Experiencing the use of Australian prison libraries: a phenomenological study

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Jane McDonald Garner
BBus (InfoLibMgt) RMIT

School of Business IT and Logistics
College of Business
RMIT University

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed. I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Jane Garner
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Abstract

Access to a library and to educational, legal and recreational reading in prison can have a positive effect on the lives of prisoners. Access to these resources via prison libraries can improve quality of life during incarceration, and reduce the chances of reoffending after leaving prison, creating a benefit for the individual, their family and the community. Despite the importance of libraries in prisons, the existing previous research has focussed on only library management and collection development issues. These studies have not addressed the user perspective of the role prison libraries play in the lives of prisoners.

The focus of this study is to understand Australian prisoners’ lived experiences of their libraries and to ascertain the role the libraries are playing in their lives. Using a phenomenological theoretical framework, 36 semi-structured interviews with both correctional facility staff and prisoners, across three states and territories, were undertaken to explore the experience of Australian prisoners who make use of their prison library. Data was also gathered through observation of the libraries and their collections. The prisons included in the study were the Alexander Maconochie Centre in the Australian Capital Territory, the Adelaide Women’s Prison, Mobilong Prison and Port Augusta Prison in South Australia, and Marngoneet Correctional Centre, Port Phillip Prison and Tarrengower Prison in Victoria.

The data gathered has been analysed with the use of NVivo software which has enabled an understanding of the role the libraries play in prisoners’ lives, how the libraries are being used, and an identification of five core themes that represent the experience of using the libraries. These themes indicate that prisoners are experiencing their libraries as a means of escape, a means of passing time constructively, a means of staying connected with community, both inside and outside prison, an opportunity to experience autonomy and self-responsibility and, finally, as an inadequate support for their formal and informal education and literacy development.

Five implications for practice were identified that may be of interest to prison administrators, both in Australia and overseas. These implications illustrate the importance of ensuring prisoners have physical access to their library, the potential for library programs to contribute to reducing the separation from communities experienced by prisoners, the importance of prison administrators perceiving prison libraries as an educational resource, and an acknowledgement of this in prison operational guidelines. Further implications relate to the development of library collections that reflect the unique needs of prisoners as a user group, and the requirement for all prison libraries to
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be adequately funded to enable them to better contribute to the successful management, rehabilitation and futures of prisoners.

Findings from the research contribute to our understanding of the experience of using a prison library. This understanding may be of interest and use to administrators of other closed or restricted communities and institutions, such as juvenile detention and immigration centres, aged care facilities, military facilities, hospitals, boarding schools and religious communities.
Presentations and publications from the research


Chapter 1 - Introduction

Context of the study

This study reports on the experience of prisoners who use prison libraries in Australia. To fully understand such an experience, some context is required. This section describes the Australian correctional sector and how it is managed. The people who are incarcerated in these correctional facilities are described and the services available to them, including libraries, are explained.

Prisons in Australia

Adult prisoners, aged over 18 years of age, are incarcerated in one of ninety-eight correctional facilities in Australia. These include eighty-five government-operated prisons, nine privately-operated prisons and four transition centres (Institute for Criminal Policy Research, 2015). The operation of each of these prisons is guided by a 2012 publication, Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia (referred to as the Guidelines), published by Australian Correctional Administrators, a group of senior members of state and territory governments responsible for corrections. The Guidelines advise companies and individuals who are responsible for the operation and management of Australian prisons on the broad outcomes and goals to be achieved within and by their prisons (Australian Correctional Administrators, 2012). For example, the Guidelines include details of management issues such as how prisoner property should be managed, how prisoners should be classified to ensure their health and safety, the types of programs that should be offered to prisoners, and when prison officers will be justified in using force or physical restraint on prisoners. The sections of the Guidelines that are relevant to this research are section 1.17, which states that legal library resources should be made available to prisoners with pending legal matters, and section 2.54, which states that prisoners should have access to a library. These sections are discussed in more detail in the ‘Libraries in Australian prisons’ section later in this chapter.
Australian adult prisoners

As this research is based on the experiences of Australian adult prisoners, an understanding of the characteristics of these prisoners is warranted. On any one night in Australia, over 38,000 adult men and women are serving time in a correctional facility. The number of adults in our prisons is rising by approximately eight percent per year (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Australia’s rate of imprisonment is 208 prisoners per 100,000 adult population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), similar to that of New Zealand, at 203 prisoners per 100,000 adult population (Institute for Criminal Policy Research, 2016), and in contrast to the latest available United States figures that identify a rate of 666 prisoners per 100,000 adult population (Institute for Criminal Policy Research, 2014).

Within Australian adult prisons, 92% of prisoners are men and 8% are women. The five most common offences for prisoners are ‘acts intended to cause injury’ (22%), ‘illicit drug offences’ (14%), ‘sexual assault’ (11%), ‘unlawful entry with intent’ (11%) and ‘homicide’ (10%). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners make up 27% of the total Australian adult prison population, despite forming only 2% of the overall adult Australian population. In 2016, 668 adult prisoners were serving life sentences or sentences of indeterminate length. Twenty-two percent were serving terms between two and five years, while 21% were serving between five and ten years. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016), approximately 20% of prisoners served less than two years in prison.

Overcrowding in Australian prisons

Adult prisons in Australia are dealing with increasing numbers of both remanded and sentenced prisoners (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The ever increasing number of adults in Australian prisons has resulted in overcrowding and a strain on resources that sees multiple prisoners being housed in cells designed for one or two prisoners (Woodburn, 2017). Other outcomes of overcrowding in these prisons are longer waits for services such as medical care, transport to court hearings, and education programs (Naylor, 2014) and an increase in violence between prisoners, and between prisoners and staff (Rubensztein-Dunlop, 2014). The Victorian government acknowledged the inability of their prisons to accommodate the increasing number of inmates in 2014, when they began housing prisoners in shipping containers as a long-term solution to the crisis (Lee, 2014).
South Wales prisons face similar overcrowding problems and have responded by expanding their capacity to house prisoners. New dormitory-style accommodation areas are being built. Each dormitory will house 50 maximum security inmates at a time, taking the pressure off existing accommodation (Woodburn, 2017). Overcrowding in prison results in poor physical and mental health outcomes, and additional pressure on access to prison programs and services, such as education and libraries (Pitts, Griffin & Johnson, 2014).

Libraries in Australian prisons

Current prison library services, both in Australia and elsewhere, are guided by a number of documents, standards and guidelines. These documents have been developed by library associations, correctional administrators, and the United Nations (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 1957). The United Nations document, the *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, mentions prison libraries, in Section 40:

> Every institution shall have a library for the use of all categories of prisoners, adequately stocked with both recreational and instructional books, and prisoners shall be encouraged to make full use of it (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 1957).

As already mentioned, the *Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia* (Australian Correctional Administrators, 2012) mention libraries twice. In section 1.17, dealing with the entitlements of remand (uncharged) prisoners, the *Guidelines* state:

> Remand prisoners and all prisoners who have legal matters pending, whether they are on remand or sentenced to a term of imprisonment, should have access to legal library resources, including where practicable supervised access to electronic media for the purpose of viewing electronic legal documentation (p.17).
The second mention of libraries is in section 2.54 of the *Guidelines*, dealing with prisoner wellbeing. The language here is derived in part from the United Nations document, the *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 1957):

Prisoners should have access to a library, adequately stocked with both recreational and information resources, which is operated according to standard library practice. Prisoners should be encouraged to make full use of the library (p.28).

This second reference to libraries in Australian prisons comes under the heading ‘Physical Sport and Recreation’ within the ‘Care and Wellbeing’ chapter, thereby associating the libraries with sport and recreation, not education or legal support. This is in contrast to many of the administrative arrangements for libraries in Australian prisons which are more likely to sit within the education portfolio of the prison than the recreation portfolio. Table 1 details the administrative jurisdictions of the prison libraries in each state or territory and the library staffing provided within each.
**Table 1: Administrative responsibility and staffing of Australian prison libraries, April 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>No. of prisons</th>
<th>Administrative responsibility</th>
<th>Staffing within the libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>One qualified librarian plus inmate staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>One qualified librarian responsible for oversight of all NSW prison libraries. One library technician at one prison plus inmate staff. All other sites have inmate staff only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>No qualified librarian Inmate staff only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Offender Programs (incorporating both education &amp; recreation programs)</td>
<td>No qualified librarian Inmate staff only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Education/Volunteers</td>
<td>No qualified librarian Inmate staff only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Education/State Library of Tasmania</td>
<td>No qualified librarian Inmate staff only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>No consistent arrangement – some Education, some Recreation</td>
<td>One qualified librarian in one library in addition to inmate staff. All other sites, inmate staff only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>One qualified librarian in each of two prisons, with inmate staff. All other sites, inmate staff only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Despite the administrative connection to the education staff at most Australian prisons, of the prisons studied for this thesis, there are no operational links between the education programs offered by the prisons and the libraries. Any link between them is informal and at the discretion of the teaching staff. Using the library to support the formal education programs offered by the prisons is an opportunity rarely taken by teaching staff.
Statement of the research problem

My research addresses a problem rather than a gap in knowledge. A gap in existing knowledge can occur because there is no benefit to filling that gap with research or new knowledge. Such a gap can remain unfilled. However, a problem that when solved, will be of benefit to others, has value and an impact beyond merely creating new knowledge. The Australian Correctional Administrators, in their ‘Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia’ (Australian Correctional Administrators, 2012) provides the context for the problem by stating that all prisoners must have access to a well-stocked library and that they should be encouraged to use it. The existence of this guideline suggests that the experience of using a library and having access to library resources while in prison is seen, in the minds of the correctional administrators who produced the guidelines, as being of value to prisoners.

However, despite the implication that the experience of using a prison library can be of value to prisoners, very little is known about what that experience is like. The literature review conducted for this thesis demonstrates that existing research relating to prison libraries focusses on the history of such libraries, their collections and their management. Very little has been published that explores the prisoners’ experiences of using a prison library.

An understanding of the prisoner experience will provide administrators with knowledge of the role the libraries currently play in prisoner’s lives, of the ways the libraries are successful in providing a valued service, and of how the libraries are falling short of fulfilling their potential as a useful service to prisoners. Such an understanding will be of value to prison administrators whose own Guidelines state that libraries must be made available to all prisoners.
Aim and scope

The aim of this research is to explore and explain the experience of using a prison library from the perspectives of the prisoners who use them. To facilitate this, the following research question has been developed (discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Research Design):

**How do Australian prisoners experience the use of a prison library?**

The research aims to allow the prisoners’ voices to be heard throughout the analysis and discussion of the data gathered during interviews undertaken with prisoners. To this end, phenomenology is used as the theoretical framework that shapes the data gathering and analysis. Phenomenology allows the experience of the prisoners experiencing the phenomenon, the use of a prison library, to be explored and understood from the individual’s perspective, rather than from the perspective of the researcher. The rationale for the choice and suitability of phenomenology as the theoretical framework for this thesis is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, Research Design.

The scope of this thesis is limited to a study of the experience of using Australian prison libraries in adult correctional facilities. The decision to limit the study to only these institutions has been driven by the coverage of the *Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia* (Australian Correctional Administrators, 2012) which only apply to Australian adult correctional facilities.

My research is a study of the experience of using a prison library based on data gathered from semi-structured interviews held with twenty-nine prisoners, six prison staff, and one volunteer, across seven sites. The prisons visited were in Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Prisons from other states and territories were not included in this study due to time constraints. Although not all Australian states and territories were included in this study, there is a high level of consistency across the corrections systems throughout Australia, including the requirement to be managed according to the same guidelines. This consistency underpins the likelihood that the findings of this research can be applied to the sites that were not included within the scope of this study.
Chapter 1 Introduction

The limitation of conducting the research in only three of the seven states and territories, and of a small number of sites within them was partly due to access to additional sites being denied by the corrections departments of the other states and territories, and partly due to the desire to contain the study to a manageable size. In Victoria and South Australia, three prisons each were visited to ensure the inclusion of the experiences of prisoners from each of the three levels of security: maximum, medium and minimum. As there is only one prison within the Australian Capital Territory, prisoners from all three security levels were able to be interviewed at the one site.

Four or, in one case, five prisoners were interviewed at each site. The scope of the interviews was limited to this number for logistical reasons. I was granted a full day’s access to each prison, but only one day, and return visits were not possible. Each interview took approximately one hour and the staff member responsible for the administration of the library was also interviewed for the same length of time. Approximately five hours of interviews was all that was possible for me to complete at each site in one day. There was often significant disruption to the daily routine of the prison to allow me to conduct interviews. Whole cell blocks would often need to be locked down to move prisoners from their cells to the interview room and back, and an officer had to be taken from their usual duties to look after my safety during the day. The schedule of interviews was interrupted for meal breaks and head counts when prisoners are required to return to their cells. Issues of sufficiency and saturation are considered in Chapter 3, Research Design.

Significance of the study

This study is significant because it addresses a problem that has not been investigated before. The guidelines that are used to support the management of Australian prisons indicate that the Australian government recognises that all prisoners should have the experience of using a library while they are in prison. However, due to a lack of published research, very little is known about what that experience is like. To have some understanding of the experience of prison libraries, as indicated by prisoners, will assist the appropriate government departments and the correctional administrators responsible for prisons, to not only comply with their own guidelines, but also to understand the role prison libraries play in the lives of prisoners, and to recognise their value and their potential to meet the needs of their users.
A prison population of over 38,000 adults, increasing in number each year, is a significant number of people. The low educational achievement and literacy levels of Australian prisoners (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015; Dawe, 2007), and the role a library can play in improving literacy and educational outcomes (Stone and Ramsden, 2013; Farmer, 2006) add to the importance of access to a library for prisoners. One of the goals of Australian prisons is to rehabilitate and reform inmates with the aim of preventing further offending and recidivism (Australian Correctional Administrators, 2012). A significant determinant of not re-offending is gaining employment after prison (Uggen, 2000), a view echoed by prisoners themselves (Hopkins, 2012). Adults, including ex-prisoners, with low literacy and educational attainment levels are less likely to gain employment and more likely to offend or re-offend than adults with higher literacy and educational attainment (Morrisroe, 2014). Therefore, having a prison library that can support literacy development and educational attainment is vital to increasing the chances of prisoners not re-offending when they re-enter the community. An understanding of the experience of using a prison library can lead to an improvement in the library services and collections offered, thereby supporting the goal of Australian prisons to rehabilitate and reform prisoners through raising literacy levels and contributing to educational attainment.

Australians outside the prison system have access to public libraries that are able to support their information and recreational reading needs. The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) describes public libraries as institutions that support the ‘information, education, cultural and recreational needs of local communities’ and also as ‘safe, trusted and inclusive public spaces where everyone is welcome… [that] strengthen social cohesion and help to build safer, more literate, more skilled and more creative communities’ (Australian Library and Information Association, 2016, p.13). The American Library Association recognises that public libraries have a positive impact on the economy, the development of communities and on literacy and education (American Library Association, 2016). As part of their incarceration, prisoners are removed from such opportunities for recreation, reading and increasing their knowledge and learning, beyond the basic vocational programs offered to them by the prison system. The prison library is the equivalent of the public library during a prisoner’s time in prison. The lack of opportunity to visit public libraries, the length of time spent in prison, and the educational and literacy needs of an increasing number of prisoners makes the role of the prison library central to providing for their informational, recreational and educational needs. An understanding of the experience of using such a library is significant in understanding how to provide a useful and valuable service to prisoners.
Additionally, there are institutions with similar environments to that of an Australian adult prison that would also benefit from the knowledge generated from this study. While juvenile justice residential facilities fall outside the boundaries of this study, it is known that some correctional institutions, for example in Victoria, Australia, that house juveniles have no libraries. This was confirmed in an email from P. Oberthier, a teacher at the Parkville Youth Justice Precinct on August 26, 2013. However, the knowledge of the role a library can play in the lives of adult prisoners could be of value to juvenile justice administrators should they wish to reconsider their position on the provision of libraries to their inmates. Australia currently incarcerates illegal immigrants within immigration detention centres. The experience of using a library within a correctional facility is likely to be similar to that of using a library within an immigration detention centre. An understanding of this experience would therefore also be of benefit to detainees within the immigration detention environment.

**Overview of thesis**

This thesis provides an understanding of the experience of using a prison library in Australia. Following the introduction is an exploration of the literature. There is very little published literature that looks at the experience of using a prison library from a prisoner’s perspective, but there is a body of related literature that has been studied and this is discussed in the review to provide context and background. Following the literature review is Chapter 3 - Research Design. Within this chapter I discuss phenomenology as the theoretical framework chosen for the study. The choice of phenomenology is explained, as are the research methods that I have undertaken to gather and analyse the data used within this thesis.

Chapters 5 and 6 explicate each of the themes identified in the data, and provide a discussion of each, with reference to the existing literature. Many of the findings of the current research are supported by existing knowledge, particularly in relation to public libraries for the general public. However, many findings contradict the existing research and these areas of difference are identified and discussed. Chapter 5 explores the themes: ‘Experiencing escape’, ‘Experiencing the passage of time’ and, ‘Experiencing community’. Chapter 6 explores the remaining themes: ‘Experiencing responsibility for self’ and, ‘Experiencing education’. The exploration of these themes is followed by a study of how the findings differ across specific participant groups and concludes with three participant portraits.
The concluding chapter restates the problem to be solved and the methods employed to do so. Knowledge about the experience of using a prison library gained through this study is discussed, as are limitations of the study, and implications for practice that may be of interest to correctional administrators, and managers of libraries in other closed communities, such as juvenile and immigration detention centres, aged care facilities, military facilities, and boarding schools.

**Conclusion**

This introduction provides context and background to the Australian corrections sector, those who are incarcerated within it and the libraries that serve them. To have an understanding of the context and environment in which the study participants live is designed to add to the reader’s ability to appreciate the significance of the need for this study and the findings it generates. The next chapter reviews the literature that provides further context and background to this study.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the background and context in which this research is located – libraries in the Australian Corrections sector, and noted characteristics of the Australian adult prisoner population. The aim and scope of this study were identified, as was the question that is the focus of the research: How do Australian prisoners experience the use of a prison library?

This review of the literature provides further context for the current research. The review begins with an exploration of the history of libraries in prisons, both in Australia and elsewhere. This is followed by a study of more contemporary prison libraries and the standards and documents that guide their management and practices. One of the main roles of incarceration is the reform of the individual. The role of education in this process is considered to be crucial. Therefore, the educational and broader information needs of prisoners are discussed, along with the role prison libraries can play in supporting prisoners to satisfy these needs. The review continues with a study of the nature of research and publications about prison libraries. The review ends with a discussion of the limited examples that explore the user perspective and an acknowledgment that this current research aims to add the prisoner’s voice to our existing knowledge and understanding of the experience of using a prison library.

Merriam (2014) discusses the role of an in-depth literature review in qualitative research. She identifies the concern that exploring the literature in depth at the beginning of a qualitative study can influence the thinking and understanding of the researcher and the reader of the research. This may lead to a presupposition in the mind of the researcher and reader. However, she also states that having a command of the relevant literature early in the research process can assist in the forming of an appropriate research question and research method. In following the example of another phenomenological study (Sheeran, 2012) and the advice of authors who write about the process of qualitative research (van Manen, 2014; Streubert & Carpenter, 2011; Taylor, 2006), this literature review aims to provide an overview of the existing literature to establish context and the
need for this study. A more focussed literature review is presented within the discussion sections of this thesis where it is used to inform discussion of the insights gathered during analysis.

A history of libraries in prisons

It has been a long held practice to provide reading materials to prisoners, but in the past this activity differed from what is commonly recognised as a library service today. Coyle (1987) identifies the earliest mention of books being supplied to European and American prisoners as occurring in the seventeenth century. He describes the practice of clergymen working to reform prisoners by providing them with religious books. He states that this was not a formal program within prisons at the time, but more an act of generosity and personal interest by some individual clergymen. Conrad (2017) also describes the provision of religious books in the United States as occurring from 1773, in the Walnut Street Jail in Pennsylvania. Neither of these could be considered a library service, rather as a service offered by clergy for the purposes of moral or religious reform.

The provision of library services to prisoners developed from this earlier circulation of religious materials by clergy. The first mention of a library service, defined as a formal collection of books purchased for use by prisoners, is by Sullivan and Vogel (2003) who describe early prison library services in the United States being present in most jails from the mid-nineteenth century. Although these libraries existed, their collections were also based on religious teachings and operated with the goal of moral reform through the reading of religious works. Carroll (2013) similarly describes the history of Australian prison libraries. She writes specifically of the history of the library in the Port Arthur Penal Establishment in Tasmania, Australia. She describes the practice of ministers of religion requesting books from religious organisations to give to the prisoners. The donated books then formed the beginnings of the prison library. Adkins (2010) has studied what remains of the collection from Port Arthur and found that more than two thirds of the collection consisted of religious texts. The goals of these early prison libraries were also to ‘improve the moral character of the depraved’ and to ‘turn man from evil deeds’ (Carroll, 2013). Stevens and Usherwood (1995) provide a similar British perspective, writing that the libraries in British prisons in the early nineteenth century were established to support the overall goals of the prisons of reforming criminal behaviour by exposure to spiritual and moral reading and training.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

The focus of prison libraries on reform through the reading of religious material began to change in the early 1900s. Wilkins (1977) writes that at this time the function of prison libraries began to more closely resemble public libraries. As the role of incarceration developed from being largely punitive to take on a more rehabilitative function, prison libraries began to change their goals accordingly (Conrad, 2017). In 1966, the United States Congress passed the Library Services and Construction Act, enabling American prison libraries to receive equal funding with all other institutional libraries, such as those located in mental institutions (Conrad, 2017). Lehmann (2011) describes the outcomes of this decision, stating that for the first time American prison libraries could increase the size of their collections, employ professional librarians to manage the libraries, and establish new library services. Unfortunately, Lehmann (2011) does not mention what library services were offered either prior to or after the increase in funding.

References in the literature that tell us about modern Australian prison libraries are few. In 1981 Donahoo (1981) compiled a bibliography of Australian prison library literature. The first reference to prison libraries in Australia appears in an Australian Library Journal article, ‘Institutional library service in New South Wales’ (Arnot, 1951). In the article, Arnot discusses a survey of the libraries in New South Wales’ mental hospitals, state hospitals, children’s homes, Aboriginal institutions, and prisons. It is significant because it gives us a rare view into the state of an Australian prison library service during this period. The article describes a project undertaken in all New South Wales prisons in preparation for the survey. The project involved an assessment of all existing library collections and the purchasing of new books. Arnot gives us a clue as to the provision of library books prior to this project when she writes “For the first time in the history of New South Wales, prisoners are visiting their library to choose their own books” (Arnot, 1951 p. 19), suggesting that prior to this time, prisoners were making little use of their libraries. She also mentions the forthcoming W.J. MacKay Memorial Library, which was to be set up as a central reference library for the prisons of New South Wales. The article notes that the prison officer to be in charge of the library was undertaking some training in librarianship to prepare him for his role. According to Donahoo (1981), the next relevant publication was written in 1961. In this article, Johnson (1961) mentions that most Victorian prisons and juvenile detention centres had a small library of some kind, including a map and textbook library and a library of novels in a ‘Military Corrective’ institution.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

According to Donahoo (1981), the next mention of prison libraries in the Australian literature is again in the *Australian Library Journal*. The anonymous article (Anon., 1971) notes the first state prison library for Western Australia as being opened in 1971 at the Bunbury prison, but no more information about the library is given. These few examples are typical of the treatment of Australian prison libraries in the literature published during the time period covered by Donahoo’s bibliography, 1951 to early 1981. Prison libraries are mentioned within the articles, often very briefly, but discussion of them does not extend to include the views of prisoners about their experiences of using the libraries.

**Prison libraries today**

Writings about contemporary Australian prison libraries are limited in number, and usually not based on research because little formal research regarding their role, performance or value has been undertaken. However, prison libraries in other countries have been more frequently studied and described. In 2011, *Library Trends* published ten articles that described prison libraries in Canada, Poland, the United Kingdom, Japan, Spain, Norway, the United States, Italy, Germany, and France. These articles explored the policies, collections and services offered to prisoners in those countries at that time. Two authors, both senior advisors at the National Library of Norway, describe prison libraries in Norway as needing to be inviting and convenient to the user. One of the libraries described offers author visits, lectures, a book café, poetry readings, writing workshops, book presentations and art exhibitions (Ljødal & Ra, 2011). Ljødal and Ra (2011) discuss outcomes following the introduction of these programs, such as improved circulation rates within the library and positive prisoner feedback.

An American example provided by Lehmann (2011) describes an innovative program offered by many correctional facility libraries in the United States: the Family Literacy Program. In this program prison libraries have developed collections of quality children’s books. Prisoners complete a class on child development and learn how to read aloud, how to select age appropriate readings and how to write poems and letters to their children. They are then allocated extra visiting time with their families, where they read aloud to their children and share books and stories together. If a prisoner is unable to be visited by his children, he is allowed to video himself reading aloud to his children, who are sent a DVD of the video. Lehmann (2011) notes one of these programs in
particular, the ‘Breaking Barriers with Books’ program, that had been running in a Wisconsin prison for fourteen years at the time of writing. She states that the program is very popular within the prison and is supported by volunteers who work with the prisoners. Through programs such as this, the prison library is facilitating family literacy and connectedness, and educating prisoners and their families about the resources and services that can be found in libraries.

In Norway, many prison libraries facilitate a ‘Books for Everyone’ program (Ljodal & Ra, 2011). This program supplies packages of ‘easy to read’ books to prisoners who have been identified as having low levels of literacy. The libraries liaise with the Red Cross visitor service which sends volunteers to visit the prisoners and read the supplied books with them. The goal of the program is to raise the literacy levels of individual prisoners who are weak readers or who have had limited exposure to education and books. With programs such as these in the USA and Norway, the libraries play a valuable role in the education of prisoners and in the development or support of connections outside prison.

Prison libraries have also won awards offered within the broader library sector. In 2007, the Münster prison library was Germany’s Library of the Year (Peschers, 2011). The library was praised as an excellent example of a socially responsible library service that provided innovative programs, special events, a welcoming attractive environment that encouraged attendance, and outreach services to prisoners isolated by security restrictions, language or literacy problems. Similarly, the Saughton prison library in Edinburgh, Scotland won an industry award presented by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). The 2010 Libraries Change Lives Award was given to the Saughton prison library in recognition of the purpose-built facility’s services to prisoners that supported their education, literacy, employment skills and transition to life outside prison (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, 2015; City of Edinburgh Council, 2010).

Depictions of Australian prison libraries have occasionally appeared outside the refereed research literature. Lavery & Blackburn (2015) briefly describe the prison library in which they once worked, the Alexander Maconochie Centre in the Australian Capital Territory, in their article published in InCite, the industry magazine for the Australian library and information sector. Although they do not
describe their library or the users’ experiences, they do list some of the reasons a prisoner might choose to use a prison library. They describe the benefits of using the library as a means of reducing stress and boredom, to pass time, to stay in touch with others, and to seek information. Another InCite article by Blackburn (2014) describes the professional development opportunities available to her during her time working within a prison library but, again, the voice of the prisoners is not heard and we learn very little about the library itself. In 2011, Day (2011), again in InCite, described a project of assessment and consequent improvements made to three of the South Australian prison libraries. However, we learn very little about the role the libraries play in the prisoners’ lives or anything about the user experience, beyond the fact that the available facilities were, and remain, inadequate.

What we do learn as a result of these published descriptions of prison libraries, and from awards given to them in recognition of what they achieve, is that some libraries, in prisons outside Australia at least, are well used by prisoners and valued by the library industry and correctional administrators alike. They can provide vital services and activities that are both innovative and integral to the activities and programs offered by the prison, such as education and work programs and general recreation for prisoners.

**Prison standards and guidelines**

As already mentioned, current prison library services, both in Australia and elsewhere, are guided by a number of documents, standards and guidelines. Although the importance of providing a library service to support the legal, recreational and information needs of prisoners is recognised by their inclusion in these documents, there is no indication of how those libraries should be run and managed. In an attempt to provide details to guide the operation of these libraries, the Australian Library and Information Association created the *Australian Library and Information Association Minimum Standard Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners* (Australian Library and Information Association, 1990), updated and revised in 2015 (Australian Library and Information Association, 2015). This document is in no way a reflection of the current practices found in Australian prison libraries, but rather an aspirational document that describes the minimum standards that should be met by prison libraries in areas such as staffing, financial resources, collections and the library services that should be provided to prisoners.
Prison libraries in countries other than Australia are guided by similar documents. The American Library Association has not developed their own set of guidelines or standards for the operation of prison libraries. Instead, they rely on two related documents: their own *Prisoner’s Right to Read: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights* (American Library Association, 2010), that identifies the principles by which prison libraries should operate, and the *Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners* produced by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) (Lehmann & Locke, 2005). The first of these documents provides no operational advice or indication of minimum standards. Rather, the document identifies a set of guiding principles that can be applied to prison libraries, such as ‘Correctional librarians should select materials that reflect the demographic composition, information needs, interests, and diverse cultural values of the confined communities they serve’ and ‘Correctional librarians should make all reasonable efforts to provide sufficient materials to meet the information and recreational needs of prisoners who speak languages other than English’ (American Library Association, 2010). The IFLA document (Lehmann & Locke, 2005) was designed to be used as a template to assist in the development of national guidelines for prison libraries in any country. It is written in much more detail than the *Prisoner’s Right to Read: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights* (American Library Association, 2010), and considers the operational needs of prison libraries in areas such as personnel, collections, physical facilities and equipment, funding and budget, services, and communications and public relations. The Australian Library and Information Association prison library guidelines are based on this document (Australian Library and Information Association, 2015).

Prison libraries in the United Kingdom are guided by the *Prison Library Service* document (National Offender Management Service, 2015). This provides statements that describe the provision of library services to prisoners, such as ‘Governors must ensure that prisoners’ statutory entitlements to library provision are met’ (National Offender Management Service, 2015), and

When prisoners are not able to visit the library e.g. when in segregation, hospital in-patients or for other reasons, a service must still be provided. These prisoners must at the minimum be able to borrow and exchange reading books or audio-visual material (National Offender Management Service, 2015).
In addition to these statements, the document contains an annex written in 2014 that more closely resembles the Australian guidelines (Australian Library and Information Association, 2015). That is, it outlines the services that should be available to prisoners, the nature of the collections and details of staffing and training of prisoner library assistants.

Beyond the Australian, American and British examples, many other documents have been created to guide the people who manage prison libraries across the world. Many of them use the IFLA guidelines as a template and they have features in common as a result of this. Their existence indicates that there is an understanding across many of the correctional systems of the world that prisons should include libraries, and that their management and maintenance are important to the overall goals of prisons, such as the reform and education of prisoners.

**Education and information needs of Australian prisoners**

The educational needs of Australian prisoners can be identified by a study of their educational attainment and literacy levels. As of 30 June 2016, there were 38,845 people incarcerated in Australian prisons, an 8 per cent increase from the past 12 months (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare provides some information about prisoners’ educational standards. Thirty-two per cent of adults entering Australian prisons had completed only Year 9 studies or below, or had no schooling. Only 16 per cent had completed year 12 studies (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015, p. 21). The Victorian Ombudsman (2015) identified that in Victorian prisons in 2013, 59.5 per cent of prisoners had literacy levels that required intensive support. At a national level, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (Dawe, 2007) identified that 62 per cent of Australian prisoners had literacy levels that are classified as less than functional. The Victorian Ombudsman’s report (2015) states that education and skills training, along with work opportunities, are essential elements of the rehabilitation package that should be offered by prisons.

Access to a quality library that supports the educational programs provided by prisons can greatly benefit prisoners with low literacy and education levels. Stone and Ramsden (2013) have identified a statistically significant association between the use of library books and educational attainment.
Farmer’s research (2006) identified a specific link between access to a library and academic outcomes, in particular reading comprehension and vocabulary development. An understanding of the ability of prison libraries to support prisoner education is important, as there is a recognised need to improve the educational levels of many prisoners (Victorian Ombudsman, 2015).

The link between education and recidivism is also well documented. A British study by Hopkins (2012) found that prisoners who had achieved a qualification whilst in prison were 15 per cent less likely to be reconvicted in the year after release than those who had gained no qualification. Callan & Gardner (2007) provide similar data in an Australian context. They found that in the two years following release from prison, 32 per cent of prisoners who did not undertake vocational education and training (VET) during their time in prison were reconvicted and returned to prison, while only 23 per cent of prisoners who undertook VET training were reconvicted. A more recent Australian study by Giles (2016) also found that the more classes taken while in prison, the less likely it was that people would re-offend upon release. The link between imprisonment and homelessness, and education has been discussed in an American study by Shelton et al. (2009). Their research indicates that there is a significant association between a lack of academic achievement and homelessness. They also find that individuals with no educational qualifications face the greatest barriers to remaining integrated within society and are therefore at the greatest risk of long-term homelessness and incarceration.

The information needs of Australian prisoners have not been examined in the literature; however, some international studies have explored this question. Lehmann (2000) identified that in America, prisoners have much the same needs for information as the general public, but have a reduced capacity to satisfy those needs due to the lack of free access to resources, such as public libraries. Greenway (2007) identifies information about current affairs and parenting as important to American prisoners. Eze’s study (2016) of Southeast Nigerian prisoners describes their information needs, and states that they have a need for legal, religious, health, recreational and financial information in addition to education and vocational information. Eze (2016) also considers the information needs of prisoners as they re-enter society at the end of their sentences. She recognises that prisoners will often need information about career opportunities, training, housing, family relationships and sources of funding. In an environment where access to information sources
outside of the prison environment has been removed, the prison library has the potential to be of great use in satisfying the information needs of prisoners, and is very often the only option available.

The role of prison libraries in prisoner education

Prison libraries have great potential to provide support to prisoners who take part in educational programs while incarcerated. As recognised by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) in their Libraries Change Lives Award to Saughton Prison Library, and described in a City of Edinburgh news article (City of Edinburgh Council, 2010), for a prison library to be truly valuable to prisoners, beyond helping them spend considerable amounts of free time constructively, it must also contribute to supporting their lives when they leave prison and play a role in reducing their chances of re-offending. Prison libraries can do this in a number of ways. The most powerful tool to help prisoners stay out of prison is education, particularly education that increases employability. A study by the U.K.’s Ministry of Justice found that lack of employment and stable accommodation were consistent factors in the re-offending of prisoners following release from prison (Brunton-Smith & Hopkins, 2014).

While the studies noted in the previous section highlight the association between education and homelessness and recidivism, the question remains as to the role the prison library can play in the education of prisoners. Zybert (2011) identifies a number of ways in which a prison library can contribute to prisoner education. She writes specifically about Polish prison libraries and identifies various programs in which they play a role, such as rehabilitation and re-integration programs, culture and art programs, and the general promotion of reading to raise literacy levels, and facilitate knowledge attainment. Lehmann (2000) identifies prison libraries in the United States as being integral to the education programs in prisons. Her examples indicate that prison education staff can integrate library materials into their curriculum and that the presence of a library can enable independent study by prisoners. Ljødal and Ra (2011) describe Scandinavian prison libraries as important resources in the informal education of prisoners by providing mental stimulation from the outside world in the form of literature and access to knowledge of current events. They see the libraries as gateways to education, rehabilitation and socialisation of prisoners. Greenway’s study of American prison libraries (2007) identifies the important educational role of prison libraries in the
areas of personal health and parenting for prisoners with health issues, or those who are parents needing help in learning how to better parent their children.

**Prison library research and publications**

Within the body of research and literature that studies prison libraries, it is common to explore prison libraries from various operational and management perspectives. In addition to those discussed earlier, the following are typical examples. Arford (2013) discusses the practice of censorship in American prison libraries, and the sometimes conflicting roles prison librarians must take to ensure freedom of access to information while complying with institutional restrictions on content. Lehmann (1999) describes the role of prison librarians in the United States, and the personal and professional attributes required to work successfully in this role. She makes the point that prison librarians must be assertive with both prisoners and prison administrators, as they will often be faced with stressful situations such as lock downs, emotional outbursts from prisoners and sudden budget cuts from prison management.

Elsewhere, Lehmann (2000) examines the links between libraries and prisoner education, recreation and rehabilitation, stating that the most important element of an effective prison library service is the employment of a competent and well-trained library professional in the role of prison librarian. She makes the point that it is common for prisoners to have both mental health and substance abuse problems, and that prisons will often provide programs that attempt to address these problems. She sees the prison library as providing support for these programs by supplying further reading for both the affected prisoners and the staff who are working to help them. In a British study, Billington (2011) also describes the role of prison reading groups and individual reading within prisons and the related positive effects on prisoner mental health. She discusses the effect of reading from many different perspectives, such as the effects on neural pathways within the brain, through to the ability of reading to calm and manage the anxiety and stress that is so much a part of prison life.

Bowe (2011) looks at recent trends and practices in United Kingdom prison libraries, including relevant legislation affecting prisons, and trends in staffing prison libraries. She identifies the prison
library to be ‘at the heart of the prisoners’ learning journey by assisting in functional and emotional literacy’. Bowe (2011) also explains that much of the success of prison libraries in achieving this role is due to the presence of a professional librarian within each library. Kennedy (2008) also discusses the importance of the presence of qualified staff in an Australian example. She describes the prison library service in New South Wales, including their collections, their physical locations within prisons, their staffing by both professional and inmate staff, and the future direction of prison libraries in her state.

The user perspective

Each of the publications mentioned in the previous section are studies of how prison libraries operate and are managed, and the role they play within the prisons. What is lacking from this body of literature is the perspective of the library user – the prisoner perspective.

Examples of publications regarding prison libraries where the prisoners’ voices are heard are limited in number, but these writings give us an idea of the role prison libraries play in their lives. Sweeney (2008, 2010, 2012) has investigated the role and value of books and reading to a group of American female prisoners, and although we are able to hear their voices in her writing, she rarely mentions the libraries that are available to them, and does not explore the women’s experiences of the libraries.

An example closer to Australia comes from Vaccarino and Comrie (2010) who describe a New Zealand program run by the Whanganui Public Library in conjunction with their local prison. The local library allows supervised visits from prisoners close to the end of their sentences and who are living in ‘self-care’ units. The goals of the relationship between prison and library are to support the prisoners’ educational, rehabilitative, informational and recreational needs, and to provide a link to the outside world as a familiar, friendly resource upon release from prison. The program has been well received by the prisoners who are allowed to use it. Vaccarino and Comrie interviewed some of the men who visited the library to gain an understanding of how they believed they were benefitting from the library. The men appreciated the opportunity to use the library as a source of education and knowledge, as well as an escape from the monotony of the prison environment. Apart from the benefits of being exposed to the library resources, many of the men also commented that they
benefitted from the exposure to the public as a first step in integrating back into the community. They enjoyed the normalcy of the environment and the fact that they were in a public place doing the same thing as everyone else – looking for books. Their visits to the library reminded them that they were normal people, not just prisoners (Vaccarino & Comrie, 2010). The visits also provide exposure to reading materials to support literacy development, opportunities for self-directed learning and informal education.

Four inmates of American prisons in Wisconsin have provided their views of their prison library (Medina, 2000; Knudsen, 2000; Purifoy, 2000; London, 2000). Although belonging only to the American context, their writings provide a rare and valuable insight into the lived experience of prison libraries from the prisoners themselves.

Luis Medina, an inmate at the Jackson Correctional Institution, described how his prison library influenced him. He writes of the library as providing him with resources to improve his language skills, and giving him opportunities to learn and develop:

Attending the library regularly gives me a sense of what knowledge is, its relationships, and its connections. It gives me an opportunity for growth in emotional maturity, health, integrity, knowledge, and wisdom (Medina, 2000).

The idea of the library providing relief from the prison environment is identified by Knudsen (2000). Also writing from Jackson Correctional Institution, he describes how the library supports his mental state and his response to his environment:

More than simply providing dissipation [sic] for me when I become bored, the library provides a means of letting my mind elude the everyday monotony and tensions that can build up and cause a person to end up in solitary confinement.
For Knudsen (2000), the library had become a significant aspect of his existence. In addition to providing relief from his environment, his library was a major supportive resource and he recognised its importance to him:

My institution library has become a very substantial part of my life. I do not think I would have been able to handle stressful situations if the library was not readily accessible to me. My library is more than a place to find a book. It has become a significant friend.

Knudsen (2000) also recognises the role his library played in helping him envisage the world outside his prison. He identified how he felt the library had changed his view of his future in that world: “My library has helped me find the courage and strength, not only to overcome my incarceration, but also to strive for a more honest and productive future”.

Purifoy (2000), a prisoner in a different prison in Wisconsin, the Oshkosh Correctional Institution, also focuses on the relief from the prison environment provided by the library. He identifies the importance of the librarians in supporting the benefits the library offers:

The supportive atmosphere and willingness of the librarians to assist, encourages inmates who have incentive, to benefit from the services offered and to become enthused with something more than the mere thought that you are here, in a correctional institution.

A different focus is taken by London (2000), a prisoner from the Oakhill Correctional Institution. Instead of discussing how the library influences his life inside prison, London chooses to look at how the library allows him to stay connected with life outside prison. When discussing the inevitable isolation from developments taking place outside the prison walls, he identifies the library as a means to bridge the divide this creates: “There is a gap in our lives and the library can be the conduit to establish a sense of continuity we need to stay current” (London, 2000).
A 2011 interview with the prison librarian at a Maryland prison also captured the words of one prisoner who believes the library has a role in preparing prisoners for life outside prison (National Public Radio, 2011). When speaking about his library, he said:

I’ve been locked up for, like, 40 years, right? But the library, and I’ve been watching it over the decades, right? The one that I notice is the people that come in the prison system and use the library, it actually impacts how they’re thinking. And that challenging aspect of books in the library is what I see that ripples out into the population and it changes people. One day you see a very angry guy, you know, three months later you see somebody who’s trying to figure out how can I get out of here? How can I improve myself? How can I move forward? It’s the library.

An English example comes from an anonymous prisoner from the Wormwood Scrubs men’s prison in London. He describes his library as “an essential part of the prison system and a source of temporary escape from the monotony that is prison life”, and says that “the importance of the prison library, that lo-fi, old-school means of broadening our minds, cannot be overstated” (Anon., 2016).

Although these observations are brief and few in number, they are vivid and valuable descriptions of the experience of individuals using a prison library. However, knowledge of the lived experience of the use of a prison library as a phenomenon remains underexplored in the international literature and untouched by Australian research and literature. It is the aim of this current research to improve the understanding of this lived experience, within the Australian context. An understanding of the Australian experience of using a prison library will help prison administrators to create libraries that best meet the needs of their users. This research will also add to the broader knowledge of library user experiences that may be generalised to other user groups living in closed institutions, such as hospitals, aged care, juvenile detention and immigration detention facilities.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

Conclusion

This review of the literature has identified the long and continuing practice of providing library services and collections to prisoners, both in Australia and elsewhere. The review has discussed research into the history of prison libraries, their guidelines, standards and contemporary practices, prisoner education and information needs, and the few examples of existing writing where the prisoners’ voices are heard. Although the nature of prison libraries has changed over time, their overall goal remains the same – to support prisons in the goals of reform, rehabilitation and education. The prison library also provides prisoners with a means of passing time constructively.

The review has identified that the majority of our understanding and current knowledge of prison libraries comes from operational documents, such as guidelines and standards, and the journal literature, which also focusses largely on operational and management issues. This current research gives voice to the prisoners who use their libraries. By engaging with the users directly, we are able to better understand their experiences and to add to our current knowledge of libraries in prisons.

The following chapter explores the research design of this study. The chapter describes both the methods employed to gather and analyse data, and the underpinning theoretical framework of phenomenology that has informed all stages of the research. A justification for the choices made in research design are given.
Chapter 3 - Research Design

Introduction

The previous chapter provided a literature review that established context, background and justification for this study. The current chapter describes and explains the research design for my study to address the research question. I use the term research design as an umbrella term that incorporates both the research methodology and the research method, terms that are frequently used interchangeably (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). The methodology is the research approach and philosophical framework that I have used in my study, in this case, phenomenology. The research method refers to the steps I took in carrying out my research.

In the first part of this chapter I describe the research methodology that I have used for this study. I discuss the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology and its history. I then explore how this methodology has been used in previous related research and explain why I have chosen it as my research methodology. Finally, in this first section I describe my reasons for choosing the Moustakas (1990) approach to phenomenology to guide my research.

The second part of this chapter explains the research method I undertook for my study. I also explain how the research methodology informed and influenced my research method.

Methodology

An introduction to phenomenology

Phenomenology is the study of phenomena as they are experienced by individuals (O'Leary, 2007). Moustakas (1994) defines a phenomenon as any ‘thing’ that can be perceived. A phenomenon can be a situation, an event, a relationship, or an experience. He considers phenomena to be the basis of all knowledge and the ‘building blocks’ of human science. The purpose of phenomenology is to describe a phenomenon, or the appearance of a thing, as it is known, sensed or experienced (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011, Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenologist takes the position that
‘knowing’ is dependent on individual perceptions and to know the truth about a phenomenon is an impossible task, since each individual experiencing the phenomenon will have a different experience and perception. The phenomenologist’s goal, therefore, is simply to obtain an understanding of peoples’ experiences of a phenomenon to illuminate the nature and meaning of that phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990), rather than to identify a definite truth or to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Such a study aims to achieve a deeper understanding of the meaning of everyday experiences, or phenomena (van Manen, 1997).

The modern philosophic study of phenomenology was pioneered by philosopher Edmund Husserl (1857-1938) who published what Streubert & Carpenter (2011) consider to be his first major work on the subject in 1913. However, the concepts of experiencing anything physical or mental in the world through a conscious perception were being explored earlier by other philosophers, such as Merleau-Ponty and Bretano (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Husserl aimed to take these earlier debates and create his own interpretation. He believed that any philosophical study should be carried out as a rigorous science and that any knowledge of science could only be achieved through a study of experience and self-reflection. Husserl’s work is concerned with the relationship between objective reality and subjectivity: in other words, the relationship between the reality outside our minds and the variety of thoughts and perceptions each of us has about that reality (Spinelli, 1989).

To Husserl, phenomenology is tied to the concept of intentionality (Moustakas, 1994), where intentionality is understood to be the orientation of the mind to an object. The mind experiences a consciousness of the object, whether that object is real or imaginary.

Husserl’s ideas have been taken and developed by many philosophers since his work first appeared, most notably by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Heidegger described three major elements of phenomenology in his work: essences, intuiting and phenomenological reduction (Heidegger, 2010). Husserl also wrote about phenomenology as a study of the essence of experiences of a phenomenon. Heidegger uses Husserl’s idea of essences being aspects of a thing that relate to the true meaning of that thing. Essences are described as “unities of meaning” (Husserl, 1999) that form the fundamental parts of a common understanding of any phenomenon between individuals experiencing that phenomenon.
To Heidegger, intuiting is the task of the researcher who must interpret the descriptions of the phenomenon given by those experiencing it. The researcher studies each of the varied descriptions given of a phenomenon to interpret or comprehend what is meant by each description and what is in common between them. This intuiting is performed until a common understanding of the phenomenon is reached by the researcher (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011).

Heidegger and Husserl’s approaches to phenomenology differ greatly when they consider phenomenological reduction. To both, the goal of reduction is to isolate what is already known about the phenomena from what is not known, to avoid preconceived ideas influencing analysis and understanding. Husserl (1999) described the importance of the epoch in phenomenological study. This he describes as the setting aside by the researcher of all understandings and judgments about the phenomenon to ensure a fresh and open study of the phenomenon. He believed that unless the researcher is free of preconceived ideas about the phenomenon, they will not be able to see or understand the phenomenon clearly (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Husserl believed that to arrive at an essence of human experience, it was necessary for the researcher to suspend all assumptions and preconceptions about the phenomenon in question. He believed all previous understandings were an impediment to recognising the truth of human experience.

Although Heidegger recognised that the holding of preconceived ideas and judgments about a phenomenon would have an influence on arriving at a truth of human experience, he did not believe that it was possible to put such presuppositions aside. In fact, Heidegger believed that presuppositions about a phenomenon were of value in reaching an interpretation of the truth about that phenomenon (Heidegger, 2010). Gadamer (2013) agrees with Heidegger that our prior knowledge and understandings contribute positively to our ability to interpret what we see around us. He argued that instead of attempting to consciously suspend all prior knowledge and understanding, the researcher must use this knowledge and understanding to ensure the truth is not misinterpreted or missed altogether. For Gadamer, the important consideration of prior supposition is for the researcher to be aware of their own bias and opinion. This awareness will make it possible for the truth sought by the researcher to be able to make itself known in light of the suppositions held (Gadamer, 1988).
In this research, phenomenology provides a useful framework for exploring the experience of using a prison library. By taking the approach favoured by Heidegger and Gadamer, it is not required or desirable to put aside my own prior knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon studied. Instead, I draw on that knowledge and understanding to assist me to understand the experiences of my participants.

Phenomenology in library and information science, and prison research

Because phenomenology is a study of experiences, it has been applied in many studies where the goal is to understand the experiences of individuals or groups who are exposed to a phenomenon of interest to human understanding (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Despite its grounding in pure philosophy and existential ‘knowing’ (O’Leary, 2007), phenomenology has much to offer social science researchers. It is a useful tool for discovering the essential nature of an experience of either an individual, or a group of individuals who share an experience. Phenomenology has been used widely in nursing, education and administration research (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Salvage (2010) has written a phenomenological study of the experiences of becoming and being a hospice nurse. She uses phenomenological methods and the exploration of personal narrative to illuminate nurses’ decisions to become a hospice nurse, and their work experiences. Sheeran (2012) uses phenomenology to explore the experiences of new mothers. She employs phenomenological methods to identify the perceived changes to women’s lives during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period. Robinson (2010) takes a phenomenological approach to her study of young homosexual people’s school experiences, and Slattery (2017) uses phenomenology to explore the role of administrators in evaluating teacher performance.

There is also an existing practice of using phenomenology in library and information science (LIS) research. Budd (2005) explores the applicability of phenomenology to LIS and concludes that phenomenology offers LIS researchers a methodology that is directly relevant to information studies and information work. Because of the focus on experience, phenomenology can be used within LIS to explore user experiences of LIS tools and facilities. VanScy (2012) uses phenomenology to study the attitudes, stories, beliefs and values of reference librarians working in academic libraries. Dalbello (2005) uses phenomenology to study the perspectives of Library of Congress staff involved in the emergence of their national digital library. She makes use of phenomenology to explore the
staff perception of the characteristics required to make successful decisions. Introna and Ilharco (2004) use phenomenological methods to explore the experience of using computer screens. They argue that the insights they have identified would not have been attained without the use of a phenomenological approach. Limberg (2000) uses a similar methodology, namely phenomenography. Like phenomenology, the focus of the study is to illuminate the experience of a phenomenon. However, phenomenography differs from phenomenology in that the goal of phenomenography is to determine the different ways that people understand a phenomenon, while phenomenology aims to determine the essential structure and meaning of a phenomenon (Larsson & Holstrom, 2007). Limberg (2000) looks at how phenomenography can be used to provide insights into information-seeking behaviours and perceptions of information needs.

Phenomenology as a research method has also been used in studies based on prison life. Meisenhelder (1985) studied the phenomenology of time in a prison environment. He found that prison inmates view time as futureless. He then went on to discuss the dehumanising effects of this experience. Rogers (1995) used a phenomenological framework to explore prisoner suicide. A phenomenological approach allowed her to focus on the prisoners’ socially constructed sense of reality within the prison environment. She then was able to explore how their sense of reality and their position within it related to suicide as a transformative experience, rather than a cessation of life.

In a more recent example, Cassau and Goodwin (2012) describe the phenomenology and change over time of depressive syndromes experienced by inmates in pre-trial detention in a Berlin prison. Their data gathering techniques were phenomenological in that they sought knowledge of the lived experiences of their participants, but they were based on self-administered surveys. This technique reflects a data-gathering process more closely associated with quantitative study than with the qualitative processes typically associated with phenomenology. However, their data were supplemented with interviews with prisoners and taken together, these data sources were able to provide a description of prisoner experiences of depression.
Selection of phenomenology for this research

Phenomenology provides a mechanism to investigate experiences that ensures the voices of those who are experiencing the studied phenomenon are heard. This was important to me, as previous research into prison libraries has neglected to seek these voices, instead focussing on the history or management of prison libraries. Streubert and Carpenter (2011) illustrate this characteristic of hearing the voices of those experiencing the phenomenon when they state that phenomenology investigates subjective phenomena and experiences, with an understanding that the essence of phenomena can only be found within lived experience. Lived experience, as it is understood in qualitative research, is the understanding of human experiences and how those experiences influence perception and knowledge (Boylorn, 2008). Lived experiences are first-hand accounts of experiences. I wished to investigate the lived experiences of prisoners to explore the role prison libraries play in their lives and how they experience their libraries. As my investigation was most interested in discovering the user experience, phenomenology’s focus on experience provided an appropriate framework and research design. In addition, I have chosen phenomenology as the research methodology for this study as it allows me to add my research to the body of work described earlier. Adding a study of the experience of using a prison library to this body of work adds new knowledge to the existing understanding of prison life.

Phenomenology was not the only research methodology I considered when determining my research design. Ethnography also provided a possible option for studying prisoners and their use of prison libraries. Scott Jones and Watt (2010) state that ethnography can be used to learn the point of view of the participants, and that the researcher comes to a deep understanding of the lives and culture of the participants. I considered this methodology due to its possibilities in exposing the role the library played in the lives of prisoners, but it was rejected for a number of reasons. Firstly, an ethnographic study requires the researcher to become a part of the culture under study (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011) and to fully integrate into that culture to experience it first-hand. This was not logistically possible or desirable for me. I was only granted access to each of my prison sites for one day. There was therefore no opportunity to immerse myself within the lives of my research participants. Secondly, I wished to focus my discovery on the experiences of my participants from their own viewpoint. Although an ethnographer immerses themselves into a culture to study it, the observations and conclusions are still their own and are external views of what they observe. I felt the ability of phenomenology to explore phenomena from the participants’ perspective would give
me a truer account of their experiences of using a prison library and would allow the prisoners’ voices to be heard more readily in my findings.

Choosing the Moustakas phenomenological method

Having decided to work within a phenomenological framework, I then needed to determine what specific phenomenological approach I was to take. Van Manen (2014) states that phenomenological practices are constantly being reinvented, reordered and disordered. He encourages a resistance to formulating a specific method and to instead deal with data phenomenologically. He prefers researchers to adopt a phenomenological way of thinking about and approaching their data that will lead to a unique treatment and analysis. However, there are a number of interpreters of van Manen’s descriptions of phenomenological thinking who have outlined procedures for the phenomenological analysis of data. One such interpretation has been provided by Moustakas (1990) and it is this method that has been used in this research.

The use of a specified method, rather than Van Manen’s phenomenological thinking approach, as discussed above, was suitable for my research for a number of reasons. Firstly, this is not an existential philosophical thesis requiring phenomenology to be taken to its extreme, where it aims to discover pure consciousness and existential knowing (O’Leary, 2007). If that were the case, an approach that did not include prescribed steps, but instead required pure phenomenological thinking as the sole method of gathering and analysing data, could be used. The goal of my research is to discover the nature and meaning of a specific phenomenon as expressed by participants experiencing the phenomenon. The pure philosophy inherent in existential phenomenological thinking is less important in this research than the results a phenomenological process can illuminate. Following a guided path toward these results, by using the steps provided by Moustakas (1990), has helped me focus my approach at all stages of the research. This has enabled me to follow a phenomenological method that guides its users in phenomenological thinking.

Secondly, I chose the Moustakas method because it supports the analysis and comparison of data in like groupings. Being able to identify experiences of using a prison library at different states or territories, or for different genders, or at different prison security levels has allowed me to identify...
characteristics of experiences that are unique to or shared by various groups. The identification of these characteristics has enabled me to draw conclusions about the experiences of each of these groups, and examine how they differ and what they have in common.
Method

So far in this chapter I have discussed the research methodology I have employed. The next part of this chapter discusses how I have incorporated the research methodology into my method. I explain how I prepared to conduct my data gathering, including the ethics processes I undertook. I then explain the participant selection process and how I gathered data from my participants. Finally, I describe my methods for organising and analysing the information I gathered, and I address the issues of rigour and validity.

When Moustakas (1994) outlined his process for conducting phenomenological studies, he divided the research process into three main categories:

1. Preparation
2. Collecting data
3. Organising and analysing data (Moustakas, 1994)

In keeping with the Moustakas method, I will structure my discussion within this framework.

Preparation

*Formulating the question*

According to Moustakas (1994) all phenomenological investigation must begin with a research question that is stated clearly and in concrete terms. The question must have both personal significance to the researcher and a broader social meaning. Every word in a phenomenological research question must work together to illustrate the purpose and intent of the research clearly. Every key word of the research question must be defined, clarified and discussed to remove ambiguity and uncertainty. Moustakas (1994) describes the phenomenological research question as having definite characteristics. Its purpose is to reveal the essence of human experience, without attempting to identify or determine causal relationships. The meanings of human experience are sought through description and comprehensive renderings of the experience, rather than through measuring and counting of data. These considerations come together in the construction of a phenomenological research question.
My research question is: **How do Australian prisoners experience the use of a prison library?** The key words of this question are: “how”, “Australian”, “prisoners”, “experience”, “use” and “prison library”.

The use of the word “how” indicates the intent of the question. ‘How’ suggests an openness to discovering the experience of the phenomena under study without any presumption of what I will find. Working without presumptions supports the ideas of epoch and phenomenological reduction that both Husserl (1999) and Heidegger (2010) believed were necessary in recognising the truth of human experience. In addition, I am not attempting to investigate when the participants use their library, why they use it, or even how often. However, although these more quantifiable aspects of prison library use were not the focus of this study, many of my participants provided me with sufficient information in the course of their interviews to answer some of these questions. The answers to these questions contribute to the overall goal: that of distilling each of the participants’ experiences into the essence of the phenomena of the experience of using a prison library. An understanding of “when”, “why” and “how often” contributes to the understanding of “how” the participants are experiencing the phenomenon.

The use of the word “Australian” purposefully limits the study to that of the experiences of Australian prisoners. No interviews were conducted outside Australia for this study and therefore no conclusions can be drawn about the experience of prisoners outside of Australia. One participant was not an Australian national. Although this participant was a citizen of another country, his crime was committed in Australia and he is therefore held in an Australian prison. His experience is included in this study despite the fact that he is not strictly an Australian prisoner. His residence in an Australian prison and his use of the library in that prison allows him to be included in the study. The use of the word Australian therefore indicates prisoners within Australian prisons, rather than just Australian nationals in prison.

Similarly, the use of the word “prisoners” indicates a specific group of individuals. Using this word identifies the participants of the study as persons held in Australian prisons, and thereby clarifies the relationship of the participants to the prison and its library. In addition to their use by prisoners, prison libraries are generally available for use by prison staff, and in some cases library materials are
able to be taken to visitor centres during visit periods. This practice can occur to allow incarcerated parents to take children’s books from the libraries to read to their children. The use of the word “prisoners” indicates that the prison staff and visitors to the prisons as users of the libraries were not included in this study. However, prison staff were interviewed about the libraries at each site. The intent of these interviews was to gain an understanding of how each library was operated and managed. The knowledge gained from these interviews, along with photographs taken of the libraries visited, and my own observations, contribute to the site summaries found in chapter 4 – Research Sites.

Using the word “experience” locates my research within a phenomenological practice as a study of human experience. A phenomenological study aims to explore the perception of human experience as it relates to a phenomenon (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). As explained above, the concept of “lived experience” is central to phenomenological study. It indicates the philosophical belief that what is true or real in an individual’s life is wholly dependent on the experiences of that person (Schutz, 1970). Therefore, it is the experiences of the participants that are sought to illustrate the phenomenon of the use of a prison library.

The word “use” in the research question indicates the relationship between the participant and the object at the centre of the phenomenon – the library itself. It implies an active relationship with the library, rather than a passive or non-existent one. It indicates my interest in how the participants are experiencing using the library, for example as a social space, or as a place to learn or as a place to connect with others. This interest created a limit on who my participants could be, since I was not interested in the experience of not using the library. I was only interested in the views of prisoners who actually use the library, not those of prisoners who choose not to use the library, or who are unable to due to circumstances beyond their control. Therefore, the word “use” indicates an active relationship with the object of the phenomenon being studied. The basis for all phenomenological study is the direct experience of the phenomenon by the participant (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011, Moustakas, 1994), therefore it was essential that all my participants did in fact use the prison library.

The final key words in the research question are “prison library”. The use of the words “prison library” in the research question serves to limit the study to just the prison library and excludes all other places within the prisons. Although no attempt is made to explore the prison experience beyond the library, all participants in the study did provide information about their broader
The experiences of living in prison. In addition, all participants provided information about their previous
history of reading and library use in their lives outside prison. This broader information helps to explain many of their responses to their libraries.

The ethics process

The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee identifies prisoners as a vulnerable population. Therefore they are protected from unethical research by a number of processes. In addition to complying with the standards outlined in the National Statement, I also needed to satisfy the requirements of RMIT University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, and the individual prison-related research and ethics committees of each of the states and territories I visited.

I was required to submit detailed research proposals to each of the following research committees.

- RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee
- Corrections Victoria Research Committee
- Human Research Ethics Committee, Department of Justice, Victoria
- Corrective Services, Australian Capital Territory (ACT)
- Research and Evaluation Management Committee, Department of Correctional Services, South Australia

I faced a number of challenges in seeking approval from each government department. Each government department approached had unique processes, forms and submission deadlines that needed to be met. South Australia and Victoria required the research to be matched to elements of their government research agendas. The ACT does not support any research being undertaken in their prisons, and permission to proceed was only granted after it was sought directly from the Executive Director of ACT Corrective Services.
Each approval process took months to achieve. Each of the state and territory governments followed similar processes, although achieving each step of the process differed in complexity and time taken. Once the correct staff member, usually a research manager, at each appropriate government department was identified, often from the departmental website, I would call them to introduce myself and explain my research and my needs. The processes to gain approval to conduct my research in Victoria and South Australia each took close to nine months. Much of this time was spent waiting for the various committees to meet to consider my proposal. Many of these committees meet infrequently and the waiting time was considerable. When working with the Victorian government, I was required to meet with a panel of research staff from the Department of Justice and Corrections Victoria, to explain my project and the access I would require. My contact with the South Australian Department of Corrections and the ACT Corrective Services was entirely by phone and email.

Once the research manager considered my proposal to have merit, I was invited to complete a form to apply to conduct research inside the correctional facilities of the state or territory. Although the forms differed between governments, similar information was required on each. The forms were submitted to a research committee for their consideration. Where the committee sought amendments, I rewrote my application and then waited until the next scheduled meeting of the committee involved to reconsider it.

My approval to conduct research in the ACT prison did not proceed along the same lines as the South Australian and Victorian processes. Because the ACT Department of Corrections does not support any research conducted in their prisons, there are no research or ethics committees to approach. After making contact with the ACT Department of Corrections by phone, it was suggested that I write a letter to the Executive Director of ACT Corrective Services to explain my research and to request access and permission to proceed. I included the same information in this letter that was required by the other state and territory ethics committees. My application was successful and I was granted permission to contact the ACT prison to arrange a visit.

The first government to grant me access was the Victorian Government. Shortly after permission from Victoria, the ACT Government also granted permission. My plan was to have three states or
territories in the study. This decision was based on the request of the Victorian Department of Justice to produce a cross-jurisdictional study to allow them to compare their libraries with those of other states for their own purposes. Initially, Corrective Services, New South Wales was approached to be included in the research as the third jurisdiction after Victoria and the ACT. Despite extensive consultation with, and support from, the Manager, Library Services, and the Secretary of the Corrective Services Ethics Committee, the Chair of this Committee did not support the application or its resubmission. Therefore, the decision was made in late 2014 to remove New South Wales from the study and to approach the Department of Correction Services, South Australia to become the third jurisdiction.

**Participant Information and Consent Forms**

Due to low levels of literacy in prisoners, I needed to create Participant Information and Consent Forms (PICFs) that would be easily understood by my participants. PICFs are required as part of the research ethics process to ensure the participants are fully aware of what is being asked of them, what information will be sought from them, how the information they give will be treated and stored, and what their rights are as participants (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council & Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee, 2007). The ethics and research committees of each state and territory, and also RMIT University, provided input into the content of these forms to make them suitable for use with prisoners. The RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee provides researchers with a template for PICFs that can be adapted as required (RMIT University, 2016). Following the request of the Research and Evaluation Officer at the Victorian Department of Justice (personal communication, 2014), I amended the template to simplify the language of the form. I was required to write the form to a literacy level of an average 12-year-old child. As stated above, this was in response to the low levels of literacy of Victorian prisoners. The Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (2015) reports that 36% of Victorian prisoners have not completed Year 10 of high school (typically 15 years of age) and 18% have only attained Year 8 (typically 13 years of age) or below, or are measured as having no education. The ethics and research committees from the other states and territories approved the use of PICFs that were based on the Victorian example.

In addition to providing each participant with a written PICF form, I was also required by all jurisdictions to ask each participant if they would like me to read the form aloud to them. I was also
required to ask each participant if they understood what I was doing and what I was asking of them, and to explain what would happen to the information they gave me. I needed to ensure that participants were aware that I would be recording their voices. There was concern from each government ethics committee, and also the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee, that my participants may be identifiable from the sound of their voice. To address this concern, the PICF given to each participant before the interviews commenced included the following text: “A digital sound recording of what you have to say will be made. It is possible that you may be identifiable from this sound recording.” The forms also made clear that the participant had the right to leave the project at any time, the right to ask to stop the sound recording, and the right to have any information removed from the project and destroyed. At each interview, after the participant signed the PICF, I would again ask permission before turning on the voice recorder. I would then turn on the recorder and confirm with the participant that they were aware that their voices were being recorded from that point on. I was instructed by each government ethics committee to not ask the interviewees about their crimes or sentences. However, many participants chose to share this information with me during their interviews.

As prison staff, and one volunteer responsible for managing the two libraries at one site, were also interviewed about the management and use of the libraries, a separate PICF was written for their use. This form followed the language used in the RMIT University template more closely as there was no requirement to reduce the sophistication of the language used to satisfy the needs of readers with low literacy levels. The final version of both PICFs used are provided in Appendix 1.

Collecting data

Gaining access to prisons

Once the research committees approved my applications to conduct the research, the next step in the process was to find specific sites that would allow me to conduct interviews on site. Although approval to proceed was granted at the government department level, granting access to each site was at the discretion of the General Manager at each prison. The General Managers of all fourteen prisons in Victoria and all ten in South Australia were approached by the relevant state Research Manager on my behalf. Gaining access to the South Australian and the Victorian prisons differed from my experience with the ACT prison, as explained below.
Chapter 3 Research Design

Three Victorian prisons expressed an interest in my research and three South Australian prisons were prepared to grant me access. The next stage involved contacting the General Manager of each of these prisons myself, by phone or email. Some General Managers wanted to speak to me about my project and what I needed from the prison; others passed me on to an officer who could help me. Usually this was the officer in charge of either recreation or education. In the case of the ACT, after my initial contact with the Executive Director of ACT Corrective Services, I liaised directly with the prison librarian.

Each site was visited for a full day, usually starting at around 8.00 a.m. and finishing around 5.00 p.m. The following prisons were visited:

Australian Capital Territory

- Alexander Maconochie Centre (maximum, medium and minimum security)

Victoria

- Port Phillip Prison (maximum security)
- Marngoneet Correctional Centre (medium security)
- Tarremgower Prison (minimum security)

South Australia

- Port Augusta Prison (maximum security)
- Mobilong Prison (medium and minimum security)
- Adelaide Women’s Prison (maximum, medium and minimum security)
### Participants

In keeping with phenomenological practice (Moustakas, 1994) data was gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews with my participants. Thirty-six participants were interviewed in total: twenty-nine prisoners, six staff and one volunteer. Table 2 shows the number of interviews conducted at each site, and one by email.

**Table 2: Number and location of interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Prison</th>
<th>Number of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prisoners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>Alexander Maconochie Centre</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>Mobilong Prison</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Port Augusta Prison</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adelaide Women’s Prison</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Port Phillip Prison</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Margoneet Correctional Centre</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tarrengower Prison</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All interviews with prisoners were conducted face-to-face within the seven prisons to which I was granted access. Interviews with staff were also conducted face-to-face with the exception of one interview, which was by email. This response was from the Prison Officer in charge of recreation at the Marngoneet Correctional Centre. At this prison, the library is included as a recreational resource along with tennis racquets and the basketball courts. The officer did not wish to be interviewed in person and chose to respond to my questions via email. He was given the same questions as all other staff.

No staff member was formally interviewed at the Adelaide Women’s Prison. The management of the libraries at this prison is outsourced to volunteers and therefore there was no corrections officer who was able to speak to me about the libraries. There are two libraries at this site and I visited both of them. The volunteer who manages them both accompanied me during my visit. I was able to
speak with her informally following the visit, but she was unwilling to answer my standard questions or to be recorded.

Five prisoners were interviewed at Mobilong prison instead of the usual four. The fifth interview took place with the prisoner who worked in the library at Mobilong. The decision to interview him came about because the staff member responsible for the library knew very little about it, and requested I ask the prisoner who works in the library for his input as an alternative. This prisoner was able to address the unanswered questions from the staff member’s interview.

**Selection of participants**

I was unable to select my own participants at any of the sites. I requested that I only interview prisoners who were regular users of the library. Prison staff or, in two cases prisoners, chose all participants for me. This decision was taken by each prison to help ensure my safety and to not cause too much disruption to the operation of the prison, as moving an individual prisoner from their cell to the interview room often required whole cell blocks to be locked down to ensure the safety of the prisoner and the guards assigned to them. The decision of who was to be interviewed was therefore based on three factors: library usage, prison logistics and safety.

This type of participant selection can be considered a form of ‘referral sampling’, as described by Evans and Rooney (2014). Participants were selected from within a subset of the total prison population, that subset being members of the prison community who were regular users of the library. One person at each location, either a prisoner or staff member, referred suitable participants to me for inclusion in the study. Referral sampling assists in identifying relevant participants for selection, assuming the person doing the referring is qualified to take on that role. This type of sampling, also known as snowball or chain sampling, is frequently used in identifying participants in populations that are difficult to access such as drug users or sex workers (Morgan, 2008). This type of sampling has been used in past research with prison populations (Marquart, 1986) where one prisoner with existing connections to all possible participants in the target population acted as the referral participant.
The population I worked with was ‘hidden’ from me due to my lack of physical access and the need to maintain the participants’ privacy and anonymity. The people referring participants to me were in a strong position to be able to refer suitable participants as they either worked in the library themselves and therefore knew which other prisoners were regular users, or were prison staff in charge of the library and were also able to identify regular users.

At Mobilong Prison and Port Augusta Prison in South Australia, the prisoners to be interviewed were chosen by the prisoners who ran those libraries as their work responsibility. This delegation of interviewee selection to the prisoners was made by the officer in charge of the libraries, who did not have enough knowledge of who was using the library regularly themselves. At the Port Augusta Prison, the prisoner who works in the library created a list of prisoners who were regular users of the library. He was then asked by the officer responsible for the library to choose three names from the list for me to meet with and interview. One participant chosen for interview by this prisoner was not interviewed, as the officer considered he was too dangerous for me to be with. Another prisoner was chosen from the list by the officer to replace him.

There is a risk with referral sampling that the choice of participants is so dependent on a connection with the referring participant that there is a high probability that other potential participants can be left out of the study if they are not known to the referring participant (Morgan, 2008). I was fortunate that at each site there were only one or two prisoners responsible for running the library and therefore the entire population of regular users of the library at that site was well known to the referring participant. Therefore, all possible participants were able to be considered by the referring participant for inclusion. Each of the participants chosen was able to answer all of my questions, and all participants were able to speak at length about their experiences of using their library.

**Description of participants**

Of the 29 prisoners I interviewed, nine were female (from three prisons) and the remaining 20 (from five prisons) were male. As all of the prisons visited were adult-only prisons, all participants were over 18 years of age. Each participant was a regular user of their library and agreed to being interviewed. All participants were sentenced prisoners, except for one man, who was not yet
sentenced. However, he had been living in the prison for 18 months awaiting his court case. This man was the only participant who identified himself as non-Australian. He was visiting Australia from his home country when he committed his crime. No prisoners were selected on the basis of their culture or indigenous status. It is possible that some prisoners interviewed may identify as Indigenous Australian, but this information was not sought and was not stated by any participant.

All of the prisoners interviewed were very keen to take part in the study. Many of them were reluctant to leave the interview at the end of my questions and often continued to speak with me after I ended the formal interview. These extended conversations sometimes touched on the library, but were more often about life on the outside, their plans for their futures and life in prison.

Interviews

*Preparing to interview*

Seidman (2013) identifies the purpose of interviewing as a way to understand people’s lived experiences. As explained earlier, the understanding of the lived experience of others is the basis of all phenomenological study (van Manen 2007). The goal of my interviews was to hear the stories of prisoners when they talked about their libraries. I aimed for them to talk about their library, how they used it, what role it played in their lives, how it benefitted them and where it fell short. To explore their lived experiences with their library, I constructed a number of questions that I used to start the conversations. The following section lists each question used and my motivation for asking it. Each question was designed to increase my understanding of prisoners lived experiences of using the library.

*Questions to library users*

The overall research question that this thesis answers is: **How do Australian prisoners experience the use of a prison library?** Table 3 shows each question asked of the participants and the goals of that question.
### Table 3: Questions to library users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Goals of question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use the library?</td>
<td>• To explore the frequency of library use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To determine if they (the library user) are a suitable participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To understand how significant the library is in their daily life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What library resources and services do you use?</td>
<td>• To determine how they are using the library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To determine what library services they are using</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please describe for me a typical visit to the library. What do you do</td>
<td>• To understand how they behave in the library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when you get there?</td>
<td>• To understand their priorities in how they spend their time there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well do you perceive the library is able to satisfy your need for</td>
<td>• To hear the language used when participants describe how well the library is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>legal information?</td>
<td>meeting their legal needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To understand how well their needs for legal information are supported by the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well do you perceive the library is able to satisfy your need to</td>
<td>• To hear the language used when participants describe how well the library is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support your education?</td>
<td>meeting their educational needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To understand how well their needs for educational information are supported by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well do you perceive the library is able to satisfy your need for</td>
<td>• To hear the language used when participants describe how well the library is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recreational reading?</td>
<td>meeting their recreational reading needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To understand how well their needs for recreational reading are supported by the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are you reading at the moment?</td>
<td>• To hear the level of interest they express in what they are reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To understand the sort of materials being used in the library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you enjoy about using the library?</td>
<td>• To identify what brings them enjoyment in the library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To hear this expressed in their own words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### In what ways is the library important to you?
- To identify the importance they place on the role of the library in their lives
- To hear the language used when they talk about their library

### In what way is reading important to you?
- To understand the role of reading in their lives
- To understand for what purpose they are reading
- To hear the language used when they talk about reading

### Do you think there is enough choice of materials available in your library at the moment? If not, what sorts of items do you wish it had?
- To hear their ideas of how their library might not be meeting their needs
- To hear how they would like to develop the collection of materials offered to them

### What do you think the library offers you? What are the benefits to you in using the library?
- Similar to ‘In what ways is the library important to you’, but with the emphasis on how they feel they benefit from having a library, rather than why the library is important.
- To understand how they feel the library contributes to their wellbeing or personal life

### Do you think that the library helps you stay connected with others, both inside and outside the prison?
- To explore the possibility that the library can play a role in creating and/or maintaining connections with others both inside and outside of the prison

### How did you use libraries before entering prison?
- To gain an understanding of the role libraries have played in their past
- To determine if the circumstance of being in prison has led them to library use or if their library use is part of an established practice

### How does using the library make you feel?
- To understand the impact of the library on their feelings and emotional wellbeing
- To hear this expressed in their own words

### What else could the library provide for you?
- To explore the details of what the library’s possibilities are in their minds
- To understand if they believe they have needs that the library could meet if it provided more or different things to what it does now
- To understand the role the library could play in their lives if it were a different place to the current library
The questions were not piloted with prisoners, as I was not granted access to participants for this purpose. As an alternative, I worked directly with the Research and Evaluation Officer from Corrections Victoria on the development of the questions to be asked. The officer ensured that the final questions were appropriate to be asked of prisoners. The questions were also discussed with my supervisors to ensure they would facilitate the gathering of useful and appropriate data. The questions were included in each of the research and ethics applications submitted to RMIT and each government department for approval. No government department required any changes to the questions. The questions were all asked during each interview, but many additional probe questions were asked throughout the interviews to follow up and expand on interesting comments that had been made. This technique is typical of phenomenological interviewing, where the goal of the additional questions is to build upon and explore the responses given to the main questions (Seidman, 2013). The standard questions were made available to the prison staff prior to each of my visits, for sharing with prisoners. The reason for providing the prison staff with my questions was to assist prisoners in deciding if they would be interested in becoming participants. However, only in the case of The Alexander Maconochie Centre were they actually passed on to the prisoners as requested.

**Interviewing in a prison environment**

Entering prisons to conduct research was at times daunting and frightening. Contrary to what I expected before entering the first prison I visited, it was more often the environment and armed guards that made me feel this way, than the prisoners themselves. Prisons are very noisy places. There is the constant chatter and static from guards’ two-way radios, the shouts of prisoners and guards, clanging metal gates, and alarms. There are frequent announcements over loud speakers to notify guards of the movements of prisoners, and to request assistance in response to incidents. During one of my visits, a ‘Code Black’ was called over the speaker system. The prisoner I was with at the time told me that this meant someone had died in his cell and the guards would need to respond. I was only made to feel uncomfortable by the prisoners themselves twice: once because a physical fight between two groups of men started outside the room I was in, and once because I recognised one of the men I interviewed and remembered the violent nature of his crimes. Despite these experiences, there were no interruptions, or changes made to the interviews.
Chapter 3 Research Design

The process required to physically enter the prisons was similar across all sites. Every site required me to leave my belongings within an assigned locker in the reception area. To move beyond the reception buildings, I was scanned with a hand held metal detector and I also needed to take off my shoes and walk through a screening gate, similar to that at an airport. To make sure I was not bringing anything unauthorised into the prison, an officer would then ask me to stand with my feet apart and my arms raised to shoulder height so they could ‘pat down’ my body. My shoes would be scanned separately and then returned to me. At one prison my irises were also scanned before I was allowed to proceed beyond the reception area. The items that I was allowed to bring into the prison had to be carried in a clear plastic bag and this bag was also scanned and inspected by a guard. For each interview, I was allowed to take in one small digital voice recorder, my list of questions, the Participant Information and Consent Forms, and one pen. I took enough forms to cover my needs and to be able to give each prisoner a copy to retain for themselves if they wanted. I was instructed to not leave the pen or the recorder within reach of the prisoners as they would be at risk of being stolen.

After the scanning process, I was allowed to move into a room that served as an ‘air lock’ between the reception building and the rest of the prison. In this room, I was fitted with a personal duress alarm and instructed how to use it. These devices are worn on a belt and, when activated, alarms ring across the prison, which then goes into immediate lock down. All prisoners out of their cells must lie on the ground and all cell doors and cellblocks lock. Guards respond immediately by coming to the place where the alarm was activated. I was told not to use the alarm unless I really felt threatened. I did not need to use an alarm during any of my visits.

Once fitted with an alarm, I was escorted by a guard out of the ‘air lock’ and into the body of the prison. I was then walked through the prison yards or buildings to the building where I would be interviewing for the day. At the Alexander Maconochie Centre in the ACT, I conducted the interviews with male prisoners in the library. The female participant at the Centre was interviewed within the women’s accommodation unit as it was not safe for her to be moved to the library, which is in the male section of the prison. Women who wish to use the library are able to do so one half day a week, when the male prisoners are kept in their cells. As my visit occurred outside the womens’ rostered time, I was taken to the womens’ section of the prison to conduct the interview. The interviews at the Mobilong Prison and the Adelaide Women’s Prison in South Australia were
undertaken within their libraries. At all other sites, the interviews were conducted away from the library but took place after I had viewed and photographed the library. At the Port Phillip Prison, I used an education room for my interviews. At Marngoneet I interviewed two of the men in an art room and two in a small interview room that was housed in an accommodation unit. At Tarrengower Prison my interviews took place in an interview room within an administration building. The interviews that took place at the Port Augusta Prison were held in an education room, with the exception of the interview with the prisoner who worked in the library. This interview took place in the library itself.

Once inside a building, I was shown to the room that I would use for my interviews and a guard brought the prisoners to me one at a time. In all interviews, except those conducted at the Adelaide Women’s Prison, the guard would bring the prisoner into the room for me and then leave and lock the door. The guards were never very far away, but could not hear the interviews. At the Adelaide Women’s Prison, the guard and the volunteer in charge of the libraries stayed in the room during each of the interviews. The potential impact of this arrangement is discussed below.

**Procedure and duration of interviews**

Each interview proceeded along the same lines, with the exception of those conducted at the Adelaide Women’s Prison. As a guard brought each prisoner to me, I greeted them, shook their hand and introduced myself by name. I believe it was important for me to do both these things to comply with what Seidman (2013) calls ‘good interviewing practice’. Establishing good interviewing practices, such as greeting participants with my name and shaking their hands, was one way that I could let them know that I valued their participation. I hoped that this greeting would respect their dignity and enabled me to start my interviews in a friendly and open way. Hicks (2011, p.67) states that “honoring peoples’ dignity is the easiest and fastest way to bring out the best of them”. As I was unable to compensate the participants in any way apart from my thanks and giving them the chance to be heard, it was important to me to let them know that I appreciated their help and valued their input.
Not all of the prisoners knew ahead of time that they would be meeting me, so they often appeared curious and sometimes suspicious of me. After introducing myself, I would frequently have to ask the prisoner to sit down as they were waiting for me to tell them what to do. Once we were both seated, I explained my research to them. Most prisoners would ask some questions at this stage, and most questions were about what other prisons I had been to or was planning to visit. Many of the prisoners I spoke to had been in more than one prison and they were often interested in what I thought about a particular prison I had already visited.

Once I had answered their questions and explained my research, I described to them why I would like to interview them and what would happen to their responses. I would show them my list of questions and explain that I would like to record their responses with a digital voice recorder. Only one prisoner questioned the need to record his voice and was reluctant to give permission for me to do this. I gave him the option of not continuing, but he chose to proceed anyway. The next step was to give each prisoner a copy of the PICF and ask them to read through it. The man who questioned the need to record his voice was the only person who actually read the document before signing. No other participant did more than glance at the wording before signing. As they were glancing through the documents, I would ask them if there was anything they would like me to clarify or if they would like me to read the papers for them. No one requested that I do either of these things. After the documents were signed, I would offer them a copy of their own. Each of the four prisoners interviewed at the Port Phillip Prison chose to keep a copy of their forms, but no other prisoners wanted to keep a copy of their form. The men at the Port Phillip Prison told me they wanted to keep their forms as they were hoping to use them to demonstrate ‘good behaviour’ when being considered for parole and reductions of their sentences. Before turning on my voice recorder, I would ask if they were happy to start and for their approval to turn on the recorder. Each interview was semi-structured and all my listed questions described in Table 3 ‘Questions to library users’ were asked at each interview, along with probe questions, giving me the opportunity to explore and clarify their responses.

The procedure at the Adelaide Women’s Prison differed from all other interviews. I conducted only two interviews, with two prisoners in attendance in each. Also present at each interview were a prison guard and a volunteer who is responsible for running the libraries at that prison. One interview was conducted in the cellblock for ‘Protection Prisoners’. These are women who are at risk
from other prisoners. It was not possible to bring these women out of their accommodation area, so I conducted this interview in the Protection Library, which is housed within the protection building. The second interview took place with women in a ‘Learning Skills Unit’. These were women who had more freedom of movement, but who were located at quite a distance from the main body of the prison, so again, it was too difficult to move them safely. This interview took place in a second library that is sited in this part of the prison for the use of women in the unit. This library is housed in a room within their residential area. It was not explained to me why the interviews needed to be conducted with the staff present. When I asked if I could interview the women separately, and without the presence of the staff, I was told this would not be possible but there was no explanation given. The possibility exists that the data gathered during these interviews was influenced by the presence of staff. I address this possibility in the section of this chapter titled: ‘Potential impact on quality of data gathered’.

The recordings of my interviews run for approximately 30 minutes each. This does not include time taken explaining my research and the Participant Information and Consent Forms as required by the ethics process. After my last question was answered, I would leave the recording device running if the prisoner was still talking about the library, but turn it off if they had moved on to other topics. It was very common for the prisoners to continue talking about topics unrelated to the library. They were often reluctant to leave and I frequently had to end the conversation so I could move on to my next interview. I would typically spend approximately one hour in total with each participant.

Sufficiency and saturation

In discussing how many participants is the correct number to interview for qualitative research, Seidman (2013) identifies two criteria to guide the researcher: sufficiency and saturation. Sufficiency is described as ensuring the participants are sufficient enough in number that they can reasonably reflect the range of possible participants within the target population. The number of participants is considered sufficient if their experiences have a chance to match those of individuals outside the study. The range of possible participants appropriate for this study was well represented by the participants chosen. They each had direct and extensive experience of the phenomenon under study, that is, using the prison library. In addition, they were all long-term residents of the prison in which they were housed. Four, or in one case five, prisoners were interviewed at each site. These
participants represented the target population by being housed in the same institution, under the same security arrangements and using the same library at each site as all individuals within the target population, that is, prisoners who were regular library users. The lives of prisoners are highly regimented and controlled with little variation in experiences beyond the influences of the people they share a cell with. Therefore, the prison experiences of participants interviewed at each site are likely to be very similar to the experiences of others housed within the same prison. Because the prisoners at each site live in the same residence and have a high level of usage of the library, four participants at each site was sufficient to reflect the experiences of other individuals within the target population who shared these characteristics but were not included in the study.

A sufficient range of sites was also achieved. Within each state and territory which was part of the study, interviews were conducted with maximum, medium and minimum security prisoners. This coverage ensured sufficiency as all possible levels of security within the population were included.

Seidman (2013) describes saturation as the point where the interviewer begins to hear the same responses reported by participants again and again. He considers saturation to have occurred when the interviewer is no longer learning anything new from participants. The consistency of responses from my participants, both within and between prisons, was noted very early on in my interviews, and if Seidman’s criterion of saturation was used to determine when my interviews should cease, I would have very few interviews indeed. The number of participants included in my study was therefore determined more by sufficiency than saturation.

**Potential impact on quality of data gathered**

As noted above, the interviews that took place at the Adelaide Women’s prison differed from all other interviews in that they were interviewed in pairs, and a prison guard and a library volunteer were present at each interview. The potential exists that the responses given by the women in these interviews may have been influenced by these two factors. In qualitative research, such influence is known as reactivity or observer bias (Gibb 2008). Spano (2005) provides advice on how to deal with such influences, stating that if the researcher believes such an influence has occurred, the interview text should be coded to indicate this belief. This practice at least serves to identify the influence.
Spano (2005) also suggests that once all interviews are coded, the researcher should compare codes assigned to the potentially influenced content with other interviews that were not influenced. Any significant differences found would indicate to the researcher that observer bias has occurred and the data should be viewed with this in mind. A study of the transcripts and the codes assigned to both interviews undertaken at the Adelaide Women’s Prison identified no significant differences in content to those of other prisoners interviewed alone, at other prisons. There was a very high degree of consistency between the codes assigned to the Adelaide Women’s Prison transcripts of interview and codes assigned to all other transcripts of male and female prisoners. Therefore, it was concluded that there was no reactivity or observer bias discernible within the transcripts.

Organising and analysing data

Transcribing

Following the first set of interviews, with prisoners and staff at the Alexander Maconochie Centre in the ACT, I began the transcription process from audio into a text document. I found this process rewarding as it reacquainted me with the participants and the experience of being in the prison with them. Hearing the sounds of the prison environment as background to the interview reminded me how it felt to be there. Hearing the prisoners’ voices reminded me of their faces and their body language and general demeanour. Hearing my own voice reminded me of how I was responding to what I was seeing and hearing, both from the participant and the environment itself. This degree of immersion in the data is an important step in phenomenological analysis, where the goal is an intimate knowledge of the data that will lead to an emergence of themes and core patterns (Moustakas 1990).

Despite the benefits of transcribing the interviews myself, after transcribing the first five interviews, I made the decision to send all remaining interviews to a professional transcription service. This decision was made in consideration of the time it was taking me to transcribe and the number of interviews I needed to transcribe in total. Having experienced the process of transcribing, I decided that the benefits of continuing in this way did not outweigh the benefits of outsourcing the transcription. To counter dislocation from the data not personally transcribed, and to correct any errors and omissions in the transcripts, I listened to each interview again and corrected the transcribed text as I went. As well as resulting in accurate transcriptions, this process also allowed
me to experience the interviews again as I had when doing my own transcribing. In fact, correcting existing text rather than creating new text from scratch enabled me to pay more attention to the sounds of the environments and the choices of words of the participants.

**Data analysis**

As noted in the first part of this chapter, van Manen (2014) urged phenomenologists to not follow a prescribed method of data analysis. I have also stated earlier that I decided to depart from van Manen’s advice and follow the data analysis method described by Moustakas (1990) to provide my research with an accepted phenomenological structure and to facilitate the analysis of data gathered from like groupings.

The eight steps in the Moustakas (1990) data analysis method are listed here:

1. The researcher gathers all data from one participant together, including the interview transcript.

2. The researcher reads the material until it is understood. An understanding of the participant’s experience as a whole and its detail is sought.

3. The researcher takes notes and identifies the qualities and themes that can be derived from the data. An individual depiction of the experience is constructed. This individual depiction retains the language and examples given by the participant.

4. The researcher returns to the original data for the individual. The individual depiction from step 3 is examined against the original data to ensure the qualities and themes identified are essential to the experience.

5. When the above steps are completed for one participant, the researcher undertakes the same process for each of the other participants until an individual depiction of each participant has been constructed.
6. Each of the individual depictions are gathered together. The researcher studies them again to fully understand the qualities and themes that are common to all depictions of the experience. The researcher then develops a composite depiction that represents the common qualities and themes identified in the data. The composite depiction reflects the individual experiences of the participants and can include exemplary narratives, descriptive accounts and verbatim excerpts from the transcripts. The composite depiction should be vivid and clear and include all of the main responses to the phenomenon as experienced by the individuals and the group as a whole.

7. The researcher returns to the original transcripts and the individual depictions to select three to five participants who can represent the group as a whole. Individual portraits of these participants are developed. The purpose of these portraits is to present the phenomena and the individuals who have experienced the phenomena in a unified and lively manner that exemplifies the experiences of the group.

8. During the final stage, the researcher draws on her own experiences and awareness of the phenomenon that have developed over the preceding stages. The researcher develops an interpretation of the themes and essential meanings of the phenomenon and presents the essences of the phenomenon. Moustakas describes the final stage of analysis as a “creative synthesis of the experience” (1990, p. 45).

The analysis of the data gathered through interviews was undertaken using the above eight steps. Each interview with a prisoner resulted in a single transcript. The transcript of interview was the only data source for each participant.

Each transcript was read through three times, using the following approach. All transcripts received the same treatment. Firstly, the transcript was read through while I listened to the recorded interview, and corrections to the typed transcript were made as required. This was also done for the interviews I transcribed myself to ensure the transcriptions were accurate. I worked through all transcripts in this way before undertaking a second reading. The goal of the first reading was to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts, rather than to become familiar with the content. A second reading was then completed for each transcript. The goal of the second reading was to become
familiar with the nature and content of each transcript. I made no attempt to code or mark up the transcripts in any way at this stage as I was not attempting any analysis of the data. The transcripts were then read for a third time. All the transcripts were examined in the third reading, but not from start to finish, before I moved to the next transcript. During this third reading, I moved between the transcripts to follow themes that were beginning to emerge from the previous readings. The goal of the third reading was to begin to identify common concepts that were emerging from the transcripts. These concepts formed the beginning of the development of codes that I would then use to analyse the data in step three.

Step three was taken in two parts: firstly, the assignment of codes through the use of Nvivo software, followed by the construction of case summaries for each participant. All transcripts were loaded into Nvivo and explored for themes and qualities, as identified in the previous step. I began with the transcript of the first interview undertaken, and assigned codes throughout the transcript. The second and third transcripts were then coded using the codes established in the first transcript. During the coding of the second and third transcripts, I added some new codes and changed the names of some codes. This was in response to my growing awareness of the nature of the content of the transcripts. These changes were minimal, due to my familiarity with the content from previous readings. I then recoded the first and second transcripts to include the new and altered codes established in the third transcript. The fourth transcript was then coded and no further changes to the codes was needed. All other transcripts were then coded using the codes established during the coding of the first four transcripts. A description of each code is found below in table four. A definition for each code is also given. These definitions are my own and serve to illustrate my understanding of each code as I applied it, and the intent of each.
### Table 4: NVivo codes and definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection to others inside</td>
<td>Used to indicate social interaction with other prisoners within the prison in which the participant is housed. This interaction can take place anywhere in the prison, but is facilitated in some way by the library.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to others outside</td>
<td>Used to indicate social interaction with people outside the prison, typically family members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection with formal education</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that associate the library with the formal educational programs run within the prison.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection with informal education</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that associate the library with self-driven educational opportunities that exist outside of the formal educational programs run within the prison.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent library user</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that confirm the participant’s experience of the library was appropriate to be included in the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of library use</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that illustrate the participant’s past experiences with libraries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of reading</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that illustrate the participant’s past experiences with reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library as escape</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that identify that the participant has experienced the library as a means of removing themselves from aspects of the prison environment, either physically or mentally.</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library as gathering place</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that illustrate that the participant has experienced the library space as a location to interact with others socially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library as opportunity for autonomy</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that identify the library as a place where the participant can make decisions for themself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library as place to pass time</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that identify that the participant has come to the library to spend some of their unstructured time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library as supporting literacy development</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that illustrate that the participant sees the library as having a role in supporting literacy development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library as therapy</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that illustrate that the participant has experienced the library as a positive influence on their emotional wellbeing and/or mental health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library role in behaviour management</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that illustrate that the participant has experienced the library as a positive influence on their own behaviour or the behaviour of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No history of library use</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that identify the participant as not being a regular library user prior to this current period of incarceration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No history of reading</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that identify the participant as not being a regular reader prior to this current period of incarceration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor legal support</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that identify the legal support provided by the library as inadequate to meet the needs of the participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading as escape</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that identify that the participant has experienced reading as a means of mentally removing themselves from aspects of the prison environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading to create isolation</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that identify that the participant has chosen to read to isolate themselves from others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading to pass time</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that identify that the participant has chosen to read to fill in some unstructured time. This differs to ‘Library as place to pass time’ as the reading can take place outside of the library.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of reading</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that attach a value to reading as an activity, both within prison life and also in the past and future, outside the prison.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of the library</td>
<td>Used to indicate comments that attach a value to libraries, both within prison life and also in the past and future, outside the prison.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second stage of this step in the Moustakas method was the writing of individual depictions of each participant as case summaries. This stage began with the identification of the most commonly assigned codes for each participant’s transcript. This identification was facilitated by creating a matrix within Nvivo that allowed me to find the number of times each code had been assigned to each case, a case being a participant transcript. I was then able to create a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that listed each participant and the most common codes associated with that participant. A copy of the spreadsheet can be found at Appendix 2 – ‘Coded data and themes’.

I was then able to create individual depictions for each participant, based on the most frequently coded data from their transcript. I worked with each case separately using an identical process:

1. Create a Microsoft Word document for the case. Within this document, basic demographic data, including gender, name of prison, name of state or territory, and the security level for the case is given. A pseudonym is assigned to each case. The use of a pseudonym was required to comply with the ethical requirement that all participants remained anonymous throughout the research.
2. Check the spreadsheet to identify each code associated with that transcript.
3. Return to Nvivo and search within the content of that transcript for all text associated with each code.
4. Copy the relevant content from Nvivo into the Microsoft Word document under a heading for each code. This ensured the exact language used by each participant is carried over into the next stage of analysis.
5. When all content relevant to each code is copied over to the document, a short summary of how the individual’s experience of prison libraries that related to each code is written.
6. The individual depiction for each participant is concluded with an overall summary of the case. The goal of the final summary is to represent the essence of the nature and experiences of the individual depiction. Four participant summaries are included in Appendix 3 – Four participant summaries, as examples of the result of this process.

To ensure the summary accurately represented the nature of the data and the individual’s experiences, each transcript was read again, followed by a reading of the individual depiction. In total, 27 individual depictions were written, representing the 29 participants interviewed. Two individual depictions each represented two participants, due to the interviews held at the Adelaide Women’s Prison needing to be undertaken in pairs.
In step six of the Moustakas method, all the individual depictions are gathered together and studied to understand and identify themes that are common to all depictions of the experience. This moving from codes to themes allows a viewing of the similarities and patterns found within the data. Having studied the content of each individual depiction, it became possible to find themes that encompassed the experiences of the participants as a group. The following table illustrates the grouping of codes into themes.

**Table 5: Themes derived from Nvivo codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Codes encompassed by the theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing escape</td>
<td>Library as escape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading as escape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing time</td>
<td>Library as a place to pass time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading to pass time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing responsibility for self</td>
<td>Library as opportunity for autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library role in behaviour management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library as therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing community</td>
<td>Library as gathering place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connection to others inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connection to others outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing education</td>
<td>Library as supporting literacy development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connection to formal education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connection to informal education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these themes is explicated in Chapters 5 and 6 – Explication and discussion of themes Parts 1 and 2. The explication of each theme is illustrated with verbatim content from the participant transcripts to ensure the voices of the participants are heard throughout this thematic study.

The seventh step in the Moustakas method requires the researcher to select three to five individual participants from the total group who can represent the group as a whole. Exemplary portraits of each of these participants are written to illustrate how the themes identified in step six are experienced by that individual. The three individuals chosen to be given this treatment were
considered the most representative of the total group. Between them, they had experienced each of the themes derived from the analysis stage and were able to speak eloquently about their experience of using a prison library. The exemplary portraits are found as the final section of Chapter 6 – Explication and discussion of themes – Part 2.

The final step in the Moustakas method requires the researcher to develop an interpretation of the themes and essential meanings of the phenomenon, and present the essences of the phenomenon. This final stage can take many forms such as a narrative, poetry, visual imagery or any other form deemed suitable by the researcher (Moustakas, 1990). I present this stage in my study as the discussion sections with chapters 5 and 6 – Explication and discussion of themes – Parts 1 and 2 of this thesis.

Data security and privacy

The following data has been generated by this research:

- Signed Participant Information and Consent Forms (PCIF) from each participant
- Thirty-two audio recordings of interviews
- One email response to interview questions
- Thirty-two transcripts of interviews
- One NVivo file of coded transcripts
- One Microsoft Excel file of coded data
- Twenty-seven participant summaries of prisoners’ interviews created in Microsoft Word documents

Twenty-seven participant summaries were derived from interviews with twenty-nine prisoners, as two participants were interviewed at once during each of the two interviews conducted at the Adelaide Women’s Prison. The participants frequently responded to each other’s comments, so it was not possible to create a separate transcript for each participant. Therefore, one single transcript was made of each of these two interviews, resulting in twenty-seven transcripts overall.

Table 6: Data storage, indicates how each of the data collections has been stored to ensure compliance with section 2.6.2 of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Australian Government, National Health and Medical Research Council & Australian Research...
Chapter 3 Research Design

Council, 2007, p. 2.3) that states researchers must: “Ensure that research data and primary materials are kept in safe and secure storage provided, even when not in current use.”

Table 6: Data storage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Storage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signed PCIFs</td>
<td>Stored in locked cupboard at RMIT University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio recordings of interviews and participant email response</td>
<td>Researcher portable hard drive in locked cupboard RMIT University server</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcripts of interviews</td>
<td>Researcher portable hard drive in locked cupboard RMIT University server</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nvivo file of coded transcripts</td>
<td>Researcher portable hard drive in locked cupboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Excel file of coded data</td>
<td>Researcher portable hard drive in locked cupboard RMIT University server</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Word participant summary files</td>
<td>Researcher portable hard drive in locked cupboard RMIT University server</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All data will be retained for at least five years to comply with the RMIT University research data and record retention guidelines (RMIT University, 2017). If required, the data will be retained beyond the five years, in accordance with section 2.5.1 of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Australian Government, National Health and Medical Research Council & Australian Research Council 2007, 2.2), which states:

2.5.1 Researchers should retain research data and primary materials for sufficient time to allow reference to them by other researchers and interested parties. For published research data, this may be for as long as interest and discussion persist following publication.

The data will be destroyed in a secure manner when it is appropriate to do so. The privacy and anonymity of the research participants has been ensured by the use of codes and pseudonyms for all participants. No traceable link connects the assigned codes with the names of participants, and no record of participant name was taken at the interviews, beyond the signing of the Participant Consent and Information Forms. These forms have been kept separate from the transcripts of
interviews at all times. The codes used were assigned to each participant before the transcripts were created from the audio files. As the participants were never asked to identify themselves by name during the recorded interviews, the transcription service used had no exposure to the names of participants. Any names of third parties spoken during the interviews have been removed from the transcripts of interview. The codes assigned were built to reflect the state or territory in which the participant was interviewed, the prison in which they were interviewed and then by number to distinguish between participants interviewed at the same site, on the same day. For example, the participant coded as VICMP4 was the fourth prisoner interviewed at Marngoneet Correctional Centre, in Victoria.

Following the analysis of the data, all participants were assigned pseudonyms that have been used throughout the thesis. The first letter of a pseudonym indicates the first or second letter (or fifth letter, in the case of prisoners from Marngoneet Correctional Centre) of the name of the prison in which the participant was interviewed. Table 7: Name of prison and pseudonym assigned, provides a list of research sites and pseudonyms for each participant.

Table 7: Name of prison and pseudonyms assigned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of prison where participant interviewed</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Maconochie Centre</td>
<td>Alan, Andrew, Alice, Aiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide Women’s Prison</td>
<td>Diane, Debbie, Donna, Danielle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilong Prison</td>
<td>Michael, Marcus, Matt, Max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Augusta Prison</td>
<td>Owen, Oscar, Oliver, Otto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marngoneet Correctional Centre</td>
<td>Greg. Gabriel, Gary, Geoff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Phillip Prison</td>
<td>Peter, Phil, Paul, Patrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarrengower Prison</td>
<td>Tina, Tara, Tanya, Tracy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The decision to use pseudonyms instead of codes throughout the thesis was taken to ensure the participants could be seen as real people, rather than merely sources of data, while ensuring their anonymity. Both the code and pseudonym assigned to each participant can be seen in Appendix 2 – Coded data and themes.
Rigour and validity

Hammersley (1990) writes of the complexity of ensuring rigour and validity in qualitative research. He states that qualitative research aims to achieve rigour by establishing trustworthiness. Taylor, Kermode & Roberts (2006) also mention the idea of trust in the research through employing strict judgement and conduct throughout the research process. To facilitate trust in qualitative research, Sheeran (2012) discusses the idea of transparency of process and decision making. Transparency of the research and decision-making processes enables others to evaluate the accuracy of the research method and the conclusions drawn by the researcher. In qualitative research, this transparency is achieved by the researcher showing how they have obtained their evidence, and how that evidence has been confirmed (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011).

Identifying any definitive ‘truths’ through phenomenological analysis is an impossibility according to Ellis (2004). The extent of the influence of ‘bias’ brought by the researcher to the analysis of data has an impact on any results determined. As an interpretivist approach, phenomenology does not result in one single correct view of the external world being studied. The researcher cannot put themselves outside what is studied to the degree that their interpretations are totally value-free, objective and neutral (Kvale, 1996). In fact, Heidegger (2010) and Gadamer (2013) consider the biases and prejudices of the researcher to be essential in the research process to add meaning and understanding during the interpretation of the experiences of others.

So how then does the phenomenologist create the trust in their research required to give it validity and rigour? Guba and Lincoln (1981) discuss the idea of determining validity and rigour in qualitative research through authenticity. They state the researcher should aim for conclusions that are ‘reasonable’ and ‘meaningful’ in relation to the methodology and the analysis of the data used for the study. Sheeran (2012) writes of a second criterion, that of transparency or auditability. This can be achieved by the researcher being explicit in their methods, decisions and actions to the degree that other researchers are able to follow the research process easily from conception to conclusion. Transparency of process can create confidence in the reader that the conclusions drawn by the researcher are in fact reasonable and meaningful, thereby satisfying Guba and Lincoln’s (1981) measure of authenticity.
A third measure of rigour and trust in qualitative research comes again from Taylor, Kermode & Roberts (2006) who consider the concept of credibility. They discuss credibility of research in terms of ‘fittingness’. They consider ‘fittingness’ to be the degree to which the findings of a study can fit into other contexts, outside the original study. The goal of ‘fittingness’ is to create relevance in the mind of the reader to their own experiences. This concept aligns with that of ‘utility’ as discussed by Ellis (2004). She defines ‘utility’ as the extent to which the findings of the research are relevant and useful to others. Her idea of ‘utility’ extends beyond relevance to the personal experiences of readers, to also include usefulness of the research design to other researchers. Again this is achieved by providing sufficient detail of the processes and decisions made throughout the research process.

My research cannot determine a definitive ‘truth’ about the phenomenon studied, because this is not the goal of a phenomenological study. Rather it is to derive meaning whilst maintaining rigour and validity. In my research I sought to achieve this through ensuring authenticity, transparency and credibility. I have provided clear descriptions of each stage of the research, the decisions taken and the methods employed. In addition, I have provided a detailed explanation of the phenomenological research methodology and how it has been applied to my data analysis. All my interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim to ensure an accurate record of the interview was produced. I have immersed myself in the data derived from these interviews by reading the transcripts and listening to the original recordings repeatedly. The original words from my participants are used extensively throughout my discussion to ensure it is their voices that are heard, along with my own.

To achieve rigour in my research, I have followed Moustakas’ phenomenological method that describe three stages of research:

1. Methods of preparation
2. Methods of collecting data
3. Methods of organising and analysing data (Moustakas 1994).

I have been guided by the writings of other phenomenologists, such as Seidman (2013) and van Manen (2007) as I prepared my research question, and interview questions. My data analysis followed the eight steps of the Moustakas (1990) data analysis method, leading to a high level of familiarity with my research data and the themes that emerged. By aligning the decisions taken at all stages of my preparation - data gathering, data organisation, and analysis - with the Moustakas.
method (1994), I was following an established pathway, and I can be confident that my research process was rigorous and thorough.

To ensure my processes and outcomes are transparent, and to allow others to judge their rigour and the accuracy of my findings, I have described each step I took, and have included samples of the outputs of the data analysis stages in the appendices. Appendix 2 – Coded data and themes, contains a printed copy of a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet where I compiled data derived from coded transcripts. This spreadsheet is the output of steps one to six in the Moustakas method of data analysis (1990) and is included to illustrate the rigour applied during the analysis process, and to produce a transparent pathway from raw data to thematic analysis. Appendix 3 – Four participant summaries, contains four participant summaries that are samples of the output of step three of the Moustakas method of data analysis (1990). They illustrate the measures taken to ensure the voices of the participants are heard throughout the data analysis phase and beyond. By associating the language and examples used by the participant with each theme and code, I am confident that the research remains rigorously phenomenological, and a transparent expression of the participants’ experiences.

To further ensure the validity of my findings, three sample transcripts were sent to a second researcher for comparative coding. This researcher holds a Doctorate from an Australian university, and although she has no prior knowledge of prison libraries, she has experience and knowledge in both coding and library-related research. The researcher was given the research question, but she was not sent the codes I had developed. She was asked to create and apply her own. The themes identified by this researcher aligned with my own and indicated that the findings drawn from the transcripts are valid and reasonable.

The use of these methods ensures that my discussion and conclusions are authentic, meaningful and reasonable in relation to the data given to me by my participants. My processes are transparent and auditable and are able to be followed and repeated by other researchers in other contexts. Therefore, the findings of my research have utility and relevance to other researchers and the readers of my research.
Conclusion

This chapter explains the philosophical context for my research and provides a detailed description of the processes and method I have used. I have explained the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology and how this framework has been used in previous, related research. I have also discussed how the concepts and practices of phenomenology have informed the method I have taken in preparing to gather my data and in the method I have used to collect, organise and analyse that data. The following chapter – Research sites – describes the seven research sites visited to conduct interviews. Each prison and its library is described, along with photos taken (with permission) of the libraries. The purpose of these descriptions is to provide context and an understanding of the physical environment that is being experienced, and described by the prisoners during their interviews.
Chapter 4 – Research Sites

Introduction

The previous chapter described and explained the research design for my study. Both the research methodology – phenomenology – and the research methods were identified and discussed. An explanation for the choices I have made regarding both the philosophical underpinnings of the research and the research methods I employed were given. The Moustakas (1990) method, which has directed both my data gathering and analysis, has also been described.

This chapter describes the seven research sites visited for the conducting of interviews. The description of the prisons and the libraries are based on the transcripts of interviews undertaken with prison staff at each site, and my own observations. Additional information has been taken from the official prison websites. The staff members interviewed had administrative responsibility for the library, in addition to either prison education or recreation programs. These descriptions, along with photos taken of the libraries, serve to provide context for the research, and an understanding of the environments where prisoners are experiencing the phenomenon under study: the use of a prison library. No prisoners are visible within the photos. This enabled me to comply with the requirement of ensuring participant anonymity. As I took the photos of each site, I asked any prisoners in the library to move away from the camera.
Alexander Maconochie Centre

**Security level:** Minimum, Medium, Maximum

**State/territory:** Australian Capital Territory

**Prison profile:**

The only prison in the Australian Capital Territory, the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) has maximum, medium and minimum security prisoners sentenced to full-time imprisonment and on remand. It houses both male and female prisoners. Fifty percent of prisoners are housed in cottage accommodation (ACT Corrective Services, 2014). ‘Protection’ prisoners are housed within the maximum security accommodation; these are prisoners who are at risk from other prisoners. ‘Protection prisoners’ have no physical contact with mainstream prisoners. Female prisoners are all housed in cottage accommodation, located in a secured area away from the male accommodation areas.

**The library:**

This library is the only library in the study that was managed by a librarian. This staff member did not wear a uniform or carry any weapon; she wore a duress alarm and carried a walkie-talkie, and her office was fortified so she could lock herself in there if she felt unsafe. The library space was shared with an officer’s observation room. A prison guard is always present in this room and helps the librarian to maintain order in the library. One prisoner is allocated to work for the librarian and he attends the library four out of five days per week. On the fifth day, he stays in his cell as the library is accessed by the female prisoners in the morning and the male ‘protection’ prisoners in the afternoon. Access to the library is controlled by a roster system. No prisoner is allowed to visit the library outside their rostered period of one half-day a week.

**The collection:**

This library is the only library in the study that receives a budget for the purchase of books. The selection of new materials is undertaken by the librarian who also accepts recommendations and requests from prisoners and always includes materials requested if they are suitable for a prison environment. The collection covers both fiction and non-fiction, books, newspapers and magazines. Materials that are not considered suitable are items relating to drugs, gangs, tattoos, weapons and chemistry. The librarian will not purchase ‘true crime’ fiction if the case described includes a prisoner currently living in the prison. In response to prisoner requests, there is an emphasis on fantasy
fiction, science fiction and history. There are a number of Indigenous prisoners at the AMC. These prisoners are not frequent users of the library, but they have requested books on Indigenous art. The librarian has purchased a collection of Indigenous art books and these are well used by the Indigenous prisoners who choose to paint during the day.

**Photos of the library:**

The following photos of the library were taken by me on 15 January, 2015.

*Figure 1: Alexander Maconochie Centre - The librarian’s fortified office, comfortable seating and a leaflet rack*
Figure 2: Alexander Maconochie Centre - Library computers used for email and word-processing
Figure 3: Alexander Maconochie Centre - Library entrance, magazine display, entrance to guard room
Figure 4: Alexander Maconochie Centre - The collection
Adelaide Women’s Prison

Security level: Maximum, Medium, Protection

State/territory: South Australia

Prison profile:

The Adelaide Women’s Prison (AWP) is located in a suburb of Adelaide, and houses both remand and sentenced prisoners. It has separate areas for maximum, medium and minimum security prisoners (Government of South Australia, 2010b). There are two libraries at the AWP: one within the ‘Protection’ accommodation and one within the ‘Learning Skills Unit’. Both libraries are managed by a group of volunteers from outside the prison system. The volunteers are managed by a prison staff member. Two of the prisoners I interviewed were housed in the Protection Unit and the remaining two were housed in the ‘Learning Skills Unit’.

Protection unit (Maximum security):

The women placed in the Protection Unit are housed away from all other women for their own safety. They are considered at risk from other prisoners due to the nature of their crimes or an affiliation with gangs. There are separated areas within the Protection Unit to keep protection prisoners away from each other as needed. Protection prisoners are locked in to a small shared space that includes their cells and a small common room that is in the middle of their building. Their cells wrap around this shared space. The common room has a single telephone, some small tables and chairs. When I was there, some of the women were working on a jigsaw on one of the tables. This table took up most of the room. There are a lot of women living together in a very small area, with no opportunity to separate themselves from others.

The women are allowed outside their building for one hour a day. They use this time to walk in a small internal courtyard and to hang out their washing. They each have their own cell which is slightly larger than a bed. When they are not outside, they either stay in their cell or come into the small shared space. Their food is delivered to them by other prisoners, but they have no contact with them during the delivery. The food is passed through a hole in the door to the common room. One of the shared spaces leads to a room that houses the library. The women in this space have free
access to the library for most of the day. The women from other sections of the Protection Unit do not have access to the library at all. They are able to see a printed list of titles and request guards to bring books to them.

‘Mainstream’ prisoners (those housed in all other sections of the prison, except for the Learning Skills Unit) are reliant on this library too. They also have no physical access to the collection and request titles from a printed list. Requested books are delivered in plastic tubs to their units once a week. The library is maintained by one prisoner who works in the library each day and lives in a cell that adjoins the common area. She is responsible for receiving requests from other areas of the prison and placing the books in tubs for each unit. Guards will then move the tubs around the prison.

**Learning Skills Unit (Medium security):**

The women housed in the Learning Skills Unit are medium security prisoners. The purpose of the unit is to provide training opportunities to women to assist in their chances of gaining work when they leave prison. They are given a chance to work in some textile manufacturing work areas and also receive some basic vocational training. However, because there are limited places available within these programs, many women are excluded. Many of the women are housed in the unit just because there is a bed available and they meet the requirements of the security level. The women in the unit have some freedom of movement within the boundaries of their area, which is fenced off and located away from the other sections of the prison. The library is located with other non-accommodation buildings within this area. The library collection is small and the space is quite large, but has a shared function. It also houses a kitchen, refrigerator and a television where the women are allowed to watch videos. The role of managing this library is shared by two prisoners who spend each day in the library.

**The collection:**

Neither library at the AWP has a budget, so all resources are donations, usually from prisoners who receive books as gifts and then donate them to the library. The ‘Protection’ collection includes some general fiction, magazines, Reader’s Digests and a ‘religion’ section. The ‘Learning Skills Unit’ library
collection includes general fiction, cook books, health and wellbeing texts and some poetry and videos.

Photos of the library:

The following photos were taken by me on 11 September, 2015.

*Figure 5: Adelaide Women’s Prison - Protection library – collection and seating for library worker and users*
Figure 6: Adelaide Women’s Prison - Protection library – collection and user seating
Figure 7: Adelaide Women’s Prison - Learning Skills Unit Library – Collection, seating, television and refrigerator
Figure 8: Adelaide Women’s Prison - Learning Skills Unit Library – Collection and author display
Murray Bridge – Mobilong Prison

Security Level: Medium, Minimum

State/Territory: South Australia

Prison profile:

Mobilong Prison is located near the town of Murray Bridge in South Australia. It is a male only prison and was built to accommodate over 300 prisoners (Government of South Australia, 2010c). At the time of my visit it was operating beyond capacity. Mobilong is what is considered a ‘Programs Prison’ where inmates are provided with opportunities to participate in programs such as alcohol and drug programs, a violence prevention program, and vocational programs that link to the prison industries at the site. These industries include electrical component assembly, manufacturing building and cement products, bakery and kitchen work, metal fabrication and rubber recycling (Government of South Australia, 2010c). When I visited the prison, some men were learning how to use an industrial digger by using a simulator. The library is located in the education building along with a computer laboratory, a small kitchen and two classrooms, one of which was dedicated to Indigenous learning programs. There is no Internet access from any of the computers in the laboratory; prisoners use them to learn how to write letters and to use word processing software.

The library:

The library belongs administratively to the education unit of the prison. The officer in charge of education was unable to answer many questions about the library, despite it being one of her responsibilities. She admitted that this was a poor situation, but stated that her priority was the education programs run within the prison, rather than the library. She requested I interview the prisoner who works in the library to answer questions that she could not. This prisoner was interviewed as a participant in the study.

The library was housed within two small rooms. Each has shelves of books around the perimeter of the room. One room also housed a small desk and computer for the prisoner librarian to work at and a small round table with two plastic chairs for users. The interviews took place in this room. The second room also contained a large chair with a joystick and screen attached to it. This was the
digging machine training simulator and was used frequently by men as I was interviewing. The chair took up most of the space in the room. There is no budget for the library and although new resources are rare, some prisoners will donate books they have received as gifts from family, but this is unusual.

Prisoners who are not on work duties are able to visit the library during the day when they choose. As a medium/low security prison, prisoners have a degree of freedom in their movements. Prisoners undertaking education programs are in the same building during the day, but they do not use the library as part of their learning. Despite the administrative link between the education programs and the library, there are no operational links between the two. Teaching staff maintain their own collection of ‘easy readers’ that are used to support the education students. These materials are locked into classrooms and are not available to prisoners not enrolled in education programs or to anyone outside of class times.

**The collection:**

The collection is largely paperback fiction with an emphasis on warfare, spies and adventure novels. At the instruction of the prison management, all ‘true crime’ novels had been removed and discarded, although the prisoner librarian had hidden a few within the collection as he recognised how popular they were. The prisoner librarian remarked that in the many months that he had worked in the library, they had received only one additional book. This book was a novel and was donated by a prisoner from his own collection. The collection also included a number of old non-fiction books across many topics, and two shelves of books in an Asian language. No-one was able to read these latter books and they never get used according to the prisoner librarian. The library receives regular bundles of unsold magazines from a nearby newsagent. These magazines don’t come into the library, but stay on a table in the corridor outside the library for prisoners to take as they want.

**Photos of the library:**

The following photos were taken by me on 9 September, 2015.
Figure 9: Mobilong Prison - The collection and user seating
Figure 10: Mobilong Prison - Prisoner librarian’s desk and collection
Figure 11: Mobilong Prison - First library room with user seating and fiction collection
Figure 12: Mobilong Prison - Second library room with digger simulator, non-fiction collection
Port Augusta Prison

Security Level: Maximum

State/territory: South Australia

Prison profile:

Port Augusta prison is the largest prison in South Australia and it houses male prisoners across minimum, medium and maximum security levels. It also houses many Indigenous prisoners from the north of South Australia. Port Augusta Prison runs some educational and work programs for some prisoners. Educational programs focus on basic literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, the prison offers programs that address substance abuse and offending behaviours (Government of South Australia, 2010d).

The library:

The library at Port August Prison is not accessible to any prisoners at any time. It is administered by the education unit of the prison. The library is housed in one room within an education building and is staffed by a single prisoner who is allowed in the room five days a week unless the space is used for staff meetings. He works alone and is responsible for organising the distribution of books around the prison. There is no catalogue of the collection. The prisoners can ask for access to a list of titles in the collection and they must request books from this list. Requested books are packed into plastic tubs that are delivered once a week into each cell block by guards. Prisoners are allowed to have three books in their cells at any one time.

The library falls within the education administrative area. However, it is not used to support the education programs of the prison. The one exception to this is a teacher who allows her students to enter the library to select a book to review as a class activity. Only one prisoner is allowed in at a time. One prisoner interviewed stated that if they do get into the library to do this, they are usually told to leave by a guard despite having been given permission by the teacher.
The library room contains a number of tables and chairs, but these are not to be used by prisoners and are there to accommodate prison officers during staff meetings.

**The collection:**

There is no budget for new library materials. Education staff often donate magazines that they have bought for themselves when they have finished with them. The library also receives donations from outside the prison. The majority of the collection is fiction with no particular emphasis. The non-fiction section contains old text books and some books on religion.

**Photos of the library:**

The following photos were taken by me on 10 September, 2015.

*Figure 13: Port Augusta Prison - The library and collection*
Figure 14: Port Augusta Prison - The fiction collection
Figure 15: Port Augusta Prison - Door to library and fiction collection
Figure 16: Port Augusta Prison - Non-fiction collection
Port Phillip Prison

Security Level: Maximum

State/territory: Victoria

Prison profile:
Port Phillip Prison is Victoria’s largest capacity prison with accommodation built for over 1000 prisoners. During the time I visited, the staff informed me that it was operating well beyond capacity and most cells were housing two men instead of one. The prison contains 13 cell blocks, each with multiple cells and a common area. There is also a small prison hospital and ‘isolation’ units on site. The prison houses only men at a maximum security level (State Government of Victoria, 2017b). Port Phillip is a privately run prison and is operated by G4S Australia Pty Ltd.

The library:
The library is housed in two small rooms that are placed next to each other. One room houses a very small collection and the other houses four desktop computers that can be used for writing letters and searching an encyclopedia on CD-ROM. The library rooms are sited within a ‘Programs’ building where prisoners come to attend training and education classes. A single prisoner runs the library and he has a small desk and a desktop computer where he is able to type letters and keep records of borrowings within a Microsoft Word document. There is very little space in the library, but it is possible for a few men to work side by side in the computer room. The library is administered by the recreation staff and has no links with the education administrative area or programs. Each accommodation unit has one half day access to the library. Prisoners who are undertaking an education program have access to the building that houses both class rooms and the library, so are able to access the library whenever they are in the building for a class.

The collection:
There is no budget for the library and the collection consists of donations. The collection is very old, worn and poorly housed. It consists of both fiction and non-fiction with no particular emphasis within either. There are no newspapers.
Photos of the library:

The following photos were taken by me on 20 February, 2015.

Figure 17: Port Phillip Prison - The non-fiction collection
Figure 18: Port Phillip Prison - The prisoner librarian’s work space, and corridor outside library
Figure 19: Port Phillip Prison - The library computer room
Figure 20: Port Phillip Prison - The fiction collection
Marngoneet Correctional Centre

Security Level: Medium

State/territory: Victoria

Prison profile:

Marngoneet Correctional Centre has a capacity of 577 men (State Government of Victoria, 2017c). When I visited the prison, it was operating beyond capacity and there was building work taking place at an adjacent site where a new facility for 300 men was under construction. Marngoneet is known as a ‘Programs Prison’ where prisoners are required to take part in education programs such as woodwork, basic education and IT courses, and offender programs for sex offenders and violent offenders. There is also a drug and alcohol treatment program. The prison accommodation includes cell blocks, cottages, a protection unit and a behaviour unit where prisoners are kept in isolation. Marngoneet was different to other prisons I visited because some of the prisoners are allowed to walk around the grounds of the prison. This freedom of movement means that when not required in an education program or work role, these prisoners can choose where they would like to spend their time. There is an outdoor swimming pool, an oval, a room with a pool table, basketball courts and the library. This freedom of movement is supported by a very obvious presence of heavily armed guards, along with other, more lightly armed guards. Both prisoners and guards were observed moving through the grounds in groups.

The library:

The library at Marngoneet is typical of the Victorian corrections system in that it is administered by education staff. There are no administrative links between the library and the education programs run by the prison. The library is run by a number of prisoners who share the role over its opening hours. The library is open seven days a week. General prisoners are allowed to access it across the week, except for one morning and two afternoons a week when the protection prisoners are allowed access. Prisoners in the behaviour unit have no access to the library, but one of the current prisoner librarians chooses to take books to them once a week. If he didn’t do this, they would have no access to books at all. General prisoners are allowed to borrow four books at one time. The library has enough room and facilities for prisoners to sit and talk with one another. There are also
some study carrels and two computers that have no internet access but do have some word processing software on them.

The collection:

The shelves are full of books and magazines, but there is no budget for new materials and all books that are in the library have been donations from the prisoners themselves or from people from outside the prison. The majority of the collection is fiction, with no particular emphasis. There is a small collection of ‘easy reading’ fiction. The non-fiction collection also has no particular emphasis and includes old text books and magazines such as *National Geographic* and some car magazines. The library used to receive newspapers daily, but the prison withdrew funding for this. A group of prisoners decided to remedy this by each subscribing to *The Age* for one day a week. They then donate their copy to the library so that the whole week is covered and other prisoners can have access to the daily paper.

Photos of the library:

The following photos were taken by me on 23 February, 2015.
Figure 21: Margoneet Correctional Centre - The library and collection
Figure 22: Margoneet Correctional Centre - The collection and prisoner librarian work area
Figure 23: Margoneet Correctional Centre - Computer for word processing and study carrels
Figure 24: Margoneet Correctional Centre - Non-fiction collection, ‘easy reading’, magazines
Tarrengower Prison

Security Level: Minimum

State/territory: Victoria

Prison profile:

Tarrengower is the only minimum security prison for women in Victoria. It was built to house 72 women in cottage-style accommodation (State Government of Victoria, 2017d). Tarrengower Prison is a prison farm and the women undertake farming duties as a part of their work responsibilities. The prison is also part of the Greyhound Racing Victoria training program where retired racing dogs are trained by some of the women to become domestic pets.

Women are allowed to keep their children with them until the child is ready to go to kindergarten. The children are taken by an officer each day into childcare in a nearby town so their mothers can go to work on the farm. The women with children are housed in a ‘Mother & Baby Unit’ and they are supported by some training programs and staff. Mothers are encouraged to read aloud to their children and the programs staff have a collection of books that they use for this. The library plays no role in this program.

There are a number of women from Asia who are serving their sentence in Tarrengower. These women have been sentenced for drug importation crimes and will be deported once their sentence is served. Many of them speak very little or no English and are housed together.

Tarrengower is an unusual prison as there are no tall walls surrounding it, just normal farm fences. Prisoners could easily leave if they chose to. I was told that in the history of the prison, only two women have done this. As a prison it is also unusual because of the presence of children, dogs and farm animals. However, in common with other prisons, it is operating beyond capacity and there is very little opportunity for the prisoners to have quiet time or to be by themselves.
The library:

The library at Tarrengower is in a very small room to the side of a tin shed that contains gym equipment. The library is administered by the prison recreation staff. One prisoner is responsible for the operation of the library. She comes to the library for short periods most days, but doesn’t stay long. There are no computers available and loans are unrecorded. The room has space for two chairs for people to read in the library. However, it is unusual for anyone to do this as the women using the gym outside often have the radio on very loudly and it is not a peaceful place because of this.

The collection:

The collection has been built by donations and there is no budget for any library materials or programs. The collection is mainly fiction and very old, and female authors of popular fiction predominate. The collection used to be more diverse, but the current prisoner librarian weeded the collection recently. She based her weeding criteria on her own tastes, so the collection is now very narrow. There is a substantial collection of old quilting and craft magazines available. This collection gets well used as many women work on quilting projects in the evenings. They are supplied with the required materials, but must donate the finished quilts to charities.

Photos of the library:

The following photos were taken by me on 20 January, 2015.
Figure 25: Tarrengower Prison - The library with quilting magazines and chairs
Figure 26: Tarrengower Prison - The prisoner librarian’s workspace
Figure 27: Tarrengower Prison - Fiction and magazine collection, view to gym
Figure 28: Tarrengower Prison - Non-fiction collection, prisoner librarian workspace
Chapter 5 - Explication and Discussion of Themes – Part 1

Introduction

The previous chapter described the seven prisons visited and the libraries within them. The purpose of these description was to provide context and an understanding of the prisons and the libraries that are the focus of this research. In this and the following chapter, I explicate the themes that have been identified through the data analysis processes described in chapter three – Research design. The five identified themes are discussed across chapters 5 and 6, to keep each chapter to a manageable size. Each code within each theme is considered separately, and all codes and themes are illustrated with verbatim comments from participant transcripts. The goal of this treatment is to provide an understanding of each code and theme, and to see it from the perspective of those directly experiencing the phenomenon, as is the goal of all phenomenological research. Following the explication of each code, a discussion examines the findings against the existing literature. Areas of concordance are identified, as are areas of discrepancy between the findings of the current study and knowledge available within the extant literature. Such areas of discrepancy are explored and explanations for this result are offered. The research question that focusses this research is answered. The research question is:

How do Australian prisoners experience the use of a prison library?

Each of the five themes identified in chapters 5 and 6 convey the essence of the experience of using an Australian prison library, from a prisoner’s perspective. Each theme consists of sub-themes, or codes that together make up the broader theme. The following themes and sub-themes are identified:

• Experiencing escape
  o Library as escape
  o Reading as escape

• Experiencing the passage of time
  o Library as a place to pass time
  o Reading to pass time
• Experiencing community
  o Library as gathering place
  o Connection to others inside
  o Connection to others outside

• Experiencing responsibility for self
  o Library as opportunity for autonomy
  o Library as therapy
  o Library role in behaviour management

• Experiencing education
  o Connection to formal education
  o Connection to informal education
  o Library as supporting literacy development

Although many of these findings relate to, and are supported by existing literature, some findings of the current study contradict the existing literature. Much of the existing literature relates to the use of public libraries, rather than prison libraries and, as identified in the literature review, there is a lack of published research on the use of prison libraries. However, as a prison library is considered to play a role for their users that is similar to that of a public library (Australian Library and Information Association, 2015), insights gained from literature relating to public libraries are considered relevant to the current study. The relationship between this literature and the findings of the current research is discussed within this chapter.

The themes ‘experiencing escape’ and ‘experiencing community’ are corroborated by existing literature. The theme ‘experiencing the passage of time’ is not explored in the existing literature. No evidence could be found that identifies the desire to fill excess free time by using a library as a common reason to use a library. This is in contrast to the experience of prisoners who often choose to use their library as a way to fill in excessive amounts of free time. The theme ‘experiencing education’ largely contradicts the existing literature, which draws a strong link between the provision of library services and collections, and educational attainment. This is a link that was not experienced by the participants, largely due to the services afforded by prison libraries. These contradictions are identified and explored here. The theme ‘experiencing responsibility for self’ through the use of a prison library was unexpected. There is, however, some existing literature that
explores this. I identify and discuss this literature and provide an explanation as to why gaining autonomy through a prison library was identified so frequently.

Theme one – Experiencing escape

The theme ‘experiencing escape’ encompasses two codes derived from the participant transcripts – ‘library as escape’ and ‘reading as escape’. The code ‘library as escape’ was assigned to participant comments that indicated they experienced their library as a place they could remove themselves to, in an attempt to escape from other places within the prison environment, and to spend time there away from aspects of prison life. The code ‘reading as escape’ was assigned to participant comments that indicated the prisoner was using the act of reading the books they accessed through the library to transport themselves away from the prison and into the worlds they found in the books. This form of escape differs from the escape offered by the library space in that this escape is a cognitive one, not a physical one. Experiencing escape through reading library books is not dependent on being physically within the library space. Having access to library books was sufficient to allow prisoners to experience this form of escape.

The two codes, ‘library as escape’ and ‘reading as escape’, together represent the experience of a sense of removal from a situation or reality. Both experiences, either visiting the library or reading books from the library, are an attempt by prisoners to experience an escape from a reality that is difficult and undesirable to them. Together they form the theme ‘experiencing escape’.

Library as escape

Donna is a minimum security prisoner living in the Learning Skills Unit at the Adelaide Women’s Prison. At one point, a rumour went through Donna’s prison that the library would be permanently closed. She described the response by the women she lived with: ‘It blew me out on how much people do care [about the library]. It’s very important. For some people, when they don’t have a job, this is their escape, from being in here [prison]’.
Chapter 5 Explication and Discussion of Themes – Part 1

She explained the experience of the library being a means of escape from the crowded conditions in her prison: ‘Some people like the quiet time. It can get very hectic. Some girls live in twelve-bed units. It’s good to know that they can just come up here and sit and relax’.

Many prisoners described the experience of coming to the library to escape from the conversations and ‘jail talk’ that occurs elsewhere in the prison. Mitchell, a medium security prisoner living in the Murray Bridge Mobilong Prison, describes this:

> It's normally pretty happy in here [in the library]. I like it in here. It's a good place. Everywhere else you go, it's ‘Eh, did you hear this? So and so's done that. So and so got bashed, so and so's doing this on the outside.’ You come in here and everyone's happy. I just come in here and escape all the bullshit that goes on everywhere else. I can just come in and pick what I want to do and not get told. The library is our place.

When asked how he benefits from the library, Mitchell’s reply was explicitly focussed on the experience of physically escaping other parts and experiences of his prison:

> Escape. That’s it. Happiness and escape. Yeah. Like everyone, you come in here, they're in here because they want to read a book. They like peace and quiet and that’s why they're here. They're not here because they want to jump up and down and yahoo, and fight, and have music blaring 24/7 and that. They like it here because they like time out.

Greg, a medium security prisoner living in Marngoneet Correctional Centre, described the experience of escape offered by his library. For him, the escape provided by using the library extended beyond the provision of a place that is an alternative to other sections of the prison. When Greg comes to his library, he feels that he has escaped the prison itself. The library enabled him to experience life as someone other than a prisoner:

> I enjoy it because it's quiet, and I personally, working here, step into a different world. I've written to my friends quite a lot from the library, and said you know I'm looking out one window and there's an oval out there with units which could be an old folks home, or ... I mean this place looks like a campus, and then I look out the other
window and there’s a beautiful rose garden, and it’s quiet, I see it as sort of mine. Even though we’re all prisoners, it seems to be away from like, the prison proper. And you don’t seem to have to be called a prisoner in it.

Peter, who is a maximum security prisoner at Victoria’s Port Phillip Prison, also experiences his library as a means of escaping his existence as a prisoner:

It's almost like freedom. I'm in there and it's like I'm not in prison. It's just like being in school when you go to the library, and actually that's how ... That whole building there is a refuge for me, because it's out of the prison cells and it is a little touch of freedom... It's an escape and it's, like I said before, it's a touch of freedom. You walk in there and it's almost like you're not in prison. If you just channel your vision and your mind, you’re not in prison. You’re at a library.

Discussion

Prisoners spoke of using the library to escape from the crowded, noisy conditions in which they live and the sometimes aggressive or violent behaviours they experience in their cell blocks. This use of a library as a form of escape is familiar. Massis (2012, p.398) describes the ‘timeless notion of its [the library’s] image as a refuge for peace and quiet and a retreat from the hectic nature of the everyday’. The experiences of escape that the library provides contribute to the prisoners’ sense of wellbeing and their mental health. One prisoner summed this up: “If we didn’t have a library I think that people would go a bit more stir crazy a bit faster”. These findings confirm research such as that by Guite, Clark and Akrill (2006) who studied the wellbeing and mental health of public housing residents living in Greenwich, England. They identified poor wellbeing, high rates of depression and other mental health conditions as being common in residents of an environment having some shared characteristics with a prison. Their findings identified a number of environmental factors that were common to participants reporting poor states of mental health and wellbeing: neighbour noise, feeling overcrowded, dissatisfaction with the immediate outdoor environment, feeling unsafe, and dissatisfaction with community facilities. Each of these factors were significant predictors of poor mental health and wellbeing, and each are commonplace in the Australian prison environment, according to the participants of the current study.
Whilst living very restricted lives, the presence of a library can give prisoners a place to go, to escape their cells. Some avenue for moving away from an individual’s living environment has a positive correlation to good mental health and wellbeing, according to Mellis et al. (2015). Although some prisoners may have limited discretion about how they move through their environment at certain times of the day, their movements are controlled and tracked, and they are not able to leave the prison. Prisoners living in maximum security prisons have no discretion about how and where they spend their time. Much of their day is spent either in their cells, or within their cell blocks, with time rostered to access an outdoor yard and prison programs, such as education or visits to the library. Mellis et al. (2015) describe populations that are also unable to leave their environment due to lack of public transport or physical mobility issues. They identify the negative effects on mental health and wellbeing of this restriction of movement, and the importance of some form of escape as a remedy. These findings support the observations of the current study that prisoners can also benefit from the presence of a library, to enable a form of physical ‘escape’. Although the mental health and wellbeing of prisoners is not investigated in the current study, comments from prisoners such as the one mentioned earlier about going ‘stir crazy’ if he didn’t have access to a library, suggest that the experience of escape by being in a library may have positive outcomes for prisoner mental health and wellbeing. This is significant as problems with mental health are common among the Australian prison population. Upon entry to prisons, 49 percent of prisoners present with a formal diagnosis of a mental illness, and 27 percent have ongoing medication needs that allow their illness to be managed (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017).

The negative effects of restricted movement within a living environment has also been explored by Shavit (1997). Shavit’s study of libraries and reading in European Jewish ghettos during the Nazi occupation describes an environment of imprisonment for Jews forced to live in ghettos, and the importance of using literature and libraries as a means of escapism. The libraries were so highly valued by their users, they were often housed in secret, and divided into small sub-collections to enable them to remain undetected, despite the risks these actions placed on their guardians. Australian prisoners who use their libraries also value them highly and use them to experience escape in a similar way to the people forced to live in Jewish ghettos. The theme of experiencing escape through the use of a prison library is supported by Shavit’s study.
People who are forced to live away from their homes, either through enforced imprisonment or for other reasons, are also likely to use libraries for escape, in a similar way as the prisoners interviewed for this current study. Braquet (2010) studied people who were rehoused after their own homes were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in the United States, and identifies the participants’ use of a library to experience escape. She writes of survivors of the hurricane choosing to use libraries during the months of displacement from their homes, finding that the survivors’ use of libraries was related not only to seeking information, but also as a refuge and for mental escape. As with the prisoners in the current study and the Jews during the holocaust (Shavit, 1997; Intrator, 2005), the hurricane survivors experienced libraries as a source of hope and escape from undesirable aspects of their lives at the time (Braquet, 2010).

Greg described not feeling like a prisoner when he was in his library. He valued this feeling of escape from his reality. Similar observations were made by prisoners taking part in a New Zealand prison program, where prisoners who were nearing the end of their sentence were taken on supervised visits to their local library. Vaccarino and Comrie (2010) describe the program and the benefits to the prisoners, stating that the ability to interact with people outside prison is an important step in rehabilitation and reintegration. Vaccarino and Comrie include some comments from the prisoners themselves, including those from a man who has a similar experience to that described by Greg. When explaining how he benefits from the program, he states: ‘It sort of reassures you that you are normal, not just a prisoner’ (Vaccarino & Comrie, 2010, p. 173). The experiences of another prisoner in the same New Zealand program are described as similarly valuable. This prisoner valued the fact that when he visited the public library, he was there for the same purpose as everyone else: to look for books to read. It was this shared activity that enabled him to see himself as someone like them, not just a prisoner. Like Greg, the prisoners in this program experience a library as a way to feel normal and to escape from the reality of being a prisoner. This experience also relates to the finding of the current study that identifies prisoners use their libraries as a means of experiencing autonomy and some responsibility for themselves. The theme of ‘responsibility for self’ is explicated and discussed in Chapter 6 – Explication and discussion of themes – Part 2.

An alternative view to the library as a place of sanctuary, safety and refuge comes from Wexelbaum (2016) who contends that while libraries may provide safe spaces for items within their collections, they do not provide safe spaces for library visitors. Wexelbaum states that libraries are rarely safe
spaces due to the lack of distinction of spaces for children and adults, poor access through library buildings for patrons with poor mobility, the intimidating nature of library spaces that leads to ‘library anxiety’, and the perception by users that library staff are judgemental and more knowledgeable than library users. She describes library spaces, such as book stacks that are remote from library staff, as being dangerous because they are open to users whose behaviour is unmonitored, and states that libraries are sites of frequent theft and vandalism. This argument is not supported by the findings of the current research. In complete contrast, participants identified their libraries as safe, welcoming, non-judgemental spaces. The physical conditions of the libraries included in the current study were often very basic, but always well-maintained, tidy and clean, with no evidence of vandalism. In terms of theft, some participants spoke of pages being torn from legal resources, but these comments resulted from frustration with the actions of other prisoners, rather than from fear or feelings of vulnerability. The prisoners interviewed for this study chose to come to their library to achieve escape, sanctuary and safety. The library was possibly less dangerous than other parts of the prison. Therefore, the findings of the current study do not support Wexelbaum’s argument.

In addition to providing a physical escape from restricted and overcrowded living conditions, participants also spoke of feeling as if they were not in a prison at all when they were in the library. Others spoke of experiencing the library as a link to their previous lives before prison, when they would also visit libraries and spend time reading. When Intrator (2005) wrote about Jews restricted to living in the ghettos of Nazi Germany, she too made this link. She stated that not only did the secret libraries and their books provide intellectual stimulation and hope, they also enabled a connection with life before the Nazi occupation, through this familiar activity. This observation is echoed in the words of Australian prisoners who experience their prison libraries as a link to the outside world and the life they used to live.

**Reading as escape**

Prisoners also experience escape through reading the library books. This second means of experiencing escape was identified within the participant transcripts as ‘Reading as escape’. This is a cognitive escape, rather than a physical escape. This experience is possible without visiting the library. Access to the library books is sufficient to enable a sense of escape through reading. For
example, Oscar, a maximum security prisoner living in Port Augusta Prison, has no physical access to his library, as the library at Port Augusta does not accommodate prisoner visits. He must choose what library books he wants to read from a printed list of titles. These books are then delivered to his cell block once a week. Despite not being able to experience the escape of being in a physical library, Oscar is still able to experience escape when he reads. Reading library books allows him to experience an activity in the same way that he would if he were not in prison, and to have the same feelings about reading. This helps him to feel, temporarily, that he is not actually in prison and allows him to experience an activity that is common to his life outside prison:

I enjoy reading, mainly for escape, mainly for entertainment. Basically, I enjoy reading for entertainment. So, the library’s very important obviously, because if I’m reading in jail, I could be outside reading. It’s something that I could be doing outside, that time that I’m reading, it’s like I’m not really in jail, because if I was outside I’d be reading too. I’d enjoy reading just as much as I would sitting here as I would sitting outside.

Like Oscar, Alan, a minimum security prisoner living in the Alexander Maconochie Centre in Canberra, also experiences the reading of library books as a familiar activity from his life before he entered prison:

It takes me away. Like, even, like outside, every morning I wake up, have a coffee, sit outside and read for a couple of hours. But here, like, I sit down with a book, I start reading and then like, I look at the clock and like three or four hours have passed and I’m like “What the hell?!”.  

Alan also describes this form of escape when asked what the library offers him: ‘Books! You know, get your mind out of the whole place.’

Reading books from the library also allows Mitchell to similarly experience escape:

Any level, any shelf, any story, you can go anywhere in the world. You open up a book and there you go. You just get lost in a book. You just open it up and you’re miles
away... It gets your mind acting straight away and you've got to concentrate on your book, and what you're reading, and how it's written, and you can't take in anything from the outside, if you know what I mean. You just open your book and you're there. It just sort of shuts everything else down, so I love it.

Discussion

The second element of the theme of ‘experiencing escape’ relates to the prisoners’ use of reading to experience a cognitive escape in addition to, or instead of, using the library space to experience a physical escape. Sweeney (2010) sums this experience up well in the title of her book Reading is my window: books and the art of reading in women's prisons, alluding to the experience of reading to escape to worlds inside books, and outside of the prison. Based on interviews with ninety-four African-American female prisoners, Sweeney’s book explores their response to reading fiction. She finds that reading “can provide a rare sense of peace, solitude, fantasy, or escape in the midst of a life governed by constant struggle” (Sweeney, 2010, p.70). A second example comes from an anonymous British prisoner who describes reading as an escape: “A good book can help you to use your imagination and put your mind somewhere other than in your cell” (Anon., 2016).

From the current study, Mitchell, a prisoner in a medium security prison, describes experiencing escape from the reality of prison life through reading: “You shut down. If you’ve had enough of every idiot around here. With everyone enclosed in a little can. It gets a bit hectic at times. Pick up a book, and you’re a mile away”. Many of the prisoners in the current study mentioned that they liked to read science fiction or fantasy fiction. They found the worlds created within these stories to be the furthest removed from their real life and therefore the most satisfying, by enabling them to experience a significant cognitive escape. The ability of reading to enable an experience of escape is well recognised in research literature. Homeless citizens of many states of America can access magazines from collections in shelters through the ReREAD program (Ritsch, 2001). One goal of the program is to make it possible for the homeless to “escape their reality” (Ritsch, 2001, n.p.) through reading popular magazines. One user of the service puts it this way: “It gives us something to take our minds off the troubles” (Ritsch, 2001, n.p.). As with prisoners, they are using reading to provide an experience of escape.
To use reading as a form of escape from an environment that is unpleasant or difficult to live in has also been identified by Begum (2011). Begum’s study of the role of escapist reading in the lives of Canadian public library users recognises that reading literature can “transport readers away from current situations” and can be used as a means of “maintaining humanity and a sense of self in sometimes uncertain and dangerous settings” (Begum 2011, p.740). Begum also identifies other benefits of experiencing escape through reading, such as alleviating boredom, reducing stress, distraction from monotony, and as a means of becoming familiar with new realities (Begum, 2011).

Schillinger (2009) also identifies the tendency for people to read to escape the negative elements of their lives. She describes the importance of choosing to read to escape from discontent and anxiety and finds that in doing so, readers are seeking to enter worlds “more satisfying than the reality outside the printed page” (Schillinger, 2009). As far back as the first world war, there was an understanding that prisoners needed to be given opportunities to read, to find relief and escape from their situation. Hagberg Wright describes the Russian government requesting reading materials from the German government for Russian soldiers in German prison camps, stating that the need for books was “quite as urgent as the demand for physical comforts” (Hagberg Wright 1917, p. 276).

Nell’s study of the experience of reading (1988) also identifies the tendency for people to experience reading as a form of escapism. When describing the role of reading in the lives of his participants, he identifies very frequent readers as having “a blighted life in which reading is an island of delight” (Nell, 1988 p. 43). Nell argues that reading to escape elements of life is synonymous with reading to escape self-awareness, and that readers experience escape to remove themselves to a world within a book that is less threatening to them than their real world (Nell, 1988).

Botzakis (2009) identifies an alternative outcome of reading to experience escape, stating that the reader is not always trying to remove themselves from immediate negative experiences or environments. In his discussion of reading comics, he makes the point that reading can be undertaken to achieve an escape back to something positive, such as a childhood memory, or familiar characters whose stories have been enjoyed in the past. He describes this practice as “Reading as friendship” (Botzakis, 2009, p. 55), making the point that characters in books can feel like friends when the reader spends time in the fictitious world of a novel. The experience of escape...
into something positive was also mentioned by a number of prisoners in the current study, particularly those who had read books as children. Thus, reading as escape can be either an escape away from the negative or towards the positive – a finding of the current study supported by the relevant literature.

A perspective of reading to escape while in prison that differs from those already discussed – escape from a negative situation or, back to a positive association – comes from Davis, quoted in Holloway (2006). Davis writes of her time as a prisoner in an American prison and describes the importance to her of not experiencing escape through reading. She was determined to use her time in prison to further her political education and found that the books in her prison library were almost exclusively those written to provide escape, such as romances and mysteries. Her frustration at a collection dominated by escapist fiction lead her to purchase her own books to be delivered to her in prison. She then donated each of these books to her prison library to provide alternative reading opportunities for prisoners who were also seeking education, rather than escape through reading. Many prisoners from the current study also expressed frustration at the lack of educational reading within their library collections, and this is discussed in a later section of this chapter. However, this frustration was independent of the desire for and appreciation of escapist fiction that is well represented on Australian prison library shelves. While also wanting educational resources, no prisoners in the current study criticised the presence of escapist fiction within their library collections. In this way, the findings of the current study do not concur with Davis’s experiences.

**Conclusion**

Libraries in prisons create opportunities for prisoners to experience escape, both physically and cognitively. Being able to remove themselves from other parts of the prison to a library gives them the opportunity to experience an escape from their physical surroundings, which are often stressful and difficult to experience. Having a library space available provides a much valued alternative location. Experiencing escape through the use of the library space is a powerful experience, allowing prisoners to feel removed from the prison and to imagine themselves in their lives outside. Similarly, experiencing escape through reading books from the library provides prisoners with an opportunity to imagine themselves elsewhere – either within the story they are reading, or outside the prison in their lives as they were before they were incarcerated. These findings are largely supported by
existing research literature. Wexelbaum (2016) and Davis, quoted in Holloway (2006) provide opposing views that are at odds with the findings.
Theme two – Experiencing the passage of time

The theme ‘experiencing the passage of time’ encompasses two codes assigned across the participant transcripts – ‘library as a place to pass time’ and ‘reading to pass time’. Prisoners across all prisons that I visited have large amounts of unstructured time every day. This is in contrast to the extent of unstructured time in lives spent outside the prison system. Unstructured time outside prison is more likely to be experienced as a scarce commodity (Hammermesh & Lee, 2007) where we must make choices between competing options of ways to fill that time (Molina, Camaña & Ortega, 2016).

Cope (2003) agrees that a prisoner’s experience of time differs to that of people who live outside prison. In a study of the effect of time spent in prison and the use of drugs during incarceration by young long-term offenders in an American prison, Cope describes prison as having its own time zone. She calls this the Prison-Time Zone and argues that this time zone is experienced differently to time outside prison. Cope found that time is experienced consciously in prison, whereas time outside prison is usually experienced unconsciously (Cope 2003). Outside prison, time moves on without us engaging with it consciously, except for the common time markers in our days, such as wakeup time, lunch time, time for a meeting, or home time, or when we are bored. She states that time can be experienced consciously in some situations outside prison, such as during the experience of a terminal illness, or within a highly controlled workplace. Common to each of these experiences is the concept of ‘time in crisis’ where the passage of time becomes the focus of consciousness (Cope 2003).

In a study of time and space within a prison environment, Armstrong (2015) describes time in prison as a burden and as an experience of waiting. Unlike people outside prison who frequently have to spend time waiting for something specific to happen – a train to arrive, a doctor to finish with the previous patient – a prisoner doesn’t wait for something to happen, they merely wait for the waiting to cease (Armstrong, 2015). This is seen as ‘empty time’ by prisoners, where time passes but also stands still as life outside of prison goes on without them. Meisenhelder (1983) also studied the experience of time within prison and describes time in prison being experienced as ‘futureless’. He considers this experience of time to be unique to prisoners and identifies the dehumanising effects
of experiencing time in this way.

Taking part in education and work programs is one way that prisoners can spend time. However, prisoners enrolled in education programs may have only half-day classes for some of their week. Those who have work responsibilities usually also work half-days for one or two days a week. In addition, because most prisons operate beyond their accommodation capacity, there are more prisoners willing to work than there are jobs for them to do. To allow as many people to work as possible, the jobs are shared. This gives the opportunity for more people to work, but there are fewer hours available per week for each person. Having nothing to do for much of the time, often for many years, is a difficult experience for prisoners. Many prisoners describe boredom and its associated frustrations as a common experience of prison life. Alice, a prisoner in the women’s section of the Alexander Maconochie Centre, recognises the experience of boredom and the negative impact it can have on a prisoner’s life: ‘you’ve got to have something to be able to occupy your time, I think. A lot of the time, the bullshit and everything that goes on in here, the fights and that, is because people are bored and have got nothing to do.’

Gabriel, who lives in a medium security prison, also expresses the boredom associated with years of largely unstructured time: ‘Now it’s become very boring. I find it incredibly boring. It’s just too many hours with not enough to do.’

Finding ways to fill these extended periods of unstructured time constructively is important to prisoners. Their libraries provide opportunities for them to experience time in a positive way: by providing a place to come to, and spend time, and also as a place that can provide them with books that they can read to pass time.
**Library as place to pass time**

Michael is the prisoner in charge of the Mobilong Prison library. He recognises the problem of boredom in prison and the benefits to prisoners in being able to visit the library:

A lot of people use the library on the basis that it gives them something to do, and sort of passes the time... Certainly, yeah, if we didn't have a library I think that people would go a bit more stir crazy a bit faster, because there would be nothing to do... We don't really promote the library in a big way, but people come here because there's nothing else to do.

Having access to a library in which to pass time can result in prisoners experiencing the passage of time more positively. When asked how he benefits from having access to a library, Max, a medium security prisoner in the same prison as Michael, stated:

It's a good distraction, good way to pass the time, I suppose. That's what it is for me... I think a lot of these things are just ways to pass the time as well, so I might come up here and read the paper for about 45 minutes. By the time I finish work, come here and read the paper and stuff and then it's lunchtime.

Being able to experience time as a positive aspect of prison life, rather than a source of frustration and boredom, can be offered by access to a library. When asked how using the library him feel, Phil, a maximum security prisoner living in the Port Phillip Prison, stated: 'It makes me feel that I'm productively occupying my time.'

Patrick, who is also living at the Port Phillip Prison, similarly recognises that visiting the library when he is able to, is a way of experiencing the passage of time productively to avoid the boredom and monotony that is common in prison:

It's a good time to get out of the unit and rather than sit there in that routine, and constantly sitting in there doing nothing and doing nothing. It keeps your mind...
stimulated, rather than just be bored and being basically a jail-head. Gives me something to do. If I can just sit in there half the day and read to myself or find something to do, I prefer to do that than be in the unit.

Discussion

The experience of time in prison can be changed by access to a library. It has the ability to transform the experience of time from an experience of boredom and frustration to that of a positive experience where time can be spent productively. Although public library users may enjoy spending time in a library, the use of libraries just for this purpose is not a commonly stated experience. The experience of using libraries explicitly to pass time is not supported by existing literature or research about the ways libraries are used outside prison. Much of the literature that illustrates the use of public libraries is quantitative in nature, describing measures such as the number of items supplied on loan, the number of people who use libraries over a given period, or the amount of money saved by patrons through using a library. For example, the 2008 report by the Library Council of New South Wales *Enriching communities: the value of public libraries in New South Wales*, provides details of the demographics of users, the economic activity generated by libraries, and the estimated economic benefit of using libraries. This report also describes the main activities undertaken by visitors to public libraries, none of which include the use of a library to pass time. The principle reported uses of public libraries were to borrow books and audio-visual materials, and to use library materials without borrowing them (Library Council of New South Wales, 2008). However, a Pew Research Centre survey that looked at how Americans value their public libraries (2013), found that 75% of all respondents stated having a safe and quiet place to spend time at a library was important to them. Despite this, the Library Council of New South Wales report identified that public library users are not spending long periods of time in their libraries, with the average length of a visit being just 35 minutes (Library Council of New South Wales, 2008). The use of a library to pass time is not identified in this report as a common practice among public library users.

An Australian Library and Information Association report provides similar findings. *National welfare & economic contributions of public libraries: final report* (2013) details the economic costs and benefits of public libraries, and other quantitative data about economic stimulus and impact. A section quotes comments from public library users about how public libraries benefit them. These comments mention the use of libraries as meeting places, the friendliness of staff, and the diversity
of the collections. One comment mentions time passing: “I can read a book and before I know it two hours have passed” (Australian Library and Information Association, 2013 p.7). Although this observation is also commonly expressed by prisoners, the quote does not imply that the user came to the public library with the desire to pass time. Rather, it emphasises that time merely passed without being noticed – an unconscious experience of time. In contrast, prisoners purposefully seek out these opportunities to make time pass by engaging in reading.

Unlike the prisoners interviewed, adults not in prison are unlikely to visit libraries as a place to spend their leisure time. A 2016 *Wall Street Journal* article (Van Dam & Morath, 2016) noted that Americans choose to spend most of their leisure time watching television, engaging in sports or religious activities, and eating and drinking. A study of how Australian adults use their time found that they make similar choices in how to spend their leisure time, with over half of their available free time spent interacting with audio-visual and media-based activities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Prisoners have fewer opportunities to engage in the leisure activities commonly chosen by adults. Many do not have televisions in their cells or access to a shared television. Therefore, the choice to spend time watching television as a form of leisure is not always possible. There is generally no access to computers outside classrooms, and no access to the internet or games on these computers. Those prisoners in lower level security prisons who are allowed to have a computer in their cell must demonstrate that it is needed for educational purposes. It is likely that the prisoners interviewed are choosing to use their libraries to pass time because they have much more free time than people outside prison, and many fewer options on how to fill those hours. The findings of this study are therefore in contrast to existing literature that describes typical public library visits as brief, and as an unlikely choice of activity for people outside prison to choose when faced with free time.

**Reading to pass time**

Tracy, a minimum security prisoner living at Tarrengower prison, is aware of how much time she has to fill in and the benefits to her of filling some of this time with reading from the library. One of those benefits is the ‘escape’ she experiences from spending time reading. This relates to the previous theme of ‘experiencing escape’. When asked in what ways reading was important to her, she stated:
Because our minds go tick, tick, tick, tick, [it] stops us from thinking and it gets you involved in the story and forget about everything else. I think it really does relax you too, and makes the time go, that's the most important thing. It's the time, I've got plenty of time.

Andrew, who lives at the Alexander Maconochie Centre as a maximum security prisoner, recognises the ability that reading has to influence his experience of time, stating that the act of reading makes time pass without him being aware that this has happened:

Reading is important to me especially because it passes time, especially in here, it passes time. Um, it is fun, you know? Reading a good book is exciting. Like, you get caught up in it. Like, you can start reading and then an hour or an hour and half later you go “Oh! It's that time is it?” and then you look down and you are like “OK, I just read a hundred and fifty pages!”.

Later Andrew expanded on the idea of reading library books to pass time and identified that reading speeds up his experience of time:

I think it is good to have something, like “Oh, what will I do? I’m bored, I could have a read”, you know. I think it is just good to kill time. All you’ve really got in this place is time where you are not doing anything. So if you can fill your time with a bit of reading, it just passes so much quicker.

In prison, the prisoners’ experience of time is frequently associated with boredom and frustration. Libraries and their books give prisoners the opportunity to use their large amounts of unstructured time productively. Reading library books enables prisoners to lose track of time and to even experience an acceleration of the passage of time.
Discussion

Some prisoners have little or no access to a library and are dependent on books being delivered to them, either because of restrictive rosters, or they are being held in solitary confinement, and have no time outside their cell, or because their library is not able to be visited, as is the case in the Port Augusta Prison, described in Chapter 4 – Research sites. To these prisoners, the influence of a library on how they are experiencing the passage of time relates to the ability to read the library books that are delivered to them. It is the act of reading library books that influences their experience of time, rather than spending time in the library.

Many people choose to read for leisure and recreation. This activity is distinct from the practice of reading to educate, or reading as an activity associated with paid employment. Although many people choose reading as a form of recreation, choosing to read to pass time is not a commonly stated motivator for readers outside prison (Rainie et al., 2012). However, passing time was frequently cited by prisoners as a reason to read. Therefore, the experience of reading to pass time is common for users of prison libraries, but uncommon for people outside prison. This difference in the motivation to read and the experience of reading between prisoners and people outside prison may be explained by their different experiences of time – conscious and unconscious. The following discussion explores these ideas.

In a study of American readers’ motivations to read, Rainie et al. (2012) found that the greatest motivation to read is to experience pleasure. Other important motivators are a desire to keep up with current events, to do research on topics of interest and also to complete required reading for work or education. Other studies of the motivation to read have identified similar results to that of Rainie et al. (2012), but again have not identified the desire to pass time as a motivation among adult readers. In an Australian study that aimed to discover motivations of Australians to read, Schutte and Malouff (2007) found four motivating factors, none of which was to pass time. The motivating factors were:

1. ‘Reading as part of the self’ – the importance of being a reader and relating to others as a reader
2. ‘Reading efficacy’ – the importance of being a good reader who can master difficult texts
3. ‘Reading for recognition’ – recognition from others for performing well as a reader, and
4. ‘Reading to do well in other realms’ – using reading to gain achievement in areas other than reading (Schutte & Malouff, 2007).

In contrast to the findings of the previously mentioned studies, the motivation to read as a means to pass time was frequently identified by prisoners in the current study. Therefore, the findings of the current study in relation to the experience of reading to pass time are not supported by existing literature. It is possible that it is the nature of the experience of time, and how this experience differs between prisoners and people outside prison, that can explain this discrepancy.

Literature that relates to how people choose to spend their time outside paid work hours is frequently located within the scholarly area of leisure studies. This body of literature has relevance to the current study, in that the use of reading or visiting the library is a choice made in use of time outside of work and education. However, much of the leisure studies literature is written with the assumption that time, and in particular, leisure time is a scarce commodity (Hammermesh & Lee, 2007). Molina, Camaña & Ortega (2016) add to this assumption with another: people need to choose from competing possible leisure activities to fill their scarce leisure time, as the opportunities to engage with various activities are greater than the time available to undertake them. That is not the case in the lives of Australian prisoners, as explained earlier in this chapter. Prisoners experience long hours of unstructured time both inside their cells and during periods of the day when, and if, they are allowed to leave their cells. The scarcity of education and work programs available in prison results in prisoners experiencing many hours of idle, unstructured time every day. The leisure activities available to prisoners to fill these hours differs according to the prison in which they are housed, but are limited in number and nature, regardless of the location. In addition to using the library and reading, the leisure activities available to prisoners within the current study sites include walking or jogging around an oval, playing basketball, lifting weights, sewing, piecing together jigsaws, and watching television in a communal area.

The consequences of experiencing extended periods of unstructured time can be depression, boredom, frustration and life dissatisfaction (Manolis & Roberts, 2012; Yi, Turney & Wildeman, 2017). In a study of 1,329 American adolescents, Manolis and Roberts (2012) found that living with excessive free time, also known as ‘time affluence’, is likely to lead to compulsive and materialistic behaviours and poor self-perceptions of wellbeing (Manolis & Roberts, 2012). They found that having too much free time is as destructive and problematic for good mental health as is too little free time. However, when studying the effects of time affluence in adults, Hansson (2014) finds the opposite to Manolis and Roberts (2012), stating that the level of wellbeing and happiness of adults
rises proportionately with their levels of time affluence. Her findings are also at odds with the prisoners’ experiences of the negative effects of excessive free time, suggesting that it is a combination of factors and contexts, including time affluence, that results in increases or decreases in wellbeing. Prisoners who have extensive amounts of free time, often for years, have been found to experience disproportionately higher rates of depression compared with non-prison populations (Yi, Turney & Wildeman, 2017). This confirms the experiences of poor wellbeing resulting from living with excessive unstructured time reported by prisoners in the current study, and suggests that finding ways to fill free time becomes important for prisoners’ mental health and wellbeing.

Rainie et al. (2012), and Schutte and Malouff (2007) identify many motivating factors amongst the general population in choosing to read, none of which include the desire to pass time. This contradicts the experiences of prisoners, but can perhaps be explained by their need to fill excessive amounts of free time, coupled with the limited opportunities to do so. Such a situation is in opposition to the assumptions about made leisure time by Hammermesh and Lee (2007), and Molina, Camaña and Ortega (2016) who identify that leisure time is a scarce commodity, and that people have many competing leisure options available to choose from. Living constantly with a conscious experience of time (Cope, 2003), and the resultant negative influence of this on wellbeing, leads prisoners to search for ways to pass time constructively, as opposed to searching for ways to have time for leisure, including reading. For the prisoners in this study, reading has become the means by which they cope with their experience of time.

Conclusion

The theme of ‘experiencing the passage of time’ explores the experience of using a prison library to pass time. Passing time was enabled by visiting and spending time in the library, and also by spending time reading books supplied by the library. The experience of the passage of time facilitated by the library was described as a positive experience, as both visiting the library and reading its books allowed constructive and productive use of time. Participants also described feeling that the passage of time accelerated when they were in the library or reading, and that they frequently lost track of time when doing so. This was seen as a positive outcome due to the large amounts of unstructured time in the daily life of Australian prisoners, and the desire to make time go faster, to relieve boredom and monotony. Reading and visiting a library as recreation is directed and motivated by choice, so relates to another theme of the findings of the current research:
‘Experiencing responsibility for self’. The ‘Experiencing responsibility for self’ theme is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

In studies that explore the motivation to visit libraries or spend time reading (Rainie et al. 2012; Schutte & Malouff, 2007), the desire to fill in unstructured time is not represented as a motivating factor. Therefore, the findings of this study are not supported by the existing literature. Armstrong (2015), Cope (2003), and Meisenhelder’s (1983) descriptions of time in prison being consciously experienced by prisoners as futureless, empty, and as a form of crisis may explain the use of prison libraries, and reading to pass time that differs from the findings present in Rainie et al. (2012) or Schutte & Malouff (2007). Further study could be undertaken to explore the relationship between the experience of time in prison, and choices made by prisoners about how to spend that time, compared with the leisure choices made by people living outside prisons, who have a different experience of time, and more leisure alternatives.
Theme three – Experiencing community

The theme ‘experiencing community’ encompasses three codes assigned across the participant transcripts – ‘library as gathering place’, ‘connection to others inside’ and ‘connection to others outside’. Prisoners are able to experience communities within the prison library when it is used as a gathering place for people who come there to enjoy each other’s company. An experience of community is also created outside the library space, but facilitated by the library, as prisoners speak to each other about books and share reading suggestions with each other when they are in their accommodation units. Similarly, prisoners also experience community through the library when the library materials give them something to talk about with their families, and keep them in touch with community and world events occurring outside of the prison.

Library as gathering place

Many prisoners spoke of the valuable role their library played in bringing people together. Greg, a medium security prisoner living in Marngoneet Correctional Centre, is the library worker at his prison and believes that his role helps him build relationships with others. When asked if the library helps him stay connected with others, he said:

It helps me connect there, but it also helps me connect to other prisoners. I’ve never been in a prison where I’ve had so many friends that I’ve got in this prison, and I really think this it’s because of my job in the library. I think, one: because I’m known to help people. I think it's because I have helped people and done letters for people.

The writing of letters by the prisoner librarian for other prisoners is a service that many participants mentioned during their interviews. This is not a part of their job role, but they often choose to help other prisoners in this way. Many prisoners do not have the literacy or computer skills to write a letter, and yet there is often a need for them to do so. Letters are written to parole boards and for other legal purposes. Michael, the prisoner librarian at Mobilong Prison describes how he will do this for others when asked:
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Their literacy may be pretty bad, so often I’ll do a lot of typing for people for parole letters, and for home detention letters, written letters to go to solicitors, and to go to court and stuff like that for people, whereby they’ve got it in their mind, but either don’t have very good English skills, or comprehension skills.

This is a very useful service for prisoners who are unable to do this for themselves. It is also a means of connecting with others through the library. Greg will also do this in his library for prisoners when asked:

A lot of guys come down to the library, and ask if we can do letters for parole for them. Guys might come down and say, "Look I want to write to parole, I don't know how to do it." I just say, "Look, put your basic details down," and I’ll draw the letter up, and print them out a letter. Another lad came the other day, he wanted his grandpa to have access to his bank account, and other things that he had. So, I did him up an authorization letter for his grandpa to, you know, take to the bank and so forth.

Later during his interview, Greg described this practice and the need for it again:

There’s quite a lot of prisoners in here that can't read or write, and a lot of them just don’t know how to put a letter together. So, I've done ... I don’t know, I suppose, with the way parole is changing, I've probably done fifty parole letters for guys. Some of them might just write them. Like guys will come in and say, "Look, I've written this letter out by hand. Can I give it to you? Can you type it up? Can you fix it all up for me, the spelling errors and all that? Just do it nice”.

Being able to write letters or type up letters is a service that is unofficially offered by many prisoner librarians. In addition to being able to form connections to other prisoners in this way, the libraries are also able to act as a place for prisoners to connect with each other by taking on the role of gathering place. The libraries provide a place where prisoners can choose to gather, away from the rest of the prison, to spend time with each other. Michael described the practice of prisoners using the library as a gathering place:
We've got guys that come up here that don't borrow books all that often, but they'll come up here every day, or they might be here two or three times a day. They just come in here to see who's here. It's not the quietest place that it should be at times. Sometimes we have to say, "You want to talk, outside because we're trying to do something else," but often people just come in and whatever I'm talking to some other guys about, they'll just join in the conversation, or whatever, so there's a social atmosphere to it which I think helps a little bit, and hopefully we're not judging anyone here, or anything like that.

The library that is managed by Michael is small, but has space for three plastic chairs and a small round table, along with a desk for Michael. Despite the small space, other prisoners who use this library also spoke about coming to the library to experience the community that forms there. These prisoners described a community that forms within the library that consists of people who are different to the general prison population. Matt, who uses the library managed by Michael at Marngoneet Correctional Centre explained this when he said:

I said to these guys [the library workers] the other day, "This is the only place I come for intelligent conversation in the jail". There's a lot of stupid people in jail. You know what I mean? They don't set the bar very high. So normally a conversation is just...
"When are you getting out, Bro?" I mean people can't even talk properly in here. So, that's why I come up here for a bit of intelligent conversation sometimes.

When asked to describe a typical visit to the library, Matt again referred to his seeking of intelligent conversation:

If it was, being a Monday, every second week I'd see if the new books are in [from Murray Bridge Public Library]. Maybe just have a quick chat and run off to the gym. But normally I'll pop back into the library two or three times a day. Just to see who's here and if there's maybe some intelligent conversation going on.

Mitchell, who uses the same library, also referred to a typical conversation that he hears in prison generally, and how this differs from the conversations he can take part in when he visits the library:
Yeah. Same thing. "Oh, have you read that?" Instead of just going, "So and so's in jail, bro? You hear? He got caught cooking or doing a stick up," you know? Everyone's the same. You walk up, "Oh, mate, you read this one? It's a good book. Read it." Otherwise, it's all the same old thing. "Oh, Jack's back, the cops finally got him, eh?"

Marcus, who also uses the same library, similarly describes a difference in behaviour of prisoners in the library to that of other parts of the prison:

[It’s] somewhere to come. Somewhere to sit and get away from everything. Here, there's no jail politics or anything like that. You can just sit and read, and talk, talk about things, what's happening in the paper. You know, there's no bridging, there's no tough guy issues when you walk in.

'Bridging' is Australian prison slang and refers to when a prisoner ‘talks himself up’ as a powerful or dangerous person, or it refers to the actions displayed by prisoners preceding a fight (McTavish 2012, p. 173).

Matt also explained that he would spend more time in the library if there was more room and if there was comfortable seating available. He believes that if this were the case, the library would be better able to act as a gathering place for like-minded prisoners:

Oh yeah! Absolutely, if this was a ... yeah, I would spend hours up here. If there's couches or even chairs just to sit and read and it was a bigger room. You could just go sit in the corner, yeah absolutely. It would be a pretty quiet place, and just get a different type of people up here.

Although Oliver is unable to visit his library as there is no physical access allowed, he describes what he imagines would be a similar experience of like-minded people coming together in the library if they were permitted to do so. He believes the library would be able to attract a community of people who are different to the majority of prisoners, and instead are similar to how he sees
himself. ‘If people were allowed to come up here and it was part of an activity. It would be great because then you’d get the people that are like-minded coming in here.’

Gabriel also distinguishes between the people that he talks with in the library and other prisoners by saying: ‘Some of the guys that come down are quite all right. Actually, it’s only the half-decent ones that talk to you anyway.’ The belief that his library is attracting like-minded people is also expressed by Paul when describing the role of his library and the choices made by prisoners who choose not to use it: ‘It is an option, rather than drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes and talking bullshit. [Which] is what most of them do.’

The forming of a community within the library space and the activities they undertake together was also described by Greg, who works in the library at his medium security prison in Victoria. He clearly enjoys the company of the men who choose to come to the library, and takes some pride in his role as one of their leaders:

To be honest, it’s seemed to have formed up a good little crew now in the library. G**** comes down. I mentioned to you before, he was doing his legal work and he was down there every morning. And somebody else comes down that’s doing some stuff, and another guy comes in. We all chat and someone brings coffee. We’ve got a hot water service that we just go, you know, get the hot water, and we bring our own coffee and milk and sugar. We have a cup of coffee, and talk, and G***** came back from court and we didn’t see him for a while, and were sort of wondering how everything went. He came in yesterday - “Hi guys”. And “Awww G**** where you been?”. And we’re all here for a couple of hours and using the computer and it’s all a bit of fun... I think it’s just something I’ve tried to create in there that’s just a... They’re not a rowdy bunch. It’s just a quiet bunch, but we have a laugh and that.

These prisoners are using their libraries as a community gathering place, or imagining how such an experience could benefit them, in the case of prisoners who have no access to their libraries. They are drawn to the library to experience community, and it is made possible because of the space available in the library. This experience was described much less frequently by prisoners who use libraries that do not have space for seating.
Discussion

Many prisoners in the current study who have access to a library, experience it as a gathering place. This experience differs from the experience of connecting to others inside the prison generally, in that the experience of a library as a gathering place is based on physically visiting the library and choosing to spend time there, rather than being compelled to be in other parts of the prison. Prisoners also experience their library as a means of connecting to others inside prison, but outside the library space, through the sharing of library resources. In many of the prisons in the current study, easy access to the libraries does not exist but is regulated by rosters and the availability of prison officers to accompany prisoners to the library. These restrictions apply most commonly to maximum security prisons, but may also be present in medium and minimum security prisons. Despite the conditions that facilitate or hinder access to libraries, any degree of access was sufficient for many prisoners to experience their library as a gathering place. Some prisoners in the current study, however, could not experience their library as a gathering place. In some cases, their experience differed because they are living in a prison where all physical access to the library was forbidden. In other cases, prisoners do have access to their library, but they were not experiencing their library as a gathering place. Reasons to explain this are explored later in this section.

Prisoners who are able to access their libraries and who chose to do so often spend long hours in the library, or will visit the library many times a day and stay for short periods each time. These prisoners do not often read books when they visit. The purpose of their visit is social and they spend their time in the library talking with other prisoners. At times they read the newspaper aloud to each other and discuss what they have read, but apart from this activity, the library collection is generally not used during their visits. These prisoners speak of a community of like-minded people developing around the library. The formation and stability of this community is facilitated by the availability of the library space. Although some library spaces are very small, prisoners still choose to use what space there is to meet with and spend time with each other.

The use of libraries as a gathering place is well supported by the literature. In many ways, libraries sit comfortably within Oldenburg’s (1997) construct of the third place – a place that is not work or home, but is a third place where people choose to gather to enjoy the company of others. Prison
libraries share many characteristics with Oldenburg’s description of the nature of ‘third places’ (Oldenburg, 1997). Oldenburg describes ‘third places’ as having eight characteristics:

- they must be on neutral ground where people can come and go as they please
- they are levellers where people can mix with others whom would normally fall outside their social circles
- conversation is the main activity, and they are readily accessible and able to accommodate the activities of those who use them
- they have regular attendees who create a sense of community and are welcoming to newcomers
- they are not extravagant or pretentious; instead they have a home-like atmosphere
- the conversations in ‘third places’ are not serious or tense, but instead, playful humour and light banter is valued and encouraged, and
- they provide the sort of comfort and psychological support that could also be found in a home, thereby taking on the role of a ‘home away from home’ for those who use them (Oldenburg, 1997).

In a study of third places, Jeffres et al. (2009) identify cafés, bars, churches, community centres and parks as examples of third places.

The experience of ‘library as gathering place’ aligns with the characteristics of a ‘third place’ in only some cases in the current study. The findings in this regard vary due to characteristics of the libraries in question. Some prisons in the current study allow no physical access to the library by prisoners. These libraries are therefore unable to provide a gathering place or ‘third place’ for prisoners, as they do not meet Oldenburg’s requirement of being readily accessible or able to meet the needs of those who wish to gather there. Access to some libraries in the current study is restricted to a very short, rostered period once a week. Again, due to lack of easy access and time to spend on activities in these libraries, they are unable to be considered ‘third places’. Within the current study, all prisoners from three of the seven prisons studied spoke at length about experiencing their library as a gathering place. A common factor observed at each of these prisons was that prisoners all had easy and unrestricted access to their library during the hours they were allowed out of their cells,
and the library had sufficient space available for prisoners to sit or stand and talk with each other. Prisoners who use these libraries spoke of them as neutral places where everyone was welcome and no-one was judged by others. They spoke of the relationships with other prisoners who chose to gather in the libraries as valuable to them for friendship, psychological relief from the stresses and anxiety of prison life and a feeling of community belonging. Prisoners made the observation that they were experiencing the library as a place to gather with others whom they would not normally expect to spend time with, outside their lives in prison. For these prisoners, their library was able to act as a ‘third place’ as described by Oldenburg (1997). Therefore, the experience of ‘library as gathering place’ from the current study, supports Oldenburg’s construct of the ‘third place’ in prisons where this experience was possible.

There are libraries in the current study that do not align with Oldenburg’s description of ‘third places’, despite being readily accessible to prisoners during time spent outside of cells. Two prison libraries in the current study appear to have all the characteristics of a ‘third place’, yet they were not described as such by those who use them. Prisoners who use these libraries did identify their libraries as being able to facilitate a connection to others, but this was not through a shared use of the library space or through choosing to spend time with others within the library. Instead, the connection to others they experienced was related to sharing books from the library. This raises the question as to why the physical access and conditions of the libraries were able to support its identification as a ‘third place’, and yet the libraries are not experienced in that way, or just not mentioned by these prisoners. The one common factor within this group is that the prisoners were women, housed in female-only prisons: one in South Australia and one in Victoria. These prisoners are not accommodated within cells, but instead live in cottages with shared bedrooms and living areas. They have very little, if any, opportunity for time away from others, and do not spend any time locked in cells either on their own or with others. Therefore, they do not experience the long hours spent alone, or the isolation and loneliness that is experienced by prisoners who are accommodated in cell blocks.

It is possible these prisoners do not experience their libraries as gathering places, or ‘third places’ in the same way as prisoners who do not live so closely with others do, because they do not seek or crave the company of others, as they already experience a lack of time alone. There may also be other explanations that would serve as a point of investigation for further study. For instance, some
male prisoners are also housed in cottages and lack time alone, and yet they do experience their library as a ‘third place’ and value the role of the library as a gathering place. If the nature of accommodation and the amount of time spent alone were influencing factors in prisoners’ experience of the library, then these men would perhaps not seek to use the library as a ‘third’ or gathering place, but the current study finds that they do. In contrast, the female prisoners interviewed also live in cottage accommodation, with little time alone, and do not chose to use their libraries as gathering places, preferring to use them as a place to escape from others. The difference in experiences described here seem to relate to gender, rather than to the style of accommodation, and could be investigated within a further study.

The findings of the current study demonstrating that some prisoners choose to use their libraries as gathering places is at odds with some of the literature. The prisoners who experience their library as a gathering place do so in libraries that are often very small and, in every case, poorly furnished and unattractive, are poorly resourced, and do not offer collections that are targeted to the needs of users. Many public libraries provide a much higher quality of services, collections and facilities compared to prison libraries, and make efforts to encourage clients to use the library as a gathering place. They invest time and money in developing spaces, services and collections to attract users to gather there. Waxman et al. (2007) describe a project run by a university library that sought opinions of students on the characteristics of the places they choose to use for study. The aim of the project was to gather ideas on how the library could redevelop to become more like a place that their users would choose to be. The authors described their library as having the potential of becoming a ‘third place’ where students would like to gather, with the observation that the library did not currently achieve this role.

Germano (2011) writes about the importance of publicly funded libraries proving and improving their capacity to fulfil the role of community gathering place to ensure their survival. He states that there is little awareness or understanding of the use of public libraries as a gathering place in the perceptions of their users. He also argues that this must change to ensure publicly funded libraries are able to prove their value and maintain their funding. Examples such as these suggest that the use of libraries outside prisons as gathering places is a desirable but uncommon use, and that libraries must work hard and invest resources into changing this to ensure their future. In contrast, the findings of the current study demonstrate that in the case of many prison libraries, no funding or
improvements are required to attract clients to use the library as a gathering place. This role for the prison library occurs spontaneously, given the right set of circumstances, such as ease of access, the presence of like-minded others, and few options for alternative gathering places.

The presence of a personable and welcoming individual working in the library has a great influence on the prisoners’ experience of the library as a gathering place. Prisoners who use four of the seven prison libraries from the current study spoke about the importance of having a friendly, welcoming and supportive person managing the library. In three of these cases, this was a fellow prisoner and the fourth was a prison employee. This employee was not a prison officer, but was employed as a librarian and therefore did not wear a prison uniform or carry a weapon. The presence of the right type of person was important in building the community of prisoners that chose to gather at the library. The people who were identified by prisoners as examples of such a person, took pride in building relationships with others and recognised this role was integral to creating a welcoming and pleasant gathering place. The prisoners that used their libraries as gathering places were also aware of the importance of this role and of the value of the individual who chooses to take on this role.

The importance of a strong and personable leader to the health of a group has been demonstrated in the literature that reports on expressive leadership and group behaviour theory. An expressive leader’s role within the group is to ensure harmony and maintain and manage the relationships between members (Hassan, Asad & Hoshino, 2016). Palmer and Kawakami (2014) write of the ability of expressive leaders to create cohesion and a sense of belonging for the members of informal groups. They work to ensure that old and new members feel connected to, and accepted by each other, seeing the purpose of the group to be one of social togetherness, rather than one that acts to complete set tasks (Palmer & Kawakami, 2014). This theory supports the findings of the current study, where the libraries that are operated by expressive leaders encourage prisoners to gather together to experience a sense of community.

One of the characteristics of an expressive leader, according to Hassan, Asad and Hoshino (2016) is that they are anti-authoritarian. This definition would seem to be in conflict with the observation that a prison staff member could be an expressive leader in a community that forms around a prison library, and is at odds with the findings observed at one research site. At this site, prisoners experienced a strong sense of community due to the presence of an expressive leader, who was a prison staff member rather than another prisoner, and was therefore in a position of authority. Her
ability to be an expressive leader who can facilitate a sense of community was not hampered by her authoritarian role within the prison, as Hassan, Asad and Hoshino (2016) might suggest it would. This may be explained by considering the prisoners’ understanding of the hierarchy of authority within the prison. Prisoners who used the library run by the prison staff member made the observation that this staff member was a librarian, not a prison guard, and therefore was viewed differently to a guard. The staff member wore civilian clothes rather than a uniform and did not carry a weapon, although she had been provided with a duress alarm and a fortified office for safety if she was threatened, rather than deal with the threat herself. It is possible that these distinctions between the librarian and the prison officers placed her in a position of less, or different, authority within the prison, in the opinion of prisoners. This could explain why she was able to fulfil the role of expressive leader, and to facilitate the formation of a community who chose to gather together at the library, despite not being a prisoner herself.

The focus of the community that developed in her library differed from that of other libraries that also acted as gathering places. In the other examples of libraries that enabled this experience, the prisoners were choosing to come together to spend time with each other. The presence of the group attracted others to join this community. However, in the library managed by the prison staff member, the prisoners gathered to spend time with her, as well as with each other. Three of the four prisoners interviewed at this prison described how they would volunteer their time to help out in the library and spend time talking with the librarian. The fourth prisoner interviewed at this prison worked in the library four days a week, so spent time with the librarian as a part of his duties. Despite being in the library for work, rather than by choice, he identified the value to him of having conversations, and spending time with the librarian. She was experienced as an expressive leader who attracted prisoners into the library. The community formed around her presence, rather than the presence of other prisoners.

It has already been noted that the use of the library as a gathering place is largely independent of the library collection, and therefore, the quality of the library collection has little or no influence on prisoners experiencing their library as a gathering place. It is possible, then, that the same experience could occur independent of the library. A different ‘third place’ (Oldenburg, 1997) could provide the same experience. For this to occur, prisoners would need to find a neutral space that is neither their cell nor their workplace, but could comfortably provide appropriate accommodation.
and the opportunity for conversation. These spaces are not readily available within prisons. Another suitable space could be the prison yard that can be accessed during the day quite readily by some prisoners, and via timetabled access for others. However, prisoners described these yards as sometimes threatening and nearly always noisy. The yards I observed during my visits seldom included seating, and seemed designed to encourage walking and other physical activity, rather than conversation. Therefore, although the library collection does not play an influential role in the experience of the library as a ‘third’ or gathering place, the physical space and amenity, even if small and poorly furnished, provided by these libraries are sufficient for this experience to be possible.

**Connection to others inside the prison**

Having access to a library space where prisoners can gather, allows them to experience a sense of community and connection to others inside the prison. However, the lack of physical space within a library to gather, or even the complete absence of access to the library, is not a total barrier to prisoners experiencing community. Prisoners who could not gather within their library still spoke about experiencing a sense of community through the library. This was often achieved through discussions about the library books or magazines the prisoners were reading. Alan, a medium security prisoner living in the Alexander Maconochie Centre, described this form of connection outside the library space when he spoke about recommending books to other prisoners:

I also recommend books to other people. And once they read one that they like, because I’ve read most of them, I know what book to recommend next. So, I always get a fair few people come up and ask me like, what they should read. So, yeah, that’s pretty much what I do.

When asked if this practice connects him with others he says: ‘Yeah, like ‘cause people will ask me what books are good, what books I recommend. So, you know, they always, um, what is it? A connection with people in here.’

Andrew uses the same library as Alan and will borrow books that he then delivers to other prisoners who don’t get to the library, either because they choose to sleep during the day, or because they
have work duties that keep them away from the library during their rostered time. He connects with
others in his cell block through borrowing library materials for them and returning them when they
have finished with them:

I do a lot of borrowing for other people that are in my area. So, if they are like, there
are some people who work, so they can only come up here on Fridays and like I live
with this guy and I give him books and I get books back from him that I bring back up
here and he just reads what I get him. If I say it’s good, like, if I’ve read it and say it’s
good, he’ll read it. So I get stuff for him. And there is another guy I live with. He sleeps
all day so I get stuff for him as well and I get stuff for other people, you know. And I get
newspapers for people. I do some running around. Not running around, but I like to
help out because I like reading so much, I’m like “Yeah, if you want me to get you a
book, I’ll get you a book!” So that’s good. You know, it makes me feel good as well. I’m
like “Did you like that?” “Yeah, it was awesome!” It always feels good when you like,
recommend something to someone and they enjoy it!

Andrew enjoys connecting with others through his knowledge of the books in his library. This
experience of gaining satisfaction in connecting with others about books was also identified by
Mitchell, another medium security prisoner, who lives in South Australia’s Mobilong prison: ‘Other
people, if they’re doing it hard, you can say, "Hey mate, go out and grab a book. Here’s something
funny. Read this. Do that." So, yeah, there’s a million answers to that, as well, but it makes me feel
good.’

Diane, who lives in the ‘Protection Unit’ in the Adelaide Women’s Prison, also describes the
enjoyment of connecting with others in her community by sharing her knowledge of library books.
When asked about the role of the library in connecting her with others inside the prison, she says:
‘Inside, it definitely helps because I know I’ll read a book and then I’ll talk to a girl about it and then
she’ll read it too and we can talk about it and swap books over so it definitely connects some of us in
the wing.’

Donna uses the same library as Diane and describes a connection between herself and other
prisoners created through using the library:
You get to know people and what they like, because, like, my other housemate came up and said, “Right, this morning it’s your mission to find me a book.” I’m like, “Oh, no, no, no, I don’t know what you like to read.” She told me and then, yeah, I’m trying to find her a book.

Marcus, who uses the Mobilong Prison library, also forms a connection with others through discussing the books he is reading from the library: ‘Well, just because you start talking to people. You get into a book. There’s 20 people in my unit who read, so if you get a good book, you just swap it and you talk about it.’

The relationships that develop between prisoners through a connection with the library can be unexpected and otherwise unlikely to occur. Michael is the prisoner who manages the library used by Marcus and Mitchell. He described a relationship with some prisoners that has formed because of their use of the library:

We had guys here who were fairly high up in outlaw motorcycle gangs. They were book borrowers. I’ll chat to them when I’m walking on the track and say, “How are you going with that book. Are you finding it interesting?” “Oh, yeah.” “Those other ones you got from Murray Bridge, now I need them back by next Monday. They’ve got to go back, so you’d better start reading them now.” Whereas most people wouldn’t say anything like that to those guys, but you can because you’ve broken the barrier down a bit. I’m just talking about library books; you know?

Discussion

These examples show that prisoners are ‘experiencing community’ through their use of the library. This experience can occur both within the library space when there is room for prisoners to gather, and also outside of the library when prisoners make connections with each other through the use of library books, both for practical reasons and for pleasure. Libraries in prisons can result in the creation of communities of like-minded people who choose to come together to enjoy each other’s company, either in the library itself or in other areas of the prison.
In contrast to the observation made earlier, that the library collection was not influential in the experience of using the library as a gathering place, the experience of connection to others within the prison depends significantly on the books within the library collections. Prisoners experience a connection with other prisoners through sharing books that they borrow from their libraries. In the current study, prisoners described borrowing books for other prisoners who were unable or unwilling to visit the library themselves. They also choose to discuss books they are reading with others during the hours that they are confined to the common area with the cell blocks or within their actual cells, which are often shared with at least one other prisoner. Prisoners often recommend books to each other and books are often shared through a cell block, so that the person who finally returns the book to the library is not the person who borrowed it. In this fashion, prisoners experience the library as a means of connecting with others inside their prison. This connecting experience is enabled by the library collection, rather than the library space.

Experiencing a connection to others by sharing books and participating in discussions about those books is also common to people outside prison who choose to be members of book groups. Peplow’s (2016) study of reading groups describes the act of shared reading and talking about shared books as a social activity and an act of social engagement with others. Peplow further states that the discussions around books and reading that take place when readers choose to make time to interact with each other, can facilitate the development of “interactionally dynamic communities” (Peplow, 2016 p. 238). He describes these communities as ‘communities of practice’, arguing that they demonstrate the three elements required to be identified as such: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Mutual engagement is achieved when members of the community frequently engage in the practices of the community. It is this frequent engagement that fosters a feeling of belonging and group cohesion. Joint enterprise is achieved when the tasks of the community are clearly recognised and identified. The shared repertoire of a community of practice describes the ways the communities operate: their rules and routines, the practices they follow and the identities that each participant takes on as a community member (Peplow, 2016).

The findings of the current study are not able to support Peplow’s description of the second and third elements of a community of practice: ‘joint enterprise’ and ‘shared repertoire’, due to a lack of applicable data. It is possible that the element of ‘joint enterprise’ is present because the groups that form within the prison library may be meeting together to engage in the joint enterprise of
conversation. It is also possible that the element of ‘shared repertoire’ is present in the roles taken on by each member of the groups of prisoners who come together in the library, and the practices of these groups. However, the operation and activities of groups of prisoners who choose to come together to converse and discuss books was not studied as part of the current research. This data could form the basis of future studies for researchers interested in the role of book groups that form within specific communities.

The first of Peplow’s elements of a community of practice, ‘mutual engagement’ can be corroborated by the current study. Peplow describes ‘mutual engagement’ as occurring when members of the community of practice frequently engage in the practices of the community. Prisoners in the current study who spoke of interacting with other prisoners in relation to books and reading stated that this was a frequent activity for them. Prisoners spend long hours confined to areas that are shared with many others, in the case of common areas within cell blocks, or with one or two others when locked into their cells. With this confinement and lack of access to the outside world and its activities, prisoners have little to talk about. Many prisoners in the current study described the ‘jail talk’ that dominates in these situations. In the absence of alternative topics, the discussions between prisoners is often about crimes committed or planned (both inside and outside of the prison), and ‘hedging’, where prisoners seek to establish dominance over others and to frighten others by talking themselves up as a threat. Prisoners in the current study mentioned that they prefer to escape the ‘jail talk’ and instead choose to talk with other interested people about books and reading. This is a frequent undertaking as books are shared and conversations develop around this shared reading.

This description of a community developing through sharing library books and related discussion is also supported by Benwell (2009), who describes such reading and discussion as a negotiated and collaborative activity. Benwell (2009, p. 312) uses the term ‘booktalk’ to describe the talk that can naturally occur between readers. Although the prisoners in the current study did not use this word to describe their discussions about books with others, it is an interesting contrast to ‘jail talk’, which prisoners try to avoid by talking about books and reading with other prisoners. They use books from the library to experience a connection with others inside the prison, and to experience a community of practice that naturally forms around like-minded people.
The value of a reading community is also recognised in Billington’s (2011) study of the therapeutic effects and benefits of prison reading groups. Billington (2011) states that the sharing of talk about books allows readers to engage with the books and their stories and messages in a meaningful and often therapeutic way. Billington (2011) believes that reading and sharing discussions on what has been read can be a social and life-enhancing activity, stating that sharing thoughts and ideas about the readings is the important element in achieving these enhancements. She identifies that by connecting to other prisoners through the discussion of books and reading, prisoners feel less isolated, alienated and lonely. These views are supported by the findings of the current research that also identify the capacity to experience a connection to others inside the prison by sharing library books and related discussions with other prisoners. Prisoners value these connections and the relief of isolation and alienation they bring.

**Connection to others outside the prison**

A further experience of connection with a community was described by prisoners when discussing a connection that their library facilitates with their families and friends outside of prison. In the case of one library, this was enabled through access to a restricted email service available through the library computers. In this prison, prisoners are allowed to send and receive emails from five authorised addresses, in the same way that other prisons make phone calls available. The email traffic and content is monitored by a security service. When Alan, a minimum security prisoner at this prison, was asked how the library enabled him to stay connected with others outside the prison, he nominated the following: ‘TV guide, newspapers and emails because I’m in constant contact with my partner.’ He described this again later in his interview when asked in what ways reading was important to him:

It’s everything. Like I said. Like, what me and my partner are doing now, I’m going to pick a book from up here, and she’s gonna go buy it, and each night, like we are going to read like four chapters each and talk about it over emails. So, we’ll both read the same book. Yeah, so that way books like, bring us closer, making it easier, you know, stuff like that. Yeah, I love books.

He expanded on this later in the interview: ‘it’s books, like it’s bringing me and my partner closer. It gives us something to discuss, like talk about, so yeah, it’s definitely a link to the outside world.’
Andrew, a maximum security prisoner at the same prison as Alan, similarly identified that he connects to his family outside the prison through the books he reads: ‘I mean, I talk to my mum about the books that I am reading and I talk to people about stuff in the paper, but I don’t get to read the paper so much anymore because I’m always working.’

When his father comes to visit, he will bring books that had belonged in Andrew’s private collection at home and donate them to the library. Andrew is supportive of this as he gets to read them again, and likes that they can then be shared with others through the library.

Alice, who lives within the female section of the Alexander Maconochie Centre, also maintains a connection with her family through talking about the books that she is reading or has read. She tries to encourage her children to read specific titles so she can talk to them about their reading: ‘My kids really, really like JK Rowling’s, you know. I’ve been trying to find other things too so we’ve got something to talk about, like “Try this book, babe. You might like this” or whatever.’

Aiden, who is a protection prisoner at the same prison as Alice, also uses discussions about the books he is reading to connect with his family outside. He describes his experience of this: ‘Yes, yes, a lot of people do that. I did that with the Aragon series and Game of Thrones actually, with my sister and she now reads and watches Game of Thrones. So, yeah, yeah, absolutely. People do that.’

He continues by describing the same practice experienced by another prisoner:

There is someone who is a friend of mine who has kids and he is reading, I think Harry Potter at the same time. ‘Cause his son is reading, I think, one of the books at the same time and they can email and talk to each other about the stories, so yeah. For some people it works that way, absolutely.
Chapter 5 Explication and Discussion of Themes – Part 1

A connection to family through book discussions is also mentioned by Max, who is a medium security prisoner at Mobilong Prison: ‘One of my little sisters really enjoys to read, so sometimes we talk about different books and stuff, what each other’s reading.’

Geoff, who lives at the medium security Marngoneet Correctional Centre, also uses the library collection to connect him with his community, but in a way that differs from book discussions. He likes to write his own stories, letters and poems and will take lines of poetry from the library collection to include in his letters to family: ‘As far as connecting with my family, yeah, I get to use it to write letters and pull poems out and use them in a letter or something.’

In addition to maintaining a sense of community and connection with others outside the prison through discussions of books, one library is able to offer another means of connection with the outside. Alan’s library at the Alexander Maconochie Centre is the only library included in this study that employs a professional librarian. One of the benefits to the prisoners of having her there is that she has access to a printer. She helps Alan stay connected to his partner by printing photos that his partner sends him by email. He is then able to take these photos back to his cell. His partner was expecting their first child when I interviewed him, and he had received photos of his baby’s ultrasound images from his partner and was able to keep these with him: ‘I can get photos sent to me, and I can print them out from here so I can take them back with me.’

He is looking forward to taking part in a program that is run by the education staff in his prison that allows him to record his voice as he reads a bedtime story for his baby. Although this program is not associated with the library, it does give the prisoners an opportunity to experience reading books to their children. Alan is excited about being able to connect with his family by sharing a book and reading a bedtime story to his baby: ‘And there is a program, um, going now, you can get recorded reading a book, and send it out. Bedtime stories, for your kids, so it, you know, that’s going to be pretty cool.’

Having access to newspapers in the library is highly valued by prisoners who have this opportunity. Being able to read about what is happening in the world outside of the prison has a positive
influence on feelings of being connected to the broader community. Aiden, who also uses the Alexander Maconochie library, describes this as ‘being able to be connected with the real world through newspapers’. Prisoners are able to buy a copy of the newspaper for their private use, but few can afford to do this and are reliant on the library providing newspapers for them. Geoff, who lives at the Marngoneet Correctional Centre, describes this: ‘It keeps me connected with the outside as far as the community goes because I read about stuff that’s going on out there or I can see out there.’

Tanya, who lives in Victoria’s minimum security Tarrengower Prison, also describes this connection to the outside world through the library’s newspapers:

Well, it certainly, by reading newspapers, it keeps us informed. I don’t watch a lot of television, so just having the newspaper, even if I don’t read it from one end to the other, I just glance through and you can sort of keep up with what’s going on, which is good so when you ring home, or talk to your family, if they happen to mention something that might have gone on, you can say “yeah, I read about that in the paper”, so it keeps you in contact with your family or friends because it keeps you having communication. You know? You still know what’s going on. Some of the things that are going on.

The importance of newspapers to the prisoners was also illustrated by Michael at Mobilong Prison. His library relies on prison officers to retrieve the library newspapers from the prison reception and deliver them to the library. The day of his interview, this had not been done: ‘Today we haven't got newspapers. I've had probably twenty people say, "Where’s the newspapers?"’

Phil, who lives in the Port Phillip Prison in Victoria, recognises that because his library does not supply newspapers, this link to the outside world, and the connection to his community outside prison that this would facilitate, is not available to him. When asked if his library helped him stay connected to others outside of prison, he was clear that the library was unable to do this: ‘Because there's no periodicals, no. No newspapers, no periodicals. No current magazines.’
Alice also recognised that access to a newspaper in her library at the Alexander Maconochie Centre would help the women she lives with stay connected to their communities outside prison: ‘So even a newspaper, because that would keep you relevant, you know? Not everyone wants to watch the news.’ Alice’s library does provide access to newspapers for prisoners, but because she can only visit the library one afternoon a week, she does not have access to newspapers outside of her rostered library visits.

Gabriel’s library at Marngoneet Correctional Centre does not have regular access to newspapers, but some prisoners donate their own copies when they have finished with them. He describes this practice and the demand for the newspapers:

We get asked all the time. People come in and they all seem to think that we get the newspapers. They presume we do get the newspapers. The newspapers end up down there because G***** orders the newspapers every other day or something, for himself. He brings them down after a day or 2 all after he's finished reading them, which I think is fair enough. It’s his newspaper. Sometime the lady from education drops off some papers. They’ll only be 1 or 2 days old, a couple of Ages or a Herald Sun or the Geelong Advertiser. Daily ... Even if we just had an up to date newspaper once or twice a week, it’d be great. Even if we just got an Age on a Saturday. We’d probably get somebody walk in, on average, at least once a day, “Have you got today’s newspaper?" Always. They’re all after different bits. Some just want the news. Others want the horse section. Others want the car section, whatever. They just want to have the latest one, you know? I’m reading Friday’s newspaper and that’s the most recent one we’ve got. It’s not quite the same when it’s that old, you know. Newspapers would be great thing to have.

Greg manages Gabriel’s library at Marngoneet. He also recognises the demand for, and importance of, access to newspapers for prisoners to stay connected to their communities outside of prison. He explains the practice that he and his friends have put in place to ensure prisoners are able to access at least some newspapers:

We have a bit of a system where I get the paper Friday, Saturday, Sunday, D***, my mate, gets the paper Monday, somebody else gets it Tuesday, and somebody Wednesday. They all read it, but they give it to me last thing at night, to read the
Discussion

Prisoners identified the experience of connecting with others outside the prison, in addition to the experience of connection to others inside the prison, as described in the previous section. Prisoners explained that they were able to use books from the library to connect with family outside prison by matching what they were reading with each other. Additionally, those that have access to newspapers can use them as a means of staying connected with the world outside prison.

Creating and maintaining a connection to others outside prison through reading and talking about books is also recognised in existing literature. Duncan (2011) reported on a program run by the Tasmanian Risdon Prison known as “Books on CD”. This program was a local version of a similar program initiated at Dartmoor Prison in the United Kingdom and since copied by many prisons around the world. In this program, prisoners with children recorded a sound file of themselves reading aloud a children’s book. This recording would be saved to a CD which was then sent to the child, along with their own copy of the book that was being read. The child would then have the opportunity to follow the story as their parent could be heard reading it to them. Prisoners were also encouraged to include a personal message to their child at the beginning and the end of the story (Duncan, 2011). The goal of the program was to maintain a connection between children and their incarcerated parents by sharing books. Prisoners who took part in the Risdon program reported experiencing a connection to others outside prison through sharing these books, and recognised the value to both their children and to themselves. In evaluating the program, prisoners made comments such as: “My kids wouldn’t speak to me when I first came in here and they wouldn’t reply to my letters. The CDs made a difference though and now I’ve bought them a mobile phone and we talk every week. It’s taken two years to make a breakthrough but I’ve done it” and “I am going to be in here for a long time. I just want my baby to know my voice” (Duncan, 2011 p. 7).

The popularity and effectiveness of the program in connecting prisoners to others outside prison has encouraged other prisons to also establish the program. The Middleton Campus of the Loddon
Prison in Victoria, Australia, has established their version of the program, calling it the “Read Along Dads (RAD) Program” (Gorman, 2015). The manager of the program states that the practice of sharing reading and books with those outside of prison helps prisoners and their families sustain their relationships (Gorman, 2015). A similar program has been developed by the Brooklyn Public Library in the United States (Weller, 2016). In this program, called “Daddy & Me”, prisoners can be seen by their families via live video, on a screen in a private room in a public library. They spend their allotted time reading books and singing songs together. The library and the prison, in this case the Rikers Island Prison, have provided facilities where prisoners and their families can reserve time to connect with each other. The managers of the program describe its popularity with both the prisoners and their families, noting that the demand for the program is greater than their capacity to meet it, and families and prisoners are often turned away. There are plans to gain funding to increase the program’s availability (Weller, 2016).

Programs such as “RAD”, “Books on CD” and “Daddy & Me” are voluntary and often funded by external, philanthropic organisations. Prisoners must choose to take part and do so with no expected benefit, other than a means of connecting with their families at home. The prisoners who choose to take part in these programs recognise the value of connecting with family and the capacity for books and reading to achieve this. The findings of the current study also support this view, with prisoners recognising the disconnect they have with their families and the ways they could use books to counteract this during their time in prison.

Prisoners in the current study also spoke of experiencing a connection to others outside prison by reading newspapers supplied by the library. They recognised that reading the newspaper allowed them to stay in touch with the events occurring in the communities that they had left, and also to understand major events occurring elsewhere in the world. This awareness of the outside world reduces their feelings of disconnection and also gives prisoners something to talk about when they speak to people outside of the prison. This observation is supported by studies that explore the role of newspapers in society. For example, in their study of the role of newspapers in America, Shaw and McKenzie (2003) state that newspapers are essentially about relationships and that they provide a means of connection between people and their communities. They describe newspapers as a “surrogate for the community” (Shaw & McKenzie, 2003 p. 140), suggesting that they allow readers to maintain an awareness of their communities by reading about local and global events and
developing opinions about them. Through newspapers, local and global events become real. Readers are informed and are able to form an opinion regarding those events. Outside the prison, being informed and capable of holding an opinion about events means that these events can be discussed with others.

The use of newspapers to facilitate a connection to and between communities is also recognised by Hess (2013) in her discussion on the future of newspapers. Hess identifies local and community papers as a means by which members of a community can stay in touch with each other and keep informed about local events. She also identifies the role of newspapers to enable a connection between readers and ‘place’, so readers are kept connected to a specific place associated with the newspaper, as well as the events that occur in that place. This is particularly relevant to the readers of ‘local’ or ‘community’ newspapers. These findings are supported by the current study. Prisoners in the current study recognise and value the experience of connecting to other people and places outside the prison by reading newspapers.

**Conclusion**

Prisoners are ‘experiencing community’ through their libraries in many ways. The physical space provided by the library has a positive influence on experiencing the benefits of being part of a community when it acts as a gathering place for prisoners who choose to come together in the library for conversation and friendship. Through using the library as a gathering place, they experience a connection to others whom they identify with as similar and like-minded. Although these prisoners come together within their libraries, their conversations are not limited to discussions about books and reading. They are able to talk about life outside prison and about issues that are part of their lives.

The experience of connecting with others inside the prison is not restricted to those prisoners who have access to gathering spaces in their libraries. Prisoners who have no access to their libraries, or who use libraries that are too limited in space to allow prisoners to gather, are still able to ‘experience community’ through their libraries. This occurs through book discussions, relationships established between prisoners who work in the libraries and other prisoners, and services offered
between prisoners that relate to the library. These services are both the selection, delivery and return of books from the library on behalf of other prisoners, and the letter writing service that is unofficially provided by many prisoner librarians. An experience of and connection to communities outside prison is also facilitated by prison libraries. Prisoners are able to connect with their families, friends and the broader community through book discussions, shared reading opportunities and the newspaper. The experience of connecting with others outside the prison through the library is common and highly valued by prisoners, who recognise the importance of staying involved with their families, their support networks and the world outside prison. The ability for prisoners to ‘experience community’ is an important and valued role of prison libraries, regardless of their quality, size or level of access.

The use of libraries to develop and maintain connections to communities is somewhat supported by the literature. This experience of community through using a library is recognisable in Oldenburg’s description of ‘third places’ (1997), although not all the characteristics of these places are present in prison libraries. Beyond the discussion of ‘third places’, much of the literature supports the findings that libraries can be experienced as a means of connecting users to communities through mutual engagement (Peplow, 2016), library-based programs (Gorman, 2015; Weller, 2016), newspapers (Hess, 2013), and the sharing of books and related discussion (Benwell, 2009).
Chapter 6 - Explication and Discussion of Themes – Part 2

Theme four – Experiencing responsibility for self

The theme ‘experiencing responsibility for self’ encompasses three codes assigned across the participant transcripts – ‘library as opportunity for autonomy’, ‘library as therapy’ and ‘library role in behaviour management’. Prisoners are able to experience ‘responsibility for self’ through the library by making choices about how they spend their time in an environment where most other choices are removed. ‘Responsibility for self’ through the library is enhanced by using it as a therapeutic space to reduce stress and anxiety, and because it helps them to manage their behaviour, and stay out of trouble.

Library as opportunity for autonomy

When a person enters prison, most of the choices that they are used to making for themselves are removed from them. They are told what to wear, where to be at all times, when and what they will eat, when they will have access to open space, when they will be locked in to their cells or rooms and who they can associate with. In this environment, the ability to make any choices for themselves becomes very important to avoid becoming completely institutionalised, to survive their prison term and to maintain skills in self-determination that they will need to re-integrate into the community when they are released. Phil, a prisoner at the maximum security Port Phillip Prison, describes the danger to prisoners in losing their autonomy:

The biggest threat to any prisoner is not being assaulted or getting a drug habit or any of those usual, Hollywood, scare issues. The greatest threat to any prisoner is institutionalization. The way basic prison management philosophy is, it’s essentially… prison management’s concern is with control and management.

The library is experienced as one of the few places in a prisoner’s life where they are able to make choices for themselves and to have a degree of autonomy in how they are spending their time.

Alice, who uses the Alexander Maconochie Centre library, recognizes the importance of choices offered by the library. When asked what the library offers her, the first experience she identifies is...
about choice: ‘I suppose, it’s the choice whether you want to use it or not.’ Matt, a prisoner at the medium security Mobilong Prison, also identified the importance of being able to make choices when asked what the library offers him: ‘Just making the day less, not so repetitive. It gives you something different. So you can choose what you want to spend your time on, that sort of thing.’

Mitchell, who also lives in Mobilong Prison, shares this experience and values the library as a place where he can do what he wants. He recognises that using the library is not tied to any other aspect of prison life and contrasts this with the compulsory education programs. Some prisoners must undertake training programs, such as drug and alcohol abuse, and anger management programs, before they will be considered for transfer to reduced security prisons, home-based detention or parole. Mitchell values the fact that using the library is not compulsory for him and that he can choose if and how to use it: ‘Something I can do when I want. Not something I’m getting told I have to do if I want to move through the system.’

Later in his interview, Mitchell again mentions the value of experiencing choice in the library. He contrasts this experience with his existence in the rest of the prison:

I can just come in and pick what I want to do and not get told. Yeah, you can come in and grab what you want, read what you want, if it’s here you can do what you want. You can open it up and its yours. They just make you, "You do this, you do that," and instead of saying, "Would you like to do this?" They come up, you get some asshole, "You go do that," and it doesn’t work with the lot of us. If you get told you’ve got to do something. The library is our place. I like it. I just like just knowing it’s here and I can come and go when I please, as I please.

When asked what he saw as the benefit to him in using the library, Otto, who lives in the Port Augusta prison, said: ‘Mainly it’s just the choice of what books I’m going to read and when I’m going to read them.’ Later in his interview, he also spoke in detail about the lack of choices in his life and the contrast to this provided by his library:
Well, that's what prison is all about. You can't choose anything. You can't choose when the door locks at night, what time you're going to eat, or go to sleep or anything like that you can't choose anything major in your life, but by going to the library, you can actually choose what book you're going to read instead of them saying you're going to do this, this, and this, but you can say "Oh, I'm going to do that," but most long-termers have got the same impression now. Just the fact that they've lost their power of choice on anything. You don't get to choose what you eat because it's all made in the kitchen and everybody gets the same, unless you're on a diet or something, so. That's prison, I suppose.

Discussion

The library is an unusual place within a prison as it provides one of the few opportunities for prisoners to have the freedom to choose what they would like to do. Prisoners experience the library as an opportunity for autonomy because the choices they make there about what and how they read are some of the only choices they get to make for themselves. For prisoners who have the option of visiting their library, even choosing to go to the library or not, is one of the few choices they get to make. They find the ability to make choices for themselves empowering, and a rare opportunity to have some responsibility for an aspect of their own lives.

The Prison Reform Trust (n.d.) has identified the lack of autonomy that is part of prison life as a major cause of institutionalisation and mental health decline in prisoners. The Trust recognises the powerlessness that prisoners feel when they are unable to experience some autonomy in their lives. The prisoners interviewed also identified the dangers of institutionalisation and the value they place on having some autonomy while in the library.

The experience of using a prison library as an opportunity for autonomy is supported by some definitions of autonomy but not others. Verkerk (2001), who writes about patient autonomy in health care, states that autonomy is the capacity to be able to make choices for oneself. If this definition is used, then it is possible to see that prison libraries do allow some experience of autonomy, as prisoners are allowed to make choices about what they would like to read. Even prisoners who have no physical access to their library are able to choose from a list of titles, books that will then be delivered to their cells. This experience of autonomy was observed by prisoners.
who spoke of the library as being the one place in the prison where they could make a choice for themselves.

Barbakoff (2010), who writes about the role of libraries building autonomy for users, takes a different view of autonomy. She argues that autonomy is the ability to demonstrate self-governance, and the ability to live life in accordance with personal values, not those imposed on us by others. Although Barbakoff’s and Verkerk’s definitions of autonomy seem similar, there are distinctions. Verkerk’s definition relates to the ability to choose and to act independently - to achieve autonomy by achieving independence. Barbakoff, on the other hand, believes that it is not the library’s capacity to enable independence that develops autonomy, but it is the quality of the library collection and the librarian’s guidance that enables the user to become autonomous in satisfying their information need. She sees a role for libraries to foster user autonomy by providing collections that meet their personal values and information needs, and librarians who can act as guides and facilitators to assist users to access and utilise the collections and facilities. The findings of the current study that the prison library can enable an experience of autonomy do not meet Barbakoff’s definition of autonomy. The information needs of prisoners in the current study are not met by their library’s collections, and therefore the type of autonomy defined by Barbakoff, is not possible. However, the findings of the current study align well with Verkerk’s definition, as prisoners are allowed to exercise freedom of choice over their choice of reading material from their library’s collection.
Library as therapy

Using the library as a therapeutic space is another way of prisoners ‘experiencing responsibility for self’. Many prisoners spoke of their libraries as places where they could go to spend time in activities that supported their emotional and mental health. The ability to read books from a library was frequently mentioned as a means of maintaining sanity while in prison. Debbie and Diane, who were interviewed together in the Protection Unit at the Adelaide Women’s Prison, describe the importance to their sanity of having something to read. Debbie said ‘I’d go crazy without books.’ Diane agreed, ‘Yeah, I would go crazy.’

Mitchell, a medium security prisoner at Mobilong Prison, also identified the role of the library in keeping him sane. When asked how the library was important to him, he stated, ‘Otherwise you just want to do your head in!’ When asked how the library was important to him, Otto, who lives as a maximum security prisoner within the Port Augusta Prison, also spoke about reading library books as playing a role in maintaining his sanity:

> It keeps me sane by being able to read because otherwise, you’d be sitting there staring at the wall going nuts or listening to the bloke next door rattle a pile of bullshit in your ear. There’s plenty of that what flies around the place. It keeps me sane.

Peter, a maximum security prisoner who lives in the Victorian Port Phillip Prison, also fears for his sanity and believes the library helps him stay sane. When asked how he benefits from using the library he says, ‘The best thing to do, otherwise I’ll go insane. It is very comforting to be in there.’ Later in his interview, Peter returns to the observation that having a library in the prison is comforting to him:

> But the libraries in the prison, I was surprised to see one, because I’ve never been in prison and I didn’t know what to expect. When I found out that was there that was very comforting... I can sit down and read a book without stress or worry or aggravation, it’s just very comforting.
The library was also identified as a comforting place by Tanya who uses the library at the minimum security Tarrengower Prison. She chooses to visit her library when she is feeling stressed or anxious because the experience of being in the library helps her feel better. These are the words that Tanya uses when asked to describe how the library makes her feel:

Relaxed, happy. Just peaceful. If you, I find if I’m a little bit stressed or a little bit strung out or whatever, I just sit in the library. Even if it’s only ten or fifteen minutes and I just, I just think I go ‘Ahhh’ and you just relax. It is just really calming. It is a place for relaxation. It’s peaceful. And lovely.

Debbie spoke about the positive experience of learning from reading library books at her library at the Adelaide Women’s Prison, and the effect this has on her self-esteem: ‘I find that education, when I learn things, I feel better about myself, so reading books and learning stuff about actual history, it makes you feel better about yourself.’ Debbie also spoke about how she reads books from the library to help her manage the anxiety and insomnia that she suffers from:

‘It stops me from overthinking things. I just sit down and read a book for a while. It helps me sleep. I've got really bad anxiety so if I just read a story, it takes my mind off my own personal stuff and manage to get to sleep eventually.’

In common with Debbie, Geoff also spoke about using the reading of books from his library at Margoneet Correctional Centre as a means of stopping himself from over-thinking his life and the choices he has made: ‘it also stops you thinking about why you’re here, what you could have and should have done and it can give you a sense of relaxation.’

Relief from feelings of frustration and stress through reading books from the library was also identified by Oliver, who lives in the Port Augusta Prison. When asked how he benefitted from having access to a library, he stated: ‘It just gets rid of any frustrations, any stresses. Its somewhere to put myself other than watching ads on TV all the time.’ Michael, the prisoner librarian at the Mobilong Prison library, also spoke of his library as a place where prisoners can gain relief from
frustration: ‘This library area is a place where people can come and vent a bit of frustration from time to time’.

Mitchell, who uses the library managed by Michael, agreed with the ability for the library, and the books he borrowed from it, to help him manage his mental health. He identified himself as suffering from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and stated that he uses reading to help him manage his symptoms:

As soon as I get in a book, it's like, "bang," everything shuts down... That's what it is, I think. It sort of calms you right down. It gets your mind acting straight away and you've got to concentrate on your book, and what you're reading, and how it's written, and you can't take in anything from the outside, if you know what I mean. You just open your book and you're there. It just sort of shuts everything else down, so I love it.

Later in his interview, Mitchell spoke about using reading to help him sleep:

You ask the officers, and when they go around at night and when they do the cell check, I'm lying there on the bed with a book, reading it. I also go to sleep with it in me [sic] hand and I'll wake up reading it. It's weird. Yeah, it helps me. It helps me sleep... Helps me wind down, helps me relax. It helps with everything. If I can't sleep, which a lot of times I can't, I'll go up here and get me a really, really, really boring book. The most boring book you've ever read, and then, I'll force myself to read word for word. It just puts me to sleep... not kidding. But, if I get a good book, I can't go to sleep until it's finished!

As the prisoner librarian for her library in the Adelaide Women’s Prison Protection Unit, Debbie is able to recognise the therapeutic value to others in reading materials that can inspire them to live their lives differently. She describes this when asked what materials she wished her library could offer its users: ‘I really want to find, bookwise, people that have had a hard life and then they turned it around, those kind of true stories, so that, inspiring stories for people in here that are feeling low to read something inspiring I think would be good.’
Geoff from Marngoneet experiences some of the inspiration and motivation that Debbie recognises books and libraries can provide. When asked about how the library makes him feel, he states:

I never really thought about it, how I feel. I feel like I’m motivated to do something positive so it makes me feel good that I’m actually getting off my bum and doing something that’s constructive in here because apart from running five kilometres a day and going to the gym and working in there, sometimes six hours a day, sometimes three, there’s not a lot else besides reading books that I do. It makes me feel motivated I suppose.

Donna shares the position of prisoner librarian with Danielle at the Learning Skills Unit of the Adelaide Women’s Prison, and spoke about the role that the two women play in counselling others:

They’ll even come up for a chat and try and ... We’ve sort of become counsellors. Our job title should be librarian, criminal lawyer, family lawyer, counsellor, but it’s really good because that’s how people get to know you, especially when they came to you and they’re like, “Can I talk to you?” You’re like, “Well, okay.” You put on your different hats to go along with it but it’s good because then other people, especially new people coming down, feel a lot more comfortable instead of this intimidation.

Discussion

Prisoners are experiencing their libraries as therapeutic spaces, and they recognise the contribution of the library in supporting their mental health. The libraries provide them with a place within the prison that is quiet, relaxing, comforting and peaceful. Libraries also provide them with reading materials that allow them to use reading to help them avoid and deal with overthinking, anxiety, and insomnia. Prisoners spoke of the common experiences of depression, anxiety and anger within the prison population. This is consistent with findings from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2015) which reports that 49% of entrants to prison in Australia have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder by a health professional, and 27% of entrants are currently medicated for a mental health condition. Prisoners from the current study reported using prison libraries to find a
quiet place to calm down, a place where they could safely vent their frustrations without creating trouble for themselves, a place to distract them from their feelings, and one of the few places within the prison where they felt they would be welcome and they could relax.

These findings are supported by Brewster’s case study about the therapeutic role of libraries. Brewster (2014) argues that libraries have a role in providing a safe and open environment for vulnerable patrons, including those with a mental illness. Brewster studied the use of public libraries by sixteen people with diagnosed mental illnesses. Her participants felt that they could use their library even when there was no other place that they felt well enough to use, and identified characteristics of their libraries that enabled this. They saw libraries as familiar, open and welcoming, comforting and calming, and empowering. This view is shared by Vincent (2015) who notes the role of libraries in providing safe spaces for the LGBTQI community. Vincent describes examples where public libraries in the United Kingdom have made efforts to make this community feel safe and welcome. He observes that libraries are able to do this by providing quiet, supportive, non-judgemental and safe spaces, as an alternative to the spaces outside the library that are sometimes experienced as difficult, unsafe or threatening. These experiences of library use are consistent with the experiences of the participants of the current study who choose to come to their libraries to feel safe and supported.

As discussed earlier, in the section of this chapter that explores the use of a library as an escape, Wexelbaum (2016) takes an opposing view to that of Brewster (2014) and Vincent (2015). Wexelbaum is of the opinion that libraries do not provide safe or therapeutic spaces for their users. Instead, she sees them as places that discriminate against and judge vulnerable individuals and populations (Wexelbaum, 2016). This view is not supported by the findings of the current research, which finds that prisoners experience their libraries as safe and therapeutic places where they feel calm and relaxed, and as places to go when they feel vulnerable, and mentally and emotionally unwell. Prisoners spoke of their libraries as places where everyone is welcome and where no-one is judged by anyone else. These findings therefore contradict Wexelbaum’s (2016) opinions.
Library role in behaviour management

In addition to experiencing the library as therapy, some prisoners are experiencing their libraries as a means of managing their behaviour or the behaviour of others. This experience is possible because the libraries provide prisoners with something constructive to do, and helps prisoners deal with feelings and emotions that can overwhelm them and lead them to make poor decisions about how they will behave. Donna, who is one of the prisoner librarians at the Adelaide Women’s Prison, believes having access to a library has a significant role in the management of prisoners’ behaviour: ‘I believe it’s really important because it takes them out of here. It saves rioting and carrying on. You know?’

Patrick, a prisoner living at the maximum security Port Phillip Prison, also believes that having access to a library helps him stay out of trouble. When asked how he benefits from using the library, he says:

Put it this way, you feel better than what you do feel if you’re sitting in the unit staring at the walls and doing nothing. I prefer to do that than sit in the unit and think, "I’ve got X amount of time to go. Gee, it's a long time to go", and as I said, get into mischief and politics and gossip.

Marcus also spoke about how the Mobilong Prison library keeps him from getting into trouble. When asked in what ways the library is important to him, he says: ‘In what ways? If I didn’t have it, I’d be lost. If I’d be bored, I’d probably be getting into shit. Yeah.’ When asked to confirm that he experienced the library as a way of managing his behaviour, he stated: ‘100%, yeah, 100%. If I didn’t have books, I’d be bored. I’d be out probably slinging drugs then.’

Discussion

Libraries in prisons are able to play a role in managing the behaviours of prisoners. Prisoners are experiencing their libraries as influencing their behaviour, largely through relieving boredom, but
also by providing relief from the realities of prison life that can lead to frustration and anger, and thus have a negative effect on behaviour.

Prisoners from five of the seven prisons visited stated that their ability to visit their library, and to read the books they borrowed, helped them to moderate their behaviour and to stay out of trouble while in prison. They attributed this to the library being available to relieve their boredom. A common point made by these prisoners was that reading and visiting the library relieved both the tedium and the monotony inherent in prison life. There is evidence to suggest that using a library to relieve boredom is also common to library users outside prison. In their study of the motivations to use public libraries in England, Hayes and Morris (2005) found that, along with the desire to alleviate financial restrictions and as a source of relaxation, people chose to visit libraries as means of relieving boredom. This was particularly the case for retired or unemployed people. Swain (2013) has also identified the role libraries can play in relieving boredom and provides some solutions to the boredom often experienced by high school children during American summer holidays. Swain states that a visit to a library can provide an opportunity to both relieve boredom, and create some positive outcomes, such as informal education and socialisation. These opportunities are similar to those provided to prisoners who choose to use their library to relieve boredom.

Prisoners in the current study attributed the relief of boredom enabled by visiting the library and reading library books to keeping them out of trouble and from committing further crimes, particularly drug use, while in prison. They were able to identify that boredom can lead them to criminal activity and trouble within the prison. There is evidence that supports this assertion that boredom can lead to crime and illegal behaviours. Fast, Shoveller and Kerr (2017) investigated the circumstances that led young men to participate in drug-related crime in Vancouver, Canada and found that boredom was a significant stimulus for crime within this group. The participants in the Vancouver study stated that they chose to commit crimes as an antidote to boredom because spending time planning and committing crimes put them “in the center of something” when the rest of their existence consisted of an excess of “having a lot of nothing” to do (Fast, Shoveller & Kerr, 2017 p. 3). They also identified that this practice often becomes pattern-forming, and people who choose to commit crimes as a means of relieving boredom are likely to continue to offend if boredom remains a feature in their lives. Similar findings come from a study of drug use in rural New Mexico that identifies boredom as a major stimulus for drug use among young people (Willging,
Quintero & Lilliot, 2014). These findings are consistent with those of the current study, which identify that prisoners recognise the potential for boredom to lead to their involvement in crime within the prison, particularly drug crime, and that using the library helps to alleviate this boredom and moderate other behaviours that could lead them into further criminal activities. These findings also relate to the previously discussed findings regarding the passage of time. Prisoners experience boredom due to the excessive amounts of unfilled time in their lives, and this boredom can lead to problems with behaviour. The use of a prison library has the dual benefit to prisoners of filling in some of their idle time, and thereby reducing the boredom that can lead to negative behaviours.

Conclusion

The prisoners of the current study are able to experience taking some responsibility for themselves through use of the library. In an environment where freedom of choice is largely removed, the library becomes a place where prisoners can make choices for themselves – a choice to visit, a choice of how long to stay within their rostered time, the choice of what to do when they get there, or at least, the choice of what to read. This level of autonomy, facilitated by the library, is rare in the prison environment where prisoners’ activities and movements are restricted and monitored at all times. For the prisoners who use the library, the ability to make a choice for themselves is a highly valued experience. Prisoners also experience taking responsibility for themselves when they choose to use the library as a therapeutic space when they recognise they are feeling upset or distressed. The library is one of the few places that prisoners can go when they feel the need to be alone, or the need to speak to sympathetic others. Prisoners in the current study also believe that being able to read books from the library and to visit the library helps them moderate and take responsibility for their behaviour. Moderating their behaviour enables them to avoid the ‘trouble’ that may be caused by behaviour considered undesirable by the prison. By relieving boredom and providing a distraction from the realities of prison existence, libraries are able to have a positive influence on behaviour management.

These findings are supported by Verkerk’s definition of autonomy as being able to make choices (2001), but not by Barbakoff (2010), who identified the role of libraries in building autonomy for users, but whose definition of autonomy requires evidence of self-governance. The findings of Brewster (2014) and Vincent (2015), who identify libraries as therapeutic places and sanctuaries, are well supported by the experiences of prison library users. The findings of the current study are also
supported by England, Hayes and Morris (2005), and Swain (2013), who recognise the experience of using a library to relieve boredom.
Theme five – Experiencing education

The theme ‘experiencing education’ encompasses three codes assigned across the participant transcripts – ‘connection to formal education’, ‘connection to informal education’ and ‘library as supporting literacy development’. This theme differs from the four previously discussed themes: ‘experiencing escape’, ‘experiencing the passage of time’, ‘experiencing community’, and ‘experiencing responsibility for self’, in that each of those four experiences was a positive experience, and an experience highly valued by prisoners. In contrast, this final theme: ‘experiencing education’, is not a positive experience. Without exception, each of the prisoners interviewed was frustrated and dissatisfied with the ability of their library to support their formal and informal education needs. They also recognised the potential for their library to support literacy development for the large number of prisoners who have difficulty reading and writing, but the prisoners interviewed were very aware that there were few, if any, attempts within their prison by education or programs staff to make use of the library in this way.

Connection to formal education

There were no formal operational connections between the education programs offered, and the libraries in any of the prisons visited for this study. This was despite many of the libraries being administratively located within the education portfolio of their prison. The education programs in Victorian prisons are outsourced to a TAFE organisation which sends staff into the prisons to run the programs (State Government of Victoria, Department of Justice, 2016). In South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, the prisons each have their own education staff who are responsible for training. Training at all prisons is offered at introductory certificate levels and has a vocational focus. Prisoners may work towards certificates in areas such as industrial cleaning, construction, bakery, business or a general education certificate that is focussed on achieving basic levels of literacy and numeracy. Specialist programs that focus on drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic violence prevention are run for selected prisoners. None of these training or education programs make formal use of the libraries in this study. Many of the training providers maintain their own collection of materials that they use during their classes. These materials cannot be accessed by prisoners who are not enrolled in the classes, and it is usual that these collections are locked into class rooms.
outside of class time, so even prisoners who are enrolled in training have no access to them when they are not in class.

As noted above, the South Australian prisons that were included in this study did not outsource their certificate teaching programs, but employed their own teaching staff. One South Australian prison has employed a retired teacher-librarian to run the basic literacy and numeracy classes for prisoners. She recognises the value of using library resources to support the learning of her student prisoners and allows them to visit the library to find materials to review as part of their literacy training. Owen, the prisoner in charge of this library, described this practice:

The teacher will send people up here for books because they've got to do book reviews. They might be doing writing assignments. She'll tell them to come up here and pick a fiction and a non-fiction to do a review out of. So, quite often I'll get, usually only one person at a time, but they've got to go through the boss before they come in the door. Then they come in here and wander around and pick their books.

This was significant as the library in this prison is not accessible to prisoners outside of this arrangement. This teacher’s students are the only prisoners who ever gain access to the collection directly. Other prisoners must request reading materials from a list of titles that are then delivered to their cell blocks. The majority of prisoners housed at this prison are therefore unable to experience visiting their library as a form of escape, or as a place to pass time or gather with others, as described in the previous section.

Oscar is a long-term prisoner who is serving a life sentence without parole at the same prison as Owen. He remembers a time when a different officer was in charge of both the library and the education programs and there were stronger links between the two:

When it [the library] used to be run by R***, she was a teacher herself. It was completely different; the attitude was completely different. She was interested in what prisoners wanted, promoted education. We had newspapers lying [around] ... We used to go to, there was a room there, where if you did education, you were in this
room, or you had access to ... With the whole books. You were in the room where all the books were.

Experiencing education through the prison library is an experience of frustration and unmet need. Oliver is a prisoner at the same prison as Oscar and Owen and when asked how well his library is able to support his education needs, he describes the poor level of support it provides:

Very, very low. Very low. I don't think I'm an above average student, I think I'm as smart as anyone else, I don't put myself in a category. But for when I go to research something, it’s not something ... There are pretty much popular books, you know. So for myself once again its very limited. Very limited.

Despite the poor educational support offered by the library, Oliver, who has a degree in Chemical Engineering, is able to use the connection between the library and the education classes offered by the retired teacher-librarian to gain access to the collection. He told me that he enrols in basic literacy classes to give him access to the library as described by Owen, above. He will then deliberately fail his courses, enabling him to re-enrol and continue to have a reason to access the library. This practice is an indication of the value to Oliver of having physical access to the library and of the barrier the 'no-access policy' puts between him and his educational needs.

The influence of an individual teacher is significant in how prisoners are able to experience education through their library. The practices of the teacher described by Owen, Oscar and Oliver above are similar to that described by Greg, who is housed in a medium security Victorian prison. Unlike Owen, Oscar and Oliver’s library, Greg’s library is accessible to all mainstream and protection prisoners. Although there is no formal or administrative connection between Greg’s library and the education programs offered, there is one teacher who will use books from the library to help her students. When asked how well his library is able to support the education needs of prisoners he replied:

Yeah, fairly well. We have a loan number for education and we lend them books. N****, she's an English teacher here, she comes and gets books. We look for books for
her too, because a lot of guys here struggle with reading and writing, she's always looking for easy reading books. There used to be a little section for easy reading. I don't know what happened to it along the way, but it just all got put in with fiction or whatever. Now, we have just set it up again, and we've got books in there for her. N**** would have, I suppose, she's probably got about twelve books out on loan at the moment.

Another example of an education program that uses library resources was identified by Greg:

The indigenous guys that do art, a lot of the guys that do art, come in and borrow books to use for their art lessons. Then after their art lessons, they bring them back to us. The indigenous guys might come and say, "Look I want a book with a kangaroo in it, or a book with an elephant in it, or whatever." Snakes, birds. Lots of guys come in for books with birds and stuff like that. I think they get that off that Attenborough show. We have a big following of Indigenous people just people coming and borrowing books from there for painting, but there is a lot of books go out for painting in there.

In contrast to this experience is that of Paul who is housed in a maximum security Victorian prison. Paul is enrolled as a distance education student in a Bachelor of Arts degree at Curtin University, Perth. Although he receives his coursework in print from Curtain, he is unable to receive any additional reading that he needs to do for his assessments. Although Curtin may be able to post him some books from their library collection, the cost of postage to him is prohibitive. He is also unable to rely on the library collection at his prison as the collection does not meet his needs. He has an arrangement with a local university to provide him with materials that are posted to him. After paying an annual fee, this university will post books to him and will include a return envelope and stamps, so he can return the books to them when he has finished. He has permission from the prison to phone a staff member at this university library who will listen to his needs and send him books that will help him with his assessments. When asked how well his own library was able to satisfy his needs for his education, Paul said: 'It don't [sic] support my education at all, basically.' Paul believes that if he were reliant only on his prison library, he would not be able to complete his studies at Curtin University.
The lack of connection between formal educational programs provided by the prisons and the libraries is seen as a missed opportunity by prisoners. Donna, who lives in the Adelaide Women’s Prison, recognises that women in her prison are offered education classes on important issues that affect their lives, but when they look for more information about these issues to extend their learning, the library is unable to support them:

Yeah, and especially now that we’ve got AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] and NA [Narcotics Anonymous] coming down. I think to have resources would be great to go along with it. Women have been asking for stuff like that for a long time now, but we just don’t get it. Yeah, because even like anger management and all that, we don’t have resources to back it up. When women want it to work and take it further and find out more, we just can’t. We’re very limited.

Discussion

Prisoners in the current study are frustrated with their experience of formal education support offered by their libraries, describing their library as unable to support their studies in any way. Formal educational programs were offered at each prison visited for the current study, but there were no formal, operational links between the education programs and staff, and the library. Prisoners enrolled in education programs were sometimes allowed to access the library to select a book to read or write about, but there was no attempt to create a supporting role for the libraries within the educational programs of any of the prisons. Prisoners experience the disconnection between formal education opportunities and the library with frustration and an awareness that this is a lost opportunity. In one prison, some long-term prisoners spoke with nostalgia of a time in the past where there was one education staff member who made more use of their library during her basic literacy classes. They regret the lack of connection between education programs and the library, now that she has left the prison staff.

The link between the presence of a library that supports learning and the positive academic outcomes of students is well demonstrated (Hughes, 2014; American Association of School Librarians, 2014; Lonsdale, 2003). The prisoners in the current study are justified in expressing frustration at the lack of connection to, and support from, their libraries in achieving their
educational goals. Literature that relates to the role and benefits of school and academic libraries is relevant to this discussion. School libraries are integrated into a broader organisation, the school, in the same way that prison libraries are integrated into prisons, however in the latter case, they are not integrated with educational programs. In both cases they are considered a department within the broader organisation that exists to support the organisation’s goals. Both provide collections and services to support student learning and recreation; both have the potential to support learning and to assist the efforts of both teachers and students. The link between the provision of a library and high educational outcomes was identified by Lonsdale (2003) in her study of the impact of school libraries on student academic achievement. She found, for example, that test scores are higher when school library use is high, and that a collaboration between school teachers and school librarians has a positive impact on student learning and academic outcomes. However, she also stated that the relationship between educational outcomes and the role of school libraries is influenced by the quality of the library and the skills of those who work there. Lonsdale reported that a library needs to be well staffed, resourced and funded to be able to fulfil its potential to support learning. If these elements are present, there will be a positive impact on educational outcomes, regardless of the socioeconomic or educational status of its users (Lonsdale, 2003).

In a more recent study, Hughes (2014) also identified a positive relationship between the quality of a library service and the educational achievement of school library users. She found a positive correlation between student academic outcomes and the presence of qualified library staff, the availability of programs, a strong relationship between library staff and staff belonging to the broader organisation, the size of the library budget, the size and currency of the print and digital collection, and access to information and communication technologies (Hughes, 2014). None of the seven libraries visited in the current study are able to provide such a service to their users. Only one of these libraries was funded and managed by a qualified librarian. No other library in the current study was allocated a budget, staffed by a qualified library professional, or received any new materials into the library except by donations from prisoners and, occasionally, from outside of prison. Although the library that was funded was able to purchase new books, there was still no formal link between the library and the education programs offered by the prison. The librarian did not have a role in supporting the education programs, and although the collection was able to be updated, the emphasis of the collection was on fiction for recreational reading, rather than non-fiction for educational purposes. Therefore, the conditions required to be present to create a
positive influence on education for prisoners, as identified by Lonsdale (2003) and Hughes (2014), are not present in the libraries within the current study.

The lack of connection between prisoner education and a library service is made obvious by the complete absence of any mention of libraries in the Victorian Ombudsman’s report (2015) on the rehabilitation and reintegration of Victorian prisoners. This report is critical of the education infrastructure and offerings within prisons, highlighting its many problems. No mention is made of prison libraries or the role they could play in supporting prisoner education. There is no recognition in the Ombudsman’s report that the provision of an appropriate library service could have a positive effect on prison educational outcomes, as identified by Hughes (2014) and Lonsdale (2003). This is not uncommon. In 2016, the British Ministry of Justice released its ‘Unlocking potential: a review of education in prison’, commonly referred to as the ‘Coates Report’ (Coates, 2016), that reviews the state of education provision to prisoners in the United Kingdom. Again, not one mention of the contribution of prison libraries towards prisoner education is made within the report.

The findings of the literature relating to the positive influence of libraries on education are not enacted in the prisons visited, or considered by government documents that examine prisoner education. As prison libraries are unable to support formal education in the ways described by the literature, the prisoner experience of education through their libraries is one of frustration, dissatisfaction and unmet need.

**Connection with informal education**

While many prisoners recognise the benefits of furthering their formal education while in prison, prisoners were also able to identify the benefits of learning through informal education. When told about a program in some American prisons where the library issues prisoners with ebook readers loaded with books, Alice, who lives in the female section of the Alexander Maconochie Centre, had this to say:
Wow, that is a really good idea. Because I think that is a lot of most people’s problem in here that they are illiterate and uneducated because they have been off doing other things. It’s not like there is no desire to be able to do it, but you know you have the time available to you here. So if you can make it interesting, any sort of learning interesting, you know I think that it would benefit people without them even knowing.

When asked what she believes the library offers her, Alice recognised the role the library can play in providing educational experiences for prisoners: ‘I suppose it is important to learn, but also you know, you can identify with things, you can find out about things... It provides an outlet for education as well as for personal escape or to just pass time.’ Here she is also identifying the experiences of ‘escape’ and the ‘passage of time’, two of the other themes that have arisen as significant experiences of the phenomenon of using a prison library.

Likewise, Debbie was able to express her belief that her library in the Adelaide Women’s Prison can play a role in education. She is also aware of how important an opportunity this was for the women in her prison, as they have often missed or not taken full advantage of the formal education offered to them through the school system. When asked how well her library was able to support the educational needs of prisoners, she was able to identify that it has a role in their informal education:

I think that whole section there is pretty much on God. Which is not a bad thing in a way because there are lots of girls that come to prison that need help with that kind of thing. It’s generally when you come to prison that you realize that you want to know something. You’d never believed in anything before. You choose to want to do it in prison because you need that help.

Debbie was able to identify areas of education that she believed prisoners would benefit from if the library were able to support learning:

But, what I reckon would be good if we were to have books of actual history, like facts history not just fiction. I think it’s important, like, for, especially girls that are in prison because we generally don’t have the best education or history when it comes to knowing history and stuff but learning that in prison, it can ... I find that education,
when I learn things, I feel better about myself, so reading books and learning stuff about actual history, it makes you feel better about yourself so definitely history books.

She recognises the benefits of learning to her self-image. Debbie also recognised that the educational experience offered by the library was insufficient to meet the needs of prisoners. She believes the library has the potential to allow prisoners to experience education more effectively and to play a greater role in the educational futures of prisoners. When asked if there were roles the library could play in enabling prisoners to experience education, she stated:

If you wanted to go out and study a makeup course or retail or something like that, it would be nice to have a book in here that you can read so you know what you're getting yourself into, engineering, anything like that. Because half the time, if you go into a course on the outside and halfway through the course, you would drop out because you don't like it but if you get the information now about the whole course that you want to do, then it's easier for you make a decision when you get out.

Danielle and Donna, who live in the Learning Skills Unit at the Adelaide Women’s Prison, were interviewed together. During their interview, Danielle also expressed the view that the library in her prison had the potential to play a greater role in allowing prisoners to experience education. When asked what she wishes the library would be able to offer its users she identified the following:

I think more up to date modern stuff, if that was available for them, I think it would be better. More on drug and alcohol and issues that we don’t have a lot of books on, on how to deal with drugs, alcohol, the whole domestic violence. We don’t have anything like that here.

Together, Danielle and Donna were able to identify the role the library could play in allowing prisoners to experience education in matters pertaining to their own health and that of their families:
Danielle: That’s the big one too. We’ve got the encyclopedia but I reckon a few more on that too because my … Oh gee, I don’t even want to get into that, but my son had a medical issue not long ago and I couldn't find anything about it. I was actually, I actually asked Mr B***** [the guard who was in the room with us] to print off some stuff for me because he’s good like that. Yeah, I reckon medical stuff we do need something more in terms of ...

Donna: Yeah, because we haven’t even got ... We’ve got little brochures on Hep C, but there’s no books on Hep C. There’s a few women down here that are diabetics, but a lot of them are told by medical, ‘You’ll go on a diet’ and, sugar and all this stuff, but they’d like more ... What am I doing? What is in that? What is sugar and where it is? So we can’t even help them on that. Even a few have come in with more serious conditions like cancer. We’ve got no books on cancer, which I find strange. There’s nothing. Other than you get a little pamphlet from medical. There’s no resources on that.

Oscar is also aware that he is not able to experience education as he would like through his library at the maximum security Port Augusta Prison. Although his learning needs are based on interest and curiosity, rather than health related issues, such as those identified by Danielle and Donna, his experience of education through the library is equally poor and frustrating to him:

Now and again I come across something that I’d like to read about, like I’d like to research, for example. Because it’s so limited it's not possible. For example, I wanted to understand how you can sail against the wind. It's something that I've pondered before and I've asked people, and they've tried to explain it to me. The explanation's never really made sense. It's an example of something that interests me that I would like to understand. Here there's no way of finding it... I doubt if they've got the material, and even if they did, how you’d find it I wouldn't know. It's [the library contents list] by title and author, it's not by topic.

Geoff, who lives in the Victorian Marngoneet Prison, identified further insufficiencies in the educational role of his library in relation to resources prisoners would benefit from as they are about to be released from prison. He sees the library as having the potential to provide information to prisoners about support networks available to them after they exit prison:
I think the library here could probably provide more information on support networks on the outside. Like drug and alcohol, homelessness, stuff like that, or they could provide more information on employment is a big one. We get a TAP [Transition Assistance Program] program before they get out. They get contacts and other... They provide limited stuff now. There’s educational stuff on doing resumes and all that but just people to contact. I think the library could concentrate on more areas of providing actual addresses of organizations that will help people on release, whether it’s a drug and alcohol issue, employment issue, health issue. How to get treatment for Hep C, whatever. There’s many areas that people don’t know where to access the information from. They should try and maybe stock the library with some stuff where people leave the jail and don’t go straight to a boarding house and ‘get on’ as they say on the drugs. Whereas they might have some different options if they’ve got the information there. I’m not saying that is the be all and end all, but so many people walk out here with nowhere to go, or no idea what to do.

Discussion

Experiencing informal education through a prison library was identified as a negative experience, and one of frustration and unmet need. Many of the prisoners in the current study wished to further their education, formally or informally, often stating that they did not receive a good education during their school years. They now saw the value in learning, to improve their futures, while they had time available to them in prison. These prisoners wanted to be able to use their libraries to access non-fiction resources to further their informal education. Some mentioned a desire to study history, art, religion, music, cooking or gardening. Others wanted to study writing and poetry to help them with their own writing, or to learn more about topics that they had been introduced to in training sessions, such as living with addictions, anger management and domestic violence. Prisoners who were living with medical conditions, or who had family members who were doing so, wanted to learn more about these conditions and how best to manage them. Because prisoners have no access to the internet, they rely on the goodwill of visitors or guards to find and print out online information. It was common for prisoners to criticise the ability of their library to satisfy their informal education needs. Every prisoner interviewed who stated they had a need or a desire for informal education, also stated that their library was unable to meet that need.

The potential role of prison libraries as a provider of informal learning opportunities is also an accepted role of public libraries. In their Public Library Manifesto, UNESCO identifies public libraries
as a “living force for education, culture and information”, a “local gateway to knowledge” and states that they provide “a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, n.d.). The International Federation for Library Associations supports this view and describes public libraries as the “nodes connecting the local learning settings – whether it is of the formal or informal kind – with the global resources of information and knowledge” (International Federation of Library Associations, 2004, p. 3).

Public library staff also identify their libraries as places of informal learning. A 2016 survey of public library staff across Europe found that 83% of the 1413 libraries surveyed offered opportunities for informal education to individuals and groups (European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Organisations, 2016). Informal learning occurred in the categories of digital literacy, reading promotion and to support the education of individuals. The people most likely to use a public library to support their informal education were students and the unemployed. Therefore, public libraries clearly have a role to play in the education of their users, particularly those with time available. As a prison library acts as a public library in the life of prisoners, and prisoners have time to spare, it follows that the prison library should also support the educational needs of prisoners. The findings of the current study indicate that prison libraries are not currently supporting the informal educational needs of prisoners.

One area of informal educational need that is identified in the current study as of great importance to prisoners, and also identified as being particularly poorly catered for, is the need for informal education about the law. The Australian Correctional Administrators recognise the need for prisoners to have access to legal resources in their *Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia* (2012). The guidelines state:

Remand prisoners and all prisoners who have legal matters pending, whether they are on remand or sentenced to a term of imprisonment, should... have access to legal library resources, including where practicable supervised access to electronic media for the purpose of viewing electronic legal documentation.
Although the prisons in the current study are designated as prisons for sentenced prisoners whose legal matters are thus complete, fourteen of the twenty-nine prisoners interviewed stated that they did have ongoing legal matters. Each of these fourteen prisoners were of the opinion that the library’s legal resources available to support their legal information and educational needs were inadequate to meet those needs. Seven additional prisoners stated that although they no longer have a need to learn about the law, they were aware of other prisoners within their prison who did have ongoing needs that were not being met by the library. Prisoners reported the need to learn about the law for a number of reasons. Some wanted to understand their own convictions and sentences better; while some prisoners have appealed their convictions or sentences and now have new legal information needs. One was facing deportation upon release from prison, away from his family, home and employment, another wanted to return to his own country to serve his time in a prison near his home and family. Two of the female prisoners interviewed needed to learn details of family law to make sense of the decision by courts to remove custody of their children. Another woman expressed the need for a legal dictionary so she could look up some of the words used in the case against her that she did not understand. Each of these prisoners had access to incomplete, out of date and frequently vandalised legal resources, if any were available at all.

The complexity of prisoners’ legal information needs and their inability to have them met has also been identified in previous research. A 2008 study (Grunseit, Forell & McCarron) of the legal needs, and access to resources to meet those needs, of prisoners in New South Wales, found that prisoners commonly experience barriers to accessing legal information, and legal advice and representation. In addition, the complexities of legal information and processes limit many prisoners from understanding or participating fully in their own legal processes. The barriers include a lack of information about how to request material from the libraries, poor quality and currency of legal resources available in the libraries, and restricted physical access to the libraries. Each of these factors was also identified by prisoners in the current study as barriers to satisfying their needs for informal legal education and knowledge.
Library as supporting literacy development

Despite prisoners experiencing education through prison libraries as a limited and often frustrating experience, some prisoners are aware that the library can play an important role in developing the literacy levels of prisoners. Alice’s prison, the Alexander Maconochie Centre, is the only site within this study that employed a qualified librarian to manage the library. She recognises the value of having a librarian available to recommend books at the appropriate levels of literacy:

Most of the books are quite easy to read, so not everyone has a great understanding of their English language or can read, so yeah, S**, the librarian herself is really good at sort of working out that sort of stuff and what you might be able to understand and read and enjoy and try to you know, entice people to read a bit more.

Some prisoners recognised that although they are able to read, many others in the prison are not able to read. They are aware that the library could provide illiterate prisoners with valuable educational experiences. When asked about the importance of her library at the Adelaide Women’s Prison, Danielle stated:

Well, I know how to read. But it’s important for some... I know a girl that’s been here for twenty years and she still is learning to read, so it’s really important for her. Yeah, we’ve got to do it for everyday life, really. It’s very important.

Geoff, who lives at the medium security Marngoneet Correctional Centre, also recognises the benefits of library use to those with low literacy levels:

It’s important because I think it helps people gain more skills, just educational skills and reading skills. A lot of guys in here can’t read or write. It’s unfortunate and I think if you can get them into the library at least once or twice. It can only help. That’s what I think.
Discussion

The prisoners of the current study were all literate and frequent users of their libraries and therefore had no need to improve their own literacy levels. However, seven of the prisoners interviewed spoke of the literacy problems and needs of others in prison. Each of these prisoners identified the role their libraries ought to play in supporting the literacy development of prisoners with low literacy levels, but noted that their libraries are not currently providing prisoners with such support.

The observation that libraries can have a role in the development of adult literacy is supported by the literature. In a report for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Krolak (2005 p.3) writes that libraries play a “key role in creating literate environments and promoting literacy by offering relevant and attractive reading material for all ages and all literacy levels and by offering adult and family literacy classes”. She identifies libraries as “the perfect place to provide adult literacy classes” (Krolak, 2005 p.8), stating that they can fulfil this role as they have “easy access to all the resources needed to run an adult literacy programme, including printed and audio books, magazines for all reading levels, videos and newspapers” (Krolack, 2005 p.8). She identifies the importance of libraries building collections that support people with low literacy skills by supplying relevant and interesting reading materials for them.

Petruzzi and Burns (2006) also describe a program developed by a public library to support and develop adult literacy in its community. In recognition of low and falling literacy levels among the population of Ohio in the United States, funding was granted to one public library to establish a family learning centre (Petruzzi & Burns, 2006). The goals of the centre were to encourage reading and to provide tutoring and teaching activities for families. A review of the service and its outcomes found that on average, participants raised their literacy levels by one full level (Petruzzi & Burns, 2006), when assessed against the LeapTrack testing program frequently used in United States schools to assess the literacy standards of students (Informer Technologies, 2017).

Literacy training and support provided by libraries can be particularly useful for populations who have lower levels of literacy than the general population. This is the case with prisoners, forty percent of whom were identified by the Victorian Ombudsman as having literacy and numeracy
levels that are insufficient to enable them to participate in the workforce (Victorian Ombudsman, 2015). Another population that typically has lower literacy levels are immigrant communities who need to learn the language of their new home country, and library programs can be developed to assist these communities. Kong (2013) describes a program that was developed by the California Library Literacy Service. Five library services that belong to this group established English literacy training programs for new immigrants into the State. Kong reports that over 1,300 adults enrolled in the programs, with the aim of improving their literacy levels, and that the programs were considered a success by both patrons and library staff (Kong, 2013). Similar programs are offered by Australian public libraries to assist new migrants to develop their English language skills. The ACT Government public libraries offer English conversation groups several times a week for new migrants (ACT Government Libraries, 2017). The City of Parramatta public libraries in New South Wales offer English conversation classes that are specifically targeted to migrant women and men, and also to low income earners (City of Parramatta Library, 2017). Programs such as these are offered across Australia in public, and state and territory libraries. There is a recognition in these programs that libraries can play an important role in developing literacy for those with low level skills. Prison libraries have the potential and opportunity to fulfil the same role, for a population that has a high need for literacy development.

An understanding that libraries can enable literacy education is supported by the literature and by the practices of public, state and territory libraries. However, the capacity of prison libraries to fulfil this role is limited by the absence or near absence of suitable resources within the libraries. As mentioned earlier in this discussion, only one library in the current study had a budget and a qualified librarian managing the library. Prisoners who used this library recognised that the librarian made an effort to include books for people with low literacy levels in the collection, and her commitment to matching books of an appropriate level to prisoners who were working towards improving their literacy. Other than the experiences offered by this library, prisoners saw the lack of ability of their libraries to support literacy development as an experience of frustration, and a recognition that an opportunity to support literacy development was being missed by the prisons.
Conclusion

Experiencing education through the library is often an unsatisfactory and negative experience for prisoners who recognise that the library can have an important role to play in supporting education. Experiencing formal education support by a prison library is unusual, and is dependent on the choices of education staff. There is also a lack of opportunities for prisoners to experience informal education through their libraries. Prisoners recognised that the presence of basic level reading materials in prison libraries would be helpful in raising prisoner literacy levels, particularly when a teacher or librarian is able to help in the selection of appropriate materials. However, experiencing education, formal or informal, through prison libraries is complex and rarely experienced to the satisfaction of prisoners.

The literature clearly identifies that libraries can play an important role in the education of those who use them. The findings of the current study are that the prison libraries are unable to provide this experience. Prisoners are unable to use their libraries to experience educational support, largely due to a lack of suitable collections, the absence of formal operational connections between libraries and teaching staff and programs, and a lack of qualified library staff to run the libraries.

Analysis of findings by demographic

As noted in Chapter 3 - Research design, the use of the Moustakas method (1990) allows the data gathered to be compared between like groupings to identify and patterns of experience, based on demographic, or other shared characteristics. The building of a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet of codes assigned to participants (see Appendix 2 – Coded data and themes) has allowed a comparison of the codes assigned on the basis of gender, state or territory, and security level. Despite the sample size of the study being very small, trends and patterns were identifiable within the data. The following charts and discussion illustrate these patterns and trends of experience discovered by a comparison of like groups.
Comparison by gender

The following two figures (Figure 29 and 30) indicate the most frequently assigned code across all participants, displayed by gender. The responses by women prisoners are less varied than those of men, with their most frequently assigned codes ranging over just three codes in total: ‘library as therapy’, ‘library as escape’, and ‘connection with informal education’. In contrast, there is a much greater variation in the most commonly assigned codes for male prisoners, with their responses ranging over six codes: ‘connection to others inside’, ‘connection with formal education’, ‘connection with informal education’, ‘library as escape’, ‘library as opportunity for autonomy’, and ‘library as place to pass time’. The most frequently assigned code for women, ‘library as therapy’, was not assigned to any male prisoner as their most frequently assigned code. This indicates a significant difference in the experience of using a prison library between women and men.

The same pattern appears when the most commonly assigned code for men is examined. The most commonly assigned code for men is ‘connection to others inside’, while this does not appear at all in the most commonly assigned codes for women. This indicates that male prisoners are experiencing their libraries as a way of connecting with others, both inside and outside the prison, while this is not such an important experience for women. There are two experiences that are in common for both women and men: ‘library as escape’ and ‘connection with informal education’. This indicates that it is common for both women and men to experience a form of escape by using their libraries, and that they described experiences relating to the ability of their library to support their informal education. As can be seen from the discussion of this code earlier in this chapter, the latter experience is not positive.
Figure 29: Most frequently assigned code by number of participants – Women

Figure 30: Most frequently assigned code by number of participants – Men
Comparison by state or territory

Participants were interviewed in three states and territories: the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, and Victoria. The following figure illustrates the most commonly assigned code by state or territory. It indicates that there were no significant differences in the number of participants associated with each code, across states or territories. Victorian prisoners were not associated with ‘library as opportunity for autonomy’, ‘connection with formal education’, ‘library as place to pass time’, or ‘connection to others outside’ as their most commonly assigned code, in contrast to the experiences of prisoners from the other two regions. However, the incidence of this association with prisoners from the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia is very small in number and therefore this does not indicate a significant difference in experiences, based on location. Also evident in Figure 31 is that the variation of most commonly assigned code is greater for South Australian participants than for participants in the Australian Capital Territory, or Victoria. The data indicates that there is more consistency in participant experiences of using a prison library in South Australia than in the Australian Capital Territory, or Victoria, where the experiences of participants are more varied. The least variation of experience is found in the Australian Capital Territory, but this is likely to explained by the small sample size of participants at this location compared to the numbers interviewed in South Australia and Victoria.

Figure 31: Most frequently assigned code by state or territory by number of participants
Comparison by security level

Participants were interviewed in prisons across three levels of security: maximum, medium, and minimum. Three prisoners interviewed were assigned a ‘protection’ status due to the nature of their crimes, or their gang affiliations. They are placed in Protection Units to keep them safe from other prisoners. For the purposes of this analysis, they have been counted as maximum security prisoners as their living conditions and the freedoms available to them are comparable to those of maximum security prisoners.

Figure 32 indicates that ‘connection to others inside’ is the most commonly associated code for maximum/protection prisoners, and medium security prisoners. Minimum security prisoners are not assigning the importance of experiencing their libraries as a connection to others inside the prison with the same significance as prisoners from higher security levels. This is perhaps explained by the fact that they spend more time with each other throughout the day, as they are not locked into cells, but instead live in cottage-style accommodation with shared living spaces. Opportunities for them to connect with others inside are available without visiting the library. Minimum security prisoners are more likely to experience their libraries as therapeutic spaces, rather than places to connect with other prisoners. For minimum security prisoners, the library is a place to find quiet, solitude, and a break from living closely with others. In contrast, for maximum/protection prisoners, the library is a place to meet with others, to counteract the solitude and separation from other people that is part of the nature of their imprisonment.

Figure 32: Most frequently assigned code by security level by number of participants
The sample size used here is small, and therefore these results may not be replicated across a similar study of a larger cohort. However, they can be viewed as an illustration of trends and patterns evident in the current participant group. As can be seen from the above discussion, the experience of using an Australian prison library differs depending on gender, and level of security, but there are few significant differences in the experience of using prison library across states and territories. It is possible that the different experiences identified across both gender and security level can be explained by the nature of prisoner accommodation: prisoners who spend large amounts of time isolated from the company of others appear to be more likely to experience their library as a way to connect with others inside; while prisoners who live in shared accommodation are more likely to experience their library as a place to find peace and calm in an otherwise hectic environment.

**Exemplary portraits**

The earlier sections of this and the previous chapter provide an explication of the five themes found in the data: ‘experiencing escape’, ‘experiencing the passing of time’, ‘experiencing community’, ‘experiencing responsibility for self’ and ‘experiencing education’, and a discussion of these themes in relation to existing publications and knowledge. Presented here are three exemplary portraits to illustrate how each of these themes are experienced by three individual participants. The development of these exemplary portraits is described by Moustakas (1990) as the seventh step of his method of data analysis. In this step, the researcher returns to the original transcripts and the individual depictions to select three to five of the participants who can represent the group as a whole. The purpose of these portraits is to present the phenomena and the individuals who have experienced the phenomena in a unified and lively manner that exemplifies the experiences of the group. Although the themes provide the structure to these portraits, their construction introduces the individual prisoners to the reader, to enable them to be known as people, not just sources of data. The following three portraits have been selected to ensure that each of the themes identified across all participant transcripts are represented. In this way, the three portraits are able to represent the group as a whole.


Although the three portraits chosen have themes in common, their individual situations, experiences and the words they chose to explain them differ enough to warrant this duplication. For example, Tanya and Oscar’s experiences are represented by the same themes. However, their situations are very different. Tanya is female and lives in a minimum security prison in Victoria. She has daily access to her library and uses it frequently. Oscar is male and lives in a maximum security prison in South Australia. He has no physical access to his library as his prison does not allow library visits for any prisoners. Despite the significant differences in their situations, their experiences of their libraries are able to be represented by identical themes. Tanya and Oscar have been selected for inclusion to illustrate this consistency of experience, regardless of their situational differences. Alice is female and lives in the maximum security women’s section of the Alexander Maconochie Centre in the Australian Capital Territory. She has access to her library one half day per week. She is included here to illustrate the same themes as Tanya and Oscar in yet another quite different environment, but in addition, her experiences also include that of ‘experiencing the passage of time’.


Tanya lives in the minimum security prison farm in rural Victoria called Tarrengower Prison. This prison and its library is described in Chapter 4 – Research sites.

Tanya visits the library once or twice a day and uses the collection for her recreational reading, the daily newspaper and craft magazines. She has a history of both library use and reading, and describes her previous experiences of library use with fondness. At other times in her life she would borrow books for herself from her work library and also her public library. She always had something to read as she travelled to work on the train. She had also been responsible for the care of her grandmother and described walking 15 minutes to the library near her grandmother’s house to
borrow books for her to read. She would also borrow for herself and enjoyed always having enough to read. She remembers this as a good time in her life.

Tanya tries to maintain a practice that she established in childhood of reading to gain knowledge. She describes growing up as an only child and using books to learn about the world. She was brought up on a farm and is now working with farm animals again. She is experiencing the library as a poor provider of education and is frustrated with the lack of educational materials in her library. She describes the library as her ‘go to place’ for knowledge, as she has no alternatives. She can see the potential for the library to support both formal and informal learning, but does not believe her library is meeting that potential. In particular, she recognizes that the library is unable to supply her with the knowledge that she wishes she had for her farming work. She describes wanting to know the gestation periods of certain farm animals and about how to raise calves and rear chickens and ducks. She describes the help offered by one of the prison officers who will sometimes print information from websites for her, but recognizes that this is not always possible and that the library is unable to help when this officer is not able to help her. Tanya is a curious person who likes to learn new things, but is frustrated by the library’s inability to help her do this.

Tanya is experiencing the library as a place to escape to when she needs peace and quiet or when she wants to pray. She likes to spend time sitting in the library when she is feeling stressed or needs to wind down at the end of the day. She will go to the library in the evenings where she can be by herself and pray. She will sit in the library with the lights off and enjoy the peace and quiet that she is unable to find elsewhere in the prison. Sometimes another prisoner will be running a yoga session in the gym space outside the library and Tanya enjoys listening to the music that is playing. She finds that this experience helps her deal with the stress that she feels during the day, and she appreciates having somewhere to go that is away from her accommodation block. When Tanya describes her experience of using her library, she spoke of feeling peace and calm, and of being able to be in her ‘own zone’ and losing track of the time when she is there. She finds that when she is reading, her mind is able to ‘wander off to different things’ and this provides her with an escape from her present situation. When Tanya feels stress and anxiety in her life, she takes responsibility for her own self-care by experiencing the library as a therapeutic space. She finds the quiet of the library relaxing and calming and makes a choice to go there, as she recognises the beneficial therapeutic effects the library has on her well-being.
Tanya is able to recognize the potential value of using the library as a place where people can gather to spend time and speak with each other. She recognizes that the current physical space is unable to provide this opportunity well, but she believes that an opportunity such as this would be of benefit to the women in the prison. She describes how she would like to make the library a comfortable space and believes that this would bring more people into the library. She envisages that a more comfortable and inviting space would allow for small groups of women to come together to just chat about what they were reading, or to discuss what was happening in the outside world. Despite the unwelcoming environment of the library, Tanya is able to experience the library as a means of connecting with others inside the prison. She achieves a connection with others by talking with them about the craft magazines in the library. She describes conversations with other women about quilting and other craft projects. Although these conversations happen outside the library, the women use the craft magazines from the library to help them share ideas of projects they could undertake.

She also experiences the library as a connection to others outside. This is possible because the library provides a copy of the newspaper each day. Reading the newspaper enables her to stay in touch with what is happening outside the prison. She describes being able to talk to her family and friends about these events when she rings home. She values having access to the newspaper as she doesn’t watch television, and uses the newspapers to keep informed with some of what is happening in the outside world.

**Summary of Tanya**

Tanya is experiencing the library as a place to escape to when she needs peace and quiet. She values the library as a place that is different to her unit or room and can offer her a level of peace and quiet that she is unable to find elsewhere in the prison. Tanya is experiencing the library as a therapeutic space. She comes to the library to relieve her stress and anxiety. She finds the quiet of the library relaxing and calming. Tanya is able to connect with others inside by discussing library materials, but is disappointed that the physical space available in the library is not very supportive of this. She is also frustrated at the lack of material within the collection that could support the work of the farm. Tanya is able to experience the library as a means of staying connected with others outside the prison by reading newspapers that allow her to be able to discuss world events.
Chapter 6 Explication and Discussion of Themes – Part 2


Oscar lives in the maximum security Port Augusta Prison in South Australia. This library and its collection is described in Chapter 4 – Research sites.

During Oscar’s interview, he stated that he is serving a life sentence with no chance of parole. No physical visits to the library are permitted at Oscar’s prison. Despite not being able to visit the library, he is a frequent user of the collection, and borrows books each week from the library. These books are chosen from a printed list of titles and are then delivered to his cell. Because he will spend the rest of his life in prison, and because his library does not purchase new materials, he is worried that he will run out of books to read. He is anxious about how he will fill in his time when there is nothing new for him to read from his library. He is frustrated with the library service and feels that his suggestions to improve the service and for specific books to be purchased are ignored. He remembers a time when the library was administered by a different individual. During this period, prisoners were allowed some access to the library during education sessions. He believes that the restrictive management of the prison library is designed to create deprivation and to punish prisoners.

Despite having no physical access to his library, Oscar experiences the library as a source of pleasure and excitement. He finds anticipating the reading he might find there stimulating and exciting. To delay the time when he runs out of books to read from the library, he limits himself to reading only a small number of books each week. He hopes that by rationing his supply of books, he will be able to continue to experience the pleasure books give him for a longer time, before he has read everything in the library.

In contrast to his experience of pleasure in reading and in anticipating the arrival of his selected books, he is frustrated with his library’s inability to support his formal and informal education, and that of other prisoners. He is experiencing the connection between formal education and the library as an opportunity that has been taken away from the prisoners. He sees the lack of access to the
collection as an impediment to the library being able to play a role in the education of prisoners. He remembers a time when the library could play a role in the education of prisoners but recognizes that the banning of access to prisoners has removed that possibility. Similarly, he experiences the connection between the library and his informal education as a frustration and a lost opportunity. He recognizes that access to a broad range of non-fiction books would allow him the opportunity to further his knowledge in topics that interest him. He is also aware that the selection of books in his library is limited and outdated, and that his library is not able to give him this opportunity.

Although Oscar cannot visit his library, he still experiences a connection to a community through his reading of library books. He is able to do this by talking to other prisoners about the books he has read and by sharing recommendations to other interested prisoners. He states that he would be unlikely to speak to or connect with these other prisoners unless they were discussing books in this way.

Oscar is experiencing the library as a means of providing him with reading that allows him to mentally escape from his environment. While he is reading, he feels like he is not really in jail. Reading provides him with an experience that he would also be taking part in if he were not in prison. To Oscar, this is a very important experience and one that brings him much enjoyment.

**Summary of Oscar**

Oscar experiences the library as both exciting and stimulating when he is waiting for books from the collection. He is using the reading of the library books as a means of escaping his situation and as a means of undertaking an activity that he would also be undertaking if he were not in prison. He uses discussions about books as a means of connecting with other prisoners. The library is also a source of frustration and lost opportunities for him as he is unable to access it in person and finds that being reliant on a title list is not a satisfactory way of choosing what to read. He believes that the library has a role in the formal and informal education of prisoners, but it is unable to fulfil that role due to the restrictions on accessing the collection, and on the quality of the collection itself.

Alice lives in the only prison in the Australian Capital Territory, the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC). This library and its collection is described in Chapter 4 – Research sites.

Alice shares a bedroom with one other prisoner in one of the two female cottages. Each cottage has many bedrooms and one shared kitchen, living room, bathroom and an outdoor space. Each cottage is separated from the other by fences and the women are not able to see or mix with women from the other cottage. One afternoon a week, they are allowed to enter the male section of the prison to visit the library. This is the only opportunity the women have to leave their cottage during the week. This one afternoon is also the only chance the women have to attend any education or training programs, so they have to choose to be involved in a program or go to the library, or stay in the cottage. The men are locked into their accommodation units at this time so the women can move safely through the prison buildings.

Alice chooses to visit the library each week. She experiences the library as a form of escape. She says that it allows her to ‘just ... get out of (her) own head’ while she is there, and also while she is reading the books she takes away from there. She likes to read fiction where she ‘gets to escape’ and experience stories that remove her from her environment. She believes the library and its books offer her a ‘personal escape’ from the other prisoners and her current situation.

Alice experiences the library and the books she reads from there as a way to pass time. She spoke about the women in her prison, particularly those who are mothers, who have not had time in the past to read books, and includes herself in this description. She believes that reading books can allow prisoners to evaluate their lives and consider different ways of living. She recognises that women in prison ‘have had the opportunity’ to spend time reading and wishes that more of them would take advantage of this opportunity. She sees this opportunity as important and described this when she said:
I think it is very important. I think when people have had a chance to actually think about where they are at, you know, once they are sentenced, they know how long they’ve got to be here, it really is a waste of time if you don’t start looking at yourself at all.

Alice sees the time she must spend in prison as an opportunity to have experiences that she has not had in her life outside prison. She believes that the library can allow prisoners to find something they are interested in and then occupy their time by reading about it. She says ‘if you can find something that interests you, then it helps your time go’. Alice also recognises that spending time reading books from the library helps prisoners avoid boredom. She observed that: ‘A lot of the time, the bullshit and everything that goes on in here, the fights and that is because people are bored and have got nothing to do’.

Alice experiences the library as a connection to informal education and considers her access to library books as a learning opportunity. She describes the women she lives with by saying ‘most people in here...are illiterate and uneducated because they have been off doing other things’. She believes that if they chose to take advantage of the library, it would help them improve their literacy levels. She experiences the informal education she is receiving through the library as interesting and valuable. She wishes that other women would take advantage of the opportunity to learn through the library while they are in prison. Alice spoke about the importance of having a qualified librarian in the library who can recognize the need for tailored reading recommendations that will encourage prisoners to read and improve their literacy levels. She also wished that the library could supply audio books to prisoners who can’t read, so they could still experience the benefit of escaping through stories without having to read.

Alice is experiencing the library as a connection to her community, both within the prison and also with her family outside of prison. She connects with other women in the prison by suggesting books that she has read and that she feels they may enjoy. She also uses books from the library to stay connected with her children. She spoke about her children’s love of the Harry Potter series and how she has been trying to ‘find other things too, so we’ve got something to talk about’.
Alice is experiencing the library as an opportunity to be responsible for an aspect of her own life. Alice recognizes the importance of having some autonomy over self and recognizes that the library provides an opportunity for her to make some choices for herself. She believes that this opportunity for autonomy is ‘very important’ as prisoners have very little autonomy elsewhere in their lives in prison.

Summary of Alice

Alice is experiencing the library as a means to improve education, knowledge and literacy levels. She is experiencing the library as the supplier of books that allow her to ‘escape’ from her surroundings and situation, and to pass time constructively and to relieve boredom. She is experiencing the library as an enabler in staying connected to her children and other prisoners by sharing discussions about the books she and they are reading. She experiencing the library as an opportunity to have some autonomy within her life.

The three exemplary portraits presented here describe the experiences of the individuals chosen, and serve to represent the experiences of the whole participant group. Presenting details of three participant experiences serves to illustrate the five themes identified in Chapters 5 and 6 – Explication and discussion of themes – Parts 1 and 2, as they are experienced by individuals. The portraits are intended to enable the reader to know the participants as people, rather than sources of data, and to better understand the lived experience of each of the themes.

Conclusion

This and the previous chapter have explicated the five themes that have been identified by the analysis of all prisoner transcripts of interviews. Those themes are: ‘experiencing escape’, ‘experiencing the passage of time’, ‘experiencing community’, ‘experiencing responsibility for self’ and ‘experiencing education’. Each theme has been identified, discussed and illustrated by verbatim comments from participant transcripts, with the aim of building an understanding of each theme from the perspective of those that are experiencing the phenomenon of using a prison library.
The themes and sub-themes identified by the current study have then been explored in comparison to existing literature and theory. The majority of the literature that relates to the findings of the current study falls within the research on public library use. However, there is also much to be learned from literature that explores ‘third places’, the results of boredom and excessive free time, the influence of expressive leaders within groups, and the role libraries play in educational attainment. Literature that investigates wellbeing and the use of specific spaces to support mental health is also relevant to this discussion, as are studies of the role of libraries in communities that have experienced restrictions on their freedom at certain times in their lives. Much of this literature supports and explains the findings of the current study, but there are areas that do not align with common findings in the literature. The role of libraries in supporting the education of their users, by acting as a link to formal education provision, or as a source of informal education and support for literacy development, is commonly observed. Considerable evidence identifies a positive relationship between library use and academic achievement. However, the findings of this study, in the context of prison libraries, was that this was not possible. The decision about who has administrative responsibility for the library, in addition to poor library collections, precludes prison libraries from playing a more positive role in the education and literacy development of prisoners.

The findings tell us much about the experience of using an Australian prison library, but also raise questions that warrant further investigation. These questions could form the basis of further studies and are discussed in the concluding chapter. Also discussed within the conclusion is the contribution this thesis makes to knowledge about the experience of using an Australian prison library, implications for practice, and the limitations of the current study.
Chapter 7 - Conclusion

Introduction

The thesis commences with an introduction that examines the context of the study, and identifies its aim, scope, and significance. Following the introduction, further context is provided in Chapter two, as a literature review that examines the history of libraries in prisons, the guidelines and documents that guide their management today, and the information and educational needs of Australian prisoners. Also in the literature review, existing prison library research is described, as are some accounts of prison library user experiences. The literature review is followed by Chapter three, a research design chapter that serves to explain both the research methodology, and the research methods undertaken throughout the research process. To provide an understanding of the research sites, Chapter four describes each prison and its library, or libraries, along with photographs taken of the libraries. Chapters five and six explicate the findings of this study, and compare them to the existing literature. Areas of agreement with existing knowledge are identified, as are findings where the current study is at odds with existing knowledge. Possible explanations for these discrepancies are given. Chapter six concludes with an exploration of different experiences of prisoners by gender, location, and security level, and three exemplary portraits that demonstrate how the five themes are experienced by individual prisoners. This chapter concludes the thesis with a discussion of the new knowledge contributed, implications for practice, and limitations of the study.

Contribution to knowledge

The aim of this study is to explore and explain the experience of using a prison library, from the perspective of the prisoners who use them. As a phenomenological study, I set out to discover the nature and meaning of a specific phenomenon as expressed by participants experiencing the phenomenon, in this case, prisoners’ use of a prison library. Data has been gathered through semi-structured interviews with 27 prisoners, six prison staff and one volunteer from seven prisons across three states and territories of Australia. Analysis of the data followed the Moustakas (1990) phenomenological method to ensure the findings identified were drawn from the experiences of those living with the phenomenon. A goal of the study was to ensure that prisoners’ voices were heard throughout the thesis, as it is they who are experiencing the phenomenon. A
phenomenological approach informs all stages of the research, from the establishment of the research question, the questions asked of participants, and the method of analysis and interpretation. Following this analysis and interpretation, five themes were identified that explain and describe the experience of using a prison library. These themes are discussed and related to extant literature and research, in terms of consistency and contradiction with existing knowledge, and as evidence of new knowledge. Although I was unable to choose my own participants, and the number of participants is a small sample of the possible cohort, the degree of consistency between participant responses, and across all the research sites suggests that my findings are a valid representation of the experience of using an Australian prison library.

The findings of this study contribute to our knowledge of how prison libraries are experienced by prisoners, the role that libraries play in their lives, and the potential for prison libraries to further contribute to and support the goals of the corrections sector in Australia. The Australian Correctional Administrators recognise the importance of providing a library service to prisoners and express this in their Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia (2012). These guidelines identify the importance of all prisoners experiencing the use of a library, yet prior to this study, we had no understanding of what that experience was like. This study provides this understanding: prison libraries are experienced as an opportunity to ‘escape’, an opportunity to pass time, an opportunity to connect with others, and an opportunity for self-responsibility. Prison libraries are also experienced as an inadequate resource in the support of prisoner education.

**Experiencing escape**

Existing literature identifies libraries as sanctuaries that can be used to escape difficult environments and living situations (Massis, 2012), and reading as a form of escapism (Sweeney, 2010). Prisoners’ experiences of their libraries, and the reading these libraries enables, support these views. A contribution of new knowledge derived from this study is the role of experiencing escape through prison libraries in the mental health of prisoners. Although prisoner mental health was not a focus of this study, prisoners identified the benefits to their mental health and wellbeing from using their library as an escape and as a provider of books. The connection between reading, library use and improved mental health is supported by the extant literature (Brewster, 2014). The connection between the opportunity to move away from restricted or difficult environments, and improved
mental health is also supported by existing research (Guite, Clarke & Akrill, 2006). While the prevalence of the poor mental health of prisoners is evidenced by existing research (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017), the contribution of the prison library to prisoner mental health and wellbeing is not recognised by correctional administrators in their Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia (2012), which makes no mention of it, or in their support and management of prison libraries. This study provides evidence that, by providing an opportunity to ‘escape’, there is an important relationship between access to a library and its collections, and prisoner mental health and wellbeing.

Experiencing the passage of time

The finding that prisoners are experiencing their libraries as a way to pass time is not fully supported by the existing literature about library use. Although some American public library users state they value having access to a library as a quiet and safe place to pass time (Pew Research Center, 2013), most other studies of the value of libraries, and the reasons for patrons using them, do not identify the desire to pass time as a common motivator for library attendance or use (Library Council of New South Wales, 2008; Australian Library and Information Association, 2013). Studies such as these are based around the activities that are undertaken by library users. The common activities are returning and borrowing books, reading books, and searching for information. There is no mention of choosing to come to a library as a means of passing time. It is possible that library users who were surveyed for these studies are motivated to come to the library to pass time, or relieve boredom, and then undertake the reported activities once they are there, but the surveys were not designed to discover this possibility. Existing library usage studies are based on activity, not on motivation. Despite an extensive literature search for a study that explores the motivations by library users to use a library service, no such study was found. There is a gap in our knowledge about what motivates people to use a public library and this could be the focus of future research. This current research provides such a study for the use of prison libraries. The need to pass time in a constructive way was frequently identified as a motivation for prison library use. It is not possible to compare this finding with literature about public library use, as that literature could not be identified. The current research appears to be the first study of library use that has considered motivation and as such, the findings form new knowledge about the use of libraries. Such knowledge is likely to be of interest to groups that manage and fund public, state and territory, and academic libraries as it may suggest a reason why their patrons are choosing to use these libraries.
The finding that prison libraries can play a role in improving prisoner mental health and behaviour is an important finding for the managers of prison libraries. Prison libraries have the potential to fulfil this role because they provide prisoners with a way to spend large amounts of unstructured time. As identified by existing studies (Manolis & Roberts, 2012; Yi, Turney & Wildeman, 2017), living with excessive amounts of free time can lead to depression, frustration and destructive behaviours. A knowledge of the capacity for the library to reduce these problems could encourage prison administrators to ensure prisoners are allowed frequent access to their libraries when possible. Prisons that do not allow any access to their libraries may be encouraged to review this policy and allow access.

Experiencing community

A further contribution to knowledge made by this study is an understanding of how prison libraries enable the formation of supportive communities within prisons, particularly for male prisoners. For the prisoners who have access to libraries, and choose to use them, libraries become a gathering place where communities of like-minded people can come together. In this way, prison libraries act as a ‘third place’ as described by Oldenburg (1997) and provide all the social benefits that these places offer. Despite the requirement that all prisoners have access to a library (Australian Correctional Administrators, 2012), two of the prisons visited for this study did not provide physical access to their libraries. The findings of this study indicate the importance of allowing physical access to library spaces, to enable them to fulfil their role as community meeting places. As noted in the previous section, the knowledge created by this study may be of interest to prison administrators who do not allow access to their libraries, and may encourage them to review this policy.

Libraries also help prisoners stay connected with their families and communities outside prison. This understanding highlights the importance of prison libraries in the quality of life of prisoners, and in enhancing the chances of a successful reintegration as prisoners re-join their communities upon release. This role has not been recognised by the Correctional Administrators in their Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia (2012). Beyond the ‘Read along Dads’ type programs (Gorman, 2015), described in the Chapter 5 Explication and discussion of themes – Part 1, there is no recognition from prison managers that libraries can play a significant role in building and maintaining communities that will benefit prisoners and their communities upon release. This study provides the
evidence that libraries do have a role to play in keeping prisoners connected with their communities outside prison. Such knowledge may challenge prison administrators to develop library programs that strengthen prisoners’ connection to community, such as the purchasing of newspapers for all libraries, and family oriented programs such as children’s author talks and readings to coincide with family visit days.

Experiencing responsibility for self

As mentioned in the discussion of autonomy in Chapter 6 Explication and discussion of themes – Part 2, the Prison Reform Trust (n.d.; 2016) recognises the value of providing opportunities for autonomy to avoid institutionalisation and mental health decline in prisoners. The prisoners interviewed also recognise the importance of autonomy and value the opportunities provided by their libraries to achieve this. The capacity to make choices for themselves in the library is an important activity for prisoners, and they believe this activity helps them avoid institutionalisation. The role of libraries in enabling the experience of autonomy is not recognised by the Australian Correctional Administrators (2012) in their statements about libraries. This omission indicates a lack of understanding of the role of prison libraries and their importance in maintaining prisoner wellbeing as part of experiencing autonomy.

As identified by prisoners, and also in the literature, (Fast, Shoveller and Kerr, 2017), being bored can lead to criminal behaviour, including offending in prison. One of the priorities of prisons is to manage prisoner behaviour (Australian Correctional Administrators, 2012) and to maintain safety and order. Prisoners interviewed identified the role their libraries play in relieving their boredom, and helping them moderate their behaviours by keeping them busy and engaged in something constructive. Libraries were able to achieve this by providing a space where prisoners could calm themselves when angry or upset. The members of the communities that form within the libraries can act as sympathetic listeners when prisoners are frustrated or angry. Prisoners know they can ‘let off steam’ and speak freely in the libraries without concern for being disciplined. The capacity for libraries and their collections to relieve boredom and moderate negative behaviours is an opportunity that is not recognised by the Correctional Administrators.
Experiencing education

One of the goals of Australian prisons is to rehabilitate and reform inmates with the aim of preventing further offending and recidivism (Australian Correctional Administrators 2012). Prisons offer educational opportunities to prisoners in an attempt to improve education levels and to increase employment opportunities after their release. Particular attention is paid to literacy training for prisoners. The link between the use of a library and increased literacy and general learning outcomes has been identified in Chapter 6 Explication and discussion of themes – Part 2. Also identified is the current inability of prison libraries to adequately support prisoner education in this way. In addition, there is no recognition of the connection between libraries and educational attainment within the government documents which review prisoner education (Coates, 2016; Victorian Ombudsman, 2015). Knowledge generated by this study can inform correctional administrators’ understanding of the potential for prison libraries to support their stated goal of furthering prisoner education, and of the current inability of prison libraries to do so.

Implications for practice

Ensuring physical access

Two of the prisons visited for this research did not allow any physical access to their libraries. Many of the positive experiences associated with using a prison library depend on prisoners having physical access to the library. Physical access to the library needs to be possible for a community of like-minded people to form, to experience a physical ‘escape’ to a space other than the cell, to browse for readings suitable to support literacy development, and to provide a space that can act as a sanctuary for prisoners when they are feeling angry or upset. While it is not always possible to allow this to all prisoners, for security reasons, the value of allowing physical access needs to be recognised by correctional administrators.

Extension of library-based outreach programs

Library-based programs that support a connection between prisoners and their families, and also between the prisoners themselves, can be developed to strengthen those connections. Programs
such as the Storybook Dads and RADS programs could be extended to include prisoners who don’t have young children, but do have other family members with whom they would like to maintain a connection through books. Some of the prisoners interviewed maintained connections with family members by organising shared reading, book-based discussion and suggesting books to each other. These practices could be formalised and supported by the library in a way similar to the Storybook Dads and RADS programs. Such support would allow more prisoners to be involved and would assist in maintaining connections between prisoners and their communities outside prison.

Administrative alignment and documentary recognition

Some prison libraries are administered by the staff responsible for recreation within a prison; in other cases, administration is managed by education staff. Prison libraries should be considered an educational resource and should be administered by education managers, or at least be closely linked to education programs, as well as to leisure activities. Giving education managers administrative responsibility for libraries increases their chance of being utilised for education purposes. Currently, education staff are being funded to build their own collections of useful books for their classes, and are then restricting access to these resources to currently enrolled students, and only during class time. Education staff should be encouraged to work with the library to build suitable collections that can support the formal education programs, in addition to being made available more broadly for informal education.

The relationship between prison libraries and prisoner education needs to be explicitly recognised in administrative documents, such as *The Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia* (2012). Without such recognition, prison libraries are likely to continue to be considered irrelevant to prisoner education, and will remain peripheral to the goal of educating prisoners to reduce recidivism. As the connection between library use and improvements in educational outcomes and reducing recidivism is clear, all possible steps should be taken to strengthen the role of the library in supporting prisoner education.
Collection development

Prison libraries have the potential to support the informal learning needs of prisoners. To be able to fulfil this role, funding needs to be provided to libraries to enable them to build collections that meet the information needs of their users. In particular, the collections need to support the operations of the prisons. For example, the library at a prison farm should include farming and animal husbandry resources. There is also a need to create links between the educational programs offered and the library collections. For example, where a prison program offers training in anger management, the library should be funded to provide additional resources on anger management so prisoners can develop their knowledge and derive greater benefit from the training program.

Collections that support common information needs of prisoners should also be developed. Funding should be directed to prison libraries to enable them to provide current resources relating to common health issues, such as hepatitis, anxiety, and depression. As with any library user group, prisoners can be surveyed to assist library managers to determine their users’ information needs. Collection management policies need to be written to reflect these needs, recognising the unique requirements of a prison environment and population. In addition, prison libraries need to build recreational reading collections to assist with the relief of boredom and avoid the associated negative behaviours.

Funding

Each of these implications for practice requires funding from the corrections sector to be directed to prison libraries. It is recognised that this is a significant departure from the current situation, where only one of the seven libraries studied received any funding. However, providing a quality library service to prisoners would benefit both prisoners and prison administrators. Prison libraries have the potential to be powerful supporters of the goals of correctional facilities, but this opportunity will remain dormant without funding. The potential for return on investment is significant and should be considered by correctional administrators.
Research limitations

This research study is limited as a result of a focus on only one question. There are many stories about the role and potential role of prison libraries that could be told, but fall outside the scope of this thesis. Specific limitations of this thesis are identified here.

Location and number of participants

This thesis studied the experience of using a prison library, but can only reflect the experiences of those interviewed. Not all states and territories of Australia are represented. Not all prisons within the states and territories studied are represented, and not all users of the libraries were interviewed. While a study such as this would not expect to be able to represent the views of all potential participants, the number of participants included, and the consistencies between their experiences, indicates the validity of the research findings. However, it is possible that another story would be told if different participants were interviewed, from different prisons, from other states and territories. It is also possible that a different story would be told by other prisoners from the prisons within the study, had they been selected as participants. This thesis can only be a representation of the experiences of those interviewed.

Theoretical framework

Although the phenomenological approach to analysis used resulted in the identification of themes in common to all prisoner experiences, there are smaller stories that are lost and subsumed into the broader story told by the data. By finding commonalities between experiences, some finer distinctions between experiences are obscured. For example, the observation of a prisoner that he had no expectation that his library would be able to support his learning needs, or his delight that there was such a thing as a library in a prison at all, is lost when this statement is collated and represented by the broader negative experience of education.

One of the aims of this research was to enable the voices of the prisoners to be heard. While this has been achieved, particularly within chapters 5 and 6 – Explication and discussion of themes – Parts 1
and 2, many individual comments and voices remain hidden within the transcripts of interviews, and have not been heard. This occurs because their messages were already represented within the themes derived from other transcripts. So although their experiences have been identified and represented, their individual voices may not have been heard.

Sampling method

I was not able to influence the selection of participants for this study. Much of the selection was undertaken by the prisoners responsible for the day-to-day operation of their libraries, as only they were aware of the names of frequent library users. Without exception, the individuals running the libraries, including the librarian working within the Alexander Maconochie Centre library, were very proud of their libraries. It is possible that they wanted to give a good impression of their library and therefore selected participants who would support such a view. It is possible that a different sampling method may have resulted in different findings. However, although the prisoners interviewed value their libraries highly, they were not averse to making negative comments about them, and they were critical of many aspects of their libraries. In addition, the consistency of the findings across sites indicate that the findings are valid and that this is a broadly representative study.

Further study

This study answers many questions about the experience of using an Australian prison library, but also raises others that were not able to be answered by the data collected. It would be worthwhile to examine why many prisoners do not choose to use their library. Given the low literacy levels of many prisoners, it may be reasonable to assume that their lack of ability to read would be reason to keep them away from the library. However, many of the benefits of using a prison library, such as to experience escape, to experience community, and to experience the passage of time, do not depend on being able to read. Further study could be undertaken to examine the reasons why non-library users choose to stay away from the library during their time in prison, when they have the possibility of going there. If prison administrators wish, to increase the number of prisoners making use of their libraries, such a study would provide them with reasons for non-use that could then be addressed to encourage greater library use.
Chapter 7 Conclusion

Another question not able to be answered by the data gathered is how much the presence of a qualified, non-prisoner library worker within a prison library influences the experience of using a prison library. The prisoners’ levels of satisfaction with and perceived benefits from using the only library with a qualified librarian were consistently higher and more positive than that of the users of other libraries. Due to the lack of ability to compare this data with other prison libraries managed by library-qualified, non-prisoner staff, it is not possible to say if the positive experiences identified by users of this library were influenced by her presence, or by some other factor. A comparative study of experiences of users of prison libraries, both with and without library-qualified, non-prisoner staff, would illustrate the degree of influence this level of staffing has on the user experience. Such a study would be of benefit to prison management who might then choose to staff their prison libraries differently, depending on the results this study identified, and their views of the library.

The current study is based on data gathered from prisoners housed in seven Australian prisons across three states and territories. Therefore, there is no understanding of how the experiences of prisoners in this study differ or align with the experiences of prisoners housed in prisons in other states or territories. It is likely that the experiences of prisoners in other states and territories would be similar to those in the current study, as the operations of their prisons are guided by the same national guidelines as those within the study, but this remains unconfirmed. Another interesting study may be a comparative investigation between the experience of Australian prison library users and prison library users from other countries, whose prisons are guided by other guidelines and policies, and where libraries are more valued. Such a study could identify library practices that might lead to more positive outcomes for Australian prison library users if they were adopted by Australian prison managers.

One observation from this study that could warrant further investigation from researchers outside the library studies community is that female prisoners who are housed in cottage-style accommodation choose to come to the library to escape each other, while male prisoners who also live in cottage-style accommodation choose to come to the library to seek each other’s company. Prisoners housed in cottages live closely with a small group of others, and share kitchen and living spaces with the group. They also share a bedroom with at least one other prisoner. Why do men and women respond differently to this style of accommodation in terms of seeking to connect with, or
Chapter 7 Conclusion

isolate themselves from, others? This is perhaps a question to be answered by a gender studies or anthropological researcher.

A significant issue identified during this research was the inadequacy of prison libraries to support the legal information needs of prisoners. The recognition exists that prisoners with ongoing legal matters need to have access to legal resources (Australian Correctional Administrators, 2012), but there is little recognition that many of these prisoners are being housed within prisons for inmates whose legal proceedings have been finalised, and that these prisoners do not have the access to the legal resources they require. This is a constant source of frustration and anxiety for the affected prisoners. The implications of the inadequacy of legal resource availability for the prisoners, warrants further study. Researchers interested in equity and access to the judicial process would find much to report in such a study.

The findings of this study indicate that prisoners’ need to pass time is a motivating factor, for choosing to read or visit their library. These findings are at odds with existing research (Rainie et al. 2012; Schutte & Malouff, 2007), that does not find the need to pass time as a motivating factor for visiting a library, or reading, outside prison. This difference in motivation could perhaps be explained by the unique experience of prison time, as described by Armstrong (2015), Cope (2003) and Manolis and Roberts (2012). Further study could be undertaken to explore the relationship between the experience of time in prison, and choices made by prisoners about how to spend that time, compared with the leisure choices made by people living outside prisons, who have a different experience of time. Such a study would add to our understanding of prisoner leisure choices. This understanding could assist prison administrators in providing leisure opportunities to prisoners that would best meet their needs to pass large amounts of unstructured time in a positive and constructive way.
Final words

Previous studies of libraries in prisons have approached the topic from historic, management and operational perspectives, such as the changing nature of prison library collections from those designed to support moral and religious reform, to those that more closely resemble the collections of public libraries. Other publications have focussed on the guidelines and legislation that relate to prison libraries, including the rights of prisoners, the right to read, and the practices of censorship in prison libraries. The information and education needs of prisoners have been explored in the literature, as have the desired professional and personal attributes of prison library staff, and the importance of having them employed in prison libraries. What was largely missing from the body of literature relating to prison libraries was the voices, opinions and experiences of the men and women who use them. This study has given voice to some of these people, and has uncovered and explored their experiences of using an Australian prison library.

The aim of this research was to answer the question: How do Australian prisoners experience the use of a prison library? Through a process of phenomenological enquiry, it has been determined that prisoners experience their libraries as a source of ‘escape’, a means to pass time constructively, a place that enables connection to others, and a place that provides opportunities for taking responsibility for themselves. Prisoners also experience their libraries as having great potential to support their educations and futures, yet recognise that, in their current state, they are unable to fulfil this role. Despite the significant shortcomings of prison libraries, the prisoners who use them value them greatly, and prisoners experience them as vital to their survival within the prison.
Appendix 1 – Participant consent and information forms

For use by prisoners to be interviewed.

Project Title: The lived experience of Australian prison libraries: a phenomenological study

Investigators:

Principal Researcher: Dr. Sue Reynolds, Ph: +61 3 9925 1310, email: sue.reynolds@rmit.edu.au

Associate Researcher: Professor Ross Harvey Ph: +61 3 9925 5807 email: ross.harvey@rmit.edu.au

Student Researcher: Jane Garner, email: jane.garner@rmit.edu.au

Dear __________________________,

You are invited to take part in a research project being run by RMIT University. Please read this sheet carefully to make sure that you understand what it is saying before deciding if you would like to take part. If you have any questions, please ask one of the investigators.

Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being done?

This research is being done to provide information that will be used by Jane Garner, the student researcher, who is enrolled in a Doctoral degree at the RMIT University, Melbourne. Jane will use the information you give her to help her write her research thesis. Jane has two supervisors, Dr. Sue Reynolds and Professor Ross Harvey. Her supervisors are employed by RMIT and are assisting Jane with all stages of her project.
Appendix 1 – Participant Consent and Information Forms

Why have you been approached?

You have been asked to take part in this research because the researcher is interested in your views of the library in your prison.

What is the project about?

This project is about libraries in Australian prisons. The researcher is interested in how well the library is able to give you what you need for your education, reading for pleasure and any legal matters that you are involved in. These questions will be asked at seven different Australian prisons. It is expected that about 35 different people will help by answering questions. In each prison, four prisoners will be interviewed and one prison staff member who is responsible for the library will also be interviewed.

If I join in, what will I need to do?

If you decide to help with this project, the researcher will meet with you and interview you about your impressions of the library at your prison. The meeting will take about one hour. If you wish, you may see the questions the researcher will be asking before you agree to take part. A digital sound recording of what you have to say will be made. It is possible that you may be identifiable from this sound recording. If you agree to take part, you will need to sign the attached consent form.

What are the possible risks and disadvantages?

You will not be put at risk by taking part in this project. You will be asked to give about one hour of your time. The researcher is only interested in your thoughts about your library. You may decide what you say and what you don’t say. At no time will you be asked to identify yourself. Any information that you give that may identify you will be removed from the data collected. Your identity is not important to this study, so your identity will not be referred to at any time during this research, or any reports that may use the information you give.
Appendix 1 – Participant Consent and Information Forms

How will I benefit?

You will not be paid for taking part, but your opinions will be audio recorded and will help the researcher report on your library.

What will happen to the information I give?

An audio recording will be made of our meeting. What you say will be typed out into a document later. All the information taken from the meeting will be held securely at RMIT University. You will never have to say anything personal about yourself, so no-one will be able to identify you in the final report. All the information you provide will be kept securely for 5 years, then it will be destroyed. While the report is being written, only the research team will be able to see the information you provide. As a participant, you may ask to see any information you provide at any time. After the report is written, the Department of Justice and Corrections Victoria will be given a copy. Your name or institution will not be identified in the report. It is possible that the information you provide may be used in conference and journal papers, and a copy of the report will be kept by RMIT University and will be able to be read online by members of the public. You will never be identified in anything produced from the information you provide.

What are my rights as a participant?

• The right to leave the project at any time
• The right to ask to stop the sound recording
• The right to have any information you have given removed from the project and destroyed
• The right to have any questions answered at any time.

Whom should I contact if I have any questions?

You may contact the Principal Researcher, Dr. Sue Reynolds at any time if you have any questions. Her phone number is at the top of this form.

What other issues should I be aware of before deciding whether to take part?

There are no other issues that you need to be aware of.
Appendix 1 – Participant Consent and Information Forms

Yours sincerely,

_________________________________________________

Dr. Sue Reynolds

PhD - Charles Sturt University, Master of Library Science, San Jose State University, California, Bachelor of Education, State College of Victoria at Melbourne.

_________________________________________________

Jane Garner

BBus (Information & Library Management), RMIT University.

If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity, Governance and Systems, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001. Tel: (03)9925 2251 or email human.ethics@rmit.edu.au
Consent Form

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet.
2. I agree to participate in the research project as described
3. I agree that my voice will be audio recorded
4. I acknowledge that:
   a. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to leave the project at any time and to have any information I have given destroyed.
   b. The project is for the purposes of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
   c. Everything I say will be kept private and safe and never shared without my permission unless required by law. You should not mention anything about illegal behaviours that you have not been charged with or have not been dealt with by a court.
   d. The information gathered during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to the Department of Justice and Corrections Victoria. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant’s Consent

Participant: ____________________________ Date: _______________
(Signature)

Witness: ______________________________ Date: _______________
(Signature)
Appendix 1 – Participant Consent and Information Forms

For use by library staff: DCS employees in charge of library services

Project Title: The lived experience of Australian prison libraries: a phenomenological study

Investigators:

Principal Researcher: Dr. Sue Reynolds, Ph: +61 3 9925 1310, email: sue.reynolds@rmit.edu.au

Associate Researcher: Professor Ross Harvey Ph: +61 3 9925 5807 email: ross.harvey@rmit.edu.au

Student Researcher: Jane Garner, email: jane.garner@rmit.edu.au

Dear __________________________,

You are invited to take part in a research project being run by RMIT University. Please read this sheet carefully to make sure that you understand what it is saying before deciding if you would like to take part. If you have any questions, please ask one of the investigators.

Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being done?

This research is being done to provide information that will be used by Jane Garner, the student researcher. Jane will use the information you give her to help her write her research thesis. This project will result in a Doctoral thesis that will be judged by her university, RMIT. Jane has two supervisors, Dr. Sue Reynolds and Professor Ross Harvey. Her supervisors are employed by RMIT and are assisting Jane will all stages of her project.

This project has been approved by the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee and the Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee.
Appendix 1 – Participant Consent and Information Forms

Why have you been approached?

You have been asked to take part in this research because you are responsible for the day to day operation of the library in your prison.

What is the project about?

This project is about libraries in Australian prisons. The researcher is interested in how well the library is able to give prisoners what they need for their education, reading for pleasure and any legal matters that they are involved in. These questions are being asked at three different Australian prisons, a high security prison, a medium security prison and a low security prison. One library worker from each prison will help by answering questions.

If I join in, what will I need to do?

If you decide to help with this project, you will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview. The interview will take approximately one hour. The questions will be about the library you work in and how it is run. If you wish, you may see the questions the researcher will be asking before you agree to take part. A digital sound recording will be made of what you have to say. If you agree to take part, you will need to sign the attached consent form.

What are the possible risks and disadvantages?

You will not be put at risk by taking part in this project. You will be asked to give approximately one hour of your time. The researcher is only interested in what you say about the library. You may decide what you say and what you don’t say.

How will I benefit?

You will not be paid for taking part, but your opinions will be audio recorded and will assist the research project on the prison library.
Appendix 1 – Participant Consent and Information Forms

What will happen to the information I give?

A digital sound recording will be made of your interview. What you say will be typed out into a document later. All the information from the interview will be held securely at RMIT University. All the information you provide will be kept securely for 5 years, then it will be destroyed. As a participant in this study, you may ask to see any information you have provided at any time. While the report is being written, only the research team will be able to see the information you provide. After the report is written, the Department of Justice and Corrections Victoria will be given a copy. Your name or institution will not be identified in the report. It is possible that the information you provide will be used in conference and journal papers. A copy of the report will be kept by RMIT University and will be able to be read online by members of the public.

What are my rights as a participant?

- The right to leave the project at any time.
- The right to ask to stop the sound recording
- The right to have any information you have given removed from the project and destroyed.
- The right to have any questions answered at any time.

Whom should I contact if I have any questions?

You may contact the Principal Researcher, Dr. Sue Reynolds at any time if you have any questions. Her phone number is at the top of this form.

What other issues should I be aware of before deciding whether to take part?

There are no other issues that you need to be aware of.
Appendix 1 – Participant Consent and Information Forms

Yours sincerely,

_________________________________________________
Dr. Sue Reynolds

PhD - Charles Sturt University, Master of Library Science, San Jose State University, California, Bachelor of Education, State College of Victoria at Melbourne.

_________________________________________________
Jane Garner

BBus (Information & Library Management), RMIT University.

If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity, Governance and Systems, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001. Tel: (03)9925 2251 or email human.ethics@rmit.edu.au
Appendix 1 – Participant Consent and Information Forms

Consent Form

5. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet.
6. I agree to participate in the research project as described
7. I agree that my voice will be audio recorded
8. I acknowledge that:
   a. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to leave the
      project at any time and to have any information I have given destroyed.
   b. The project is for the purposes of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
   c. Everything I say will be kept private and safe and never shared without my
      permission unless required by law.
   d. The information gathered during the study may be published, and a report of the
      project outcomes will be provided to the Department of Justice and Corrections
      Victoria. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant’s Consent

Participant: ____________________________ Date: ________________

(Signature)

Witness: _______________________________ Date: ________________

(Signature)
## Appendix 2 – Coded data and themes

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### Codes

- Connection to others inside
- Reading as escape
- Library as therapy
- Library as escape
- Connection to others outside
- Library as supporting literacy development
- Connection to others outside
- Library as opportunity for autonomy
- Reading to pass time
- Reading to pass time
- Library as escape

### Themes

- Experiencing escape
- Experiencing time
- Experiencing community
- Experiencing responsibility for self
- Library as supporting literacy development
VICMP1 Summary

Pseudonym: Greg

Gender: Male

Prison: Marngoneet Correctional Centre

Security Level: Medium

State: Victoria

Prison profile:

Marngoneet Correctional Centre has been described in Chapter 4 – Research sites.

Prisoner profile:

Greg was a man in his late sixties and held the shared role of prisoner librarian. He told me that he had been through a number of prisons but all as part of the sentence for the one crime. He was enormously proud of the library and said that he felt that it was his own place. He said he loved being in the library and would live in it if he could. He was keen to show me the loans and catalogue system that the library has running. He told me that in his life before prison he was in management roles and ran his own business. He found it hard to sit and not work and so asked the prison management if he could run the library. He believed it was important and that it was not being run well and wanted to do better. He was told that at his age he was ineligible for work duties and would be taking the job of someone else. He persisted and was granted permission to work in the library.

Greg told me that he had been unwell recently and had spent some time in the Thomas Embling Hospital, a forensic psychiatric hospital. While at the hospital he worried about who was looking after the library and also picked up some ideas about new features he would like to see in the library. He wanted to allow prisoners to visit the library to listen to music as he had been able to do in hospital. His suggestion was not supported by Mobilong.
The codes most frequently assigned to Greg’s interview were:

1. Connection to others inside
2. Library as gathering place
3. Connection with informal education
4. Library as escape
5. Library as therapy
6. Connection with formal education

**Connection to others inside**

**Greg:** ...if it is quiet I do any letters for myself, or anybody else that wants them done. A lot of guys come down to the library, and ask if we can do letters for parole for them. Guys might come down and say, "Look I want to write to parole, I don't know how to do it." I just say, "Look, put your basic details down," and I’ll draw the letter up, and print them out letter. Another lad the other day ... I just looked up there this morning whether that delivered or not. Lad came the other day, he wanted his grandpa to have access to his bank account, and other things that he had. So, I did him up an authorization letter for his grandpa to, you know, take to the bank and so forth.

So there's those things. There's quite a lot of prisoners in here that can't read or write, and a lot of them just don't know how to put a letter together. So, I've done ... I don't know, I suppose, with the way parole is changing, I've probably done fifty parole letters for guys.

Some of them might just write them. Like guys will come in and say, "Look, I've written this letter out by hand. Can I give it to you? Can you type it up? Can you fix it all up for me, the spelling errors and all that? Just do it nice."

**Greg:** Yeah. Like a lot of guys says, "Well, when will it be coming in? When are you buying it?" It just doesn’t work like that. All we can do is put your name on the list, and ... Like if someone comes in and says, "You've got six books here on Harry Potter, but book two is missing." We can have a look and see who's got it on loan, and contact them only regarding, to see if, are you finished with this
book here. Or we can put the person’s name down, and when it comes in we just find them and give them the book. It works mainly by memory, but we do try and let guys know, like if Jake’s just brought thirty or forty books in. When guys come down, I'll say, "Look, Jake's just brought thirty or forty new books down, this is what they are." So, they can look through, and see oh yeah I haven't read this.

**JG:** What are you reading at the moment?

**Greg:** Strangely enough, it’s called, and I was only given it Sunday night, Self Help And Well Being. A guy actually in the cell opposite me, came across and gave me, "T**** can you take these books back to the library for me." Because a lot of guys will come to my cell and say, "Look, can you take these back, rather than come down cause they might have to go to work or something." When he came across, he said, "Would you like to read this book and it's called 'Self Help and Good Health' or something like that."

**Greg:** To be honest, it's seemed to have formed up a good little crew now in the library. K**** comes down. I mentioned to you before, he was doing his legal work and he was down there every morning. And somebody else comes down that's doing some stuff, and another guy comes in. We all chat and someone brings coffee. We've got a hot water service that we just go, you know, get the hot water, and we bring our own coffee and milk and sugar. We have a cup of coffee, and talk, and K***** came back from court and we didn't see him for a while, and were sort of wondering how everything went. He came in yesterday - “Hi guys”. And “Awww K***** where you been?”. And we're all here for a couple of hours and using the computer and It's all a bit of fun, and I don't know whether the other guys have that on their shifts. But I think it's just something I've tried to create in there that's just a..... They're not a rowdy bunch. It's just a quiet bunch, but we have a laugh and that.

**JG:** So, it's like a community.

**Greg:** Yeah. It is, and seems to be away from, even though we're all prisoners, it seems to be away from like, the prison proper. And you don't seem to have to be called a prisoner in it.
Appendix 3 – Four Participant Summaries

Greg: It’s important like I told some of the billets ... Like A****** might be working there with me and a guy can’t find a book or something, and I’ll say look A****** “Can you help me?” To offer assistance, and be pleasant to the people. Always say, coming in and we don’t know their name, “What’s your name?” Because we put in the computer for a borrower’s number. “Oh it’s ‘Jim’ so and so. Okay, and happy reading Jim” or “Have a good read”, and so forth.

Greg: Really we got some really good people come in and borrowing books now, and talk, and have a chat.

JG: So, the library is important to you to give you, like a sense of purpose?

Greg: Yeah. Look, I was always in a managerial role, and I had my own company after that, but tragedy brought me to prison. I’ve always got to work for this sense of satisfaction, and that I’ve helped others enjoy their day, and stuff like that. I mean, when I was leaving because I was going to the hospital, I was pushing a trolley across and people were on the path saying “Who’s going to run the library? What’s going to happen to the library?”

Greg: Yeah. Also, we have a bit of a system where I get the paper Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Dave, my mate, gets the paper Monday, somebody else gets it Tuesday, and somebody Wednesday. They all read it, but they give it to me last thing at night, to read the paper. My turn is at night time. Then, I put it in the bag, and bring it down the next day to the library. So, I’m really bringing my own down. I’m careful when I put it out, because, no names mentioned, one particular billet will sit there the whole afternoon reading the paper and do nothing. So, you know, I won’t usually put it out until he’s done a few things around the place.

Greg: Well, if I look at all the prisons, I think the benefits us to learn. They use it for additional education. They use it to do their homework, and some people just come down to have a quiet moment, and sit there and read the paper. I think it’s really necessary, and as I say ... I’ve not made it a habit to go to lots of prisons, but the few I’ve been to, I’ve never seen it laid out like this where you can borrow stuff, that’s just ... Not borrow stuff, but relaxing. It used to actually have a coffee machine and lounges, but prisoners were stealing the coffee and sugar, so they closed all that down. It was before my time, but that would’ve been really nice.
Appendix 3 – Four Participant Summaries

Jane Garner

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**JG:** Does the library help you feel connected to others?

**Greg:** Yeah. Yeah. It helps me connect there, but it also helps me connect to other prisoners. I've never been in a prison where I've had so many friends that I've got in this prison, and I really think it's because of my job in the library. I think one because I'm known to help people. The other billets that used to be there, used to put their feet up on the desk, computer blaring with music and stuff like that. We've stopped all that, and I think it's because I have helped people and done letters for people.

I mean, there's a guy who comes down here, and Jake saw him the other day and couldn't believe it, and he comes down and sits and talks with me. While he was talking with me, he covers books. He actually works cleaning the laundry, but because he wants to come down and talk to me, he'll sit there and cover a few books while he's there. I'll just say to him, look you want to cover some books, he'll cover some books. Guys just come down and sit and talk and do things for me. It's great.

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**JG:** How does using the library make you feel?

**Greg:** Relaxed. Annoyed sometimes, because the buggers don't put... Like last night I was straightening all the magazines up. I come in this morning and they're all over the place again. But it makes me relaxed and also you just... Like people coming down. The interaction with people. You hear things and see, you know. It's not really a gossip center like the medical department is. If you want to know anything in prison you get on the medical line. It's not a gossip center. We do hear a few things here and there.

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**Summary of Connection to others inside**

Greg is experiencing the library as a means of connecting to others inside the prison. This connection is facilitated by his role as prisoner librarian (library billet). This role allows him to interact with others both within the library as also outside the library. He is able to learn the names of others and the opportunity to be helpful to others in the library means that he is respected and liked outside the library. He feels to be part of a community that is based around the library and believes that has made good friends with others whom he has met through the library. Greg chooses to take library books to other prisoners who can’t get to the library themselves and also receives reading recommendations from other prisoners.
Library as gathering place

**Greg:** To be honest, it's seemed to have formed up a good little crew now in the library. K***** comes down. I mentioned to you before, he was doing his legal work and he was down there every morning. And somebody else comes down that's doing some stuff, and another guy comes in. We all chat and someone brings coffee. We've got a hot water service that we just go, you know, get the hot water, and we bring our own coffee and milk and sugar. We have a cup of coffee, and talk, and K***** came back from court and we didn't see him for a while, and were sort of wondering how everything went. He came in yesterday - “Hi guys”. And “Aww K***** where you been?”. And we’re all here for a couple of hours and using the computer and It's all a bit of fun, and I don't know whether the other guys have that on their shifts. But I think it's just something I've tried to create in there that’s just a..... They’re not a rowdy bunch. It’s just a quiet bunch, but we have a laugh and that.

**JG:** So, it's like a community.

**Greg:** Yeah. It is, and seems to be away from, even though we're all prisoners, it seems to be away from like, the prison proper. And you don't seem to have to be called a prisoner in it.

**Greg:** Really we got some really good people come in and borrowing books now, and talk, and have a chat.

**JG:** What do you think the library offers you? What are the benefits to you in using the library?

**Greg:** Well, if I look at all the prisons, I think the benefits us to learn. They use it for additional education. They use it to do their homework, and some people just come down to have a quiet moment, and sit there and read the paper. I think it's really necessary, and as I say ... I've not made it a habit to go to lots of prisons, but the few I've been to, I've never seen it laid out like this where you can borrow stuff, that's just ... Not borrow stuff, but relaxing. It used to actually have a coffee machine and lounges, but prisoners were stealing the coffee and sugar, so they closed all that down. It was before my time, but that would've been really nice.
Appendix 3 – Four Participant Summaries

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I mean, there's a guy who comes down here, and Jake saw him the other day and couldn't believe it, and he comes down and sits and talks with me. While he was talking with me, he covers books. He actually works cleaning the laundry, but because he wants to come down and talk to me, he'll sit there and cover a few books while he's there. I'll just say to him, look you want to cover some books, he'll cover some books. Guys just come down and sit and talk and do things for me. It's great.

JG: Okay. How does using the library make you feel?

Greg: Relaxed. Annoyed sometimes, because the buggers don't put... Like last night I was straightening all the magazines up. I come in this morning and they're all over the place again. But it makes me relaxed and also you just ... Like people coming down. The interaction with people. You hear things and see, you know. It's not really a gossip center like the medical department is. If you want to know anything in prison you get on the medical line. It's not a gossip center. We do hear a few things here and there.

Summary of Library as gathering place

Greg is experiencing the library as a gathering place for prisoners to come to spend time with each other. Due to their freedom of movement during the day, prisoners are permitted to visit the library if it is open and they do not have other commitments. Gary enjoys the community that has developed within the library and values the friendships that this offers him. This type of interaction with other men makes him feel less like a prisoner because it is an example of a relationship that could be occurring outside to the prison.
Appendix 3 – Four Participant Summaries

Connection with informal education

JG: What do you think the library offers you? What are the benefits to you in using the library?

Greg: Well, if I look at all the prisons, I think the benefits us to learn. They use it for additional education. They use it to do their homework, and some people just come down to have a quiet moment, and sit there and read the paper. I think it's really necessary.

Greg: A lot of Australian history. The indigenous guys that do art, a lot of the guys that do art, come in and borrow books to use for their art lessons. Then after their art lessons, they bring them back to us. The indigenous guys might come and say, "Look I want a book with a kangaroo in it, or a book with an elephant in it, or whatever." Snakes, birds. Lots of guys come in for books with birds and stuff like that. I think they get that off that Attenborough show. We have a big following of Indigenous people just people coming and borrowing books from there for painting, but there is a lot of books go out for painting in there.

Summary of Connection with informal education

Greg recognizes the role of the library as a means of gaining an education outside of the formal programs offered by the prison. This occurs both by offering a place where prisoners can sit and read and by offering books to prisoners who want to learn more about art or something they see on television.

Library as escape

JG: Okay. What do you enjoy about using the library?

Greg: I enjoy it because it's quiet, and I personally, working here, step into a different world. I've written to my friends quite a lot from the library, and said you know I'm looking out one window and there's an oval out there with units which could be an old folks home, or ... I mean this place looks like a campus, and then I look out the other window and there's a beautiful rose garden, and It's quiet, I see it as sort of mine. I shouldn't think like that, and I know Jake (officer in charge of recreation) worries that I do sometimes, because I'll want to work every shift and all that sort of stuff.
Appendix 3 – Four Participant Summaries

I find its the place that I go to personally, and I know other guys do come in, read papers, stuff like that just to get away from it. You know, you don't have to put up with ... I lived in a cottage for a little while, that's hard. I've lived in the cell, in a single cell, and I'm in a pod, which is nice, but I couldn't stay there all day and listen to the people. I've got to get away from them.

**JG:** So, it's like a community.

**Greg:** Yeah. It is, and seems to be away from, even though we're all prisoners, it seems to be away from like, the prison proper. And you don't seem to have to be called a prisoner in it.

**Greg:** ....some people just come down to have a quiet moment, and sit there and read the paper. I think it's really necessary.

**Summary of Library as escape**

Greg is experiencing the library as an escape from the rest of the prison. When he is the library, he can almost imagine that he is not in prison at all. He uses the library to 'step into a different world' and it makes him feel like he is not a prisoner at all. He recognizes the need prisoners have to remove themselves from their units and believes the library is a place where they can come and have some quiet time away from other prisoners.

**Library as therapy**

**Greg:** I find its the place that I go to personally, and I know other guys do come in, read papers, stuff like that just to get away from it. You know, you don't have to put up with ... I lived in a cottage for a little while, that's hard. I've lived in the cell, in a single cell, and I'm in a pod, which is nice, but I couldn't stay there all day and listen to the people. I've got to get away from them.

**Greg:** I'd like to see a bit of music down there perhaps that you could plug in headphones. You could come in here and just sit back, just to sit quiet. I was in Thomas Embling Hospital for a while, the psychiatric hospital, and in there we could go into a little room and just put on a stereo with really soft music, or it doesn't have to be soft. If they want it loud they can have it loud, but they have to wear headphones. I'd like to see a few CDs in here. Particularly the ones where you can
listen to them and you hear the river, and the waterfalls, and the birds. I think it’d be perfect just to have that.

**JG:** Yeah. It would.

**Greg:** Just with points maybe. It could be run from Jake’s office or somewhere. He could just put the CDs on, and we’d just plug the headphones in. Particularly for prisoners when they’re having a problem, because if you’re uptight and you’re having a problem, sometimes you can’t read, you just can’t concentrate, but you can listen to that type of music and just settle yourself down a bit. I think it’d be great to have those points in here.

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**Summary of Library as therapy**

Greg is experiencing the library as a therapeutic space. He recognizes that having a place to remove himself to and to read is of benefit to him. He would like to enhance this role of the library by including the possibility to listen to music on headphones and by having a place in the library where the prisoners could sit on couches and make coffee for themselves. He recognizes the ability to do activities such as these in the library would have a ‘settling’ effect on the prisoners.

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**Connection with formal education**

**JG:** How well do you think the library is able to satisfy your needs for your education?

**Greg:** Yeah, fairly well. We have a loan number for education and we lend them books. Naomi, she’s an English teacher here, she comes and gets books. We look for books for her too, because a lot of guys here struggle with reading and writing, she’s always looking for easy reading books.
Before the library was relaid, there used to be a little section for easy reading. I don’t know what happened to it along the way, but it just all got put in with fiction or whatever. Now, we have just set it up again, and we’ve got books in there for her. Naomi would have, I suppose, she’s probably got about twelve books out on loan at the moment.

Horticulture had about thirty-six books out a while ago – the Horticulture teacher. I actually rounded those up, because I was a bit concerned they’d been out too long, and we got those all back. The new horticulture teacher’s come and borrowed a couple since.

Also, we do have computer technology books here, and also training computers. Like if a guys doing a computer course down in IT, he might be allowed to take the latest book away, but surely you know with computers, last year’s books just as good. It’s just got one other thing, so we hold ... We might have something, like we might have 2012 version there, or 2006, or 2005, or whatever. Guys can still use those books, and sit on a computer here, and do their lessons.

JG: That’s good.

Greg: So, we provide those. We have a lot of students ... Unfortunately, we've only got two computers. We used to have three computers in there when I came. One broke down and they didn’t replace it. We were told after Christmas, we were going to get five computers. That hasn’t happened, so we’ve only got two. A lot of guys do come down, and do education on those two computers during the week and also weekends.

**Summary of Connection with formal education**

Greg recognizes the role the library can play as a support for the formal education programs run by the prison. The support is experienced by the prisoners undertaking literacy training and by prisoners working within vocational programs.

**Summary of Greg – VICMP1**

As the prisoner librarian, Greg is able to experience the library as a means of connecting with other prisoners when they visit the library and when he moves through the other parts of the prison, as he knows the names of the prisoners who visit the library. He values the opportunity the library gives him to remove himself from the cell block and all its stressors, and to be a part of a community of people with whom he feels comfortable and whose company he enjoys. Interacting within this community and being in the library space helps him feel less like a prisoner and almost as if he were
in “another world” and not in prison at all. He experiences this opportunity as a form of therapy and his recognition of this role has led him to ideas of how this role could be enhanced. Greg recognizes the role the library can play in supporting both formal and informal education through a space to read, the book collection and the two workstation computers that are available.
Appendix 3 – Four Participant Summaries

**VICPP3 Summary**

**Pseudonym:** Paul

**Gender:** Male

**Prison:** Port Phillip Prison

**Security Level:** Maximum

**State:** Victoria

**Prison profile:**

Port Phillip Prison has been described in Chapter 4 – Research sites.

**Prisoner profile:**

Paul describes himself as a ‘typical mature-age student’. He is studying a Bachelor of Arts at Curtin University, Perth. He manages to get readings from Deakin University to support his education. He pays a yearly membership fee to Deakin to be able to use their mailing services. Deakin University will post books to Paul as he requests them. Paul has a history of both reading and library use. He uses the prison library every week day except for Wednesdays when the ‘Protection Prisoners’ use the library. He reads books from the prison library for recreation, but spends most of his time in the library using the computers in the back room. He also borrows recreational reading from Deakin University. Paul remembers how the prison library used to be and misses the place that it was before the changes. (The library used to be housed in more rooms and there was space for seating and tables. All but the small spaces left were taken over by Education staff offices.)

The codes most frequently assigned to Paul’s interview were:

1. Connection to others inside
2. Library as gathering place
3. Connection with formal education
4. Role in behaviour management
5. Reading as escape

**Connection to others inside**

Paul: I must say that has something to do with space. I don’t know if you whether you were being told, but we used to have a much bigger library. That was where the TAFE offices are now, in that...
Jane Garner

building. I was a librarian there at the time, and what was good about it was, there was space for people to come in and read. There was little tables and chairs, and computers, or they could sit and ... we don’t have newspapers any more.

We used to get the daily newspapers in the library. Port Phillip prison administration decided that was too expensive, and so they got rid of them. It was a much better atmosphere, more convivial, more people came in and had a chat, and that was all right as long as they were quiet. More people came in to work, because there were more computers. We have the same books but we had more space, any other books came in.

Paul: When I ran the library here. I probably would, yes. I might get two or three people coming in and take books out, and the next day there might be ten or fifteen, so there is no particular thing, but the idea is to have it there. It is an option rather than drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes and talking bullshit. It is what most of them do, and it is going to get even worse, they are going to ban smoking pretty soon.

That is going to cause a lot of trouble, because the main thing is not the smoking, it is the time they are up for example to roll a cigarette. It takes a half an hour or an hour in the day, the cigarettes you need to roll and all that stuff, because there is nothing else to do, is there? So trouble is going to be caused. If you have a library, a proper library, proper education, apart from employment, there is other things to do. Keep your mind active.

Paul: Again that has got to do with the space in there at the moment, because there is nowhere people can sit down and read, or get a couple of books and have a bit of a look through, and taking a couple out. That is the main ... a library is supposed to be for reading and it is not. It is for going in, looking at a book, and taking it out again. Which is all very well, but it does not create a need for the library, where before there was, with the newspapers and with the little spaces to read. A nice quiet convivial atmosphere to read, that even if people just came in and sat for a while, it was good.

Paul: Again I hate to harp back to the fact that the other library had places to read and stuff like that. I don’t know if they can ever do that by knocking out a wall, but that is what is needed in there now, is a reading space, especially if they get the papers.
Summary of Connection to others inside

Paul spoke about experiences he had in the library before it was changed to a very small space. He experienced the library as a means of connecting with others when the library had the space for people to come together and read the papers and talk with one another. He recognizes the value of these interactions and also recognizes that they are no longer possible.

Library as gathering place

Paul: I must say that has something to do with space. I don’t know if you whether you were being told, but we used to have a much bigger library. That was where the TAFE offices are now, in that building. I was a librarian there at the time, and what was good about it was, there was space for people to come in and read. There was little tables and chairs, and computers, or they could sit and ... we don’t have newspapers any more.

We used to get the daily newspapers in the library. Port Phillip prison administration decided that was too expensive, and so they got rid of them. It was a much better atmosphere, more convivial, more people came in and had a chat, and that was all right as long as they were quiet. More people came in to work, because there were more computers. We have the same books but we had more space, any other books came in.

Paul: When I ran the library here. I probably would, yes. I might get two or three people coming in and take books out, and the next day there might be ten or fifteen, so there is no particular thing, but the idea is to have it there. It is an option rather than drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes and talking bullshit. It is what most of them do, and it is going to get even worse, they are going to ban smoking pretty soon.

That is going to cause a lot of trouble, because the main thing is not the smoking, it is the time they are up for example to roll a cigarette. It takes a half an hour or an hour in the day, the cigarettes you need to roll and all that stuff, because there is nothing else to do, is there? So trouble is going to be caused. If you have a library, a proper library, proper education, apart from employment, there is other things to do. Keep your mind active.
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Paul: Again I hate to harp back to the fact that the other library had places to read and stuff like that. I don’t know if they can ever do that by knocking out a wall, but that is what is needed in there now, is a reading space, especially if they get the papers. I don’t mind if people come in and read the paper all morning, don’t worry me, as long as they don’t steal it, which used to happen now and then, and then other people can’t read it.

Summary of Library as gathering place

Paul recognizes the value of libraries acting as places where people can gather and spend time with each other. He also recognizes that his library is unable to fulfil this role as there is no longer any space for seating in the library and the newspapers have been cancelled.

Connection with formal education

JG: How well do you think the library is able to satisfy your needs to support your education?

Paul: It don’t support my education at all, basically.

JG: If you did not have access to the stuff through Deakin, you would not be able to do your study?

Paul: Not really, no.

Summary of Connection with formal education

Paul requires a lot of support to complete his education at Curtin University. His prison library is not able to provide him with any support at all. If he was reliant on his prison library alone, he would not be able to continue his studies.
Role in behaviour management

Paul: When I ran the library here. I probably would, yes. I might get two or three people coming in and take books out, and the next day there might be ten or fifteen, so there is no particular thing, but the idea is to have it there. It is an option rather than drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes and talking bullshit. It is what most of them do, and it is going to get even worse, they are going to ban smoking pretty soon.

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Summary of Role in behaviour management

Paul recognizes that having large amounts of unstructured time to fill in can lead to behaviour problems. He considers the presence of a library as important to provide a way of spending some of that unstructured time.

Reading as escape

JG: Why do you like science fiction.

Paul: It takes you away from this joint, basically. I have been reading it since I was eight years old. I have read all the classics, Asimov and all that. It is just one of the things that I like to read, plus horror stories. I like people like Clive Barker, which is a horror person. It takes you away from this joint, and it also gives you a bit of inspiration, for my writing and so forth. Sometimes not good inspiration, but it does help me a lot. It is a good muse.

Summary of Reading as escape

Paul is using reading as a means of removing himself from the prison environment and placing himself within the world of the books that he is reading, particularly science fiction.
Summary of Paul – VICPP3

Paul is experiencing the library as a means of providing him with reading that allows him to escape the prison and enter the world within his books. He recognizes the importance of having a library available in the prison as it provides a way of filling in some of the large amounts of unstructured time that prisoners have. He is aware of how this opportunity to spend time in the library can reduce the likelihood of behaviour management problems. His experiences of the library are also ones of unmet needs. The library is unable to meet his educational and social needs due to a poor and unchanging collection and a lack of space that prevents people gathering in the library as they used to be able to before the library space was reduced in size.
**ACT 3 Maximum Female**

**Pseudonym:** Alice

**Gender:** Female

**Prison:** Alexander Maconochie Centre

**Security level:** Maximum – Women’s section

**State:** ACT

**Prison profile:**

The Alexander Maconochie Centre has been described in Chapter 4 – Research sites.

**Prisoner Profile:**

Alice lives in the female section of the prison in cottage-style accommodation. She shares a bedroom with one other prisoner. There are two female cottages in the prison and they each have many bedrooms and one shared kitchen, bathroom and an outdoor space. Each cottage is separated from the other by fences and the women are not able to see or mix with women from the other cottage. One afternoon a week, they are allowed to enter the male section of the prison to visit the library. This is the only opportunity the women have to leave their cottage during the week. This one afternoon is also the only chance the women have to attend any education or training programs, so they have to choose to be involved in a program or go to the library, or stay in the cottage. The men are locked into their cell blocks at this time. Alice chooses to visit the library each week.

The codes most frequently assigned to Alice’s interview were:

1. Connection with informal education
2. Library as escape
3. Reading to pass time
4. Library as supporting literacy development
5. Connection to others outside
6. Library as opportunity for autonomy

The following are her words that are associated with each code:
Connection with informal education

When told about a program in some American prisons where the library issues prisoners with ebook readers loaded with books to prisoners:

Alice: “Wow, that is a really good idea. Because I think that is a lot of most people’s problem in here that they are illiterate and uneducated because they have been off doing other things. It’s not like there is no desire to be able to do it, but you know you have the time available to you here. So if you can make it interesting, any sort of learning interesting, you know I think that it would benefit people without them even knowing.”

JG: In what way is reading important to you?

Alice: “I suppose it is important to learn, but also you know, you can identify with things, you can find out about things.”

JG: What do you think the library offers you?

Alice: “I suppose, it’s a choice whether you want to use it or not. It provides an outlet for education as well as for personal escape or to just pass time.”

Summary of ‘Connection with informal education’

Alice is experiencing the library as providing a connection to informal education. She is able to identify the books made available by the library as learning opportunities. She recognizes that reading can help you learn and reading can help raise literacy levels. She recognizes that literacy is a problem among prisoners and that if they choose to take advantage of the library, it can help them improve their literacy levels.

Library as escape

JG: What do you enjoy about using the library?

Alice: “Um, the escape really. Just being able to get out of your own head and yeah, I suppose not just the library, but books in general, but I like being there as well.”
Appendix 3 – Four Participant Summaries

JG: In what way is reading important to you?

Alice: “….it can be you know, fiction and that is sort of where you get to escape and that. I think also, um, I don’t know. I often like watching a movie and then reading the book and seeing the differences or how they have interpreted different things, so, yeah.”

JG: What do you think the library offers you?

Alice “I suppose, it’s a choice whether you want to use it or not. It provides an outlet for education as well as for personal escape or to just pass time.”

Summary of ‘Library as escape’

Alice is experiencing the library as a form of escape from her situation and surroundings. She is using the library to provide her with books that enable her to ‘escape’ out of her own head and into the stories that she reads from the library.

Reading to pass time

Alice: “I think a lot of people find once they’re in jail, that, especially mothers in particular, you know, you just don’t have a lot of time it seems on the outside when you are looking after your kids and everything and to sit down a read a good book you know? So, I’ve sort of been able to help a couple of the girls with “This is really good” you know, like “Have a read of this” or whatever and myself also, you know when I, I hadn’t actually been able to say I’d read a whole book for a long time, but I have had the opportunity to do here and yeah, it’s a good thing.”

Alice: “I think it is very important. I think when people have had a chance to actually think about where they are at, you know, once they are sentenced, they know how long they’ve got to be here, it really is a waste of time if you don’t start looking at yourself at all. Even if it is just art that you are interested in, you’ve got to have something to be able to occupy your time, I think. A lot of the time, the bullshit and everything that goes on in here, the fights and that is because people are bored and have got nothing to do. And if that isn’t 100% it, then it’s because they don’t choose to do anything. You know what I mean? So if you can find something that interests you, then it helps your time go. And in hindsight, you do get something out of it. I think also, especially in the boys’, like I’ve been to a different jail as well and it been a lot more numbers of women and I think, women in particular need something to do because we just get so bitchy and horrible (laughs).”

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Summary of ‘Reading to pass time’

Alice is getting her reading from the library. She is experiencing reading as a way to pass time. She sees the time she must spend in prison as an opportunity to have experiences that she has not had in her life outside prison. She believes that the library can allow prisoners to find something they are interested in and then occupy their time by reading about it. She experiences time reading books from the library as a means to avoid boredom that can lead to fighting.

Library as supporting literacy development

Alice: “most of the books are quite easy to read, so not everyone has a great understanding of their English language or can read, so yeah, Sue, the librarian herself is really good at sort of working out that sort of stuff and what you might be able to understand and read and enjoy and try to you know, entice people to read a bit more. I think a lot of people find once they’re in jail, that, especially mothers in particular, you know, you just don’t have a lot of time it seems on the outside when you are looking after your kids and everything and to sit down a read a good book you know? So, I’ve sort of been able to help a couple of the girls with “This is really good” you know, like “Have a read of this“ or whatever and myself also, you know when I, I hadn’t actually been able to say I’d read a whole book for a long time, but I have had the opportunity to do here and yeah, it’s a good thing (laughs).”

Alice: “It would be good I think for some people in here if they had audio books and that sort of thing, for the people who really can’t read. I don’t know how they would go about doing that sort of thing but.”

Alice: “Because I think that is a lot of most people’s problem in here that they are illiterate and uneducated because they have been off doing other things. It’s not like there is no desire to be able to do it, but you know you have the time available to you here. So if you can make it interesting, any sort of learning interesting, you know I think that it would benefit people without them even knowing.”

Summary of ‘Library as supporting literacy development’

Alice recognizes that many prisoners have low levels of literacy and that the library can help them improve this. She recognizes the importance of having a librarian in the library who can recognize
the need for tailored reading recommendations to encourage prisoners to read and improve their literacy levels.

Connection to others outside

Alice: “My kids really, really like JK Rowling’s, you know. I’ve been trying to find other things too so we’ve got something to talk about, like “Try this book, babe. You might like this” or whatever.”

JG: What about when you mentioned talking about books with your kids? Does having the library help you to be able to do that?

Alice: “Yeah, but again, that’s personal choice.”

Summary of ‘Connection to others outside’

Alice is using the library to stay connected to her children. She is doing this by talking to her children about what they are reading and by recommending books that she has found in the prison library that she thinks they may enjoy.

Library as opportunity for autonomy

JG: What do you think the library offers you?

Alice: I suppose, it’s a choice whether you want to use it or not. It provides an outlet for education as well as for personal escape or to just pass time.

JG: Is having the choice to use it important, because you don’t have many choices here?

Alice: I think it is very important.

Summary of ‘library as opportunity for autonomy’

Alice recognizes the importance of choices offered by the library. The autonomy offered by the library is important as prisoners have very little autonomy elsewhere in their lives in prison.

Summary of Alice – ACT 3 Maximum Female

Alice is experiencing the library as a means to improve education, knowledge and literacy levels. She is experiencing the library as the supplier of books that allow her to ‘escape’ from her surroundings.
Appendix 3 – Four Participant Summaries

and situation and to pass time constructively and to relieve boredom. She is experiencing the library as an enabler in staying connected to her children by sharing discussions about the books she and they are reading. She experiencing the library as an opportunity to have some autonomy within her life.
Appendix 3 – Four Participant Summaries

VICTP3 – Summary

Pseudonym: Tanya

Gender: Female

Prison: Tarrengower Prison

Security Level: Minimum

State: Victoria

Prison profile:

Tarrengower Prison has been described in Chapter 4 – Research sites.

Prisoner profile:

Tanya has a history of both library use and reading. She is working with farm animals and is frustrated that she is unable to access information about the jobs she is doing in the library. She wants the library to collect materials that would support the farming activities of the prison, such as books on animal husbandry and agriculture. Tanya visits the library once or twice a day and uses the collection for her recreational reading, the daily newspaper and craft magazines. She has fond memories of using libraries in her life outside prison.

The codes most frequently assigned to Tanya’s interview were:

1. Library as escape
2. Library as gathering place
3. Connection with informal education
4. Library as therapy
5. Connection to others inside
6. Connection to others outside

Library as escape

Tanya: And I also go, sometimes in the evenings, one of the girls runs a yoga session, so she has really peaceful music playing in the gym next to the library, so I actually sit in the library and pray. Because I’ve got that peaceful music and its nice and quiet. I don’t have a light on, I just sit there and I have my rosary beads and my prayer book and whatever. Usually there is that too. Because we don’t have a chapel here and the multipurpose centre is where we go and have our Mass when
Father comes, but, when you need to pray, it is sort of not really a comfortable quiet area up there. It’s a big multipurpose centre whereas the library is small and quiet and you know, if you are sitting in there quietly, people tend to come in. I see the quiet and everybody’s quiet. So, that’s, they’re the things I use the library for.

JG: What do you enjoy about using the library?

Tanya: I just like the peace, the quiet. It’s just, it feels just comfortable. And it’s sort of like, you can wind down at the end of the day or even if you are having a bit of a stressful day, I just find, you walk into the library and it is peaceful and you just go “Ah…” and then you sit down and read a newspaper or a book or a craft magazine or a reference, whatever you want and, I don’t know, you just sort of go into your own zone, in there. You have to be careful you don’t lose track of time but (laughs). I get absorbed in books.

JG: In what ways is reading important to you?

Tanya: Knowledge. Knowledge and, because you are in prison here too, sometimes you read so your mind just wanders out to different things. Especially when I read the historical things, your mind just wanders and that. But, I like to read for knowledge. I always have. I grew up as an only child, so I always read and I probably had more non-fiction that fiction books. Even as a kid. I just loved to get knowledge about anything and everything.

Tanya: It offers you a place to be in a quiet zone if you need or want a bit of time out, but not in your own unit or your own room.

JG: How does using the library make you feel?

Tanya: Relaxed, happy. Just peaceful. If you, I find if I’m a little bit stressed or a little bit strung out or whatever, I just sit in the library. Even if it’s only 10 or 15 minutes and I just, I just think I go ‘Ahhh’ and you just relax. It is just really calming.
Summary of Library as escape

Tanya is experiencing the library as a place to escape to when she needs peace and quiet or when she wants to pray. She likes to spend time sitting in the library when she is feeling stressed or needs to wind down at the end of the day. She values the library as a place that is different to her unit or room and can offer her a level of peace and quiet that she is unable to find elsewhere in the prison.

Library as gathering place

Tanya: And maybe it could have a bigger area where you could have a few more chairs, you know, say you could have, maybe somewhere a little bit bigger, where you could have more, you know, maybe have a table, that sort of thing. So it was a more comfy environment.

Tanya: Yep. And as I said, perhaps some more furniture. You know, even if it could be a slightly bigger area, where you could have a bit more seating. I think too, see, people don’t sort of sit in the library and, well, not yell, but they don’t really sit in the library and have a little chat or anything as there isn’t a place to sit there and chat. Even whether its about books or something in the paper or, there’s just, there’s not that space to do it.

JG: Do you think they would if they could?

Tanya: I would like to think that they would.

Summary of Library as gathering place

Tanya is able to recognize the potential value of using the library as a place where people can gather to spend time with each and speak with each other. She recognizes that the current physical space is unable to provide this opportunity, and she believes that an opportunity such as this would be of benefit to the women in the prison.

Connection with informal education

JG: How well do you think the library is able to satisfy your needs to support your education? And I mean also your informal education where you might want to learn about a particular topic.
Appendix 3 – Four Participant Summaries

__Tanya:__ Well, there is nothing there. There is nothing there about raising calves rearing chickens, ducks. There is really nothing there.

__JG:__ Yeah. It will. OK, in what ways is the library important to you?

__Tanya:__ It’s our source of knowledge. Without having internet and anything, it really is our source of knowledge but also, it is a source of enjoyment so that, like, as I said, we do quilting and sewing and that and we can get ideas out of it and that. But it really is our go to place for knowledge, because quite often the duty officers are busy and they haven’t got time, if you need to ask them something, they haven’t got the time, or the staff to do that, so, we need it. To have a good library for our knowledge. The education, I believe education has some books there, but then, they are not accessible. Cause they are locked away.

__JG:__ In what ways is reading important to you?

__Tanya:__ Knowledge. Knowledge and, because you are in prison here too, sometimes you read so your mind just wanders out to different..., wanders off to different things. Especially when I read the historical things, your mind just wanders and that. But, I like to read for knowledge. I always have. I grew up as an only child, so I always read and I probably had more non-fiction that fiction books. Even as a kid. I just loved to get knowledge about anything and everything.

**Summary of Connection with informal education**

Tanya is experiencing the library as a poor provider of informal education. She recognizes that the library is unable to supply her with the knowledge that she wishes she had for her farming work. She understands that the prison officers can sometimes print information from websites for her, but recognizes that this is not always possible and that the library is unable to help when this happens. Tanya is a curious person who likes to learn new things, but is frustrated by the library’s inability to help her do this.

**Library as therapy**

__Tanya:__ And I also go, sometimes in the evenings, one of the girls runs a yoga session, so she has really peaceful music playing in the gym next to the library, so I actually sit in the library and pray. Because I’ve got that peaceful music and its nice and quiet. I don’t have a light on, I just sit there and
I have my rosary beads and my prayer book and whatever. Usually there is that too. Because we don’t have a chapel here and the multipurpose centre is where we go and have our Mass when Father comes, but, when you need to pray, it is sort of not really a comfortable quiet area up there. It’s a big multipurpose centre whereas the library is small and quiet and you know, if you are sitting in there quietly, people tend to come in. I see the quiet and everybody’s quiet. So, that’s, they’re the things I use the library for.

**JG:** How does using the library make you feel?

**Tanya:** Relaxed, happy. Just peaceful. If you, I find if I’m a little bit stressed or a little bit strung out or whatever, I just sit in the library. Even if its only 10 or 15 minutes and I just, I just think I go ‘Ahhh’ and you just relax. It is just really calming. It is a place for relaxation. It’s peaceful. And lovely. (laughs)

**Summary of Library as therapy**

Tanya is experiencing the library as a therapeutic space. She comes to the library to relieve her of stress and anxiety. She finds the quiet of the library relaxing and calming.

**Library as connection to others inside**

**JG:** What about with books? Do you ever talk to people about what you have been reading?

**Tanya:** Not really. More, we’ll sit down with craft books and we’ll compare craft books and you know, and I’ll say “Hey, look at this pattern. That might be really good for what you’re doing, or that might be really good for what you’re doing.” So you use it as a reference type thing. So, that gets you going.

**Tanya:** Yep. And as I said, perhaps some more furniture. You know, even if it could be a slightly bigger area, where you could have a bit more seating. I think too, see, people don’t sort of sit in the library and, well, not yell, but they don’t really sit in the library and have a little chat or anything as there isn’t a place to sit there and chat. Even whether it’s about books or something in the paper or, there’s just, there’s not that space to do it.

**JG:** Do you think they would if they could?
Tanya: I would like to think that they would.

Summary of Library as connection to others inside

Tanya is experiencing the library as a connection to others inside the prison. She achieves this by talking with them about the craft magazines in the library. She recognizes that there is the role of the library to do this is limited due to the very small space available within the library.

Connection to others outside

JG: Do you think the library helps you stay connected with others, either inside here or people outside?

Tanya: Well, it certainly, by reading newspapers, it keeps us informed. I don’t watch a lot of television, so just having the newspaper, even if I don’t read it from one end to the other, I just glance through and you can sort of keep up with what’s going on, which is good so when you ring home, or talk to your family, if they happen to mention something that might have gone on, you can say “yeah, I read about that in the paper”, so it keeps you in contact with your family or friends because it keeps you having communication. You know? You still know what’s going on. Some of the things that are going on.

Summary of Connection to others outside

Tanya is experiencing the library as a connection to others outside. This is possible because the library provides a copy of the newspaper each day. Reading the newspaper enables her to stay in touch with what is happening outside the prison and to be able to talk to her family and friends about these events when she rings home.

Summary of Tanya – VICTP3

Tanya is experiencing the library as a place to escape to when she needs peace and quiet. She values the library as a place that is different to her unit or room and can offer her a level of peace and quiet that she is unable to find elsewhere in the prison. Tanya is experiencing the library as a therapeutic

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space. She comes to the library to relieve her stress and anxiety. She finds the quiet of the library relaxing and calming. Tanya is able to connect with others inside by discussing library materials, but is disappointed that the physical space available in the library is not very supportive of this. She is also frustrated at the lack of material within the collection that could support the work of the farm. Tanya is able to experience the library as a means of staying connected with others outside the prison by reading newspapers that allow her to be able to discuss world events.
Appendix 4 – RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee notice of approval

Notice of Approval

Date: 23 September 2014
Project number: 24/14
Project title: The role of Australian prison libraries in supporting the intellectual and social needs of prisoners
Risk classification: More than low risk
Chief investigator: A/Prof Peter Macauley
Approved: From: 23 September 2014 To: 31 December 2016

The above application has been approved by the RMIT University HREC as it meets the requirements of the National statement on ethical conduct in human research (NH&MRC, 2007).

Terms of approval:
1. Responsibilities of investigator
   It is the responsibility of the above investigator to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by HREC. Approval is only valid whilst investigator holds a position at RMIT University.
2. Amendments
   Approval must be sought from HREC to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment use the request for amendment form, which is available on the HREC website and submitted to the HREC secretary. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from HREC.
3. Adverse events
   You should notify HREC immediately (within 24 hours) of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
4. Plain Language Statement (PLS)
   The PLS and any other material used to recruit and inform participants of the project must include the RMIT university logo. The PLS must contain a complaints clause including the above project number.
5. Annual reports
   Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. Annual reports for each calendar year must be submitted by December 31 of each year from when the application is approved.
6. Final report
   A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. HREC must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
7. Monitoring
   Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by HREC at any time.
8. Retention and storage of data
   The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.
9. Special conditions of approval
   Nil.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title above.

A/Prof Barbara Polus
Chairperson
RMIT HREC

In the Research Office/Governance/RMIT Ethics/HREC/Applications database/2014/24-14 Macauley/24-14 Macauley notice of approval.doc

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