

# **The Reintegration of Violent Offenders into the Community**

by

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to fulfil the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Criminology



# Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution. All necessary ethics and safety approvals have been obtained through the Human Research Ethics Committee of Murdoch University (Project number 2017/144).

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# Abstract

In Western Australia, about 10,000 prisoners are released into the community each year with most of these having been incarcerated following a conviction. A recidivism rate around 45% means there are large numbers of released prisoners who are reoffending and are returning to custody. Violent offenders account for about 20% of all prisoners and the harms caused by this group to the community, their families and themselves are considerable. Therefore, it is in the best interests of the government, the community and the returning prisoners themselves that their re-entry into the community is successful.

This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the prisoner reintegration process for violent offenders and, in particular, the elements of the process which contribute effectively to the ex-offender living a non-criminal and satisfying life. Using a qualitative methodology, nine adult males who had been imprisoned for (non-sexual) violent offences and had been released into the community were interviewed regarding their experiences. Recruitment of the participants was through a number of agencies which provide resettlement or rehabilitation and counselling services. A Grounded Theory approach was employed to analyse the transcripts of the interviews, with saturation of the resultant categories being achieved.

Five central themes emerged: the need for connection, a self-awareness which includes motivation for a process of change, a need for support from external agencies which is individually orientated, an agentic capacity to set one's own directions and a desire to give back to assist others. The Good Lives Model of rehabilitation and reintegration is examined and demonstrated to be a close fit to providing a means of addressing the issues arising from the participants' experiences. The implications of this to policy and practice are discussed.



# Personal Statement

This research emanates from an interest of mine in violent offenders. I have for many years conducted workshops with male prisoners in a voluntary capacity with the organisation Alternatives to Violence Project. Through my discussions with the workshop participants, I have become fascinated with the question of what experiences or people have been influential in their lives – both to lead them down a path of violent behaviour and then to cause them to want to turn that around and live differently. When these men are released back into the community, these transformative influences need to be effective enough for the changes in their lives to be stable. It is this phenomenon in which I am interested.





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# List of Abbreviations

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
AVP	Alternatives to Violence Project
CCO	Community Corrections Officer
CoSA	Circles of Support and Accountability program
DoJ	Department of Justice
FIFO	fly in fly out
GLM	Good Lives Model of rehabilitation
NA	Narcotics Anonymous
OICS	Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services
PRU	Pre-release Unit
RNR	Risk, Need, Responsivity model of rehabilitation
SVORI	Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiatives
VOTP	Violent Offenders Treatment Program
VRO	Violence Restraining Order
WA	Western Australia



# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The problem associated with high incarceration rates is that these prisoners inevitably are released back into the community. The rate of imprisonment has been rising markedly in Western Australia in recent years, increasing to 500.1 per 100,000 in 2015 (Clare, 2017), a rate significantly higher than the national average of 365.7 per 100,000. As of March 2018, there were about 6800 prisoners in custody in Western Australia and about 66% of these were sentenced prisoners (ABS, 2018).

In the 12 months up to March 2017, approximately 10,000 prisoners<sup>1</sup> were released back into the community (DCS, 2017). In Western Australia, the recidivism rate<sup>2</sup> is around 45% and much higher for the subgroups of young men and Aboriginal men (DCS, 2014; OICS, 2014). This means there are large numbers of released prisoners who are reoffending and returning to custody within two years. This problem is clearly articulated in a recent report from the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS, 2014, p. i):

Recidivism means more crime, more victims and more financial costs to the state. It places enormous pressures on the prison system, increasing prisoner numbers, overcrowding, and costs.

Therefore, the importance of this re-entry process cannot be underestimated, given the high number of prisoners released, often without parole or supervision. Accordingly, it needs to be sufficiently resourced by government jurisdictions. While the success of reintegration is often measured by low recidivism rates, from a social perspective, measures of well-being and productivity are just as important (Gartner, 2016). Clearly, there is a great need for investment in effective re-entry programs.

As argued in a report by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS, 2016b), there are several reasons that the reintegration process needs to be effectively resourced. Firstly, as a social justice issue, it is unreasonable to expect that prisoners

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<sup>1</sup> This figure includes those on remand

<sup>2</sup> From prison to Corrective Services

with complex difficulties relating to mental health, accommodation, family relationships, substance abuse and employment will reintegrate into the community without any support. Secondly, with such a high recidivism rate, especially in the first 12 months after release, the cost of incarceration to the public purse is exceptional. Thirdly, the human suffering to potential victims, offenders and their families is incalculable. Therefore, it benefits the government, the community and the returning prisoners that the re-entry process is successful.

In Western Australia, violent offenders account for about 20% of all prisoners (ABS, 2018). The harms caused by this group to the community, their families and themselves are considerable (Kemshall & Wilkinson, 2015). Hence, it is appropriate to focus on this group for rehabilitation efforts (Day & Doyle, 2010).

While there are aspects of violent offenders' lives which cannot be changed – the static risk factors, such as childhood experiences and previous criminal behaviour – there are opportunities whilst incarcerated for these men to choose to live their lives differently. These include rehabilitation programs assigned to them after a forensic psychological risk assessment; a range of voluntary programs in which they might engage; counsellors, other prison support staff and fellow prisoners, all of whom may have a degree of influence. Also, prior to release, there may be re-entry services available to plan for a new approach to life. These services may include those provided by the prison, the Department of Justice or a contracted service organisation<sup>3</sup>. If effective in engaging the offender, there is the potential to reduce the risk factors associated with recidivism, such as association with criminal or non-social peers, unemployment or substance abuse (Davis, Bahr, & Ward, 2013).

Once released into the community, whether on parole or at the termination of their sentence, there are further opportunities to successfully reintegrate and live a non-criminal life. Once again, there are many service organisations<sup>4</sup> which potentially could contribute to this process, through providing access to accommodation, employment or training support, drug and alcohol counselling, therapy programs and mentoring.

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<sup>3</sup> See [www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au/prisons/getting-out.aspx](http://www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au/prisons/getting-out.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> For example, Outcare, UnitingCare West, Centrecare, Wungening Aboriginal Corporation, Communicare, Ruah

Besides all of these sources of potential support, there is the self-agency of the former offender himself<sup>5</sup>. Potentially, this may manifest in the recognition of the antisocial and destructive nature of his previous behaviours; a desire to change; an application of his own internal resources or taking the initiative in accessing available assistance.

So, the question I will investigate through this study is: when the violent offender returns to the community after being released from prison, what will best prepare him for and support him through that process, leading to a satisfying, constructive and non-criminal life?

## 1.2 Aim and Scope of the study

The aim of the study is to identify, through the experiences of violent offenders in Western Australia, the factors which are important in their reintegration into the community. The study considers aspects of reintegration including desistance from crime, the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs, post-release support services and social supports.

The persons of interest in this study are adult males who had been convicted and imprisoned for violent offences, had been released into the community within the last five years and are residing in the metropolitan region of Perth, Western Australia.

Furthermore, this study explores the crucial link for consistency between existing models of rehabilitation and reintegration and the voices of returning prisoners who have committed violent offences.

## 1.3 Overview of the thesis

Following the encouragement of Evans, Gruba, and Zobel (2011), I shall write in the first person when describing my processes, opinions or conclusions.

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<sup>5</sup> Masculine pronouns will be used throughout as the focus of this study is male offenders

In Chapter 2, I will review the literature in this field and show that, while there has been much research conducted on violent offenders, most of the studies have used forms of quantitative analysis. Studies with a qualitative methodology employing interviews with violent offenders are mostly from international sources and do not relate directly to the reintegration process. The theoretical framework and models used extensively for rehabilitation and, to a lesser extent, reintegration, will be reviewed.

The qualitative methods employed in this study will be described and justified in Chapter 3. This will include an overview of Grounded Theory and its applicability to this study.

In Chapter 4, I will present the results of the data analysis conducted using Grounded Theory, demonstrating the five major themes emerging from the data. These themes will be further elaborated and discussed in relation to existing theory and previous research in Chapter 5. Finally, in Chapter 6, I will summarise the findings and draw out some implications for policy and practice.

# Chapter 2 Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by outlining the literature regarding the underlying criminogenic needs of violent offenders. It then draws together the key understandings from previous research into rehabilitation programs and re-entry services, with a particular focus on what the evidence shows about factors which are effective in these services. There is also a consideration of what is known about the process of desistance from crime, and violence in particular, as this is an essential component of the process of reintegration to the community.

The chapter concludes with a summary of the qualitative studies which have been undertaken into re-entry of former prisoners generally, and violent offenders specifically. This provides some useful background in both methodology and findings relevant to this study. I shall demonstrate the need to further investigate the reintegration process for violent offenders.

## 2.2 Rehabilitation

The overt purpose of rehabilitation is to prevent reoffending. Recidivism, or repeat offending, is therefore a key measure of success for any correctional initiatives. For correctional authorities and policy makers, there is a delicate balance between punishment and rehabilitation, especially as the voices of victims of crime are now more widely recognised (Ward, Day, & Casey, 2006). This creates a tension in the goals of sentencing and incarceration, with the dominant philosophy of today, as argued by Travis (2005), being that of retribution, rather than rehabilitation. This tension is influenced by community attitudes, "apparently becoming more risk-averse and punitive in their attitudes towards offenders" (Ward & Maruna, 2007, p. 175).

Specific deterrence aims to discourage offenders through imprisonment as a punitive measure, whereas rehabilitation seeks to change the values of the offender who then desists from crime due to attitudinal reform (Bagaric & Alexander, 2012). Incarceration on its own is not a deterrence and does not reduce violent recidivism (Bagaric &

Alexander, 2012; Gendreau, Cullen, & Goggin, 1999; Glass, 2016; Kenemore & Roldan, 2006; Lopez & Emmer, 2002; Motiuk, 2000; Toch, 1992). Thus, custody without the use of rehabilitation programs is ineffective in keeping the community safe after the release of a violent offender. From their meta-analysis of 80 studies on the effectiveness of correctional treatment, Andrews, Zinger, et al. (1990) concluded that the type of treatment was clearly the variable producing the strongest effect in reducing recidivism and significantly more effective in reducing recidivism than were criminal sanctions or inappropriate service.

### 2.2.1 Criminogenic needs

There are a number of recognised risk factors associated with criminal offending. Criminogenic needs are a subset of the dynamic risk factors that are directly linked to criminal behaviour. Bonta and Andrews (2007) list these as antisocial personality, pro-criminal attitudes, social supports for crime, substance abuse, poor family/marital relationships, low performance on school/work and lack of prosocial recreational activities.

There is evidence that some static risk factors are particularly relevant for violent offenders. These include initial offending at a young age (Mclean & Beak, 2012; Walker, Bowen, & Brown, 2013), a long criminal career (Gartner, 2016; Mclean & Beak, 2012), a history of violence (Mclean & Beak, 2012) and an abusive childhood (Farrington, 1998; Walker et al., 2013). The probability of violence occurring is significantly related to the number of risk factors present (Farrington, 1998).

It is the dynamic risk factors, however, which allow correctional practitioners the opportunity to influence the behaviour of violent offenders. Some of these dynamic risk factors could be referred to as personality traits. Impulsivity and risk taking are commonly identified traits for the violent offender (Craig, Gannon, & Dixon, 2013; Farrington, 1998; Motiuk, 2000; Ware, Cieplucha, & Matsuo, 2011). Antisocial attitudes and interaction with antisocial peers (Craig et al., 2013; Farrington, 1998; Gartner, 2016; Polaschek & Collie, 2004; Ware et al., 2011) are also strongly correlated with violent offending.



Polaschek and Collie (2004) acknowledged that social cognitive deficits and impulsivity are strong risk factors but suggested that it is unclear whether these traits are specific to violent offenders. From their meta-analysis of violence rehabilitation programs, they also claimed that there is no evidence for anger as a criminogenic need, suggesting instead that anger is symptomatic of a pattern of impulsivity or poor self-regulation not necessarily limited to violent offenders. A compelling case has also been made by Fisher and Hall (2011) regarding an inflated sense of entitlement as a criminogenic need for violent offenders.

### 2.2.2 Addressing the risk factors

The focus on rehabilitation of violent offenders has become more prevalent since the 1980s, prior to which there was a paradigm of punishment, based on retribution and deterrence. This was precipitated, in part, from the 'nothing works' mentality of the 1970s when Martinson (1974) reported that either the rehabilitation programs were not good enough or simply did not work in reducing recidivism.

Since the 1970s, Andrews, Bonta, and Hoge (1990) developed the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model for correctional treatment. The risk principle states the requirement to match the intensity of service provision to the offender's level of risk to re-offend. The need principle is to assess criminogenic needs and target them in treatment. The responsivity principle is to tailor the intervention to the learning style, motivation, abilities and strengths of the offender (Bonta & Andrews, 2007). There is much evidence to show that recidivism decreases significantly when more of the principles are addressed and increases when none of the principles are applied. (Andrews, Zinger, et al., 1990; Bonta & Andrews, 2007). Based on these principles, Petersilia (2004) advised that rehabilitation programs should take place mostly in the community, be intensive, focussed on high-risk offenders, be cognitive-behaviourally based, and matched programs to individual characteristics of the offender.

Risk assessment which only focusses on the generic risk factors may be unreliable due to ignoring the environment to which the offender will be returned. Steadman (1982) argued that the situational factors are more relevant to the likelihood of violent

behaviour reoccurring and thus attention ought to be given to the living situation, activity patterns and drug and alcohol use.

### 2.2.3 Rehabilitation programs

The principle of targeting criminogenic needs is critical. There is considerable heterogeneity in the violent offender population so individual functional analysis is needed (Howells & Day, 2002; Ware et al., 2011). It was demonstrated by Chambers, Ward, Eccleston, and Brown (2009) that there are different pathways to violent offences and thus rehabilitation should be tailored to the individual needs of the offender. The need for different programs considering the personality attributes and different types of violent offenders is also raised by Toch (1992, p. 226), who noted that "it makes no sense to approach all violent men with the same remedial program" but added that individual treatment is unnecessary, rather that groupings of similar offenders can be made. When discussing psychopathy in violent offenders, Tew, Harkins, and Dixon (2013) argued that the focus should be on addressing the relevant offending needs rather than the symptoms of psychopathy. As it is evident that violent offenders have high recidivism rates for non-violent offending, there is a need to also target more general criminogenic needs (Polaschek, Wilson, Townsend, & Daly, 2005). The practice of 'program stacking' – the use of multiple programs, targeting specific needs – seems to be effective in this regard (Anstiss, 2003).

Treatment readiness is considered to be a significant factor in the success of rehabilitation programs (Chambers et al., 2009; Grossi, 2017; Ware et al., 2011; Wong & Gordon, 2009). Howells and Day (2003) described seven potential impediments to readiness which may render the violent offender resistant to therapeutic efforts. These included dysfunctional client inferences about the nature of their problem and denial that their aggression and violence is problematic. One of the critical issues in a cognitive-behavioural approach is the motivation to change required by the participants and so a therapist's initial goal is to find a means of engaging the offender (Day & Doyle, 2010).

When considering the range of cognitive factors which could impact on an offender's readiness to engage in treatment programs, including particular beliefs about his

violence or traits of cognition, Chambers, Eccleston, Day, Ward, and Howells (2008) suggested some offenders would be resistant to change, especially if there was a perceived coercion. This includes offenders having primary cognitive distortions who may be self-oriented, considering that no other points of view matter. Thus, they can't see the need for personal change. They may also hold a belief that the violent act serves some purpose. The authors suggested that there needs to be some pre-treatment to address the offender's motivation. The primary method is that of Motivational Interviewing (McNeill & Weaver, 2010). In this one-to-one process, the therapist would include the components of empathy, developing discrepancy, avoiding argument, rolling with resistance and supporting self-efficacy (Miller & Rollnick, 2003). Motivational Interviewing is also seen as useful in assessing the offender's readiness for change as well as establishing the relational qualities from which motivation can grow.

Day and Doyle (2010) argued that institutional life in a prison can serve as an inhibitor to engagement in a therapeutic program in that providing therapy is typically not a primary goal of a prison system. They suggested that even when the importance of these goals is acknowledged, custodial functions of imprisonment will always be pre-eminent. Regardless of this, according to Polaschek, Yesberg, Bell, Casey, and Dickson (2016), an initial reluctance to engage is typical of high-risk violent offenders who often show an improvement on their engagement during the program and later attribute personal gains to their continued attendance in the program.

In regards to treatment placement in Western Australian prisons, OICS (2014) acknowledged that treatment readiness is critical and that there is no value in assigning prisoners with low motivation to a program. The report noted that in 2013, 70% of offenders assessed as a low motivation rating were nevertheless assigned to a program, mostly intensive in nature. This would appear to be a waste of valuable resources and, possibly, counterproductive.

While there have been a limited number of studies dealing with treatment effectiveness for violent offenders specifically (Day & Doyle, 2010; Howells, Watt, Hall, & Baldwin, 1997; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2007; Ware et al., 2011; Whitehead, Ward, & Collie, 2007), most use some form of cognitive behavioural therapy or anger management (Bagaric & Alexander, 2012; Polaschek & Collie, 2004; Polaschek et al., 2016). In their review of

research reports on treatments for violent offenders, Jolliffe and Farrington (2007) concluded that interventions with violent offenders were effective both at reducing general and violent re-offending. The features of programs which proved more effective include the duration of the program, those which addressed cognitive skills and anger control, used role play and had offenders complete homework. Similarly, Polaschek and Collie (2004) reported that most of the studies they reviewed show some evidence of modest success in recidivism. For the programs targeting antisocial cognition, there were convincing results for violent recidivism. However, they claim that there is currently no empirical basis for arguing that violent offending requires specialist programming and that there is a lack of detail about the underpinning theoretical basis for the interventions used. In concluding a meta-analysis on violent criminal careers, Piquero, Jennings, and Barnes (2012) argued: "In order to reduce violence, the focus should be on reducing recidivism more generally regardless of the type of offense which initially brought the individual into the criminal justice system" (p. 177).

Despite that claim, there is evidence that interventions specifically targeting violent offenders have some success in reducing violent, and general, recidivism (e.g. Polaschek et al., 2005, Polaschek et al., 2016). As noted earlier, where these programs target the offender population and individual criminogenic needs, they have more chance of success (Howells et al., 1997; Ware et al., 2011). In their evaluation of the outcomes of the high-risk special treatment units in New Zealand, Polaschek et al. (2016) conclude:

Overall then, the data show that completers of intensive treatment units for high-risk violent prisoners are significantly less likely to breach parole, to be reconvicted for any type of offence, to be reconvicted for violence, and to be reimprisoned for a new offence in the first 12 months after release on parole. (p. 359)

The overview of interventions for violent offenders conducted by Kemshall and Wilkinson (2015) concluded that programs targeting emotional self-management, interpersonal skills and social problem-solving attain positive outcomes with high reliability. Again, of note, was the observation that successful outcomes were less consistent in prison-based programs.

The effectiveness of the inclusion of anger management programs for violent offenders is somewhat ambiguous (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2007). Where offenders are assigned to these programs with little evidence of the criminogenic need, the outcomes on recidivism are mixed (Polaschek & Collie, 2004). From the perspective of the parolee, mandated anger management programs can add to their frustration and inhibit their sense of self-determination (Feldman, 2016). Novaco (2013) admitted that " the evidence for anger treatment lowering physical aggression is relatively sparse" (p. 227) and yet notes that there is evidence that programs having an anger control component are associated with reduced recidivism. Whether this is an adequate justification for the inclusion of such programs in the suite of interventions, remains unclear, particularly given the earlier discussion about the ambiguity of anger as a criminogenic need.

The use of rehabilitation programs in Australia is similar to that of the US and UK. Australian jurisdictions have been devoting increased resources into rehabilitation over the past decade. Heseltine, Day, and Sarre (2011) suggested that each jurisdiction had made programmatic advances and the quality of the programs was improving, although their effectiveness had not been adequately evaluated. This lack of evaluation of programs, also noted by other researchers (Bagaric & Alexander, 2012; Howells & Day, 2002; OICS, 2014; Ware et al., 2011), makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the effectiveness of the programs used in Australia.

So, while there are some encouraging results reported in rehabilitation programs for violent offenders, the evidence is mixed on recidivism outcomes for this group. As such, recidivism measures alone may not be the best indicators of success but rather to be taken in conjunction with indicators of cognitive change and personal wellbeing.

#### 2.2.4 Rehabilitation models

As discussed earlier, the Risk Needs Responsivity (RNR) model is the predominant model for rehabilitation programs in Australia and most of the world. The model has a risk-management perspective (which suits the purposes of community-focussed policy makers) and thus therapies target the modification of dynamic risk factors (Ward &

Maruna, 2007). Despite a mounting evidence base for its relative success, in the last ten years the underpinning philosophy of the RNR model has been questioned.

Offender strengths within the RNR model are conceptualised as the absence of risks or needs. Such approaches are thus a deficits paradigm. According to Fox (2015, p. 69), "Correctional rehabilitation, however, including probation and community corrections, is dominated by models that insist offenders' subjective states are flawed, that they are risks to be managed, and that criminal personalities are distinct from ordinary peoples". Similarly, Ward and Maruna (2007) argued that although risk reduction is a commendable aim to protect the community, individual offenders need assistance in creating better and more meaningful lives. They contend that:

The failure of RNR explicitly to consider a broad range of human needs and the role of identity and agency in offending means that it ultimately pays insufficient attention to core therapeutic and intervention tasks (e.g. treatment alliance, motivational issues). (p. 105)

The alternative is a strengths-based approach. Even within the RNR-based programs, the principle of responsivity, or effectively engaging offenders, is relatively weakly represented (McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler, & Maruna, 2012b). The Good Lives Model (GLM) of offender rehabilitation (Ward & Brown, 2004) attempts to redress this in assuming that interventions should promote an individual's predisposition to seek certain goals and human goods and provide the means for them to achieve this in non-criminal ways, as well as managing risk. The GLM recognises that while an individual may have a number of internal or external problems which lead to offending behaviour, his motivations and goals are essentially the same as everyone else: to attain primary human goods in their environment (e.g. relationships, mastery experiences, a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose, and autonomy) (Ward & Maruna, 2007). This requires "an explicit focus on conceptualizing a good life—taking account of strengths, primary goods and relevant environments, and encouraging and respecting individuals' capacities to make choices for themselves" (McNeill et al., 2012b, p. 48).

According to Ward and Maruna (2007), the GLM both builds upon and transcends the RNR model because it connects with an individual's motivation to change, as well as addressing risk factors. It is strengths-based in the sense that it acknowledges the

preferences and values of the individual and provides them with the competencies and opportunities to build better lives (Whitehead et al., 2007). The individualisation of a therapeutic program is also stressed by McNeill and Weaver (2010) who contend that theories of change and any implemented plans need to be personalised and developed in collaboration with the offender. The contention of the GLM is that equipping offenders with means to implement a good life plan will also modify their criminogenic needs. Thus, the issue of poor motivation is addressed as offenders are not asked to abandon the things which are important to them. In this way, interventions are considered to be adding to the offender's personal functioning, rather than merely attempting to remove or manage risks (Ward & Maruna, 2007), thus leading to the potential for desistance.

## 2.3 Desistance

Why does a criminal offender cease their criminal activity? How can this process be aided and accelerated? These questions are at the heart of the endeavours of modern correctional practices relating to rehabilitation and reintegration.

One of the most universally empirically evident facts of criminology is that offending decreases with age from early adulthood (Davis et al., 2013; Haggård, Gumpert, & Grann, 2001; Maruna, 2001; Piquero, 2004; Walker et al., 2013). There is now little support for the theory that criminal offenders are 'different' types of people who are irredeemable. The evidence is that almost every offender eventually 'goes straight', or desists, from crime (Piquero, 2004).

Defining and measuring desistance is problematic. As an event, it is impossible to know if an offender has ceased criminal activity permanently. This leads to the concept of intermittency whereby offenders go into temporary remission and then resume a criminal career, perhaps in cycles as a function of changes in their local life circumstances (Farrington, 2007; Piquero, 2004). Thus, most researchers prefer to describe desistance as a causal process which supports the continued state of non-offending (Davis et al., 2013; Farrington, 2007; Walker et al., 2013). Maruna (2001) drew an analogy to the alcoholic who is on a pathway to sobriety but has lapses along the way

and suggested that desistance might more productively defined as the long-term abstinence from crime among individuals who had previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending. It can be helpful to think in terms of the concepts of primary desistance, being a lull or crime-free gap, and secondary desistance, when the offender is assuming the role or identity of a changed person (Maruna, Immarigeon, & LeBel, 2004).

From his qualitative study of desisters, Maruna (2001) observed:

Every member of the desisting sample reported offending on a daily basis or weekly basis in the not-so-distant past. For such individuals, 12 months of drug-free, crime-free and arrest-free behaviour is a significant life change worthy of examination. This abstinence from criminal behaviour does not guarantee the change is "permanent" but it accurately captures the process I'm interested in studying. (pp. 47-48)

This zig-zag process of desistance, with intermittency leading to more permanent desistance, is difficult to measure and creates a dilemma for authorities. If offenders are about to desist, it is a waste of scarce prison resources to lock them up (Farrington, 2007). Clearly, the probability of termination increases with time so, practically, it is simpler to establish a decrease in frequency, variety or seriousness of offending (Farrington, 2007).

There are several theories by which one can understand and interpret desistance. These could be broadly described as developmental life course theories and cognitive transformation theories (Davis et al., 2013). The former emphasise the role of internal and motivational factors, together with informal social controls such as employment and marriage (Laub & Sampson, 1993). Cognitive transformation theories emphasise subjective change and the role and development of agency (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002). However, there is probably a need for some integration of these models to more fully understand desistance.

The desire to change is the key element in any change process; however, this motivation on its own is not sufficient (Haggård et al., 2001). The offender needs to be able to embrace the possibility of change as a real prospect and also needs social support.



The development of social capital can be through involvement of the family, a stable marriage, parenting or mentoring in the community (Farrall, Maruna, & Immarigeon, 2004; Haggård et al., 2001; Mclean & Beak, 2012; McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler, & Maruna, 2012a; Sampson & Laub, 1995, 2005; Walker et al., 2013). In a qualitative evaluation of the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) program in the US, Fox (2016) demonstrated the social dimensions of desistance-promoting practice whereby desistance is facilitated by community integration. The CoSA program provides volunteer community sponsorship for released offenders. The interactions with the volunteers provide social capital and this social support is a critical component to increasing a sense of agency among offenders, thus creating a noncriminal identity which occurs in interaction with others.

Haggård et al. (2001) investigated the notion of turning points, or triggers, in the change process of violent offenders. These were usually one specific event or factor having a negative influence, leading to some insights, and were the start of a longer process of desistance. Carlsson (2012) also argued that the concept of turning points can be useful in understanding the process of desistance; however, they need to be understood in the context of the surrounding social circumstances, as these factors operate in tandem.

Such turning points can operate as the catalyst for the desire to change and yet it is the reinforcing interplay between individual motivation, agency and social support that most effectively produces the movement towards desistance (Carlsson, 2012; Davis et al., 2013; Maruna, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 2005). That is, desistance requires human agency and social structure and interaction between them (Haggård et al., 2001).

The importance of developing an affirming self-narrative was described by Maruna (2001). His well-developed argument is that to desist from crime, ex-offenders need to develop a coherent, prosocial identity for themselves, by making sense of their lives, commonly in the form of a self-narrative. Maruna found that the main differences between desister and persister narratives could be classified as (1) an establishment of the core beliefs that characterise the person's 'core self', (2) an optimistic perception of personal control over one's destiny and (3) a desire to be productive and to give something back to society.

According to Maruna (2001), the 'core self' was seen as distinct from the party responsible for crimes of the past. The desistance process could then be envisaged as freeing one's 'real me' from external constraints (drug dependency, poverty, a lack of education or skills or societal prejudice), sometime described in terms of empowerment from some outside source. The self-narrative is then a reconstruction of one's life story of a moral tale, often involving cognitive neutralisation techniques to explain deviant behaviour.

The self-identity as a moral, decent person was also observed by Presser (2004) who described the ex-offender's perception of themselves as in a 'heroic struggle'. She distinguished between 'return narratives' which offered excuses for past crimes due to criminogenic factors which were present, and 'stability narratives' which presented a steady moral character and tended to apportion blame on others.

Neutralisation techniques are often employed by the ex-offender to enhance the coherence of such narratives. Presser (2004) identified those commonly used to be (1) defined offending as good; (2) framed offending as fleeting and atypical of one's true self; or (3) shifted the focus of stories and the overall narrative away from one's offending, noting that "these discursive tactics effectively helped the narrator to neutralize deviance in the past for the sake of a nondeviant self-presentation today" (p. 88).

Rehabilitation could be viewed as change through intervention and desistance as self-change, and yet both require self-agency (Maruna et al., 2004; McNeill et al., 2012a). Liem and Richardson (2014) highlighted the importance of this in their study of 'lifers'. They found that the lifers who had been re-incarcerated lacked a sense of agency, despite exhibiting a sense of core self and generative motivations. Four themes were identified as prevalent in this group: the idea of chance, the notion of self as passive object, 'negative phrasing' and the inability to reflect. This reinforces this concept of the agentic desister, which possibly contradicts the common image of the 'burnt-out' criminal (Maruna, 2001). One of the major findings of the desistance study of LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, and Bushway (2008) was that the belief in self-efficacy could be viewed as a necessary condition for desistance from crime and quite likely conditioned the effects of any social problems after release from prison.

LeBel et al. (2008) proposed a subjective-social model of desistance, highlighting the importance of cognitive changes in the individual prior to release. They suggested that these subjective changes may precede structural social events or 'turning points', enabling self-agentic influence.

Generative pursuits (or 'giving back') address the needs of the desister for fulfilment, exoneration, legitimacy and even therapy (Arditti & Parkman, 2011; Kenemore & Roldan, 2006; LeBel, 2007; Maruna, 2001). In discussing restorative justice principles in the reintegration process, Bazemore and Erbe (2004) concur, citing the sense of usefulness and belonging, established by the desister in the context of community.

Adding to the complexity of desistance, in a qualitative study of ex-offenders, Nugent and Schinkel (2016) argued that "desistance for some is not just a 'process' but rather more like an endurance test with little to no reward for their efforts" (p. 580). They described the 'pains of desistance' as isolation and loneliness, emanating from an attempt to avoid negative influences; goal failure, particularly in relation to gaining employment; and a lack of hope, arising from constant failure and lack of recognition from others. This is an important perspective on desistance and highlights the imperative for greater understanding of the plight of ex-offenders, and for assistance which addresses these 'pains'.

An understanding of the desistance process has implications for rehabilitative practices. As noted earlier, most criminals desist naturally over time. However, as argued by Maruna et al. (2004):

The process of spontaneous desistance takes far too long and leaves too many victims in its wake. The lesson of desistance research is that correctional interventions should recognise this 'natural' process of reform and design interventions that can enhance or complement these spontaneous efforts. (p. 16)

This argument is also made by Bazemore and Erbe (2004) when discussing invention based on restorative justice principles which they say is "essentially about accelerating naturalistic processes of desistance by creating new connections that build human capital in offenders and social capital in the communities where they will be reintegrated" (p. 47).

As a considerable part of correctional practice involves trying to change the self-narratives of inmates, some understanding of the role they play is essential. Cognitive neutralisation techniques used by offenders could, in extreme, be considered as denial of responsibility. However, Maruna (2001) argued that there is value in an acceptance of neutralisations, noting that offenders who use neutralisations typically are less comfortable with their previous behaviours and are moving towards more conventional morality. These narratives have an important part to play in protecting the self-esteem, reducing anxiety and protecting the sense of self as a non-criminal. It is, after all, this perception of the 'core self', distinct from the party responsible for crimes of the past, which enables the desistance change to proceed. Controversially perhaps, this contradicts central tenet of rehabilitation practice – the need to own up to the past.

In regards to 'lifers', who have had a lengthy incarceration, Liem and Richardson (2014) noted that they have typically developed, perhaps with assistance through rehabilitation programs, a well-rehearsed transformative narrative. They found that this was not a protective factor for recidivism but rather the discriminating factor was a sense of agency. Therefore, they argued that post-prison programs should focus on developing self-agency.

Finally, the identification of protective factors for desistance has been an important development, although there has not been much research on their effect (Farrington, 1998). While these could potentially be regarded as the absence of risk factors (Walker et al., 2013), the presence of such factors is seen to have a moderating effect on the exposure to risk (Herrenkohl et al., 2003; Lodewijks, de Ruiter, & Doreleijers, 2010; Rennie & Dolan, 2010; Yesberg & Polaschek, 2015). In a study of violent recidivism in Dutch youth, Lodewijks et al. (2010) found that strong social support and strong attachments to prosocial adults were significant predictors of desistance. Similarly, other studies have identified that marriage and employment serve as protective factors for violent men (McClean & Beak, 2012; Sampson & Laub, 1995). These factors on their own do not create a desistance mindset but rather the interplay between them and the meaning afforded to them by the offender himself (McNeill & Weaver, 2010).

## 2.4 Reintegration – what works

The term 'reintegration' can be referred to as the successful transition from a prisoner to a productive and independent member of the community (Hunter, Lanza, Lawlor, Dyson, & Gordon, 2016; OICS, 2016b). Despite the efforts to address offending behaviours, many of the risk factors remain when prisoners are released. It is ironic that we use this term "because in most cases they were never integrated in the mainstream in the first place" (Maruna, 2001, p. 14). Often, as noted by Halsey (2006), young offenders are expected to find more conventional networks upon release, rather than returning to the friendship groups which have provided the only source of security and identity for them.

Specifically, prisoner re-entry is the physical resettlement and participation in the community (Gideon & Sung, 2010) – the process ex-offenders navigate as they leave correctional facilities and return to society. This process starts prior to release and continues long after (Maruna et al., 2004), encompassing any correctional programming provided, transitional services and possibly completing terms of community supervision, such as parole (Gartner, 2016).

As observed in the US context, Seiter and Kadela (2003) claimed that as re-entry policies are focussed on avoidance of risk, there is a 'revolving door of offenders' who fail in the community and are reimprisoned. They argued that this is as much a failure of re-entry policies as it is of the offender himself.

### 2.4.1 Principles of successful reintegration

The first weeks and months after release back into the community are critical for the offender as this is a highly unstable time where circumstances can be changing rapidly (Gartner, 2016). Community supervision while on parole, is considered to be valuable in the early re-entry process but some studies claim that there is little empirical evidence that parole reduces recidivism (Bonta, Rugge, Scott, Bourgon, & Yessine, 2008; Yesberg & Polaschek, 2015). This claim, which is not universally supported (Motiuk, 2000; Woldgabreal, Day, & Ward, 2014), seems to be counter-intuitive, so the possible reasons

for this need to be explored further, including the factors which alongside parole make it more effective. There is some evidence that community supervision practices do not adhere very well to the risk and need principles, or the use of behavioural techniques, or provide prosocial modelling (Bonta et al., 2008). Furthermore, the effectiveness of any re-entry program can be diminished by staff turnover and poor program integrity – where there is a gap between the principles espoused by the management and the enacted practices of the staff (Smith, Gendreau, & Swartz, 2009).

While there is little evidence about how community supervision impacts on reoffending (McNeill et al., 2012a), there are indications that it is a valuable element of the reintegration process. For some, this can act as a deterrence to reoffending; for others, having access to resources for solving problems is important (Rex, 1999). McNeill et al. (2012a) observed that while some ex-probationers initially dismissed the value of the supervision, in retrospect they acknowledged its contribution. For offenders arrested and sentenced to a probation under supervision, there is evidence that, at the least, this significantly reduces the criminal activities of these offenders (MacKenzie, 2011). Similarly, released offenders have reported that supervision in the community was a significant factor in their successful reintegration (Gideon, 2009). The major contribution of community corrections is that of offender change which has the dual effect of reducing harm to the community and enabling the ex-offender to become positively engaged in the community (McNeill et al., 2012b).

The use of parole supervision is strongly supported by Travis (2005), who claimed that parole boards can promote rehabilitation and thus successful reintegration. Furthermore, he suggested that at least all violent offenders should have post-release supervision built into their sentencing. However, he argued that there should be limits to the supervision conditions to reduce the numbers of parolees returned to prison for parole violations. These conditions should be tailored to the specific needs and risks of the individual and supervision periods should be reduced for good behaviour.

The high incidence of re-arrest of parolees, particularly in the first few months of release, is a significant problem and inhibits the reintegration process for these offenders. Travis (2005, p. 353) warned that "we have constructed systems of supervision and extended sanctions that severely inhibit former prisoners' ability to

regain their place at society's table". This could also be partially addressed by having quality feasible release plans which have been shown to contribute to reduced recidivism (Polaschek et al., 2016). Such a 'safety plan' (Travis, 2005), combined with frontloading supervision resources when they are most needed, would best serve those most vulnerable to lapses. One valuable component of community-based supervision such as parole would be the continuation of programs begun in prison. This would help to maintain the progress made and to reduce the risk of reoffending (Grossi, 2017).

In the UK, there is an increasing practice of peer mentoring provided by ex-offenders. Fletcher and Batty (2012) suggested four key propositions for this practice:

First, peers can be effective 'identity models' for offenders- people they can identify with and are living proof that turning away from crime is possible. Second, peer support is necessary because offenders view professional staff as authority figures and are more likely to listen to individuals that have 'walked in their shoes'. Third, it is cost-effective. Finally, the approach can build social capital and resilience within deprived communities. (p. i)

Despite the perceived risks presented by employing ex-offenders, the potential benefits to the newly-released offender, as outlined above, are enormous. So too, there are significant benefits for the reformed offender in the role as a peer mentor. There is the healing effect of their generative actions in helping others (Maruna, 2001), consolidation and affirmation of progress they have made (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016) and a softening of the stigmatisation barrier through being made to feel acceptable and useful. It was also one of the key recommendations of the report by Seppings (2016) that Justice Departments support through-the-gate peer mentoring using reformed prisoners as models and guides.

It is becoming increasingly common for non-government agencies to provide re-entry programs for returning prisoners. These could take the form of transitional or treatment programs (Seiter & Kadela, 2003). There have been a number of evaluations reported on re-entry programs, mostly in the US, and the majority of these indicate reductions in recidivism rates (Bouffard & Bergeron, 2006; Braga, Piehl, & Hureau, 2009; Davis et al., 2013; Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Wikoff, Linhorst, & Morani, 2012; Wright, Zhang, Farabee, & Braatz, 2014). Identifying the key factors contributing to the success of these

programs is not always easy, as multi-dimensional features are used, and the risk factors for individuals vary considerably. There are usually multiple goals of such programs, including reducing the risk of reoffending, and a paucity of robust evidence on which to judge 'good practice' (Day, Ward, & Shirley, 2011).

Many re-entry programs address factors such as housing needs, employment, drug treatment and education. Wright et al. (2014) found that many of the programs evaluated were promising and those providing housing assistance and the inclusion of an aftercare component seemed to have the greatest positive effects on participants' lives. The evaluations assessed by Seiter and Kadela (2003) provided mixed results. They concluded that vocational training programs are effective in reducing recidivism, drug treatment programs and halfway house programs are effective in easing the transition to the community and education programs increase educational achievement scores but do not decrease recidivism. Whatever the measures of success may be, the provision of these services can only benefit the lives of ex-offenders.

Although measuring the overall success of reintegration is difficult, Gideon and Sung (2010) pointed at the measurable outcomes that contribute to successful reintegration: legitimate employment, education, alcohol and drug abstinence, supporting self and family. Similarly, as part of a qualitative research study into the reintegration process, Davis et al. (2013) identified six factors from the literature which were important in the process of reintegration and successful desistance from crime: reduction in substance abuse; stable employment; family support; prosocial friends; motivation to change; and increase in age. They concluded:

Those who were successful at reintegration tended to be those who received treatment, obtained full-time employment, and had more support from law abiding friends and family members. Thus, the combination of motivation and social support was associated with successful reintegration. (p. 463)

This combination of personal motivation and social support is emphasised in different ways by other researchers. McNeill et al. (2012b) included the development of identity, the importance of human relationships and self-determination in their set of themes from the desistance literature. Among seven factors identified by Chan and Boer (2016) in a qualitative study of ex-offenders in Singapore, was 'personal choice to change' and



'personal vision in life'. In his study of desisters from crime, Maruna (2001, p. 154) noted: "Their vision of desistance is one of renewal, gaining strength, finding who they really are or bettering themselves."

Motivation alone does not translate into successful reintegration, as many offenders profess a desire to change but fail in the process (Maruna, 2001). Social support is a critical component to increasing a sense of agency among offenders, as well as community accountability (Braga et al., 2009). Chan and Boer (2016) also noted strong and consistent networks of support, including family, as a key factor in successful reintegration. Travis (2005) referred to 'the concentric circles of support' around the prisoner – family, peer group, community institutions, social service agencies, criminal justice agencies – the strengthening of which will enhance the reintegration process.

Besides limited social support, there are economic and legal impediments to successful reintegration (Halsey, 2006; Richards & Jones, 2004; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). When released, ex-offenders may be faced with accumulated debts, stigmatisation (Behrens, 2004; Grossi, 2017; Nugent & Schinkel, 2016), discrimination in employment (Arditti & Parkman, 2011; Bender, Cobbina, & McGarrell, 2016) and deficits in their education and work skills. While an ex-offender may consider themselves rehabilitated, reintegration may be more difficult as some factors are beyond their control, often providing the perception that their sentence continues beyond the prison gates. A lack of hope will work against self-motivation in desistance (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016; Woldgabreal et al., 2014). The impediment of stigmatisation was recognised by McNeill et al. (2012a, p. 10):

'Psychological' or 'correctional' rehabilitation can take a person part of the way towards a better life, but if the route is blocked, for example, by the practical effects of a criminal record or by the stickiness of the criminal label and the refusal of the community to accept that someone has changed, then desistance may be quickly derailed.

The policies of Government agencies regarding re-entry processes are largely focussed on risk management (Fox, 2015; Grossi, 2017; Hunter et al., 2016; McNeill et al., 2012b). According to Lussier, Dahabieh, Deslauriers-Varin, and Thomson (2011), the risk assumptions of the criminal justice system for violent offenders are threefold: the high likelihood of reoffending, violence specialisation and the stability of reoffending over a

long period. Each of these assumptions, they claimed, "are at odds with current empirical findings" (p. 221). In regards to the purposes of community corrections, McNeill et al. (2012b) also noted the increasing focus on reducing risk and public safety, affecting the nature of the rehabilitative purpose of probation supervision. Similarly, when discussing the release of young men from custody, Halsey (2006) was critical of the 'just add programs and stir' philosophy, which assumes that to expose young men to a mix of the right messages will produce law abiding citizens. He challenged the assumption that young offenders released into the community automatically pose a risk. Rather, he drew attention to the failings of the systems and procedures to which young releasees are subjected which, he claimed, "far from working to foster desistance from offending, literally assemble the conditions for recidivism and repeat incarceration" (p. 1212). As such, he believed that all young men should be supported in their return to community living, regardless of whether they are on conditional release or parole.

Hunter et al. (2016) argued that the dominant model for offender assessment is the Risk, Needs, Responsivity (RNR) framework; however, the application of RNR principles to community-based re-entry programs is yet to be evidenced. Furthermore, it has been argued that targeting only offender deficits neglects the facts that their needs on other more 'normal' societal measures are significant and community-level social relationships promote identity change in released offenders. (Fox, 2015).

Indeed, such a risk-aversion is counterproductive in the desistance process which community corrections processes should be promoting. Risk is the arch-enemy of change; ex-offenders need to be allowed to fail because failure is an integral part of the change process. Often, people are making significant progress in the desistance process, even while making legal failures (Halsey, 2006). Such allowances need to be held in tension against the possibility of further victims resulting from lapsed behaviour.

As discussed previously, the more recent Good Lives Model provides an alternative strength-based approach. One example of a program employing GLM is evaluated by Hunter et al. (2016). They described the Community Reentry Initiative (CRI), a state-level intervention that provided pre- and post-release services for men transitioning from prison to the community. They analysed one particular program, which implemented a strengths-based case management approach to service provision. A key

recommendation of the report was that there should be a move away from a risk-evaluation framework toward a strengths-based assessment model. The features they describe of this model include "an assessment that identifies client's goals, capabilities, and assets that can be used to overcome challenges and incorporates the assessment material into a client-focused treatment plan that is tailored to the strengths and needs of the individual" (p. 1300). Case managers assist in accessing external resources required for individuals to achieve positive change.

The value of efficient and person-focussed case management of prisoners in the re-entry process is one of the critical factors for the successful reintegration of violent offenders (Grossi, 2017). This includes the overseeing of identifying the needs and planning access to resources in the community, ideally commencing prior to release. Glass (2016) identified significant flaws in the case management of prisoners by prison officers in the Australian state of Victoria and suggested case management through-care, provided by specialist case managers, rather than prison officers.

In Western Australia, there is a system of Transitional Managers to assist prisoners with their re-entry into the community. However, a recent report by the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS, 2016b) highlighted the paucity of this service. The authors noted that due to the high number of prisoners released from custody every year, investment in these services is wise and are in high demand from prisoners. The report is critical of the limited resources allocated to transitional management and the poor adherence to allocation on the basis of risk, need and demand.

## 2.4.2 Reintegration of violent offenders

There has been very little research specifically focussed on the reintegration of violent offenders and so it is difficult to assess whether there are any issues distinctive for this group.

Braga et al. (2009) evaluated the Boston Reentry Initiative, a re-entry program targeting high-risk, young violent offenders. The program initialises soon after their entry to prison when offenders meet with an assigned panel to inform them of available services. They are then assigned a caseworker and mentor from the community who continue to

meet with them after their release. This model of through-care and community accountability has elements in common with other initiatives for generalist offenders (Fox, 2015; Hunter et al., 2016). The study found that recidivism rates were 30% less than that of a control group.

The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiatives (SVORI) in the US has been designed to reduce recidivism and decrease violent offences among individuals released from prison. Housing, employment and health outcomes are designated as re-entry targets. As evaluated by Bouffard and Bergeron (2006), the SVORI program appeared successful in increasing offenders' participation in community-based services and increasing levels of supervision in the community. The authors claim that these re-entry offenders fared better than those released on traditional parole. Despite being targeted at violent offenders, there appears to be no elements of this program which distinguish it from other more generally targeted programs, other than the mandatory completion of treatment programs before release.

Gartner (2016) also evaluated the SVORI program. The study concluded that the majority of respondents identified housing, employment, social support, physical and mental health, and substance abuse treatment service needs at the pre-release phase. However, achievement of these outcomes had relatively no significant impact on decreasing the odds of rearrest among re-entering individuals. Despite this, she noted that as front-loading services during the pre-release and transitional phases of re-entry does positively impact the achievement of these non-criminal justice outcomes, they should be continued.

It appears from the research reviewed that the reintegration needs of violent offenders are not distinctly different from those of other offenders. However, the risks of reoffending are higher and so they need to be managed more carefully. Also, in a qualitative study evaluating a re-entry program in the US, Bender et al. (2016) noted the added stigmatisation for high-risk offenders, limiting their employment opportunities and pro-social outlets. Furthermore, there is support for a gradual and structured release of offenders, as the evidence is that supervised offenders have more successful reintegration than those released without supervision (McNeill et al., 2012a).

## 2.5 Qualitative research on reintegration of violent offenders

There is relatively little qualitative research in the field of criminology, and very few of studies on violent offenders. According to Tewksbury (2009), "Qualitative research is not only the 'weak' stepchild of the scientific community in the eyes of many criminology and criminal justice scholars, but it is also numerically the rare method behind published scholarship in the field" (p. 40). Kleck, Tark, and Bellows (2006) also observe that "Although the utility of qualitative research has been well documented, many still view its theoretical contributions as being inferior to those gained by quantitative means" (p. 46).

An analysis of journals specifically concerned with criminological topics was reported on by Brent and Kraska (2015). They observed that "Survey research dominates the field of criminology and criminal justice. No other method rivals survey methodology as a way of gathering information on crime, criminals, and society's reaction to crime" (p. 149). The principal tools used in qualitative field research – informal interviews and direct observation – were used in only 12 percent of research. In examining the issue of desistance and reintegration, most of the studies have used official records and quantitative surveys but have not solicited the perspective of the ex-offenders themselves (Davis et al., 2013).

The work of Maruna (2001) as a qualitative study of the process of desistance has been a guiding beacon for more recent researchers. In order to understand the needs, the reasons for success and failure and the desires of ex-offenders released into the community, there is a necessity to engage directly with them. The data derived from this process needs to be integrated into existing theories and knowledge while entertaining the possibility that there is something unique about each geographical and socio-political context.

Whether violent offenders have distinctive needs or patterns from non-violent offenders in the reintegration process remains in contention. The studies investigating the related issues of re-entry, desistance from crime and reintegration into the community have typically not distinguished between offenders. Most of these

considered the factors affecting reintegration (Chan & Boer, 2016; Davis et al., 2013; Richards & Jones, 2004) and desistance (Carlsson, 2012; Fox, 2016; Kenemore & Roldan, 2006; Maruna, 2001), including the effect of a strengths-based model (Fox, 2015; Hunter et al., 2016) and the challenges faced by young offenders (Arditti & Parkman, 2011; Halsey, 2006).

Qualitative studies investigating the reintegration of violent offenders into the community are extremely scarce. Building on the work of Maruna (2001) who describes the transformative narratives used by ex-offenders to create a 'core self', Liem and Richardson (2014) focussed on 'lifers' released from prison, the majority of whom were African-Americans. The study aimed to assess the role of these narratives and their elements in the desistance process by comparing those who desisted from crime against those who reoffended.

A qualitative study in the US by Bender et al. (2016) focussed on a re-entry program targeting gang members who were high-risk violent offenders. The purpose of the study was to examine the clients' perceptions of the program and to consider the effect of procedural and substantive justice on their satisfaction of the program. The study highlighted the barriers to employment as a significant issue as well as finding there were concerns about a fair and respectful approach by the service provider.

An Australian qualitative study by Halsey (2006) involved interviews with 47 young men who had been reincarcerated. He investigated their experiences of reoffending and drew attention to the failings of the systems and procedures to which these releases were subjected. These included the critical issues of accommodation, employment programs, curfews, rehabilitation programs, guardianship, economic support and poor neighbourhoods.

The only other study in Australia, addressing the issue of reintegration through interviews with returning prisoners, was within a mixed-methods study conducted by Willis (2008). His focus was on indigenous offenders, reporting the importance of family and community as well as the necessity of a throughcare model of service delivery.

So, while much quantitative analysis has been done on recidivism, very little attention has been given to hearing the voices of the ex-offenders and what they consider to be

important for their successful reintegration into the community (Bender et al., 2016). These participants in the criminal justice system are "an extraordinarily untapped resource in the formulation of rehabilitation theory and policy" (Ward & Maruna, 2007, p. 15). The imperative of engaging with this sector has been recognised by McNeill et al. (2012b, p. 50):

... desistance research (at its best) draws on the voices of ex-offenders and those that have supported them to change, so it is perhaps unsurprising that it also leads us towards a recognition of important forms of knowledge and expertise that have been routinely neglected or marginalized in much of the research on rehabilitation (and on criminal justice more generally). These are those forms of knowledge and expertise that come from the life experiences of ex-offenders and from the professional experience of correctional practitioners.

Similarly, McNeill and Weaver (2010) called for the direct involvement of current and former offenders in "co-designing, co-developing and co-evaluating a desistance-supporting intervention process" (p. 10), arguing that such services are likely to be more effective and that this provides opportunity for the development of agency and generativity. The same arguments can be made for the process of reintegration of violent offenders into the community.

## 2.6 Conclusion

Following the exhortations of the prominent researchers as discussed in the previous section, this study focuses on hearing the voices of violent offenders released into the community. It aims to ascertain the relevance of the developing theories of reintegration to the experiences of those undergoing the process. In particular, it evaluates the relative importance of the various factors identified by others and their applicability to violent offenders. This includes the twin primary influences of self-agency and social capital. The principles of the Good Lives Model have been relatively unexplored in their application to reintegration and also to violent offenders. This study illuminates some significant connections between these elements. The barriers to reintegration faced by violent offender, and the associated 'pains of desistance' are exemplified through the contributions of the participants.

Therefore, this study provides an insight into the specific needs of violent offenders, released into the community in the Western Australian context, through listening to the stories of their experience.



# Chapter 3 Method

## 3.1 Introduction

Chapters 1 and 2 developed a rationale to justify the study of the reintegration of violent offenders into the community, while this chapter describes the methodological choices made to meet the specified aims. This chapter initially justifies the qualitative approach used before describing the process of participant recruitment, interview rationale and technique, and data analysis process. Furthermore, it outlines the Grounded Theory model of data analysis which was employed.

The chapter concludes with a consideration of the ethical issues involved in the study and declares the possible weaknesses of the method employed.

## 3.2 A qualitative approach

### 3.2.1 Relevance to aims

This research project employed a qualitative methodology based on a phenomenological perspective. The aim of the project was to identify, through the experiences of violent offenders in Western Australia, the factors which they consider to be important in their reintegration into the community. To achieve this, qualitative research was essential as its purpose is to elicit the contextualised nature of experience for the people under study, from their own perspective (Corti & Thompson, 2004). Like all qualitative researchers, I was interested in the meanings which those under study attached to aspects of their lives, relevant to the reintegration process.

The choice of methodology was directed by the nature of the questions to be addressed; that is, the experiences of the ex-offenders of their reintegration process. Qualitative research seeks to provide in-depth, detailed information regarding behaviours and processes (Tewksbury, 2009). This requires firsthand accounts of the experiences (Hochstetler, Miller, & Copes, 2015), allowing interpretations to stay true to the lived reality of these ex-offenders. According to Tewksbury (2009, p. 38), "the knowledge gained through qualitative investigations is more informative, richer and offers

enhanced understandings compared to that which can be obtained via quantitative research". The richness of the data originates from the interviews with people, who not only provide information about what they know, but also have the opportunity to explain what it means and provide reasons for their statements. Thus qualitative research uncovers contextual factors specific to the research subjects and their environment (Brent & Kraska, 2015).

Furthermore, as argued by McNeill et al. (2012b), the evidence gathered on the rehabilitation of ex-offenders needs to include the voices of both practitioners and ex-offenders and the voices of the latter have been largely neglected. The lived experiences of those subjected to the criminal justice processes is an important source of knowledge and provide a vital insight into the efficacy of these processes.

### 3.2.2 Nature of qualitative methodology

In qualitative research, there needs to be some flexibility in the design process as the research proceeds with the specifics evolving in the process. Typically, the researcher will enter the field without specific hypotheses or preconceptions, unless he/she is intentionally testing hypotheses or theories. Rather, the researcher will explore phenomena as they arise. Meanings and interpretations are created and developed, with the researcher participating in the process of people making sense of their lives. This requires empathetic understanding.

It could be argued that qualitative research lacks in reliability and validity due to its interpretative nature. The process of theory-generation through conceptualisation, rather than through a cycle of hypothesising and empirical testing as typical in a quantitative methodology, doesn't sit well with some theorists. However, the focus is on validity in establishing meaning and interpretation, and documenting the perspective of the people being studied rather than reliability in producing scientifically replicable results, which is the aim of quantitative research. Qualitative data can be useful to explain the results of quantitative research, particularly in understanding the reasons for apparent phenomena.

### 3.2.3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework shapes the focus of the research and therefore the methodology (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). A phenomenological perspective emphasises understanding the social phenomena from the perspective of the individual, recognising that what is important is the reality constructed by the individual. The value of phenomenology is that it prioritizes and investigates how the person experiences the world (Adams & van Manen, 2008), recognising that what is important is the reality constructed by the individual. Understanding people's actions requires contextualising them in their everyday lives and their conscious intentions. This understanding is developed by an inductive process of searching for patterns in the descriptive data.

Of the basic inquiry paradigms of the present era (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), constructivism is best aligned with a phenomenological perspective. As described by Annells (1996), the constructivist paradigm is that human beings construct their own social realities in relation to one another; that reality is subjective and experiential. One person's particular construction of reality might be shared with many other people, but other people could construct the same reality in quite different ways. People act according to the meaning they attach to things (Blumer, 1986) and may act differently as they have developed different meanings for the same social phenomenon (Taylor, 2015).

This research was founded upon a constructivist, phenomenological perspective. As discussed earlier, concerns about a qualitative approach to research relate directly to the philosophical underpinnings, particularly the epistemological ones. A constructivist approach to knowledge has no such concerns. This is the theoretical framework which is most influential in my own approach to qualitative research.

## 3.3 Participant recruitment

To address the aim of the research, sampling techniques were needed which were targeted and efficient. This required locating participants having the required experience and thus being experts in the phenomenon under study (Morse, 2010). This type of purposeful sampling needed to target participants meeting the criteria of the study – the sample population was adult males who have been convicted and

imprisoned for violent offences and had been released into the community within the last five years. The aim was not to generalise about the distribution within the population but to analyse the apparent phenomena, as provided by the participants.

The number of participants could not be fixed in advance. Whereas quantitative data relies on sample size to establish statistical significance and thus validity, the amount of qualitative data collected depends on the emergence of patterns to establish theories or themes. This is governed by the principle of 'saturation' which depends on the quality of information provided. There is likely to be a data saturation point, where additional data does not add further to the insights gained. According to Charmaz and Bryant (2008), saturation is determined when the researcher can understand the phenomenon, identify it in many forms and it appears consistent.

The choice to target ex-prisoners who had been released in the last five years was one of both practical and conceptual reasons. Firstly, they were likely to be more easily accessible as they would possibly be current clients of the supporting organisations. Secondly, this would also be likely to unearth those in a range of stages in the desistance process – including those who have 'gone straight' completely, those in the 'zig-zag' of fluctuation between desisting and persisting in criminal behaviour and those who have reoffended. Finally, this provided recent experience, and hence relevance, as services, policies and practices are changing over time.

An exclusion from the sampling population was those who had committed sexual offences as the psychological pathology of these offenders is likely to produce unique needs (Polaschek et al., 2005). Furthermore, this is a study focussing on male offenders. Males comprise the vast majority of violent offenders and hence the findings will have greater relevance. Also, the nature and motivations of the violence for female offenders is typically significantly different than for males (Motz, 2016). Finally, this study only considers adult males as the maturation factors presented by juveniles require different approaches to rehabilitation and re-entry (Polaschek et al., 2005).

To be considered for this study, participants were required to have met the criteria of having been convicted of the violent offences of homicide (including murder, wilful murder), assault (including grievous bodily harm), threatening behaviour (including

carrying of weapons), deprivation of liberty and robbery (including aggravated burglary)<sup>1</sup>.

My initial strategy to contact potential participants was to gain the support of the organisation Outcare, a not-profit provider of re-entry services to released prisoners in Western Australia. The practical support provided by Outcare to their clients includes finding accommodation, referral to health support agencies, job-seeking, skill development, engagement in community activities and emergency relief<sup>2</sup>. As a beneficiary of this research, Outcare, through their CEO, agreed to assist with the study by identifying eligible participants and requesting that their case managers give them an introductory letter with my contact details and by also providing an interview room.

After several months of continued dialogue with Outcare, only one of their clients had contacted me to assist with the study. Then, during the period of my study, their contract with the Department of Justice was not renewed and so they did not take in new clients. The Department of Justice would have been able to provide me with access to those on parole or supervision through Adult Community Corrections but they declined to support my research and therefore other avenues of participant recruitment were pursued.

Alternative to Violence Project WA is another not-for-profit organisation which supports former prisoners who have connected with their programs in prison and wish to continue as volunteer facilitators after their release. The Chair of AVP-WA agreed to send information about the study to a number of volunteers who met the criteria, resulting in three participants for the study.

Wungening Aboriginal Corporation provide a range of services, including alcohol and drug counselling to Aboriginal clients. After discussion with the Manager of Strategic Projects, they agreed to contact clients meeting the criteria to make them aware of this research project, resulting in one participant.

UnitingCare West have a Specialist Re-entry Service (known to the clients as 'Outreach') which provides re-entry services to male prisoners who are serving life sentences.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [www.police.wa.gov.au/Crime/CrimeStatistics#/](http://www.police.wa.gov.au/Crime/CrimeStatistics#/)

<sup>2</sup> Source [www.outcare.com.au/about/](http://www.outcare.com.au/about/)

Provision of accommodation is the primary service but they also provide assistance with transport, financial counselling, finding permanent accommodation, employment, education and training, and general support in establishing community networks and re-establishing family relationships<sup>3</sup>. The CEO of UnitingCare West welcomed my enquiry and agreed her team could assist me in accessing clients. Unfortunately, this did not eventuate as they discovered that their contractual agreement with the Department of Justice required official support of my research application. The Department subsequently declined a second time to approve the research project, effectively terminating this avenue of support.

Linkt Therapeutic Day Centre is a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre offering treatment for addictions, including some supported accommodation<sup>4</sup>. The Director of Linkt was very enthusiastic in her support of this research and enabled access to two participants.

Other avenues of recruiting participants included Prison Fellowship and other contacts known to the organisations. Furthermore, each participant interviewed was also asked if they could contact others they knew who may like to participate. Thus, while purposeful sampling was the primary technique, some snowballing was also attempted, although it proved to be unfruitful.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: [www.unitingcarewest.org.au/services/offender-re-entry-supports/specialist-re-entry-service/](http://www.unitingcarewest.org.au/services/offender-re-entry-supports/specialist-re-entry-service/)

<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://linkt2heal.com/>

### 3.4 Participant characteristics

**Table 1** Characteristics of the participants (n=9) by age, offence, length of sentence, time since release and Aboriginality

<b>Age (years)</b>	Range 22-77 Mean = 42	<table border="1"> <caption>Age Distribution Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Age in years</th> <th>Number of participants</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>20-30</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30-40</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>40-50</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>50-60</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>60-70</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>70-80</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age in years	Number of participants	20-30	3	30-40	1	40-50	2	50-60	2	60-70	0	70-80	1
Age in years	Number of participants															
20-30	3															
30-40	1															
40-50	2															
50-60	2															
60-70	0															
70-80	1															
<b>Most serious offence</b>	Wilful murder, murder, armed robbery, aggravated burglary, armed to cause fear, threats to kill, breaching VRO.															
<b>Length of custodial sentence<sup>5</sup></b>	Range 2 wks - 22 yrs	<table border="1"> <caption>Served sentence length Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Served sentence length in years</th> <th>Number of participants</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0-2</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2-4</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4-20</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20-25</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Served sentence length in years	Number of participants	0-2	3	2-4	2	4-20	1	20-25	3				
Served sentence length in years	Number of participants															
0-2	3															
2-4	2															
4-20	1															
20-25	3															
<b>Time since release<sup>6</sup></b>	Range 1 day - 4 yrs	<table border="1"> <caption>Time since release Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Time in years since release</th> <th>Number of participants</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0-1</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2-4</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Time in years since release	Number of participants	0-1	6	2-4	3								
Time in years since release	Number of participants															
0-1	6															
2-4	3															
<b>Aboriginality</b>	2 participants identified as Aboriginal. 7 participants did not identify as Aboriginal.															

<sup>5</sup> indicates only the most recent custodial sentence served; many participants had served more than one prison sentence

<sup>6</sup> indicates the time since release from the most recent custodial sentence

## 3.5 Data collection through interviews

### 3.5.1 Rationale

In qualitative research, the methods of data collection almost always involve face-to-face interaction with the study participants. The primary value of the interview as the data collection technique is that one avoids making *a priori* assumptions about responses (Hochstetler et al., 2015). The researcher starts from an assumption that, despite the area of research interest being well-defined, all relevant questions are not known prior to the research and that understandings will be built through the process of interviewing. The interviewer engages in a social interaction where meanings are continually constructed and reconstructed, aided by the participant articulating a narration, possibly for the first time (Taylor, 2015).

### 3.5.2 Technique

An in-depth interview is largely unstructured, where topics are the focus and open questions are employed. The qualitative in-depth interview differs from a structured interview in that it is flexible and dynamic. It takes the form of a one-sided conversation which is "open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 85), where the interviewer is the research tool. Thus, participants are encouraged and prompted to talk in depth (Cook, 2008). This middle ground, between a rigid structure and uncertain meandering, can provide the researcher with rich data on topics of interest without controlling the outcome of the conversation.

This approach does give rise to a criticism of bias. Researcher bias is unavoidable, whatever form of questioning is employed. This should not be problematic if the researcher is aware of this and allows the informants to shape the direction and language of the interview. However, it is helpful if the researcher is aware of the major domains of experience likely to be discussed by the participant and so be able to probe how these relate to the topic under investigation (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999).



The advantages of this method of data collection are that it requires less time than observation, it allows for an inductive theoretical approach to data analysis and the informants' responses are less influenced by their peers, as they may be in a focus group.

For these reasons, in this study a semi-structured interview technique was employed, starting with some open questions to elicit the themes of importance to the participant. This was then followed by some probing questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2011), as needed, to focus on particular issues of significance (see Appendix A). For example, as one of the areas of interest for this study was the effect of programs undertaken whilst in prison, some of the prompting questions used were "What do you remember of the programs you did while in prison? Was there anything in those programs which has helped you? How motivated were you to engage in these programs? Why or why not?".

The initial contact with each participant was through an introductory letter (see Appendix B), either emailed or handed to him through a case manager of the supporting organisation. This was always through a third party, rather than direct contact from the researcher, to prevent any element of coercion. Before the start of the interview, the participant was provided with a more detailed information sheet (see Appendix C) and this was discussed with him by the researcher. The information sheet described the purpose of the research, who was conducting the research, the use of a recorded interview, the voluntary nature of participation, the steps taken to provide anonymity and the availability of assistance available should the interview create any emotional distress. A consent form was then signed by the participant and researcher and retained by the researcher. Prior to commencing the interview, demographic information was recorded. This included the age of the participant, the time since being released from prison, the prison of release, the last/most serious offence, the length of the last sentence served and whether the participant identified as being Aboriginal.

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. This allowed the interviewer to concentrate on questioning and observing, including establishing rapport and the use of eye contact and other body language to encourage openness, allowing the capturing of detail. After transcription of the recording, all copies of the recording were destroyed.

## 3.6 Data analysis using Grounded Theory techniques

### 3.6.1 Description of Grounded Theory

The aim of data analysis is to discover, understand or confirm theories through immersion in the data. Conventional thematic analysis involves inductive identification of codes (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005), allowing the categories to flow directly from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), with little reference to existing theory. The units of analysis are concepts and analysis is an intuitive process involving the comparison of statements to see if there is a concept which unites them (Taylor, 2015).

A particular form of this is Grounded Theory which is a methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Grounded Theory was originated by American sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Alselm L. Strauss who developed a systematic process to codify qualitative analysis. Charmaz (2014, p. 1) succinctly explains that "grounded theory begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis". Thus, Grounded Theory methods enable a demystifying of the conduct of a qualitative inquiry (Charmaz, 2014).

It is a process of starting with individual cases, incidents or experiences and developing more abstract categories to synthesise and explain the data collected, and ultimately to identify patterned relationships in it which can be developed into a theory (Charmaz, 2014). Theory may be generated initially from the data or existing theory elaborated upon or modified. This is a contentious distinction as will be elaborated further in the next section.

### 3.6.2 Variations

Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasised developing theories from research grounded in qualitative data rather than deducing hypotheses from existing theories and testing them with the data. However, Annells (1996) identifies two emerging schools since that time. Strauss (1987) linked Grounded Theory to verification of existing theories or

hypotheses which provoked Glaser (1992) to suggest that Strauss' methods were a verification model interrupting 'true emergence'. In particular, he refutes Strauss' 'axial coding' (discussed later) as unnecessary and imposing preconceived connections between categories.

Charmaz (2014) espouses a Constructivist Grounded Theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) which highlights the flexibility of the model and recognises that the researcher is not a neutral, values-free observer. Rather, it emphasises the active and vital role played by the researcher in the development of codes and categories. Certain features of Grounded Theory are distinctive to the methodology, regardless of the variations derived from it (Charmaz, 1995). She suggests that the distinctiveness of Grounded Theory is that it unites data collection and theory development and thereby undermines the notion that qualitative analysis is only intuitive and impressionistic. It enables a rigorous process for checking and making conceptual sense of large amounts of data.

### 3.6.3 Choice of data analysis techniques

According to Glaser (1992), the logic of Grounded Theory is based on identifying the problem of the people under consideration, what may account for most of the variation in processing this problem and what properties of the categories are indicated. These questions relate directly to the nature of the study which I conducted. However, he suggests that the researcher should not ask the questions directly in an interview as this preconceives the emergence of data.

This seems to be very purist in its practical application. Indeed, Charmaz (1995) disagreed with Glaser, claiming it is the interactions between the researcher and participant which actually produces the data and hence the meanings observed. She recommended that the interviewer should adapt the questions posed to explore areas further and delete those which prove to be unfruitful. It is this model of Constructivist Grounded Theory which was employed in this study.

With these variations on Grounded Theory methodology, which may be confusing, Backman and Kyngäs (1999) helpfully suggested that there may need to be a compromise between the demands of the approach and the resources available. In particular, Glaser's advice is that the researcher begins with no preconceived ideas from

reviewing other literature. However, they proffered that this kind of detachment may be difficult for the researcher; rather, previous knowledge may help to clarify thoughts and narrow down the topic. Furthermore, the researcher's previous experience can also be considered as data.

The data has been analysed thematically using the techniques of Grounded Theory to develop the emerging concepts and link them to existing theories of rehabilitation and reintegration. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), the aim of directed content analysis is to conceptually develop or embellish existing theory or prior research. In this way, categories for uniting the initial codes can be guided by prior research, providing a more structured approach than a pure grounded theory methodology as espoused by Glaser.

## 3.7 Data analysis process

### 3.7.1 Coding and categories

Coding is "the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain the data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 113). The codes used portray meanings and actions from the participants. They cover feelings, events, and explanations given. The distinctiveness of grounded theory studies is that the researcher derives analytic categories directly from the data, requiring the researcher to attend closely to what is actually happening in the world under study (Charmaz, 1995).

The coding process I employed involved two steps (Charmaz, 2014). Firstly, initial coding, applied to each line or segment of the data, using short analytic labels. Glaser (1992) refers to this as 'open coding' in which the data is broken down into incidents to be compared and assigned to a category. Following this initial coding, I embarked upon a focussed phase of coding involving sorting and synthesising the most frequent or significant codes. This necessitated bringing my view of what is significant in the data including my choice of words for the codes (Charmaz, 2014). Thereby, it was more selective and conceptual than the initial coding. By keeping the focussed codes as succinct as possible, it became easier to create clear categories. These categories then synthesised rather than merely described. This enabled me to then engage in the

'constant comparative method' (Glaser, 1992), comparing incidents firstly, then comparing incidents to concepts. Patterns of similar incidents were named as a category; dissimilar incidents were considered as a property of a category.

Other types of codes are discussed by Charmaz (2014), including '*in vivo* codes' of participants' special terms and 'axial coding', a term created by Strauss and Corbin (1994). It refers to a process of relating categories to subcategories, specifying the properties and dimensions of a category. It is a strategy for reassembling the data into a coherent whole. While '*in vivo* codes' were not relevant in this study, axial codes proved to be very useful.

Prior knowledge of the phenomenon under study needs to be treated with critical awareness when applying Grounded Theory. The data analysis can be chaotic with uncertainty clouding the coding process, so my knowledge of the literature and my personal experience brought some welcome clarity. Charmaz (2014) recommends that familiarity with the phenomena under study is a prerequisite; however, she also warns of the need to examine your assumptions and to be careful in using language of intentions or motivations unless they are supported by the data. Heeding this warning, after each step in the analysis I kept returning to the original data to verify that the categories created reflected the data and not my assumptions.

### 3.7.2 Memo writing

According to Charmaz (2014, p. 162), "memo writing constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts you to analyse your data and codes early in the research process." She suggests this is a space for conversing with yourself about the data, the questions, any new ideas and making assumptions visible. These memos can serve to identify properties and conditions of the codes and engage the researcher in comparative analyses (Charmaz & Bryant, 2008).

I employed this technique to keep my analysis grounded in the data, recording my perceptions about the contribution of each participant and my thoughts about the emerging categories. As such, the exploratory process of writing memos provided the link between coding and analysis. This was useful in the process of 'constant

comparative methods' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), comparing the beliefs and actions of different participants.

### 3.7.3 The coding process

I coded each transcript soon after the interview so that it was fresh in my mind, paying attention to the nuances of tone and body language used by the participant. As I read each line of the transcript, I asked myself "what is the concept being talked about here?" This was partially influenced by my prior knowledge but I mostly tried to interpret the intent of what was being said.

So initially, I ended up with a whole range of independent codes. Early in the process, I tried to group some of them together by categorising to what aspect of the reintegration process they belonged; for example, 'early days of release' or 'mandated programs'. However, after two transcripts, I decided not to do any more grouping so as to not go down a pre-determined route. Rather I would wait and see whether there may be any other ways of connecting the codes. This way, I was working from the detail upwards, rather than allowing any preconceptions to influence the coding.

After five transcripts, I returned to organising the codes by grouping them into some emerging categories. Some of the categories created were large and spanned many issues (eg. 'prison' or 'early days of release') and some had less scope. There also appeared to be overlap between the categories to which some codes belonged. This grouping process also left many codes remaining uncategorised.

Upon further examination of the large category of 'prison', it became apparent that the codes within this category were actually indicative of either external support provided, personal initiatives made or evidence of a change process. This led to the creation of the new 'axial' categories 'support' (which also encompassed several other categories), 'self-agency' and 'change'. Furthermore, I could see that 'children', 'family', 'partner' and 'social connections' were all examples of a wider phenomenon I called 'connection'.

The table below shows the first mapping to create a smaller set of categories, eliminating the ambiguous 'prison' category. The first four categories remained intact at

this stage. The codes from the 'prison' category were distributed to the new categories of 'self-awareness', 'self-agency' and 'support'.

**Table 2** *First stage mapping of categories*

<b>Initial category</b>	<b>New category</b>
Accommodation	Accommodation
Drugs and alcohol	Drugs and alcohol
Early days of release	Early days of release
Employment	Employment
Children	Connection
Family	
Partner	
Social connections	
Personal initiative	Self-agency
Giving back	Giving back
Cognitive changes	Self-awareness
Self	
Violence attitudes	
Community corrections	Support (external agency)
Community organisations/programs	
Counselling	
Service providers	
Technology	
Prison	Change
Getting information/opportunities	
Satisfying the PRB	
Making personal initiatives	
Pre-release support	
Mandatory programs <sup>7</sup>	
Voluntary programs	

The categories of 'accommodation', 'drugs and alcohol', 'early days of release' and 'employment' (shown in grey in the table) were all thematic, although within each of them there was no consistency or evident pattern in the codes. I read through the summaries of each of these categories and noted the links within each one to other

<sup>7</sup> The term 'mandatory programs' has been used in the coding simply to distinguish these programs from the voluntary ones. Strictly, they are not mandated but rather recommended in the sentence management plan for a prisoner. Voluntary programs are those offered by external organisations in some prisons.

categories. It started to become evident that some categories could be completely subsumed within other ones (eg. 'accommodation' could be addressed through 'support', 'family' and 'connection'). The focus of the axial categories then became a concept, rather than a thematic grouping. Thereby, I eliminated some categories, maintaining more conceptual ones through which the codes from the others could be addressed. The codes from the thematic categories of 'accommodation', 'drugs and alcohol', 'early days of release' and 'employment' were then reassigned to the more conceptual categories. Some codes were ignored as being less relevant to the aims of my research.

The new conceptual categories were:

- Connection
- Self-awareness
- Change
- Support (external agency)
- Self-agency
- Giving back

The category of 'change' still had links to all the other categories and much could be addressed through 'self-awareness'. Some aspects of it (mandatory programs, voluntary programs) also related to 'support'. So I decided to create a new amalgamated axial category of 'self-awareness and change'. This included how the participant viewed themselves (attitudes, feelings, beliefs, needs) as well as what they thought contributed to changes in self (programs, organisations, prison experience).

Now there were five axial categories:

- Connection
- Self-awareness and change
- Support (external agency)
- Self-agency
- Giving back

After four additional interviews were conducted, these were coded by reference to the existing codes where possible. If there was any doubt about the connection to these codes, a new code was created; however, the majority of coding fitted with previous



analysis. It was reassuring that the categories created could accommodate most of the new data.

Any new codes created were then analysed further and most of these could be related to the existing categories. The new data provided a greater depth to an understanding of the properties of the categories. A participant may be saying the opposite to other participants about a particular concept but with the additional contextual information about the participants, this provided a depth and dimension to the concept. Thus, I was satisfied that saturation of the categories had been reached after five participants as no new categories emerged from the additional participants' data.

A full review of all the coding was then conducted. A creation of 'miscellaneous' codes emerged, which were any codes which did not appear to be related to any of the categories created, nor to each other. These were considered to be extraneous to the analysis. Other codes were either renamed or merged or reassigned to become a property of another category. This process strengthened the centrality of the axial categories.

The following example in Table 3 illustrates the data analysis process described above. It shows the original data and how they were coded. These codes were then assigned to an initial category, as shown in Table 2, before being amalgamated into an axial category. The final column of Table 3 indicates the property of this category when the data indicated differences in what the participants were saying.

**Table 3** Codes providing properties of the axial categories 'support' and 'connection'

Text	Code	Initial category	Axial category	Property
so as I say the rules were bent and accommodation was made available for me as and when I needed it	<b>authorities</b> <b>bending rules</b>	<b>service</b> <b>providers</b>	<b>support</b>	flexibility
If I'm busy, they give me a bit of leeway	<b>community</b> <b>corrections</b> <b>flexible</b>	<b>community</b> <b>corrections</b>	<b>support</b>	flexibility
but you know this is my job these are the boxes I've got to tick	<b>community</b> <b>corrections</b> <b>rigidity</b>	<b>community</b> <b>corrections</b>	<b>support</b>	rigidity
well to actually have something that isn't so compliance and control based	<b>DCS power,</b> <b>control,</b> <b>compliance</b>	<b>community</b> <b>corrections</b>	<b>support</b>	rigidity
no not at all. In fact, it was a hindrance to me being at Outreach for those four months	<b>service provider</b> <b>no help</b>	<b>service</b> <b>providers</b>	<b>support</b>	rigidity
I guess I didn't need someone to be with me all the time to do those everyday things. Initially it was interesting to have that assistance because it was all new, don't get me wrong. But from then it was, I was happy to do it myself. I didn't feel the need to have assistance.	<b>service provider</b> <b>not needed</b>	<b>service</b> <b>providers</b>	<b>support</b>	flexibility
With two other fellows and the police were knocking on the door quite regularly because one was an ex-drug person and the other one was a stealing person who had quite a bit of an alcohol problem before as well. And that was very upsetting for us all. And none of us got on.	<b>accommodation</b> <b>cohabiting</b> <b>stressful</b>	<b>accommodation</b>	<b>connection</b>	need for own accommodation
I live by myself. So I'm very isolated.	<b>accommodation</b> <b>isolating</b>	<b>accommodation</b>	<b>connection</b>	need for shared accommodation
okay if I know some person doesn't particularly mean I want to live with them because you still want that space.	<b>accommodation</b> <b>needing your</b> <b>own space</b>	<b>accommodation</b>	<b>connection</b>	need for own accommodation
just having a halfway house for long-termers is would be somewhere great where there's other people going through the same situation	<b>connecting with</b> <b>people sharing</b> <b>experience</b>	<b>social</b> <b>connection</b> AND <b>early days of</b> <b>release</b>	<b>connection</b>	need for shared accommodation

### 3.8 Ethical considerations

In the Preamble to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007 (Updated May 2015)), attention is drawn to the ethical responsibility of the researcher due to the trust required by the participants. Clearly, for qualitative research in

criminology, there are many considerations in respect to these principles including an individual's rights to anonymity, informed consent and respecting the promise of confidentiality.

There is a fundamental assumption of voluntary participation, with no coercion and the initial approach to participants makes this clear (see Appendix 1: Introductory letter). Informed consent from participants is paramount. Participants were informed about the aims of the study and possible consequences of the findings (see Appendix 3: Information for participants). Confidentiality of the participants' disclosures is also critical and was carefully explained. This sets the informants at ease and allow them to share their experiences and viewpoints without fear of consequences (Taylor, 2015). It is difficult to always ascertain how watertight these guarantees are in practice, as it may be possible to identify a participant inadvertently. Any text used from the transcripts was assessed for its risk of identification and possible consequences. In cases of high or moderate risk, explicit consent to include the material was obtained. It is contentious as to whether disclosure of illicit activity should remain confidential. While it may be wise to state to participants up front that these disclosures will need to be reported, this may inhibit participants from sharing important viewpoints or incidents. Goode (2015) claims that the promise of anonymity to participants should be absolute. In this study, participants were informed that any disclosures of illegal activity would be kept confidential, except as required by law. However, intentions to self-harm or harm other persons, would be disclosed to the relevant authorities.

Ethics approval for this research project was given by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Murdoch University (2017/144).

### 3.9 Methodological weaknesses

Accessing participants proved to be problematic as the sampling process was largely reliant on various service organisations' clients responding to the request for participation. Also, as the selection of participants did not utilise any form of randomisation, the nature of the respondents was self-selecting. This could potentially provide only participants who have a positive experience to relate, with those having negative experiences being reluctant to expose themselves in case this reflects poorly

on themselves. Anecdotally, there were also ex-offenders who did not want to reconnect with memories of their past, involving crime, incarceration and release. However, this is the general nature of qualitative research whereby participants are, by necessity of ethical considerations, self-selecting. My strategy was to have a broad spectrum of invitation through as many avenues as possible.

Grounded analyses are typically conducted on a small sample of participants and this could be seen as problematic in terms of its generalisability. However, as discussed previously, the validity of the findings is not dependent on the number of participants but the quality of responses provided. This relates to the concept of saturation. The researcher will be able to perceive the commonly experienced phenomena from the sample selected and develop some depth to the concepts through theoretical sampling. Rennie et al. (1988, p. 9) noted that "the problem of limited generalizability of grounded findings is not resolved but is accepted by grounded researchers as a legitimate price to pay for research that is intimately tied to the phenomena it addresses."

The issue of subjectivity has been discussed earlier. An approach using Grounded Theory draws credibility by being persuasive (Rennie et al., 1988). This will involve a demystifying of the process of grounded analysis and carefully documenting the categories developed which underpin the conclusions reached. Total objectivity is one of the legacies from positivism.

Similar issues of subjectivity are raised by Willig (2013) but without the concern. She recognised that whatever emerges from the field through observation depends on the observer's position within it. Likewise, whatever emerges from the analysis of a set of data is theoretically informed because all analysis is necessarily guided by the questions asked by the researcher. Categories do not simply emerge from the data; rather, they are constructed by the researcher during the research process. Again, the process of documentation demonstrates the ways in which the researcher's assumptions, values, sampling decisions, analytic technique, interpretations of context, and so on, have shaped the research. This does not negate the validity of the findings.

The reliability of accounts provided by the participants could potentially compromise the findings. Concern about the accuracy of the participant's account is discussed by Charmaz (2014). She recommended collecting more data to offset this negative effect and notes the phenomenon of 'creating fictional identities' allowing participants to

maintain continuity from the past. The intrinsic worth of the use of verbal reports as data could be questioned as participants may be unaware of the internal processes they use. However, by employing the 'constant comparative method' and demonstrating that a viewpoint is espoused by other individuals, the credibility of accounts is enhanced (Rennie et al., 1988).

Finally, there was no attempt at triangulation of data, for verification of the participants' accounts or for a broader understanding of the issues they raised. This could have been achieved through interviews with Community Corrections Officers, case managers or other family members.



## Chapter 4 Results: Analysis of data

### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, a description of the Grounded Theory techniques of data analysis was provided. The application of these techniques to the data from this study was detailed, showing how the five conceptual categories emerged. Appendix D shows the relative numerical strength of these categories, demonstrating that the first four were considerably stronger than the fifth. The themes were (1) the need for a close connection with family, children or partner, as well as other social links, (2) a cognitive change process incorporating a sense of self, (3) the need for support through external agency with an emphasis on individual needs and preferences, (4) the benefit of self-agency and (5) the desire to give back.

Across these themes were illustrations of their application to accommodation, employment, the early days of release and dealing with drug and alcohol dependencies. The themes relate to issues raised about programs undertaken during the time in prison, Community Corrections, service providers and other community organisations.

### 4.2 Connection

The need to connect with one's family, children and partner was shown to be critical for the returning prisoner who may have had many years of limited contact opportunities. Besides reconnecting with families, other opportunities for social connection were created through organisations, accommodation arrangements or a workplace. This also presented difficulties, depending upon the needs of the returning prisoner and his social skills. These needs were particularly apparent in the early days of release.

#### 4.2.1 Family

In some cases, there was a reliance on family to provide accommodation as, in the case of those on parole, having an address to which to return was a requirement for release.

When family were to accommodate the returning offender, there needed to be a supportive relationship to sustain this arrangement. Brian<sup>1</sup> and Frank, two long-term prisoners highlighted this importance of this.

*Brian: So somehow if my sister or my stepfather was unable or didn't feel comfortable – because that was still a choice and I wouldn't hold that against them – it's still a choice that had to be made. I was fortunate enough that my sister did make it and say yes, she would.*

*Frank: I was released to my sister and her family. I lived with them for probably around 12 months or longer, maybe 18 months... So yeah, I was in their lives from day one of release... But it was very, very comforting and reassuring and involving to be part of you know such a small group... Of course, the invitation was there for me to stay with my family for as long as I felt I needed to or want to.*

For Ian, the support of his family came with some tension.

*Ian: I'm living with my parents at the moment. It is only very temporary because they're selling their house. It wasn't a thing that we... that I had planned to do when I got out.*

*Me: And your parents are happy to have you indefinitely? Or for as long as it takes?*

*Ian: Not really. Because look it's not fair. They need a life and they don't need their 45-year-old son living at home still. Just put them on the spot like this when they should be living their life. It's a responsibility that they don't need as it's not fair for them to be caring for me at my age. So it's complicated.*

For the returning prisoner, the need to have a sense of belonging and acceptance was important. This need was heightened as he often carried a sense of shame regarding his crime and subsequent disengagement from family life. For some participants, this family acceptance seemed to come with a sense of relief and pride.

*Darren: Yeah, my siblings you know they're very supportive. And my parents, they are very supportive.*

*Evan: Total support! I've got three kids. ... They have never missed a beat in all of these years... Even though the old man is not as good as he should be.*

*Gary: Heaps of support. Family, friends, ex-partner, my son. I've got heaps of support.*

*Henry: They're really supportive. There've been really good through all of this.*

It was important to be able to maintain connections with family and other community members during a lengthy imprisonment as this facilitated a smoother reengagement

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<sup>1</sup> All the names used are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants



once released. Frank made it quite clear that the facilitation of this connection from prison was a critical factor in being able to re-engage.

*Frank: Over the period of time I was very fortunate, unlike other very long-term inmates, to have family support – be it phone calls, visits, Skype calls at Acacia Prison when they were available – which was a great connector for my family interstate... It's really only my immediate sort of family who I still have contact with regularly. And also, whilst I was in custody as well. So those ties have remained, strengthened... Although I had been out of the community for a very long time, I didn't feel isolated or completely out of touch with the community. So, I felt reconnecting would be much easier for me... Regular visits from people in the community when they were available because over such a long period of time things change... And often with long-term inmates, friends and family drift... People have different pursuits, have different things in their life, and sometimes you lose those connections.*

Connection to family also acted as a motivation for desistance and hope for the future.

*Darren: You just think about your family you know. What they have to go through if you do that. Definitely it would be a big disappointment for them.*

Conversely, there was a sense of disappointment when family were unavailable or didn't provide emotional support. Most of the participants viewed family as their primary source of emotional support.

*Andrew: Yeah, well I have no real family support to speak of...*

*Craig: My family are like time and place sort of thing. If stuff is going on in their little family and their life they don't really give a shit about anything else. If I, say if I got locked up and need to be bailed out, Dad would bail me out you know. If I'm stuck somewhere he would come and pick me up but as in the emotional and mental support stuff that you need, there is none of that nup... So it's quite daunting.*

## 4.2.2 Children

Having children provided a unique and primal desire for connection with them. For Darren, engagement in crime was attributed to a loss of that connection (when his child was given to foster carers) and also provided some motivation to regain that connection.

*Darren: Having a child was very helpful and as he got taken my whole world is just like crashed. I mean only when you're at your lowest you can find your way back. That's how I felt you know... Like if I had him I wouldn't be like this, going through*

*all this. I wouldn't have any problems if I had him... I go and visit him whenever I get a chance to, to be there for him.*

*Me: So, is it important to you that you're able to get custody of him?*

*Darren: Yeah it is. That's what I mean like sometimes it's hard, you get drunk you get on drugs and you do stupid things. At the end of the day well all that's going to do is keep setting you back until eventually they do an 18-year order and you won't be able to have the opportunity... That's basically what kept me going you know thinking about my son.*

For Andrew, this connection with children had been lost and he had been disowned due to the crimes he committed. In his case the children were older and the crime involved the death of a family member.

*Andrew: I have no relationship at all with my children... They want nothing to do with me... Well it's heart-wrenching so it comes back to the serenity prayer doesn't it. Something I can't change so I need to have the wisdom to accept that.*

Other difficulties in connecting with children arose through the relationship with the ex-partner who was the mother of the children. In some cases, she controlled access to, and contact with, the children. If the relationship was not good, or if there was another partner on the scene, this limited connection for the ex-offender.

*Craig: Well you see my ex-partner, when her partner is in jail because she met him when I was in jail and she had two kids with him. When he is in jail she rings out and I can talk to the kids and it's all blasé but when he's out numbers get changed. Like sometimes I couldn't even contact them for over a year.*

### 4.2.3 Partner

The connection to a partner was seen as important for emotional support. Some participants actively sought out and worked at retaining such a relationship. If that emotional support was seen to be lacking, it was lamented.

*Brian: I got into a serious relationship approximately 12 months after my release and have now since been married for approximately five weeks... So, relationship's thriving, going ahead in leaps and bounds, happily married.*

*Craig: Now with (name) before I went to jail I felt that I couldn't leave that relationship even for a day, just in case ... keep it maintained... But as in the emotional and mental support stuff that you need, ... I'm not even getting any from (name) either, my partner you know... It's been 2½ years of really headache, heartache stuff and I don't really know what to do.*

Being incarcerated in prison added to the difficulties in maintaining this emotional connection. Re-establishing it after release could be a fraught process. Craig was feeling powerless when he heard his partner had re-coupled while he was in jail and the prospect of reconnecting was daunting.

*Craig: Oh, I didn't know about it until one of my mates came down to Albany and visited and told me and that was like after about 8 to 10 months after I got locked up. Yeah but being in jail, what do you do? You can't do nothing. You can shout on the phone all you want, you can write letters all you want. I could let it go easily because I knew that it was pretty much over you know... I'm not really sure that when people have kids they think I'm never going to jail but they do and nine times out of 10 it's something to do with the relationship or when they're in jail and if you cheat on your partner you go to jail then they think it's like I remember that like here we go and it's just starts that fucking bullshit when you get out because you're still with that person and you still love that person and you've got kids together but they've slept with someone else you might know or you might not know. It's not good.*

#### 4.2.4 Social connections

The opportunity for other social connections was sought out through a variety of avenues. Participants referred to their engagement with church, other ex-prisoners, their partner's friends, long-standing relationships, business connections, sporting clubs and people in volunteer organisations.

Finding acceptance from others was an important issue for these ex-offenders and any recognition of such acceptance was warmly acknowledged. In the light of the perceived stigma and rejection from other realms of society, such acceptance was an oasis. For Darren, this was through a close kin relationship.

*Darren: So that's why I'm saying it's good to have that close relative to talk to. He's on the same journey as I am... Yeah, we spend a lot of time together especially on days that we're down because we always like picking each other up. So if I'm down he comes up and it will be the other way so it's like really good man. I found a guy that really helps a lot and picks me up a lot. Like we always talking about what we are thankful for like every day.*

Darren and Evan both acknowledged the acceptance they found in a church group.

*Me: Do you feel accepted there?*

*Darren: Yeah, yeah.*

*Me: So you don't feel that judgement that you've been talking about?*

*Darren: No. Definitely not. I feel like it's one of the only places that fully accepts you.*

*Evan: And you were never criticised for what we really did.*

Accommodation arrangements provided this opportunity for social connection for some but it also created difficulties for others. Some wanted the connection with others in similar circumstances, while others avoided it. Some felt isolated; others wanted to have their own space after many years of cohabiting in prison. Some appreciated a supportive housemate; others found sharing with others very stressful. This highlighted the need for an individual assessment of the needs, desires and goals of the ex-offender in relation to accommodation.

Andrew thought the idea of a group of ex-lifers sharing together had merit as they could help each other out, whereas Brian wanted some personal space after many years of having to share with others.

*Andrew: Well talking to some of the old-timers around the traps back a long time ago they used to have a thing a halfway house where long-term prisoners could go and stay and you know there was counselling available and different supports to help you get back into the community. Basically, I was just dropped in the deep end and fortunately I had the skills to get through it. I can imagine it would be a lot more difficult for other people who weren't as confident and as able to problem solve as I... Just having somebody to ask questions of. You go somewhere and engage with an organisation and – not so much for me because you know I'm quite adept – but other guys particularly they don't want to appear foolish so they don't want to ask what they believe are dumb questions.*

*Brian: You need that independence because of all the years of being – I wouldn't say in most cases – but lying over your head is the fact that in any time you could be put two-out or four-out and having to share with someone else you don't particularly know or get along with and even in self-care units it's still sharing with a group of people some you may not like or some you may not get along with. So I didn't want to get into that type of situation ... you still want that space. So things were always going to be different and of course I would rather not deal with someone else's problems. I was managing okay I didn't want to manage someone else's problems.*

Darren felt isolated on his own, whereas Craig and Evan found it difficult and stressful in shared accommodation. Andrew enjoyed sharing with a like-minded housemate.

*Darren: I live by myself. So I'm very isolated.*

*Craig: When I first got there, there was four of us... Like it's really hard because after what happened when I first got out that you just go to the house and that's full of all blokes who have just gotten out of jail as well and it's kind of like a prison inside the house.*

*Evan: With two other fellows and the police were knocking on the door quite regularly because one was an ex-drug person and the other one was a stealing person who had quite a bit of an alcohol problem before as well. And that was very upsetting for us all. And none of us got on.*

*Andrew: At the moment I've got a housemate. He and I get along really well and he is a similar mindset to me and similar struggles so we bounce well off each other.*

When first released from jail, some participants felt a sense of isolation.

*Andrew: When I was first released the stress of going from a closed in community where you know everything and everybody and the view never changes to being dropped off into a one-bedroom unit with nobody to talk to and no support network.*

*Craig: Yeah, yeah then you go back home and there's blokes who have just got out of jail and they're walking around like fucking even more lost. It's quite depressing*

Darren articulated the need to connect with the right people to avoid returning to a criminal life. Making changes to the social group, through recognising the negative influence of the previous connections, added to the feeling of isolation.

*Darren: Well it's hard to talk to people. Like when I first got out it was hard to communicate with people and connect... The only thing I need is good company. The right group of people to hang out with. Yeah, that's pretty much it. I don't need anything else... I've got some relatives who are doing drugs, stealing and then you got some relatives who are just trying to have a great life. They don't want to fall back into that old habits you know what they were doing.*

When making new connections, the disclosure of a criminal record associated with a lengthy prison sentence created some tensions for the returning prisoner. Brian highlighted this in his experience of dating. He also discussed how parole conditions which included restrictions on attending licenced premises can also make life awkward.

*Brian: I found the most stressful part of getting into a relationship was do I tell her or do I not tell her in regards to where I have been and my offence itself. So, I did the old dating for a while and not telling her anything unless I was asked. If I was asked, I was in the frame of mind of I would say. Don't ask, don't have to say... Some of the girls I went out with said 'where have you been all this time' and I said 'well...' That was a bit strange.*

*Brian: Actually in regards to getting out and about I suppose I had conditions on my parole which prevent me going to licensed premises. So that rules out social occasions unless it's a cafe.*

## 4.3 Self-awareness and change

### 4.3.1 View of self

The ex-offender's view of himself, or his self-awareness, seemed to be integrally tied to his willingness and capacity to change and thus desist from crime enabling a successful reintegration into the community. All of the participants displayed some degree of self-awareness and understanding. In some cases, this was an attempt to interpret the 'true self' and create a narrative to explain their crimes but at the least, there was a recognition of some of the emotions with which they contend and how they deal with them.

Some of the participants talked about the sense of shame, or self-disappointment, that they carried due to their crimes.

*Darren: Just because you went there is not what you wanted but it just happened you know. Yeah and you just feel down on yourself because you've been through that you know. Disappointed in yourself.*

*Brian: (With them) I don't have to have that shame of being in prison. Because it is shame. Not that I'm saying that people judge me, it's my own shame.*

*Evan: However, in our own hearts we know how bad our crime was and we're certainly ashamed of that. That was one of my big things to get over, was the shame of it after doing so well throughout the world for so many years.*

Darren extended this thought to the recognition of the need for self-forgiveness.

*Darren: You can forgive yourself, try to move forward. You just need to get all of those things off your chest... You might not be able to forgive yourself at first but you give it some time and you'll be able to forgive yourself eventually for whatever happened.*

In keeping with the need to create a narrative of the 'true self', which can be separate from the actions of the past and attributable to defensible causes, Henry viewed his criminal actions as a result of his drug use. Similarly, Darren was keen to escape the judgements made about him arising from his actions.

Henry: *I was using at the time... Crime wasn't really the thing it was more using. It was just like a bad mistake to go and rob them.*

Darren: *And it does feel like as soon as you get out everyone is watching you. I mean just because you made like a mistake it's not who you are. And these people are judging you, telling you this and that. And you already know right from wrong. You don't need to be told and judged especially when they don't know like, they were in your shoes in your position. You get angry you know. (Emphasis added)*

For some, the view of the self included an awareness that anger was an ongoing battle.

Darren: *I sometimes get impatient you know. Like say for example you're sitting there waiting for your pay. And these fellas are messing you around but all you want to do is just like hurt them you know. Just like get wild with them you know... Yeah just because little things like they may be taking too long. And you get up and abuse them... They downgrade you a bit and I feel like hurting them. Yeah like I'm really wild with them just because they're saying some nasty things, putting you down.*

Andrew: *I understand that anger is an emotion which is neither good nor bad, it's what you choose to do with it. So it's easy enough to hold that belief. It is harder in times of, I suppose, emotional compromise, being angry, to actually making the right decision and it's not working.*

Recognition of the need to change and set some positive goals came from Henry.

Henry: *Just realising that using isn't for me. It's time to give it up and start studying again and get back into more positive ways of living life without drugs and alcohol.*

Frank was determined to maintain a positive demeanour during his years in prison which held him in good stead upon his release. He was clearly aware of the potential consequences of holding on to destructive emotions from a negative mindset which would limit his process of change.

Frank: *That was my goal. I'd say my goal in prison was not to leave any worse than I came inside... Yeah, I was determined not to let my prison experience damage me as far as being bitter, resentful, all those negative things that a lot of prisoners come out with. A chip on the shoulder, whatever you want to call it, a lot of prisoners do have that. They have a nasty attitude... Anyway, I didn't want have anything to do with that. I wanted to leave prison without that bitterness or chip on the shoulder, that resentment, and anger. And that's how I've tried to live my life in prison and then out of prison as well.*

### 4.3.2 Changes in self

Several participants were able to identify changes in their beliefs, attitudes and thinking. This was most apparent in the older men.

Andrew, in particular, was able to identify his previous irrational thinking, including entitlement beliefs, and a development of an empathetic perspective. These cognitive shifts were evidenced in the changes in behaviour which he observed in himself and a recognition that he was much less aggressive. He was also aware that he was on a progressive, developmental journey of change.

*Andrew: Well a lot changed in the way that I think and I act... Oh I'm a very different person, I'm much more empathetic. I can tolerate different beliefs a lot better. ... spend time – personal time – doing things that help other people... I was very self-centred and selfish in the past and had male entitlement beliefs and a whole lot of other irrational thought and behaviour patterns... Well, I'm now aware of some of my irrational thoughts and my beliefs and how they led up to my offence... it's been a process. Some program intervention when I was inside and some I'm still currently doing. So, it is a work in progress.*

Brian recognised that he now employed more consequential thinking, partially as a result of a prison therapy program. Clearly, this was one of the goals of such a program and a contributor to desistance from violent behaviour.

*Brian: So, when I first got in, even though I thought I was a careful and cautious person, I did not spend enough time thinking about if I did this, what would be the consequences? Oh, if I did that, what would be the consequences? That is one of the things we did in the Cog Skills course was that they have those acronyms, creating lists, outlining the objectives, selecting the best one, trying it, if that doesn't work go to the next one. It was very straightforward but again, useful.*

Whilst he did not attribute it to a particular source, Ian could identify that his attitudes had changed through dealing with his anger.

*Ian: It's my attitude towards life and towards people. The way I conduct myself, I guess. I think there's been a big change in me from all the anger that I had from what's happened to me and I've taken all the anger and tried to turn it into something positive.*

All of the participants had been convicted of a violent offence. Thus, being aware of changes in their thinking which affected their behaviour is a critical issue. Andrew identified this very clearly and was able to articulate some of the things he had learnt



which had led to changes in his view of violence. He expressed a clear desire to eliminate some of the violent behaviours from his life.

*Andrew: A small percentage of the time I could turn nasty which is something I am very aware of and is no longer a factor in my life... I'm a lot less aggressive. I actively seek the good in people... My position has moved now. I'm much more aware of behaviours that can be perceived as threatening you know. Things like the volume of the voice, the tone of the voice, getting too close to someone, standing over them, being physically bigger than that a woman. Yes, so I'm very mindful of that and seek to remove those behaviours from my life. As I say it's an ongoing process and I'm nowhere close to being done but my belief now is anything can be achieved through non-violence.*

### 4.3.3 Agents of change

What brings about these changes in offenders is the critical question to ask. The view of these participants is that it is a mixture of maturing with age, input from prison programs – both 'mandatory' and voluntary, involvement with organisations and even the prison experience itself.

Brian had a long-term sentence and recognised that he had 'grown up'; Ian also alluded to learning from the experiences of life.

*Brian: Okay, I went in when I was 30 came out when I was 52. Obviously, there's a big change. I got wiser. As you age, you need to grow up, understand your responsibilities and accept them.*

*Ian: Changed about myself? Understanding life more. I guess life wasn't meant to be easy. (Laughs) All the challenges that you go through and still...*

Ageing was also a change agent for Evan but he further identified that the prison experience provided him with an opportunity to develop empathy which in turn led him to engage more with ex-prisoners after his release.

*Me: Can you tell me how you think you have changed?*

*Evan: Very mature. Very tolerant. Very accepting of other people's stories. Because when I first went to jail, I would never ever have spoken to a crim. Now, that's part of my life and I want to get them on the straight and narrow too (laughs).*

Certainly, participation in rehabilitation programs while in prison was a contributing factor for some of the participants, even though this was not true for them all. The earlier quotes from Andrew ('Well it's been a process. Some program intervention when I was

inside...') and Brian ('That is one of the things we did in the Cog Skills course...') about changes in their thinking show that the interventions provided in the rehabilitation programs had some effect for them.

Some of the long-termers identified the issue of motivation to change as being a key to their learning and engagement. However, this was combined with the motivation to do what was required to exit prison more quickly.

*Andrew: Yeah well, I have a high level of honesty and integrity and I understand that I have problematic behaviours and I readily accepted intervention. I am motivated to change and there was no artifice at all. It was 100% effort all the way.*

*Brian: The medium intensity violence program ... Did I need to do it? No. But it was one of those things where I could see that I could benefit from it.*

*Frank: With my very long-term view I was looking more about changing my life and doing things differently in my life because I didn't want to come back to prison. That was my number one motivation, is not coming back. Yeah, that was it.*

*Andrew: Well I was highly motivated and that was confirmed in the post program report. Highly motivated, engaged well, was a group leader, exhibited prosocial behaviours and all the rest of it. And I knew in the end that report was what the Prisoner Review Board was going to read.*

At least for Craig, there was a clear and significant insight which he refers to as 'an epiphany'.

*Craig: And in the first Pathways I did, I had an epiphany you know. Because when we were talking amongst things all you can hear is 'yeah but she did this, yeah well he went' and 'no, it was nothing to do with me blah blah blah'. And I realised that we are in control of what we do. No-one else. And I explained to the class what they're trying to say is ...*

Whilst in prison, Frank undertook intensive counselling therapy and he attributes much of his learning and developmental change to this engagement.

*Frank: I believed that I would continue my learning journey if I did it... The one-on-one counselling was more insight into self, into motivations, into past, into patterns of behaviour, and thinking of course. Looking at ways of, obviously very old ways of doing thinking, but not repeating them in the future. So that's what it was about. It's more about learning from childhood behaviours and experiences which form the person you are to a point and then obviously lead you to learn more, correct those behaviours and continue your journey in life.*

Engagement in voluntary programs in prison was overwhelmingly viewed as supportive of change and connection with helpful people. Again, motivation was the key to engagement and learning.

*Ian: I just thought it might help. Things I may not have known so I just volunteered myself to check it out and see if I could learn something more.*

*Andrew: The other thing is obviously I don't know everything and there are still behaviours I need to change. So, anything that can give me insight and assist me on my journey is extremely helpful.*

The inclination towards engaging with voluntary programs extended to programs in the community. Andrew explained that while on supervision orders in the community he preferred a voluntary course to the one prescribed as the group mindset was much better.

*Andrew: I self-referred to Relationships Australia and am engaging with them in a voluntary group. The thing is that as soon as I was sentenced there are program requirements... My thought process was: well... I know what's best for me and I want to stay in the Monday group with people who are there voluntarily.*

Henry indicated that the change process was directly related to his motivation, or lack of it.

*Henry: Yeah, I went to rehab in Geelong in 2015 called (unclear). They were quite good. And services here like Palmerston, Cyrenian House, the rehab centre here as well.*

*Me: So, you've got connections with all of those as well?*

*Henry: Well I went to them. But I wasn't ready to change at that stage. The motivation wasn't there.*

For some like Gary, without an openness to accepting help and engaging in learning about different ways of thinking, nothing will really help.

*Gary: I'm a very strong-minded person and there's nothing they can teach me. Nothing I did out there that I didn't think about, you know what I mean. I thought about everything that I was doing.*

It needs to be recognised that for some, change is a difficult and extended process. Darren lamented this painful truth in revealing that he had further charges pending.

*Darren: To be honest, I got charged three months ago and still have to go back to court for that. Yeah, I want to change my life around but it's a little hard... Well that's what I was saying like I got charged three months ago when I was pretty intoxicated. So, nothing's really changed.*

## 4.4 Support: external agency

The external agencies nominated by the participants which provided useful support included a combination of the Department of Justice programs within the prison, Community Corrections Officers (CCOs), organisations which were service providers contracted by the Department of Justice and other community organisations providing programs and counselling.

The central theme which emerged from the participants' references to support from external agents was the value of an individual orientation of the service through knowing the circumstances of the returning prisoner. This theme was evident across all aspects of external support and embraced the sub-themes of flexibility, learning opportunities and practical help.

Evan articulated this concept very strongly when discussing his experience with his service provider.

*Me: So, they were wanting you to do certain things that they want everyone to do but they weren't relevant for you. Is that right?*

*Evan: That's right, it's not relevant for me. And this is the thing. Each released person is a separate identity. That's the way it has to be approached. ... Listening to what the crim has to say. Because the crim has his mind where he wants to go and how he wants to get there. By putting stumbling blocks – this is how you should do it, this is how you should so-and-so... Not listening!*

### 4.4.1 Flexibility and rigidity

Perhaps one of the most significant issues affecting the value of the support to the participants was the dichotomy of flexibility and rigidity, or being helpful rather than being a hindrance.

Community Corrections clearly plays a major role in the reintegration process for those on parole. For some participants, the flexibility shown by CCOs was much valued. It provided them a sense of working together and being 'for' the returning prisoner.

*Evan: Well, of benefit to me is tar-te-tar to our situation. If I'm busy, they give me a bit of leeway. Like as in reporting... I rang up because the time had shot past and I was half an hour late, more or less. She said 'oh don't worry about coming in but make sure you're there next week'... So that's it. It was more of a getting along*

*together situation. Flexible. And not antagonistic towards each other. It was great.*

*Brian: I had a clause on my parole for frequent and regular urine drug testing. They now realise that that's not required and they're making up an application to have it taken off as a parole condition. Only having had done a few since getting out the guy said why are they even on there? Just like anything they've got a budget to spend and when they have someone like me who is got a place to live, a new relationship, is working, reports on time all the time and they know the ones who are using.*

*Frank: Well my first reporting obligation is obviously a five-year parole term. Initially on release I was seeing my community corrections officer at least twice a week, sometimes three times a week. I'd say within a month or so that dropped down to maybe two times a week then became once a week. When I found work, I think it moved back to fortnightly on one afternoon. So, they sort of said to me 'look, when you have work we just sort of step back a bit and let you do your thing' because they just said work is one of the factors that reduces the chances of reoffending. So they stepped back. And from there after about a year or so I went to monthly and has only been a few months ago that has gone to every second month.*

These views contrasted with another perception of rigidity and 'ticking the boxes', as described by Andrew.

*Andrew: Once again, it's process driven. So, I don't know how long I'll spend with the CCO today when I report. In my experience it's been 15 minutes. We'll do that every week and then we'll knock it out to fortnightly and then extended a bit further. Yeah it's 'how is everything going? Good. Any interaction with the police? No. Still working? Yeah. Still living at the same address? Yeah. Okay see you next week'. Even though it's a lot softer approach this time, it's still ticking the box.*

*... and he says I have to you give one of these, it's the process. I see you've already put in your calendar but okay yeah well it is the process... The list goes on but you know this is my job, these are the boxes I've got to tick.*

One experience Frank related demonstrated this tension between adherence to processes while needing to be aware of the needs and goals of the individual.

*Frank: And it got to a point very early in the picture with my Community Corrections Officer wanted to do some sort of treatment plan with me. And I mentioned that to my psychologist and she just said 'well hang on, treatment was back there, you've done that, you're moving forward in your life, this is not a time for treatment'. So I think that Corrections were trying to cover all bases, trying to be – I wouldn't say overzealous – but trying to do everything that they could do to*

*cover their backsides... But yeah like I said I just think they were trying to be heavily protective of the processes of the system.*

Again, Frank raised the issue of counselling that he was required to do as a condition of his parole. Whilst he acknowledged this measure as a sensible precaution, he didn't see any value in it and was relieved when it was abandoned.

*Frank: Like I said I did have psychological counselling initially that was of my parole condition. That was non-negotiable. But that was generally helpful but again because I was moving forward with my life there wasn't really much work for counselling. So those sessions, I had a number of different sessions early on, but they didn't continue because there was nothing really to continue with. I wasn't having the types of stressful encounters or issues or anxiety or confrontations that someone who's been in custody for a long time might have so the work wasn't there to do. So, it was pointless. It would have been a waste of my time and my psychologists time having further sessions when there was nothing to talk about...*

However, the general consensus from the participants was that the CCOs were supportive and helpful. This mostly related to the value of individual attention and knowing the circumstances of the ex-offender.

*Darren: And Corrective Services are very supportive you know... Yeah, they just want me to complete the order and just get over this thing that's happened... Well they talk to me like as if they were a counsellor. Yeah, their help for like different areas, like with your child, like with your order obviously, how's your drugs and all that going.*

*Evan: And I found this place. Then I approached the CCO and the CCO said to me well you find it and we'll come and check it later, which they did. And they were rapt... In this respect that the CCO's that I have been dealing with have been for me and not against me.*

*Andrew: So, I've had my interview for a pre-sentence report and that was handled really well. It was all about me and I was very happy with it – the pre-sentence report that was put forward to the court. It's one of the reasons I'm still in the community and not back behind bars. And then when I reported after when I was sentenced, the case manager who had been appointed was much the same. Very much about my needs and assisted me through the process to complete it successfully.*

By contrast, the feeling of not being known and not having that individual attention was very frustrating. Andrew noticed this particularly when there were changes to his CCO supervision.

*Andrew: The thing is, I see a Community Corrections Officer and even after I'd been seeing them for a while they didn't know my case. They've got a caseload of how many people and quite often would go be going over the same old stuff that I've already gone through and if my CCO wasn't available and I'd have to see the duty officer it was even worse. Sometimes I felt like saying 'could you take five minutes to read my f-ing file!'*

Frank conveyed his perception that his relationship with Community Corrections was very formal, describing how he was not at all comfortable with it. He recognised that he associated them with correctional staff in prison.

*Frank: Oh, it's very formal. I mean sometimes I even go in now, recently I've seen more, a lot of different corrections officers. Because initially I saw one Community Correction Officer a lot but as I've moved forward and moved on I've seen a number of different ones. Sometimes I see a duty Community Corrections Officer who will act quite informally and relaxed but for me it's still very formal... But I still get the sense of Corrections, prison all rolled into one. I'm not at ease or comfortable with them. ... my thinking of Corrections I guess stereotypes my thinking of Community Corrections Officers and the system.*

Andrew, who had two experiences of reintegration across a period of 8 years, had noticed a significant difference in his connection with the CCOs over this time.

*Andrew: Yeah Community Corrections have changed a lot since I first dealt with them in 2009. It was a very compliance-based system at that time. It was 'okay you have breached so you going back'. Now it's more about 'well okay what can we do, how can we assist?' So it was a totally different flavour. It's quite surprising to me.*

For two of the participants, there was a deeply-felt perception of a mistrust of the Department which demonstrated no sense of care about the prisoners' wellbeing or future.

*Andrew: My overall experience is the care factor is zero, let's do the minimum... I still have an extremely high level of mistrust of the Department.*

*Gary: When you doing full time, they don't care about you. They just kick you out of the gates when time is up. They just don't care... No, the justice is bullshit they don't give a fuck about you. They don't care about helping you get released or anything like that.*

The provision of parole as part of a sentence acted as an incentive for the offender. For Gary, who had served several terms of imprisonment without any parole provisions, this

was a strong point of contention. He believed that this type of staged release under supervision would have been beneficial.

*Gary: If the government had put more steps in place for crims who are getting released full-time from prison, they'd find that the return rate would be heaps lower... They need to put stages in place for them... People don't get parole anymore. See, so everyone is doing full-time.*

*Me: So that would help; if you got parole then you'd be under supervision of some sort, that would be a good thing?*

*Gary: Yeah, fucking oath that would work. Yeah, hundred percent.*

*Me: It sounds like it might have been motivating for you as well if you knew that you could get parole.*

*Gary: Yeah. I've never been given parole. Never. I always get kicked out of the gate. That's it.*

Parole conditions themselves, as set by the Prisoner Review Board, were generally viewed as been helpful and even as a means of keeping the Department of Justice accountable. This included conditions around the use of alcohol and ensuring connections with supporting organisations.

*Andrew: I was on parole for three years and a condition that I had was not to consume alcohol. So, for three years I had no alcohol. I finished parole last year and continued non-drinking.*

*Brian: So my participation with Outreach was actually made a parole condition which they thought was very, very unusual. Also, with drug and alcohol counselling, I had to maintain contact with drug and alcohol counselling, Outreach and even my church. They were all put there as my main support network. So, at least for the first year, they were pretty much once a week, once a fortnight, either one of those would be a drop in, 'hello, how are you going, have a coffee', and so on... So, upon release, I went and made contact with them and just having to say 'well it's actually been made a condition that I continue seeing you people'.*

*Andrew: Well it was particularly useful for me because it actually gave me an address to be paroled to for a start so I could get out of jail. I went straight there. I was driven by a prison officer straight to the program. It was a parole condition, which was great because you know parole conditions are magic. They make the Department do things they don't want to do.*

*Me: So how do you see your parole conditions? I mean how restrictive are they for you?*

*Evan: They are not restrictive whatsoever. In fact, the only stipulation is that I stay with – and this is from the Governor – that I stay with Stepping Out Services*



*International. It's down in black and white, right beside Outreach. Yeah, I gotta stay with them the whole time on parole.*

There were a number of contracted service providers for released prisoners. While the value of these services was generally acknowledged, the same issue of individual attention through a flexible approach was evident from the participants' accounts.

Evan was particularly disturbed by what he described as a hindering approach, applying unwanted pressure on him which he perceived to be bullying. Instead, he wanted to be able to act independently to achieve some of the goals he had set for himself.

*Me: So you don't get that kind of assistance from Outreach?*

*Evan: No, not at all. In fact, it was a hindrance to me being at Outreach for those four months.*

*Evan: What's happened from day one? ... I got picked up by Outreach, pressured into going to Centrelink, pressured into getting everything fixed up on the dole and the pension and everything you could get, and told how much it was gonna cost me to stay at Outreach's house... And from then on, it just got worse and worse. In this respect that you're pressured, pressured to the point of being bullied, verbally bullied through mobile phone. Regularly chasing you up, 'what are you doing?' ... Push push push push push. Even though I was well past my time of day and I can look after myself which I did do.*

*Me: Is there anything that you wanted from them that you didn't get?*

*Evan: Er, yes. Peace and quiet. The ability to do my own thing which I had started back, way back, within Acacia prison and expanded on it from Karnet. And it's all falling into place now. But it took a wasted four months of my six months since I've been out to achieve.*

The stress of the first day of release recounted by Evan was also described by Craig, who was with a different service organisation.

*Craig: From first straightaway getting out I would say that – I'm only speaking for myself and I'd pretty much be able to talk for much of the prisoners... The day that you get out you kinda do not want any commitments or anything. So, like see I had to come here. I was just lucky that my dad picked me up otherwise I would be catching a train and bus all the way here. Then come here to realise that I got to go to the bank, then go to the bank, come back. You know my dad was here that happens but it just threw me way off. He came picked me up at 8.30, we didn't leave here till 1 o'clock. No-one wants to fucking do that in the first day that they get out. Like a week without anything, that would be fine you know and then may be something like a bit of training or...*

By contrast, Frank was released to his family and enjoyed the relaxed freedom of his release.

*Frank: I mean I was released on (date). So, I got home maybe just after lunch. I went to the beach that night and had a swim. And then the next day my brother took me to the beach and then we went shopping. Near Christmas shopping madness. And that was my first experience out and about the next day so I got into it straightaway. I got into life straightaway. Those sorts of things were no stress for me, no discomfort, I embraced them, I wanted to do them. Therefore, any assistance that Outreach or other organisations might provide me would only have a very short-term impact on me as in needing their assistance, if at all. It was good to have that initial assistance but for me personally I was fortunate not to have needed it.*

Similarly, for Brian, the support service available was not particularly needed.

*Brian: With Outreach I got to the stage of 'well, I don't know why you need to keep coming to us because you don't need that help anymore'. It's kind of like you're out of the nest now.*

The concept of individualisation of service was extended by Evan to include assisting the returning prisoner to achieve his own goals.

*Evan: It's the best thing to do is to help them on their way. Not say 'look this is what you should do'. No, no, no. 'How can we help you get there?' That's the thing.*

The concept of rigidity in service was also applicable to pre-release support. One of the participants, Andrew, was a 'lifer' who was eligible for a resocialisation program. This meant that he was transferred to a minimum-security prison facility and could undergo a program of graduated community release for work experience and home leaves. He recounted that his experience of this was that it was a box-ticking process rather than a real service. In practice, he was left to organise his own opportunities for community release, even though he had minimal resources at his disposal.

*Andrew: As part of the process of me being released from a life sentence, initially I had to do a resocialisation program which I envisaged a program as in some sort of structured process that you go through to assist you getting skills and be ready. And what it actually was, was more like a theatre program. It was a list of boxes to tick and one of the activities on my resocialisation program was I was made eligible to go into the community. The thing is that that didn't happen until I asked for it. I took my own steps to get it and I worked on a crew that worked outside the prison but I had to do all of that.*

*The rules are not designed to assist and as I say – rehabilitation, reintegration, resocialisation, they're words that are on paper and yet he's done a resocialisation program – what did you get from it? Absolutely nothing from you lot!*

*The other thing is part of my resocialisation program was to have home leaves. Now the thing is home leaves is great if you've got somewhere to go. No family in W.A. ... So I've got nobody and part of the process of home leave is gradually building the time that you're allowed out staying overnight. ... The entire time I had one home leave of a few hours because I got in contact with an old friend and he was able to do that. I couldn't go and stay at his place because his wife wanted nothing to do with me, which is that's fine, it's her choice but yet what systems are in place for people who don't have. You know it's a requirement of the resocialisation program. What process do you have in place to assist me if I don't have somewhere to go? Oh, we don't. The end. Full stop. So, I didn't do home leaves. They are a valuable reintegration tool where, once again, like everything else, organise it yourself and if you can't organise it yourself you don't have it.*

So, often the rules and processes were seen as a barrier to pre-release support. Those who bent the rules were viewed as the most helpful. This is another example of the flexibility which these ex-prisoners valued because it provided a much-needed service which the rigidity of the rules would not otherwise permit.

*Andrew: The thing is that a lot of the support services are contracted by DCS and you have to fit a certain hole and I was a square peg and everything was a round hole. Fortunately, I had met somebody through Outcare whilst inside and I was seeing them and they bent the rules to actually assist me and offer me services and accommodation because I wasn't eligible for it.*

*A couple of times I had to go outside the rules in fact. ... I needed clothes for the prisoner employment program. I had been inside for a decade and I needed business attire. I had money, I had a bank account, I just needed access to get the items and there was an allowance as well. The government chipped in but to get me out and go to the shops required a certain permission under one section of the act and the great thing about this lady she said 'ah stuff them!' So, she did it under another section of the act and did a permission up and it was the wrong one and it was dodgy and she got her bum kicked but she was one of the few people – and there have been a few, it's not all negative – who have gone above and beyond. But it means going around the rules, bending the rules because the rules are not designed to assist.*

*... Once again, the guy who arranged for me here was another rule-bender... If they had found out, he would have got his bum kicked...*

## 4.4.2 Learning opportunities

The perception of flexibility or rigidity encountered extended also to learning opportunities provided. There are a number of opportunities for most to engage with learning to address offending behaviours, either while in prison through 'mandated' or voluntary programs or in the community through organisations providing programs or counselling. The key finding from the participants was that these learning opportunities need to be both relevant and engaging to be of value.

Participation in rehabilitation programs while in prison received a mixed reception. It seems that they provided some useful elements for some but were irrelevant for others. Whilst it was noted that there were some useful contributions from these programs, there were a range of issues discussed which sometimes rendered these services as unhelpful or even counter-productive. This again highlighted the desire for a flexibility that provided for their individual needs.

*Frank: It depends how long they have been imprisoned, what there've been in prison for, whether they are a first offender or a repeat offender. It depends on their motivation, where they're at, what they want to do if they get out. So, there's a number of factors that I think are different for every person and would need to be assessed for every person. It's not a one-trick-fits-all type scenario. It's an individual factor.*

*Brian: So, I had the five year out forensic psychologist identifying my criminogenic needs, going through all the profile, going through all the questionnaires and identifying what courses I needed to do. And at the five year out one that basically said well you're only suitable for the Medium Intensity Violence course and maybe Cog Skills... There was a comment in regards to that I may benefit from individual counselling, one-on-one... Because it said 'may benefit from', they said it was not a treatment need. But having it, I definitely benefited from it.*

For some of the participants, the programs that were provided appeared to be tokenistic and not particularly 'offender-centric'.

*Andrew: It's: here is the program, it comes out of the box. It's like this, we'll do that and that's it and they tick the box at the end... The thing is that it was a mandated intervention and basically was just a checklist. Okay, you're a violent offender, you've got to do a program. You've been drinking at the time of the offence, you've got to do another program. That's the way unfortunately the system works. It's not very offender-centric at all... Nobody's been interested in the past because it doesn't fit with the group model. We don't care what you bring to the*

*table. This is our program, these are the steps, this is what you need to do. Attended three days, do your exercises and you will give you a gold star at the end.*

*Frank: Some programs I got the sense were more token and numbers programs.*

This inflexibility in directing offenders into programs sometimes resulted in an irrelevance for the participant.

*Frank: I think I did a two-day drug and alcohol program. And that was because someone within Corrective Services head office said I had a drug and alcohol problem, even though there was no evidence of that. ... Oh, because my sentencing judge said I had experimented with drugs and alcohol, not that that was part of my offending behaviour, or a control my life in any sense. But because I had experimented, this person believes that I must have some serious issues there and I had to do a drug and alcohol program. Mind you, the facilitators who took the two-day program, looked at my sentencing judge's remarks and said 'what the hell are you doing here?' You know, compared to some of the other people, 99% of the other participants would need to be there and I was the odd person out.*

*Andrew: Well yeah once again square peg in a round hole. They put me on this six-month Violent Offender Treatment Program. That program was designed for long-term recidivist violent offenders – people with a history of violence. At the pre-course interview the psychologist said 'this course is not actually suitable for you but has been identified on your individual management plan, so here you have to do it'. So I did it... But a lot of it was you know sort of drawn-out and not relevant. It was, as I said, I found it very stressful.*

*Evan: Of the government programs? I remember nothing. And the only one I did was Think First.*

*Gary: I've done every program under the sun.... I've done all of the violence programs, I've done Moving on from Dependencies program, done fucking Sycamore Tree, I've done fucking Cog Skills, and all the programs in the prison system.*

*Me: Was any of that any good to you?*

*Gary: Nup, not really. It was all a bunch of bullshit mate... Who knows, other people might benefit from it, I'm not too sure. I've been in the prison system for the last 10 years and I haven't seen anyone benefit from it... Well, to me it was just irrelevant. If you gonna stay out you're going to stay out. No little course is gonna teach you that shit.*

Whether they were mandated programs or recommended voluntary ones, Frank conveyed that there was a sense of coercion, with consequences for the achievement of parole.

*Frank: Of course, the issue is if you refuse to do a program that would be held against you, of course. That would be grounds, as you would expect, for a rejection of parole. Or recommendation for parole. Of course, people often do it for the sole reason of wanting to get parole and that's the way it is, that's the system... I still did it, absolutely, I still volunteered. Again, I believe that if I didn't do this program on the back of someone in head office telling me I needed to do it, I wouldn't be having a positive recommendation.*

Not all prisoners had the motivation to engage, to learn and to change. Frank undertook a program which involved mostly prisoners on short terms. His observation from this was that these prisoners did not share his motivations.

*Frank: Because the participants being short termers who would get out anyway, who didn't care whether they got parole, they would like to get parole and this program would have helped that but because they had an end date they just didn't care. So if they did the course, well they might have a chance of parole. If they didn't they are gonna get out anyway.*

This seemed to be the case for Gary, who did not have the opportunity of parole and thus, for him, there was no incentive to engage in courses.

*Me: And how motivated were you to do that?*

*Gary: Not really ... because there's no point in doing the course because we aren't given parole. What's the point of doing them? There is no incentive.*

There were a variety of other issues which the participants raised about the programs offered in the prisons. The mix of participants in some programs made the group environment uncomfortable and unhelpful for both Andrew and Frank.

*Andrew: I found it quite stressful not so much in relation to the program itself but the other people in the group a lot of had entrenched criminal thinking and that wasn't and has never been me... The thing is that a lot of it was useful, however, the group environment was not the right situation for me. I think I'd be better served by one-on-one intervention exercise looking at my needs, my problems. Nobody's ever touched on those... Yeah well in a lot of cases I'm sitting with a group of people who are nodding and saying the right thing in the group and soon as they're outside the saying the exact opposite. It was tough.*

*Frank: It's a very short anger management workshop. Very short. You had a lot of short-termers in that program and only one or two long-termers. A lot of the short-termers obviously didn't want to be there but felt obliged to do it for parole. That they would just waste time and all that sort of stuff. I could see the value of what I guess was being taught but, in that environment, it was not really going anywhere.*

Whereas, in another program, the more homogeneous grouping proved to be more beneficial.

*Frank: Not a problem though because smaller group, longer term prisoners, violent offenders. I guess still an element of the people who are doing it because it was an obligation to move on. But I personally got a lot out of it and that was of value to me.*

The life experience of the program facilitators was also a concern to both Andrew and Gary.

*Andrew: It's one thing having someone with book learning when I did my Violent Offender Treatment Program the psychologist that was running the group was in her early 20s and yeah great you've done your degree, you've learned all the stuff from books but I place a very high value on life experience.*

*Gary: People that are teaching it don't have any firsthand experience of any of it. So how can they first try and understand that when they don't have any experience of it. It doesn't make any sense to me.*

However, despite the issues identified above, many of the participants could identify some benefits of having engaged in rehabilitation programs and the influence of these on their lives.

*Andrew: Yeah there was lots of useful things in the course... did a domestic violence program which was run by Communicare. ... Yeah and from all of those I got I picked up different bits and pieces. The thing is that the domestic violence course was more useful than the Violent Offenders Treatment Program because my history is domestic.*

*Brian: And there was other small aspects of gold. You know different scenarios they put into it but it all came down to cognitive thinking and thinking about consequences of your choices. And I find that very relevant in my everyday life.*

*Craig: It was (useful), because it spins another light on your thinking patterns around what happened and makes you identify what you're feeling.*

*Me: That's the VOTP?*

*Frank: Yes, that's right. So, I did that, which I thought was very helpful for me.*

*Me: Tell me what was useful?*

*Frank: Well looking at thinking before, during and after the offence. Looking at consequences, looking at negative self-talk, looking at a number of different things that go into those sorts of scenarios. Which I hadn't fully recognised to address within myself, which was part of my offending behaviours. So that was some very good learning for me, at that stage... Of course, as I did with the Stopping Family Violence program, there was a learning journey there as well.*

For Craig, there was value in both the empathy and the challenge he received from the other participants through sharing his story.

*Craig: So, the programs I know for a fact that they give guys the opportunity in like a sort of safe environment to sort of tell their story or tell what happened. For that moment in that group they actually listen and there's some people who take compassion with you, they're sympathetic with you. Like say if you say something and everyone knows that it's wrong they'll like 'why did you do that for, it's your mum'. So it's kind of in front of your face you know. Especially when you've got to stand there in detail say what happened.*

Program intensity has been identified as one of the significant factors in treatment effectiveness for high risk offenders (Dowden & Andrews, 2000; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2007). Frank's observation of his experience supported this finding.

*Frank: But for me the more intensive programs, the longer programs had benefit. So, the six-month violent offender program, which I thought was very good for me, I confronted many issues of my offending behaviour... I did the Stopping Family Violence program... It was quite rigorous, a couple of days a week I think it was. So was the VOTP that was three days a week as well. So those, the more frequently you do them each week I think you learn more, you soak in more, you remember more and I guess you digest more. You go over it more as well.*

Frank completed some of his programs spaced by a number of years. This gave him the opportunity to revisit some of the concepts and notice some useful developments in the content.

*Frank: I did the Stopping Family Violence program which was more of a domestic violence program. It touched on many of the issues that I had learnt in the VOTP that I guess had targeted specific issues to do with domestic violence. Also, I found that some of the teaching and thinking had moved on since the VOTP, had evolved. Because I did the VOTP and then some years later I did the Stopping Family Violence program so there was a significant timeframe between the two. So, although I had a good refresher, there was also some new ways of doing things and new information which I thought was helpful.*

The provision of voluntary programs was generally embraced very positively. A significant part of these programs being beneficial was that they were voluntary and thus the participants all wanted to be there to learn and contribute.

*Brian: On the other hand, voluntary programs. If you volunteer for something, is because you want to do it, you're interested in doing it. So that helps in being there in first place. So if you want to be there, there's a chance that you will listen*



*better, you'll understand more, you will participate better, everything will just fit in and just like anything I suppose if you like what you're doing, you're continue to do it.*

*Andrew: Yeah, I engaged with a volunteer organisation called Alternatives to Violence Project and I found them very useful. That was not mandated; the people that were there wanted to be there... Well, as I say, for a group environment it's a much better environment because it is voluntary... Having a voluntary organisation go in with a totally different mindset to the way the Department runs things is a godsend for the guys.*

Andrew was on a community supervision order and his sentencing requirements included attending a domestic violence course. He insisted that his CCO allow him to attend a voluntary program, rather than the mandated one. Being with like-minded people was important to him.

*Andrew: I don't want to go to a mandated program group because I've done mandated programs and I know the attitude and I know the level of interaction. So, I've done three sessions with that group now and am quite happy and my CCO said 'well, if you can get them to report your attendance to me I'm happy to leave you there'.*

Some of these voluntary programs with community organisations, either within the prison or in the community, provided valuable learning affecting the behaviour of the participant and providing ongoing support. Thus, these programs were valued as a benefit to life in the community.

*Brian: I have great connection with AVP as an organisation but the workshops themselves I found to be very useful not only in the prison environment... I conducted my first community workshop I suppose within six months of getting out. I think within a week of getting out I went to my first training night for AVP, attended, made contact with everybody... So, the philosophy of AVP is well-rounded and can be easily applied whether it's in prison or in the community that is why I maintained it.*

*Ian: Life skills programs to help you to go back into society and to deal with your issues. Learn new skills so you won't reoffend and go back to the old ways again... Well for the Sycamore Tree more so is an understanding of the victim's side of things. And where you have to look at yourself and say was I part of this effect? And now how can I change my behaviours, my ways to better myself in the community? So I'm not going to go back to the old ways again.*

*Craig: I did a lot of the life skills ones, yep. Yeah, I did a lot of those even though they're not recognised for anything. See in Acacia when I did the four years, I volunteered my services to the drug and alcohol team. I was doing NA programs and the AA*

*programs with two other guys... and then we sort of come to the realisation that every day is a struggle you know. If you can get a clean day in, good, and if you can't you get off the beam and jump back in and try again. So that made it all right.*

*Frank: Alternatives to Violence Project. I did a workshop and I liked it and I did another workshop, an advanced workshop and training for facilitators workshop and facilitated a number of different workshops with inside and outside facilitators. I enjoyed those because they were involving, got you thinking, kept your mind fresh. But you're involved in inside community and outside community. But also, to remind yourself of where you are at from your past, your history your criminal offending and why you're in prison to where you want to be. It is a reminder of your journey, and what you been learning and it's a way of involving yourself in something positive to move forward.*

*I was also involved in a couple of... Sycamore Tree, yeah that's the one. I did two of those programs, they're voluntary programs. And I got a lot out of those as well. It made me confront some of the issues that a serious crime can have on individuals as well as the wider community. So that was another learning experience from a very different perspective on something that I hadn't been aware of. So that was very confronting.*

*Henry: It was different things, it wasn't just about drugs. It was like problem solving skills, anger management, consequential thinking and stuff like that. Also related to your way of thinking, the way you perceive things. Not just in relation to drug use but in how to tackle things in the normal world. I found stuff like that good, yeah.*

For many of the participants, the provision of one-to-one counselling was both desired and found to be valuable. This was a means to address directly the issues affecting their offending behaviours. By its very nature, this was the individualised attention that they sought, as described by Frank and others.

*Frank: I believed I would learn more about myself and obviously one-on-one counselling it's completely about yourself. You know what I mean, is not a group environment. So there's a lot more intensity with the individual psychological counselling and a lot more confronting things about yourself and about your past that you can't hide from, dodge in a group, you know, where the other people have to do it as well. So, there's no room to wriggle or squirm in one-on-one counselling. It's very direct...*

*Andrew: I was I think I'd be better served by one-on-one intervention exercise looking at my needs my problems. Nobody's ever touched on those.*

*When I had my assessment for Relationships Australia, one of the things they offered immediately was individual counselling if I so desired. And I said 'Yep,*

*once I'm through the court process and if I'm still here I will take that up' because that's something that I've seen to be of high value working one-on-one with someone that knows my story.*

*Brian: ... one-on-one. ... I definitely benefited from it.*

*Darren: Yes, sometimes it's hard to talk to family, you know, about some certain things but it's easier to talk to like a counsellor. It's a lot easier because for one they're not your family, they're just totally like different. So, it's definitely easier to talk to them about all your problems, let it out and you feel a lot better.*

*Ian: I did go and seek my own counselling privately ... She gave me some good key elements on how to deal with it and I've been applying those to my life and things are a lot better.*

Both Brian and Darren sought out counselling related to drugs and alcohol but the individual connection seemed to be the important factor.

*Brian: Yeah, it was just that someone to reach out to if you needed someone to talk to about a problem. I suppose that's what it's all about. If you don't know anyone you don't know who to turn to. ... Yes, so that went on for at least 12 months after my release.*

*Darren: I go to counselling ... so it's like sort of opens your eyes to things that you've never seen when you're on the drugs or alcohol... You learn a lot about what the effects do to you. By what affects the drugs and alcohol. ... and connection, which is something that you need you know like someone to talk to. Like you're not isolated you know.*

Similar to the preference expressed in program facilitators, for Andrew, it was important that the counsellor was someone who had life experience to which he could relate. Having been through similar experiences was an important factor.

*Andrew: When I went to Breathing Space – Communicare's Breathing Space – part of that process during the three months you're assigned a psychologist to counsel you once a week. And once again, I was assigned a young lady in her 20s and she self-identified, she said 'no I can't work with \_\_\_\_\_. He needs someone that has more experience, more understanding'. So she identified that and I was assigned somebody that was much older, had been around the traps and the life experience to go with the theoretical knowledge.*

*Andrew: Most of the drug and alcohol counsellors that I have engaged with over the years, most of them have criminal records, have been drug users themselves and that's why they're so effective because they made the changes in their lives.*

The other learning opportunities to which the participants referred was that of education. Evan and Brian reported that the training they completed within prison enabled them to make immediate progress after their release.

*Evan: And while I was inside I was also a peer tutor of the small business group training school in the education side at Acacia for nearly 9 years. It enabled me also to do research for myself.*

*Me: So you started this whilst you are inside Acacia?*

*Evan: I started the planning of it bit by bit, yes. And that was very well done and through the small business education facility that is available to everyone. That was very, very, very well done...*

*Brian: So, I did some certificate IVs that I felt would be more needed should I be released... When I got out because of those skills I was able to fit into some employment. So, the job I received a couple of months after getting out I'm still working in now. Because of those very straightforward certificate IVs in health and safety, certificate IV in training and assessment, certificate III in information technology. All of those gave me vocational competence to apply for a whole array of jobs.*

#### 4.4.3 Practical assistance

Finally, the individualisation of the support required extended to the need for practical assistance, particularly with the use of technology and accessing accommodation.

The practical nature of the support required included the pre-release services. For those returning from a life sentence, the availability of a resocialisation program and the associated Prisoner Employment Program was an opportunity for practical life skills to be relearned. Transitional Managers within the prison arranged driver's licences, birth certificate, Medicare cards and so on.

Andrew spoke about the need for providing this sort of practical support.

*Andrew: I understand that reporting to Community Corrections is something that that is required but what about the simple stuff? I know guys that, when it got to their release time, they had been in for 20 years. Simple things like navigating a shopping centre, learning how to use a smart rider, opening a bank account. You know all of those simple things... Rather than 'okay, so these are the things that are on a list that we give you', 'what do you actually want? What do you need to know? So, you're a bit worried about going to such and such, say applying for a*

*rental property? So, you see that as a bit of a challenge? No worries, we will come along with you and we'll talk you through the process'.*

The opportunities within the prison through self-care units enabled Brian to develop some practical independence skills which stood him in good stead after his release.

*Brian: For 21 years I relied on someone else to provide something for me and even after providing your own meals because when it comes to looking after yourself being in a self-care unit within a prison gives you those skills of being able to help yourself in regards to can you cook? No, I can't. Well you're helped along the way to cook because it's one of the responsibilities of being in a self-care unit... So, you cook, clean, look after yourself. You got a job in the unit and when you get out because you're in that routine, so you cook, you clean, look after yourself and that's a good thing.*

The practical assistance provided by various organisations was invaluable, although Evan noted that information about these was not well-known.

*Andrew: St Vinnies donated some bedding and crockery and that sort of thing.*

*Evan: In fact, the men's sheds from Wanneroo supplied one of the computers that I wanted... Amazing what you can find out.*

*Evan: That's another thing. All your organisations are not widely known except if you're a druggie, if you're an alco, or you do 12 steps. The others are not widely known or even publicised.*

Assistance with either providing or locating accommodation was often vital for the returning prisoner.

*Ian: Trying to find accommodation and work. I've struggled a lot with that. Trying to get proper accommodation and trying to find work it hasn't been easy. I've gone around to different associations, like for housing. I kind of always get the cold shoulder like brushing me off. They tell you okay we looking at you for suitability for accommodation and will get back to you. No one ever gets back to you and so you're always chasing finding out what's going on.*

*Craig: I never had anywhere sort of to stay apart from staying with girlfriends prior to my four years jail. So, I linked up with Outcare to get some accommodation.*

*Andrew: Initially... when I was released in (date given) I had support from Centrecare. They're the ones who arranged the accommodation.*

*Then I was released in (date given). I went to a live-in domestic violence program and spent three months there...Communicare run Breathing Space which is where I went and did the residential program when I got out... well it was particularly*

*useful for me because it actually gave me an address to be paroled to for a start so I could get out of jail.*

*Brian: So other prisoners said there's this group that may be able to provide you with accommodation or other support upon your release. So not knowing that if I can have my sister give me a place to live or anything like that so I had to cover a lot of your bases. So I lived in one of their houses for about three months.*

Even though this provision was appreciated, Evan felt that the rental charged was far too high.

*Evan: Ripping off crims to pay for their housing. Here where I am now is cheaper by about \$22 from the same people. It's still UnitingCare West or a Uniting Church facility. It is. And then to cut things harder for me here, they held on to about (mumbling some amounts). Those two amounts of money from my pension which would have paid my deposit here, to make it easier for me to get in here. They held onto that for two weeks and two days. So, it was a bit of a battle that part. But we survived.*

Although the accommodation wasn't initially required, Brian found himself in need when the support from his sister deteriorated. So, he utilised the 'back-up' he had previously arranged.

*Brian: Okay when I was first released I was fortunate enough to have my sister, as I suppose you'd call her my sponsor. Unfortunately, about 3 months into my living with my sister we had a falling out so then I had to rely on emergency accommodation with a provider. I was there for about three months and then got my own flat.*

Evan reflected on his desire for permanent accommodation at the outset, rather than having the insecurity of being moved out of the temporary accommodation provided.

*Evan: Then at the end of the four months, I got told it's time to move on. I got a letter telling me get out mate. It's in black and white. I tell you, I've still got it. And I found this place.*

*Me: Going back, when you got out, in terms of Outreach, what would you have liked them to have done? What could they have provided that would have been really helpful for you?*

*Evan: (long pause) Permanent accommodation from the word go... Like a place like this, yeah. Introduced me to the housing mob, somewhere like that. Yeah one of their places. Because it was a hindrance. That's the most important thing. Where you've got stability of where you can set up site office, home office, whatever you like to call it these days...*

The practical help sought extended to financial support in the case of Craig who recounted the stress of the first day after release. He was aware that the scarcity of his financial resources was a real temptation for him to return to selling drugs.

*Craig: I get out of prison on the first day I wanted to go back to jail because I get out they didn't give me any EBT cards because they're phasing them out or whatever so I come here and asked them how much I need to get them for rent and haven't even spent one night in there, mind you and I gotta give these guys 300 bucks out of my 400. I got 440 and I had to give them 300 bucks of it. And I just sort of sat here and what the fuck is going on? I haven't even spent one night in this place and paying a fortnight in advance - shouldn't it be the other way around? Just gotten out of prison and I need money to stop me stealing, stop me doing this, stop me doing that. So I left here with a really bad taste in my mouth... So, the first month I got out I had \$125 to my fucking name. Yeah, I wouldn't want to wish that on anyone... Going back to what I did before. Yeah, getting someone to give you a certain amount of drugs and you just palm them off and just kept me going till now.*

Evan, too, recognised a similar dire situation for those with whom he was living.

*Evan: Also, ripping them off with the price of rental that they were paying. One of them only had \$17 in the pocket when all those expenses were taken out. He had no hope of getting food, other than beg, and he had no hope of getting some work frankly.*

For those who had been incarcerated for many years, the accelerated development of technology created many challenges for them upon their release.

*Andrew: Initially it was tough when I first got out having been away from the community for so long and not having access to things like mobile phones and current technologies. So it was a very steep learning curve... No understanding. Yes, big culture shock.*

*Evan: Like I had to learn how to do webpages. I had to learn how to use a mobile phone... Outcare helped me. A lady there helped me with that computer, as in Skype. Helped me with the emails, really quick.*

*I'm lucky because I've got other people who can do it now. Who can guide me quickly... He is teaching me how to hook up my bleeding laptops. (Laughs) You've gotta have things to find out how to do it otherwise you haven't got a clue.*

*I can't even use MyGov on the taxation system or Centrelink today. I go there and I sat there for the whole afternoon one day because I wouldn't even have a go at it.*

## 4.5 Self-Agency

The need for support through external agency was supplemented by a need for self-agency. Often, this was to compensate for lack of provision by external agents but also to set one's own direction in achieving goals.

The returning prisoner's mindset of persistence and determination to succeed, regardless of support, was a critical ingredient in the reintegration process, as attested to by several of the participants.

*Ian: It can be very frustrating. That's life too. You just gotta keep pressing on and moving forward. If you kind of just say 'I've had enough' and give up, it's too easy. That's where I feel that a lot of blokes who come out just can't be bothered with it. They just go back to what they were doing before.*

*Frank: I was determined and motivated within myself to move on and to seek out my own experiences and support if I needed it.*

*Ian: There has been no support. I have gone out and got my own help... And one day I was living on the streets in an underground tunnel and I came to my senses that you've got to do something for yourself no one else is going to do it. So, you've got to pick yourself up and go get yourself some help.*

*Gary: There is nothing that really helps people. It's whether they want to do it or not. It is not anything that they can go 'oh I'm going to do this because it's going to help me'. It's in their head. They're either going to do it or they're not. That's how I find it.*

Prior to release from prison, this self-agency manifested itself through personal initiative to contact organisations, seeking out people who could help, soliciting information from other prisoners or engaging in educational opportunities. The Prisoner Employment Program, available in a minimum-security prison, enabled Andrew to gain valuable work experience but he had to organise this for himself.

*Andrew: A lot of what has been most helpful for me is what I have sourced myself... One of the activities on my resocialisation program was I was made eligible to go into the community. The thing is that that didn't happen until I asked for it. I took my own steps to get it and I worked on a crew that worked outside the prison but I had to do all of that... So my resocialisation program consisted of me organising things for myself.*

*There was there was a thing called the Prisoner Employment Program but once again self-initiated I had to apply for it, organise my own employment and it was*



*approved. And I was allowed to do it but the thing is that if I hadn't of made the contacts that I had – that was through the trainer that had come in to run the small business management course in the education centre... I got to know him and I was talking about my experience and my qualifications and he said well you can come and work for me. So, I was going out there.*

Similarly, as discussed previously, it was Brian's initiative to demand counselling which would not have been otherwise provided.

Unfortunately, the need for self-agency sometimes arose through a lack of timely information provided to the prisoners. For some of the participants, the best, or only, source of information was other prisoners.

*Andrew: The thing is most prisoners know about things which are available to prisoners from other prisoners. The system doesn't give any information. Working with AVP inside prisons, prisoners go to AVP workshops because other prisoners tell them that is on.*

*Brian: So other prisoners said 'there's this group that may be able to provide you with accommodation or other support upon your release'... It's not what you know but who you know. As a long-term prisoner you get to know the people who ran the services.*

Brian described how he also made the initiative to connect with some organisations who could assist him.

*Brian: Okay, so the provider was Outreach. So, I connected with them approximately six months prior to getting out from prison. Again, there was no automatic referral. I made contact based on turning up at a visit and saying I would like to see you guys... That was like: 'Do you reckon you could squeeze me in here?'... I self-referred to the drug and alcohol service. Again, one of those type of ones where I lobbed in the visits centre and said 'would I be able to see one of you guys?'*

Voluntary programs, by their nature, require a degree of personal initiative. For Brian, this included requesting a transfer of prisons as there seemed to be a perception that Acacia Prison, which was privately managed, was the only one which offered voluntary programs. The dearth of voluntary programs at other prisons was a motivating factor for him to transfer to Acacia. He saw this engagement as an opportunity to show a willingness to change.

*Brian: At the time in (date given) when I left Bunbury, there was very little in regards to voluntary programs that you could do in the prison to help you for release. I knew*

*they did voluntary programs at Acacia. That was one of my main reasons to leave my little comfort zone in Bunbury and go into Acacia.*

*I did just about every program I could get into. I'm a strong believer of if you don't show you're willing to change, they won't accept you have changed. So participating, mainly at Acacia – Acacia is the one that offers the voluntary programs... If I just sat there and did nothing, where is my commitment to change?*

As described earlier, Brian and Evan in particular, through their own initiative, took up the educational opportunities provided.

*Evan: I've done all that in jail. However, if I had not studied I would never have come out a better person.*

Andrew and Brian were aware that they needed to satisfy the Prisoner Review Board that they could be released on parole. This influenced the initiatives they each made in program engagement.

*Andrew: Well I was highly motivated and that was confirmed in the post program report... and I knew in the end that report was what the Prisoner Review Board was going to read.*

*Brian: I suppose for the Review Board, they needed to be satisfied that I posed a low risk of reoffending... I could see the benefit of doing voluntary programs to help me get out... Yet it is a very important aspect of it to have that additional support on your parole application to say okay I had contact with these people, I had contact with these people, I have contact with these people.*

For Frank, self-agency was reflected in his mental preparation which served him very well once released.

*Frank: I just felt it was my time to move on. I felt that for many years in custody, once I had served my minimum term, I felt that punishment had been served and my mindset was moving on. And that continued for the years after my minimum term had expired until my release. So, when I was released I was completely ready to move on mentally. So I embrace that and didn't look back. So, I was mentally ready to go before I was out the gate. I was mentally ready to go years before I was out of the gate. I got out and I move forward straightaway... So, I was fully prepared, fully ready to go.*

Similarly, the importance of self-agency was evident immediately after release. The need for an income to provide money was of paramount importance. This enabled the ex-offender to have some independence and thus, in some cases, to stay away from returning to crime. This self-agentic character featured strongly in the search for

employment which required the confidence to use skills both acquired prior to prison and those developed during prison time. There was also the need to negotiate around the barriers associated with having a criminal conviction.

Evan described the importance of having enough money. For him, it was an entrepreneurial spirit which provided this but he struggled initially.

*Evan: It's all about, as far as I'm concerned, getting the fellow into business so that he can get money. Money is a common denominator. If you've got a dollar and I've got a dollar, it's how you manage that dollar that makes the difference. Managers make things happen. That's just what they're doing, managing their business and not going backwards. They're not relying even on the payment per fortnight. They're getting it weekly or whatever... So even for me I start off on the pension again. But I've been able to do it... So cashflow is vital for crims leaving jail.*

Having a cashflow enabled an independence, including being able to afford their own rental property and to buy a car.

*Brian: And I was successful which of course once you have money coming in other things fall into place so you're no longer reliant on Newstart – they don't pay much anyway... And again, because I was employed, because I had money coming in, that then contributed to me being able to get a deposit together to get a bond on a house and subsequently moved into a single bedroom bachelor pad... I was able to pay the bond and then move in. From there, again being employed, I was able to slowly buy some pieces of furniture, get together and made myself a home... So yeah moved out of there, moved into my own place, and then once I had my own place I actually got myself a car. So, having a car made a lot more independence again, so that makes it a lot easier.*

*Frank: I was basically working and could afford my own place... Private rental, yeah. I was working, I could afford it and touchwood I'm grateful that I continue to work steadily with very small gaps in between. But yes, I can afford my own private rental.*

*Me: And you were going on to say about buying a car?*

*Frank: Yeah that was work-related. That was having the money to do it. And that was great as well. I've got to enjoy the freedom to drive a car which has been profound for me... I valued the sense of freedom in driving and having a car.*

*Ian: And being on the dole it frustrates me a lot. Because I like my own independence. I like to have some money in my pocket and not to be every week waiting for money to come into my hand on the dole. You can't live off that. It's only to help you not to live off. So, it's frustrating.*

Employment obviously provides the best means to access money. However, beyond that, it enabled the returning prisoner to find some purpose and develop self-esteem. Darren explicitly saw it as a means of staying free of a crime lifestyle. As such, the importance of having employment cannot be underestimated.

*Frank: Work has been very important.*

*Brian: Okay I believe employment is one of the most valuable parts of probably anybody's whether you just been released from prison or have been long-term unemployed.*

*Darren: That's why I wanted job so I can just keep going and stay on the good path.*

Brian was able to utilise the skills and qualifications he had gained through his time in prison and found work quite easily.

*Brian: I got employment within the first two months of being released. And have been employed full-time basically ever since. In one or more jobs... Other jobs include general maintenance and that type of thing, working on a farm. So, I currently have three jobs.*

The process of the search for employment was often not an easy one and very little support was offered with this.

*Andrew: Well from that point, looking for work I was able to seek employment and then start getting back into everyday life. Very slowly. There was no real support... It was, yeah go to a job agency and do it like everyone else...*

*Ian: Trying to find accommodation and work. I've struggled a lot with that... I apply for jobs and hand out resumes, things like that. You get no replies back. It can be very frustrating... Getting an actual interview. And also, not getting any replies back again after handing out so many resumes. Foot slogging into stalls and getting rejected all the time. And you see on the news that this plenty of jobs around, so I go 'where?' I'm very blessed, I've got a lot of skills. And a few qualifications. I'm still having problems with it. I don't know. I really don't know what the problem is. Is there not enough work out there? Or are they just saying that on the news to make it sound good? I don't know.*

For some, like Frank, who had no readily applicable skills or qualifications, there was no option but to look for low-paid unskilled jobs.

*Frank: And then I had to actively look for work on a weekly basis and do a quota of everything else. So that's what I did. I started looking at construction, I started looking at trade assistant labouring roles because they were the easiest to get into.*

*Me: So, have you continued in that belief that you can really only get casual employment?*

*Frank: Yes. And also, in a lot of the FIFO drive-in drive out construction, mining, oil and gas, if you don't know someone in the industry, you don't have a personal contact who can get you in a job, with or without a police clearance, you can obviously grease the wheel and move things through, you've got no chance. No chance at all of getting into a high-paid, lower rung job, so I believe I'm doing the best I can at this point in time.*

Andrew and Ian both relied on personal contacts in their job search. For Andrew, this developed successfully to the point where he was able start his own business as a contractor.

*Andrew: Fortunately, I've made a couple of contacts and one of those was able to help me out so I started working and I worked with that guy for about six months. Then a position came up in a training organisation that I was working with – a training contractor. So, a position came up with an organisation we contracted to and I took that and I spent the remainder of that year with them... The employer that I worked for previously took me back. I contacted them to sign a contract as a contractor. It was my intention to start my own business at that point. That year they took me back full-time and I was there for a couple of years until they made me redundant in (date given) and that's when I did start my own business and I been doing that since... Lots of changes and I'm in a totally different work area than my past.*

*Ian: So, what do you do, where do you go to? I'm not sure. All I know is what to do. Just keep looking on the job sites on the net and word-of-mouth, asking people around that you might know.*

Evan had his own business plans and had to use his own initiative to seek people who could help him out.

*Evan: Making appointments with different banks, different other people to get together my business plan that I couldn't do from prison.*

*Me: So learning those things has really been your initiative? Seeking out people to help you?*

*Evan: Yeah seek people out to help you. Yeah you don't get told where to go so much.*

Self-agency for some required a certain degree of optimism about one's prospects, including being able to find work.

*Craig: Because I've never had a problem finding jobs...Because I'm the one who will get up in the morning if I was going to look for a job I would just be going in to offices and stuff you know. Around Ellenbrook they're building and building and I know how to put gyprock up. So, my plan is to like rock up at maybe 6 o'clock not with*

*like full work gear but offer my assistances. 'Do you need any help? If you want to test and see how I go today do, I'll do it for nothing. If you want me, great. If you don't, sweet as. Just give me a beer or something because I am a good worker'.*

*Gary: Well it's easy for me to get a job but I can't while I'm in here. I've got to do rehab before I get jobs. But I can get jobs easy. I'm a concreter. I get work easy mate. I just gotta get out of here. Then get a job.*

Having plans or creating intentions also demonstrated a degree of agency. Regardless of whether they come to fruition, these intentions could foster a sense of purpose.

*Evan: I can get finance through the Export Finance insurance Corporation and the other thing which is the Commonwealth government, and progress. And that's the stage I'm up to now, just about ready to take off. Ugg boots to Israel. Stuff to New Guinea.*

*Craig: Because I think the other thing is well, which I've got way back in my head, is that once I put my foot forward and do that, everything is going to be different you know.*

*Brian: Prior to going to prison I had a trade... You have a trade, it felt like a waste. I had to learn something different to set me apart from everybody else. And I think I suppose it made a foundation for where I'm working in now. It's still building and construction related. I'm a cabinet maker by trade. Building and construction, health and safety, is still work within it. So yes, it did expand my previous qualifications but I still would have got the job without.*

Having a criminal record has proved to be a major obstacle for some of the participants. For Brian, it was a serious dilemma as to whether or not to disclose his record. When there was a requirement to produce a police clearance, this posed a distinct threat to the prospects of securing a job. Clearly, there was a perception that employers will avoid anyone with a conviction.

*Brian: If your employer asks you 'do you have a criminal conviction?' I tell them. Don't ask, I don't have to tell them. And that's the legal requirement.*

*I was told prior to getting out that should I be asked if I had a criminal record I must disclose it. I was fortunate enough for my first job that they did not ask... So at that time criminal conviction was not an issue. However, for up-skilling and job advancement, as soon as there is other third parties involved that may require a police clearance, it goes quite sideways. I can say I can get a police clearance, I've got a police clearance. All the police clearance says is what I've been convicted for and says that I am not wanted for anything. So, yet here's my police clearance and the jaw hits the ground. 'Oh, you've got a conviction for wilful murder'... So,*

*once they got my police clearance they kind of backpedalled a bit... But it ended up was 'not recommended for' to be one of those trainers to go to another or third-party because of – well it comes down to the image...*

*... but I've had interviews for other jobs where somehow, they found out... Somehow, they must have done a police check and I did not hear from them again. I tried emailing they just blocked me. I'm always looking for new opportunities, up-skilling, and you look down the list and police clearance required, police clearance required...*

*I suppose it comes down to that I've gotta take responsibility for what I did and that's one of the outcomes, the fact that employment opportunities aren't always going to be there because of my criminal conviction. So, I've done research and even though they say we're an equal opportunity employer it does not mean a brass razoo if they ask for that police clearance and you've got to give it to them. And basically say 'oh you're not quite the person we're looking for' or something like that. They won't say it's because you got a criminal record when you can't give us a clean police clearance.*

*Craig: And I don't know what type of courses you need to do for stuff like the public-sector sort of thing, tests and all that stuff but with a criminal record and stuff I don't know how all of that goes and it's just I'll wing it you know. You go there and they tell you 'oh no...'*

*Darren: Yeah it is very hard. Every time you want to apply for a job they ask you for your history of your crimes and all that.*

*Yeah you get rejected for a job straight up so it's hard to get a job. I mean there are some jobs you get but is not really the jobs that you want or the job that you desire.*

*When I got out I spoke to my job-net about that and said 'can I go back to the mines?' And they said 'nup, no not really, it's not on the table at this moment'. I said like 'why's that?' and she said 'because of your conviction, what's just happened'.*

*Frank: And also because of my record I didn't want to have to provide a police clearance. Oh, I looked at the lowest rung of the ladder for employment in the construction industry... I simply believed it would be an automatic 'no'. It would be doors closing in my face.*

*A couple of instances of that happening. Initially, I applied for a position. It was a simple, I guess, a gatekeeper-type position at a warehouse. I was keen for the job, I had an interview, everything was fine, 'yeah call me back tomorrow and you can start very soon'. And what I presume was, that whoever was at the office did a Google name check and of course everything was brought up and I never got a call back the next day... Never found out why but I firmly believe from the*

*meeting the previous day that it was a done deal for employment. Yep. That's happened a couple of times. But there was one time in particular when I did produce my police clearance and it was simply a 'No, can't have anyone working in this position who has a criminal history'. So I was asked 'do I have one?' and I said 'yes I do'. When I explained what had happened, I was completely honest about it. I did hand over my police clearance and the person who was interviewing me said 'look I'm sorry but we need a squeaky-clean police clearance. I understand what you're saying to me but we can't accept it'. And that was only six months ago.*

Self-agency was also demonstrated through a strong determination to desist from further crime. This included a recognition that they needed to have a job and stay away from drugs. For some, having a child was the motivation to stay out of jail.

*Darren: Well hopefully they don't breach my order and send me to jail. Hopefully that doesn't happen. Just try to stay positive and hope the judge just looks at it like 'yeah, he's doing what he needs to do, getting counselling, reporting to corrective services and is trying to go to rehab'. Yeah, I do need some help, definitely.*

*Me: So you seem to know these things, don't you? What's going to make a difference?*

*Darren: Stay out of trouble. That's why I wanted job so I can just keep going and stay on the good path. Like I know a lot of relatives and family are in and out of jail and they don't care about their kids because they only care about drugs and that lifestyle you know stealing, stolen cars and all that. They do it all for the drugs, alcohol.*

*Gary: Now, me, I'm over it. I've done all my prison. I want to look after my boy. So my son is the main reason for me to stay out. Everyone is different like that... Yeah, I just want to be there for my son. That's number one. That's all that matters.*

However, for Craig, the desistance process was proving to be very difficult.

*Craig: Going back to what I did before. Yeah, getting someone to give you a certain amount of drugs and you just palm them off and just kept me going till now... Not only that but I was using drugs. I used to get a little bit of drugs and peddle it around that's the only way I could make my money last these days.*

## 4.6 Giving Back

Often, integral to the change process, was an expressed desire to give back, in the form of helping others in similar circumstances or providing some mentoring. This was an important aspect of their lives for many of the participants. This dual giving and receiving



process is self-agentic in the sense that it requires significant initiative on the part of the returning prisoner.

*Evan: The idea of that was to visit crims who had never had friends or visitors... With the blessings of the Justice Department we can go inside the prison and see these guys. From Geraldton to Albany, Bunbury, here, Boronia.*

*Andrew: My desire is to go into prisons and work with prisoners because I have a lot of experience in that regard and I've walked 10 miles in their shoes. I haven't just walked a mile in their shoes. I know the struggles that they face and how going from the wonderful caring and understanding environment that is AVP back into prison. They...you know, the Department says that I can't do it...*

The concept of having 'walked a mile in their shoes', was a strong motivator for the ex-prisoners. It gave them a sense of having a unique experience which could be of value to others.

*Evan: So that's another reason why friends of mine who have been Christian friends from way back 14 or 15 years are so happy because now they got to the stage where Stepping Out Services can go to the next stage of its development because there've got an ex-crim that knows what he's talking about. Not 'this is what you should do, this is how you should do it'. It don't work. If you haven't been through it to be able to do it, you've got no idea.*

*Andrew: That's the way that I view myself. I've made a lot of changes in my life and further down the track than some of the guys, so it'd be great to work with them because in a lot of cases, it's not what you say or do it's just the fact that you're there and can say 'it is possible, it can be done, you can change, you can turn your life around' but I'm not given that opportunity.*

*Brian: ... and thus became a bit of a mentor for other people with violent problems who didn't know what to do and were looking for an alternative.*

This desire to 'give back' to others gave rise to Ian's vision of setting up a men's support group for former prisoners.

*Ian: This is what my idea was when I was doing the Sycamore Tree... That I would like to start a men's group to come and see prisoners before they get released and say 'look I'm here, if you've got any problems, let me help you'. Just a support network... At the moment it's on the back burner but it's something that I'm still very... Something I really want to do. And I really feel is needed. Really, really bad. I'm not too sure how I'm going to go about it at the moment... 'And if you want to come maybe once or twice a week and have a men's group, sure, I am all for it. Where we could discuss the issues that we may be facing each week or*

*supporting getting employment or something like that'. Yeah there's ways around things.*

# Chapter 5 Discussion

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the data presented in the previous chapter is interpreted and compared with the findings of other research. I will show that the central themes of Connection, Self-awareness and Change, Support, Self-agency and Giving Back are interconnected and that they confirm and extend upon existing theories. In particular, I shall demonstrate that the principles espoused by the Good Lives Model have direct relevance to the reintegration experiences of the participants in this study and provide a sound basis for effective practice in this endeavour.

## 5.2 A strengths-based approach

The clearest finding to emerge from the data is the need for a strengths-based model for rehabilitation and reintegration which prioritises an individual assessment of needs and goals.

The Good Lives Model (GLM) (Ward & Brown, 2004) which emerged in the first decade of this century, addresses this very concern. In brief, it proposes that we all seek out primary human goods (e.g. healthy physical life, relationships, mastery experiences, a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose and agency). Offenders have contravened the legal system by attempting to achieve these goods in antisocial ways due to either a lack of personal skills or the advent of external circumstances. The solution lies in equipping offenders with the legitimate means (secondary goods) of achieving these goals, thus implementing a good life plan (Ward & Maruna, 2007).

As described by Whitehead et al. (2007), the GLM is a strength-based approach because it relates directly to the offender's own goals, preferences and values as well as seeking to provide the competencies and opportunities to enact individual life plans. Thus, it is a collaborative approach more likely to motivate the engagement of the offender. In a review of the desistance and resettlement literature, Maguire and Raynor (2006) drew the implication that "It is important to understand and respond to offenders' individual

circumstances, including where they are in terms of readiness to change, rather than applying a 'one size fits all' set of interventions" (p. 25). Furthermore, they encouraged a joint enterprise with the ex-offender in the process of change.

Maguire and Raynor's exhortation aligns with the voices of the participants in this study who sought a more individually-orientated application of intervention programs and services provided which incorporated their own needs, desires and goals. They found it frustrating to encounter a one-size-fits-all model in various guises. This requires a degree of flexibility in the design and implementation of programs and services.

The desistance literature consistently indicates the requirement of both social capital and personal agency for a successful reintegration into society (Craig et al., 2013; Farrall et al., 2004; McNeill et al., 2012a). This is supported by the themes derived from the data in this study.

Social capital can be acquired through a variety of sources, including family, employment and accommodation arrangements, all of which were borne out by the participants in this study. The family of origin and the formed family through partnership and parenting are usually the most significant and effective social capital (Farrall et al., 2004).

### 5.3 Connection

The need to connect with one's family, children and partner is critical. This is especially so for a returning prisoner convicted of violent offences who may have had many years of limited contact opportunities. Incarceration can be a traumatic experience with the potential loss of significant relationships, including family (Kenemore & Roldan, 2006). From the perspective of a strengths-based model, families can provide emotional and practical resources which can benefit the progress of the achievement of goals (Hunter et al., 2016). Thus, it is unsurprising that there is evidence that strong family ties correlate with decreased recidivism as they provide pro-social attachment, monitoring and acceptance (Davis et al., 2013). A re-entry program ought to make a priority of strengthening these connections and re-establishing them where they have broken down.

Sampson and Laub (2005) found a strong connection between marital attachment, together with job stability, and desistance from crime. For some of the participants in this study, a partner relationship was an expressed need, especially where family connections were weak. Other participants had strong family support and did not seek out a partner relationship. This suggests that family and partners can provide similarly positive connections for desistance support.

The connection with children also featured strongly in the findings of this study, especially as motivation for staying free of crime. Although this motivation may need to be accompanied by cognitive developments (Giordano et al., 2002), this finding concurs with others (Farrall et al., 2004; LeBel et al., 2008; MacDonald, Webster, Shildrick, & Simpson, 2010; Walker et al., 2013). For those with young children, such as Gary and Darren in this study, there is an emerging identity as a father which allows a new characterisation of self as a provider rather than a consumer. Clearly, this connection needs to be balanced against any risks to the safety of the children, especially if they were past victims of the father.

Thus, the importance of connection with family, partner and children is established as an essential ingredient of the reintegration process. Prison authorities can provide supporting roles in enabling these connections to remain strong (Travis, 2005). One jurisdiction made it clear that a 'healthy prison' is one in which "every prisoner is enabled to make contact with their family and prepare for release" (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2000, p. 15). Frank, one of the participants, attested to the value of having Skype contact with his family which enabled him to have a smooth reconnection when released. In its report on the Bunbury Regional Prison in Western Australia, OICS (2018) noted the limitations on the availability of Skype for prisoners in the pre-release facility and recommends that "Simple changes to prison operations, including Skype time and visit regulations in the PRU, would allow dads to reconnect and build strong relationships with their children prior to release" (p. 62). This is particularly so for Aboriginal prisoners. Commenting on prisons in Victoria, Glass (2016) drew attention to the significant role of family support and the impediments to this through visit restrictions and prison transfers. Enabling these family ties to remain strong while in custody is a vital component of a successful reintegration process.

A sense of belonging, acceptance and having purpose is one of the primary goods of the GLM sought by all humans (Ward & Maruna, 2007). This can be derived from connection to family or through other avenues such as work or engagement with organisations or churches. The importance of this for the returning prisoner is emphasised by Bazemore and Erbe (2004) who suggested that reintegration "is essentially about accelerating naturalistic processes of desistance by creating new connections that build human capital in offenders and social capital in the communities where they will be reintegrated" (p. 47). This state has been described as one of 'tertiary desistance' (Fox, 2016), or 'identity desistance' (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016), perhaps the ultimate goal of the reintegration process. Such a place of acceptance takes on added significance for the violent offender who often faces stigma and perceived judgement from the general community.

Unfortunately, the reality for many returning prisoners is one of isolation and a sense of 'being lost'. In this study, this was highlighted by Craig and Darren, the two Aboriginal participants, as well as Andrew. Nugent and Schinkel (2016) described the pains of desistance as "isolation and loneliness; goal failure; and, increasingly, a lack of hope" (p. 572). As was the case for Darren, this can include the search for a new identity involving new social connections, thus disconnecting from previous influences. This transition can bring a sense of displacement and perhaps an unfamiliar introversion. Desisters can assist each other in this process, as attested by Darren.

*Darren: So that's why I'm saying it's good to have that close relative to talk to. He's on the same journey as I am...*

Besides the workplace, living arrangements can provide the opportunity for connection and development of social capital. However, this is where an individual approach is essential as not all returning prisoners have a desire for shared accommodation. In fact, the model of providing shared accommodation can be counter-productive as it can involve the mixing of ex-offenders at different stages of their desistance process. A 'similar mindset' is the term Andrew used to describe his housemate in shared living accommodation and he was one looking for support and connection. Darren was looking for this but was on his own; Brian and Evan did not want to mix with 'ex-crims'. Using the approach of the GLM, practitioners would seek to assess the needs, goals and desires of the returning prisoner when allocating accommodation.

Andrew's vision of group accommodation for returning lifers has some merit as it would provide the social capital for those who sought it. This is a similar concept to that of Ian's support group which he wanted to initiate. Day and Doyle (2010) discussed the merits of a 'therapeutic community' in the context of violent offender treatment programs within a prison. This concept could be extended to the community as a facility for paroled violent offenders. To be effective, this would require a consensual engagement from those with the motivation to engage in such a community.

## 5.4 Self and change

The ex-offender's willingness and capacity to change is connected to his self-narrative which attempts to explain past actions and to construct a new, 'truer' identity. This essentially is the thesis of Maruna (2001) who described this process as 'making good' by creating a 'redemption script' to make some sense of past behaviours. He suggested that desisters present a belief in a 'core self' and possess an optimism about having some control over their destiny. This allows some separation from the party responsible from past crimes and deflects to environmental factors, for example (Liem & Richardson, 2014). Presser (2004) extended this and identified subtypes of narratives and various tactics used to justify a moral stability, despite the violent crimes committed. The participants in this study displayed small segments of such narratives.

*Henry: I was using at the time... Crime wasn't really the thing it was more using. It was just like a bad mistake to go and rob them.*

*Darren: I mean just because you made like a mistake it's not who you are.*

One participant made no such attempt to deflect responsibility which may indicate that he hasn't yet embarked upon the desistance journey.

*Gary: Nothing I did out there that I didn't think about, you know what I mean. I thought about everything that I was doing.*

Part of this narrative process is dealing with the sense of shame, or self-disappointment, and the need for self-forgiveness, that the participants carried due to their crimes. Walker, Bowen, Brown, and Sleath (2017) claimed that shame is a feature of desisters' accounts and is a necessary experience for change. This is an internal process, as opposed to the stigmatisation to which violent offenders are subject, arguably as a result

of media coverage (Grossi, 2017). This is a real and external effect, often limiting opportunities for employment, housing and social connection (Behrens, 2004; Davis et al., 2013; Maruna, 2001), leading to avoidance of people and situations (Haggård et al., 2001). Although he didn't name it as such, Frank recognised the effects of this stigma on others and he was determined not to succumb to it.

*Frank: Yeah, I was determined not to let my prison experience damage me as far as being bitter, resentful, all those negative things that a lot of prisoners come out with. A chip on the shoulder, whatever you want to call it, a lot of prisoners do have that. They have a nasty attitude.*

## 5.5 Agents of change

It is one of the central quests of criminology to determine what brings about the changes in offenders to lead them into desistance from crime. The substantial evidence around the age-crime curve suggests that, regardless of interventions, crime involvement decreases across adulthood (Davis et al., 2013; Haggård et al., 2001; Maruna, 2001; Piquero, 2004; Walker et al., 2013). Violent offences follow a similar pattern, although they appear to peak later and decline more gradually (Walker et al., 2013). This development with age was reflected in the comments of Brian, Evan and Ian from this study. The more substantive question then becomes how to promote or accelerate the natural desistance process (Farrall, Maruna, Sparks, & Hough, 2010; Farrington, 2007; Walker et al., 2013). The participants in this study provided a vast amount of data regarding the influence, or otherwise, of 'mandatory' and voluntary programs, service providers and other community organisations. Throughout all of this commentary runs the concept of personal motivation. Before addressing the issues raised regarding the various interventions and supports provided, I will consider the role of motivation.

The most clarity regarding motivation came from Andrew, Brian and Frank, who were all 'lifers'. They articulated their motivations as an interconnected mixture of desire to change their behaviours and achieving the goal of parole, enabling an earlier exit from prison.



*Andrew: I understand that I have problematic behaviours and I readily accepted intervention. I am motivated to change and there was no artifice at all. It was 100% effort all the way.*

*Well I was highly motivated and that was confirmed in the post program report. Highly motivated, engaged well, was a group leader, exhibited prosocial behaviours and all the rest of it. And I knew in the end that report was what the Prisoner Review Board was going to read.*

*Brian: The medium intensity violence program ... Did I need to do it? No. But it was one of those things where I could see that I could benefit from it.*

*Frank: With my very long-term view I was looking more about changing my life and doing things differently in my life because I didn't want to come back to prison. That was my number one motivation, is not coming back. Yeah, that was it.*

This suggests that extrinsic motivations can have value; in particular, the mandating of programs and the provision of parole. These participants accepted the role of these external motivators but also engaged for their own personal benefit. Whether it is possible to have one without the other is a question for further research but clearly the combination can be effective. Most of the participants in this study attested to some benefits derived from engaging in rehabilitation programs. Furthermore, in most cases, there was an explicit acknowledgement of the incentive of gaining parole through course engagement.

The issue of motivation to change features in much of the previous research, suggesting that this, rather than debates about program content, should be the focus for practitioners (McNeill et al., 2012a). Firstly, it is apparent that a cognitive behavioural intervention, as the favoured approach based on evidence for its effectiveness (Polaschek et al., 2005), requires a degree of motivation from the violent offenders who participate and this is often not present (Davis et al., 2013; Day & Doyle, 2010; Day et al., 2011; Maguire & Raynor, 2006; Polaschek et al., 2005; Polaschek et al., 2016). Secondly, there is evidence that men engaging in these programs under extrinsic motivation or coercion can experience changes in their internal motivation and cognitive functioning. In a study of an intensive treatment program for high-risk violent offenders, Polaschek et al. (2016) found that despite being reluctantly involved in the program, some men became more engaged in the program over time and attributed personal gains to the program. The authors asserted that "the treatment philosophy with high-

risk offenders is one of recognising that extrinsic motivation at programme entry is normative, and it is the job of the programme to change that" (p. 358).

The Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model is the typical existing paradigm for rehabilitation programs. Whilst the value of this approach is evident, it is often weak on the application of the responsivity principle in practice (McNeill et al., 2012a), including attention to treatment readiness. In Western Australia, a report revealed that a high proportion of offenders with a low motivation rating were assigned to intensive programs, leading to a high drop-out rate (OICS, 2014).

In recognition of these problems, there is growing regard for the application of the GLM to rehabilitation programs, supported by promising evidence (Netto, Carter, & Bonell, 2014). Ward and Maruna (2007) claimed that the GLM transcends the RNR model by giving attention to individual motivation to change, rather than only risk. This is achieved by focussing on the perceived benefits of change while maintaining the importance of what is valued by the offender. Thus, it employs motivational, rather than confrontational techniques. In this regard, there has been reported benefits of using pre-treatment 'motivational interviewing', a technique centred on the individual's circumstances and cognition (Chambers et al., 2008; McNeill & Weaver, 2010).

Finally, the importance of focussing on motivation was emphasised by Davis et al. (2013, pp. 462,463) and concurs with the key findings of this study:

The desire to change was identified as a key element in the desistance process. Whatever the catalyst for this desire – be it jail time, friends, family, or hitting rock bottom – it appears to be a requisite step in desistance from crime. Our findings suggest that internal motivation to change and adequate social support are reinforcing.

## 5.6 Support: external agency

The value of services provided to them was acknowledged by most of the participants. This support included a combination of programs within the prison, Community Corrections Officers (CCOs), organisations which were service providers contracted by

the Department of Justice and other community organisations providing programs and counselling.

It is now generally agreed that the application of intervention programs during incarceration is effective and worthwhile (Andrews, Zinger, et al., 1990; Cullen, 2005; Giordano et al., 2002; McNeill et al., 2012a) and that these are a significant component of the reintegration process (Bender et al., 2016). The evidence base for efficacy in interventions for violent offenders is unresolved. These programs typically use a cognitive behavioural approach. Some report that there is very little reliable evidence of the effect of these programs on desistance from violence or recidivism (Day & Doyle, 2010; Grossi, 2017; Walker et al., 2013). However, the studies by Polaschek and colleagues found that those of an intense nature, adhering to the risk, need and responsivity principles do demonstrate a reduction in violent and general offending behaviour (Polaschek et al., 2005; Polaschek et al., 2016).

It is important to note that quantitative studies, based on mean effects of groups of offenders under study will necessarily overlook the individual cases of successful change due, in part, to the programs in which they participated. The participants from this study demonstrated that while these programs were not effective for all, individuals (for example, Brian, Craig and Frank) attested to cognitive changes as a result of their engagement. Giordano et al. (2002) referred to a 'cognitive blueprint' provided by these programs offering the participant a language and framework for alternative thought processes. They note that there is no inevitability about desistance from exposure to these and other interventions, however, "subsets of respondents within the sample did indicate that these experiences were important catalysts for changes they had made" (Giordano et al., 2002, p. 1038). These subsets of the violent offender population are important markers of the success of an intervention.

The need and responsivity principles of the RNR model suggest that any intervention program should be tailored to the individual offender. For practical and financial reasons in institutional settings, this may be difficult to enact in the spirit intended by the model. Individualisation of treatment was, however, the strongest theme to emerge from the data of this study. Participants found it frustrating and counter-productive to be placed

in programs which they considered to be irrelevant to their needs, containing a heterogeneous mix of offenders or the result of a box-ticking exercise.

There is a heterogeneity amongst violent offenders with motivational causes differing between reactive and instrumental, for example (Tapscott, Hancock, & Hoaken, 2012; Ware et al., 2011). Delivering a standard program to all violent offenders is therefore less likely to target the individual needs. Howells et al. (1997) called for a 'formulation-based case management' approach with a multi-modal application. This concept has been extended to an intensive residential program which allows for a greater degree of individualised therapy targets with reported success (Day & Doyle, 2010; Polaschek, 2006; Polaschek et al., 2016; Ware et al., 2011). The contribution of the GLM to this approach is that the purpose is to add something of value to the personal functioning of the offender, rather than merely eliminate problematic behaviours (Ward & Maruna, 2007).

If, as I have argued, the provision of rehabilitation programs for violent offenders, governed by evidence-based principles, is an important agent of change, then the issue of availability of these programs is critical. Two recent reports into the operations of prisons in Western Australia (OICS, 2016a, 2018) exposed the problem of under-resourcing leading to prisoners being unable to undertake prescribed programs. This results in offenders either being unable to achieve parole or being released without addressing their offending behaviours. This resourcing ought to be a priority for corrections management.

The individualisation of interventions, matching the needs of the offender, would logically suggest that one-on-one counselling should be employed. It was the reflection of several participants (Andrew, Brian, Darren, Frank and Ian) that counselling was the most effective learning instrument. While there are benefits of group programs, such as the sharing of acquired problem solving and pro-social thinking from other participants, Andrews, Zinger, et al. (1990) expounded the importance of clinicians taking control in these group settings to ensure that pro-social messages are reinforced, suggesting that otherwise the interactions in these groups could be criminogenic. This was also Brian's observation from his attendance in a violence program.

*Brian: So that program exposed me to more levels of violence than what I've... Because you hear other people's stories and some of them gloat in the fact that of what there've done, they glorified it...*

In the context of domestic violence offenders, Langlands, Ward, and Gilchrist (2009) appraised the application of the GLM and suggested that it is essential that clinicians supplement group programs with individual counselling to develop their plans for living good lives. While this may be intensively demanding upon the time available and hence the financial resources of correctional services, the desirability of this should be apparent.

It was significant that many of the participants referred to the value of voluntary programs, either completed in prison or in the community. The attraction and benefit of these programs was threefold. Firstly, that due to the voluntary nature of them, attendees were of a cooperative and engaging mindset, thus affecting the group dynamic. Secondly, offenders were able to select which programs were of interest to them. This interest may have been derived from the desire to learn skills or due to the perception of the impression this may create on the Prisoner Review Board. Thirdly, they often offered the opportunity to interact with people from outside the criminal justice system, thus making valuable connections with the wider community.

There is a surprising lack of reference to these voluntary programs in the research literature. A report into transitional services available in Western Australian prisons highlighted the demand for such programs, which exceeded the capacity to supply, stating that "Transitional Managers regarded voluntary programs as an area of high need, with programs relating to drug and alcohol misuse, domestic violence, and anger management being most frequently requested" (OICS, 2016b, p. 15). A growing number of community organisations are offering services to prisoners, or those released, at a low or subsidised cost and tapping into these resources would seem to be of substantial value.

Upon release on parole, returning prisoners are afforded supervision by Community Corrections Officers. In most cases, the participants in this study were appreciative of both the opportunity for parole and the support provided by the CCOs. The focus of the feedback was the flexibility and individual attention provided by this service.

The rationale for employing a supervised parole period as a component of a criminal justice sanction is well established (McNeill et al., 2012a; Travis, 2005; Woldgabreal et al., 2014) and I shall not elaborate on this. Beyond the 'why' of community supervision is the 'what' and 'how'. While the RNR principles may be relevant, there is little evidence that this model translates effectively to re-entry programs (Hunter et al., 2016). There has been a positive shift away from an exclusive focus on risk, where strength is seen merely as an absence of risk, to a value-added model. Yesberg and Polaschek (2015) referred to a hybrid model in which parole is considered an intervention in itself. Again, the principles of the GLM are relevant in that parole should focus on strengths, self-efficacy, goal-setting, strategies for attaining these goals and a cultivation of hope and optimism (Kemshall & Wilkinson, 2015; Woldgabreal et al., 2014). This requires a case-management approach in which the parolee's circumstances and needs are heeded and a supportive relationship is established. From the perspective of the participants in this study, there needs to be flexibility in processes and a mutual understanding of the purpose of these processes.

As was the case for the participants in this study, Gideon and Sung (2010) reported that many released prisoners hail community supervision as a major factor in their successful reintegration. According to McNeill et al. (2012a), "For some, simply being on probation was enough of a deterrent for them to cease offending, for others, getting help on how to solve problems in their lives was more important" (p. 8).

Despite all the positive outcomes from community supervision, many parolees either reoffend or breach their conditions and are returned to prison (Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Travis, 2005). This is a set-back for the offender but also a failure of the criminal justice system, resulting in further incarceration costs. Desistance from reoffending is well documented as a non-linear, or 'zig-zag' process, involving relapses along with the gains (Maguire & Raynor, 2006; McNeill et al., 2012a) and it would be helpful if this process was carefully and adeptly managed in a constructive manner. So too, breaches of parole conditions could be managed in a manner which aids, rather than returns parolees to prison.

Whilst low educational attainment is associated with higher recidivism (Wikoff et al., 2012), the evidence associating education in a rehabilitative context with reduced

recidivism is unclear. Seiter and Kadela (2003) found that vocational training programs are effective in reducing recidivism, although education programs do not necessarily decrease recidivism. The evidence of Brian and Evan in this study shows that, where the prisoner is motivated by the goals he has set, vocational training provides a legitimate and invaluable pathway into meaningful employment after release. As employment is one of the critical factors in a successful reintegration (Davis et al., 2013; Gideon & Sung, 2010), providing prisoners with the opportunity for vocational training is a vital contribution to this. This was reiterated by a report into the (now closed) Wandoo Reintegration Facility for young offenders in Western Australia (OICS, 2017).

Besides the support provided by the variety of learning opportunities while in prison or on parole, the participants in this study emphasised the value of practical support. Once again, this was a highly individualised need, dependent upon the participant's circumstances and goals. Regardless of the ex-prisoner's self-efficacy, the need for assistance with technology, accommodation and access to financial assistance is often critical for survival in the post-prison world. Furthermore, this reliance on initial assistance is a stepping stone to the independence they seek in reconstructing their lives.

To achieve this independence, the returning prisoner needs access to relevant information about which organisations can provide what assistance. There also needs to be a client-focussed approach from service providers and prisons, as advocated by the GLM. In the words of one of the participants, Evan: *Listening to what the crim has to say*. As previously discussed, accommodation needs vary with the aspirations and inclinations of each returning prisoner. So too, the assistance required with seeking employment or dealing with new technologies.

Certainly, the initial needs of the returning prisoner are usually of a practical nature and this support is recommended by previous research (Day et al., 2011; Kemshall & Wilkinson, 2015; Maguire & Raynor, 2006). While practical support alone will not ensure a successful reintegration, it can be an effective means of removing barriers to achieving goals and thus maintaining a hope or optimism vital for progress (Maguire & Raynor, 2006).

## 5.7 Self-agency

Regardless of the availability of external support or social capital, the degree of agency shown by the individual is a fundamental factor in the reintegration process. It is widely supported that agency has a critical role in desistance generally (Liem & Richardson, 2014; Maguire & Raynor, 2006; Maruna, 2001), and from violence in particular (Ellis & Bowen, 2017), as well as in the reintegration process (LeBel et al., 2008). Indeed, in a study on desistance from prison violence, Ellis and Bowen (2017) found that agency independently predicted desistance.

The consensus among scholars is that there needs to be a combination of personal agency and social capital and an interaction between them (Craig et al., 2013; Haggård et al., 2001; Walker et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2017) for successful desistance. LeBel et al. (2008) described this synergy as the capacity to take advantage of the opportunities which present themselves, with a degree of resilience to cope with the setbacks, asserting that "the subjective mindset is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for success after release from prison" (p. 139).

The ability to respond to changes in life's circumstances or 'triggers' has been explained by Bandura (2006) being as enabled by self-efficacy, which he described as a belief that one can produce a desired outcome by their actions. This in turn fosters motivation and resilience. Fundamentally, agency is about the capacity to act independently, making one's own choices (Liem & Richardson, 2014; Maruna, 2001) or at least having the perception or belief that one can make choices (Ellis & Bowen, 2017).

The self-agency, as described above, was demonstrated in a variety of ways by the participants in this study. Brian's initiatives in seeking out organisations to help, Andrew's self-organising of his resocialisation experience, Frank's determination to be independent and Evan's preparation to set up a business are all examples of the outworking of this quality.

Ward and Maruna (2007) argued that the RNR model, widely employed in correctional services, fails to consider the role of agency and hence pays insufficient attention to motivational issues. Given that agency (or autonomy) is one of the primary human goods recognised by the GLM, it follows that this model has better applicability to the



reintegration process. The question then becomes: how can this sense of self-agency be developed or encouraged in the returning prisoner?

Violent offenders may have spent many years being incarcerated in an institution which, by its very nature, can strip away a sense of agency. Therefore, any post-release services need to have a strong focus on restoring or developing this quality (Liem & Richardson, 2014). It is especially important for service agencies to have a mindset of working with released prisoners, rather than working on them, encouraging and fostering self-determination (McNeill et al., 2012b). In part, this would mean providing opportunities to acquire an identity which brings a sense of meaning and purpose, rather than merely controlling all the risk factors in their lives (Ward & Maruna, 2007). Woldgabreal et al. (2014) described the intervention strategies for this as those which include identification of well-defined goals, the generation of pathways to attain those goals and the cultivation of belief that these goals can be achieved. It is this development of the sense of agency and creation of positive and meaningful self-narratives which is at the core of the GLM.

Several of the participants on this study demonstrated their self-agency, despite the expressed lack of information or service provided to them. For many prisoners, these types of barriers would inhibit the development of agentic behaviour. When the sense of self-agency is at a low baseline, there would be a strong inclination to give up readily, reinforcing the belief that they have little control over their lives. When the institutional mindset is focussed on risk reduction, rather than goal achievement, providing information and access to organisations has a low priority.

The striving for independence upon release from prison featured strongly in the narratives of many of the participants in this study. Deriving an income through finding employment or setting up a business, setting up independent accommodation, attaining a driver's licence and buying a car were all examples of enacting this desire which required an application of self-agency. A pre-requisite for this independence is often money, obtained through legitimate means. In the words of one participant, Evan: *cashflow is vital for crims leaving jail.*

Stable employment is one of the protective factors in the desistance process (Bottoms & Shapland, 2011; Davis et al., 2013; Gartner, 2016; MacDonald et al., 2010) but one

which proves difficult to achieve (Bender et al., 2016; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). Carlsson (2012) argued that employment itself is not responsible for desistance but that it can enable other changes to occur. It can provide the opportunity for connection with pro-social people, involvement in meaningful activity and a sense of responsibility.

Unfortunately, there are some significant barriers for the returning prisoner. There are many factors which can work against the search for employment: their age at release, limited work experience and qualifications, and reporting requirements (Glass, 2016; Nugent & Schinkel, 2016; Seiter & Kadela, 2003). However, as evidenced by the participants in this study, perhaps the most difficult barrier is that of the stigma of a criminal record. Brian, Craig, Darren and Frank all clearly articulated experiences or perceptions of this phenomenon.

For the violent offender, that this stigma can have a significant negative impact on the reintegration experience is well documented (Bender et al., 2016; Grossi, 2017; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). Employers, as representative of society generally, see them as risky potential re-offenders, rather than those seeking to create a new life and identity (McNeill et al., 2012a; Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). In some cases, this is a direct result of employer policy (Glass, 2016), whereas for others it is a prejudice, whether reported verbally or not. Reporting on interviews with young male ex-offenders, Arditti and Parkman (2011) exposed the paradox of this situation where "Employment was profoundly important to participants, yet gainful employment was out of reach for most ex-offenders at the time of the study interviews" (p. 212).

## 5.8 Giving Back

Finally, the participants demonstrated a desire to 'give back'. Andrew, Brian, Evan and Ian each expressed the desire to assist prisoners or ex-prisoners, feeling that their own experience would be a valuable asset.

Maruna (2001) described this as having 'generative motivations' and identified it as one of the three central traits of desisters. He postulated that generative pursuits addressed the need for fulfilment, exoneration, legitimacy and therapy. Liem and Richardson

(2014) in their study of released lifers found that a majority of these men displayed generative motivations but what distinguished the desisters from those who returned to prison was the sense of agency. It may be that this agency regarding generative pursuits can develop over time, after the pressing concerns of the early days of release have been overcome (Day et al., 2011).

One creative and constructive idea reportedly used in the UK, is to employ ex-offenders in peer support roles for those released from prison (Fletcher & Batty, 2012). It was also one of the key recommendations of the report by Seppings (2016) that Justice Departments support through-the-gate peer mentoring using reformed prisoners as models and guides. This would serve multiple purposes: providing relevant peer mentors for released prisoners, providing redemptive opportunities for reformed offenders and enabling them to have employment in an area of expertise.



## Chapter 6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to ascertain the factors important in the process of reintegration into the community, through the perspectives of violent offenders who have been released from prison. Of particular interest was the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs and post-release support services, and the influence of social supports.

The previous chapter elaborated on the five central themes emerging from the data and related these to previous research. It established the need for connection in developing social capital; the role of motivation as being critical to the change process; the value of external agency providing support, governed by evidence-based principles; the role of self-agency together with barriers to its development and a desire of returning prisoners to give back to those in similar circumstances. Across all of these themes, it was argued that the Good Lives Model provides a sound basis for addressing many of the issues raised by the participants of this study.

Measuring the success of a reintegration process may be difficult but the individual participants in this study have provided valuable signposts of the pathway to success. From their accounts, the idealistic summative picture of the successful reintegration is that of a man who is well connected to his family (or children or partner) with a sense of acceptance and belonging; is engaged in the workplace; is satisfactorily accommodated; has established a positive post-prison identity through a self-narrative; is motivated to embrace change and new opportunities; has been provided with interventions which are relevant and engaging; has been provided with initial practical support pertaining directly to his needs and goals; is self-agentic and can overcome the inevitable barriers presented; and possibly displays generative motivations.

While this description sounds utopian, the elements of it are eminently achievable. The GLM of rehabilitation and reintegration is a close fit to providing this outcome and it was found to have direct relevance to the key findings of this study. That is, because its orientation is towards the aspirations of the released prisoner in achieving his individual goals, it supports the need for connection to family, it gives pre-eminence to a positive self-narrative and personal motivation for change, it tailors support to the needs and aspirations of the individual and fosters the self-agency required to flourish.

An approach based upon the GLM would influence a number of key elements of the reintegration process. I shall summarise the key findings of this study and how the application of the GLM may affect policy and practice.

This study provides further evidence of the importance of social connection, especially with family, a partner or children. The opportunities to maintain and strengthen these connections while in custody are of paramount importance. Prison authorities can assist in this facet of reintegration in enabling connection through timely visits, phone calls and Skype facilities. Furthermore, policies which enable a prisoner to reside in a correctional facility in proximity to family would support such a connection. Once released, any support provided through contracted providers or CCOs should recognise the value of enabling and strengthening these relationships. Using a collaborative approach, support personnel should assist in developing these strengths of social capital.

The centrality of motivation as a necessary agent in the process of cognitive change was a clear outcome from this study. This could be derived from an internal perspective, recognising the need to change behaviours and attitudes in order to function more responsibly in society and thus acquire the primary goods so desired. Also, interventions and services can play a part in serving this role, providing an effective extrinsic motivation. This can be through the incentive of release through parole, through a motivational interview process or through the support of CCOs and case managers fostering a perception of the benefits of change.

The allocation of rehabilitation programs to offenders should involve an assessment which goes beyond the RNR approach to exploring the aims, motivational levels and learning preferences of the individual. For an optimal learning experience, rehabilitation programs need to be perceived to be relevant and delivered in a context suitable to the individual. There is a need for one-on-one counselling to address criminogenic needs, either supplementary to programs or as an alternative. The lack of availability of such counselling is problematic. So too, is the unavailability of programs for those on fixed sentences.

The value of voluntary programs within the prisons, as well as in the community, needs further investigation. These programs played a significant role for many of the participants in their learning process and in their connection to role models in the

community. The availability of these programs within the prison seems to be limited by the Department of Justice budgets and their priorities. Programs featured in this study as making valuable contributions include Sycamore Tree, Alternatives to Violence Project, church services through the Chaplaincy, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. I recommend further research into the efficacy and integration of these programs into the suite of interventions available.

The services provided by Community Corrections Officers (CCOs) to those on parole received a mixed reception from the participants. For some, they were distant, formal and merely following procedure and providing little assistance. For others they were a source of counsel, information and practical assistance.

The opportunity for parole could be made available more readily, both as an incentive to engage in intervention therapies as well as enabling further supervision and support within a community context. In this case, CCOs should be flexible in their application of procedures to allow the individual to pursue his own legitimate goals. This would be done in such a way as to maintain adherence to minimising risk, with a clarity communicated to the parolee and mutually negotiated as appropriate. A recognition that minor lapses or breaches of conditions of parole are a normal part of the desistance process would lead to an empathetic and tolerant response. Flexibility of systems and procedures is essential in being able to meet individual needs. For some of the participants in this study, the 'rule-benders' were perceived to be the most helpful.

The support provided by contracted or community organisations should be openly discussed and flexibly tailored to the needs and aspirations of the returning prisoner. This includes providing relevant learning opportunities and practical assistance. Initial support needs to be practical and individually-orientated. The immediate need for accommodation is obvious and should take account of the needs and desires of the returning prisoner, enabling him to make the social connections he needs but protecting his preference for privacy and independence. For those released after lengthy sentences, assistance with technology such as mobile phones, ATMs, email and internet access is highly valued. All of these lead to a development of independence.

As demonstrated in this study, the presence and application of self-agency is a critical component of a successful reintegration process. This needs to be nurtured and developed during incarceration and upon release. The application of the principles of

the GLM would be instrumental in this process. Custodial staff and caseworkers working within a strengths-based framework will endeavour to encourage a 'can-do' attitude, conveying a belief in the capabilities, hopes and goals of the offender.

The two major barriers to the exercise of self-agency which emerged in this study were the lack of information provided and the stigma of a criminal record diminishing the prospects of employment. The reported lack of information available to prisoners regarding community services is a concern. Further investigation into employment schemes and incentives for employers to provide opportunities for released prisoners is warranted.

In accordance with previous research, generative motivations, or the desire to 'give back', featured prominently in the participants' narratives. When enacted, these intentions provide an important avenue to the rehabilitative process. Opportunities for this type of engagement should be supported and encouraged, initially through connections with community organisations. Furthermore, there should be the opportunity for reformed and established former prisoners to connect with other released prisoners to act as peer mentors and guides. Connecting with serving prisoners in the capacity of a volunteer program facilitator or visiting mentor is another means of fulfilling this purpose. Currently, the options for such roles are restricted as the Department of Justice views such engagement suspiciously and with risk-aversion.

While the analysis of the participants' contributions has not uncovered anything new to add to existing theory, it has provided a coherent endorsement of components of this theory. In particular, the voices of these participants provide compelling support for the application of the GLM, as described by Ward and Maruna (2007), to the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent offenders. There has been limited previous evidence for this application.

The other encouraging aspect of the findings of this study is the generalisation of the theory of the GLM to the reintegration process. The contextuality of the policies of the local authorities and the services available to the participants may be expected to influence the outcomes of the study. However, regardless of whether the participants perceived elements of the rehabilitation and reintegration processes to serve them well, their assessment pointed to a similar conclusion: the value of a strength-based approach, as advocated by the GLM. The findings of this study should therefore have



generalisation across a wide range of contexts. They relate to men released after a period of incarceration, rather than the specific context.

As described in Appendix 5, it proved to be extremely difficult to work cooperatively with the Department of Justice. This obstructionist, gatekeeping attitude leads to speculation about a fear of exposure of their practices and outcomes in the reintegration processes. It could be argued that a government department which deals with some of the most vulnerable and damaged members of our society should be most open to scrutiny of their practices and resultant outcomes. Such transparency should be demanded by the community, given the vast amounts of taxpayers' money consumed by such a department. The culture of obstruction to scrutiny, rather than cooperation with investigation, demonstrated by the Department, requires further interrogation.

There were some limitations to this study, as discussed in Chapter 3. Firstly, a sample size of nine participants is potentially restrictive. In terms of the data analysis, I am confident that the rigorous application of the Grounded Theory techniques has led to the valid emergence of themes. Saturation of these themes was evident after the data from five participants was analysed. While the addition of four extra participants added a breadth to these themes, they did not alter the initial analysis as described in Chapter 3.

However, the small sample did not allow for much analysis of variation across the demographics. For example, two of the participants were Aboriginal, four were 'lifers', four were dealing with drug addictions and the ages ranged from 22 to 77. The needs and concerns of those in subsets of the cohort are likely to vary and a small sample cannot represent that variation.

Secondly, a feature of any qualitative research is the voluntary nature of participation. This inevitably means that only those who are willing to share their stories will be heard. A possible implication of this is that only positive stories of relative success will be shared. It would be valuable for future studies to incorporate the stories of those who have been reimprisoned after release. In light of this concern, it was important that from the cohort of participants in this study there were some who were clearly struggling with reintegration.

Thirdly, through the semi-structured nature of my questioning, there could be an element of the 'you get what you ask for' syndrome. Beyond the initial open-natured questions, there were some probing questions employed, directing the participants to address their experience of programs in prison, post-release services and social support (see Appendix 4). While these were open questions in themselves, they did provide a prompting focus for the information provided.

In conclusion, regardless of our personal response to the behaviours of those who have committed violent crimes, it is important to remember that they are people who have the potential to achieve positive things in their lives, provided they can access the tools to do this legitimately. Ward et al. (2006, p. 81) observe that

... crimes are committed by people who share much in common with the rest of the community: human aspirations and a desire for better lives. Our reintegration policies should reflect this fact rather than become merely vehicles for revenge and the effective quarantining of offenders.

The final word goes to Evan:

*And this is the thing. Each released person is a separate identity. That's the way it has to be approached. ... Listening to what the crim has to say. Because the crim has his mind where he wants to go and how he wants to get there. By putting stumbling blocks – this is how you should do it, this is how you should so-and-so... Not listening!*

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# Appendix A Interview Questions

## Contextual information

- Name
- Age
- Time since release
- Last offence
- Length of last sentence
- Aboriginality

## Questions:

Tell me about what's happened since your release from prison.

What is different about your life now, compared to before your imprisonment?

Tell me about things have helped you since your release.

## Prompts, if required:

### Programs

- What do you remember of the programs you did while in prison?
- Was there anything in those programs which has helped you?
- How motivated were you to engage in these programs?
- Why or why not?

### Support services

- What support services have you accessed since being released?
- What has been the value of those services?
- What do you think you needed that you haven't had?

### Self-identity

- Do you think you are a different person in any way since before your imprisonment?

### Social supports

- Family
- Friends
- Recreation/Clubs

### Drugs and alcohol

- Continued use?
- Rehabilitation

## Appendix B Letter to potential participants

Dear

I am writing to you to invite you to participate in a research project, the purpose of which is to identify the factors that former prisoners consider as being useful to their reintegration into the community. Your experiences and input into this research will be extremely valuable.

The research is being conducted by Mark Newhouse, a Masters student, under the supervision of A/Prof Guy Hall and Dr Anahita Movassagh Riegler, both of Murdoch University. The intention of the study is to determine what is working well and what needs to be given more attention in terms of the services provided to offenders both prior to and after their release from prison. This study is independent of the Department of Justice or any service-providing organisation.

Participation will involve a single interview, conducted face-to-face, of about one hour at the offices of the supporting organisation or Murdoch University in Murdoch. You will be asked to talk about your life in the community since your release from prison and to identify what has contributed to your reintegration experience. To compensate for your time and travel costs, a cash payment of \$50 will be provided.

Your identity will be kept anonymous and no record of your name will be retained after completion of the research. In any publication of the information you share, an alias, or coded label, will be used as a reference. While the interview will be recorded for the purposes of analysing the information you provide, the recording will be destroyed at the completion of the research.

Should you be interested, a copy of the findings from this study can be made available to you.

My supervisor and I are happy to discuss with you any questions you may have about this study.

To volunteer your participation in this research, please contact the researcher, using the contact details below.

Sincerely

Mark Newhouse  
[33165906@student.murdoch.edu.au](mailto:33165906@student.murdoch.edu.au)  
0400 231151

This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2017/144). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University's Research Ethics Office (Tel. 08 9360 6677 or e-mail [ethics@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:ethics@murdoch.edu.au)). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

# Appendix C Participant Information Sheet

## **Reintegration of former prisoners into the community**

### **The Researchers**

Mark Newhouse is a Masters student enrolled at Murdoch University. This project is supervised by Assoc. Prof. Guy Hall and Dr Anahita Movassagh Riegler, both of Murdoch University.

### **Nature and purpose of the study**

The aim of the project is to identify the factors that former prisoners consider as being useful to their reintegration into the community. Participants will be selected from those who have been convicted of and imprisoned for an offence involving violence and have been released into the community within the last five years.

The intention of the study is to determine what is working well and what needs to be given more attention in terms of the services provided to offenders both prior to and after their release.

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and what your involvement will require of you. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have, and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

### **What the study will involve**

Participation will involve a single interview, conducted face-to-face, of about one hour at the offices of the supporting organisation or at Murdoch University in Murdoch. Your honest and in-depth responses will be appreciated.

The interview will be audio-recorded and this recording will be transcribed for the purpose of analysing the information you provide.

You will be offered the opportunity to read and edit the transcript of your interview and nominate any information which you do not want to be used in a publication.

### **Voluntary participation and withdrawal from the study**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without discrimination or prejudice. All information is treated as confidential and no names or other details that might identify you will be used in any publication arising from the research. If you withdraw, all information you have provided will be destroyed.

**Privacy**

Your identity will be kept anonymous and only the researcher will know your name and that you have participated in the research. In any publication of the information you share, an alias, or pseudonym, will be used as a reference. The recording of the interview will be destroyed at the completion of the research.

Any disclosures of illegal activity will be kept confidential, except as required by law. However, intentions to self-harm or harm other persons, will be disclosed to the relevant authorities.

**Benefits of the study**

It is possible that there may be no direct benefit to you from participation in this study. While there is no guarantee that you will personally benefit, the knowledge gained from your participation may help others in the future.

This project will help to identify what is working in terms of the services and programs provided by the Department of Justice in WA and organisations providing services from the perspective of the former prisoner.

**Possible risks**

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study. However, should the interview create any distress or emotional disturbance with which you may need professional assistance, you can contact one of the following organisations for assistance:

Lifeline WA    13 11 14  
beyondblue    1300 22 4636  
MensLine Australia    1300 78 98 78

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself, on 0400 231151 or my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Guy Hall, on 93606033. My supervisor and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

The study should be completed during 2018. Should you be interested, a copy of the findings from this study can be made available to you. Please contact the researcher using the contact details below.

If you are willing to consent to participation in this study, you will be asked to complete the Consent Form which will be provided at the interview.

Thank you for your assistance with this research project.

Sincerely

Mark Newhouse

Researcher

[33165906@student.murdoch.edu.au](mailto:33165906@student.murdoch.edu.au)

0400 231151

This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2017/144). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University's Research Ethics Office (Tel. 08 9360 6677 or e-mail [ethics@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:ethics@murdoch.edu.au)). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

## Appendix D Quantification of coding references

**Table App D.1.** Number of sources and code references for each axial category recorded in NVivo 11

Category	Sub-category	No. of sources	No. of code references
Connection		9	100
	children	4	11
	family	9	23
	partner	4	19
	social	4	6
Self-awareness and change		9	68
	self	9	40
	change	6	28
External agency		9	127
	flexible/rigid	5	46
	learning opportunities	7	26
	practical	7	48
Self-agency		8	69
	desistance	4	9
	employment	7	39
	money	4	15
Giving back		5	15



## Appendix E Working with the Department of Justice

The obvious place to start with access to potential participants for this study was the Department of Justice (known as the Department of Corrective Services at the time of first contact). I first submitted a research proposal to the Department in March 2017, following the process outlined on their website. In May, I was advised that they were suspending all research applications in 2017 "due to Machinery of Government changes", which was the amalgamation of two government departments. However, in July, I was sent a letter inviting me to submit a research application, which I subsequently did in August.

Shortly after submitting that application, I received a request to provide additional information to clarify a number of concerns raised, in particular (1) how I will be contacting the offenders, (2) safety during interviews, (3) my experience with violent offenders and (4) detail about the research questions.

I addressed these issues in a document, clarifying that I did not require names and that I hoped the Department may be able to identify and contact potential participants; confirming the support of the University and Outcare; and describing my background with AVP and prior contact with violent offenders.

Three months later, I received a further request to address some concerns from the Department's Research Applications and Advisory Committee (RAAC), outlined below:

- Concerns relating to identification of the sample. This may have potential impacts on the VOTP where confidentiality is assured yet people on parole or returned to prison are being identified based on their participation. It may be better to not identify specific people and invite participation through posters/flyers at sites. Another option would be to invite those participating in current VOTP's and gain consent to follow them into the community.
- The application is confusing in regard to de-identification. You state that you will use pseudonyms but you will know their real names. This means it is possible to follow them up.

- Underestimation of the potential psychological impacts on participants.
- How you will manage your conflict of interest as a volunteer facilitator with the Alternatives to Violence Project in Acacia and Wandoo prisons.

My response reiterated the need for participants to meet the criteria for the study; reassured the measures to be taken so that participants would not be identified and not disclosing my involvement with AVP to guard against biased responses. The issue of VOTP confidentiality was a strange one as reports released on the website of the Prisoner Review Board identify participation in the VOTP and indicate any benefits gained.

In January 2018, I received a letter from the Department informing me that my application was unsuccessful. The reasons provided repeated the previous concerns, adding that the application could not be supported "on the basis of participant wellbeing and ethical grounds". It was stated that the additional information provided was not adequate and that "there is already comprehensive research (unpublished) conducted with AIC which covers the same topic".

Meanwhile, after Outcare was only able to provide one participant to interview, they informed me that they had lost their contract with the Department and would be taking no new clients. Given that I would get no assistance from the Department to access participants and Outcare could no longer assist me, I decided to approach UnitingCare West which have a Specialist Re-entry program for released prisoners on a life sentence. They informed me that, whilst they were keen to assist in this project, it would need approval from the Department due to their contractual requirements.

So, to proceed with this avenue of assistance, I would need to appeal to the Department. Despite an initial indication through a phone conversation with the Chair of RAAC that the study probably could proceed without official approval and that publicity flyers could be sent to Adult Community Correction Centres, I was later informed that a reapplication would be needed. In March, I secured a meeting with Chair and two other members of RAAC to discuss their reasons for rejecting the initial application.

In this meeting, the changes they required were tabled. These were the removal of VOTP as a criterion for participant selection, the explicit exclusion of participants who have been in an AVP workshop with me, the removal of a monetary incentive and the

strengthening of the provision of resources to address potential psychological impacts on participants. On this basis, I amended my proposed methodology, revised the letter to participants and publicity poster and resubmitted an application immediately.

In April, I received a letter from the Department informing me that my application had been rejected again. The reasons provided this time had not been raised with me previously:

- The Department is currently transitioning in new reintegration services provided by new contractors. This means the reintegration experience of offenders will also be in transition and the research outcomes may not be an accurate reflection of new contracted reintegration services and their efficiency.
- The Department would like the opportunity to stabilise and evaluate the new services prior to external examination of offender outcomes and experiences.
- The Department does not believe an examination of reintegration services is warranted as an internal review was undertaken in 2017.

It is true that the Department entered into new contracts with service providers from April 2018 and some participants in my research would be sharing their experience based on previous service providers. However, the majority of the participants have engaged with service providers still under contract with the Department or with organisations which continue to provide services separate from contractual arrangements with the Department.

Furthermore, the scope of the themes arising from my interviews is separate to, and well beyond an evaluation of the service providers and remain relevant regardless of the organisations under contract or the model of reintegration applied.

As described above, it proved to be extremely difficult to work cooperatively with the Department of Justice for a number of reasons. Firstly, the length of time taken from the initial submission of a research proposal to the final rejection was about 13 months. The time delays included a suspension of all research applications and more than four months for the RAAC to assess and reject the first application. This is quite prohibitive for a small unfunded project to proceed with any certainty.

Secondly, despite the research methodology being assessed and approved by the Murdoch University Human Research and Ethics Committee, the Department added a

number of restrictions and additional requirements as conditions of approval. There was, however, a strong element of a 'black box' process as these amendments proved to be unsatisfactory to the Department and the 'correct' responses were not clarified until I requested a face-to-face meeting with members of the RAAC.

Thirdly, despite the fact that approval of my research project would have been at no cost or inconvenience to the Department, it remains perplexing as to why they refused to endorse it. This is especially so as I modified all aspects of the methodology with which they raised concerns. Approval of the project would have provided the possibility of access to participants through Adult Community Corrections and, more importantly, through key contracted service organisations such as UnitingCare West and Wungening Aboriginal Corporation. Both of these organisations expressed a keen desire to engage with and support my research and they would have been able to provide access to a large number of the clients who met the criteria of my study. So too, a chaplain working with the Department in one of the major prisons expressed his enthusiastic support and desire to assist with participants. However, a week later, he apologised, indicating that the requirements of confidentiality from the Department meant that he could not connect me with ex-prisoners. While the Department may have viewed the findings of my study as being irrelevant to their needs, it is nevertheless difficult to understand what harm they envisaged from supporting the research.