36] The field work was undertaken over a period of six months from June-November 2016, to coincide with the length of the learning program and to comply with the fixed CSNSW time limit.

3.5 Positionality and Reflexivity

3.5.1 Positionality

Just as Jewkes (2013:15) urges prison researchers to ethnography, she also demands a transparency of positionality, noting:

> There have been few attempts to account for why we do research, what our conscious or unconscious motivations might be, and how we feel both carrying out the research and afterwards.

[36] Most CSNSW teachers were made redundant from December 31, 2016. The decision had been made to contract out basic skills provision for prisoners in CSNSW to trainers. All teachers (apart from those in ILC centres) were made redundant from that date. (Visentin, Sydney Morning Herald, 2016)

This is not because she is making a claim towards some sort of 'scientific' objectivity. On the contrary, she suggests that to do otherwise and to hide our emotional responses as researchers is perhaps because we are afraid that open acknowledgement of our position as subjective and our emotions as we engage with participants will weaken our research:

> It is as if fear of exposure as an emotional human being, capable of compassion and empathy with respondents or, indeed, excitement about the research process will undermine our findings or create what appears as 'soft' research. (15)

I am indebted to the work of Jewkes in prison ethnography for showing me that rather than fear my subjective position and the emotions experienced as researcher, I understand these can be acknowledged and recognised as adding value to the research rather than presenting as liabilities. This is especially true when my position as researcher is as a white, middle-class, female researching male offenders of various ages, few of whom have white Australian backgrounds and many who are Indigenous Australians. My background of white privilege feels like a liability causing me to wonder, 'to what extent can I understand my participants?' I am an absolute outsider to their life experiences and their experience of being incarcerated. Is my socio-economic and cultural positionality an insurmountable barrier to mutual understanding? How can I ensure I do not replicate or enforce socio-cultural dominant power as researcher over my participants, who are particularly vulnerable because they are incarcerated?

If one views ethnography as Yin (2002), who suggests that 'the investigator's goal is in fact to experience directly the phenomenon being studied' (125), then my position as insider/outsider is problematic as it is impossible for me to directly experience the phenomenon being studied — I am neither incarcerated, nor engaged in learning at the ILC. Instead, the Participatory Action Research notion of researcher as co-learner is more useful and drawn upon within this research because of its alignment with critical theory, including critical education theory, and intention to minimise the

imbalance of power between interviewer and participant by privileging their perspectives on their experiences.

3.5.2 *Researcher Identity*

While many other researchers have struggled with access to prisons and prisoners, my positionality as a previous employee of CSNSW and my insider-outsider status gave me good access to the research site. As an organisation, CSNSW retains some paramilitary traditions (Weelands 2009; Reason 2010), one of which is to take rank seriously and my previous role as Senior Project Officer made a marked difference to my positionality as an insider within the uniformed ranks of CSNSW. The management grading of the post gave it an authority and credibility within custodial ranks generally not experienced by teaching staff. In addition, my involvement at MNCCC with the design and build of the ILC meant that my iris scan[37] was still in the centre's database and this alone meant I was probably considered to be far more of an 'insider' than other researchers may have been. As a result, I experienced unexpectedly easy access to the centre to undertake fieldwork.

As Schlosser (2008) states, when conducting research in prisons 'making connections with individuals who themselves have connections with those in charge of access can make all the difference"' (1509) and I had the privileged position of having ready-made professional connections which gave me somewhat of 'insider' status evidence by being able to physically 'get inside' the prison and conduct fieldwork as smoothly as possible.

I experienced a similar fluidity of multiple identities as that experienced by Thomson and Gunter (2011) in their research within a high school having been teachers and knowing the principal. I found, as did they, my roles as insider or outsider were fluid and shifted according to my relationships with those involved in the research. In many

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[37] This refers to the digital image of my retina captured and stored on CSNSW data bases. My eyes were scanned on entry to the prison to prove my identity.

instances I was neither insider nor outsider, or I was insider to some and outsider to others due to the nature of the different groups existing with my complex research site: prisoners, custodial officers, teachers, Aboriginal Elder, general manager etc. and my shifting position with them over the course of the research.

Throughout this research, I was acutely conscious of how my positionality as ex-employee/colleague positively affected my access to the prison and participants, which in turn opened up methodological choices.

3.5.3 Reflexivity

Berger (2015) summarises the literature to state that reflexivity in research is 'commonly viewed as the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome' (220). Reflexivity gives me critical space as researcher to be aware of my own 'reactions to interviews, thoughts, emotions, and their triggers' (221). In the field, reflexivity as researcher is important, less for maintaining 'accuracy' or 'credibility' and more for 'situating the researcher as non-exploitative and compassionate towards the research subjects' (Pillow, 2003). Berger (2015:221) argues that reflexivity is also ethically important because it 'helps maintain the ethics of relationship between researcher and research by 'decolonizing' the discourse of the 'other''.

Reflexivity allows me to carefully examine the making of meaning within this research project, especially during interviews, considering how my own background and perspectives shape the way I hear and interpret participants' comments and how they may interpret mine. It allows me to explore the interesting 'gaps' between what I thought was meant at the time during an interview and what I hear subsequently when transcribing the interviews, listening again to the audio files or reading transcripts and identifying multiple possible meanings. Often these gaps are frustrating, as I reflect on missed opportunities to pursue an issue raised that I had

not heard or understood properly. Finlay (2000) warns against the assumption as researcher that participants share the same language as each other and as the researcher, suggesting that holding this assumption will result in a researcher who has 'missed the point' (537). While I certainly feel as though I missed the point at times and Finlay does well to advise us that researchers have to work hard to counteract projection of self and meaning on the 'other' being studied, the phrase 'missed the point' suggests that reality is fixed and, it is likely, can be known. As St Pierre (1977) and Pillow (2003) suggest, in a post-structuralist world, reality is fluid, arguably non-existent, and 'missing the point' can be important in terms of identifying gaps in meaning exchange, power imbalances and examining ways of representation. Sometimes, however, the gaps present as small epiphanies where a significance missed at the time now becomes meaningful. Reflecting on how meaning is being made throughout this thesis is important because those reflections in turn can become part of the data gathered and analysed.

While the ethics process within this research ensures to a certain extent that the participants are protected from harm, recognising my positionality and my own vested interests as researcher together with understanding how these may serve to support or dismantle dominant ideology is important. Taking up Jewkes' (2013) challenge to 'embrace the "reflexive turn"' and declare my 'emotional investment' in this thesis, it is important to acknowledge that I believe learning has emancipatory capacity which is why I am passionate about both teaching in prisons and this thesis. I also have a vested interest in the ILC as it marked the professional achievement of which I am most proud (as discussed in Chapter 1). I became emotionally engaged with the men who shared their experiences of learning with me. I laughed often and sometimes cried. It is my deep desire to honour their contribution to this thesis and to find, particularly in the representation of their data, methods that capture their humanity, allowing the reader to also connect emotionally in some way. In adopting the 'reflexive turn', it is important to make the processes of analysis and representation as transparent as possible. For this reason, participants' quotations are used extensively, lightly edited. Italics are used to indicate the participants' words, identifying these as distinct from mine.

It is my strong hope that in taking such an approach I will, as Jewkes (2013:15) suggests, be able to 'succeed in retaining epistemological and theoretical rigor while at the same time "owning up" to feelings of emotional investment [and] arguably produce more interesting and honest knowledge'.

3.6 Methodological Choices

While it was essential to do no harm to participants and ensure they were not diminished by participation in this research, it was important to do more and to ensure that the process was generative, adding value to the participants' own learning experience. This aligns with emancipatory methodologies such as critical theory (Lather, 2017) and impacts significantly on choices of methods, which are outlined below.

3.6.1 Selection of research site

The spaces in which learning takes place is important as it can impact on the quality of learning that occurs as well as the freedom to grow. Learning spaces can support the development of identity (Barnett, 2007 & 2012; Sagan, 2012). As discussed in Chapter1, the Intensive Learning Centre at MNCCC is an innovative, architecturally designed (on therapeutic and learning principles), purpose-built learning space which is neither oppressive nor 'prison-like', juxtaposing startlingly with its medium-security prison context. The ILC at MNCCC was built with the specific purpose of creating a space that was as unlike prison as possible, despite existing within a prison, with the intention of framing the ILC student as a 'learner' rather than 'offender'. As such it is unlike any other prison learning space in Australia and provides a unique opportunity for research about the learning experience.

Theoretically, the selection of this site allows the research to focus more on participants' learning experience than carceral experience, but also provides an opportunity to capture any comparisons participants make between the two. Within this site, it was expected that it would be possible to see more clearly what impact

the learning experience has on the student participants and to identify moments, if any, they find transformative, within the prison context.

3.6.2 Selection of Participants

The selection of ILC students was identified as making up a suitable sample population within Australia to answer the research questions. There is no attempt to claim this sample is representative, however that is not to say that their experiences are an isolated case and the findings will be irrelevant.

Given the fact ILC learners are, to a degree, held within the program until its completion, it was more likely that the participants would be able to complete all three interviews over the six-month course, making it easier to track any changes they were experiencing. This also reduced the risk to the research project (and participants themselves in terms of their own learning journey) of tracked learners being removed from the program prior to completion. The reduction of risk seemed to work two ways: the participants' status as ILC students provided an insurance against transition, reducing the likelihood of participant drop-out generally expected within this population, but also their status as participants in the project provided an additional insurance against them being moved out of the ILC before the end of the fieldwork phase.

There were two main selection criteria: the participant had to be convicted, sentenced and resident at MNCCC; the participant had to be engaged in the ILC learning program between April and December 2016. Exclusion criteria included: that the participant posed a significant risk to the researcher; a participant was not capable of giving informed consent; and a participant needed to be available for three interviews over the six-month period April-October 2016 (some potential participants were excluded on this basis, but none were excluded on the basis of the first two exclusion criteria). It is possible that potential participants self-excluded on the basis of potential stress to them due to participation, but they remain unknown. It is

assumed eligible learners who thought they might find participation stressful would not have volunteered at the recruitment stage.

3.6.3 Learner participant sample size

The sample size was restricted to up to forty ILC students for inclusion in the initial general survey, and up to ten participating ILC students in the class newest to the ILC for interviews at the beginning, middle and end of their course. This sample size is considered adequate to answer the research questions around why education might work for those involved in prison education in the unique context of the ILC and appropriate given the methodological choices made. The sample is restricted both by the student capacity of the ILC and the time-constraints of both the PhD time frame and the time limit applied by CSNSW. This sample size is in line with recent qualitative PhD projects undertaken with prison inmates engaged in education (Pike, 2012; Carrigan, 2013; Bennalick, 2018; Garner, 2018).

It was originally intended that all ten tracked learner participants would be in the same class (thus enabling easier tracking and, perhaps, being able to provide data about the impact of collegiality/belonging on a class level). This was based on the CSNSW ILC Statement of Purpose about how the ILC program should be administered. Having said this, the pressure for beds at MNCCC resulted in a decision being made by CSNSW Head Office that the ILC program at MNCCC would not have fixed classes with a set start and end date, but would run as other prison education departments, on a basis of rolling enrolments. Therefore, the participants eligible for the research project did not belong to one class but were distributed between three of four classes in the ILC and all had started at slightly different times.

Even within the 'ring-fenced' population of ILC students, my experience of the extraordinarily high level of transience of students in prison education led me to recruit 'back-up' learner participants in case too many learner participants were moved out of the ILC program and were unable to continue their participation in the research project until its completion. As a result, there were thirteen potential learner

participants selected as 'suitable' by the ILC CEO who selected on the basis of specified criteria but also, he stated, in terms of identifying which students would be more likely to be 'useful' to and 'engaged' with my research project. Patton (2002: 230), states that 'purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study' and it is my understanding that any of the ILC participants would have provided information-rich cases to explore. However, as an external researcher, I could not control the list of potential participants given to me. On the basis of comments made by the ILC CEO, it was clear he was trying to ensure my journey from Perth to do fieldwork was 'worthwhile' so excluded some potential participants he thought would waste my time, even though I made clear that I could not exclude a potential participant on the basis of how compliant he would be as a participant. Having said this, we struggled to find participants who met the inclusion criteria on the basis of time to complete the research project before (a) completing their learning program and thus risk being moved back into the main working population or (b) completing their sentence and being released back to the community.

3.6.4 Recruitment of Learner Participants

Potential participants who had been identified as meeting the specified inclusion criteria by the ILC CEO were collected as a group within a classroom for the purpose of an information session about the research. I provided participants with a verbal overview of the project, explaining who I was, where I had come from, what my previous experience had been, what my research questions were and why I was interested in the ILC. I shared what my relationship with the ILC had been and that I was a PhD student and that this research was part of my degree. Students were able to ask questions and make comments. Information sheets that had been written in plain English for those with lower literacy skills were given to each participant (Appendices 8.7.1 and 8.7.2) together with a consent form (see Appendices 8.8.1 and 8.8.2), which were also talked through to support those with low literacy levels. Potential participants were told participation was not compulsory, nor did they have

to complete the project once they started it. This was reiterated at the beginning of each interview and at the beginning of the focus group session.

All thirteen potential learner participants wanted to participate in the project and it was decided to include them all with a view to tracking ten of these by interviewing them three times each over the six months of their project. Transience was more significant than expected and five of the potential learner participants were unable to complete all three interviews for the following reasons:

- One participant refused his opportunity to have a second interview but opted back in for his third.
- Two other participants were excluded from the ILC just prior to their second interview due to a breach of security. Their second interview was undertaken outside of the ILC on the accommodation unit they had been transferred to as a result of exclusion from the ILC. This unit, D-pod, was considered to be the disciplinary section of the prison. It was decided not to conduct their third interview as they were no longer part of the ILC program, engaged in formal learning or accessing the ILC space.
- One participant was released on bail by Supreme Court Order shortly after his first interview to attend family drug rehabilitation, so it was felt to be inappropriate to interrupt this process by interviewing him in the community. In addition, he was no longer an incarcerated learner and thus outside the remit of the project.
- Another participant was removed from the ILC as a Special Management Area Placement (SMAP) and his second interview was undertaken in an interim pod while he was awaiting transfer. Despite being extremely keen to return to the ILC, this was disallowed by virtue of having SMAP status as SMAP inmates are not allowed to mix with other inmates. Thus, it marked the end of his learning journey in prison.
- Finally, another participant was released on probation prior to our third interview. Despite being very keen to participate in this third interview after release, ethics approval had only been to interview participants who were ILC

students and staff at the prison, so further contact would have been unethical, albeit interesting.

3.6.5 Selection Bias

One of the sticking points for Davis et al (2014), Gaes (2008) and Tyler and King (2007) is possible selection bias in prison education research. Put simply, they raise questions about the validity of prison education research when it seems to be that those who engage in prison education may well be more pro-social than those who don't (the act of engagement in learning is seen as an inherently pro-social act) and so prisoner learners may already be predisposed to desistance from crime. Referring to Tyler & King's (2007) study, Gaes (2008:9) states 'The benefit of education could be overestimated if prisoners alter their attitudes over time that leads to engagement in inmate programs such as educational achievement.' Selection bias also troubled Davis et al (2014) and so large-scale quantitative trials were one of their key recommendations to overcome this. However, within a framework of the desistance process, the experiences of participants over time and any perceived changes, particularly seen as 'betterment' by the participants and any shifts in thinking or alteration of attitudes over time become significant and worthy of exploration rather than a signifier of compromised research integrity.

Selection bias remains a likely issue in this research, not just because learners self-selected to come to education, but also because the CEO edited the list to include only participants he felt would be 'helpful' for my research. By this, he meant he steered participants my way who he felt were not going to be problematic in terms of their behaviour. The question is whether and how this selection affects the data and if it might devalue the findings. In terms of participants' self-referral to education, rather than compromise the findings, investigating the different motivations of learners to engage in prison education and the way/s motivations may shift over time might provide rich grounds of inquiry. To dismiss research in prison education on the basis of selection bias is, perhaps, to miss important information about what draws people into prison education, how this engagement may be an indicator of

progression towards desistance and how it may act as an unexpected 'hook for change' (Giordano et al, 2002), a sort of catalyst sparking and supporting the progress towards desistance from crime (McPherson, 2017a, 2017b).

In terms of the selection bias of the CEO to steer only participants he considered to be compliant or useful my way in order to make the process more convenient to me as researcher, this is problematic in so much as it would possibly skew the data. However, it is difficult to see how data would be 'skewed' in such a small sample size of thirteen, given this is qualitative research with no control group to establish a 'baseline' and a focus on individual experiences of learning. Furthermore, it is possible that even those learners who were less compliant out of the forty possible participants[38] would not necessarily have experienced their learning differently or described their experiences differently to the other participants. Within the participants who were tracked over their learning journey, there was considerable difference of experience and some striking commonalities. We cannot assume that the learner who was not included in the research as a participant because of social difficulties, non-compliance or threat to researcher safety would have experienced learning outside of the range of experiences described by the other thirteen participants. Arguably, to exclude this potential participant on the basis that he was 'difficult' is unlikely to skew the data any more than those who were excluded because they would not be in the program long enough to be interviewed three times (including those who were excluded for non-conforming behaviour).

3.6.6 Recruitment criteria for staff participants:

The teaching staff who work with the ILC learners get to know them well over the course of their learning program as, like primary school teachers, they are with the same learners in the same class every day. Consequently, they are able to provide

[38] It transpired that just one potential participant out of the forty was considered 'problematic' and was not put forward by the Education Officer.

valuable insights about perceived growth, development and positive change. Similarly, the custodial and non-custodial staff who work with ILC learners in or out of the ILC context in other areas of the prison, were also able to provide valuable insights about any growth, development and positive change they perceived in the learner participants.

Eligible staff were easily identifiable by nature of their location within the ILC and/or connection with the education department and were approached individually or as a small group around the lunch table in the ILC staff room to introduce myself, present information about the research, ask any questions and gain written consent from those who would like to participate.

It was assumed that by virtue they had been considered suitable for employment by CSNSW, all staff had the mental capacity to provide informed consent for the project and, in accordance with the CSNSW Professional Code of Conduct and Ethics for all staff, would be neither violent nor abusive. Therefore, the only exclusion criteria for staff was for any staff member who may be caused undue stress or begin to experience undue stress due to their participation in the research project. It became apparent during the fieldwork that many teaching staff were under significant stress due to the imminent outsourcing of education and impending redundancies (not as a result of this research project) and it dominated their discussions. Some teaching staff declined to be part of the project on the basis of existing stress levels and staff interest declined among some as their own futures became less certain. No staff, however, were excluded on this basis.

3.6.7 Staff Participant Sample Size

While it was intended that a maximum sample size of twenty would be adequate for staff participants to provide informed feedback and give personal opinion on the growth/change of ILC students over time in the course, it was only possible to recruit three teachers working directly with the tracked students, one teacher who no longer worked directly with the ILC students, one CEO who had had recent significant

responsibility for the ILC but now had different non-ILC responsibilities, the CEO who had current responsibility for ILC students and the Senior Correctional Education Officer (SCEO) who had oversight of the provision of all inmate education in the prison complex. The custodial officer allocated to the ILC participated in the project and the Aboriginal Elder was happy to participate as she saw her 'boys' being interviewed in the yarn circle. A total of nine staff participants were recruited and all were in a strong position to comment on the growth of individual learners they had noticed and their experience of the impact of the ILC program and space.

Each staff member was interviewed once and again the style was semi-structured and conversational, using an Appreciative Inquiry approach, to encourage the sharing of ideas and experience in order to address the research questions. A question template was used and a copy given to each participant for their information and reference. Participants were extremely generous and interviews ranged from 45 minutes to three hours (one was held in stages as the teacher had to teach a scheduled class but wanted to continue the interview again after class).

3.7 Data Collection

All data was de-identified and stored in accordance with ethical requirements to protect the identities of participants. This was explained to participants at an introduction session and also individually at first and subsequent interviews when consent was sought and re-sought.

3.7.1 Interviews

3.7.1.1 *Interviews with Learner Participants*

Repeated, dialogical semi-structured interactive interviews were undertaken with ten participating 'tracked' learners. Each participant was interviewed three times over a period of six months while engaged in his learning program. This interactive approach has been identified by Ellis et al (2011) as a more 'collaborative endeavour between

researchers and participants'. However, unlike Ellis et al, I did not use interactive interviewing as a technique appropriate to painfully 'sensitive' or 'emotionally charged' topics, but to create an open discussion that places the learner participant in a position of authority about the ILC and their own experiences. An interactive interview can be useful to create conversational space for shared experiences and thoughts about learning and learner identity, thus helping to address the research questions.

In addition, more traditional semi-structured interviews tend to involve a participant being interviewed once by a previously unknown researcher, whereas interactive interviews tend to be repeated with the same researcher within the context of an emerging relationship (Adams, 2008). In an attempt to avoid participants feeling used, I wanted to avoid the more 'smash and grab' technique of traditional single, semi-structured interviews and establish a more conversational style that enabled participants to ask questions too. I consciously shared parts of myself with my participants who were sharing themselves with me. This is perhaps unusual as a technique within the prison environment because the sharing of self with inmates is frowned upon in prisons for fear of being groomed, manipulated or putting self at risk if an inmate is able to identify where you live. There is strong fear of the inmate having power over civilians or of civilians 'going native' and siding with inmates, thus compromising the safety and security of all.

Similarly, as a researcher working within an academic tradition and conventions of a PhD, I was concerned that repeated, interactive, conversational interviews would not be objective enough or perhaps result in becoming too emotionally involved for results to be valid. However, the repeated, interactive, semi-structured interviews allowed me to build up rapport with my participants and to demonstrate that I did not intend to abuse the power imbalance, take what I wanted and get out. The sharing of self was important to counteract the power imbalance inherent in the academic researcher/prisoner participant relationship, perhaps enabled participants to trust me and certainly allowed me the opportunity to demonstrate 'intelligent trust' by sharing my own interests or stories about my experiences as a prison educator and even as a mother.

The same questions were used to loosely structure the first two interviews (Appendix 8.9.1), however various important themes arose from the staff and learner interviews, including:

- literacy/numeracy as 'code breaking/switching'
- relationship with the teacher
- trust - for learning and methodology
- hope
- dialogue - for learning and methodology

As a result, the interview questions were modified for the final interview with learner participants (Appendix 8.9.2). A copy of the interview questions was always made available for the participants, yet rarely used. Interviews ranged in length from 13 minutes to 70 minutes, with most averaging 45 minutes.

3.7.1.2 *Interviews with staff participants*

Staff were also asked about their perceptions of the students' experience of learning process in the ILC and to identify any positive change. This was done primarily through semi-structured interviews with staff and teachers of the tracked learners (8.9.3). ILC teachers were also asked to complete a brief check-list report on their students' development of social and emotional competencies (using the CORE MESH teacher report found in Appendix 8.11.3.2). Nine interviews were undertaken and ranged in length from thirty minutes to three hours (in two shifts). Data was used for triangulation of learners' experiences but it was decided to focus on the learner voice within this thesis as it was their experiences of education that would help us answer the research questions about how they experience basic skills learning and the value they find in such learning. Data gained from staff participants was of such scale, richness and depth, it could not, unfortunately, be included in this thesis but will be explored in future publications.

3.7.1.3 *Transcription*

All interviews were recorded on a digital audio recorder and stored as MP3 files then imported into a music software program, Audacity, for transcription purposes. No transcription services were used. I transcribed all interviews as de-identified Word documents, allowing me to re-hear the interviews and get closer to the data. Once an interview was transcribed, the transcription was re-checked against the audio file in its entirety. Each interview was heard at least three times, allowing me to be very close to the data.

All participants were offered their transcripts to check or to keep. While two learner participants asked for a transcript at their initial interviews, one declined when given a copy, saying he didn't need to check it and the other took it but did not request any changes to be made. The lack of requests for transcripts was surprising given the interest in the research and the adequate literacy levels of the learner participants to read them. It did feel as though the request for transcript was a test of researcher integrity as the transcripts given did not appear to be read, so it may be possible to interpret the other participants' lack of requests for transcripts as a form of trust in the researcher and methodology.

3.7.2 Other methods

3.7.2.1 *Identity Map*

One of the areas of interest in this research project is to understand how being a learner in prison may or may not affect one's sense of self. Seeing one's self as a learner rather than as an 'inmate' or 'criminal' is important in exploring whether engagement in learning may catalyse desistance from crime by providing an alternative pro-social self. The contrast of seeing self as a 'learner' within a wider prison community of 'offenders' is an interesting possibility that was explored within this project. An 'Identity Map' facilitated the drawing together of different types of social and personal roles and generated data about the number and type of social identities. It also gave an indication of the importance of these social roles to the

learner participant. This map allowed the exploration of learner participants' perceived roles and identity and provided a way of tracking any changes in self-description over time spent in the ILC program.

Each tracked learner over the six months of their learning program was asked to complete a template of an Identity Map and an example of a completed map (Appendix 8.10) and had the freedom to use their own descriptors to describe self and self in relation to others. The map was kept by the researcher and reviewed with the participant prior to every subsequent interview. Additional comments were made in a different colour pen to show changes made over time. As a means of triangulation of interview data and teacher observations, and tracking a learner's changing sense of self over time, this was a useful data source. However, it was found that there was little gap between the sense of self described during dialogic interviews and the identity map. The map could never be as full and varied as the interview, so the data has not been given priority in this thesis.

3.7.2.2 *Classroom observations.*

Originally, it was intended that observations would be of the tracked class at the beginning, midway and at end of its course, however, as noted above, changes to the ILC enrolment procedures meant the tracked students were not all in the same class, but spread across three classes. Consequently, each class was informally observed three times as the researcher came in and out of class to collect a participant for interview and more formally on one occasion. The teachers were very open to my presence and allowed me to 'hang around' in their learning environment, watching and taking notes as well as interacting if a student approached me. Using an ethnographic approach and informed by Appreciative Inquiry, notes were made in class and additional reflections were made after each visit to the class. Notes included anything that seemed of anecdotal interest, including diversity of pedagogical practice and features of that learning community, together with participants' interactions and behaviour or moments of significance.

3.7.2.3 *Focus group*

A focus group was held at the end of the second-visit interviews to test emerging themes by presenting these to the learner participants and inviting their thoughts through discussion. Ethically, it was important to provide an opportunity for participants to know what I had found significant thus far, why I found it significant and to comment on whether they agreed that these things were significant, as well as comment on the accuracy of interpretation/representation.

Originally, the focus group would have consisted of learner participants from the same class, however, as discussed above, participants were drawn from three different classes. As a result, it was clear there was less cohesion than in the classrooms. This was also exacerbated by the fact the focus group was held in the afternoon, which, it was soon realised, was after methadone had been dispensed by the clinic. This visibly affected the participation of some. Some participants were irritated by those who were, in their view, adversely affected by methadone. The focus group discussion was recorded and transcribed in the same way as the interviews.

3.7.2.4 *Reflective Learning Journals*

Reflection is part of learning process that moves forward, deepens learning and increases transferability, so reflective learning journals written as part of the course work as well as narratives are important sources of data about self-perception as learner and also construction of narrative self. While this was a keen intention, this method was not supported by the teaching staff and so the learners, unused to written reflection, were unable to sustain a reflective learning journal, even when re-branded as a 'Research Diary' and issued with a model to prompt and scaffold a reflective response. Two students completed one to two entries in their learning journal and both of these were more descriptive than reflective. This method was unsuccessful because the participants needed more support in reflective writing.

3.7.3 Supplementary Questionnaire:

Self-Management, self-efficacy (agency) and growth mindset (hope) have all been identified as traits of successful desisters (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Burnett & Maruna, 2004), as well as successful learners who become 'active, engaged citizens' (Australian Curriculum, 2010). To supplement the interview data, the Social-Emotional Student Survey (8.11.3.1) and corresponding Teacher Report (8.11.3.2) were administered at every interview and the data analysed for tracked students. While the data showed an increase across each domain of self-efficacy, self-management, growth mindset and social awareness. Again, as the methodological approach within this thesis prioritises the participants' voice articulating their experiences of basic skills learning in prison, this data is considered supplementary and provides little more than a thumbnail sketch with which to confirm interview data.

3.7.3.1 *MESH learning Student Self Survey and Teacher Report*

There is increasing evidence that social and emotional learning may contribute more to employability than specific work-related skills, so it was important to try to get an indication of social and emotional development of learners over the course of their learning program. The work of Goleman on *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) and *Social Intelligence* (2006) has been influential in the world of education, particularly in Australia where his work, together with Gardiner's (1983) underpins the Australian National Curriculum. Goleman and others founded The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) based at the University of Illinois Chicago in 1994 which the Australian Curriculum describes as providing "an excellent framework for integrating the academic, emotional and social dimensions of learning" on which its General Capabilities are based (http://v7-5.australiancurriculum.edu.au/generalcapabilities/personal-and-social-capability/introduction/background).

CASEL has identified 'five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioural competencies' central to social and emotional learning, illustrated in Figure 1 below:

Figure 14 Indicators of Social and Emotional Learning retrieved from http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies

California's Office to Reform Education (CORE) has, together with Transforming Education, education administrators and practitioners, and '[c]ontent experts' in Mindset, Essential Skills and Habits (MESH) from CASEL (Transforming Ed, 2016: 5) developed a survey for students and teachers that aims to assess development of social and emotional capabilities, specifically Self-Management, Self-Efficacy, Growth Mindset and Social Awareness (Transforming Education, 2016: 5. The developed test was field-tested in California's CORE Districts (nine school districts comprising 1500 schools) in 2015 with nearly 500,000 students. The Harvard Centre for Educational Research concluded that the measures used were reliable and significantly correlated to students' Grade Point Average (GPA), test scores, attendance and suspension rates. It has been developed for continuous school improvement to help students succeed and embodies a strengths-based approach consistent with the methodological approach of Appreciative Inquiry employed in this research.

The four capabilities measured in the Self-Survey have already been identified as being important within the process of desistance from crime (see Chapter Two), so this provides a useful, free of charge, easily administered, already-validated measure (albeit within the different context of Californian high schools). A benefit of the surveys is their transparency. The surveys openly declare what they are about and which competencies each question relates to, and (in the case of the Teacher's Report, the key literature for each section of the survey). This is both enlightening and empowering for users and there was clear feedback from the pilot phase that this was appreciated by learner and staff participants.

Transforming Education and its partner CORE Districts have given permission for the Student Self-Survey and shorter Teacher Survey to be adapted and used in this thesis. The main adaptations are of the demographic information section of the Student Self-Survey which has been adapted to the Australian/prison/ILC contexts and the provision of a 'grid' answer system for participants to tick the relevant box that is most true for them. Colour has been used to shade the answer-grid for the section on Social Awareness because the scales differed between questions and the use of colour allows the grid to be more easily understood and therefore easier to answer. This was tested in the pilot phase with learner participants and found to work well, with no difficulties of use or interpretation of questions. The learner MESH-SEL questionnaire is shown in Appendix 13.10.4.1 and accompanying student report for teachers to complete is shown in Appendix 13.10.4.2.

Following the pilot, the questionnaire was administered at the beginning, middle and end of the ten tracked students' course to capture any changes/developments in specific areas of SEL/MESH competencies and identify in which particular domains any changes might occur. Three participant teachers also completed the teacher report of their students' MESH competencies at the beginning, middle and end of their course. All ten tracked students were taught between the three teachers, so there was a corresponding participating teacher's report for each learner participant's completed questionnaire.

3.7.4 Acknowledgement of participation

At the end of the data collection phase and at the participants' request, their involvement in the research was acknowledged internally with case notes being entered on the Offender Information Management System by the CEO and a personal, formal letter of thanks from the researcher, documenting each participant's involvement and contribution, was issued and added to each participant's property list so it could be taken with him on release from custody.

3.8 Data Analysis

Braun & Clarke's (2006, 2012, 2013) six-phase Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach underpinned by qualitative philosophy (Kidder & Fine, 1987) has informed the data analysis process and technique within this thesis as a method which is particularly well suited to addressing questions about a group's lived experience (Braun et al, 2019). In particular, Reflexive Thematic Analysis 'can also examine the "factors" that influence, underpin, or contextualize particular processes or phenomena' (Braun et al, 2019: 850), which is appropriate for the exploration of the process of learning in prison education and how that might relate to the process of desistance from crime. 'Meaning-based patterns' were constructed as interviews were listened to again during the transcription process and transcripts were read/re-read (Phase 1: Familiarisation), with a consciousness of the 'cultural membership', 'social positionings', 'theoretical assumptions and ideological commitments' (Braun et al, 2019: 847). In an attempt to stay close to the data, manual coding (generating codes phase) was undertaken in an 'old-school' way, using coloured sticky notes to codify identified meaning through the data, with data attached to that post-it. As a practitioner and informed by the literature, coding was, inevitably, deductive in orientation, however, space and time were taken to step back and look again in a more inductive way, with a consciousness of my biases and conceptual framework, to see data anew.

These sticky notes were then clustered and re-clustered into ‘sets’ which spoke to a particular aspect of the data, which were then mapped against other aspects to construct themes (phase 3) which were then revised (phase 4) against the data and the research questions to (re)define themes (phase 5) which are reported and analysed in the Findings and Discussion chapters of this thesis (phase 6).

There is a concern as a solo researcher, particularly one who is remote from the university, that unconscious bias may go unnoticed and unchallenged. In an effort to address this, de-identified data in the form of a learner participant transcript extract was submitted to a PhD data analysis workshop at University of Technology Sydney (2017) and initial coding was undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team of students, led by the professor with responsibility for Higher Degree Research students, with written feedback given.

A second code-check was undertaken by two PhD students, one from another institution undertaking ethnographic research in the field of prison library research and the other undertaking hermeneutic phenomenological research in education. The de-identified, clean transcripts of three complete interviews from one learner participant were considered independently by the two researchers in order to cross-check emerging themes and consistency with the researcher’s own analysis. These ‘critical friends’ were recruited in two different ways. One was recruited through the closed Facebook group ‘PhD Parents and Early Career Researchers’ and the other was a PhD candidate I knew who had commenced her research degree at the same time as I had. Interestingly, the process of using Facebook to request a critical friend raised academic eyebrows within the closed Facebook group, many of whom felt it was unnecessary to check consistency of analysis. It must be noted that this was not to check if I had ‘got the coding right’ – Braun et al (2019:848) identify coding is an ‘organic and open iterative process’ and as such is fluid and shifting. Rather, I found this process essential, particularly as a remote student, to check that my own biases, interests and personal history were widening and deepening the analysis, rather than restricting my view.

A surface analysis of the questionnaire results was also undertaken to explore consistencies and inconsistencies within an individual participant's interview data and to identify any mini-trends across the cohort that may support/challenge themes emerging from interview and focus group data. As the results are neither statistically significant nor is this a 'mixed methods' thesis, results of this surface analysis is not included here, suffice to say they supported the data generated by interviews.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

There were multiple ethical considerations given the learner participants are prisoners due to the inequality in the relationship between the learner participant and researcher. Inmates have sanctions and restrictions put upon them by the criminal justice system that limits their choice and agency. There was a risk that inmates would feel obliged to participate in the research which could be heightened if the learner participants perceived the researcher as an agent of the criminal justice system. Every effort was made to reinforce the fact that participation was on a voluntary basis and there would be no repercussions if a potential or existing participant decided he did not wish to participate or to withdraw his consent, drawing on the best practice literature of Roberts & Indermaur (2007) and Gostin, Vanchieri and Pope (2007). Consent was reviewed at the beginning of each interview with learner and staff participants as a way of checking each participant was clear about their option to withhold consent.

The research methodologies employed aimed to address cultural and linguistic diversity and are informed by Rynne & Cassematis's (2015) influential work, 'Assessing the Prison Experience of Australian First Peoples: A prospective research approach'. Consultation with UTS and other academics who have already engaged these groups in other research projects was undertaken prior to and during the project. Local Elders known to the participants were invited to participate in the project and assist potential participants to make a decision whether to give their consent if they wished to participate or not.

Every effort was made to ensure that the methodologies selected were respectful and responsive to the needs and requirements of these groups. Hence, the semi-structured interview format which invites conversational sharing of knowledge, and the sharing of knowledge through stories told in the interviews or written within the literacy classroom was selected as a primary research method. In addition, consideration was given to place of interview and the Yarn Circle in the ILC was used as appropriate.

3.9.1 Incentives to Participate

While it is considered normal practice to thank participants for their time with some sort of gift or token, this was difficult to negotiate within the restrictive environment of the prison. However, approval was sought from the general manager (and granted) to bring in supplies of tea, coffee, sugar, milk and biscuits as a way of thanking participants for their time[39]. In addition, towards the end of the project, participants mentioned that they would appreciate a statement on their case file outlining their positive involvement in and commitment to the research. While I could not access their case files directly and because staff were leaving due to redundancies, I was able to write official letters of thanks to each learner participant to keep. Participants were hopeful this would help them at their next classification meeting or parole board hearing, so were appreciative.

3.9.2 Approvals

[39] While this might not seem like much, it is important to note that at the time of research, tea and sugar were prohibited for inmates. It was highly unusual to have permission to take this into prison for inmate consumption and I am so grateful for the permission given by the general manager because it helped establish a rapport with the participants. It was also helpful to consult the learner participants about which biscuits they would prefer (which were usually biscuits that were not available on their buy up list). The usually prohibited sugar, tea and not-readily-available biscuits helped the participants feel a bit more valued. What seemed like a small incentive was actually quite significant.

An Application for Ethics Approval to undertake this research was sought and granted by the CSNSW Ethics Committee (see Appendices 8.1, 8.2 & 8.3) as host organisation and ratified by UTS HREC committee which allocated the approval code UTS HREC REF NO. ETH16-0282 (see Appendix 8.4). Furthermore, permission to access the prison and bring in specific materials and consumables (Appendix 8.5) was sought from and given by the local general manager, which facilitated smoother entry into the prison (see Appendix 18.6).

3.10 Conclusion

Schlosser (2008:1501) urges prison researchers to share more about their qualitative methods 'in a criminological setting based on original empirical research' because by 'sharing both our common and unique experiences in researching these groups, we can better equip future investigators to handle some of the challenges that await them' (1501). While I understand that there are many practical issues facing researchers in prison, I question whether there is anything fundamentally conceptually different in terms of methodological approach required for prison research as opposed to research in other institutions such as schools or hospitals. Perhaps the focus has been too much on the 'otherness' and resultant fear of the prisoner. I wonder if we can minimise many potential research challenges by using strengths-based approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry and adopting the role of researcher-as-learner. I suggest we can minimise the emotional toll prison research takes by seeking to find and strengthen connections with our participants and seeking ways, through our research methodologies to provide opportunities for growth and transformation for participants (and researchers). And so I arrive at a bounded, ethnographic Case Study, using an Appreciative Inquiry approach as my methodology to try to answer the question, 'What is the relationship between engagement in prison education and desistance from crime?'. I revisit this methodology in Chapter 6.2 when reflecting on the practice of this research and the impact it had on the research experience (of participants and researcher) as well as the type and quality of data collected as an important contribution to knowledge.

Understanding the meaning these participants make of their learning is important personally, but also ethically and methodologically. Listening to their voices, so distant from society, is imperative and so it is essential to turn now to the participants who helped me with this research.

4 The People

> **When you (the reader) think of a prisoner, is the image you conjure up based on direct experience...? Is the prisoner in your mind a man or a woman, black or white? Do you conceive of the prisoner as an 'outsider', someone who is strange, other, dangerous?** (Brown, 2003:228)

Twelve incarcerated men made a remarkable contribution to this research, sharing their experiences, thoughts and insights about their learning and the impact they thought it was having on their lives, especially on their attitudes and sense of self. While the HREC ethics approval process required all participants to remain anonymous, many participants wanted to waive their right to anonymity, vociferously declaring they were proud of what they were achieving, proud to be part of this research and wanted their names associated with it. It is with some regret I was unable to honour their requests within the ethical constraints of the research, so it is my intent to show their contribution as much as possible throughout this thesis. I quote extensively from the learner participants, indicating in italics where they speak, using a 'code name' as required. In the enforced process of de-identification for ethical purposes, a fictional name replaces each man's real one.

While understandable, the insistence on the participants' anonymity may do a disservice to the men who are proud of their educational achievements, progress and participation. It sits rather uncomfortably that the choice to waive anonymity was declared not theirs to make. Going against the clear, current wishes of the participants can be seen as rather paternalistic/colonial; that, somehow, we know best and so must override their desire to be known for their contribution to this research. Insisting on their anonymity and removing their names renders the participants somewhat faceless, which may only perpetuate the notion of the prisoner as 'dangerous other' (Brown, 2008). Furthermore, while understandable, the insistence of the ethics committee on the anonymity of the participants on the basis that, in future, the participants may not wish it to be known they were incarcerated, may also go some way to defining the experience of incarceration as shameful and to

be hidden from others. However, assessing the risk of harm is complex and delicate and so, in this instance, I am bound by the conditions of ethics approval and my participants remain anonymous.

In the interests of helping us understand our shared humanity, and also to help the reader follow who is speaking, the participants are introduced below by their code name and some basic demographic information from baseline information gathered and observations from field notes. While being respectful of the rights of their victims, my goal is to show the participants' humanity and individuality as a matter of respect and also to help the reader navigate the multiple voices in the use of quotations.

In prison research, it is common to include detail about a prisoner participant's offence and sentence length. Given this research is situated within a learning space in which prisoners can, to an extent, escape the label of prisoner and take up the role (perhaps even identity) of learner, and recognises the importance of developing an alternative future non-offending self within the process of desistance, such information is deliberately omitted here. Each of these men has been convicted of a crime committed in the past and received a custodial sentence. As a past event, their offence is not within the parameters of this research. My interest is in their current experience of learning. The nature of the crime and the length of sentence is not relevant as it has no bearing on the research questions being asked. Unless the participants volunteered the information about their offence and sentence, that information was not sought and is not known.

This approach is also informed by Appreciative Inquiry methodology which seeks to identify the best, currently and regarding the future. It is important that as researchers or as readers we do not fall into the counterproductive trap of defining the participants by their past offence(s) but to acknowledge these men as engaging in learning, participating in research and, for some, openly working towards a crime-free future.

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the men who chose to engage to participate in this research at the Intensive Learning Centre:

Aiden:

Aiden was in his early 20s, of Lebanese heritage and really enjoyed being in the ILC. Muslim, Aiden shared how his religion informed the way he thinks about imprisonment and programs, saying that just as the Muslim religion was handed down to 'those that needed it the most' (i.e. the worst behaved), programs in prison, especially education, should also target those who need it the most. He felt strongly that prison education should be compulsory because it had had such a profound impact on him. While Aiden was observing Ramadan, he was very open to have his first interview. Aiden did not wish to be interviewed in Phase 2, but did not withdraw from the project and was interviewed again in Phase 3. During that interview, he explained he had been disturbed by some of the other learners who had, in his opinion, gorged themselves on the tea, coffee and biscuits that had been provided. He said he did not wish to be associated with them and was disgusted by their greediness, so he opted out of Interview 2. By the time of Interview 3, Aiden had completed his Certificate II course to a high standard and had successfully applied for a position as Library Clerk, which he was really enjoying. Aiden was very close to his family who were especially supportive of him, which he appreciated. He expressed a strong desire to give back to his family for all the emotional and financial support they had given him while in prison and was acutely aware the other 'boys' didn’t have that. He had a keen sense of humour, a ready smile and sincere regret for the trouble he had caused his family and the tattoos he felt made him 'look like a criminal'.

Barry:

Barry was a white Australian and presented as a little younger than his early 20s due to his slight build and had only recently enrolled in the ILC. He was a bit shy and didn’t always want to make eye contact, but was happy to talk about his experiences of learning in the ILC. While he did not discuss his offences, Barry mentioned the attractions of the criminal world were hard to give up, but he knew he 'had to'.

Describing himself as a disruptive student at school, Barry said he suddenly decided to change and made an effort in Years 11 and 12 and was doing well. He said when he started trying at school he discovered his teachers were 'all right' and tried to help him. He was doing well until he made a poor decision to get into a car with a friend who had been drinking and was involved in a serious accident which resulted in Barry's hospitalisation for some weeks. He said he discharged himself ('wheeled himself out') from hospital in order to sit his High School Certificate exams but his life was unravelling at that stage and his results were disappointing. He saw the ILC as an opportunity to get out of the prison workshops, which he did not enjoy, and to try to prove his intelligence. Sadly for Barry, he was expelled from the ILC shortly after his first interview for climbing on the roof of the ILC to retrieve a package that was being thrown from one accommodation unit to another. His second and final interview was held on the 'punishment' unit. He longed to get back to the ILC as he felt it was helping him do better, but unfortunately that option was no longer open to him.

Brett:

Brett was in his late 30s. He was a little different from the other participants in that he felt he was 'jail-weary'. He had already spent a lot of time serving his current sentence and felt that the day he was sentenced was the day he started to change, describing his sudden decision to rehabilitate himself in a Damascene moment. Brett had a sense that programs were a waste of time if he was already changed, but he still felt he gained something from about 10% of the programs he did. Brett was articulate and confident, presenting with a maturity and resignation that he just needed to get through his time and get out. He was most looking forward to spending time with his mum, who had been through a tough time with both her sons in prison. Brett felt he was fully rehabilitated and staying in jail another couple of years was a waste of time and public money. He dreamed of getting out, 'meeting someone nice', working and starting his own family. He had concrete plans for work. He regretted relationships that had been broken as a result of his offences. Brett was a white Australian and often apologised for his interview responses which he thought were not characteristic of most participants and 'not what you want.' Brett had good ideas

about how to improve education and vocational training for prisoners. He also regretted his tattoos and felt they were a mark of the 'man he was' rather than the 'better man' he had become.

Charlie:

Charlie was an Indigenous man in his 40s. Charlie's natural demeanour was a frown, which could make him look quite fierce, but when he smiled, his whole face opened up and his eyes twinkled. He had hardly spent any years in school and was grappling with literacy and numeracy in the Certificate I class. Charlie was always ready to help anyone around him in a quiet, patient way, perhaps because he knew what it was to find formal learning difficult. When I first met Charlie, I wasn't sure he understood some of the interview questions, but I soon learned he understood everything and thought a lot about complex issues around imprisonment (particularly institutionalisation) and education. I was ashamed that I'd judged him because he took time to answer and spoke quite slowly. I often felt Charlie was asking questions I should have already thought of and he was always interested in how the research was progressing. Charlie surprised and schooled me often. He couldn't wait to get back to his family and community.

Darren:

I was a little nervous of Darren to begin with as I'd had a stern warning from an officer to 'be careful of him' on the basis of 'what he's in for.' Given I didn't know what Darren had been convicted of, my imagination ran wild and as a result I was wary of Darren in our first interview. Consequently, the interview was more than thirty minutes shorter than any other. It is my biggest regret as interviewer to have allowed that to happen. He would frown when he was thinking and I incorrectly interpreted that as something I should fear. Darren was in his late 30s and was a large, softly-spoken man with low literacy and numeracy skills. He was also enrolled in a Certificate I class. He was a man of few words and loved cars, especially Australian cars made in the 1970s and 80s. He was happy to educate me about these and while he opened up a little over the three interviews and seemed happy to participate, his

interviews were generally the shortest. This didn’t mean he was resistant or didn’t care. On the contrary, Darren’s contribution to the research was concise yet very important. Darren was a father and hoped to be a 'better dad' when he got out, but he said he couldn’t be confident that he would be until he was actually out and in the position of active fatherhood again.

Eddie:

Eddie had been in and out of prison for a while even though he was only in his early 20s. He had a little girl who was two years old and precious to him. He was longing to get out and be 'a proper dad' again. Eddie was Indigenous and felt he may have 'a bit of Chinese' in him too. He loved painting and was happy to show me his work, which was beautiful. He was enjoying learning in the ILC, especially about his heritage and felt it was so important to pass on to his daughter. Eddie was laid-back and easy to interview in the mornings, but afternoons were a little more tricky once he had had his methadone, as he could not focus as clearly on the interview questions. He had had a difficult time at school which seemed to be due to poverty and a sense of 'shame' that his clothing and belongings were so shabby compared to those of other students. He talked wistfully of just wanting 'a decent pencil case' when he was at school and how he got bullied and then became aggressive towards others to try to hide his shame.

George:

George was one of the most enthusiastic participants. He was articulate, enrolled in the Certificate II class and doing very well. He was Indigenous and in his early 20s. George felt happier in education than anywhere else in prison and had plans to continue with education as far as he could. He wanted to enrol in a Certificate III course and perhaps do a Tertiary Preparation course after that but was worried that as the Certificate III course wasn’t available, he would have to go back to the workshops and lose his momentum in learning. George thought carefully about whatever I asked him and seemed embedded in the ILC, so it came as a surprise to find him out of the ILC and in the ‘protection’ unit, which is where we had our second

interview. George reported his brother hadn't been doing so well in prison and had been moved to the protection unit. George was worried about him and had asked to be moved, temporarily, out of the ILC and into the same unit as his brother to help support him. The request had been denied. As a result, George had felt that family was more important and had behaved in such a way as to get himself excluded from the ILC and into the same unit as his brother. George had spent three weeks on the unit and his cousin had now moved into the protection unit to support his brother. George felt his familial obligations were fulfilled and he was desperate to return to the ILC and continue his learning journey. Sadly for George, his exclusion from the ILC was permanent.

James:

James was one of the oldest learners in the ILC, in his early 60s. James was unusual in that he had already obtained a degree while in custody and could not praise enough the education staff who helped him with that remarkable achievement in a different prison over ten years ago. Despite this level of educational attainment, James was happily enrolled in the Certificate II class and said he still found it challenging as he had never really been good at maths. He talked about his previous experience at school in South Africa and was devastated when it had been decided by the 11+ exams that he was not academic and could not go to a grammar school. This had seemed to cause an underlying lack of confidence in his academic abilities for the rest of his life. James was well-liked by his classmates who often helped him as sometimes it took him a little longer to understand. He was recognised as a gentleman by the other learners and staff and offered some profound insights in our interviews, wanting the research to make a difference. James felt the ILC provided a solution for the prison about what to do with him given he is in his 60s and thus employment is not a priority for him on release. James was really enjoying his learning and felt a bit stressed about the prospect of being returned to the prison workshops upon completion of his Certificate II program, saying the noise and pressure of the production line was distressing.

Matthew:

Matthew was in his mid 20s and problematic for his teacher. Obviously clever, Matthew took pride in being non-compliant yet hugely appreciated being in the ILC, where he had access to art and access (via his teacher) to the internet. Matthew is a white Australian and was very clear about what he wanted to learn which was mainly about art. He was drawn to realism and design for tattoos. Although it was clear he ought to be in the Certificate II class, Matthew had ensured his literacy and numeracy assessments were low enough to secure him a spot in the Certificate I class because he knew that if he went straight into the Certificate II class, he could only be in the ILC for about six months. By 'dumbing down' and enrolling in the Certificate I class, he ensured he had a pathway to the Certificate II course and could be at the ILC for twelve months instead of six. He was openly calculating and described himself as a 'schemer'. Matthew claimed he treated crime as a mind-game and it was not all about the money. Adamant that he was a persister from an early age, rather than a desister, yet valuing learning at the ILC, Matthew was also expelled from the ILC for climbing on the roof to retrieve a package and provides a very interesting case study, which is provided in Chapter 12.2.

Neil:

Neil was an Indigenous man in his early 30s with a partner and four children waiting for him in the community. Neil's interview was interesting as he talked about education. While he really enjoyed being part of the ILC, he had bigger things on his mind. He had only been in the prison for about three weeks although had been to other prisons before arriving. He had started at the ILC as soon as he arrived. He felt it provided a welcome respite and he particularly enjoyed being able to see the trees beyond the prison wall. Shortly after his first interview, Neil was released to a drug rehabilitation unit in the community where he could spend time with his family.

Shane:

Shane was in his mid-20s, a single white Australian who talked a lot about how much he had changed since he first came to prison, especially in terms of how much weight

he had put on and improvements to his physical health and fitness. Shane was also proud of his educational achievements, listing them in the first interview. He was enrolled in the Certificate II class and took pleasure in surprising his teacher (and himself) with the level of Maths he was able to successfully complete. He had never achieved formal qualifications at school but was really enjoying numeracy and his teacher gave him some old exam questions from the Higher School Certificate exams. Shane was 'buzzing' about being able to complete those questions correctly. He also enjoyed helping other people in the class, like James, who were a bit slower or needed things explained in different ways and seemed to do some unofficial peer teaching. He particularly enjoyed his teacher and respected him enormously. In class, their rapport was evident in their highly entertaining verbal sparring. Shane presented as a confident learner, yet his own experience of schooling had been traumatic and characterised by sexual and physical abuse at boarding school. Shane was excited by his newly discovered strengths in maths and was planning for release on parole. A butcher by trade, he was thinking about setting up a small, exotic meats importing business and was thinking carefully about all the education, training and permits he would need to be able to run a successful small business. Shane was open and enthusiastic in interviews. He was keen to participate and said it felt good to be part of the research. He thought he might be released on parole before our final interview and insisted he could be contacted through his parole office in order to do our third interview over the phone, but sadly this required an amendment to the ethics approval which could not be granted in time. Shane valued prison education highly and his contribution to the research was significant.

Terence:

Terence was in his 60s and had been in and out of prison since he was 14 or 15. He was a proud Indigenous man who was part of the Stolen Generation[40]. He talked

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[40] 'The Stolen Generation' refers to Indigenous children forcibly removed from their families. The result of various devastating Australian government policies, the action spanned across 1910-1970. See

about the anger and hatred of 'white fellas' he had carried around with him. Despite only being enrolled in Certificate I and learning the basics of literacy and numeracy, Terence was a voracious learner, and he enjoyed thinking about the natural and political world around him. He felt called to be an Elder to guide the younger Indigenous men in prison and also his family and community after his eventual release from prison. Terence's mind was sharp and he had much to teach those around him, including researchers. His interviews were always enjoyable and often profound. Terence's ability to forgive those who had wronged him over the years was extremely moving. The roles of researcher and learner often seemed reversed in interviews with Terence and I often felt schooled by him.

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the link below for further details: https://www.australianstogether.org.au/discover/australian-history/stolen-generations.

5 Being, Belonging, Becoming

The learning process is something you can incite, literally incite, like a riot.

(Audre Lorde, Scratching the Surface, 1978: 98)

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Two reviewed the literature around desistance which suggested that 'without being anchored in positive social experiences of non-deviance, imprisonment cannot create opportunities for creative self-transformation and agency,' (Soyer, 2013:105). It was also noted that Behan (2014), Hughes (2009) and Reuss (2009, 1999) identified that education programs in prison can provide just that sort of positive social experience. Additionally, those with lived experience as learners in custodial education programs also identify the positive, pro-social impact it has had on them, acting as a 'hook for change' and catalyst for desistance (see, for example, MacPherson, 2018; Warr, 2016; and Hart, 2018). As outlined in Chapter One, the context of this thesis is the rare opportunity to conduct research within a unique purpose-built learning space within a medium security prison, which, potentially, offers a place in which the conditions for desistance can exist.

This chapter presents the findings interpreted and analysed from the data collected in relation to the research questions: to explore both how the learners experience and what they value about basic skills education in prison, and the relationship their learning may have with the process of desistance from crime. While Crewe (2005: 199) identifies that 'Prisoners did not identify themselves as a unitary group and the criminal identity offered little in the way of shared status,' and learners were interviewed individually, there was strong cohesion within the data and important commonalities. Three overarching themes were identified as significant to the learner participants in terms of the value they found within education: *Being*, *Belonging* and

Becoming. Hanging under the broader umbrella of these themes were key sub-themes:

- the importance of place
- the importance of culture
- the importance of basic skills acquisition and development of wider capabilities
- and the 'confirmation' of self.

All of these themes are considered in terms of their relationship with desistance from crime.

This chapter begins with a consideration of how the learners experience *being* in the physical and cultural space of the ILC and the behaviour learners identified as unique to the ILC, a place of 'not prison' and 'not work'. Attention is given to how the learners are framed within this space by the teachers and custodial staff and the impact this has on the learners' interactions. The notion of border crossing by Giroux (1992), Michie (2014) and Turner (2016) also provides a framework in which to consider the space of the ILC within the wider prison and the landscape and community beyond. Consideration is given to how learners experience their own behaviour and the behaviour of others in the ILC as more or less pro-social than that elsewhere in the prison and whether the conditions for learning may also support the conditions for desistance from crime.

The second theme of *belonging* explores the learners' sense of self in relation to others and, in the case of Indigenous learners, to place; understanding the important of pro-social connections to the process of desistance with an aim to achieve social inclusion. Developing strong pro-social bonds with others is important (Laub et al, 1998; Uggen, 2000; Farrall, 2002, 2004; McNeill & Maruna, 2007; McNeill & Whyte, 2007) as is perceiving self as part of a community, with the ability to contribute positively to that community (McNeill, 2014; Uggen, Manza & Thompson, 2006). This chapter also considers connections to culture and country that may create a deeper sense of belonging (Carnes, 2013) and how curriculum choices can matter, especially

for Indigenous learners with a focus on supporting the development of a sense of belonging within a family, to a culture and to country.

Developing human capacity/capabilities (social, emotional, academic, vocational etc) has been identified as essential to supporting the process of desistance from crime (Maruna & LeBel, 2003; Maguire & Raynor, 2006; Carrigan, 2014; Pike, 2014; Bennalick, 2018; Garner, 2017). This chapter draws upon the capabilities model of education articulated Australian Curriculum (2010) as a way of understanding how we might be able identity which whether the learning experienced by the learners and their sense of development of capabilities, if any, might support the process of desistance.

While the first part of this chapter presents findings that have been arrived at more inductively, the last part of this chapter takes a more deductive approach, considering whether there is empirical evidence to suggest learners experience the development of any of the seven General Capabilities and, if so, which ones are most commonly experienced. Consequently, the chapter focuses on the process of *becoming*, within the context of self as an ongoing process. Attention is paid to the skills acquired and capabilities developed over the six months learners have spent in the ILC. The data is presented in relation to the seven General Capabilities considered essential for a successful learner: basic skills (literacy and numeracy); ICT; critical and creative thinking; interpersonal skills; ethical understanding; and intercultural understanding, having already shown in Chapter Two that these are common to the desistance process.

The final part of this chapter applies the lens of desistance to the data and presents an analysis of whether learners can be identified as desisters on the basis of empirical evidence around developing a non-offending self over the time spent in the ILC. Drawing on Giordano et al's (2002) four stages of desistance and Bottoms and Shapland's (2011) seven phases of desistance to identify which phase of desistance a learner, if any, may experience. Indicators included: having a sense of connection to others and society; future orientation and a sense of hope.

Data from all thirteen learners is included in this chapter, with the inclusion of two individual case studies at the end of the chapter. These case studies are included because they illustrate learners within the ILC were disparate and experienced the ILC differently, with some identifying more overtly as desisters than others. These two very different cases, which perhaps draw more from portraiture than the traditional case study model, offer detailed accounts of a learner's experience of the ILC and progression towards desistance, or not, enabling us to draw conclusions about how learning may support desistance from crime.

5.2 Being

One of the most significant findings was that participants identified they were both treated differently and behaved differently within the ILC compared with elsewhere in the prison. The way in which learners are framed as learners by their teachers, together with the design of the space, curriculum, and pedagogical approaches suggest a philosophy of dignity the learners experience as profound.

Learners contrasted the safe, peaceful, calm and harmonious ILC with the rest of the prison which was described as noisy, dirty, oppressive, mindless and threatening. The ILC felt therapeutic in comparison and learners described an increased sense of emotional well-being. Learners attributed this directly to the ILC's physical environment, their relationship with staff and other learners, all of which they experienced as humanising.

They described the space as allowing them to 'escape' from prison for a while, allowing them to feel 'normal' and in which they felt safe, commenting on how this affected their behaviour positively. They identified the impact of learning in a space that looked unlike the rest of the prison and where they were treated respectfully, recognised as a whole person and not seen as 'just a crim'. The ILC was valued by the learners as a protective place of escape and safety as well as a place of mental stimulation, which allowed them to be different.

All learners, regardless of how compliant with or resistant to authority or learning they were, detailed they behaved differently in the ILC space, suggesting a suspension of the usual inmate code of behaviour and the existence (and acceptance of an alternative, unspoken social code). In the ILC, they experienced desistance from 'jail talk,' aggressive behaviour and criminal activity.

Fundamental to the shift towards pro-social behaviour were the experiences of being framed as a 'learner' rather than 'offender'; escaping the pains of imprisonment; having breathing space to reflect and recover; having a forum to speak in a pro-social way; and replacing meaningless work with authentic learning.

5.2.1 Framed as learner

Within the ILC, entwined paradigms of punishment, risk management and rehabilitation evident elsewhere in the prison appeared to be suspended, replaced with a learning paradigm. At no time was a learner framed as an 'offender' by the teachers. Rather they were constantly referred to as 'learners' – as students just like the many other students these teachers had taught before elsewhere. ILC teachers and learners operated on a first name basis, with respect shown to the female teacher, who was always referred to as 'Miss' L. To learners in prison who are used to being referred to by their Master Index Number (MIN), being called by their first name marked a significant shift in the way they were perceived, which, Shane felt, was empowering:

> ... when I came over and started the ILC, it made me feel like I had some sort of importance, you know? Like I'd picked up my school books and attended every day, came into class and used my brain, I wasn't stuffing around ... It sort of empowers you a little. (Shane)

Sykes (1958:78-9) outlined the 'pains of imprisonment' as being physical, emotional and psycho-social:

> Imprisonment, then, is painful. The pains of imprisonment, however, cannot be viewed as being limited to the loss of physical liberty. The significant hurts lie in the frustrations or deprivations which attend the withdrawal of freedom, such as the lack of heterosexual relationships, isolation from the free community, the withholding of goods and services, and so on. And however painful these frustrations or deprivations may be in the immediate terms of thwarted goals, discomfort, boredom, and loneliness, they carry a more profound hurt as a set of threats or attacks which are directed against the very foundations of the prisoner's being. The individual's picture of himself as a person of value... begins to waver and grow dim.

In complete contrast with Sykes' description of a sense of diminished or devalued self that is more characteristic of experiences of imprisonment, learners experienced the ILC as a place which was quite unlike the rest of the prison. Not only did it look very different, but it felt different. Learners felt valued and important within the ILC:

> *Over there (indicates in the unit) you walk around and you're a nobody, you know? You're just a number. Over here ... you know, you feel important, do you know what I mean?* (George)

All of the learner participants commented on the positive impact of their teachers as people '*who care*' and many gave specific examples of teachers going out of their way to help when they didn't have to. Learners articulated that they were treated well by their teachers and particularly admired and appreciated their '*patience*' and kindness, citing acts of generosity they considered to be beyond the call of duty of prison educators. For example, Shane was having difficulty reading his work but couldn't get a quick appointment with the optometrist who visited the prison. Shane reported being particularly touched that his teacher had loaned him *'a pair of glasses. His own pair of glasses,'* to help Shane until he could get an appointment. That small gesture of generosity in an austere culture where delineation between staff and inmates is considered a matter of security — where staff are discouraged from giving inmates anything lest that staff member be groomed/manipulated by the inmate — was a

powerful symbol of humanity, noticed and much appreciated by Shane and the learners around him. Learners felt their teachers engaged with them *'as human beings'* and that they '*could ask them stuff too, like about what kind of day they were having*,' which helped cement more 'normalised' human relations in the learning space.

ILC Learners commented frequently that they felt they were treated differently in the ILC by education staff who they felt were more approachable and felt particularly connected to their teachers. Eddie talked about the best bit of being in the ILC in terms of his relationship with teachers:

> *Just meeting like teachers, talking to people, different people and that stuff, their views and stuff and that...Probably they understand ya, they listen. Like I watch stuff at night and I can talk to them about it and stuff. (Eddie)*

Learners commented they felt they could 'talk to' their teachers about their own lives and that teachers gave them more information about themselves, such as information about their families or sharing their own experiences. They felt this was a gesture of trust that was much appreciated:

> *I don't know, I'd say it would be the atmosphere and I'd say the teachers are a big part of it as well. They make you feel comfortable and that, not like... We just see these uniforms all day, you know? Like if you were in the workplace or something... Yeah, oh yeah. Like normal people, you know? (George)*

The implication of this is that the learners felt as though this was unusual and did not characterise their experience elsewhere in the prison or, in fact in other prisons they may have been sent to. This is unsurprising — the general prison induction training I received included instructions to never share any personal information about myself to ensure I did not become vulnerable to 'grooming', with a stern warning to 'never forget, *they* are in here for a reason.' Sharing any personal information such as where you might live or whether you have children is generally considered ill-advised, risky and dangerous. Turner (2016: 45) identifies that '[p]rison teachers also have a difficult

job to do in negotiating the prison boundary.' Within the ILC learning space, however, teachers were more open about themselves in terms of their views on current affairs or thoughts about life, about whether they had a family and what their likes/dislikes were. The sharing of this information did not appear to be abused at any time by the learners as it seemed to be part of normal conversation. It was this openness and normalcy that seemed to be so much appreciated by the learners.

Significantly, the learners seemed to identify the ILC as a place in which they could escape not just from the prison environment and regime but also from the role of 'offender' and the 'criminality' of other prisoners:

> *It makes you feel differently when you're in here, in the different environment, yeah... just because when you're back in the pod you're around all the criminals, you're around the murderers, all different type people. You come in here and there's not many people in here, so you know...? ...It feels like you're.. I don't know...I guess, in a different environment...back at school...probably normal. (Barry)*

Interestingly, Barry applies a narrative frame, distinguishing the learners from 'the criminals' who do not come into education, whereas the ILC teachers never applied the framework of offender. Teachers never referred to 'offending behaviour' or criminogenic factors, but would discuss issues about imprisonment learners found important, when they were raised.

Within the prison, the role of learner appeared to be unique to the ILC and learners suggested this was significantly different to that projected onto (and often internalised by) them by other prison staff/inmates and the wider community and the media. For example, Eddie documented the shame he often felt outside in the community, contrasting it with how his teacher treated him:

> *No, I feel better here and that, open, and...I can talk...like to Stephen [a teacher] and that, like he's a person, like on the outside...I don't know... like he doesn't...no one judges you. Yeah, you're not ashamed and that... you're not ashamed like walking down the street or in a shop and stuff*

> *like that. I don't know...like I can talk to Steve like anyone and that, but outside I couldn't do it, I think they'd look [at me] funny and stuff. Like walking in a shop they're probably thinking I'm thieving... (Eddie)*

The implication for Eddie was that as an Indigenous man, he felt was likely to be perceived as thieving. It is important to note that Eddie wasn't just referring to himself as an 'offender' but also to the racism he experiences as an Indigenous man who faces 'double judgement' for his Indigeneity and status as an offender. He understood criminality was associated with Indigeneity which raises a very significant issue within Australian culture and prisons. It is clear that Indigenous men are still over-represented in the criminal justice system (Dawes & Davidson, 2019; Gannoni & Bricknell, 2019) which points to endemic 'institutional systemic racism' in Australia (Carnes, 2014: 90). While it is not possible to explore institutionalised bias more fully within this thesis, please see the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (1991) and *Bringing Them Home* (HREOC, 1997) as well as Carnes' (2014) excellent PhD thesis exploring the education of Indigenous prisoners in Western Australia for a full and thoughtful discussion, together with Gannoni & Bricknell's (2019) review of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* twenty five years on.

Significantly, in the ILC Eddie, like other learners, felt seen as an Idigenous man and that his teacher did not judge him nor think of him as a criminal. Eddie found this both unexpected and freeing from the shame of being relentlessly perceived as a offender.

Learners contrasted being taken at face value in the ILC to their experience of offending behaviour programs, in which they felt they were still framed as 'offenders' who must complete a program identified as necessary for their 'rehabilitation'. This is not to devalue offending behaviour programs or those who deliver them, but to identify that learners felt their relationship with teachers and status as learners differently to that experienced in other areas of the prison and, interestingly, they felt more free of the 'criminal' label in the education space. The position of teacher as a non-uniformed civilian whose job it is to help the learner develop and reach his potential as a human being appeared to establish the relationship on a different

footing, perhaps, to that of other staff members whose primary role it is to enforce security or even deliver programs of rehabilitation.

Even though the aims of education and programs staff may be identical in that they both want to support people in prison to develop and be successful citizens, thus creating a safer society for all, the foundations of the relationship appeared to be quite different. In avoiding the label of 'offender' or 'criminal' it seemed that most learners felt they were able to learn and develop more freely.

James described the pro-social impact being in the ILC has on the learners:

> *I suppose…it's like anything that you spend some time in, in that environment, you become part of it, you get into a habit, you know what I mean? And people in that environment play different roles, you know what I mean? Like the different teachers, even the officers. You have a rapport with them and it all fits together. (James)*

Implicit in James' remark is the fact that the culture of the ILC affects positive change over time:

> *...unusual behaviour or unruly behaviour really does sort of...it just sort of doesn't fit in…It wouldn't work here, you know? And even people that it's foreign to, it washes off on them, you know what I mean? (James)*

Learners reported modified or alternative behaviour in the ILC that was not part of their experience in the wider prison. For example, George identified an ability to be different in the ILC:

> *You think you're a hard person when you're out to prove something but in the ILC you can be different. (George)*

The influence of genuine, positive regard by teachers together with a steadfast determination to frame their students as 'learners' rather than 'offenders' seemed to be a powerful factor within the ILC. It hinted that while teachers never directly

addressed offending behaviour (and perhaps *precisely* because they didn't), learners developed 'a habit' of pro-social behaviour, the longer they spent in the ILC. James suggests this is true even of those who might be more resistant to the 'foreign' pro-social model. There seemed to be something powerful about the culture of learning in the ILC that allowed participants to behave in a more pro-social way.

5.2.2 Escaping the pains of imprisonment:

Turner (2016: 11) identifies the sensory deprivation that prisoners experience (particularly touch and sight), saying there is usually 'limited opportunity to visually experience the landscape in their immediate vicinity.' This has certainly been my experience of many different prisons in Australia and the UK where the view, if there is one at all, is predominantly vertical and of concrete and bricks. Once inside a prison it can be, literally, impossible to see beyond the razor wire atop the boundary wall. The ILC was intentionally designed to allow learners to see over the wall to the trees beyond, as it was felt to have therapeutic value in terms of providing a connection with nature and a sense of place within the wider landscape (DOC, 2013). The learners often commented on the ILC's physical design, saying they felt it allowed them to 'escape' from prison, even if only temporarily:

> *But here everything's open and you can see the sky…[O]ur work locations [are] indoors and you know you're in jail, whereas here [in the ILC], you kind of don't know...There'll be times when you don't feel you're in jail...like walking to the library, that little bit of garden and stuff...Yeah, you don't think you're in jail for a couple of seconds. (Matthew)*

> *Yeah, it's different, like it's different here. I don't know, like the surroundings are different...It doesn't feel like you're in jail every day...it's way better...Yeah, it's really different. You can see the trees...you can see the birds and that. It's like it's not...it's like I'm not in jail here...Yeah, it's a relief when you come in here. (Neil)*

Learners referred to the landscaping around the ILC buildings, which attracted birds and butterflies, noticing it brought nature into the learning space. While they described a sense of openness and escape, it seemed less a freedom of open borders as a retreat into a space with protective and restorative value, like a walled garden in the midst of a city that cocoons against the stresses of urban life:

> *Yeah, it's like, it's like prison's a jail, you know? At the heart of the desert is this little oasis. Yeah, something like that, you know? (George).*

Without exception, the learners contrasted their experience of the learning space with that of the wider prison, associating the ILC with therapeutic value that enhanced their sense of well-being:

> *Well you see, when I come here, I can* ***escape****, I can* ***get away*** *from everyone and everything... And it* ***gets me out of there*** *and listening to everybody else's problems and everything else and they've got so much problems in this place, so 'Home and Away'*[41] *ain't got nothing on them, you know? It's all drama, you know. Yeah, so I like coming in and just* ***escape****, like my head* ***escapes*** *when I'm in ... Yeah, but some of the older fellas we all talk and that. We* ***get away from that****. So* ***it's a great escape*** *and it is,* ***it is like a little peace when I come in****. (Terence, emphases added)*

Recorded interviews were punctuated by bird song and field notes describe the variety and frequency of birds seen in the ILC gardens, an unusual occurrence in a predominantly concrete, brick, steel and bitumen environment. My own sense of well-being as a researcher was enhanced by the views to the trees and the birds and butterflies that regularly visited and featured in field notes. The design of the curved roof of each classroom which draws the eye upwards to the sky and trees beyond the prison fence, the pretty planting around the yarn circle and the middle of the decked

[41] *Home and Away* is a long-running Australian television soap opera series.

area which invites wildlife into the ILC both softened the harsh edges of the more traditional prison architecture surrounding the ILC and provided a non-prison-like environment which participants found to be more like a college or TAFE[42]. The learners seemed to feel the same way, speaking of the ILC as calm place, providing relief from the noise, dirt and conflict in the rest of the prison, which made them feel 'better':

> *It's been good to just have, you know, it's peaceful here. You know, it's not noisy, there's no politics, there's no drama. It's good to have a break from that…Cos after so long it was kind of just wearing on me. I needed to find a sanctuary inside a jail where I could just…breathe...breathe for a minute. (Brett)*

> *Well, it's a clean environment too...nothing in jail is a clean environment ... so it's a cleaner environment and when you're in a cleaner environment I suppose...you feel better. Yeah, even in the library you're in a clean...a clean environment, I guess. (Matthew)*

The phrase 'I feel better' occurred conspicuously frequently. Without exception, learners commented on feeling 'better' in the ILC and experiencing relief on entering the learning space. While some attributed this to the influence of nature in the ILC environment, others referred to the 'normalising'[43] benefits of the building design, saying it felt just as though they were at a college in the community. This sense of escape was less a therapeutic retreat and more a breaking out of the dehumanising institution:

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[42] Technical and Further Education College

[43] The term 'normalisation' as it is used here is based on Scandinavian Exceptionalism, which supports prisons run on humanitarian principles in which the greatest (and ideally only) punishment is the restriction of freedom. All other aspects of the prisoner's life are kept as 'normal' as possible in order to avoid unnecessary further 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes, 1958) and, in particular, institutionalisation. See Pratt & Eriksson (2013)and the counterargument by Reiter, Sexton and Sumner (2017).

> *Yes. It's like you're away from...****you're not in jail for this period in time****. It has this impact, you know?…It's really weird. I don't know what it is. I mean, I don't know...****it's like I'm out****. I talk to all the boys.* ***It's like when we're out****. It's like we're at TAFE or something,* ***like literally like we're not in jail, like we're out, out of the jail system. Like we're at TAF****E...That's right,* ***it's like we feel human again****.* ***And once we feel human****, we're actually learning as well and I actually take it in more, I can't explain why and* ***we're actually feeling happier****... (Aiden)*

Aiden's sense of feeling 'better' and 'happier' in the ILC was echoed by others. Learners described feeling happier and more relaxed in the ILC as it allowed them to feel more 'human'. Shane asserted the ILC had been such a therapeutic experience, it had functioned as rehabilitation:

> *I've really tried hard to improve my life and make a better situation for myself. So I've sort of used this place as a rehab. (Shane)*

Just as a walled garden can provide respite from the pressures and anxieties of urban life outside, there was a sense that physically being in the ILC and mentally engaging in learning helped participants deal with the pressures and anxieties, both of prison life and life 'outside'. Not only did the ILC have an insulating, protective factor both from the culture of criminality on the accommodation units but learners also experienced protection from the pain, caused by imprisonment, of separation from family. Eddie explained that being in the ILC helped protect him from the pains of prison life, saying it '*helps and that. It gets you away from everything. It gets you away from all the shit in the unit*' and also protected him from the pains of missing his children:

> *You're just doing your [ILC] work and you just want to do jail without thinking about nothing that's going on there in the outside, you know? You don't want to be in there thinking about your kids every day and that. I couldn't do that. That's why I don't ring 'em. (Eddie)*

This was also reinforced by Neil who described his engagement in basic numeracy as a protective factor, distracting him from the pain of separation:

> *Yeah, but I've got to do my maths. I don't think about my girlfriend, I don't think about my kids, it takes my mind out of that you know...I've got no worries...It's a good distraction...Makes it easier. Just makes it easier. (Neil)*

As a physical place within which learning takes place, the ILC was experienced as a place of escape, protection and enhanced well-being — a place in prison, in which it was able to feel 'normal' again. Learners experienced the ability to see beyond the prison walls to the trees beyond, taking them out of prison for a while, yet escaped into the ILC to experience respite from the stresses of both prison and home life. Learners associated being in the ILC with feeling better which seemed to affect behaving better.

5.2.3 Space to breathe

All of the learners commented on experiencing the ILC as '*different'* to the rest of the prison: as a safer space than the 'pod' (accommodation unit) that impacted on their communication and behaviour. Charlie commented he didn't have '*to watch [his] back*' in the ILC space, whereas on the pod, others' behaviour was less predictable, saying '*You never know what might happen*.' This was also reinforced by Terence:

> *Back there...when you go back out there, you put up your mask and you put it on again and you just block everybody out if you can and everything else, and you've got to watch and look and everything else about you, but in here you don't have to watch too much. (Terence)*

The idea of a mask which is dropped within the ILC suggests a level of authenticity within the ILC space not experienced elsewhere in the prison. Other learners also

referred to a mask worn to survive on the accommodation pod that seemed to be a 'hypermasculine imperative' (Dolovich, 2012; Jewkes 2002, 2005)[44]. Coming into the ILC, that mask was metaphorically left at the ILC threshold and a more vulnerable self, perhaps even Goffman's (1959) 'backstage self'[45], was free to emerge.

Learners experienced a lack of conflict in the ILC they found remarkable within the prison context. Learners spoke of a prison population divided by rival gangs, often split along racial or religious lines. A different, unspoken, yet clearly understood code of conduct seemed to apply in the ILC, even for those, like Matthew, who openly admitted he was still drawn to a criminal lifestyle:

> *Like, anything can happen at any time...And um...and it hasn't and I don't think it will. Yeah. Like that's just not having...only having one fight here since this place has opened, that's just oh...phenomenal...I can't, I can't believe it. If you told other people that in other jails, they'd just laugh at ya. (Matthew)*

Matthew had a long history of fights in prison, was surprised there had been no fights in the three months he had been attending the ILC. Moreover, he was amazed that since he commenced in the ILC, he had not incurred another prison charge for aggressive behaviour or breaking prison rules. This was unprecedented for him[46].

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[44] See Morey & Crewe (2018) for a more nuanced reading of masculinity within prisons.

[45] While this thesis is not based on Goffman's (1956) theory of 'frontstage' and 'backstage' personas, as shown in *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* it is important to note his important observation that people present different 'selves' in different social settings. At the risk of oversimplication, one 'performs' social roles when 'frontstage' in public and is more authentic when being one's private 'backstage' self. Interestingly, Raffel (2013:173), critiquing and building on Goffman's theory, suggests that 'we will not feel as real as when among intimates'. The data presented in this research suggests that there is a higher degree of intimacy among the ILC learners in terms of the ability to show vulnerability than elsewhere in the prison, which may account for their experience of feeling 'more real' or authentic in the ILC. For further discussion of Goffman's theory within the prison context, please see Bartlett & Eriksson's (2019) astute consideration of the conflation of front and backstage selves in their research of the construction and performance of masculinities (specifically, fatherhood) in the liminal space of prison visit areas.

[46] Matthew's story, as a self-identified non-desister, is presented as a case study later in 5.5.2.

Charlie explained the divisions in the wider prison did not cross the threshold into the ILC, even though members of the different gangs were enrolled at the same time:

> *...we all leave it at the gate, race gangs and stuff, when we come to education. We just want to get our education done and...all that gang stuff we leave it behind at the gate, and then when we leave [the ILC] we put it on again, like that mask. (Charlie)*

Learners identified a different way of behaving, as though a different moral code was in place. Barry described that the aggression and talk of criminality characteristic of life on the pod were replaced with more polite, altruistic behaviour:

> *When we come here we ask how the work's going, not asking about um ...criminal stuff. Yeah ...when you're back there you're trying to prove a point. You don't want to be the weakest link, but in here you can be polite. I guess that's the good side coming out in everyone...Yeah, it brings out the best. The ILC does...Yeah, like saying 'thanks for this.' We don't say that back at the pod to each other. We walk up and just say 'give us that.' Or we don't say please and thank you, our manners just go out the window. Yep. For most people anyway. For me, I will always say it, 'thanks', you know? Thank you. It doesn't cost nothing, manners don't cost nothing...Yeah. A lot of the criminals when they're being polite and when they're using their manners, they only want something...[But in the ILC] [i]t's how they act when you've got nothing...It's how they act when you've got nothing...towards you. (Barry)*

Learners commented that they mingled with co-learners with whom they would not necessarily on the pod:

> *There's people in our class that I definitely wouldn't talk to at all, but since being in class I've become friends with and stuff. Usually we'd be enemies, but...if it wasn't for the ILC...um...you get to see how they live and you...react to things and stuff, I don't know...Um...in...in...um...in the pod...Yeah, um…you've all got your separate groups in jail, it's always*

> *been like that, and in here, your groups intermingle kind of, so...yeah it's not so much um...Like it breaks down the walls, I suppose. It comes to that...(Matthew)*

Separately, almost all learners brought up the same point — getting to know other learners in the ILC environment broke down barriers, fear and prejudice and made the environment safer:

> *...it's the interaction with the other classmates, you know, if it wasn't for the ILC you'd still have people going up against each other not knowing who is who and stuff like that, but in class you get to learn who different people are and different people mingle and stuff like that...you come in here [the ILC] and it's just completely different attitude. People are communicating every day, they're talking to each other, you're having a laugh, if someone's down, they'll see you and pull you aside to ask if you're alright...(Shane)*

It appeared the ILC was safe enough to allow learners to communicate freely with each other, resulting in a developing understanding of the 'other' as more than the member of a different/rival group. In turn this seems to develop into empathy for each other as they begin to care if a classmate seems to be *'down'.* This suggests interpersonal and intercultural understanding is both instrumental in the creation of a safe environment and also the outcome of that environment.

As James describes it, immersion in the ILC environment seems to result in its pro-social values '*wash[ing] off on you*.' Aiden also described the process of adapting to the learning environment as '*growing on you*.' This suggests the code of behaviour was not spoken, taught or enforced, but modelled, absorbed and adopted over time. Time spent in the ILC space meant time spent in its pro-social culture, surrounded by people (staff and other learners) modelling pro-social behaviours. Learners could not seem to help adapting to it, as Aiden also affirmed.

5.2.4 Space to speak

Not only did learners feel safe to display empathy and drop their mask of hypermasculinity within the ILC, learners identified a difference in the way they spoke in the ILC. Prisoners' conversations are often characterised by swearing so it is interesting the interviews were free of bad language. When I asked the learners about this, they shrugged, saying they had a '*different mindset*' (Brett) in the ILC and '*we've got nothing to swear for in here*' (Charlie).

It was not just a lack of swearing that was noted, learners also identified there was a different *type* of conversation. They stated that in the ILC talk focused on learning rather than crime:

> *We're talking about what we've done, and...how we're going...and how we're going in our course and what we're doing. And it's like we all learn the same thing and that and when we get back there, it's sort of different ...I don't know how to explain it...We talk about education when we do talk to each other here, but in there, it's talking about politics, jail politics and that. (Charlie)*

Barry described 'jail talk' as talking about crimes, saying that in the ILC:

> *... we ask each other 'how's class going? What are youse doing?' Nothing about how we're going to rob this person or that person...Yeah. You get back there and you start plotting this and 'oh and we'll do this when we get out', but it's all made up and...it's just, yeah, jail talk we call it, it's jail talk. Yeah...Yeah...passing the time. (Barry)*

While it sounded as though the 'jail talk' is just empty posturing to spend time, Barry's final comment suggested that was not always the case: *'But some of it actually happens.'* The phrase 'jail talk' was used repeatedly by multiple learners to describe the differences between communication in ILC and that back in the pod. While there was the general suggestion that most jail talk was about imagined or exaggerated crimes, Barry clearly believed some jail talk was serious planning that led to further

crimes on release from prison. The absence of jail talk in the ILC was noted repeatedly as was the observation that a different, more empathetic and pro-social focus of conversation about learning and the progress of co-learners existed in the ILC.

The absence of jail talk seemed to increase the learners' sense of safety. They were not worried about saying the wrong thing or repercussions for something said. Charlie elaborated:

> *Yeah you have to be careful what you say and who you say it to in there [the pod], but we can talk like...we can talk here...like when we're talking about education and all that...Yeah. That's black* ***and*** *white.* [Charlie, emphasis his]

Charlie was at pains to point out that this absence of jail talk in the ILC seemed to exist regardless of ethnicity. There was a safety in speaking as an Indigenous man within the ILC that, to him, seemed unusual within the wider prison culture.

Interestingly, Barry suggested that the lack of jail talk was more rehabilitative than being in rehabilitation, which was, in his experience, also characterised by discussions of criminal activity:

> *You think about it all, a lot of people go 'I wasn't thinking' but they were thinking. I know that. If you're a criminal, you're most likely to reoffend. It's so hard to stay out of jail. It becomes like your first home, now it's your second home. Being in jail, even at rehab. I went to rehab. That was like being in a jail too. That's what you think, all you're talking to everyone about is criminal activity. It doesn't really rehabilitate you at all.*

When asked, 'So, when you come to somewhere like the ILC, do you talk about criminal activity?' Barry's reply is significant:

> *All that stops. We start helping each other in class.*

Barry's comment that the jail talk stops in the ILC implies he feels the culture of the ILC is more conducive to respect and mutual support than that on the pod, in the

workplace or even in rehabilitation programs he had previously experienced. It appears that within the ILC, learning provides an alternative common experience and focus which in turn fosters an openness to and respect for others which, in turn, fosters cooperation and collaboration, that was not found elsewhere in the prison.

Learners speculated that it was because the ILC's environment was so nice that it made people want to stay, that it embodied certain values that they enjoyed and were quite different to those in the rest of the prison:

> *It's a...well I guess you only realise how beneficial it is after...towards the end of it really, and when you're confronted with having to go back into the system and what is the 'norm'...To realise...to realise what you did have here. It is a nice, isolated environment, a nice peaceful environment to be able to learn, or feel better about yourself, to better understand yourself and also your fellow inmates...because you're with them in situations where they open up, where there's...to help each other, there's like... And it's amazing for that to happen without any intrigue...it's ok to help someone, to give somebody something.* (James)

The lack of jail talk seemed to affect both the values adopted in the ILC and, consequently, vulnerability that can be shown. The ILC appeared to be a safe place where learners could let their guard down because there was little or no physical or emotional threat of fighting or manipulation/intimidation.

There was strong and repeated evidence of intercultural understanding being developed as a result of learning in ILC. Learners repeatedly spoke of their surprise that everybody 'gets on' in the ILC and the factions, often along racial lines, were suspended at the threshold to the learning space.

5.2.5 *Space to learn*

5.2.5.1 *Meaningless work, meaningful learning*

ILC learners repeatedly contrasted their experience of working in the prison industries workshops and learning in the ILC, explaining engaging in learning rather than repetitive, production-line work increased their sense of calm and purpose. Eddie explained the monotonous repetition of the workshop was stressful, whereas in the ILC he found the learning stimulating:

> *You're not stressing, you're not um...doing the same thing, you're doing something different, sort of for your mind and that...Yeah, it's not boring.* (Eddie)

Learners also spoke of experiencing time differently in the ILC as opposed to the workshops, stating that '*time goes faster in here*' than in the rest of the jail, particularly more quickly than in the workshops where they experienced time as passing most slowly. The faster passage of time perceived in the ILC also may have helped alleviate both the boredom and distress when one is separated from loved ones and yearning to go home.

Many described the workshops, especially the 'woodwork' workshop as one which seemed to crush one's spirit, identifying the *'brain dead work'* as *'soul-destroying.'* Learners pointed to the lack of training in the workshop and the monotonous activity of using a nail gun to affix wooden slats to bed bases in a production-line environment. They resented the mindlessness of the work, identifying it as *'relentless,' 'mind-numbing'* and *'boring.'* Brett contrasted his ILC learning experience with the workshop, where *'got sick of working'* because:

> *Well, it was just noisy, dusty, I felt...I felt just...I was part of a conveyer belt line...a production line, you know?...It's just constant noise and it's just, you know? And it's tiring...I had no self-worth down there. I hated it.*

Brett was scathing of such work, commenting that the only places such jobs exist are in prison so there was no way of getting a job like that on the outside even if he wanted to[47]. He had been in jail for about ten years and could compare current employment provision in jail with that available in the past. He felt the work options were not *'real'* and lamented the lack of apprenticeships in trades such as plumbing, construction or electrical where '*boys can actually earn a living*.' Most significantly, Brett attributed a sense of 'self-worth' to engagement in meaningful activity. This suggests that engagement in learning he finds meaningful enhanced his self-worth rather than diminished it.

All thirteen learner participants commented on what they perceived as a marked difference between work and ILC learning, saying they were *'actually learning'* in the ILC rather than just undertaking *'brain dead work'*. The interview questions did not include a direct question inviting participants to compare their experience of the industries' workshops with their learning experience, so it is significant that this information was volunteered, unprompted, by the participants as something they felt keenly. This difference was of importance to them and they identified a feeling of purpose and achievement, of being engaged and increased motivation in the ILC that they did not experience in the CSI workshops. They attributed value to this.

5.2.5.2 *Motivation to learn*

Some learners reported that they had initially enrolled in the ILC to *'avoid going to the workshops*.' While it is easy to interpret this as a lack of strong work ethic, it is possible to read this as an avoidance of the work environment which they felt was stultifying rather than avoiding work itself. For example, when Neil is asked 'Why are you at the ILC?', he laughs and replies *'Cos I'd rather do this than go to work.'* He claims this was because he didn't want to work for Corrective Services and for the low

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[47] Barry was referring to contract work undertaken for external customers by Corrective Services Industries (CSI). In this case, a major bed manufacturer contracts CSI to staple bed slats onto bases and this is undertaken by prisoners in the 'woodwork' shop. Barry suggested that if CSI has the contract for this work, then the job is only available in prison and not available out in the community, therefore it is a worthless 'skill' to learn.

rate of pay offered, but when it was pointed out he was on exactly the same rate of pay in the ILC, he responded:

> *Yeah, but then you do what you do here, we do less here but you're actually learning something, like it's something that's used for...like who's going to be making bed frames or making clothes? I'm sure as hell not going to be when I get out. (Neil)*

Those who came to education to avoid work or take it easy described a process of change in their motivation and engagement in learning once they arrived in education. For example, Terence enrolled in the ILC to avoid going to work and take a bit of a breather, but found that his motivation shifted and was surprised to find he could not help engaging in his learning:

> *Yeah, you see that's one of the reasons I came in here because I didn't want to do the same old, same old things. Come into jail, go to work, come back...So I said I'll go to education. And I don't know if it was because of my health and that, because of my health, but I know I didn't want to go to the workshop. I tried it, but it didn't [...] And I sat in a class there for a while, maybe for a couple of months just thinking about a lot of things and just pretended to work, but then it just snapped and then you just do some things because you wanted to do things, I just wanted to ...Yeah, they have changed because coming to jail, been coming to jail since I was a kid and been doing the same old thing, go and get fit, go to work, come back, pump iron, do the same old thing, not learning very much, learning nothing about much any more, so I decided to just go to education. It's...I wasn't expecting to be um...to* ***learn*** *something...I've surprised myself. (Terence, emphasis his)*

In fact, other learners were keen to outline that distinction, claiming they were not work shy but simply could not cope with the relentless noise, stress and monotony of the workshops. For example, one of the learners in the Certificate I basic skills course stated:

Well you see, when I come here, I can escape. I can get away from everyone and everything. I put my head down and do whatever I want to do and work...you don't get pushed to rush things here. You just go along at your pace, your own pace which is good. I learn more that way than being rushed with things. (Terence)

The flexibility of the learning environment was also appreciated by the learners, particularly the ability to work at one's own pace. Again, without being prompted to compare the ILC with the workshop, learners pointed out the differences, for example:

Yeah, you're not on the production line, you're not under pressure...you can take your time learning it. People are a bit slower than others, you actually get the time put into them to get it done. (Shane)

Others claimed they enrolled to have an 'easy ride' away from the pressures of production line work. Brett commented '*That was the whole method behind coming here you know? Um, just to come here and chill, to speak, breathe, reset*.' Even those whose initial motivation to come to education was to avoid the workshops shifted over time and often quite quickly. Most learners reported a growing engagement in learning together with a desire to succeed and continue their learning to higher levels. It appeared that sustained attendance in education resulted in increased engagement and motivation, regardless of initial motivation to attend and reluctance to engage.

Shane also commented that it helped him find some sort of mental/emotional balance and purpose within the prison:

When I started learning, my brain started going and I just sort of thought, 'Well, I'll just throw myself into it.' Now, if I wake up in the morning and I didn't have education to come to, I reckon I wouldn't be able to find me feet again, for a little while... (Shane)

There is also a sense that Shane has adopted the identity of learner as he says he would be destabilised if he 'didn't have education to come to.'

James valued education at the ILC in terms of being an alternative way to serve a custodial sentence:

> *Absolutely, yeah, like I mean ah...well, look, comparing it...well you can't compare it to being in the wood shop or the...it's not...it's a totally different approach to doing your time in jail. It is...it's a gift, it really is. It is. And ah...if it is treated as such, and a privilege, then you can get a lot from it... (James)*

Shane distinguished that what he had learned in the ILC was more valuable than that in the workshops because he could carry his learning with him:

> *Yeah...see, when you leave here, whatever you've done in the ILC goes with you. So that's the thing. Cos when you're working, and then you leave, you don't really take anything with you. (Shane)*

This may indicate a belief that what he is learning in the ILC is inherently more valuable than the skills he has learned in prison workshops because it has more relevance/applicability in the community and/or the fact that his learning in the ILC is accredited so he receives certificates that have currency in the community.

There was also a sense that working in the ILC was more suited to some learners' specific temperament, personality or situation:

> *I mean it's a far cry from the carpentry shops, put it that way (chuckles). And whether it is just year 10, the environment, the whole thing is just sort of um...appropriate to my age, my persona, you know what I mean? (James)*

James felt the ILC was a more appropriate place than the workshops for him at the age of 65 and valued his place very highly. His interviews were characterised by gratitude for the opportunity to stay at the ILC, to learn and also the staff who help

him along the way. Other learners commented on how much they valued their place within the learning program and felt this is why behaviour was much better as no one wanted to lose their place at the ILC. All learners expressed a strong desire to stay in the ILC, liking the safety and freedom they experienced and preferring how they felt and were in the learning space.

5.3 Belonging

It is widely recognised that strong pro-social bonds with others are important for emotional well-being generally but are also especially important for the process of desistance from crime (Laub et al, 1998; Uggen, 2000; Farrall, 2002, 2004; McNeill & Maruna, 2007; McNeill & Whyte, 2007). These pro-social bonds are usually described as spousal, parental or familial. However, while certainly more qualified, within the ILC it was possible to see pro-social bonds developing between learners, and between learners and their teachers and mutual genuine positive regard was frequently evident. It was also possible to see pro-social bonds being supported by development within the ILC. That is, the boundary of the ILC was somewhat porous, allowing learners to develop relationships with their family. This seemed to increase learners' sense of self as being part of a community with the potential to make a positive contribution to that community upon release which can also support desistance (Uggen, Manza & Thompson, 2006; McNeill, 2014). The acquisition of writing skills and use of the interactive whiteboards which had internet connectivity were particularly valued by the learners in terms of putting learners 'in touch' (Turner, 2016) with the outside world.

Learners were conscious they were not particularly welcome or valued in society.

> *Yeah, see, I know I'm not much of a valued member of society at the moment. Yeah. So if you find a bit of value, you take it. (Shane)*

Perceived self as a social outcast but learning gave him a sense of value.

The importance of family, culture and country was of especial importance to Indigenous students. Interestingly, it was the moments when teachers veered away from the vocationally related curriculum and included culturally relevant history or art that they treasured the most. Knowledge about culture was considered a precious gift, to be passed on to family, especially children, in order to help them understand where they belong.

5.3.1 Belonging to family

Learners also identified that the value of the basic skills they learned in the ILC was not so much in terms of employability but in terms of their ability to support others in their learning, particularly their own children:

> *Yeah, now I can get out and with the two of my youngest and sit down and they can go 'yeah dad, tell me what's one plus one' and you know, start reading with them and that, you know? (Charlie)*

Others also talked about their grown-up children being 'pretty happy' with news of their involvement in basic skills learning. Darren said his adult children 'knew I couldn't read and write properly.' There was a sense among the learners that their engagement in learning made their families proud of them and this made them feel good:

> *Yeah. The letters I do write are...have been...have improved...Big time, yeah. So my daughter tells me that when she writes back and you know? ...She gave me a compliment when I spoke to her on the phone and everything. She said, 'Gee that's your handwriting?' I'm like 'yeah', and everything. Yeah, little things like that. (Terence)*

Many learners articulated their hopes for the future. While some of the learners did talk about getting a job upon their release from prison, others spoke about continuing their learning in the community, progressing through the Certificate levels. Others

spoke of becoming a father for the first time or a better father/grandfather than they were before:

> *I'm going to get out and be the man that I've always wanted a father-like figure to be. I still want kids. I'm not that old that I can't be a father. I want to get out and have a couple of kids and be a better person. I can see a light at the end of the tunnel where the light wasn't so bright [before]. (Shane)*

> *I want to, you know, find a nice girl, settle down, have a family. You know. Yeah. All that lovely stuff that comes with that...You know, it's nice to daydream and have these goals, but yeah, just baby steps. Sit down with the family and have a meal and listen to everyone just interact...I daydream...Yeah, I mean, you know, I've always wanted to be a dad, you know? (Brett)*

Others spoke of restoring their relationships with their family:

> *...like I lost time with my kids and my brothers, and my dad.. I just want to spend time with my family...Yeah, my family is everything to me. My brothers, my pop and my kids...I just want to go home and have a bbq in the park with my nieces and nephews and my brothers. (Eddie)*

> *Get me relationship better with me daughter and me boys, you know?...Catch up on the times I've missed out on. (Darren)*

Learners identified their first priority on release would be to reunite with family and restore the relationships that had been fractured by offending behaviour and subsequent incarceration.

5.3.2 Belonging to culture

While this thesis did not set out to be a study of Indigenous learners, the reality was that more than half the learner participants tracked over the duration of their learning course identified as Aboriginal. It is an acknowledged weakness of this thesis that Indigenous methodologies have not, specifically, been used, but, as discussed in the Chapter Three, the Appreciative Inquiry approach is not inconsistent within Indigenous methodologies (Bishop, 1998; Chilisa, 2012; Murphy et al, 2004; Reade & McKenna, 2013). There is a sense that the thesis cannot do justice to the magnitude of the importance of belonging to culture and country, but it is acknowledged it is a rich area for significant future research. Having said this, it is important to include findings about learning in relation to the profound sense of belonging it afforded Indigenous learners in particular, with the hope it can be taken forward for future scholarship.

Data showed that Indigenous learners developed their understanding of their own culture as a direct result of engagement in learning at the ILC, both in terms of inquiry-based pedagogies that allowed them to pursue their personal interests and also in response to curriculum content. Despite the fact that Indigenous studies were not explicitly taught as a curriculum subject, it is significant that the inclusion of relevant cultural content should have had such a positive impact on the Indigenous learners. One of the teachers, Stephen, favoured self-directed learning over whole-class teaching, allowing students to pursue their own projects of interest. Exercising agency and choice, many of his Indigenous students elected to research aspects of their own culture and painting was very much part of both the discovery and expression of expression of their findings.

Stephen's student Eddie chose to research Indigenous astronomy and told me animatedly of his new understanding about his learning:

> *I did me project about Aboriginal culture and stuff...[about my family's] totem and all that stuff. And the stars in the skies and that...Astronomy. Aboriginal astronomy and that stuff you know?...Yeah, yeah. I didn't*

know either. (Eddie)

Significantly, Eddie felt this learning was of crucial importance to him, connecting it with a sense of self-knowledge and belonging, helping him to identify his place in the world beyond white settler history. Eddie said he could not wait to tell his daughter about it *'so she knows who she is.'*

Stephen's pedagogical decision to neither control curriculum content nor method of research allowed each learner, regardless of ethnicity, to undertake projects of their own interest. For Indigenous learners, this afforded them a rare opportunity to research aspects of their own culture which led to a more developed sense of cultural identity and belonging:

> *...well we've got all education her ...if that made, um...what is it compulsory for every young Aboriginal person who come in here to come to education and be taught, but they've got to learn where they come from first, while they're here. If they don't know where they come from... take your time and find out where they are, where their people come from and they wouldn't be here. (Terence)*

Terence suggests that the kind of cultural knowledge that he has found through his engagement with basic skills education at the ILC, including culturally relevant content, is a protective factor against crime. Learning about one's own culture and the cultures of others in prison seemed to be perceived by the Indigenous learners as both criminologically preventative and also protective, supportive of future desistance. The implication was that a lack of knowledge about culture could be criminogenic.

Curriculum content was very important in supporting intercultural understanding. Despite the requirement of the Foundation Skills training package being predominantly vocational, teachers sometimes taught non-vocational subjects or themes they felt allowed them more creativity and opportunity for engagement with their students. For example, Jane had a high number of Indigenous learners in her class so decided to teach them about Aboriginal soldiers and fighter pilots in the

world wars. This had a significant, profound impact on the learners in her class, particularly on Terence, whose case study is presented at the end of this chapter. Eddie, another Indigenous learner, also spoke of the importance of learning about Australian history and also Chinese language and culture from a classmate. He told me with pride about learning more about his classmate's Chinese culture:

> *I like Australian history. I like to learn more about Australian history and I like other stuff too, like Chinese, there's a couple of Chinese fellas in there too I like, and I'm good mates with one of em and he tells me a lot…Yeah.* (Eddie)

Learning about one's own and other cultures created both a sense of belonging, and the security of identity associated with that, and intercultural understanding seemed to create the sense of safety in the ILC as it broke down barriers between groups that would usually not mingle in the general prison population outside the ILC.

Terence felt learning about self and culture was so important that he suggested culturally relevant education should be compulsory for Indigenous prisoners, drawing a clear link between one's own understanding of/belonging to a culture and the ability to desist from crime:

> *I been coming to the jail since 1970s and I'd see all the other fellas coming in, and I'd be thinking about it all and that? I'd be thinking, well we've got all education here, now if that made, if that made um...what is it compulsory for every young Aboriginal person who come in here to come to education and be taught, but they've got to learn where they come from first, while they're here. If they don't know where they come from...it doesn't work. (Terence)*

Terence saw the potential for prison education to help his Indigenous brothers and sisters learn about their own culture and thus better understand themselves and their place in the world. He felt this was so important for his people that it should be compulsory and this was echoed by others. If a sense of belonging and civic engagement are important within the process of desistance, then it seems likely

intercultural understanding, which includes understanding one's own place in relation to others and the development of empathy and compassion for others, is highly supportive of that process, especially if 'kinship' has high cultural value (Sullivan, 2013). Significantly, in his final interview, Terence said:

> *I would get all Aboriginal people and allow their culture. That's the first thing I would do here is have all the young people learning about their culture first then learning about the rest of the world...Yeah, they're belonging, where they're from. Knowing from here to there what culture they're from, what tribe they're from. Once they know all that, they'll connect. People connect, things will connect. (Terence)*

Cultural knowledge helped Terence feel connected rather than isolated and understand the interrelatedness of people and things to each other. It struck me as ironic that he, and other Indigenous learners who were discovering their own culture, found a strengthened their sense of connection with their culture while being physically separated from it.

5.3.3 Belonging to country

As an Indigenous man, Terence longed to be able to reconnect with Country and find love once he had *'jumped through the hoop'"* of parole:

> *Well, see a sunset. Get there, live the sunset days eh?...Kick back, get a nice lady and sit back with her and...just enjoy the rest of my life...I'd like to move...Get my little feet on...do my little walkabout, do my driving bash and see what I can do for [my family], wherever I can. After I get my little freedom, in my little walkabout. (Terence)*

Interestingly, Terence talked about the burden of parole requirements on release, making walkabout unlikely in his immediate future. While resigned to it, he felt parole would adversely affect his ability to connect with his country and limit the time he was likely to have left as an Indigenous, sixty-year-old diabetic man:

Like I have to fit some of that in, to what I want to do. I know I've got a lot of things to do when I get out and I've got no control over that with the parole board and all of that. I'm accepting all of that. So you know I've got to find out what they're going to do with me and what they expect of me, so they'll push for things when that time comes. I'd like to do a lot of things, but I can't do that until these mongrels tell me where I'm at, what I'm doing...But um...by the time I've finished then, I won't have much time left to go and do what I want to do, you know? (Terence)

Indigenous learners responded strongly to both the learning space and program, despite the learning program not being specifically for Indigenous learners and having no Indigenous content. When teachers decided to include Indigenous content in whole-class activities or provide an opportunity for learners to have the opportunity to pursue their own research projects, Indigenous learners seemed to have profound learning moments that connected them with community and country. Terence described being in the ILC like *'being in the bush. Being one with that. It's one with this,'* alluding to a similar kind of spiritual relationship with the ILC as he had with the land. He used the metaphor of being 'on Country' for being in learning, which implied a strong sense of belonging in the learning space and that learning, like the land, can be a nurturing force (Carnes, 2014).

5.4 Becoming

As learners, we are in a state of becoming — for better or worse. Learning need not necessarily be about getting 'better' at something. We can also learn bad habits, how to be a better criminal or learn what we can get away with. Within the context of capabilities-based learning, it is clear that learning is considered a state of becoming which enhances a person. While the intention of a learning program may be to enhance the learners, practice and pedagogy may, consciously or otherwise, cause quite different outcomes. Within the ILC, learners were clear they had a sense of moving forward and were developing.

As outlined in Chapter Two, the Australian Curriculum (2010) takes a capabilities approach to education. This is consistent with the UN Special Rapporteur's report on the Right to Education, within which Barry (2019) 'proposes an education framework (known in English as the "ABCDE framework" for its goals of acceptance, belonging, critical thinking, diversity and empathy).' I have also traced the importance within the desistance process of human capacity and capabilities including social, emotional, academic and vocational (Maruna & LeBel, 2003; Maguire & Raynor, 2006; Cleere, 2015; Carrigan, 2014; Pike, 2014; Bennalick, 2018; Garner, 2017.)

CSNSW has not, however, applied a capabilities approach to prisoner education, preferring instead the vocational Foundation Skills training package at Certificate I and II level. Its focus is on employability and equipping learners for custodial offending behaviour programs and Corrective Services Industries. As a result, the vast majority of teaching in the ILC was centered around functional, vocational literacy and numeracy, with about two hours per week allocated to ICT classes. The disconnect between the capabilities approach and the vocational approach has already been discussed and so it would be reasonable to have low expectations of the development of all seven General Capabilities. Surprisingly, however, despite the vocational approach to literacy, numeracy and ICT, and lack of overt attention to the development of the other four General Capabilities, evidence of the development of all seven General Capabilities was found in the ILC students who participated in the research.

5.4.1 Becoming capable

> *It has taught me I'm more knowledgeable now. So, walking in not knowledgeable and walking out knowledgeable, I've got to say the ILC is working. (Shane)*

5.4.1.1 *Basic skills: literacy and numeracy*

Learners were at a fairly basic literacy and numeracy levels and learning mechanics such as punctuation, spelling, sentence structure etc. and simple numeracy skills such as addition, subtraction and multiplication, and using a calculator. For example, Terence described learning about money in numeracy, saying, *'In maths I've learned, yeah, dollar signs and dollar things and having to do with the dollar.'* Barry described learning about a *'lot of different texts, mainly. I've been learning adverbs, vowels...all that.'* Terence described the ambition of making his work look 'proper', saying he wanted to:

> *...be able to write properly. I want to put the capital letters and the dots in the right place and exclamation marks and all that. You've just got to learn all that, yeah, so I'm, I'm getting things about that too, so I'm learning all that...I want it to look good on paper. (Terence)*

While most research around prison education has been centred on those engaged in post-secondary or tertiary learning in terms of desistance from crime, it is possible to see the impact of literacy and numeracy skills, even at a basic level, on the sense of self and agency. Charlie, for example, commented on how he found learning literacy empowering: *'Yeah, I can read it, I don't need anyone to show me.'* Darren also sought to improve his literacy skills to increase agency, saying, '*I want to be able to do the paperwork meself.'*

Charlie also attributed his improved literacy skills with a lack of boredom, which in turn kept him out of trouble: *'Yeah, cos it keeps the screws away from you too, you know...Cos with my reading I don't come back and get bored and that.'* Becoming an independent reader had a positive impact on his behaviour as he no longer got drawn into conflict or intrigue on the accommodation.

Some learners associated their basic skills acquisition with raised employability, finding the skills useful *'just in case one day I want to go and get a better job or do something better with my life, you know?'* (Barry), for *'filling out form'* on release from prison (Charlie) or for engaging in further learning in future (Matthew). Even those

who self-reported they were unsure about whether they were ready or able to desist, like Barry or Matthew, saw the acquisition of basic skills as something that would be useful in future, to a future non-offending, pro-social self.

Other learners, who declared they were already desisters, felt literacy was empowering and enabling, developing their capacity for further learning:

> *A lot of words have been coming out of my head and my heart that I didn't know were there. And coming out of my mouth. Yeah. Learning new words and the meanings of them and that. It's been really good, eh? (George)*

Aiden talked about basic skills learning in a way that opened up further opportunities because he developed a sense of self-efficacy, a confidence to learn new things.

> *It's just once I've learned these things like problem-solving and just basic maths even, it gives you more confidence to do...why can't I do other things, you know? Like, it opens doors up, you know? (Aiden)*

The impact on basic numeracy acquisition and problem-solving seemed to indicate the development of a 'growth mindset' (Dweck, 2000) which, given it does not conceive of capacity (such as IQ) of capabilities to be fixed entities, is consistent with a belief that one might not be competent *yet*, with continued application, will one day achieve mastery. While the model may be rooted in neuroscience, its importance to learning and desistance is that it considers learning as a process. As the brain builds new neural pathways, changeability is possible which can, in turn, support the desistance process. Interestingly, Charlie commented on his literacy learning saying, *'I'm slowly getting the hang of it now and that. And it's sort of like I grew some more brain cells and that, in my brains.'*

Literacy, even at the most basic level was also considered to be a powerful tool, in terms of connecting with family (as in 5.3.1) or in being able to express one's self in the mode of the dominant discourse, without necessarily assimilating the values of dominant ideology. This was especially true of Terence and is explored in detail in his

case study below at 5.5.1 as he moved from learning to cross the Ts and dot the Is to thinking about the way the world works, its interrelatedness and things he would change.

Importantly, not all learners appeared to be primarily interested in 'employability'. For example, James and Terence would be past retirement age upon release. Furthermore, while the Indigenous learners were keen to learn basic skills that would allow them to participate in society, some were clear that they did not want to assimilate into society and there was a sense of quiet resistance to the ways of 'whitefellas' focused on employment above family and community. Their goal on release was not employability but to reconnect with family and Country, after which they would be in a position to make decisions about their employment future. Repeatedly, Indigenous learners in the ILC articulated their desired 'future self' as a wise guide and teacher within their family and community upon release who would be able to pass on cultural knowledge, using the language of 'whitefellas' to educate and, therefore, protect their culture. Basic skills acquisition was valued for its power for social inclusion rather than economic inclusion (although the two are interrelated). Literacy and numeracy were considered *'a gift'* to pass down to future generations:

> *I want to stay with them, at the table with [my children] just reading, sort of like having a school at home... (Charlie)*

As learners' literacy developed and they were able to do more sustained writing, autobiography provided agency in the sense of self-authorship. George identified the importance of telling one's own story, identifying that the process of doing so had been therapeutic, helping him deal with the death of his baby girl, but also in terms of developing self-awareness that fostered more pro-social choices, indicating progression towards desistance:

> *I done a written assessment on my life and how my life's going and saying 'this is how it's going at the moment...Prior to going to jail and how it is now,' and I did a written assessment about it. That was a big eye opener*

for me about where I went wrong outside, to ending up in here and make myself a better person, you know?...Yeah, I had to write it down, then look at it and [remember] what happened back then until right now... Yeah. There were bits I was trying to block out of my life, but I had to go back there. There were a lot of issues, and a lot of sadness and grief for me, but it was good, like, going over it again. There's always going to be sadness and grief in your life. I lost a little girl back in 2007. She was four months premie. I had to bury her. That's not going to go away. I don't think I could go back to that life. She wouldn't want me to, because I started drinking because of her and she wouldn't want me going downhill and so... So that written assessment, it was a big eye opener for me. I wouldn't have got around to doing it unless I did come to the ILC. I would still be in upholstery now, probably still working and bottling it all up and not letting it out.
(George)

5.4.1.2 *ICT*

Most learners appreciated ICT classes, especially the older learners who realised their lack of ICT skills and understood their lack ICT skills could affect the success of their reintegration into society. Terence commented '*We gotta learn all this computer wise things now, you've got to learn all that*' and James identified his skills gap, lamenting they needed more computer time to get up to speed and expressing a sense of being left behind technologically:

Well one thing that's really come through there is that we don't get enough computer time...and something like that for someone who is not computer literate is vital. I mean the one thing where...the one avenue that could help me for when I get out is to learn operating a computer which is not part of my generation. (James)

Learners understood that ICT could help them 'get a job' in terms of being able to search the internet and complete job applications/resumes online, but understood the wider importance of ICT skills in terms of being able to successfully navigate life in

the 21st century. Shane took enormous pride in the fact he was developing a basic game in ICT:

> *And today I designed me own game on the computer...Well, you put objects and obstacles on your screen and then you move your mouse and you've got to jump on the square things and move around. You've got to move your mouse to make it do that...Yeah, I'm about halfway through the game. (Shane)*

In particular, learners valued the internet connection afforded by the smartboards in every classroom as a way of staying current with the outside world by watching the news, being able to easily research information/topics of particular interest, or *'learning from the best of the best' (Matthew)* via YouTube clips of experts with particular skill sets of interest:

> *Cos you do a...like...we watch the news in the morning and that, and you can see what's going on in the outside world? Cos we've got Google and that, you know we can Google stuff, and sometimes we'll watch dance clips and just heaps of stuff, like geography things. (Neil)*

While the operation of the internet was teacher-only, the repeated and constant modelling of using search engines and demonstration of the capacity of the internet as a learning and communication tool was especially powerful, not just the skills the learners were acquiring but because of the feeling of connectedness with society. It provided a kind of portal to the outside world.

5.4.1.3 *Critical & Creative Thinking*

There was strong evidence of increased capabilities in critical and creative thinking. Over the course of six months, the data showed that, during interviews, the learners' focus shifted away from the mechanics of literacy and numeracy to be concerned with wider questions about how and why things work in society or the universe. Various metaphors were used to describe the learners' experience of a widening

perspective from ‘opening up’ to ‘unfolding’ and curriculum content was an important influence. Learners responded more to matters affecting the world (nature, politics, history) than they did to overt literacy and numeracy classes, although they understood the necessity of the latter. Critical thinking is essential for being able to understand, analyse, question and resist the status quo and there was clear evidence that critical thinking was being developed:

> *I’m learning...what have we got...we’re doing a...climate change thing about the pros and cons. We watched two videos, one telling us how bad we’re treating the earth but then we watched another one saying that’s bullshit...So then we’ve got to write down differences and things like that and how media works in our lives and society. (Steve)*

Terence first talked about learning how to use full stops but in subsequent visits talked much more about the mysteries of space, politics and the natural world. Charlie’s basic literacy skills were very low and, on entry to the ILC he had difficulty staying in the classroom, needing to go ‘walkabout’ every so often outside the class to try to focus. Within six months of his learning program, Charlie had been thinking about my research and asked:

> *You know when you stopped and listen to everything the boys have to say about jail, I’m just asking ya, did you think that they institutionalise or it doesn’t...the boys, when they have to put a mask on and that? (Charlie)*

His question was important and showed clear, deep critical thought about institutionalisation, offender identity and whether learning made a difference. James also wondered about my research and whether it would influence change:

> *Yeah. Does it end with your thesis or can you utilise it towards um...the powers that be that run things...I mean, do they* ***want*** *you to? (James, emphasis his)*

Engagement in the research project seemed to develop, in some participants, an interest in the purpose of prison education and why it might matter.

5.4.1.4 *Personal & Social Capabilities*

It was recognised that learning is much broader than just literacy and numeracy outcomes. In addition to the data presented already in the findings, an amended Social and Emotional Learning Scale (Appendix 8.11.3) was used to gauge learning in the domains of self-management, self-efficacy, growth mindset and social awareness of the learners. While the results cannot be considered statistically significant when n=13, and thus are not reported here, there were indications of growth across the small group in each of the domains. A brief analysis is given in Appendix 8.12, which indicates the scale may be a useful tool in future for a quantitative study specifically on the development of social and emotional learning within prisons. This scale may provide a way of measuring the process of development rather than just the achievement of learning performance criteria. This is a particularly interesting prospect which could begin to capture data other than literacy and numeracy outcomes on a more substantial scale, as it is used in schools in California, allowing us to better understand the role engagement in learning has on the development of personal and social capabilities that are so important for the process of desistance from crime.

Learners also reported increases in confidence in their abilities, knowledge and skills. For example, Shane felt he had really developed his social skills, which has left him feeling changed:

> *I just feel it. I couldn't sit here and talk like this before I started at the ILC ...Naaaaaaaah. If someone came into my cell, I'd tell them to get out. I pretty much wanted to be on my own. (Shane)*

Within four months, Shane had shifted from being quite antisocial to enjoying the sense of collegiality in the ILC, saying *'Yeah...I've got to admit it's good hanging out with the boys.'*

5.4.1.5 *Ethical Understanding*

There were also indicators that some learners were developing their ethical understandings. For example, when asked if being in the ILC had changed the way he thought about crime, George commented:

> *Yeah. It's changed the way I think about it…I used to support my family through dirty money and that. I worked as well, but I had two lives, sort of thing. I did armed robberies as well, it was greediness but now, like, the ILC is teaching me the real way of life, not to thieve people and take their money and spend it on your own family. You've got to earn your own money. The ILC has been a big opener for me and a big life-changer...I'm loving it. (George)*

However, there was limited talk about ethical issues or capabilities within the ILC - they were not mentioned in the interviews nor did they show themselves, particularly, in other data to the extent that it warrants special attention. The interview questions prompted learners to identify positive progress they had made in their learning. It could be that other learners did not experience shifts in ethical understanding, or it could be that they had already developed this capability. Indeed, Brett, for example, articulated he had spent all of his long prison sentence as a desister, having experienced a Damascene moment on his first day as a sentenced prisoner. It could also be that the ILC space and culture provide a place in which learners can practice desistance, in which case opportunities for the development of Ethical Understanding are less likely to arise. However, George's experience that 'the ILC is teaching [him] the real way of life' is interesting given there was no attempt to address offending attitudes or behaviour by teaching staff. Nor did the teachers, despite the vocationally focused curriculum, explicitly teach employment or employment skills. George's perception about legitimate versus 'dirty money' and the value of honest work is, perhaps, another example of learning in the ILC experienced as an immersion in a pro-social culture that 'grows on you' over time. George's experience of the development of Ethical Understanding indicates the capability could strongly support desistance. As such, it warrants further research.

5.4.1.6 *Intercultural Understanding*

Learners appeared to experience a developing understanding of their own and other cultures within the ILC. Divisions along racial/cultural lines that existed in the wider prison were suspended in the ILC, with learners mixing and learning together in a way that enabled intercultural understandings to develop, as outlined in 5.2.3 above. The development of understanding of their own culture was of enormous significance to Indigenous learners and is detailed in 5.3 above, where learning supported a sense of belonging and interrelatedness. There was strong evidence, outlined in Terence's case study at 5.5.1 below, to suggest that interpersonal understanding developed compassion and empathy. Given this capability is explored in more detail elsewhere in this chapter, it is not repeated here.

5.4.2 Becoming a desister, becoming myself

5.4.2.1 *Agency*

A key factor for desistance is the development of a sense of agency enabling a sense of choice and empowerment about one's own situation (Sampson & Laub, 2005; Giordano et al, 2002; Soyer, 2013; McNeill, 2006 & 2012). Prisoners are often portrayed as unagentic, because of the 'deprivation of autonomy' (Liebling & Maruna, 2005) they experience. Undoubtedly, choice is restricted for prisoners, but they are not wholly unagentic. For example, while the prison authorities may structure part of a prisoner's day in 'purposeful activity', there are a lot of hours in which prisoners must decide how to structure their time. Prisoners may choose what items to purchase in 'buy ups' or whether to engage in criminal activity within the prison or not. In 5.4.1.1, Charlie described avoiding causing trouble on his accommodation wing as an outcome of learning to read, linking the choice to read with a form of desistance.

Liebling & Maruna (2005: 18) identify that as a result of perceiving prisoners as powerless, and that most desistance progress is made 'outside of the criminal justice system' (citing Farrall: 1995, 96), 'prison effects researchers have largely ignored the growing body of research on desistance from crime.' Consequently, there has been little focus on the exercise of agency by prisoners or how this may support their progression towards desistance. Within the ILC, however, learners presented as consciously agentic, sometimes in direct relation to desistance. For example, at interview, many learners described their sense of agency, particularly within the development of a non-offending self. Shane stated,

> *I've become a different person, I've influenced myself. I've taken steps and I've looked back and thought, "Wow," and stuff.*
> *(Shane)*

Shane linked the ongoing development of a more pro-social self to his experience of learning in the ILC and the feeling of having 'options':

> *See, cos I'm still learning...I'm still discovering new ground...cos I wasn't thinking this way when I first came in. I was a different bloke. And now I'm looking at all these options and I'm thinking oh yeah I can do this, that and the other...*
> *(Shane)*

However, the lack of agency was very much felt by some. Brett explained that for him, choosing to come to education had been a very real choice to change his life away from crime, but he also expressed frustration that within the prison system he did not get any further opportunities to prove he was a genuine desister:

> *It's real, you're in it. Time to make a choice. You can either turn left, go and get on the methadone, go and get on the drug drops and everything else, you know, it's all about the hustle and get into trouble or um...or you can go this road. You can educate yourself, you can train and you know? ...So you're just building this tool box up and you can't use any of the tools yet. (Brett)*

Engaging in education can, therefore, be seen as an agentic act. Brett's frustration was centred on his inability to exercise pro-social agency elsewhere in the prison.

5.4.2.2 *Non-offending identity*

One of the recurring themes in much desistance literature is around the offender identity which is often 'knifed off' by a successful desister as they build a new non-offending identity (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Indeed, it has been my experience that prisons (staff, programs and environment) often project the offender identity onto those who are incarcerated, a sticky label that is almost impossible to remove (Uggen & Blahnik, 2016). As a result, I assumed, based on much of the desistance literature, that education in prisons might create a space in which learners could try on an alternative 'student' identity that would help them forge the 'imagined future self' identified as common in those who successfully desist from crime.

The identity of the prisoner is understood by the learners to be 'criminal' and is characterised by 'macho' aggression, or hypermasculinity (Jewkes, 2005; Morse, 2017, Morey & Crewe, 2018).

It seemed that some learners were in fact, trying on the 'student' identity for size, as an alternative to a criminal identity and much preferred it. Later in the interview, Shane said '*I think I'm just trying to stay away from who I was when I came in*,' suggesting a 'feared self' such as described by Paternoster & Bushway (2008). He drew a clear distinction between his 'criminal' self (which he also described as an unwell self) and his current self, still a prisoner but stating '*I've become a different person...I like the person I am now.*' Interestingly, Brett also felt the same way, indicating he had become a desister some time ago, when first handed his 20-year sentence:

> *Yeah, well I've grown out of that comfort zone...cos that was...like all the tattoos, I don't want them on me any more. That was...That was a different person...I've grown out of them because I've had 'em so long...I*

> *don't even swear any more. I've cut swear words out of my vocabulary. I've made a conscious effort to grow up and mature, you know?...They haven't had a hand in it. It's been all me, not them. (Brett)*

However, other learners expressed things rather differently, describing learning as a process in which they become more *fully* themselves rather than developing an alternative or 'other' self. For the majority of ILC learners, it was a sense of being able to be more authentically self in that learning space, being *'able to be who I really am'* rather than trying on an alternative identity. Participants described feeling they were able to be vulnerable within the ILC and so were more open to others, dropping the 'mask' they felt was necessary outside the ILC.

Being in the learning space seems to enable learners to 'be themselves' more authentically than they can be in other prison accommodation, work or program/treatment spaces. This 'authentic self' is a pro-social, decent and engaged human being with a sense of responsibility and integrity. This was in stark contrast to the accommodation units, where learners felt they had to put on a tough, macho mask in order to fit in or even survive:

> *Yeah, race gangs and that. But it was like we said yesterday, we all leave it at the gate, race gangs and stuff, when we come to education. We just want to get our education done and all that gangster shit, all that gang stuff we leave it behind at the gate, and then when we leave we put it on again, like that mask...We put it on again...Nah, it always goes up… always...Yeah, we do that at the gate, yeah. As soon as we get out that gate [to the pod], yeah...Yeah, when we're in here we're students, but when we get back in there we're just crims again you know? (Charlie)*

Learners spoke of being their most 'real' within the learning space. James said he felt *'alienated'* on the pod but *'calm'* in the ILC because it allowed him to be himself. Other learners talked of having two distinct 'selves' — one who wore a 'macho mask' on the pod, while the other was the more relaxed, unguarded self in the ILC. While the ILC might be thought of as a liminal space where prisoners, taking up the role of

learner, are on the threshold between 'offender' and 'desister', learners seemed to feel more certain about themselves and their future, identifying as desisters within the prison. Despite showing that motivations to engage in education differed (see 5.2.5.2 above) and some learners did not describe themselves as desisters (see 5.5.2 below), some learners drew a distinction between learners and workers, claiming that learners were inherently less criminal. Shane referred to the 'crims' going to the prison workshops and identified those as coming to education as being different:

> *Yeah, you know like, just less than half of us come to the ILC and just over half go to work. They guys who go to work and the guys who come to the ILC are two different people. (Shane)*

He identified the ILC as a place which, perhaps, draws desisters in. This is echoed by Charlie who said '*Most of the crims are at work, not in education and that*', suggesting that those embedded in criminal culture do not come to education whereas those who do are 'different', somehow less 'criminal'. Given one of the major criticisms about prison education research is the bias of self-selection, Shane's claims seem to suggest it may be valid.[48]

While learners said they preferred their more pro-social identity as learner, they did not feel this was a temporary or alternative identity, but one that more closely reflected who they actually were. Rather than feel a 'new' person who was being 'transformed' or 'rehabilitated' James felt his sense of who he is was being *confirmed* in the ILC:

> *Well, things that you believe in like compassion, honesty, trust, I mean they are all* ***confirmed*** *in an environment like the ILC where you are helping people, where you can see the benefit of non-violence, where you*

[48] My counterargument to this is given in 3.6.5, where I suggest that the type of (usually quantitative) research skewed by selection bias presents only a 'pixillated', patchy picture and also the data presented here that some participants had no intention of engaging when enrolling in the ILC.

> *can see the benefit of not standing over somebody, not being a threat...You can see that it works, you know? (James, emphasis his)*

Terence also talked about being more like himself in the ILC, saying '*You can be yourself in here...you come in here and you have a different way of looking at things which is good.'*

Aiden provided an interesting comparison of his self outside prison, in jail and in the ILC. He pointed to the normal opportunities in the community to show people who he was, saying '*Outside, I'm Aiden. This is my job, where I like going...I can give you a picture of who I am*' which he contrasted with being perceived as '*just a crim*' in jail. He went on to comment that in the ILC, he felt '*I'm the me on the outside*' and that when he is released he will be able to '*show them the real Aiden, the best Aiden...I can just show them. I can just be myself*.' The implication is that imprisonment stifles the 'real' self and requires the development of a mask of criminality and machismo strength to survive.

The findings suggest that while a couple of learners felt that they were 'new' men, most learners felt less like they were choosing between their old, 'criminal', 'corrupt' self and a new, 'reformed' or 'transformed' person and more like they were *becoming/being* their 'real' self. The rhetoric was about growth and development, not transformation into someone else/new. In terms of agency (essential for successful desistance), this is an important difference. The learners felt that progress or changes they experienced were not enforced by an external agency, and therefore they did not feel they were being rehabilitated (Brett even commented '*I won't let them rehabilitate me*'). Rather, they felt they had a freedom to become more like themselves within the learning space. Darren described a core sense of self remaining untouched by the development of his basic literacy skills, saying he was '*not changed, just...still the same person but just a bit of me literacy and that has gotten a lot better*.'

Charlie, who had spent much of his life in prisons, also felt that his basic skills learning in the ILC was somehow making a positive difference to him in a way other prison programs had not:

> *Ah...I just, I just feel confident about myself...cos...I wanna learn something. I know I know half of, but I don't know the rest and I do feel good about it when I do come here through the day every day and that, just learning a bit more what I want to do...Yeah, it makes me feel good about that...I feel comfortable in myself too, you know?...Yeah, just knowing that I'm learning something, you know, different every day and that and I'm getting...this is the first time I've sat down in a long time you know in a classroom and learning something instead of getting up and walking away. That's how...I feel good knowing what I know and the bit I'm learning there. (Charlie)*

5.4.2.3 *Hope for the future*

A sense of hope for the future, including work and learning opportunities has also been identified as characteristic of successful desisters (Farrall & Calverley, 2006: Soyer, 2013). Many ILC learners articulated their hopes for the future. Shane described one of the impacts being in the ILC had had on him:

> *I'd have to say thoughts on the future. Yeah, I know...I can see a light at the end of the tunnel where the light wasn't so bright back then. (Shane)*

Future orientation was evidenced. Some of the learners talked about getting a job upon their release from prison while others spoke about continuing their learning in the community, progressing through the Certificate levels. Others spoke of becoming a father for the first time or a better father/grandfather than they were before.

There were two important exceptions of learners who did not appear to have firm future aspirations or were in doubt they could achieve their future goals, Matthew

and Barry. Matthew's story is more complex and told below at 5.5.2. Barry, however, expressed a desire to desist, saying he wanted to *'get out and do different things...do something better...to prove to everyone',* especially his mother, that he was not a criminal. He was not hopeful of achieving this outcome on the basis of his past history of reoffending:

> *Yeah, like when I first come to jail, I still had dreams. Like, I always wanted to be a chef, but then after the second and third time coming to jail, my dreams just really got out the window...Yep. You really just give it up...I guess that's why I'm here at the ILC, to be smarter. It might help me. (Barry)*

When asked if he had replaced his original plans of being a chef with any other plans for the future, Barry replied:

> *Nah...Yeah, well, it's hard in jail...like you think you're going to do this when you get out, and do that. So you say it all, you think it all in your head over and over again and you get out and nothing's changed.* ***Nothing.*** *And it just goes back gown the same track because you fall into the same group of friends.*
> *(Barry)*

At his second interview, Barry was asked what the future might hold for him, he responded *'I wouldn't have a clue. I don't really know.'* At that point, Barry had been excluded from the ILC, his pathway to learning had been closed to him due to disciplinary reasons and he did not seem hopeful for his future.

I interviewed both Barry and Matthew on the accommodation unit they had been sent to after their exclusion to the ILC. Both were desperate to return to the ILC to continue their learning, but their exclusion was permanent. Even though both identified more with a criminal lifestyle, both had been in the ILC only a short time and both had shown incremental shifts towards desistance: Barry had expressed the desire to desist and Matthew had begun to think about options for his future. Given the assertion by many others that the pro-social culture of the ILC 'washes off on you'

over time, this raises the question about whether permanent exclusion as a sanction for a prison offence[49] is likely to hinder or support further progress towards desistance. Barry's regret was tangible as he said:

> *I just wanted to learn more things over there, just to know a little bit more ...Yeah. It helped me. I dunno I just wanted to learn over there. I just wanted to do it so when I get out it would make it easier. (Barry)*

Learning in the ILC was seen as a way of exercising agency in a pro-social way, with a hopeful future orientation. The exclusion of learners from the opportunity because they had (re)offended was felt as a profound loss of hope and opportunity to lead a crime-free life.

5.5 Case Studies

These case studies are presented in a less traditional format, drawing from portraiture which acknowledges the researcher's role in the construction of meaning from the data and is considered well-suited to qualitative interdisciplinary study (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005; Vallance, 1998; English,2000; Copes, Jones & Hendricks, 2015).

While portraiture aims to present the participant as a 'whole' person, the case studies below cannot fully delineate the participants, nor would I want to try to. For these men whose choices, power and even identity (often projected onto them) are often described within deficits-based rhetoric, my aim is to draw upon portraiture to show their strengths, goodness and potential, and to show how these participants have contributed to my understanding of how engaging in prison education might relate to

[49] It must be noted that the offence committed by Barry and Shane breached security and as such the punishment of exclusion was in accordance with prison rules. Having said that, given the breach did not involve an act of violence, it could be argued that exclusion from education for those who may be in the earliest stage of desistance (just 'thinking about it') may pose more of a risk to successful reintegration than allowing them to continue learning at the ILC.

desistance from crime. Their stories of the impact of their learning in the ILC and changes experienced over time are interesting and of direct relevance to the inquiry.

Terence's story provides an interesting case study exploring the relationship between learning and desistance from crime because he demonstrates the impact of basic skills acquisition on a sense of agency (Sampson & Laub, 2005; Giordano et al, 2002; Soyer, 2013; McNeill, 2006 & 2012) and social/political power. His basic skills learning led to a moment of profound intercultural understanding and consequent self-reflection that changed his frames of reference about 'whitefellas' and seemed to ameliorate years of hurt and hatred as a result of the suffering inflicted on him as part of the Stolen Generation. During three interviews over six months, the development of Terence's critical thinking as a result of his engagement in learning was apparent.

Matthew's story is important in terms of exploring his experience of learning as a someone entrenched in a criminal lifestyle with no initial desire to seek an alternative. Matthew had only been in the ILC for four weeks when I first interviewed him and did not express any interest in desistance. This resistance is important in terms of counter-arguing self-selection bias but also provides an opportunity to explore the impact of learning on those who have no intention of desisting.

Terence and Matthew are from very differently cultural backgrounds and appear to be situated at quite different points of the desistance spectrum. Their juxtaposition below helps us understand how learning can impact on the desire to and practice of desistance.

5.5.1 Terence: Seeing Beyond

Terence was a proud, striking Indigenous man. Whenever I saw him, he was wearing a headband in the colours of the Aboriginal flag to hold his longish white hair back from his face, remarkably unlined for his age, especially given his record of being in and out of prison. I would have thought a lifetime of incarceration might have left more of a

mark on his face and, perhaps, bitterness in his heart. Instead, he beamed at me every time we met and readily shared his thoughts and stories with a conviction that he was exactly where he needed to be at this moment in time.

Terence's education files and teachers indicated that he had been educated to Year 5 in primary school and had been enrolled in the ILC at for about six months. He had been assessed as having barely functional literacy and numeracy and was enrolled at a Certificate 1 level in Foundations Skills for Work and Training.

Terence and I met three times over almost six months in 2016 to talk about his learning and any positive changes he identified and associated with that. I looked forward to these meetings with Terence because he was so generous with his time, open and patient as I sometimes struggled to understand his big ideas. His graciousness was extraordinary as he helped me see things from his perspective, as much as I was capable of understanding being a white, middle aged, middle class woman. Terence never made me feel our differences were insurmountable, instead he searched for and found common ground.

Importantly, the purpose of our interviews was not to delve into the past or address Terence's 'offending behaviour'. However, in his first interview Terence volunteered he had been in and out of prison since the 1970s, and in a subsequent interview he mentioned that addiction to drugs and alcohol had brought him to prison multiple times from about the age of fifteen. It was hard to reconcile that history with the Terence I met, who presented as a peaceful, healthy man, albeit diabetic with a penchant for the chocolate biscuits and sugary coffee we shared during interviews.

Terence firmly believed he had the capacity to effect significant emotional, intellectual and physical change. During interviews, he frequently referred to the fact he had transformed himself physically while in prison by 'pumping iron' but now he was transforming himself intellectually.

Terence's interviews were rich with references to the themes that have already been explored in Chapter Five. For example, he outlined the development of his own empathy as a result of learning about WWII and the holocaust and described the

unfolding and expansion of his own world view as a widening of perspective that helped him see beyond his immediate situation to the future, giving him hope and a strong sense of connection with his culture and community. Terence's rapid and dramatic shift in thinking over the six months is a compelling example of the impact of learning in prison, even at the most basic level.

Operating at a functional level of basic skills, Terence described the acquisition of basic numeracy skills, specifically around money. He also described the acquisition of literacy skills as something fairly mechanistic, learning capital letters and punctuation:

> *I like to read. Ah, writing, writing is good. Writing...cos I like, I want to be able to write properly. I want to put the capital letters and the dots in the right place and exclamation marks and all that. You've just got to learn all that, yeah, so I'm, I'm getting things about that too, so I'm learning all that...Yeah, I want it to look good on paper. Little things like that...*
> *(Interview 1)*

Even from our first interview, Terence had a sense of being changed in some way by his involvement in education. He related the change directly to his acquisition of basic literacy skills. When I asked him to describe his last week in the ILC and to tell me something he'd learned, he identified the significance of acquiring literacy skills, specifically reading:

> *I could...ah...well I can't tell you what I...I've learned a lot of things about ...I've learned about reading...and I know how to do a few texts. I know which is which and everything else, and where things go in place and that, putting things in place and that. I know that now...Whereas I didn't know that before.*
> *(Interview 1)*

Terence was specific about the importance of the mechanics of literacy in order to help him write properly and linked this with a sense of forward progression and enlightenment — of knowing something now he didn't know before.

Significantly, Terence identified literacy skills acquisition with that ability to engage with the dominant discourse in society:

> *It is an important thing, yes. It's like I can communicate these things where I might not be able to talk it, might not be able to talk it, express myself that way, but I learn how to write and express myself that way a bit better...In that way, in that language. Hmmmm...In your way. In whitefellas' way.*
> *(Interview 1)*

Terence went on to describe the changes he was experiencing as being more than just literacy or numeracy skills acquisition. Terence seemed to associate acquiring literacy and oracy skills with being able to access and perhaps even have some power in society and related the skills as a tool, or catalyst for further, wider changes around perspective and world view:

> *...I see a lot of things differently...how I speak and how I look at things. I can see a lot of difference...Before I was all muscle and I was broad and that. I was all muscle and training every day. Before in the jail system. And I didn't come to education, only for painting and leisurely things, but now I just sort of like to learn. My brain does all the work and that, everything. I see...I see the difference, I know the difference in learning, writing anyway. Writing and writing right. How to write. Different ways of writing for different things...Different purposes and all that, it's, it's a big thing, yeah.*
> *(Interview 1)*

Twelve weeks later, during our second interview, I was struck by how Terence's thinking had continued to develop. Whereas his focus in our initial interview had been around the acquisition of adult basic skills with a view to supporting his grandchildren and being able to participate more fully in Australian society, in our second interview, he was significantly more concerned with politics and history, particularly the role Indigenous people had played within important events in Australian history and how

significant a knowledge of “whitefellas’” literacy skills was in terms of gaining political power. He spoke of Neville Bonner[50] and Nelson Mandela as good examples of cultural and political leaders who had learned how to use language of the dominant society in order to challenge and overcome oppressive ideology:

> *Yeah, things about Neville Bonner and things like that. From over there, all their little speeches. A lot of them have good little speeches...Yeah. Some of them, they never left, they never been to Jacky Jacky and he spoke the white man’s words too and he beat them in that way too, you know? He beat them at their own way, like Mandela.*
> *(Interview 2)*

For Terence, oracy was extremely important as he recognized its power to engage in the dominant discourse without assimilating its associated values and beliefs.

One of the most powerful moments in education Terence experienced was learning about Indigenous Australians and their contribution to Australia’s past. He described his reaction to a documentary his teacher had shown in class about Aboriginal fighter pilots in WWII:

> *Yeah. And a lot of other history things...About what happened all over the world...So it’s like the world is a cruel place and a lot of people went through a lot of massacres like we did in this country. They went through the same things all around the world, so we weren’t just the [only ones]... And they still are, yeah. So that sort of opened my eyes a lot better and my attitude toward other people has changed a bit too...They’ve been through genocide and everything like we did, and they had a raw deal, and we’re not the only ones. Yeah , we suffered a lot but they suffered as well...And I...yeah it just opened my eyes up a lot better and opened our minds up to it, to broader things, to wider things and looking at it in a*

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[50] Neville Bonner (1922-1977) was the first Aboriginal senator, representing Queensland in the Federal Parliament.

different way to what I used to. Yeah.
(Interview 2)

For Terence, learning about the holocaust for the first time had a profound effect. Until that moment, Terence had believed that Indigenous Australians were the only people who had suffered genocide. Learning that *'whitefellas suffered too'* in the past, even in different countries, appeared to catalyse a change in his thinking about race and the harms inflicted on his people. He explained the powerful impact of this knowledge, saying *'I don't hate whitefellas any more.'* For a member of the Stolen Generation who had experienced years of abuse, incarceration and exclusion, this shift was especially remarkable and moving.

Terence repeated the broadening impact learning had on his perspective on life and on the development of empathy with others, even for those traditionally seen as oppressors:

> *...well they were politicians, most of them. All our politicians make you angry. Well, they make me angry anyway...Yeah. For just for their sake, and a lot of things for progress, just in the name of progress you know? And a lot of people been through changes like I have. I've been through a lot of changes in life itself and I didn't understand all that. But now I understand a little bit more about the changes that have to be made for it. How they make things, how they do things. And if you don't know this, you'll never know it and you'll still be left back there, you know? You're left back...Yeah, yeah, you know, you see these things where I was back there and I didn't see these things before and I didn't understand it and I was a lot angrier. I was a lot angrier about things because I didn't understand them things.*
> *(Interview 2)*

Learning, particularly about history, helped Terence make sense of his own experience and began to defuse his anger. Terence repeatedly used the term 'seeing the bigger picture' to explain how he had found learning transformative and

described the position of other Indigenous prisoners he felt were still trapped by the lack of wider knowledge and understanding, being *'stuck down there'* — an image of restriction and being left behind.

> *Yeah, it feels good and it's sad...It's sad, it's still sad to see the young fellas still stuck down there. They're still not opening their eyes to look at the bigger picture, they're not looking at the bigger picture.*
> *(Interview 2)*

He described the respect he had gained of other Aboriginal men and alluded to a role as an Elder within his cultural group. Within that role, he saw it as his responsibility to help other Aboriginal men 'see the bigger picture':

> *Oh yeah, they've got that respect. Then they come later on and I tell them, 'You've got to look at the bigger picture, brothers. There's more to it.' Which there is. There is.*
> *(Interview 2)*

This 'Elder' role had been apparent even in his first interview, where he described an almost spiritual role he had with the younger 'lost souls' to whom he felt he needed to pass on some knowledge. It appeared as though in the ILC and even on the pod, Terence had taken on the role of mediator between Aboriginal cultures and 'whitefellas' culture, facilitated by his acquisition of basic skills:

> *I see it by the crims, I see it with the younger fellas. I believe they're lost souls and they need to know a few things in here. And they get it from me ... No, but, yeah they...they look forward to the yarning now and again and I do it with them and I yarn in their way...In their way, yeah.*
> *(Interview 1)*

Terence recognised different, culturally appropriate ways of communicating and felt he could reach the younger Indigenous men in prison, by *'yarning ... [i]n their way'*. Learning basic skills allowed him to avoid exclusion from one culture and provided the

ability to access both cultures. Oracy was seen as essential to achieving access to and successful transition between both cultures.

In his second interview, Terence described the way he led younger Indigenous learners in the ILC by modelling good learning strategies in class, such as asking question, stating and how important it was for him to guide younger learners to become curious about the wider world around them.

> *Yeah, I've got that, I've got that vibe yeah. I look at that young brother of mine there and he's thinking a little bit along my lines a bit, he's thinking the same way a little bit, but not much, but it's a start. It's something he never did before. But it's a good thing, it's a good little thing. He never thought that way before. So he's coming around that way and listening a bit more and asking questions a bit more which is a good thing. Yeah I like it that way.*
> *(Interview 2)*

The concept of sharing knowledge and insight with others in order to empower and enable them was incredibly important to Terence.

Terence was particularly interested in the news and mentioned *Behind the News* and other current affairs programs repeatedly as a means of finding out and thinking about what was happening in the news. Ironically, despite being physically separated from his family, community and country, Terence felt that learning about his culture gained almost incidentally at the Intensive Learning Centre[51] had helped him connect more fully with his own and other cultures around the world. He had found this so powerful he made a strong recommendation that all Indigenous peoples in prison be allowed to find where they come from and where they belong as he felt this was the

[51] The unit of work that had affected Terence so significantly was not specifically on Aboriginal culture, but a vocational literacy unit his teacher had tried to make more interesting and relevant by showing a documentary and teaching thematically around WWII.

key to feeling connected, developing a sense of belonging and finding peace (see Chapter 5.3.2).

At the end of our final interview we discussed how quickly his learning had escalated and he described his mind ‘opening up’ (a metaphor he used frequently throughout the interviews) and the sense of being part of a connected world:

> *Yeah, my mind just opened up. And grabbed it and I want to find out a lot of things. And I want to find out things, about where we’ve been. I want to find out the history of it. And also about other cultures and their history and I want to find out about how all this connects to one another and there’s a connection there. I’ll find it and there’s a connection there. And I’ll find it. And I’ll find the faults in it too. I’ll find the faults in it all. One day I might be able to write it down and give me opinion on things.*
> *(Interview 3)*

A couple of times during interview, Terence referred to the impact being a learner has had on him and that he felt continuing in education beyond Year Five at primary school would have been a significant preventative measure for his offending:

> *Being a student...oh...at this age and in a prison and in here, it makes a big difference. I...I...if I had learned this lot of things now, little things, little things like writing right and listening, things might have been different. It would have been different. I’m pretty sure. I think so. It would have been different. Yeah, it would have been...If I had learned...if I had stayed in school, if they’d let me be in school where I wanted to be, instead of taking that away, and that all went down the drain, and I had no interest in learning, you know what I mean? It wasn’t because of choice back then. But that’s then. But now it’s quite different. I have new opportunities to write. It plays a big part in my daily life.*
> *(Interview 2)*

Terence felt a strong sense of belonging and purpose as a learner and used the interesting simile of being a learner at the ILC like 'being in the bush', describing a sense of peace and 'being one with this [learning]'. Furthermore, he demonstrated a sense of empowerment gained along with his literacy skills, saying he had 'new opportunities to *write*'. The notion of authorship in his life was significant, as an incarcerated man who had spent much of his life behind bars. Authorship implies agency, which has been denied him in the past and was restricted in prison. As he learnt the mechanics of 'whitefellas' language, he drew on images and examples of empowerment and seemed to suggest such learning supported his role as Elder both within his family as grandfather and within the prison Indigenous community. Moreover, it brought him a sense of peace.

One of the most striking things about Terence was that he never imagined the kind of transformative learning he had engaged in was possible when he enrolled in the ILC. In fact, like most other participants, he had enrolled to 'escape' from the Corrective Services Industries' workshops but found his motivation to engage in his learning increased over time.

Like other participants, Terence found a sense of personal well-being in the learning space, which had been designed along humane and therapeutic principles for 21st-century learning (McGregor, 2011). While he was clearly future oriented, Terence's focus was not on getting a job upon release but on passing on his knowledge and learning to his family and community, to help others become 'unstuck' and be able to move forward. Terence frequently referred to the future and forward momentum and, like other participants, found that experience in the workshops would not raise employability at all, rather it had a negative effect on his sense of well-being. He described the reason he felt better as a full-time student was because it had a direct bearing on his future:

> *Cos um...4 months off is going to learn me to do something when I get out and use it in the future, whereas before I didn't think along them lines.*
> *(Interview 1)*

As mentioned above, Terence saw his future in terms of carrying knowledge and learning back to his family and community, not in terms of economic interest in getting a job. For Terence, the primary purpose of prison education was not to raise employability but to guide his family and community.

Terence never intended to come to education long-term. He thought he'd just pause in the ILC a while to gather himself before going back into the workshops. This never happened. Despite himself, he got 'hooked' on learning and wanted to keep going, describing how he wanted to finish Certificate I, progress straight away to Certificate II and go on to Certificate III if it was offered. We discussed the possibility of him going to university one day and co-presenting at a conference, which he felt would require him to wear a suit. He was somewhat disappointed to learn that university lecturers don't often wear suits these days. He seemed to have become a lifelong learner and wanted to '*keep going. Cert III. Push it, push it' (interview 3).*

At no point was offending part of Terence's narrative about his present or future self. Perhaps this might be because the offending self was being 'knifed off' from narrative of self (Maruna & Roy, 2007). However, Terence's Identity Map, completed over six months, did not show any reference to a perception of himself as offender, which begs the question whether he had in fact identified as an 'offender' at any time. While he was clear that he had committed offences, he did not seem to have taken on the role of 'offender'. He used identifiers for himself that were much more about his self in relation to others, indicating his strong sense of family/community and the importance of connectedness.

I realised I had assumed that participants would identify as 'offenders' because they are so relentlessly framed as such by the institution and society. I had assumed that being engaged in formal, full-time learning in prison could help give Terence an alternative, pro-social identity. It became clear while interviewing Terence that he had a much broader sense of himself than that. He did not define himself as an offender, but as a grandfather and Elder. He saw his identity in terms of how he was connected to others and be able to provide some guidance in the lives of the younger generation:

> *I’m becoming. I will become the favourite grandfather that all the kids want. Not the father, but the grandfather. My future? That’s all I want, to be all they want. That’s who I’ll become. And that’s my goal.*
> *(Interview 3)*

Terence saw himself as a work in progress and that the work he was doing in gaining knowledge, skills and experience in the ILC was valuable for his own self-development, but also and importantly for his grandchildren, other Aboriginal prisoners and his community. I had assumed that prisoners wanted to get out and get a job. While this was generally articulated by non-Aboriginal participants, all Aboriginal participants had a clear priority of returning to family and home community to make a positive difference to the younger generations by passing on knowledge gained. Terence saw his ‘job’ as being a guide and to pass on his knowledge and learning to others. He saw his role as grandparent being more valuable than paid employment and critical to preventing offending among the younger generations. He also saw formal education as being an essential part of this preventative process:

> *And I want to be there for that. For that reason. It’s to pass...so I know it’s going to be passed on. And it’s going to be great. And I’m going to make sure he’ll go to school and everything else. It’s a good thing. A good feeling.*
> *(Interview 3)*

Terence’s interviews were characterised by a sense of hope for the future and a clear plan to give back to his family and community. He was not alone. Other participants, particularly the Indigenous learners, expressed similar hopes and desire to ‘make good’ (Maruna, 2000), however the non-Indigenous learners tended to understand ‘making good’ as making more of an economic contribution to their families and society in general.

Interestingly, Terence did not feel he would be able to start to implement the plans in earnest until he had satisfied probation requirements. While he accepted them, he

saw his prison sentence and eventual community supervision as barriers to making a positive difference in his community:

In our third and final interview, just less than six months after our initial interview, Terence gave this piece of advice for those in charge of prison education, drawing on the impact that learning about the role Aboriginal fighter pilots had played in WWII had had on his own learning and world view:

> *I would get all Aboriginal people and allow their culture. That's the first thing I would do here is have all the young people learning about their culture first then learning about the rest of the world. Yeah, they're belonging, where they're from. Knowing from here to there what culture they're from, what tribe they're from. Once they know all that, they'll connect. People connect, things will connect.*
> *(Interview 3)*

Terence described his own mind, having been opened by engaging in education and learning about his own culture, as 'going beyond'. In sharing his insights during our interviews, he made me think beyond traditional explanations about why prison education 'works' to reduce reoffending and understand that it can be about far more than 'getting a job'. He helped me begin to understand the importance of prison 'school' as a deeply humanising space embodying principles of normalisation (Minke, 2014; Rentzmann, 1996) within the prison context, and as well as the critical importance of including opportunities for all learners to explore their own culture and history. He helped me to begin to think about the importance of feeling 'connected' to others as a natural outcome of learning about one's own culture and the role this may play in developing intercultural understanding and within the process of desistance from crime.

Terence also helped me to see that the acquisition of basic skills is not an end in itself, but the access to dominant society afforded by the acquisition of these skills is both empowering and valuable without necessarily endorsing dominant ideology. While his engagement in learning may have been initially motivated by a desire to resist the

prison culture of work, the basic literacy and numeracy skills he had gained now allowed him to better understand dominant ideology and equip him to resist it if he chose (Giroux, 1983). This was evidenced in his resistance to social expectations that his priority might be to 'get a job' upon release and his clear decision to instead invest his future time with his family and community, passing on the wisdom he had learned and helping them to 'go beyond' their current limits of knowledge, experience and perspective, just as he had begun to help me go beyond mine.

Most interestingly, Terence defined the importance of his learning in terms of expanding his perspective on life, of 'going beyond', which led directly to increased intercultural understanding and deeper empathy for others, even cultural groups traditionally seen as aggressors/oppressors. Terence's case seems to pinpoint an intersection between the General Capabilities referred to in the Australian National Curriculum as being characteristic of a successful, engaged citizen and the traits identified by desistance theorists as common to successful desisters. Through the development of Literacy, Numeracy and ICT skills, Terence consistently demonstrated he had also developed Critical and Creative Thinking, which allowed him to 'go beyond' and then develop Intercultural Understanding, Personal and Social Capabilities. This development was confirmed in his questionnaires and his teacher's reports on his social and emotional learning.

Terence provides a fascinating study within the learners enrolled at the Intensive Learning Centre to help us understand how learning both 'whitefellas' basic literacy/numeracy/ICT skills and about one's own culture may support the process of desistance from crime and about how important it is to be connected with others.

5.5.2 Matthew: A Straight Life's Not For Me

Giordano et al (2002) and Bottoms and Shapland (2011) define stages of the desistance process. Giordano suggests there are four stages, which include an 'openness to change', exposure to 'hooks for change', the availability of a 'conventional self' and the 'reassessment of attitudes to deviant behaviour'.

Indeed, Bottoms and Shapland (2011) suggest there are seven phases of desistance, including a desire to change, thinking differently about self and surroundings, taking action towards desistance, and finally developing a crime-free identity.

I first met Matthew at an information session for potential participants explaining and answering their questions about this research project. In an effort to make the session a bit more interesting, I sought permission from the General Manager to bring in tea, coffee, sugar and biscuits for the students. I needed special permission because sugar and tea are forbidden for inmates. Seemingly, the temptation to make moonshine with sugar and smoke roll-up cigarettes with tea leaves wrapped in scraps of paper (cigarettes are also forbidden) is too much, so both sugar and tea were considered contraband. I checked the 'buy-ups' list to make sure I bought biscuits they couldn't get for themselves in prison and purchased good quality tea and coffee bags. It was an unexpected and very welcome surprise that the GM allowed me to bring these items in to thank the learners for their time during the introduction session. The gate staff couldn't quite believe it and scrutinised the email from the GM giving permission for all items closely, in a state of disbelief at the sugar and tea, teasing me that they'd confiscate the biscuits, then good-naturedly letting me through.

Matthew sat near the front of the room, a study in casual disinterest. He leant back on his chair and looked around the room as though he didn't want to be there. I introduced the project and the other participants nodded or gave me other signs they were listening and interested. Matthew looked elsewhere, but revealed he was listening because he didn't wait for a pause, feeling free to interrupt me to ask questions. He wasn't bullying or intimidating and the questions weren't irrelevant. He

wasn't trying to be disruptive. He just couldn't wait or see the point in waiting. He asked questions impulsively, as his thoughts hit him. It was as though, having heard a few pieces of information, he thought he knew what I was going to say and needed to ask about the practicalities to speed up the process. Perhaps his brain had filled in the blanks and he was bored listening to me outline the detail the others needed to get a fuller picture of the research. He had also spotted the tea, coffee, sugar and biscuits and seemed to be trying to hustle the session to an early finish so he could get to the refreshments.

I tried to weigh up Matthew. No one else had been so openly challenging and I had a strong sense I was being tested, but there was a quick smile on his face as he tried to steer the conversation. He seemed young and determined to show me how little he cared about what was going on. It was not difficult to sense he was a strong presence in the classroom, but the older learners leaned away from him as though they were trying to give him a wide berth. They physically distanced themselves from him in the room. He had a ring of space around him that no one else in the room had. I didn't sense they were afraid of him, more that they were trying to disassociate themselves from him. There were many looks of disapproval directed at him by his peers, but no one said anything. He tried to pressure me to start the tea break and I let him know that the break would happen as soon as the kettle of hot water arrived so they could make their drinks. He disengaged again, impatiently waiting for tea and biscuits, trying to shut down others with 'She's already said that' and suggesting no one else asked questions so we could get to the refreshments. The others still asked questions, but perhaps not as many as they would have liked.

The kettle arrived and Matthew leapt into action. He made sure he was first to the table to get his tea and took more than his fair share of sugar and biscuits. I knew he was taking liberties but I also knew I had enough for all the other participants. He couldn't stop himself. He wanted more and more. While one other learner joined Matthew and took more than he can use, the other learners hung back. One learner wouldn't even take any, so Matthew had that learner's allocation as well. I later learned during the interview that the other learner was so ashamed by Matthew's greedy behaviour, he didn't want to take anything. The supply was supposed to last

for the next day as well, but Matthew cleaned it out in record time. I knew I'd have to let the officers know how much he took. I worried this would mean the learners would feel they couldn't trust me and I won't have any participants for interview.

I was surprised that Matthew still wanted to be interviewed the next day, but he arrived with a cheeky grin and I realised he had taken liberties, not so much as a show of power/dominance (although this was probably part of it), but that it was a game and, it appeared, one he enjoyed. Rather than resent the fact I needed to report how much he took, he seemed to think I played a fair game, and wanted to have another round and asked if he was getting tea and biscuits at interview. I laughed, 'There's none left, as you well know!'. He chuckled and walked off. It was clear there was no resentment on his part and he happily presented for interview later that the day, despite the lack of refreshments as an incentive.

Matthew's interview surprised me. I had thought he was really young but I discovered he was 34 years old and had four children. Unlike the other participants who stated they didn't want to reoffend, Matthew declared himself to prefer a 'criminal' lifestyle:

> *Like I...I've lived like a straight life and that's not for me. Yeah. Yeah. Never has been...Even then I knew that, like when I was little even in primary school.*
> *(Interview 1)*

Matthew set himself apart from other learners at the ILC. He saw himself as 'different' and yet suggested everyone else was just as 'criminal', using the argument that anyone else would have done the same thing and taken far more tea and coffee than was allocated:

> *I don't know what's wrong with me, but from a young age I've constantly been like scheming and I'm always trying to get one up on authority, kind of, so...yeah, oh that was bound to happen, but whether it was me or someone else, but um...*
> *(Interview 1)*

Matthew talked about seeing the benefits of learning in the ILC for others and enjoyed being there but declared it was for different reasons. When asked why he felt better in the ILC, he replied:

> *Well...I don't know, it makes you feel like you've got an opportunity to um ...go out there and work kind of thing, not that I would personally but I know other people feel that way, like...Like there's...they're not just stuck in a life of crime, they can go back and learn, like. It gives them an idea I suppose of what TAFE would be like if they wanted to go out and go back into TAFE and stuff, but um...No, not for me, like...*
> *(Interview 1)*

Matthew pointed to engagement in further learning as a sign the other learners weren't 'stuck in a life of crime' and also shared the experience that the ILC was what 'TAFE would be like', but that such a pro-social choice would not be his.

Matthew was keen to let me know that he was 'known' in jail as a troublemaker/tattooist/violent offender. It was a persona he was very keen to project. I wondered if it gave him a sense of importance. He never complained about being 'known', just about the additional surveillance he was under as a result of his notoriety.

Yet, against this image of the 'schemer', game-player and convicted criminal, Matthew was struck by the fact that he has been in the ILC for four weeks and has not been in trouble.

> *...yeah...it keeps me out of trouble in jail and um...I get in a lot of trouble and go to segregation and um...get lots of internal jail charges, so since (coughs) um...I haven't had a jail charge for four months which is a the longest I've ever gone, ever. Usually it's a couple every month, but this is the longest I've gone ever and the only reason I've gotten away with it for the three months prior to coming to school is because I was being moved around and they haven't had a chance, really, to closely watch me, but now that I'm stationary in jail..*

(Interview 1)

While four weeks sounded a short space of time, Matthew seemed genuinely amazed that he had not been in any trouble. I asked him why he thought he hadn't been involved in any fights since arriving at the ILC.

> *Ah...Well I do a lot of art. On the outside I'm a tattooist, so I get access to like, art, which is a major thing that brought me over here [...] Yeah. I wanted access to paints and...all...they've got heaps of stuff over here. (interview 1)*

Matthew attributed his lack of jail charges with the increased access to art materials within the ILC. It helped him 'feel better,' maintain his identity as a tattooist and stay out of trouble. He was even surprised at himself how long he has gone without being in trouble in the prison and the positive impact being in the ILC could have long term:

> *Yeah, definitely, because it's helping. At the end of the day it's going to help me because this...even this four month break is, like, amazing and parole eventually down the track will I suppose think about that and they'll see that I've done...Like the longer I'm here the better, the more I'll stay out of trouble, I suppose. But um...*
> *(Interview 1)*

The 'But um...' at the end of his sentence, as his voice trailed away, gave me the impression he was not confident he could stay out of trouble.

Matthew told me he had been found guilty of a violent crime and the length of sentence he was facing. He still hadn't been sentenced for some of the crimes he had been convicted of so he didn't know the final date he would be released. He didn't think his sentences would be served concurrently and talked in numbers of cumulative sentences, such as '8.5 years' for one crime and '5.5 years' for another, plus the sentence he hadn't received yet. He knew he had a long time ahead of him in jail, yet he talked about crime as profitable:

> *Yeah. I can't go back to earning fifty grand when I could be making two*

hundred and fifty...I did try living straight but the money's just not good enough. I was successful before I ever got...but yeah, it was bound to come. You can only do so much like that before you get done for one or two things, so...
(Interview 1)

Yet he declared money wasn't the most important thing about crime:

It's not the most important. I don't like material things really, it was just a game. When I look back at it, it was just a game to do it. Yeah.
(Interview 1)

Trying to clarify whether I understood correctly that he did not want to go 'straight' after he has served his sentences, I asked if was saying he would choose to continue 'the game.' Interestlngly, Matthew's response indicated a lack of agency as he seemed to feel 'stuck' in the lifestyle rather than exercising a deliberate choice to remain in a criminal lifestyle:

Oh yeah, I'm stuck in the...It's like hard to get out of this rut. Like, it's um ...and that's all I really know. I've just being doing it for so long and um... and it's, it's hard. I can't really see [an alternative]...
Interview 1

I found it interesting that Matthew couldn't see an alternative when earlier in the interview he explained the impact learning in the ILC has on other people in terms of the pro-social choices they were likely to make. In describing their choice to continue in learning, for example, it seemed he was aware of at least one alternative, albeit one that might not pay $250k per year. It was as though he could see that option available to others but couldn't contemplate it for himself. During the interview, he returned more than once to the choices he had to make between going straight and living a life of crime, as though his choice was not yet finalised:

Like it's just...just being in and out of jail like...Yeah. I've got to stay away

> *from guns. If I can do that, I'm halfway there, and then I've been thinking about other ways that I can make a lot of money, legally, but it's just it's hard. It's hard to...I'll figure it out, but I've got to go overseas to do it, that's the only way I can do it.*
> *(Interview 1)*

It was extremely unlikely parole conditions would allow him to go overseas on release, yet Matthew felt this was the only way he could desist.

Matthew also tried to express what it was about the ILC that made him feel better. He highlighted the physicality of the environment — its cleanliness and open design to allow learners to see the sky above and trees beyond the fence:

> *Well, nothing in jail is a clean environment, like the kitchen's always dirty, like you'll get moved into a cell where you can never get the walls clean and stuff so it's a cleaner environment when you're in a cleaner environment I suppose...you feel better...Yeah, your thinking's clearer... Yeah, like if you're in a dirty, musty pod like Silverwater or something, like, you're ready to snap at any time, like you can just be ready...But here everything's open and you can see the sky and although our work locations you're indoors and you know you're in jail, whereas here [in the ILC], you kind of don't know...There'll be times when you don't feel you're in jail, no...Yeah. That's right, like walking to the library, that little bit of garden and stuff...Yeah, you don't think you're in jail for a couple of seconds.*
> *(Interview 1)*

Matthew repeatedly expressed his amazement that he had not been in trouble as an ILC student, saying *'yeah I was even surprised I was talking about it with my cellmate the other day that I haven't been in trouble.'*

Matthew mentioned that his mother is a high school teacher. That struck a chord with me as I was originally trained as a secondary school teacher and have a son. I wondered what it must be like for her:

> *Oh yeah, yeah. She knows what I'm like. Like I was trouble even when I was in primary school, I was expelled from primary school. I was in a lot of trouble from a young age and you know I explained to her that I haven't been in trouble here and she's...Yeah, she's a bit...um...yeah, she's a bit suss, like I suppose she's expecting me to...stuff up and go to the...like usually here I get in...when I get in trouble it's big trouble, it's not minor stuff, it's always something major and...I've lost a lot of opportunities because of that but I just can't help that, for some reason I just can't help it if it's um...If it's got to be done, I'll just do it...And I haven't been in trouble ...Yeah, and I don't think I'm going to get in trouble, but[52].*
> *(Interview 1)*

Throughout our interview, Matthew returned more than once to the choices he had to make between going straight and living a life of crime, as though these might not be his final choices after all.

Matthew outlined his belief that the learners feel as though they 'belong' to the ILC, which created a sense of community and reduced conflict. Like other learners, Matthew thought the peace and harmony in this space was rare within the prison experience and described becoming friends with other learners he would usually be enemies with, commenting that in the ILC, *'Well, you get to see how they live...Like it breaks down walls, I suppose' (Interview 1).*

Matthew continued, linking the integration and sense of belonging with the lack of conflict in the ILC. This seemed important for a number of ILC learners, who have all mentioned the lack of conflict within the ILC and the spirit of cooperation and collaboration:

> *Yeah. Like that's just not having...only having one fight here since this place has opened, that's just oh...phenomenal...I can't, I can't believe it.*

[52] Matthew uses 'but' here as an Australian colloquialism to reinforce what he's saying rather than contradict it.

If you told other people that in other jails, they'd just laugh at ya. They'd go 'Well, fuck!' They'd think it was a school for bone-yarders[53] or something like that, like um...[but] there's gang members here. Teachers don't know there's gang members in here, they don't know what gang you're in and there's new gangs popping up all the time and stuff. Yeah, it doesn't get brought in here...Yeah, I can't believe it. Yeah, because everywhere else in jail, not only is it brought in, it's the main thing.
(Interview 1)

Matthew's final comment took me by surprise. He had noticed that conflict characterised his experience of prison and that this was 'normal' within the prison context, but that the conflict did not enter the ILC space. Instead he experienced the ILC as a peaceful community. He wasn't sure why this should be the case but was certain that it was true.

Matthew seemed divided. He gave the impression of a battle within and hinted at a propensity for violence, hence his surprise that he hasn't been in trouble since becoming a student at the ILC. He claimed going straight wasn't for him, yet when he talked about his children, he was almost wistful:

Yeah. I've got to try to stay out for my kids like...Like it's just.. just being in and out of jail like...
(Interview 1)

Matthew's responses were often incomplete, as though he was thinking about the very alternatives he claimed not to have. He would make big statements about not going straight or his own convictions for violent crimes, but his unfinished sentences often felt as though they ended with a silent 'and yet...'. He had a pattern of tailing off when his meaning was actually different to the content of the first of the sentence

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[53] 'Bone-yarders' are inmates perceived as 'weak', usually because they have committed some sort of sex offence. This in turn requires them to seek protection from the general population of inmates, where they can be targeted by other inmates for punishment. The protection wing can be known as a 'bone-yard' and those who reside there are hence known as 'bone-yarders'.

that had been articulated. This became particularly important at one point in the interview where he discussed his teacher — he was furious that, despite promises, she didn't show DVDs on Friday afternoons when they'd all worked well in class. He explained that in prison you have to keep promises and that to break them is serious, saying, *'You could get stabbed for that' (Interview 1*). The comment pulled me up short. I wondered if it was a veiled threat towards his teacher (or possibly to me) and, if so, what I needed to do with that. I looked at him, trying to work out whether he was threatening to do his teacher harm and terminate the interview, or keep listening. As he talked on, I realised he was speaking within the context of the lack of violence in the ILC, perhaps suggesting his teacher was 'lucky' she was protected by the lack of violence in the ILC. Or perhaps he was describing the struggle for self-control in this learning space because he valued being there so much:

> *Here's...every day is different so you kind of want to come to school and, like you don't want to play up here, whereas there's been one fight here since it started, whereas, there's a fight every day in the pods and stuff, so...People think twice...Yeah, they value being here. I think twice. Like I used to get in trouble but I...would rarely hesitate to get into trouble but I hate the way the systems works and the screws work and stuff but…Yeah, if I didn't value it I wouldn't care, I'd just do anything. Yeah, so I've um... yeah...*
> *(Interview 1)*

Matthew described how valuing the ILC helped him exercise self-control. He chose not to react violently.

Like most other learner participants, Matthew mentioned the monotony of the Corrective Services Industries' workshops in the prison and contrasted this with the ILC, where 'every day is different', describing a clarity of mind unattainable elsewhere in the prison:

> *I don't know, like my mind's clearer. Like I notice that every day I wake up, I like, want to come here. It's like I don't want to go anywhere else in jail.*

> *Everywhere else in jail it's, it's just a morbid feeling whereas here it's not. I don't know.*
> *(Interview 1)*

Also, like other learners, Matthew described the sense of opening doors and options by engaging in education. Whereas other learners might point to opening up opportunities for jobs, or, like Terence, opening up one's mind or perspective on the world, Matthew linked feeling 'better' in the ILC to an increased access to a number of things. Firstly, he described the importance of access to a good library:

> *It's access to the library, it opens up doors that are usually...doors that don't exist in other jails yeah. And um...Oh, like access to anything. Like access to a good library is just like...Yeah Silverwater's quite a good library but any other jail just has a book really.*
> *(Interview 1)*

Matthew goes on to link the access to the library with the sense of not being in jail when I ask him what he likes best about being in the ILC:

> *Um...well it would definitely be the art I would say. But um...having access to a library where they've got like autobiographies and stuff, like where I can...I'm not restricted to learning what's in class, I can get to that library and go back and read a book and not be in jail. Just read a book like I'm outside and...*
> *(Interview 1)*

Matthew linked being able to extend his own learning beyond the opportunities available in the ILC. This was further supported by the access to the internet in class, albeit controlled by the teacher, available through the interactive whiteboards. Matthew liked the *'internet access, if [...] If I hear about something on TV that I don't know, that I haven't heard of before, at the end of each lesson I can ask the teacher and they'll look it up for me and then I can learn' (Interview 1*). This was echoed by other participants. Like them, Matthew very much valued the internet. While others like Terence might value it most because it keeps them current with what is

happening outside in terms of news, Matthew valued it because it helped him develop and expand his own learning about things he wanted to know more of. He felt the internet gave him access to expert teachers saying, *'Yeah, so that part of it's good, like how you can come to school and be taught by someone, the best of the best on a TV screen right in front of you' (Interview 1)* and he went on to link this directly with his increased self-control and restraint from violence within the ILC:

> *Yeah, that's what interests me. Like, that stuff, not so much everything else, but that really interests me like having access to that is...I don't want to lose that, that's where I was coming from before where I won't jeopardise, like my time in here by getting into trouble.*
> *(Interview 1)*

Matthew felt the importance of the interactive whiteboard with its internet connectivity was that it provided *'access to the outside world' (Interview 1)* in terms of supporting his personal and professional interest in art, whereas for Terence, accessing the outside world was important for news and perspective-making.

I began to see a different side of Matthew as he described his interest in books and the internet. He presented as intellectually curious and described a thirst for learning, saying *'I need, like, ideas,' (Interview 1*).

I listened to Matthew explain how his brain had always 'schemed' and he has always searched for cleverer ways of doing things, whether they be perfectly benign systems or illegal rorts. It was clear he was intelligent and able. Reading and writing were not a problem to him, yet he was in a low-level Certificate I class because it suited him to be there. He acknowledged he should have been in a Certificate II class but said it was better for him to stay in the lower level, so he could stay in the ILC for longer[54],

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[54] Each certificate level in the ILC takes six months. Only Certificate I and II levels are available in the ILC. If Matthew had enrolled in Certificate II, he would only have had a maximum of six months available to him in the ILC. By choosing to 'dumb himself down' for the assessment of his core skills (the results of which are used for class placement), he ensured he was placed in a Certificate I class, thus effectively opening up a further six months to him in the ILC as he would have asked to progress to Certificate II upon completion of his Certificate I course.

because it stopped him from getting in trouble and that in turn is better for parole. Given his parole was some years away, it was difficult to accept this as a reason for his desire to stay in the ILC.

When interviewed, Matthew's teacher was frustrated because she knew he got bored easily because he was at a much higher level of literacy and numeracy than the others in the class, and his behaviour then became problematic. I wondered whether Matthew had ever been tested for learning ability.

As Matthew spoke, he appeared to be divided, saying he was not ready to give up a life of crime just yet, but he was willing to desist from crime while in jail and try to avoid incurring further jail charges. According to McNeill's (2004) stages of desistance, it occurred to me that Matthew may have been in the very earliest stage of desistance. He was perhaps the most surprised of all to find himself at that point and was clear that he very much wanted to keep being charge-free within the prison so that he could stay within the ILC program:

> *I'll be here the next time you come back. Yeah, I'll be here. [...] I think I'll do it...Yeah, I need to be here.*
> *(Interview 1)*

I did not doubt Matthew's intent for a moment as I could see he was shifting incrementally towards desistance from crime.

When I returned to the prison three months later, I was disappointed to learn that four ILC students were no longer in the program. One had been released from jail on Supreme Court Order, however three had been expelled from the ILC. Matthew was one of them.

Feeling sad that he had not been able to sustain his resolve, I went to see him on his new accommodation unit as he had been transferred to another wing on exclusion from the ILC. I asked him what had happened and he explained he had been charged with being up on the roof of the ILC and it was alleged he was up there to retrieve something thrown from another wing (i.e., drugs). He had been sentenced to a 21-

day lock in, which meant no work, visits or privileges or 21 days, with limited access to the exercise yard. The lack of visits with his children hit him particularly hard:

> *After that, I didn't get to see my kids for two months...Yeah. They shouldn't be allowed to do that.*
> *(Interview 2)*

He explained that he finished that 21-day lock in and was only out for an hour, before he was charged again for setting fire to something. I remember this is what he said he used to be like before coming to the ILC. Matthew explained that '*in jail sometimes you need to do someone a favour because you might need a favour some time down the track' (Interview 2)* to justify why he was on the roof. He described himself as *'spewing'* that he was no longer at school, but that he *'did pretty good to stay out of trouble that long*,' (Interview 2). I asked him if there could have been an alternative to going on the roof that wouldn't have resulted in his expulsion from the ILC:

> *Oh yeah. Yeah, I suppose. But you have to do what you have to do I suppose. If the message comes to me, then it comes to me and it has to get done. That's how it works. It's all a game of chess. It's politics. One wrong move and it's all...so like I said, it had to be done.*
> *(Interview 2)*

Although Matthew had secured a job as a barber on D-pod, he still missed being in the ILC and said it was *'better'* being there.

Matthew and I tried to work out how long it had been since his previous jail charge. He was always clear that while he had avoided charges in the three months prior to enrolling in the ILC, this was only because he had moved around jails and hadn't been caught. He would only count the time spent as an ILC student as his 'charge-free' time. Prior to the ILC, Matthew would be charged once or twice a month with quite serious jail offences, but he had just managed to go for almost two months without a charge. He said that in the many years he had been in prison, this was the longest time he had ever gone without charges. Prior to this, he had always been

punished by being denied buy-ups or by being sent to segregation. This time, his punishment was not being allowed back into the ILC. When I ask him how that feels, he says, *'Oh...it doesn't feel good. Like...yeah, it's not good.'* He said he missed having *'access to stuff' the most (Interview 2)*.

Matthew said he went over to the library and asked if he could get back into the ILC program but was told by the education officer running the library, 'No way.' It is not known if the message to re-enter the ILC was passed on to ILC staff.

Matthew points out that he wasn't actually a security risk when being on the roof of the ILC, saying *'It's not like I could have gone anywhere, being on that roof.'* We discuss how he would possibly now be re-classified as an escape risk and that, if so, he would be ineligible to go a minimum-security prison. Matthew claimed, *'that doesn't bother me, but not being able to go to school...that's not good' (Interview 2).* It was surprising to me that Matthew regretted not having access to the ILC more than being precluded from eventual transfer to a minimum-security prison. It reminded me Aiden claimed during interview that he would have forfeited a move to a prison closer to family in order to finish his ILC learning program, such was the importance and value they put on their experience of learning at the ILC. Matthew also pointed out ILC learners got less access to telephone calls, but even that was not too high a price to pay: '*I felt better. I felt better even though I couldn't access the phone as much as I can now being here. Even that didn't piss me off. Yeah, if I could go back I would,' (Interview 2).*

I didn't recognise that relationships with other ILC learners was important to Matthew in our first interview, but this could have been because he had only been enrolled for four weeks. It came as something of a surprise when he said, *'And I miss being on A pod. That was a good pod...I wasn't getting into trouble over there. It was just a group of people I didn't get into trouble with,' (Interview 2).*

He tells me how having good people around also helps with motivation to 'go straight' saying:

> *That's what helps you too. If you've got good people in there, that will*

> *give you incentive to be good, I suppose. But yeah, it was bound to happen. I know myself too well. I can't believe I lasted that long. (Interview 2)*

Matthew recognised that *'it's not good for my parole and I've just got to stop doing stuff towards the end of my sentence,' (Interview 2).* Then Matthew told me he really *'just doesn't care.'* I remind him that he told me about how he wanted to get out for his kids and in turn he reminds me that he has a big sentence coming up at the end of the year. He thought he was going to get another twenty-five years on top of his current sentence. I though how difficult it must be to focus on 'being good' in these circumstances. It felt like the end of what had begun to be a promising road for Matthew as he realised *'No, they'll never let me back,' (Interview 2).*

I told him I think he's really intelligent and wondered if boredom was part of his difficulty. *'Definitely...oh, definitely,'* he replies. It feels like we are back at the beginning of the first interview, three months ago, when he was telling me he would offend again, before the shifts that may have suggested he was moving towards desistance seemed to occur as we spoke.

We talked his aptitude for learning and he responded that he desperately wanted to get back into the ILC, saying, *'If I could, I would. If I could, I definitely would,' (Interview 2).* His first choice for doing prison time was to *'do school'*. He expresses regret for going on the roof of the ILC and knew what the consequences would be but repeated *'it had to be done'.* The implication is clear that while the ILC may be a place of escape and offer protective factors, the learners must return to their accommodation units in the evening and reside within the wider prison culture. The ILC threshold was not an impermeable barrier and, while the learning experience seemed to help learners resist the more anti-social culture of the prison, sometimes the wider culture crept in and sometimes, within a framework of desistance, learners reoffended.

I asked Matthew about some of the emerging themes arising out of the first interviews, he says he agrees that there are no masks and that he thinks you can be your *'best self'* in jail in the ILC. He suggests the reasons for this are:

Small numbers in class, doesn't have the vibe of it being on the pod, it's not like being in a jail, it's in a clean environment. It's interesting, you're learning stuff. If you're interested, you're not going to play up I suppose. (Interview 2)

Matthew talked about how just before he got expelled, the class was beginning to look at the top two or three news stories every day and that was *'really good.'* This marked a significant difference from his focus on using the interactive whiteboards for the personal interests of learning about art. His interest in current affairs suggested a widening interest in the world we would associate with a broadened perspective that might, ultimately, lead to civic engagement.

I asked if Matthew felt happier over in the ILC and he replied by contrasting his learning experience with his experience of working in the Corrective Services Industries woodwork shop:

It sets you apart from the others, going to school. They're going to work and we're not. We're learning, they're not. They're covered in dust and we're not. We get back a bit earlier than them. We feel better than them. (Interview 2)

I felt sad that Matthew had no hope of continuing as an ILC student. I shared with him that when I'd interviewed him and listened back to the audio files, I had a sense of small shifts that indicated he was thinking about options other than crime long term, particularly when he spoke about his kids or about his learning experience at the ILC. Matthew responded in his divided way, acknowledging he may have alternatives but feeling pessimistic that he had the self-control to stay away from crime:

Yeah, well, maybe...yeah sometimes I think about that. Yeah I've got plenty of options out there, like when I get out...I've got um...Yeah, yeah, and ah...I'll try and do that I suppose, for as long as I can. Yeah, before it happens, yeah, it's going to happen. I'll try and avoid it but... history repeats itself. I'll try not to, but...it's really hard for me. I don't even need friends around me to get in to trouble. I just...

(Interview 2)

Matthew's sentence tailed off, indicating a divided view – another 'and yet...' moment.

At the end of the interview, Matthew completed the same questionnaires he completed during my first visit. As he's completing them in front of me with no attempt to hide his answers, I ask him about one of his answers to the Belief in Redeemability[55] questionnaire that asks to what extent he believes the statement 'once a criminal, always a criminal':

> *Yeah. Yeah. Always, like uh...Yeah, people can change but at the end of the day if the opportunity arises and it's in the right place at the right time, they're going to do it. There's no two ways about it...Yeah, yeah. They change to a point. Say I get out and I need a million dollars...I need more than that...say ten million...and I wouldn't have to commit a crime for the rest of my life and if there was something I was angry about, I wouldn't think twice. That's the story of my life. I've been in a position where I don't have to commit any times, but I still choose to and I've got friends in the same position. They've got more than enough money to last them a lifetime but they still do it because they love doing it. It's in their nature.*
> *(Interview 2)*

Heavy-hearted, I walk away from the interview knowing that as Matthew will most probably be moved to another jail I will not have the opportunity to talk to him again. I'm so grateful for his insight. He gave me glimpses of the change he could imagine for himself and it gave me hope for his future, if only he could be supported in that progression, for example, by staying in the ILC long enough. It seemed that being in the ILC was beginning to make a difference; that the pro-social culture was

[55]See appendix 9.11.4

beginning to 'grow on him' as other learners had described, so it felt sad that this option has been withdrawn. What seemed saddest of all was Matthew's statement, *'this is just normal. This is just normal for me. I've done it all before. This is just normal,'* and his declaration that crime was somehow *'in his nature'* pointing to an inevitability that he would reoffend.

I never heard if Matthew got his expected sentence of a further twenty-five years. If he did, he would be fifty-nine years old when he eventually released. The cockiness Matthew had when we first met had gone, together with his opportunity to be enrolled as a full-time student[56]. The glimpses of a desire to lead an alternative life seemed to have evaporated with that lost opportunity. There was a sadness and weariness as he spoke. Despite this, Matthew said *'I know I'll work it out and do something good,'* but it felt very much like the odds were stacked, overwhelmingly, against him. Just as Soyer (2014: 91) identified 'a momentary intention of desistance' (92) and 'an initial cognitive openness for change' (91) among juveniles in prison custody that could not be sustained within the usual prison regime, so the subtle, yet remarkable changes Matthew had experienced appeared temporary, as he was moved out of the place in which the conditions for successful desistance were found and away from the people who supported that process.

[56] As mentioned in the Introduction, in Australian prisons, prisoners have the right to education. There is, however, no stipulation of the minimum amount of education to be provided. Consequently, provision can vary enormously, even from one area of a prison to another. Even though Matthew was withdrawn from the full-time ILC model (that allowed him to be paid as though he was a worker), he still had the right to access education on a part-time and unpaid basis elsewhere in the prison.

5.6 Conclusion

The ILC space was designed to support learning and to frame the 'offender' as 'learner' (DOC, 2013). Despite a curriculum of vocationally related, functional skills, pedagogical practices within the ILC leaned towards a capability approach. Even though they were not explicitly taught, there was evidence of the development of capabilities such as critical and creative thinking, interpersonal skills, personal and social skills, intercultural understanding and ethical understanding as outcomes of engagement in learning. Similarly, despite never directly addressing specific offending behaviours, there was evidence that learners either identified as desisters or were at the early stages of desistance. The strengths-based learning culture established within the ILC, provided a positive counterculture to the more deficits-based, fixed-entity, punitive culture within the wider regime. Within the ILC, learners seemed to experience possibilities to behave differently, to develop connections with others and to consciously move towards desistance from crime. Their experiences of learning within the space indicates there is a relationship between a capabilities-approach to education and desistance from crime.

All the participants reported they felt an increased sense of well-being, both 'feeling better' as a result of their engagement in learning which they perceived as 'bettering' themselves. Learners highlighted the attitudes of teaching staff, together with the absence of jail talk and 'crims' in the ILC as factors that made them feel the learning centre was 'unlike prison'. The alternative, pro-social culture developed within the ILC was experienced as humanising and created a sense of normalcy, providing relief or an escape from a more oppressive/macho prison culture or the stultifying boredom of the prison industries workshops. The experience of feeling 'fully human' in education and being 'treated like human beings' by teachers is consistent with other prison education research (Behan, 2014; Carrigan, 2013; Pike, 2014; Szifiris, 2017; Bennalick, 2018).

Learners felt very safe in the ILC space, both physically and emotionally. They felt able to drop the 'macho' mask and be their most 'authentic' self. The alignment of authentic self with the learner identity rather than identity of 'crim' in the workshops or on the accommodation unit indicated that an 'offender' identity is perhaps never fully adopted. Additionally, it appeared that within the ILC, conditions were created in which desistance was more likely and able to take place.

The experience of being a learner in the ILC seemed to be characterised by politeness, kindness and the absence of 'jail talk'. Instead conversations centred around learners' progress and well-being, which seemed to have the effect of developing mutual understanding, acceptance as well as genuine concern for each other. Working with others with whom one would not ordinarily mix seemed to develop intercultural understanding which the learners valued.

In terms of desistance, the learners expressed agency, future orientation, a non-offending self, a sense of belonging, and hope for the future, implying that their engagement in learning also supported their progression towards desistance. In particular, the acquisition of basic skills, especially literacy and even at low levels, seemed related to a sense of empowerment and agency, strengthened social bonds, a pro-social identity and the development of critical thinking. They identified being able to behave pro-socially, felt a greater sense of belonging to family and culture, and experienced an enhanced sense of self in an ongoing process of becoming.

It was interesting that many learners perceived that they were desisters in a sea of offenders and the ILC provided a haven where desisters could be themselves. With a couple of important exceptions, almost all learners identified as desisters which seemed to suggest that they were drawn to education because they were already different to the career criminals they described on the pod or in the workshop as 'just crims'. However, the findings were nuanced: even those who had initially engaged in education as a way of avoiding the boredom of the workshops or who saw enrolment in education as an easy option where they could just relax and not actually participate began to engage within a relatively short period of time. There were a couple of learners who were more equivocal about desistance and indicated during their

interviews that they were not convinced they would not reoffend upon release. Even these learners also gave small indications they were changing their minds as a result of engagement in learning at the ILC, suggesting there may be some sort of relationship between engaging in learning and desistance from crime.

Interestingly, as outlined in Chapter Two, prison education's effectiveness is often explained as a result of raising employability, which leads to successful employment and thus reduces the risk of reoffending. It would not be unreasonable to expect this to be reflected in the interviews by, for example, participants feeling an increased sense of determination to obtain and hopefulness about getting a job on release[57]. Employability was, however, notably absent from the value learners attributed to education. Only one learner spoke about his plans for future employment in any detail. The others were clear that their most important priority was restoring and repairing relationships, especially with family. This is where they felt their hard work was to be done on release, as well as on their addictions. Employment did not seem to be a concern.

This was especially true of Indigenous learners, who also saw basic-skills acquisition as important for maintaining, restoring and protecting future relationships, rather than for supporting employability. Basic-skills acquisition was seen as a way of gaining social power as it opened a way to engage in the dominant discourse without necessarily adopting its social values. Indigenous learners felt cultural knowledge and basic skills learning in the ILC enhanced their ability to be leaders within their families and communities and gave them a profound sense of belonging. Learners described the pleasure and pride in being able to write letters to their family and envisioned utilising these skills to help their children/grandchildren with their schoolwork as a future, generative activity. Separation from family, community, culture and country was identified as criminogenic by Indigenous learners. Belonging to family,

[57] See Turner (2016) for an excellent interrogation of 'work culture' in prison and the wider community as a form of neoliberal social control.

community and country through the acquisition of knowledge about culture was considered essential to breaking the cycle of crime.

The developments experienced by the ILC learners were often expressed less as 'transformations' and more often as 'becoming'; as a sort of expansion or unfolding of self. This marks a significant point of difference from the oppressive notions of normalisation and reformation often implicit in the rhetoric of punishment, transformation and rehabilitation. The type of changes experienced were of development and enhanced capabilities rather than a transformation of self. Capabilities were developed via basic skills learning and were most noticeable when the class content veered away from the required vocationally related focus and towards wider subject areas such as history, geography and/or art, particularly those which referenced Indigenous contributions to the subject. Such moments were powerful and examples of these are explored with reference to the impact they have on the learners' critical thinking, intercultural understanding and empathy. Similar, interrelated capabilities have been identified as characteristic of successful desisters.

The relentless framing of the prisoner as learner rather than offender by the teaching staff, the environment and basic skills teaching situated in relevant cultural or historical events appeared to be a powerful trifecta in terms of creating the conditions in which learners could expand and progress, supporting their sense of well-being, confirming a non-offending self and providing hope for the future — allowing them to be, belong and become.

> *There should be a lot more ILCs through the prisons and that. It will change a lot of people. I really think that. If you really want to change, you can do it here. (George)*

6 Discussion: learning and desistance as entwined processes

… the very production and acquisition of knowledge is being used by students to rewrite their own histories, identities, and learning possibilities. Giroux, (1992:30)

6.1 Introduction

Throughout Chapter Five, empirical evidence was presented in relation to the following research questions:

- *How do prisoners experience basic skills education?*
- *What value (if any) do prisoners find in basic skills education?*
- *What skills/capabilities do prisoners develop when they engage in a quality basic skills education program in prison?*
- *How does/can prison education support learners' progression towards desistance from crime?*

The purpose of this inquiry was not to evaluate the ILC learning program, the space in which it takes place or desistance. As a practitioner and researcher, I was aware of the generative power of prison education and curious about what makes it work, and how the stories of individual success I was aware of, might be fostered. In this context, the focus of this study was on the stories of the learners themselves and '*understanding* and *explaining* the processes that practices, systems and techniques exist to support' (McNeill, 2016:267, original emphases) their progression in learning and, perhaps, in desistance. Despite a growing body of scholarship that focuses on important aspects, such as hope (Farrall & Calverley, 2006; Soyer, 2013)), pro-social bonds, (Laub et al, 1998; Uggen, 2000; Farrall, 2002, 2004; McNeill & Maruna, 2007; McNeill & Whyte, 2007), social inclusion (McNeill, 2014; Uggen et al, 2006), agency

(Sampson & Laub, 2005; Giordano et al, 2002; Soyer, 2013, McNeill, 2006, 2012) and a non-offending future identity (Healy, 2013; Soyer, 2013; Weaver & McNeill (2010)), opportunities also exist for desistance theory to include insights from education, given many aspects of successful desisters appear to be in common with successful learners. While much has been made of the relationship between prison education and reduced recidivism within the 'what works' body of literature, few studies have specifically explored prison education and desistance from crime, and even fewer have focused on basic skills learning in prison, preferring to focus on further or tertiary learning, as this is where reoffending was found to be most reduced (Chappell, 2004; Stevens & Ward, 1997; Burke & Vivian, 2001; Pike, 2013; Fabelo, 2002; Stocks, 2012; Harer, 1994). Consequently, much prison education research has explored further or higher education (Pike, 2013; Szifiris, 2017).

In the light of this gap in the literature on desistance, this study sought to understand and explain the processes and practices found within basic skills learning at the ILC, and their relation to desistance processes, to help researchers, practitioners and, ultimately, learners better understand how these might support the earliest stages of desistance from crime. Conceptually, this involved bringing diverse bodies of literature together in a new and innovative way from the fields of critical education, critical ethnography and desistance from crime. Methodologically, critical theories of education and desistance combined with Appreciative Inquiry to provide a novel framework and opportunity to listen to and privilege the voices and perspectives of basic skills learners in prison.

Experiencing the process of research as participant and learner with 'emancipatory aspirations' (Lather,2017:74) is also important within this inquiry as it has a direct bearing on how the data have been gathered and the research questions answered. Within the frame of critical theory (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983) and research as praxis (Lather, 1986, 2017), methodology 'premised on a deep respect for the intellectual and political capacities of the dispossessed' was developed with the aim of avoiding 'exploitative inquiry methods' (Lather, 2017:74). As a past practitioner striving for social justice, my reading of critical theory literature alerted me to the 'tension

between advocacy and scholarship' (Lather, 2017:80), which I embodied as part of this research process and thus, on occasion, permeates this thesis.

With this understanding of the research approach, I will first discuss strengths and weaknesses of the methodology as this places context around how to discuss and conclude the findings. In discussing the methodology, it is also relevant to highlight the contributions this research has made with regards to methodology in prison education. Subsequently, in this chapter I will discuss, elaborate and state the contributions of this research to the three relevant fields of knowledge and practice:

1. Methodology in prison education research
2. Prison education literature and practices
3. Desistance theory and practice

6.2 Methodology matters

Methodology had a substantial impact on this inquiry. As explained in Chapter 3, my methodological approach has been a reflexive ethnographic case study, using an Appreciative Inquiry approach (Liebling et al, 1999) and drawing on my emotional responses as a data source (Jewkes, 2013). The methodology employed in this thesis was developed as a response to prison education research which has often focused on cost-benefits or recidivism rates, neither of which has unlocked the 'black box' (Mackenzie, 2009; Davis et al, 2014). The methodology was developed as a result of understanding that learning and desistance were strengths-based processes (as outlined in Chapter 2) and therefore sought to 'measure' something quite different to that found in the meta-analyses or more traditional research. As Biesta (2007:2) states:

> This is the question whether we are indeed measuring what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end up valuing what we (can) measure.

The focus on learners' strengths impacted on the methods and also the experiences of participants and researcher alike. It made a significant difference which is explored here as one of the original contributions of this research.

Traditional approaches to research underpinned by a narrow conception of value-free inquiry and objectivity do not align well to methodologies designed to enable change by, 'encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding' of phenomenon (Lather 2017:75). However, as explained in Chapter 3, I am not interested in top-down 'exploitative' research (Lather, 2017), as traditional research can often be, but rather respectful, strengths-based approaches that reveal the possibilities for new kinds of knowledge, relationships and practices (Lather, 2017). With this in mind, my stance is that the *doing* of methodology can support emancipatory learning through relational processes that shed light on the significance of learning for basic skills learners within prison education. By listening to and affirming the voices and perspectives of the participants I wanted to contribute to the inter-disciplinary field of desistance theory through a strengths-based rather than a deficits-based understanding of their experiences of learning. Appreciative Inquiry revealed the evolving capabilities of learners in this study and helped to better understand learning and desistance as they were evidenced, even outside the formal curriculum, through the exercise of agency, hope, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding; all of which were found to be common to both processes. In exploring the process of learning, the application of a capabilities approach to education has helped to link and understand learning with respect to desistance.

Rowe (2015) pointed to the importance of reflexively 'situating the self' in prison research rather than producing sanitised accounts that have the appearance of being straight-forward, linear and objective. Despite some of the inevitable messiness and uncertainty surrounding such an approach, explicitly locating myself reflexively within the research process impacted productively on both the type and amount of data generated as well as the research experience for me and, it seems, the participants. The methodology facilitated the generation of substantial, rich, thick data and, significantly, there were no voluntary participant withdrawals, indicating the participants found the process tolerable (Clark, 2008). The Appreciative Inquiry

approach which focused on what was working well encouraged participants to talk about aspects of their learning they felt they were achieving in and felt proud of. Asking about their learning successes seemed to make it easier to establish trust in me as researcher and the semi-structured interviews opened up avenues for discussion of subjects that interested them, increasing the likelihood of their engagement (Jewkes, 2013). Participants had space in the interviews to explore ideas that interested them and understood their power within the process – that I was not an expert mining them for information, but a practitioner turned researcher seeking to understand their experience and thus dependent upon their contribution. For example, James commented on his experience as a participant at the end of his final interview:

> *And I must say you have a very good attitude towards us. Do you know what I mean? I mean just the way…you communicate with us, I mean it's very, very nice. It comes across that we have something to give you and…and you're not just here to take it, you're here to ask for it, you know what I mean? And I think it's that thing about being in here…not many people ask anything of you, they tell you you've got to do that, you give me that information or…and you've come in humble*
> *(James)*

As a method of inquiry into a strengths-based process, Appreciative Inquiry is well suited to exploring the strengths-based processes of learning and desistance, and it is also well-suited to exploring the experiences of those who are vulnerable because they are in a position of diminished power, like prisoners.

The role of emotions in the prison literature has been explored previously (eg, Jewkes, 201); Holland, 2007; Drake & Harvey, 2014) Some scholars describe their ethnographic research in prisons in terms of the emotional, physical and psychological 'toll' taken, usually due to witnessing (Wacquant, 2002; Scott, 2015) or experiencing (Piacentini, 2012) suffering. For example, Scott's (2015:47) experience of prison research led him to declare that '[p]risons are *dark places* filled with loneliness, despair, mental anguish and suffering.'

In contrast, my experience of research at the ILC was affirming and even joyful. It is striking that joy is not a feature of prison research or even prison education research (Jewkes, 2013), yet it was a strong feature of the semi-structured interviews, with references (by participants and me) to physical elements that bring joy (such as design of the ILC, ability to see trees, birds etc), as well as the background noise of the interviews which often contains birdsong or laughter. The role of embodied emotions such as joy, particularly in the context of prison research, remain undervalued and there is scope for their exploration to reveal, rather than conceal, their role. Transcribing the interviews, I was struck by how often laughter erupts. Often it is one person laughing in the interview at something the other person has said, and sometimes we laugh at the same thing at the same time. It points to an emotional connection and joyfulness that exists in the interviews. Building upon the work of Jewkes (2012) others, this suggests a need for greater awareness about the role of emotions in the field of desistance studies and in particular their methodological complicity in the production of knowledge.

Of course, the semi-structured interviews take a strengths-based approach to the experience of learning in the ILC. As such, the interview questions did not set out intentionally to examine learning deficits or barriers, to explore difficult or shameful past experiences or trauma as other prison research might. Despite the expression of a range of emotions, from sorry to happiness and joy, the emotional response to the interview process by both participants and researcher were unexpectedly positive. For my part, the research experience was characterised by feelings of connection with participants as warm and generous human beings. Emotions, as St Pierre (1997:177) suggests, should be included as 'transgressive data' in ethnographic research as a way of 'redescribing the world'. The emotions experienced over the course of fieldwork in the ILC 'redescribe' Scott's prison of 'darkness, loneliness, despair, mental anguish and suffering' as participants identified their sense of well-being and feeling 'normal', together with hope and connection within the learning space, raising an interesting idea about what prisons might become should the learning paradigm be unfurled across the whole institution.

As research method, the Appreciative Inquiry approach was instrumental in framing the learner as 'the lived-experience expert in prisoner learning' from whom I was there to learn – not as a subject with important data to be mined. Prisoners are subject to ongoing assessment and research and, like any participants, can suffer 'research fatigue' (Clark, 2008,). James' comment above indicates the research approach was welcome and made a positive difference. By implication, participants may have been more likely to open up and share more information, perhaps because the participants experienced being listened to as therapeutic (Peel, 2006) or enjoy engaging with female staff (Crewe et al, 2017). That is not why this approach was taken. Rather, it was to redress the power imbalance within the researcher-participant relationship (Lather, 2017) and therefore an Appreciative Inquiry approach was considered an appropriate method for strengths-based inquiry (Liebling et al, 1999). The richness and depth of data collected suggests this approach is currently significantly undervalued as an appropriate methodology for strengths-based processes such as desistance and learning.

Methodologically, it was imperative to present lightly edited learner contribution in the findings, because '[a]ll too often those who decide what is best for the prisoner ignore their views and experiences' (Costelloe & Warner, 2007:14). For this reason, large verbatim quotations are used to foreground the voices and perspectives of the participants. Their quotations are always italicised to clearly identify them from academic quotations. My case studies are also included for this purpose – to show the complexity and range of contradictory experience of learning in prison. As Lather (1986b:72) suggests, comparative case studies can issue an 'invitation of disconfirmation' which is important in such openly ideological research.

Lather (1986b: 73) comments that '[i]deally, such research involves participants in the planning, execution, and dissemination of social research.' This is a weakness in this inquiry which simply could not accomplish this ambition within the narrow timeframe. This was because, pragmatically, there was not enough time for learners to interpret the findings and discuss solutions given the restrictions of distance from the research site, a compulsory end date to fieldwork and access to the prison. Indeed, the complex and fraught and 'tightly controlled' nature of prison research has

been remarked upon repeatedly in the literature (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008:313). Also final stages of Appreciative Inquiry are to dream and design and this inquiry was only able to go part way through the steps of this approach, for the same pragmatic reasons. While the ethical, methodological and political challenges of prison research are likely to remain, this suggests there is rich ground for future research where the participatory potential of critically reflexive methodologies is more fully explored which would help future researchers to better understand the processes of learning and what helps both learning and desistance.

Bottoms & Shapland (2016:100) elected not to do retrospective studies because '…such research designs have limitations when it comes to analyzing the early stages of desistance' due to time, memory lapses and selectivity.' Bottoms & Shapland (2016:100) found that while their study of the early stages of desistance meant they were 'less able to study full completed desistance', they were able to trade-off with being 'able to consider early-stage desistance with a greater degree of detail and immediacy'. It is in this context that this research is undertaken within the prison classroom, exploring learning and desistance as they are being experienced by basic skills learners. Thus, interviewing learners at the beginning, middle and end of their learning program allowed me to explore their experiences of learning and also any experiences of desistance at their early stages in detail and with immediacy.

6.3 Prison education literature and practices

Chapter Two outlined that the purpose of CSNSW education is to equip learners with sufficient basic skills to access offending behaviour programs and/or Corrective Services Industries workshops, with a view to raising employability. Accordingly, in common with similar carceral education programs around the world, particularly in the USA and UK, the ILC's focus on basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is in line with the belief that prison education has a rehabilitative, remedial function to address educational 'deficits' that are criminological (AEVTI CSNSW, 2015) with the aim of transforming learners into productive citizens. Education becomes an 'intervention' (Warr, 2016; Newman 1993). Within this ideological constraint, education is tethered

to the world of work, which is generally low-skilled and low-paid, particularly for those who exit the prison system (Cho & Tyler, 2010; Visher, 2004; Aaltonen, 2015; Young 1999; Laub and Sampson 2001; Farrall et al, 2010).

However, within these constraints, the findings show the learners find meaning and value within basic skills education at the ILC beyond its vocational purpose, particularly in terms of the sense of well-being, self-betterment, increased self-confidence, increased agency, and hope for the future that basic skills acquisition affords. These findings are also supported by literature which finds prison education 'transformative' (Pike, 2013, 2019; Kendall & Hopkins, 2019; Merriam, 2013; Duguid & Pawson, 1998; Newman, 1993; Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016; Warr, 2016; Vesey et al, 2009. Nichols (2016) found that adult basic skills learners in prison experienced education as 'transformative' in terms of gaining knowledge, understanding, emotional maturity, confidence, self-esteem and self-worth.

Interestingly, Nichols (2016:238). describes as the sense of transformation as a result of learners beginning to realise 'what [they were] capable of'. My findings support those of Nichols insomuch as value is found beyond vocational practice and in cognitive, social and emotional learning domains, but this thesis also builds on the literature by developing the conceptualisation of learning as capability-building[58]. I draw on the capabilities model of education borrowed from mainstream education in Australia and, uniquely, apply it to the ILC context, showing that learners also experienced the development of other capabilities, such as critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding, personal and social capabilities and intercultural understanding. Warr (2016) describes the importance of critical thinking within the desistance process,

[58] Importantly, Nichols (2016) undertook a retrospective analysis of ex-prisoner's narrative and found the perception of ex-prisoners that prison education had been 'transformative'. Drawing on the work of Warr (2016), I have already justified above why, methodologically, it may be valuable to interview learners as they experience it rather than retrospectively and so my work differs significantly from Nichols in this respect.

In addition, rather than conceiving of such capability-building as 'transformative', I argue that the notion of transformation is situated within the paradigms of rehabilitation and reform, the legacy of which which were traced in Chapter 1. Within a capabilities approach and critical framework of education as freedom (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983), my findings suggest that basic skills education is both experienced and valued as an 'enhancement' rather than 'transformation'. This is a significant contribution to the field of prison education and desistance, as it presents a more nuanced understanding of identity 'change' which underpins much desistance and prison education literature and thus avoids the risk of reinforcing the idea of prisoner who must be 'changed' in order to be redeemed (O'Sullivan, 2017) or found socially acceptable (Warr, 2016; Vorhaus, 2014).

It must be noted that the ILC program could not be described as aspirational or, indeed 'transformative' as it has little scope for creative pedagogies. Within its parameters, it is hard to see how it could be otherwise. Learners and teachers alike felt the constriction of the official or intended curriculum. Yet, within this rather narrow curricular context, there was a significant sense of progression and forward momentum. Basic skills acquisition gave a concrete sense of knowing now what was not previously known which, in turn, bred confidence and a growth mindset. There were, Indeed, moments learners identified as most significant to their development were moments in which the teachers did *not* explicitly teach basic skills for work. Rather, the most powerful teaching moments seemed to come when (a) no explicit teaching was done at all and the learner had autonomy over the choice of his learning area and how to undertake it and (b) when another teacher took a risk and included historical content, rather than solely vocational purpose, in her basic skills lesson. For Indigenous learners, culturally-relevant content was experienced as powerful, strengthening learners' own cultural understanding and intercultural understanding, which in turn fostered (in Eddie's case) a sense of cultural belonging and pride, and (in Terence's case) intercultural understanding, empathy and compassion for others.

It is important to note that pedagogical practice within the ILC was not explicitly informed by a capabilities approach to education. Neither did staff have a particular awareness or understanding of desistance theories. Consequently, neither desistance

theories nor consciously capabilities-informed pedagogical practice were evidenced in the ILC, yet the data clearly suggest that engagement in basic skills education supported the development of wider capabilities that also support desistance. It appears the development of wider capabilities and progression towards desistance (however incremental) occurred as *serendipitous* outcomes of the learning program rather than as a result of intentional design.

This raises the question, 'Is there something about the experience of just *being* in prison education that works?' If we read between the lines of the joint Ministry of Justice/Department for Education (2017) analysis of 10,000 prisoner learner outcomes, the suggestion is that this in fact may be so. The report confirmed the link between engagement in prison education and reduced recidivism, however, what was most interesting was that it also seemed to also demonstrate a link between engagement in prison education and desistance from crime. Records showed that prisoners who had engaged in *any* prison education, regardless of curriculum, content, or completion, reoffended less frequently and less seriously[59]. A key finding was:

> It is taking part in the learning activity which appears to have the most impact. (MoJ/DfE, 2017:2)

That finding is extraordinary in the context of prison education which considers certificate completions as auditable measures of success and it runs counter-intuitively for educators who witness learner satisfaction upon completion of a certificate. It appears as though that finding is also supported in this inquiry. Learners frequently referred to the 'normalising' power of the ILC – both in terms of helping them feel 'normal' (by which they meant respected as a normal human being and not

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[59] As discussed in Chapter Two, this study showed that re-offending prisoner learners received a sentence about 120 days less than their original sentence, while non-learners received a sentence slightly longer than their original sentence. Furthermore, while violent crime was predominant at initial offence, theft was more likely at reoffence, indicating a downward trend in severity of crime (if we take theft to be less severe than violence against a person),

defined as an offender) but also as a force that is normalising. A significant finding is that being in the pro-social ILC, regardless of lesson content or course completion, results in increasingly pro-social attitudes and behaviour. In this sense, the ILC functions as an 'ameliorative space' (Toch, 2005:469).

Chapter Two reviewed the literature around desistance which suggested that 'without being anchored in positive social experiences of non-deviance, imprisonment cannot create opportunities for creative self-transformation and agency,' Soyer (2013:105). It was also noted that Behan (2014), Hughes (2009) and Reuss (2009, 1999) identified that education programs in prison can provide just that sort of positive social experience. Additionally, those with lived experience as learners in prison (for example, MacPherson,2018; Warr, 2016; and Hart, 2018) identify the positive, pro-social impact learning has had on them, acting as a 'hook for change' and catalyst for desistance. Chapter Five describes the finding that, within the ILC, learners described experiencing a process of pro-socialisation as an almost organic adaptation to the pro-social culture and space which 'grows on you'. This finding makes a new contribution to prison education literature in that it finds that respectful, non-interventionist practices within un-prison-like spaces in prison can create the conditions in which learners can experience being authentic, belonging to a community and becoming a desister. Turner (2016: 10) urges researchers to:

> … re-frame our ideas of successful rehabilitation to include offenders actively making choices about and changes to their lives, there are clear pathways that would create a demand for research that engages with the prison as an affective environment.

Turner laments (2016:10) that 'no one has yet paid sustained spatial attention to these cultural manifestations of engagement' in prisons. This thesis is one of the first to address this gap in the literature by considering the impact of a learning space and its impact on the processes of learning and desistance from crime,

Given the well-documented effectiveness of prison education in reducing recidivism (Aos and Drake, 2013; Davis et al, 2013; Stocks, 2012; MacKenzie, 2006[60]; Vacca, 2004; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Wilson, Gallagher & Mackenzie, 2000; Tracy, Smith, & Steurer, 1998) and the dominance of the notion of education as 'treatment' for criminogenic behaviours (Warr, 2016), it would be very tempting to argue for prison education to be compulsory. In fact, it was found that learners valued their experience of basic skills education so much, they suggested it should be compulsory. For example, Aiden described it as 'a *must'* (emphasis his), seeing it as beneficial for 'everyone in prison.' The finding that even those who enrolled in education as an escape from the workshops and/or wider regime, or perceived it as an 'easy' option, yet experienced shifting motivation towards engagement and more pro-social behaviour despite their initial intentions, can be interpreted as though there is something inherently transformative about prison education and thus makes the idea of compulsory prison education compelling (De Graaf, 2005) . However, behind such temptation is purpose, and the intention is still one of medicalised rehabilitation – to fix the deficit, 'offender' learner. It important to note that prisoners can clearly still resist engagement in education even if mandated to it, just as school-aged learners in mainstream can (and do). Perhaps more importantly, compelling prisoners to attend education removes choice and minimises agency, which is counterproductive to both the learning and desistance processes. McNeill (2012:10) states that '[s]ince desistance is about discovering agency, interventions need to encourage and respect self-determination.' Making education compulsory in prisons would obviously neither encourage nor respect self-determination. Moreover, in becoming compulsory, education can make as subtle shift to 'treatment program' or even 'punishment', as Duff & Garland (1994:3) assert:

> It is one thing to provide a justification of education by appeal to the aim of rehabilitation, another to claim that the state is justified in aiming at

[60] MacKenzie found that all prison education 'works' to reduce reoffending except general 'life skills' courses.

> rehabilitation by means of compelling prisoners to participate in education as part of their punishment. (Cited in Vorhaus, 2014:167)

It was demonstrated in Chapter Five and above that deficits-based models of education don't match the experience of learning in the ILC and that a capabilities approach provides a much better way of understanding how learners experience the development of their own capabilities and any resultant expansions (or possible contractions) of self. The danger is that just as within a paradigm of rehabilitation, prison education can become a 'treatment' so too could a capabilities approach be seen as a fix. As Marshall (1989:109) suggests, turning capabilities 'into a set of skills, desirable attitudes and dispositions, in which individuals can be exercised, examined and normalised' is another way of producing:

> …normalised and governable people. If it is more humane, it is more subtle; if it is less overt and. Involves less violence to bring power into play, it may be more dangerous because of insidious silence.

It cannot be recommended that we replace one model of education that aims to fix deficits and exert social control with another form of education that still aims to exert social control. In order for a capabilities model to retain its effectiveness (largely held in its unyielding conception of the learner as nothing more, nor less, than having the capacity to continue to learn), it must resist its own colonisation as a fix for criminogenic deficits. As Vorhaus (2014:167) asserts, there is a moral imperative to respect the dignity of prisoners, including with respect to their engagement in education or not:

> Alternatively, an approach associated with the morality of Immanuel Kant will place less emphasis on estimating costs and benefits and more on how far prison education is compatible with a proper respect for human beings as autonomous and moral agents. The principle question is then, not: 'What is the total sum of prison education-related harms and benefits?' It is, rather: 'Is prison education compatible with respect for the status of the prisoner as a moral, autonomous human being?' Besides moving us towards

> a view of education as a human right, this last question, in so far as it is concerned with effects on prisoners, encourages us to take seriously some domains above others – in particular, matters of self-respect, respect for persons, and their moral autonomy.

This thesis draws on the K-12 mainstream Australian Curriculum and innovatively applies it to adult prisoner basic skills education, providing a new and interesting alternative model of education to that held by CSNSW. It suggests a model of capabilities-based education is better suited for prison education, as it is in the community, not so we can draw up a matrix of skills and capabilities that can be measured against targets, but so prison policy makers, administrators, and educators can be more aware of the wider value of the wider value of prison education to support the individual development and growth of each learner and, simultaneously, encourage and support progression towards desistance from crime. The implication is that prison education that seeks to develop capabilities for social inclusion and wider social change can be harnessed to support desistance and should not be a secondary consideration. The power of basic skills education lies not in transforming people, but in expanding their skills and capabilities and increasing their capacity to critically think about the world around them and act on making desired change to both self and society.

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6.4 Desistance theory and learning

Desistance studies have generally been focused on those who have been released from prison, on probation or otherwise, for example Maruna's Liverpool Desistance Study (2001), Laub & Sampson's interview study (2003) or Bottoms & Shapland's Sheffield Desistance Study (2003-2007). This is understandable given that desistance is, to a large extent, enforced by imprisonment. Primary desistance has been described as a temporary 'lull' in offending that could be caused by, for example, hospitalisation or imprisonment, whereas secondary desistance involves a change of

offender identity to a non-offending self. (Maruna & Farrall, 2004; Maruna et al, 2004). Put simply, it is easier to desist when one is incarcerated and does not have access to the usual tools of the criminal trade. As such, it is perhaps not considered as reliable an indicator as desistance experience in the community and, consequently, the journey travelled towards desistance while incarcerated has not been studied nearly as much as the journey travelled after release (King, 2013; Healy, 2010). It appears to be considered that the *real* test of desistance is how successfully one manages upon release from prison, when the opportunity to commit crime is much greater and the pressures of life as an ex-offender take their toll.

While it is generally true that Secondary or Tertiary Desistance usually occur post-release and therefore provide rich grounds for desistance research, we cannot assume that desistance is only possible after release. There are plenty of opportunities to make choices in prison that indicate a shift towards desistance as prisons are not necessarily crime-free places. Not only are there crimes committed in prisons (such as assaults, smuggling in phones and/or drugs), it is possible for prisoners to be involved in crime outside the prison. I remember one incarcerated student telling me proudly that he was still running his 'businesses' from inside the prison. Prisons are often referred to as 'universities for crime' and many who have been imprisoned describe being made 'more criminal' while incarcerated, due to being surrounded by other offenders whose focus may centre around how to become 'better' criminals (Kropotkin, 1913; Barrow Cadbury Trust, 2009; Bush, 2019). It is important to remember that desistance is a process which must start somewhere. Understanding the beginning of the journey may, in fact, be just as valuable as understanding the later stages of the process. For some, it would seem that the desistance process starts while in prison. Brett discussed his decision to desist from the moment he arrived in prison as a sentenced prisoner. As a past practitioner, I've witnessed the small, incremental attitudinal changes that have occurred alongside learning in prison. If the desistance process can be ignited or, at the very least, its flame fanned by engagement in prison education, then understanding the relationship between prison education and desistance is important as it may allow us to better support those who wish to desist from crime.

The findings presented in the previous chapter suggest that as general capabilities are developed in high-quality prison learning, learners seem to develop the characteristic of successful desisters. The findings indicate that desistance is not only possible but actual within prison education, which seems to provide a safe harbour within the prison where learners can learn and practice desistance from crime. The findings presented in Chapter Five should not be diminished because they explore indicators of *early* desistance. Early desistance is not somehow less valid than later stages of desistance. As Uggen and Blahnik (2018:224) suggest, criminal behaviour is fluid and changes over time: 'Of course, whether we consider Paul a recidivism success or failure depends on when we look at him.' It is important that these findings show that many of the learners engaged in high quality learning experiences in the Intensive Learning Centre can be demonstrated characteristics of desisters.

All theories of desistance centre around the often-messy process of moving towards cessation. As described above, much rich research has focused on those who identify as successful desisters, however King (2013) and Healy (2010) both show that more attention needs to be paid to primary desistance. King identifies that people fluctuate between states of desistance (King, 2013:150) and asserts, secondary desistance is only 'a provisional state of being' – a state of transition between offending and final phase away from crime. The concept of changed identity from offender to non-offender underpins much desistance theory (Maruna & Farrall, 2004; Maruna et al, 2004). King identifies both the 'redemption script' of Maruna et al (2001) and Paternoster & Bushway's (2009) suggestion that 'a desisting identity must be a replacement self which is fundamentally different from the previous offending self', however, King (2013:153) points to the importance of achieving a 'consistent self'. The findings of my inquiry align more with King's - while learners indicated signs of early desistance such as hope for the future, agency, non-offending identity, they did not necessarily describe their identity as *changed*.

While King goes on to explore the use of narrative to construct early-desisters' non-offending selves, my findings do not support the notion of a changed self. Instead, the findings point to an enhanced or developed self rather than one which is transformed. Referring back to the perceived link between learner identity and the

development of a non-offending self, as explored in the literature (2.10), my findings do not necessarily bear out a change in identity. While learners certainly identified changes experienced as a result of their engagement in learning, these did not seem to affect their sense of identity, apart from Shane, who actively discussed not 'being that man more.' This raises important questions about the timing of research in order to explore early desistance.

Importantly, the findings suggest learners develop skills and capabilities which are shared with successful desisters, in the form of hope, agency, and a non-offending self. The point of difference is, crucially, to be found in the lack of notion of identity *change*, for many learners. Within desistance theory, this lack of expression of identity change would be interpreted as a signifier the participant is still an early desister at the primary stage (Maruna & Farrall, 2004). This interpretation underpins most research around prison education and desistance (Tett et al, 2012; Pike, 2014; Carrigan, 2013; Garner, 2017).

The scholarship on identity and learner identity is wide and deep. It is not possible to go beyond the established agreement about the importance of a changed identity to non-offender in successful desisters and the development of learner identity in successful learners within this thesis. The findings suggest that further research is warranted to identify a more nuanced understanding of identity in the processes of learning and desistance.

Additionally, it may be necessary to interrogate the assumption that secondary desistance is achieved only when identity has been changed to non-offender. As King (2013) argues, this does not adequately allow for the experience of desistance as a process, which ebbs and flows over time. There is room for further research around the conceptualisation and rhetoric of desistance theories to explore whether the notion that one's identity can and ought to be 'changed' is a legacy of reformation and rehabilitation, which aims to 'transform' the prisoner. Within the context of the ILC, the notion of developed or 'enhanced' self may be more helpful to our understanding of desistance as an ongoing process and help us 'de-label' the learners, ensuring they are respected as are their rights to learn and to seek out their own

future. As Michie (2014:24) asserts,' identity learning takes place where there is identity enhancement.' Perhaps we need to be reminded that we ought not demand change nor impose a preconception of what change is preferable and valued. Rather, we need to think of identity being 'enhanced' and listen to a learner like David who tells us he is '*not changed, just…still the same person but just a bit of me literacy and that has gotten a lot better*.'

6.5 Implications

6.5.1 Conceptualising prison education programs

CSNSW's selection of vocational-education curriculum is easy and relatively economical to administer, but is does not reflect developments within the fields of education or desistance. The findings of this thesis suggest the need for prisoner learners to be understood less as limited and vocationally-focused with deficits in literacy and numeracy to understanding a prisoner as a person whose capacity can be enhanced through the development of general capabilities as well as basic skills acquisition. Currently, the curriculum in CSNSW prisons is also incarcerated. Its narrow vocational focus does not encourage the wider general capabilities of critical thinking or intercultural understanding nor is it culturally-relevant to Indigenous learners.

Below is a visual illustration of how restricted (and for both teachers and learners, restrictive) the CSNSW curriculum is. The model used is the three-dimensional Australian Curriculum, which aims to support learning in the seven general capabilities of literacy; numeracy; ICT; personal and social capabilities; ethical understanding; intercultural understanding; and critical and creative thinking. It also aims to support learning in the second dimension of eight learning areas such as English, Maths, History, Science etc., through which are braided the three cross-curriculum priorities of Australian Curriculum to illustrate the three strands of

learning that comprise the capabilities model: Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Histories and Culture; Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia; and sustainability. The areas of the broad curriculum addressed within prison education in CSNSW have been applied to this model, showing the scale of limitation. Such limitation does not only have implications for limiting learners but also has serious implications for teachers who become de-skilled and demotivated with such limited scope to teach.

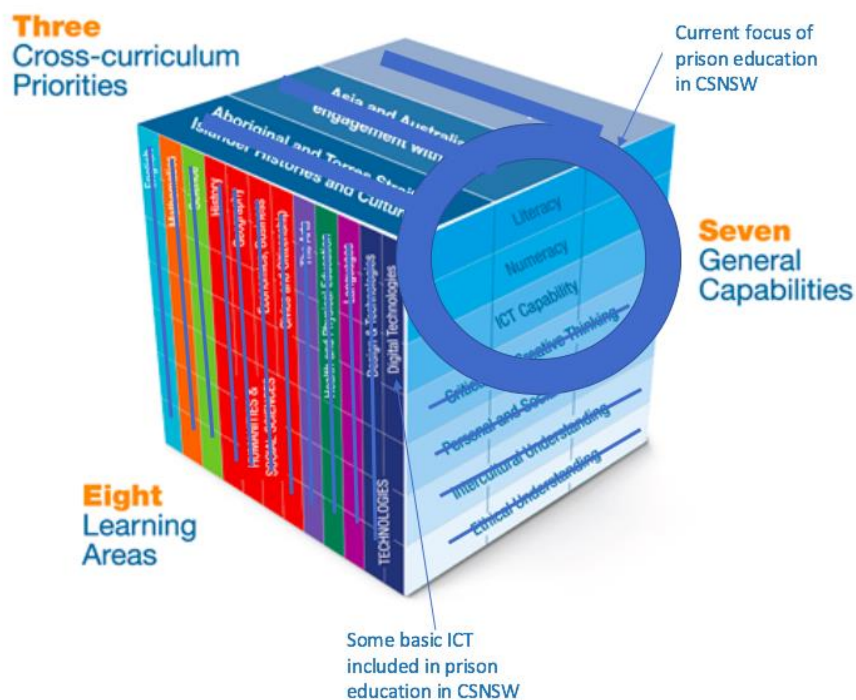


Figure 15 An incarcerated curriculum

The next figure illustrates the impact when ILC teachers delivered lessons or encouraged research beyond the curriculum:

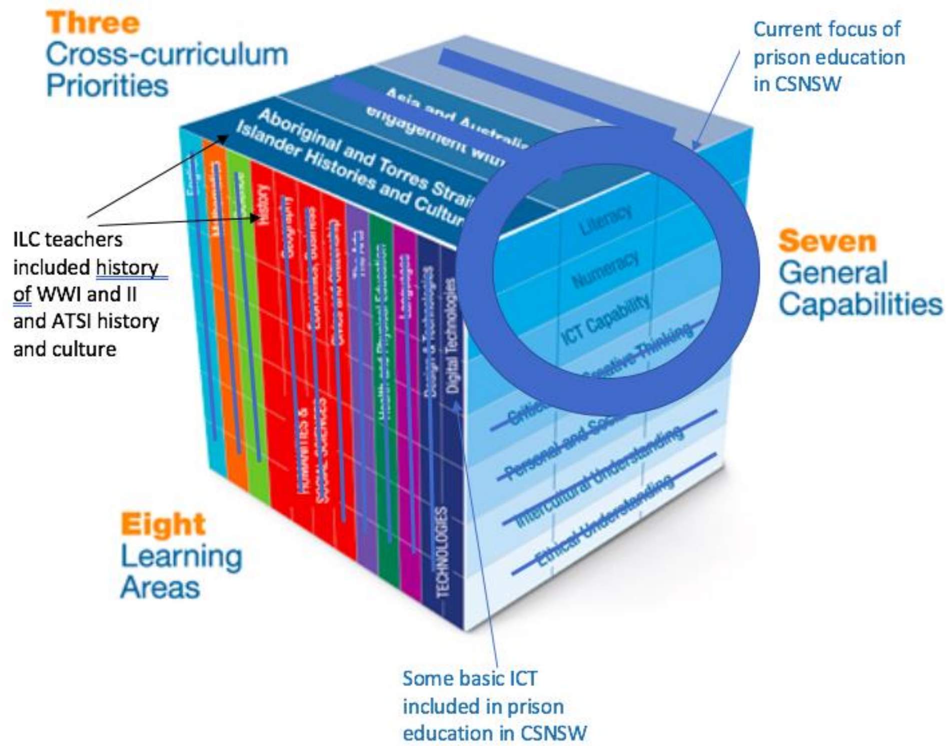


Figure 16 Subversive expansion of the curriculum

While the scope has been opened up in part, it is still some way from the eight Learning Areas, seven General Capabilities and three Cross-Curricular Priorities the Australian government considers necessary to develop as successful, agentic learners and engaged global citizens shown below:

The three dimensions of the Australian Curriculum

The general capabilities comprise an integrated and interconnected set of knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that apply across subject-based content and equip students to be lifelong learners and be able to operate with confidence in a complex, information-rich, globalised world.
https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/structure/

Figure 17 Australian National Curriculum - three dimensional model of learning

We need to ask why the current curriculum prison education in NSW is so narrow and why it is so vocationally focused when the evidence from prison literature is clear that the effectiveness of prison education to reduce crime does not especially rest in raising employability, but more in developing their capabilities across all areas. The findings of this thesis imply it would be better to give teachers and students the freedom to explore the world around them more widely, especially as the inclusion of all general capabilities and, particularly, Indigenous culture and history, could generate powerful moments of agency, intercultural understanding and belonging all of which support desistance from crime.

6.5.2 Conceptualising pedagogical practice

There are multiple implications for pedagogical practice arising from an understanding of the entwined nature of the learning and desistance processes. As discussed above, the key characteristics that are evidenced in both learning and desistance are agency, critical and creative thinking (which includes problem solving and can build resilience), intercultural understanding (which promotes empathy). Questions then arise about how pedagogical practice can foster agency, critical and creative thinking and intercultural understanding. Lessons can be learned from this inquiry about the importance of allowing learners agency with regards to choice of learning topic and also the manner in which it will be studied; relevant and interesting lesson content; and culturally relevant lesson content and pedagogical practices for Indigenous learners. For example, exploring learning how we learn and learning Indigenous ways of knowing with learners can support metacognition, a sense of self in relation to others and one's place in the world, intercultural understanding and critical thought. Biesta suggests that rather than focus on prescribed outcomes, teachers should have a freedom to experiment, understanding that effectiveness is often to be found in outside the official curriculum and often in the enacted curriculum:

> This is why effective education is not enough – and a case can even be made that sometimes educational strategies that are not effective, for example because they provide opportunities for students to explore their own ways of thinking, doing and being, can be more desirable than those that effectively proceed towards a pre-specified end. (Biesta, 2007:3).

In the practice of education as freedom (Freire, 1970), the teacher must be co-learner, and learner agency can be developed by experiencing shared power to collectively discuss and decide potential lesson content, projects and even the way these might be assessed.

Similarly, even the use of auto/biography as a method to develop literacy skills can be seen to support the narrative of a developing non-offending self, and thus support

early desistance, but also to equip the learners with the skills for self-authorship, usually denied to prisoners who are, more often, being written about:

> The guilty person, the prisoner', remarks Ioan Davies, 'everywhere across time and societies … [is] not expected to write. They are expected to be written for [either by the authorities or by benefactors] (1990:7, cited in Turner, 2016:183).

Within the prison classroom, teachers need to understand desistance and how it is best supported by educational practice. Providing opportunities for the development of all seven General Capabilities is important because they support desistance. For example, encouraging students to write their past and imagined future narrative can be a good way to develop literacy skills, knife off the past self and imagine a future, non-offending self, should they perceive self as an offender. Developing a course on 'Understanding Desistance' mapped against literacy competencies could engage and support learners who identify as desisters or those who aspire to be, developing their critical and creative thinking, self-efficacy and literacy skills, among others.

The seven General Capabilities can best be supported by teachers who take on the role of co-learner, where content and assessment are negotiated in order to engage the interests and develop the self-efficacy and critical thinking skills of the learner. The creation of opportunities for collaborative and creative learning in prison with relevance to the outside community and capacity for generative activities is important, especially for those who are socially excluded. Inquiry-based and project-based learning are more likely to allow the development of the General Capabilities that support the desistance process than more traditional pedagogies.

Professional development is essential for all prison educators, particularly to ensure they understand the process of desistance and how it may relate to the process of learning. It may be useful to draw on the notion of 'assisted desistance' from the field of probation services to reframe the work of a teacher in prison. Additionally, prison educators need to be kept abreast of developments in mainstream education, so training opportunities with mainstream educators would be useful to ensure

pedagogical practice is relevant and fresh, thus ensuring the conditions for learning and desistance can be created and maintained within the prison classroom.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings in the light of existing research, placing this thesis within the wider context of prison education literature and showing its original contribution to the research in the field of prison education and desistance from crime.

Firstly, this chapter showed that a critical approach to education, desistance and methodology can form a theoretically consistent base on which to explore the relationship between prison education and desistance from crime in a way that is new, appropriate and effective. It points to the development of Appreciative Inquiry as a useful, respectful and gentle method of inquiry which escapes the deficits narrative embedded in much rhetoric around prison education and recidivism, allowing a fuller exploration of what helps.' As learning and desistance were understood as processes that occur over time, data was collected at multiple time points (beginning, middle and end) of a learner's program in the ILC, which is a less common approach in prison education research. This thesis aimed to give voice to the participants, who are unable to speak directly for themselves. There are multiple ways of doing this, but portraiture was considered the best method for showing the shared meaning-making implicit in Appreciative Inquiry and make clear the representation of data by an openly ideological (Lather, 2017) researcher. As such, this thesis is methodologically unique within prison education research in Australia and further field.

Secondly, this chapter shows how the ILC was experienced as an affective, ameliorative space in which a culture of learning was established. As a space that is 'not prison' it allowed an alternative way of 'being' to be experienced within the ILC that was more pro-social and appeared to foster early desistance. The exploration of

learning space and its impact, sometimes serendipitous, on prison learning and desistance from crime and the suggestion that the lessons learned from the ILC may provide a way for a more pro-social culture to be established across a whole establishment, rather than just existing in isolated pockets, is also an original contribution to the field of prison education research.

Thirdly, this chapter examines the impact of the ILC on a sense of belonging, through increased basic skills acquisition, leading to social inclusion, and knowledge about culture, as learners felt their learning strengthened and restored relationships with family, community and country. Establishing a link between basic skills learning, culturally relevant content and restored family/community relationships that support desistance from crime, is a new contribution to scholarship in this field.

Fourthly, this chapter considers learning and desistance as a process of becoming, rather than transformation, identifying the characteristics common to both successful learners and desisters and showing how a capabilities approach to education may best support desistance from crime, describing learning and desistance as entwined processes. This is an original contribution to scholarship in this field.

Finally, this chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the numerous implications for, practice and further research arising from this thesis which asks for a reconceptualisation of the purpose, policy, and pedagogies of prison education.

In understanding learning and desistance as two distinct yet entwined processes, perhaps we begin to understand more of the 'black box' of why prison education might 'work' to reduce recidivism, Ultimately, this thesis suggests we have, perhaps, been asking the wrong question and it would be more fruitful to undertake strengths-based research that asks 'what helps prisoners to desist from crime?'. This thesis asserts that the strengths-based processes of learning and desistance are entwined and that learning can be harnessed to support desistance from crime. In this way, this thesis more fully articulates the relationship between learning and desistance from crime.

7 Conclusion: What helps?

> **Rather consists in opening out a way**
> **Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,**
> **Than in effecting entry for a light**
> **Supposed to be without.**
> *(Browning, Paracelsus, 1835)*

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the relationship between engagement in prison education and desistance from crime. This thesis takes up McNeill's (2016:268) challenge to identify not what works, but what helps to catalyse and support desistance, considering prison education not as an 'intervention' that results in desistance, but considering both as simultaneous processes. The findings presented and discussed within this thesis, based on an innovative application of Appreciative Inquiry approach (Liebling et al, 1999) from a critical ethnographic standpoint (Lather, 2019), privileges the experience and voice of the learners as those with lived experience of learning in prison. The notion of prison education as rehabilitative intervention that may cause desistance is interrogated within this thesis and, in a unique application of a capabilities-approach to education, the assertion is made that while the processes of learning and desistance may be separate, they share common, pro-social characteristics. As a result, this thesis asserts we can reframe the way we think about prison education and desistance, explaining these as entwined processes, which a capabilities-approach to education best supports. Framed within the context of development of skills, capacities and capabilities drawn from the Australian Curriculum, both prison education and desistance can be understood as processes of learning. As such, this thesis makes a significant contribution to prison education and desistance literature, challenging the paradigm dominant in CSNSW of 'rehabilitation as treatment' and implying the vocational-education model of education may not be

as effective in the development of capabilities that support progression towards desistance from crime.

Chapter One provided the personal, professional and geographical context to this thesis, articulating my position as a past practitioner, now researcher, and introducing the uniqueness and importance of the ILC as research site. Within the field of prison education, the ILC provides an exceptional opportunity to explore learning within a carceral space that is intentionally pro-social and purpose-built for learning. This opportunity does not seem to have arisen elsewhere in prison education literature and provides a good example of the affective impact of prison spaces (Turner, 2016; Crewe et al, 2013).

Chapter Two reviewed the literature, placing this thesis within a wider context of prison education as a rehabilitative enterprise aimed at reform or transformation of the offender, and stating the inhibiting impact on policy and practice within prison education. Exploring desistance and education literature, this thesis asserts that learning and desistance are both processes which build capabilities, which is an innovative approach within prison education literature. The chapter explores the mainstream model of capabilities-based education (Australian Curriculum, 2010), which is, ideologically, more aligned with the work of Sen (1999), Nussbaum (2003, 2009), (Freire, 1970) and Giroux (1983) who conceptualise education as freedom. As such, this thesis asserts a capabilities approach is more ethically, educationally and also criminologically appropriate than a deficits-based model of education to support the processes of learning and desistance from crime. Having established the potential importance of basic skills learning as supportive of the process of desistance, the research questions were then presented:

- How do prisoners experience basic skills education?
- What value (if any) do prisoners find in basic skills education?
- What skills/capabilities do prisoners develop when they engage in a quality basic skills education program in prison?
- How does/can prison education support learners' progression towards desistance from crime?

This thesis has been informed by experience of prisoners as 'othered' within prison and on return to society, and perhaps long before they entered prison. There was a desire to find socially just, decolonialised research methods (Lather, 2017; Bishop 1995) that redress some of the imbalance between researcher and participant and so Chapter Three explains and justifies ethnographic case study using an Appreciative Inquiry approach as the most appropriate method of inquiry to explore the strengths-based process of desistance and how it might relate to another strengths-based process, desistance from crime. The approach allowed the participants to retain as much power as possible within the process and to open up avenues of inquiry about future possibilities. This was especially important to counter the deficit narrative and participants responded warmly, openly and reflectively to describe both experience of learning in the ILC and its impact.

It was also hoped the methodology would be generative, and in asking learners to think about and share their experiences, researcher and participants would develop critical thinking better understanding about the learning process and its relationship with desistance. it is a disappointment that the fixed time constraints and narrow window of opportunity for field work precluded participatory action research for this would have been the logical conclusion of this approach (Fine & Torres, 2019; Lather, 2017; Liebling, 1999; Tett et al, 2012). Within the dominant narrative of the 'what works' framework, traditional scientific method, has privileged quantitative over qualitative, creating a gap around the experiences of prisoner learners. Statistical, cost benefit analysis methodology would not have allowed me to gather such rich data nor arrive at these findings. The implication arises that a wider more critical ethnography incorporating strengths-based research methods would be beneficial for the research of processes prisoners experience as supportive and/or protective, such as education. In addition, there is scope for participatory action research to be undertaken to ensure the research is not merely extractive, but generative, while providing a more finely calibrated view of the processes as they are experienced within the prison setting.

Largely, learner experience has been missing from the literature, as outlined in Chapter Three. I am conscious that participants were not able to participate in the

final analysis of the findings and so, at the last, their voices and experiences are framed within mine. It was important to convey a sense of the learners as interesting, intelligent and agentic men, who behaved with dignity, courage and good humour, despite their carceral environment. Chapter Four is important within this thesis to ensure that the learners are not just 'mined' for their data or divorced from it, but that they are acknowledged and appreciated as human beings with a valuable experience we can learn from. To separate the learner from his experience feels like intellectual theft, so Chapter Four has been included in the attempt to ensure the data belongs with the participants as much as possible. This is especially important when there was a tension between the ethical imperative to anonymise the data and participants' desire for recognition for their contribution to the research. Together with the use of portraiture within the Case Studies presented in Chapter Five, offers an alternative way of presenting data in qualitative prison education research that is openly ideological (Lather, 2017) and aspires to be open about data collection and analysis as shared meaning-making processes.

Chapter Five presents the findings of this thesis under the broad themes of Being, Becoming and Belonging. A key finding was around the physical and cultural space of ILC which impacted positively on the participants' experience of basic skills learning. The ILC appeared to be a place of escape and protection from pressures internal and external to prison, increasing learners' sense of safety, well-being and sense of enhanced self, described as 'betterment' or expansion of self. Learners found the ILC deeply humanising and therapeutic, a place in which they described *being* more authentic, had a sense of connection to family, community, culture and Country that helped them feel as though they *belonged*. Finally, their experience of learning was deeply valued because it was a strengths-based process in which they acquired basic skills and other, wider capabilities, creating a sense of 'self in progress' and growth. ILC seemed to have a pro-social influence and learners described their changed attitudes and behaviours as a result of their immersion in the learning space and culture, which seemed to 'grow on' or 'wash over' them in time. Their sense of self was that of enhancement, being 'unfolded' or expanded, which was greatly valued. Learning was associated with an experience of *becoming*.

Chapter Six discusses the processes of learning and desistance entwined. Desistance is not an outcome of good quality prison education, although it may be catalysed and supported by a valued learning experience. Chapter Six cautions against applying a deficits model of education as 'treatment' to the capability-model of education, arguing that the capabilities model is less about intervention with the aim of achieving the learner's personal 'transformation' and more about the creation of conditions in which people can grow. Those conditions include human dignity and respect, as well as student-led, inquiry-based learning with personal, social and cultural relevance.

Using the Australian Curriculum as a model and prioritising learning over punishment, it is argued that a capabilities-informed design of prisons and learning spaces within prisons together with a better understanding of the role of learning within the desistance process can better support those in prison and on their release. Interrogating the purpose of prisons and understanding the critical role of learning supported by prison education (including both formal and informal learning in the official and enacted curricula) is essential not only in minimising the damage caused by imprisonment but equally importantly, in create the conditions in which those held in prison, and those who work with them, can not just survive, but grow.

These findings suggest that even within a dominant traditional custodial culture (that secures, disempowers and depersonalizes the incarcerated and, therefore, does not support desistance) the conscious and deliberate attention to the development of learning space, culture and program can be effective in supporting desistance. It also suggests that the program could be even more effective if it were not a contained/constrained within the more dominant, traditional environment and culture of security and containment. If the design and culture of the wider prison embodied learning as its highest priority, all staff and prisoners confined within its boundaries may be better supported to reach their full potential.

The implication is not so much how we develop programs or curricula that 'work' to reduce reoffending but how we expand a non-othering culture of learning established in high quality education spaces in prison back out to the whole prison and beyond

into mainstream society. When we recognise the desistance process as a process of learning, we begin to understand how critical capabilities-based education is within prisons and how undervalued and underplayed prison education has been, like a guitar with only one string. Prison education is capable of so much more than has been allowed or is envisaged. The implications for development of learning programs and pedagogical practices are also discussed in Chapter Six.

The challenge is to affect a shift in thinking about carceral education within and beyond prisons. Prison education is generally given within institutions whose main purpose has been to punish the incarcerated and protect the wider community. This thesis suggests that by developing a culture, environment and programs centred on respect for the learner and a conviction the learning is life-enhancing, it may be possible for prison learning centres to foster desistance, prompting and accelerating personal growth and progress towards desistance from crime. We need to shift away from the medical model of education as 'treatment' for 'deficits' or the neo-liberal notion of education for 'employability', towards capability-building model because it allows humans to grow *and* supports desistance. If it is possible to learn to desist from crime in a custodial setting through engagement in somewhat limited basic-skills education, how much more so when that learning consciously supports the process of desistance from crime? Turner (2016:29) asserts that:

> To implement a desistance model, prisoners should begin their process of transformation to a life without crime before they complete a sentence and whilst they are inside the prison.

A capabilities-approach to prison education that supports the process of desistance may help prisoners catalyse or confirm their progression towards desistance even while incarcerated.

Incarceration and desistance do not have to be at odds if their purposes are aligned with a model of human dignity and capabilities. In this way, prisons may be able to lessen the pains of imprisonment by creating the conditions for growth and learning which, in turn, support the process of desistance. Re-purposing prisons as secure

learning centres may be an effective way to achieve this. This is not necessarily purely aspirational. The model of the Intensive Learning Centre developed by UTS and CSNSW provides an interesting micro-model of ameliorative space which could be applied to a whole carceral institution, framing prisoners and staff as learners, better supporting the process of desistance from crime. While there has been some work in the area of a human-dignity approach to prison architecture, it has not been informed by the understanding of learning and desistance as entwined processes. While this thesis has implications for the fields of carceral geography (Crewe et al, 2013), prison design and architecture (Moran & Jewkes, 2015; Hancock & Jewkes, 2011; Jewkes & Johnson, 2012), further research is necessary to better understand how processes may be intentionally supported through learning-informed design.

This thesis suggests that the process of learning and desistance occur simultaneously as entwined processes. Consequently, as we support learners to acquire basic skills and develop general capabilities, we may also help them learn to desist. As such, this thesis makes a new and original contribution to prison education scholarship with important implications for policy, program development, pedagogical practice and further research.

8 Appendices

8.1 Approval from CSNSW Ethics Committee

NSW Government | Justice Corrective Services

Henry Deane Building
20 Lee Street, Sydney
GPO Box 31, Sydney NSW 2001
Tel 02 8346 1333 | Fax 02 8346 1010
www.justice.nsw.gov.au

D16/167102

21 March 2016

Ms Fiona McGregor
Senior Research Officer
Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network
Long Bay Complex
1300 Anzac Parade
Malabar NSW 2036

Dear Ms McGregor

I refer to your research application titled *'Exploring how becoming a learner in prison education might reduce reoffending.'*

The study will aim to investigate the relationship between the learning process experienced by students in prison education and the desistance or slowing down in their rate of re-offending. The study will focus on inmates and staff located in the Intensive Learning Centre (ILC) at the Mid North Coast Correctional Centre in NSW.

I am pleased to inform you that approval has been given for you to undertake the research project. The conditions of approval are that you comply with the *'Terms and Conditions of Research Approval'* [Attachment A] with the additional condition;

1. The researcher will not be permitted to access the case notes of inmate participants enrolled in the study.

I wish you every success in your endeavours.

Yours sincerely

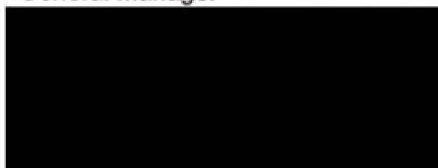
PETER SEVERIN
COMMISSIONER

8.2 Amended Approval (Letter to General Manager)

Justice
Corrective Services

Henry Deane Building
20 Lee Street, Sydney
GPO Box 31, Sydney NSW 2001
Tel 02 8346 1333 | Fax 02 8346 1010
www.justice.nsw.gov.au

General Manager



I refer to the research project titled *'Exploring how becoming a learner in prison education might reduce reoffending'* approved by the Commissioner of Corrective Services NSW on 21 March 2016.

Please note the identified researcher; Ms Fiona MCGregor is currently a PhD Student at the University of Technology Sydney and not a Senior Research Officer with the Justice Health.

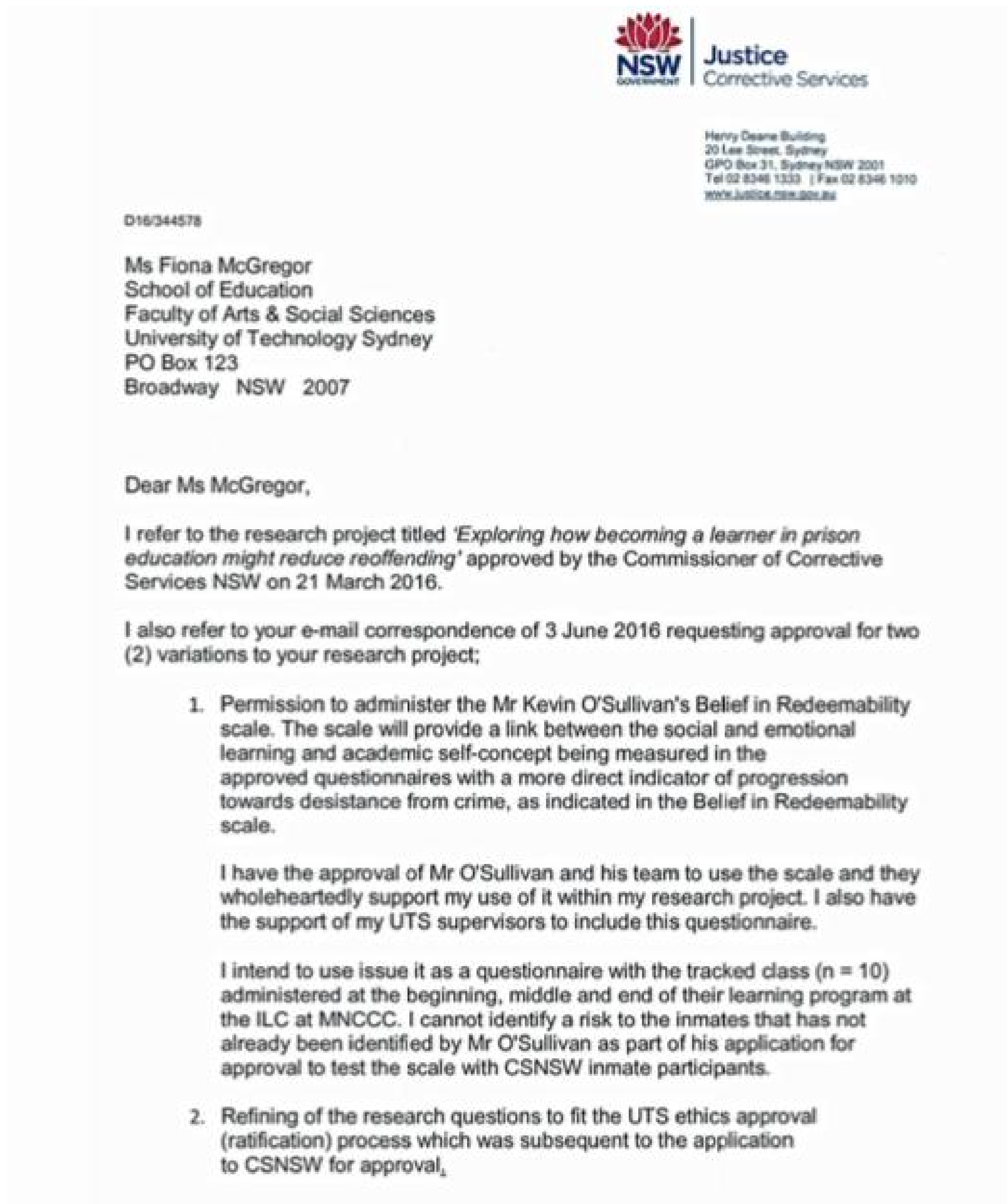
An incorrect job title for Ms McGregor was accidently put in the letter.

Please be assured the error does not affect the Commissioner's approval for the project. If you should have any queries in regard to the research project or its approval, please do not hesitate to contact me on [redacted] or email me at

Secretary
Corrective Services Ethics Committee
Corrections Research Evaluation and Statistics
CSNSW

9.5.16.

8.3 Amendment to Approval to include scale and revise research title



NSW GOVERNMENT | Justice
Corrective Services

Henry Deane Building
20 Lee Street, Sydney
GPO Box 31, Sydney NSW 2001
Tel 02 8346 1333 | Fax 02 8346 1010
www.justice.nsw.gov.au

D16/344578

Ms Fiona McGregor
School of Education
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
University of Technology Sydney
PO Box 123
Broadway NSW 2007

Dear Ms McGregor,

I refer to the research project titled *'Exploring how becoming a learner in prison education might reduce reoffending'* approved by the Commissioner of Corrective Services NSW on 21 March 2016.

I also refer to your e-mail correspondence of 3 June 2016 requesting approval for two (2) variations to your research project;

1. Permission to administer the Mr Kevin O'Sullivan's Belief in Redeemability scale. The scale will provide a link between the social and emotional learning and academic self-concept being measured in the approved questionnaires with a more direct indicator of progression towards desistance from crime, as indicated in the Belief in Redeemability scale.

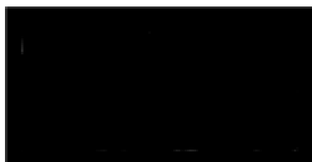
   I have the approval of Mr O'Sullivan and his team to use the scale and they wholeheartedly support my use of it within my research project. I also have the support of my UTS supervisors to include this questionnaire.

   I intend to use issue it as a questionnaire with the tracked class (n = 10) administered at the beginning, middle and end of their learning program at the ILC at MNCCC. I cannot identify a risk to the inmates that has not already been identified by Mr O'Sullivan as part of his application for approval to test the scale with CSNSW inmate participants.

2. Refining of the research questions to fit the UTS ethics approval (ratification) process which was subsequent to the application to CSNSW for approval.

I am pleased to inform you approval has been given for both requested variations subject to your continued compliance with the *'Terms and Conditions of Research Approval'* signed by you. I wish you every success in your endeavours.

Yours sincerely



Executive Officer
Corrective Services Ethics Committee
Director Corrections Research Evaluation and Statistics
CSNSW
14.6.16

8.4 Ratification of Approval from UTS HREC

Dear Applicant

[External Ratification: CSEC 16/11215 – 21/03/2016 to 21/03/2017]

The UTS Human Research Ethics Expedited Review Committee and Clinical Trials Subcommittee Chair have reviewed your application titled, "Learning to Desist: Investigating the development of the 'learner' identity by those who engage in intensive prison education and its relationship with desistance from crime", and agreed that the application meets the requirements of the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct In Human Research (2007). I am pleased to inform you that your external ethics approval has been ratified. The Committee noted that the researcher must have the UTS approval number on the Participant Information Consent Form and any other document which has the NSLHD approval mentioned.

Your approval number is UTS HREC REF NO. ETH16-0282
Approval will be for the period specified above and subject to the provision of annual reports and evidence of continued support from the above-named Committee.

Please note that the ethical conduct of research is an on-going process. The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans requires us to obtain a report about the progress of the research, and in particular about any changes to the research which may have ethical implications. This report form must be completed at least annually, and at the end of the project (if it takes more than a year). The Ethics Secretariat will contact you when it is time to complete your first report.

I also refer you to the AVCC guidelines relating to the storage of data, which require that data be kept for a minimum of 5 years after publication of research. However, in NSW, longer retention requirements are required for research on human subjects with potential long-term effects, research with long-term environmental effects, or research considered of national or international significance, importance, or controversy. If the data from this research project falls into one of these categories, contact University Records for advice on long-term retention.

You should consider this your official letter of approval. If you require a hardcopy please contact Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au.

To access this application, please follow the URLs below:
* if accessing within the UTS network: https://rm.uts.edu.au
* if accessing outside of UTS network: https://remote.uts.edu.au , and click on

"RMENet - ResearchMaster Enterprise" after logging in.

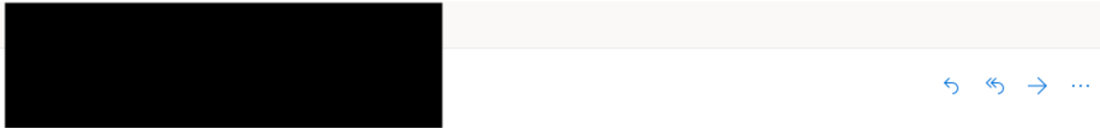
We value your feedback on the online ethics process. If you would like to provide feedback please go to: http://surveys.uts.edu.au/surveys/onlineethics/index.cfm

If you have any queries about your ethics approval, or require any amendments to your research in the future, please do not hesitate to contact Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Marion Haas
Chairperson
UTS Human Research Ethics Committee
C/- Research & Innovation Office
University of Technology, Sydney
E: Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au

8.5 Approval from General Manager to undertake research on site



Good afternoon Fiona,
I see this as a great opportunity and would support your research at MNCCC. Once you have approval from CSNSW I would be more than satisfied to approve this request.

Regards,

General Manager

8.6 Approved Materials List for Security Staff

Mid North Coast Correctional Centre

List of Approved Materials for Fiona McGregor, Principal Researcher, University of Technology Sydney: Learning to Desist project (UTS HREC REF NO. ETH16-0282)

Date of Visit: ________________________________

Approved Materials	**Signed in (Gate Staff)**	**Signed out (Gate Staff)**
1 x Phillips DVT2700 digital voice recorder		
6 x AAA batteries for voice recorder (3 inside recorder + 3 spare batteries)		
1 x short USB cable to connect voice recorder to laptop		
1 x 16GB micro SD card for voice recorder (installed, will not be removed while in MNCCC)		
1 x Macbook laptop		
1 x power cable (charger) for Macbook.		
CSNSW-approved research materials: questionnaires, information & consent forms, pens etc.		
1 x 16GB thumb drive for Macbook		
2 x packet of biscuits, small amount of tea, coffee, milk and sugar for research participants (strictly controlled with inmate participants).		Consumables – any left overs will be left in the ILC staffroom for staff.

These materials are approved for entry by Acting General Manager, [redacted].

____
Signature

____
Date

8.7 Information Forms

8.7.1 General Learner Participant Information Form

INFORMATION SHEET - ILC STUDENT (general)
Learning to Desist HREC REF NO: ETH16-0282

Who is doing the research?
My name is Fiona McGregor and I am a student at UTS. I have worked as a teacher in prisons for a long time and I'm interested in finding out more about prison education and the differences it can make.

What is the research about?
I want to find out how prison education might make students change their minds about themselves and think about their future. I want to talk to you while you are a student at the ILC about your learning and the difference this learning makes to you.

What happens if you agree to be part of the project?
You will participate in research activities in the ILC as part of the normal ILC day. I will ask you to:

- complete a maximum of 2 questionnaires that might take about 15 minutes to complete.
- be part of a focus group that discusses some of the research ideas. The focus groups will meet up to 3 times for about 30 minutes.

Are there any risks involved in being part of the project?
There are very few, if any risks because the research has been carefully designed. You might be worried people will know what you have said in your questionnaires, but we will protect your identity. You can be anonymous if you want to or use a false name.

Do you have to say yes?
No, you don't have to say yes. Nothing bad will happen if you say no. I will thank you for your time listening to the information and will not ask you again to be part of the project.

Can you change your mind after you agree to be part of the project?
It's ok to change your mind. You can drop out at any time. Nothing more will happen. We will thank you the help you have given us up to that point.

Why you?
We are interested in you because you are paid to be a full-time student at the ILC and have a nice learning environment. You don't leave the ILC until you have finished your certificate. This is unusual in prison education and so your experience of being a student is important to this project.

Who can I talk to if I'm worried about the research or want to complain?
If you are worried about the project and need more information, you can speak to me or another member of staff you trust. You can ask them to email me at fiona.j.mcgregor@student.edu.au. I am will respond to your concerns. If you would prefer, you can ask staff to email one of my Co-supervisors: Dr Rohan Lulham (rohan.lulham@uts.edu.au), Dr Jacquie Widin (jacquie.widin@uts.edu.au) , Gregory Martin (gregory.martin@uts.edu.au).

If you don't want to talk to anyone involved in the project you can speak to a member of staff you trust to contact the Research Ethics Officer at UTS (Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au or tel: 9514 9772) or the CSNSW Ethics Committee secretary (research.enquiries@dcs.nsw.gov.au), quoting this number (UTS HREC Ref No: ETH16-0282).

8.7.2 Tracked Learner Participant Information Form

INFORMATION SHEET - ILC STUDENT (TRACKED CLASS)
Learning to Desist (UTS HREC Ref No: ETH16-0282)

Who is doing the research?
My name is Fiona McGregor and I am a student at UTS. I have worked as a teacher in prisons for a long time and I'm interested in finding out more about prison education and the differences it can make.

What is the research about?
I want to find out how prison education might make students change their minds about themselves and think about their future. I want to talk to you while you are a student at the ILC about your learning and the difference this learning makes to you.

What happens if you agree to be part of the project?
You will participate in research activities in the ILC as part of the normal ILC day. Over 6-9 months I will ask you to:

- complete a questionnaire that might take about 15 minutes to complete.
- interview you at least 3 times during your course. The interviews will take about 30 minutes, but you can stop earlier if you want to. The interviews will be confidential. They will be audio-recorded and written down. You will be able to see what is written and check that it's right.
- be part of a focus group that discusses some of the research ideas. The focus groups will meet up to 3 times for about an hour.
- allow me to read your Reflective Learning Journal and stories that you write as part of your literacy class.
- allow me to use quotes from your interviews, focus groups and classwork in my work that might be published and presented at conferences. You will be anonymous or we can agree a fake name for you to protect your identity. Noone will be able to identify you in any of my work.
- allow me to talk to your teachers and other staff about your progress in the course and any changes they can see in you.

Are there any risks involved in being part of the project?
There are very few, if any risks because the research has been carefully designed. You might be worried people will know what you have said in your interviews, but we will protect your identity. You might feel a bit embarrassed or bored during the interviews but you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to and you can stop the interview at any time.

Do you have to say yes?
No, you don't have to say yes. Nothing bad will happen if you say no. I will thank you for your time listening to the information and will not ask you again to be part of the project.

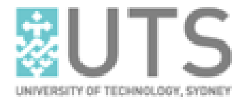
Can you change your mind after you agree to be part of the project?
It's ok to change your mind. You can drop out at any time. Nothing more will happen. We will thank you the help you have given us up to that point.

Why you?
We are interested in you because you are paid to be a full-time student at the ILC and have a nice learning environment. You don't leave the ILC until you have finished your certificate. This is unusual in prison education and so your experience of being a student is important to this project.

Who can I talk to if I'm worried about the research or want to complain?
If you are worried about the project and need more information, you can speak to me or another member of staff you trust. You can ask them to email me at fiona.j.mcgregor@student.edu.au. I am will respond to your concerns. If you would prefer, you can ask staff to to one of my Co-supervisors: Dr Rohan Lulham (rohan.lulham@uts.edu.au), Dr Jacquie Widin (jacquie.widin@uts.edu.au) , Gregory Martin (gregory.martin@uts.edu.au).

If you don't want to talk to anyone involved in the project you can speak to a member of staff you trust to contact the Research Ethics Officer at UTS (Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au or tel: 9514 9772) or the CSNSW Ethics Committee secretary (research.enquiries@dcs.nsw.gov.au), quoting this number (UTS HREC Ref No: ETH16-0282).

8.7.3 Staff Participant Information Form



INFORMATION SHEET: STAFF

RESEARCH PROJECT:LEARNING TO DESIST
(UTS HREC Ref No: ETH16-0282)

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?
My name is Fiona McGregor and I am a student at University of Technology Study. My 3 Co-supervisors are: Dr Rohan Lulham, Dr Gregory Martin & Dr Jacquie Widin.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?
I'm interested in finding out more about why research seems to show that prison education 'works' to stop reoffending. I'm specifically interested in what significance the role of inmate as 'learner' may play in the desistance process.

IF I SAY YES, WHAT WILL IT INVOLVE?
I will invite you to:

- participate in at least one 30-60 minute semi-structured interview that will be audio-recorded and transcribed. You might be asked for interview a further 2 times over the course of the learning program;
- allow me to observe students being 'learners' in your classroom for approximately 60 minutes, 3 times during their course of their learning program;
- Participate in focus groups to hear feedback about and comment on themes emerging from the research; and
- Allow me to read notes you make about the students (eg case notes).

ARE THERE ANY RISKS/INCONVENIENCE?
There are very few if any risks because the research has been carefully designed. However, it is possible that you might feel embarrassed or worried about having a researcher in your class. I am not watching you or evaluating your work – I am interested in observing the students' interactions and response as 'learners' in the ILC. You might also be worried that what you say about the learners could be revealed to them. All data gathered is confidential and will be de-identified so your identity will be protected. No-one but the researcher will be able to tell what you have said.

WHY HAVE I BEEN ASKED?
You are able to give me the information I need to find out about how students engaged in the ILC program might adopt the role of 'learner' over time and how this might affect or change them.

DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?
You don't have to say yes.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I SAY NO?
Nothing. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

IF I SAY YES, CAN I CHANGE MY MIND LATER?
You can change your mind at any time and you don't have to say why. I will thank you for your time so far and won't contact you about this research again.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE USED?
It will be used for my PhD thesis and academic publications/conferences.

WHAT IF I HAVE CONCERNS OR A COMPLAINT?
If you have concerns about the research that you think I or my Co-supervisors can help you with, please feel free to contact us on:

@student.uts.edu.au, rohan.lulham@uts.edu.au,
jacquie.widin@uts.edu.au, gregory.martin@uts.edu.au

If you would like to talk to someone who is not connected with the research, you may contact the Research Ethics Officer via Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au, and quote this number *(UTS HREC Ref No: ETH16-0282)*

Page 1 of 1

8.8 Consent Forms

8.8.1 General Learner Consent Form

UTS
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT (GENERAL)

Investigating the identity as 'learner' developed by those who engage in prison education and its possible relationship with desistance from crime (UTS HREC Ref No: ETH16-0282)

Chief researcher: Fiona McGregor, PhD Student, School of Education, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences UTS.
Co-supervisor: Dr Rohan Lulham   Co-supervisor: Dr Jacquie Widin   Co-supervisor: Dr Gregory Martin

I ____(name) agree to be part of this research project that is looking at how learners at the ILC respond to being students and how this might affect how they think about themselves and their futures.

The project has been explained to me by the researcher, Fiona McGregor and she has answered all my questions about the project.

I understand that:

- I will be asked to complete up to 2 questionnaires taking about 15 minutes each.
- I do not have to answer any questions if I don't want to.
- no-one will mind if I decide I do not want to take part in this research project.
- I can pull out of the project at any time and I won't get in trouble.
- The researcher has agreed not to tell anyone my name or any other personal details. She will keep my information very safe so no one will know what I've said in my questionnaires or focus groups.
- If I talk to the researcher about an offence that I have not been charged or convicted of, the researcher will be obliged to report it to the authorities.

If I have any questions about this project, I can speak to the researcher. If I want to complain, I can make a complaint to the Senior Corrections Education Officer or another member of staff I trust. A telephone call can be arranged for me with the Research Ethics department at University of Technology Sydney (ph: +61 2 9514 9772 Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au) or I can complain to the CSNSW Ethics Committee secretary by asking the Senior Corrections Education Officer or another member of staff I trust to email them on my behalf (research.enquiries@dcs.nsw.gov.au).

I have read, or have had this consent form read to me, and understand it.

________________________________   ____/____/____
Signature (participant)

________________________________   ____/____/____
Signature (researcher or delegate)

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee and the Corrective Services Ethics Committee. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome. If you make a complaint, please quote the UTS HREC Ref No: ETH16-0282.

Page 1 of 1

Tracked Learner Consent Form

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT (TRACKED)

Investigating the identity as 'learner' developed by those who engage in prison education and its possible relationship with desistance from crime (UTS HREC Ref No: ETH16-0282)

Chief researcher: Fiona McGregor, PhD Student, School of Education, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences UTS.
Co-supervisor: Dr Rohan Lulham Co-supervisor: Dr Jacquie Widin Co-supervisor: Dr Gregory Martin

I ____(name) agree to be part of this research project that is looking at how learners at the ILC respond to being students and how this might affect how they think about themselves and their futures.

The project has been explained to me by the researcher, Fiona McGregor and she has answered all my questions about the project.

I understand that:

- I will be asked to complete up to 2 questionnaires that will take about 15 minutes.
- the researcher will talk to me about my experiences at the ILC. She will ask about how it feels to be a student and what this means to me. She will also ask me questions about what I think my future might be like.
- I will have to talk to the researcher for about 30 minutes but I can stop sooner if I want to.
- I do not have to answer any questions if I don't want to.
- the researcher will audio-record our interviews, but my name won't be on the recording.
- no-one will mind if I decide I do not want to take part in this research project.
- I can pull out of the project at any time and I won't get in trouble.
- The researcher has agreed not to tell anyone my name or any other personal details. She will keep my information very safe so no one will know what I've said during interviews or focus groups.
- It is OK for the researcher to look at my education file, case notes and other information relevant to this project on OIMS.
- It is OK for the researcher to read writing I do in class like stories and my Reflective Learning Journal.
- the researcher will ask other staff about the progress I am making in the ILC and any changes they have noticed in me.
- It is OK for the researcher to quote my words from our interviews or my writing in her work. My name will not be mentioned and my identity will be protected. I understand that her work might be published and that she might present it at conferences, but she will never use my real name or give any clues that I was involved in this research.
- If I talk to the researcher about an offence that I have not been charged or convicted of, the researcher will be obliged to report it to the authorities.

If I have any questions about this project, I can speak to the researcher. If I want to complain, I can make a complaint to the Senior Corrections Education Officer or another member of staff I trust. A telephone call can be arranged for me with the Research Ethics department at University of Technology Sydney (ph: +61 2 9514 9772 Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au) or I can complain to the CSNSW Ethics Committee secretary by asking the Senior

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Corrections Education Officer or another member of staff I trust to email them on my behalf (research.enquiries@dcs.nsw.gov.au).

I have read, or have had this consent form read to me, and understand it.

____ ____/____/____
Signature (participant)

____ ____/____/____
Signature (researcher or delegate)

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee and the Corrective Services Ethics Committee. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome. If you make a complaint, please quote UTS HREC Ref No: ETH16-0282.

8.8.2 Staff Participant Consent Form

CONSENT FORM (Staff)

I ____________________ *(name)* agree to participate in the research project 'Learning to Desist: investigating the identity as 'learner' developed by those who engage in prison education and its relationship with desistance from crime' (UTS HREC Ref No: ETH16-0282) being conducted by Fiona McGregor (e: ____________@student.uts.edu.au) of the University of Technology, Sydney for her degree Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Education, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences

I understand that the purpose of this study is to explore how students at the Intensive Learning Centre, MNCCC respond to the role of student and to identify any noticeable changes in skills, attitudes and behaviours of ILC students over the time they are engaged in the ILC program.

I understand that I have been asked to participate in this research because I work at MNCCC and have contact with ILC students as part of my job, so am in a position to comment on changes I may observe in the students over time. My participation in this research will involve being interviewed by the researcher up to three times over a period of 6-9 months. The interviews are likely to take up to 30 minutes and will be audio recorded. I will be provided with a transcript of the interview which I can make changes to and sign to agree when I am happy with it. The interviews are confidential.

I understand that there may be minimal risks associated with participation in this project, mostly surrounding confidentiality and data protection but I am satisfied that the researcher has established agreed protocols for the secure storage of all data which will also be de—identified. I understand all efforts will be made to minimise all risk.

I am aware that I can contact Fiona McGregor or her supervisors, Dr Rohan Lulham (rohan.lulham@uts.edu.au), Dr Jacquie Widin (jacquie.widin@uts.edu.au) and Dr Gregory Martin (gregory.martin@uts.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from this research project at any time I wish, without consequences, and without giving a reason.

I agree that Fiona McGregor has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

____ ____/____/____
Signature (participant)

____ ____/____/____
Signature (researcher or delegate)

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (ph: +61 2 9514 9772 Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au) and quote the UTS HREC Ref No: ETH16-0282. Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

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8.9 Interview Questions

8.9.1 Interview Questions for Tracked Learner Participants: Phases 1 & 2

Learner Participant Interview Questions: Phases 1 & 2

1. Tell me about what it is like to be an ILC student.
2. What are you learning here?
3. How does being an ILC student make you feel about yourself? (maybe some descriptors offered).
4. Describe your last week in the ILC. What would you say you have learned?
5. How important is learning to you? Why?
6. Do you enjoy learning in the ILC? What do you enjoy the most?
7. Have you been a learner in other prison education departments? How does the ILC compare with those?
8. What is the best thing about learning at the ILC?
9. What is the most significant learning moment you've had in the last 3/6/9/12 months? What was the context? What did you learn? Why was it significant to you?
10. Tell me about a time (since we last met – relevant for follow up interviews) when you really felt you had moved on, become a better student. What do you think was important about that incident?
11. What impact has being a student here had on you?
12. What is the most important difference being a student makes - to you? To your family? To others around you now?
13. How have your thoughts about your future changed since being in the ILC? What are your dreams for the future? How likely are these to become reality?
14. Do you feel that you 'belong' in the ILC? Where do you think you belong the most?
15. What are you like as a student? What do you think your teachers would say about you?
16. What is the most positive change you've experienced since you've been at the ILC? How do you know you have changed? What/who has influenced you most to change?

8.9.2 *Interview Questions For Tracked Learner Participants: Phase 3*

Phase 3 questions: Learner Participants.

1. What makes a good learner?
2. What makes an effective teacher?
3. Describe your relationship with your teacher/s in the ILC?
4. What does your teacher expect of you in class? Do you expect more of yourself than your teacher does?
5. Who would you say you trust:
   - In your life
   - In prison
   - In the wing
   - In the ILC
6. What makes him/her trustworthy?
7. Why did you decide to enroll in the ILC? Was it a good decision?
8. Now that you are getting to the end of the course/have finished your course, what will happen next? What do you *want* to happen? What do you *think* will happen?
9. What has been your best moment/achievement in the ILC?
10. Do you think you've changed in any way as a result of being in ILC education? Could you describe any changes you think you have experienced?
11. What advice would you give to those who are thinking about coming to the ILC or who think that education is not for them?
12. Who benefits the most from coming to the ILC?
13. If you were able to give a message to your younger self now, what would it be?
14. If you were able to give a message to your future self now, what would it be?
15. If you were able to give a message to the public, what would it be?
16. If you were in charge of prison education, what would you do?
17. Who are you? Who are you becoming?

8.9.3 *Interview Questions for ILC Staff*

Sample interview questions: ILC teaching staff

Do you think ILC students change while they are in the ILC program? If so, in what way/s?

What do you think makes a successful learner?

Is there one particular student you think has been particularly successful while in the ILC? Can you tell me about that student and how he was successful?

Why do you think he has changed? What has made a difference to him?

If you were writing a school report on this student, what sort of adjectives would you use to describe him?

What skills/knowledge do you think he has acquired at the ILC?

Do you think the skills/knowledge could be useful to him elsewhere in MNCCC or in the community?

What are your hopes for this student in future?

Can you tell me about any particular ILC student you changed your mind about? (in a good way or a bad way).

Can you tell me about your most significant learning moment in the ILC? Why was it important to you?

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about ILC students in general?

8.9.4 Interview Questions Non-ILC Staff

Sample staff interview questions: Non ILC staff

Are you aware of an inmate/inmates who have been to the ILC?

Can you tell if an inmate has been an ILC student? If so, how?

- Can you give examples?
- What do you think might be making this difference in ILC students?

Can you tell me about a specific inmate who is/has been an ILC student that you have thought showed positive change?

Do you think that ILC students are different in the ILC than when they are in other areas of the prison?

- What sorts of differences might you see?
- Why do you think he is different outside the ILC?

Is there anything else that you think is important for me to know about ILC students?

8.10Identity Map

Pro-forma for learner participants:

My Identity Map: ______________________________ **Date 1:** ______________

Date 2: ______________

Date 3: ______________

Identity Map

I am...

Adapted from: http://www.abc.net.au/talkitup/pdfs/Identity_Activities.pdf

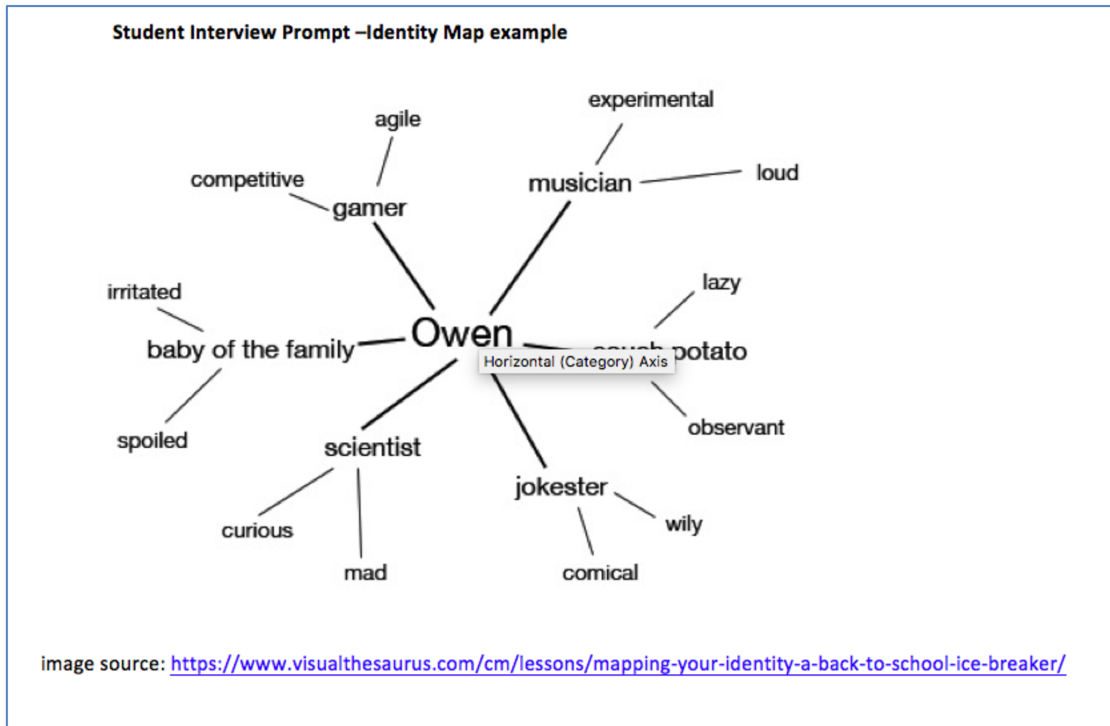
Add words that describe how you see yourself and how you relate to other people/things.

You don't have to fill every circle.

You can add extra circles if you need to.

I will keep your map in a safe place so it is confidential. You will look at this map again in about 3-4 months' time and then again about 3-4 months after that. You can make changes to it each time you look at it if you want to. In reports about this research, I will use your agreed Research Code Name if I write about your work.

Example for participants:



8.11 Supplementary Questionnaire

Social and Emotional Learning Questionnaire

There were two parts to this questionnaire – a self-report by the learner participants (Appendix 8.11.1) and a teacher report on the learner participant (8.11.2). These are shown below:

8.11.1 Learner Participant Self-Report Questionnaire

STUDENT SELF-REPORT SURVEY ON MESH COMPETENCIES

This survey asks about your behaviour, experiences, and attitudes related to learning. We look forward to using your feedback to try to make learning in prisons better.

Some of the survey questions will ask you about specific periods of time (such as the past 30 days) or a particular class (such as maths class). Please pay careful attention to these time periods and classes when you respond.

Please do not write your real name on the survey. Use the code name we have agreed you will be called in reports about this project.

Thank you for taking this survey!

(starts over the page)

Code Name: ____________________________ Date: _______________

Self-Management[1]

First, we'd like to learn more about your behaviour, experiences, and attitudes related to school.

Please answer how often you did the following in class during the past month. Please indicate ☑ how true each of the following statements is for you.

Tick the box that is closest to how you have done in class over the past 30 days...

Question	Almost Never	Once in a While	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1. I came to class prepared					
2. I remembered and followed instructions					
3. I got my work done right away instead of waiting until the last minute					
4. I paid attention, even when there were distractions					
5. I worked independently with focus					
6. I stayed calm even when others bothered or criticised me					
7. I allowed others to speak without interruption					
8. I was polite to adults and peers					
9. I kept my temper in check					

[1] Adapted from Patrick & Duckworth (May, 2013), *Empirical support for a tripartite taxonomy of character in adolescents*. Poster presented at the 25th annual convention of the Association for Psychological Science.

Growth Mindset[2]

In this section, please think about your learning in general.

Please indicate ☑ how true each of the following statements is for you. Tick the box that is closest to what you think:

Question	Not True At All	A Little Bit true	Half True	Mostly True	Completely True
1. My intelligence is something I can't change very much.					
2. Challenging myself won't make me any smarter.					
3. There are some things I am not capable of learning.					
4. If I'm not naturally smart in a subject, I will never do well in it.					

Self-Efficacy[3]

How confident are you about the following at school? Please indicate ☑ how true each of the following statements is for you

Question	Not Confident At All	A Little Confident	Half Confident	Mostly Confident	Completely Confident
1. I can earn an A grade in my classes.					
2. I can do well on all my tests, even when they're difficult.					
3. I can master the hardest topics in my classes.					
4. I can meet all the learning goals my teachers set.					

[2] Farrington et al (2013), Becoming Effective Learners Survey Development Project, Chicago Consortium for School Research.
[3] Adapted from Farrington et al. (2014) Becoming Effective Learners Survey Development Project, Chicago Consortium for School Research.

Social Awareness[4]

In this section, please help us better understand your thoughts and actions when you are with other people. Please answer how often you did in class during the past 30 days. Please indicate ☑ how true each of the following statements is for you. During the past 30 days...

Question	Not Carefully At All	Slightly Carefully	Somewhat Carefully	Quite Carefully	Extremely Carefully
How carefully did you listen to other people's points of view?					
	Not Carefully At All	Cared a Little Bit	Cared Somewhat	Cared Quite a Bit	Cared a Tremendous Amount
How much did you care about other people's feelings?					
	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Often	Almost all the time
How often did you compliment other's achievements?					
	Did not get along at all	Got along a little bit	Got along somewhat	Got along pretty well	Got along extremely well
How well did you get along with students who are different from you?					
	Not at all clearly	Slightly clearly	Somewhat clearly	Quite clearly	Extremely clearly
How clearly were you able to describe your feelings?					
	Not at all respectful	Slightly respectful	Somewhat respectful	Quite respectful	Extremely respectful
When others disagreed with you, how respectful were you of their views?					
	Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Quite a bit	A tremendous amount
How much were you able to stand up for yourself without putting others down?					
	Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Quite a bit	A tremendous amount
How much were you able to disagree with others without starting an argument?					

[4] Adapted from AIR and CASEL (2013) Student self-report of social and emotional competencies

Demographic Questions

Finally, we'd like some background information about you. Please tick ✓ the answer that best describes you.

What ILC class are you in?

- Certificate I
- Certificate II
- Certificate III
- Other grade

How long have you been at the ILC?

- Less than 3 months
- About 6 months
- About 12 months
- More than 12 months

When did you stop going to school? Tick the last year you went to school for most of the year.

- Never went to school
- Before Year 4
- Year 4
- Year 5
- Year 6
- Year 7
- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11
- Year 12
- TAFE
- University

What is your race or ethnicity? (Tick all that apply.)

- Asian
- Aboriginal
- Torres Strait Islander
- Pacific Islander
- White
- African

This is the end of the survey! Thank you very much for taking part.

8.11.2 ILC Teacher Report

Report of MESH Competencies for: _________________ (student's name) Date: ____________

Self-Management (School Work)[1]

Please think about how well your student demonstrated these learning behaviours over the last 30 days. (Please consider the full set of behaviours and provide a single overall rating for the student.)

- Came to class ready to learn
- Remembered and followed directions
- Persisted when tasks became challenging
- Paid attention and maintained focus
- Resisted distractions

(Almost Never, Once in a While, Sometimes, Often, Almost All the Time)

Self-Management (Interpersonal)[2]

Next, please think about how well your student was able to manage himself with regard to classroom behaviour. How frequently did he display the following set of behaviours during the past 30 days? (Please consider the full set of behaviours and provide a single overall rating for the student.)

- Remained calm even when under stress
- Allowed others to speak without interruption
- Got along well with others
- Kept his/her temper in check

(Almost Never, Once in a While, Sometimes, Often, Almost All the Time)

Social Awareness[3]

Finally, please think about how well your student was able to manage himself with regard to his social interactions in class. How frequently did he display the following set of behaviours during the past 30 days? (Please consider the full set of behaviours and provide a single overall rating for the student.)

- Listened carefully to other people's points of view.
- Got along with students who were different from him/her.
- Disagreed with someone without starting an argument.
- Stood up for him/herself without putting others down.
- Noticed and complimented others' accomplishments.

(Almost Never, Once in a While, Sometimes, Often, Almost All the Time)

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[1] Adapted from Patrick, S. D., & Duckworth, A. L., (May, 2013), *Empirical support for a tripartite taxonomy of character in adolescents*. Poster presented at the 25th annual convention of the Association for Psychological Science.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Adapted from AIR and CASEL (2013) Student self-report of social and emotional competencies.

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