

Paying It Back: Does Community Service Activities Promote Desistance In Prisoners?

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Definitions & Acronyms

CSA	Community service activities
GLM	Good Lives Model is a form of rehabilitation used in prisons
IOM	Integrated Offender Management
LSCMI	The Level of Service Case Management Inventory is an assessment tool for Corrections to measure risk and needs of prisoners and probationers
NGO	Non-government organisation
RBMSPP	Ron Barwick Minimum Security Prison
RNR	Risk-Need-Responsivity model is a model and theory of offender rehabilitation and assessment used in prisons and community corrections in Tasmania
ROGS	Report on Government Services
RVNC	Risdon Vale Neighbourhood Centre
S42	Section 42 day leave for prisoners from prison which is part of the Tasmanian <i>Corrections Act 1997</i> legislation
TPS	Tasmania Prison Service

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Abstract

The prison as an institution in society is a complex and multi layered set of social relations confined to specific geographical places. Working with prisoners in these circumstances is a necessary and important task as they are nearly all released back into society. This highlights not only issues of the causes of crime and the nature of punishment, but also the importance of understanding and supporting the processes of desistance (of ceasing offending), pro-social change and community reintegration in that setting. The task of corrections is to maintain the safe order and security of the prison, reduce risk and recidivism, and support pro-social change in prisoners. It is the latter part which is difficult as corrections broadly applies mechanisms of security, but often fails to identify suitable individual solutions.

The research explores the use and impact of community service activities as a means of assisting desistance from crime for both minimum enclosed and minimum open prisoners in the custody of Tasmania Prison Service. In the past, community service has been used in many jurisdictions as a low level reintegration mechanism, seeing it as meeting the public or local community needs. This research examines the impact and benefits to individual prisoners, the agencies and stakeholders they are assisting, and assesses the efficacy of community service activities to promote desistance and reintegration. Fourteen different prisoner community service activities are considered here – for the first time in the public domain.

The findings of this study show that community service activities have a positive impact at a number of levels: on the staff and volunteers in the agencies, the communities who are recipients and beneficiaries of community service activities and, ultimately, the prisoners who develop their social capital, showcase their existing human capital and access real opportunities and supports for reintegration. This framework is developed in the context of Tasmania, and yet has relevance and utility to be tailored for other jurisdictions.

Chapter 1

The Research Problem

As in all learning journeys, the understanding of desistance was a process. I knew as a practitioner all of the aspects of prison that did not work long before I discovered reintegration and desistance, so my experience has framed my conceptual learning. This chapter looks at the literature and definitions used, dominant approaches used in corrections and then desistance theories and critiques.

The following paragraph describes an experience which commenced my search for desistance in prisoners, and which posed the question of can a prisoner actually participate in desistance while in prison?

I was talking to an enclosed inmate about the schedule for the potatoes in the garden located in Ron Barwick Minimum Security Prison and I explained that these activities were part of paying it back, and that the local community were the recipients of the vegetables he was growing. I explained how this was part of reintegration and even mentioned desistance from crime, he understood although not familiar with some of the terms. The next day I visited again and we were standing in the rows of freshly planted seed potatoes and he mentioned that he had spoken to his adult children about what he was doing; growing vegetables for the local community, for the seniors and sole parents. The responses from them was that they were ‘really, really proud of what he was doing’, despite his crime, and in telling me it was obvious from his face he was very proud as well. I realised I was witnessing a ‘meaningful attachment’ to his adult family (Meisenhelder 1977: 325) supporting his actions. But he was nowhere near the active reintegration phase of his sentence or participating yet in any intervention programs, so what caused this change? This was the beginning of the research journey and pursuing the question of the role and influence of community service activities in promoting desistance.

The passage below is the premise that underpins the research and is found in the preamble of the Tasmanian Corrections Legislation.

The Tasmanian *Corrections Act 1997* Section 4; (d) individuals are capable of change;

The last three decades has seen jurisdictions across the world having a focus on measuring risk and building more prison infrastructure to accommodate increasing prison populations. Prisons were described in media as warehouses (ABC 2012) and criminogenic institutions which were isolated from community, resilient to public criticism and housing dangerous offenders, and with a focus always on security with reintegration as an afterthought. Referrals made to crisis accommodation on leaving prison and signing up to Centrelink were accepted as basic service levels for reintegration, with the welfare sector expected to take over in the community.

However, the architects of this legislation knew that punishment must have an ending; and the purpose of the sentence, deprivation of liberty and personal incapacitation were finite and had points of completion as defined by the courts. So we see the concept of change; the execution of personal agency acknowledged as possible, either before the completion of the sentence or in the community. However little is known about innovative reintegration that harnesses the power to change in prison, to use the prisoner's skills in their human capital and develop new relationships and social capital. Is it possible that the time spent during the sentence could be used to bring change which would affect prisoners transitioning back into the community? Can good things be done in prison? This is the research problem – the question of how inmates can change - specifically by participating in and contributing to generative [community service] activities (Maruna 2001). As stated earlier not much is known about this in a local context.

This research study contributes new knowledge and insight in a few ways, making it unique and innovative. It focuses on adult prisoners – male and female – not juveniles or probationers, who are commonly studied in existing empirical research literature on desistance. The study also highlights the voices and experiences of practitioners who work alongside these prisoners in the community, and limited research has been done at the coalface with this group in a local context. At an international level, very little research has been conducted on the link between meaningful community service activities, and supporting the desistance of adult prisoners while incarcerated. The majority of desistance research and practice has been developed in the United Kingdom with probationers, and there is only one other study that directly examines prisoners, desistance and generativity (concern for the others manifested by generating products and outcomes that will outlive the self) in Australia (see Halsey & Harris 2011).

This research examines community service projects in prison and the community looking at the role of giving for prisoners in the context of desistance literature. This includes the concept of redemption; the act of saving something from a corrupted state to a better condition, the removal of a social obligation by inmates participating in generative activities, and the role of hope (McNeill 2009) which is engendered within these activities. Within this, another area that is explored is if opportunities for inmates to contribute to these projects while in prison promotes desistance from criminal careers, and if 'paying back' that is participating in these activities enables inmates to develop pro-social identities, social capital and contribute to the desistance process.

The literature on community service activities is predominantly from a Community Corrections context which is diversionary or post release from prison, and research that involves pre-release activities that promote desistance in prisoners is limited in the field of criminology. The benefits and potential outcomes of this research is that it may specifically reframe how Tasmanian Corrections provide community service activities as part of reducing

re-offending (Justice 2010: 8), and perhaps move from seeing these individual activities as a broad community service response, to a means of developing social capital in individual prisoners.

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Community Service Orders, which are made by courts and supervised by Community Corrections, have seen reduced completion rates (Justice 2011: 51) since 2008 in Tasmania and the decline of activities to become menial, manual and arduous in other jurisdictions (Caddick 1994: 450 in Maruna 2004: 141). Contrast this to overseas examples of partner community service activities between sentenced prisoners from 75 prisons in the US and Habitat for Humanity who built over 250 homes for low income families (see Ta 2000: 114) illustrating the potential value of focussed and meaningful community service activities. The table below defines differences between activities and orders and highlights the aspects of voluntary vs. compulsory, penalties for non-attending and the different locations utilised.

Table 1 - Difference between Orders and Activities

Community Service Orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Imposed by courts and managed by Community Corrections. - Involuntary and supervised, fixed hours and completion is required. - Sanctions for non-attendance include breaching by PO and court attendance. - Located in the community usually assisting NGO's.
Community Service Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voluntary Partnerships with NGO's and Prison plus third parties such as councils or funding bodies. - Voluntary and supervised, flexible hours and open ended or until project completion. - Re-assignments to other work if prisoners are not attending as contributions are voluntary. - Can be co-located in prison, or prison and the community.

Source: Justice Annual Report and IOM

In contrast to the Community Service Orders listed above, the following table details the types and scope of Community Service Activities available at Tasmania Prison Service for prisoners.

Table 2 - Community Service Activities at Tasmania Prison Service 2011-12

<i>Description^(a)</i>	<i>Description of service or activity^(b)</i>
Artists with Conviction ³	Community & Prison art exhibition ¹
Assistance Dogs ³	Training assistance dogs for people with disabilities
Barista work	Coffee service at the local Church ²
Botanical Gardens	Maintenance and development of the garden
Prison Tours for Students	Education of Year 11-12 Legal students seeing prison
City Mission	Picking up of household charity donations
Coastcare	Landscaping & conservation work at the bluff
Community Garden ³	Community gardens promoting local food security
Creek Renewal	Restoration work and building stone bridges
Government House	Maintenance of the public grounds
Hobart Dogs Home	Animal care and assisting veterinary health workers
Taste of Tasmania	Construction and set up of community festival event ¹
The Lea	Conservation and maintenance of scouting property
UnitingCare Computers	Refurbishing computers for community use ²

Notes:

^(a) Some prisoners are involved in more than 1 activity on different days, also some events are annual ¹, some are weekly and others on demand ²

^(b) These community service activities do not include Prison Industries such as maintenance, kitchen, or outside property gardening, they are all Section 42 leave for sentenced prisoners participating in community service activities.

^(c) Some activities are within the prison for minimum rated Enclosed prisoners unable to leave the perimeter.³

Source: Integrated Offender Management, Tasmania Prison Service 2012.

While community service activities are not a universal remedy for desistance, it is a relatively unexplored area in the context of prisoners, and could add to evidence based planning as another factor for consideration in sentence and reintegration planning. It may also provide a process where our community can connect with, re-engage and offer participation and inclusion for these specific inmates. Bazemore writes that ‘involving convicts in dignified and productive activities that have real benefits for others can send a message to the community that the offender is worthy of further support and investment in their reintegration’, as well as allowing them to develop a ‘pro-social identity for themselves’ (Maruna 2001: 7) which will assist their reintegration into the community.

Underlying the research are other key themes which include identity, desistance and change, the quality and quantity of prisoner relationships, prisoners contributing to the community, social and human capital and generativity. By generative it is intended that any activities that prisoners can participate in that contribute to society, provide for the next generation, promote the welfare of the community or build social capital, will be included in the scope of discussion. Prisoners in Tasmania can participate in these activities in the active reintegration phase, the final 3, 6 or 12 months of their sentence in preparation for return to the

community. Critics of this would argue that prisoners should be able to contribute earlier in the sentence - and they can, but only in activities that are from within the prison walls such as the community garden or assistance dogs activities. Full participation in community service activities, such as described in this research are outside of the prison and regulated by section 42 of the Tasmanian *Corrections Act 1997* and prisoners fall into one of two groups – either enclosed status meaning they are unable to go outside the perimeter walls of the prison, or open status meaning they can participate in activities in and around the prison, see the table 2 below.

Table 3 - Comparison of prisoner security status on activities in Tasmania

<i>Status</i>	<i>Comparison</i>
(a) Minimum rated and Enclosed	Only able to participate on a voluntary basis inside the prison perimeter on community service activities.
(b) Minimum rated and Open	Able to participate (inside the prison and also) outside in the community, with a custodian and on section 42 leave requirements.

Source: Integrated Offender Management, Tasmania Prison Service.

Generativity in the context of desistance will be examined as an indicator of self-change and not as other literature has described as a phase of maturation or life course, see especially Sampson and Laub (1993), Giordano (2002), Glueck and Glueck (1937). Uggen and Janikula (1999: 355) suggest that inhibitors to antisocial behaviour may lie in the social bonds, social learning and social controls present in volunteering for offenders and that it may reduce criminality through pro-social socialisation (Uggen 1999 in Maruna 2004: 135). This theory will be tested in this research, and the area of social bonds will be specifically discussed to see if this holds true.

The research question about community service activities is framed in the context of desistance; that of lessening or reducing criminal careers, of giving up crime and examining other alternatives of provision, and moving into and discovering alternate identities that do not include criminal activities (McNeill 2006). Over a third of offenders (36.2%) return to prison within 2 years in Tasmania (see the table 3 below) and this rate is referred to as the recidivism rate (ROGS 2012: C.21). This recidivism obviously affects the development of pro social careers, but may still be part of a reduction in criminal careers if sentenced for lesser crimes. Primary desistance is about the ongoing reduction of offending and includes recidivism as an element, but secondary desistance, the flat-lining or cessation of criminal careers does not include reduction but seeks an absence of crime, and this is the area of most interest.

Table 4 - Released prisoners who returned to correctives services

Prisoners released during 2008-09 who returned to corrective services with a new correctional sanction within two years. ^(a)									
	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>Tas</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>Aust</i>
Prisoners returning to:									
— prison	43.1	36.9	35.2	44.2	29.8	36.2	Na	47.1	39.7
— corrective services	46.2	44.8	41.1	55.7	43.4	42.2	Na	48.1	45.6
(a) Refers to all prisoners released following a term of sentenced imprisonment including prisoners subject to correctional supervision following release, that is, offenders released on parole or other community corrections									

Source: State and Territory governments in ROGS 2012

Literature Review

This chapter will take a narrative approach to introducing the literature on what is known about desistance and generativity which are the core components of the research, and focus on the desistance paradigm with generativity, social capital, agency, and the relationship to the community framing the core element. It will also place the research question in the context of the current literature and identify the significant and emerging theoretical work, discuss methodologies used to view the institution of prison, and examine contemporary desistance and generativity research and practices.

Definitions & Language

There are multiple definitions available from psychology and criminology however in the context of this research I have chosen the following:

Generativity defined as the concern for and commitment to promoting the next generation, manifested through teaching or mentoring, and generating products and outcomes that aim to benefit the development and wellbeing of individuals and social systems that will outlive the self (McAdams and de St. Aubin 1998: 20 in Maruna 2001: 99).

Human Capital & Social Capital defined as human capital that is created by changes in people that bring about skills and capabilities allowing them to act in new ways and that social capital, comes through changes in the relationships that facilitate action (Coleman 1988: s100).

Community Service Activities are restorative projects carried out by sentenced prisoners within prison (as enclosed prisoners) or in the community (using Section 42 leave) to perform charitable work such as public space conservation or assisting local agencies in a volunteer and unpaid capacity.

Desistance is a term that refers to the absence of criminal behaviour after a pattern of offending behaviour (Maruna, LeBel *et al.* 2009: 50) and these have been identified in two parts as primary desistance - a crime free gap in a criminal career and secondary desistance is about ceasing to see one's self as an offender and finding a more positive identity (McNeill & Weaver 2010: 17).

Desistance itself is an organic process (Farrall 2004, Ward & Maruna 2007 *et al.*) and should not be confused with prison or community programs. Even words common to prisons such as rehabilitation or the range of intervention programs available are singular in function and form part of the risk paradigm operative in most Western prisons. Instead, metaphors for desistance can be likened to a narrative told by many people but with the same ending, a journey across a continent with many paths to the same destination. It is by definition a dynamic process for individuals, progressing at differing rates and an external demonstration

of an internal change; that of prisoner to citizen and the reduction and cessation of criminal careers.

Desistance per se is a fluid process that stops and starts for offenders with triggers and pauses, and a purpose of this research is to see if contemplating or participating in generative activities while incarcerated could be a signal that criminal careers are slowing or in decline (Spence 1973 in Bushway & Apel 2012). Participation in community service could be a factor in desistance as it fits the stop start process and is non-linear in progression.

This participation may be hastened by pro-social peers, insight or maturation, or even by contemplating change and utilising available opportunities in prison. It may even be sponsored by acts of restorative justice to the victims of crime or their families. Whatever the cause may be, for a sentenced prisoner to move into this emotional – spiritual – conceptual domain can indicate a shift in identity or motivation, and may be a signal of reduction in risk, or increasing positive pro-social change, even while incapacitated.

In light of these significant factors, the rationale for this research is important because the literature and analysis of how prisons can support desistance and generativity is still emerging in Australia and internationally, especially in the area of analysing the influence of generativity and redeeming oneself from prisoner to citizen. Also there is little Australian research on sentenced prisoners and community service activities, as contrasted to juveniles (prior to sentenced prisoners) or probationers – which are post sentencing and readily documented in the literature.

Dominant Approaches in Correctional Theory & Practice

The last 20 years have seen a dramatic increase in prison populations in countries like the US, Australia, and the UK (see table 4) largely due to the punitive policies of political factions seeking to bring about fear of crime using ‘get tough on crime’ platforms at elections. Prisons presented an easy target with criminals needing to be punished and fitted well into campaigns. During this period in Australia the prison numbers increased from 96 per 100,000 to 129 per 100,000 of population (ICPS 2011).

Table 5 - Prison Populations since 1995 to 2011

	<i>Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population) in 1995</i>	<i>Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national population) in 2011</i>
Australia	96	129
United Kingdom	100	154
United States	592	730

Source: The International Centre for Prison Studies in partnership with the University of Essex UK

Against this setting of increased prison populations, the key methodologies utilised by Corrections in the last two decades has been the Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model by Andrews, Bonta & Hoge (1990) and more recently the emergence of the Good Lives Model (GLM) by Ward (2002) and Ward and Maruna (2007). These have been the dominant rehabilitation offender frameworks utilised in prisons almost worldwide and come from differing perspectives; RNR from a risk and deficits based model and the Good Lives as a strengths-based model.

Historically correctional institutions and cultures have been risk and security focussed and have utilised the RNR model across jurisdictions, and as Polaschek (2012) notes it is built on psychological principles, can be validated empirically and fits well into a correctional philosophy of treatment programs, it shows respect for persons, uses a normative approach to rehabilitation and acknowledges and responds to the factors that prevent crime. Also that it has made a 'substantive contribution to criminal justice assessment, intervention, and research' (2012: 4). The theory includes a model of practice, an assessment tool which has evolved into the latest iteration: the Level of Service Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI), and development of the 'central eight' factors of criminogenic needs that determine risk.

However, the least developed part of the RNR model is the third component of Responsivity and has been criticised that 'RNR treatment is only concerned with the external manipulation of contingencies for behaviour' (Polaschek 2012: 8). McNeill neatly encapsulated the risk-needs approach when he comments that RNR targets 'factors that predict criminal behaviour, not on factors that predict desistance' thus demarcating between risk-need-responsivity based rehabilitation and desistance theories (McNeill 2012: 12). However after 20 years of development it remains at the core of scientific framework to measure criminogenic traits in Corrections. For further discussion of RNR and ongoing development see especially Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, (2004), Andrews & Bonta (2010a).

Partly in reaction to correctional programs that were risk or deficit based, strengths-based theory such as the Good Lives Model argues that the offender's family and their social relationships could 'contribute significantly' to desistance (Martinez 2009: 68). This focus on the individual and family explaining crime as a social construct was in contrast to RNR thinking and has started an ongoing dialogue in criminological theory.

The Good Lives Model is also the closest model to desistance based practice and desistance is often described as coming from strengths based perspective (Maruna and Burnett 2006: 84). It recognises risk management and aligns criminogenic needs with strengths plus protective factors and focuses more on responsivity and change. Overall the Risk-Need-Responsivity and the Good Lives Model have been the dominant approaches to Correctional theories of rehabilitation for a number of years. In the following table we can see the methodology of the three theoretical perspectives applied to a community service activities setting.

Table 6 - Differences in Models Applied to Community Service Activities

Risk-Need-Responsivity Model (RNR)	<p>Corrections perceives community service activities which ‘downplays the welfare of offenders in favour of the good of the community’⁽¹⁾, and to meet community needs by sending groups of prisoners, with success being the task completed or participation in fighting bushfires, floods, community service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community benefit is acknowledged on a macro level of the prisons assisting the common public good. The CSA is primarily viewed as a risk reduction practice (pro-social activity) enabling prisoners to contribute a broad community service and initiated as a group level response toward a public good. • A macro level response.
Good Lives Model (GLM)	<p>In the this model community service activities are viewed as assisting individuals to contribute to society by developing the individual’s strengths in order to meet the community’s needs e.g. participating in welfare programs, mentoring or training and contributing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These strengths could be; agency in making decisions, mastery in skills and abilities, coming into and being part of community, developing new relationships and friendships.⁽²⁾ Most importantly non-government agencies would endorse and value this as their practice framework. They may agree with Corrections view of the larger task but see growth and change of the individuals as one of the primary aims of community service activities. • A micro level response.
Desistance paradigm applied in a Correctional setting for community service activities.	<p>Using a desistance focused framework for community service activities would seek to incorporate the GLM and desistance elements, but emphasising creation of new identity, new social ties and relationships and development of social capital e.g. in projects such as community garden, assistance dog or nutritious food training activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In applying policy principles of desistance they would look to ‘build positive relationships, respect individuality and develop individual responses, create new networks of support and opportunity, and find methods of re-inclusion for prisoners.’⁽³⁾ • Micro level but broader in response; individually tailored to need, pro-social and relational, opportunities to expand relationships and ties, developing social capital and emphasising being part of a community and developing a new identity. • A tailored response for each individual utilising sentence and reintegration planning, and matching to community service activities which have capacity to generate social capital rather than broad community service goals or using only human capital of skills, abilities.

Source: ⁽¹⁾ Ward & Maruna 2007: 165 ⁽²⁾ Ward & Maruna 2007: 113 ⁽³⁾ See especially McNeill & Weaver 2010: 6

The Desistance Paradigm

Originally this paradigm evolved out of probation and social work in Scotland and is best described as an alternative way of viewing corrections, as a new lens to explain what we see rather than an additional theory that evaluates an intervention or program. McNeill (2006: 54)

in his introductory writing talks about ‘needing to explore strengths as well as addressing needs and risks’, thus acknowledging Risk-Need- Responsivity and Good Lives Model ‘but forefronts processes of change rather than modes of intervention’ (2006: 56), and it is at this point we start to see the separation from risk based and deficit based interventions. See also Maruna and LeBel (2010).

Desistance Theories & Concepts

To discuss giving up and being crime free is to talk about personal change, and personal change is by its very nature an individual matter. However prisons historically come from a deficit approach – of what is *needed* in inmates - seeking scalable solutions, and as McNeill indicates below, desistance is a subjective and particular approach, and that a one size fits all model is adverse to the desistance process. Assisting desistance involves working with the prisoner at the personal level to move past vulnerabilities, risks and harms of offending to support their capacity to move or transition toward a different future (Graham 2012: 8).

Historically, Correctional jurisdictions across Australia and overseas have addressed common prisoner traits by relying on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) intervention programs. These are programs ‘which helps patient’s understand the thoughts and feelings that influence behaviours ... people can learn how to identify and change destructive or disturbing thought patterns that have a negative influence on behaviour (Cherry 2009). However if used in isolation or if they are insufficiently connected with the social context of the prisoner’s world, they will produce little lasting change. McNeill argues that the change process is ‘central’, personal, and that programs, such as CBT are a *peripheral* support.

Arguably, the delay in recognising the significance of these sorts of additional ingredients in the recipe for effective practice is a result of thinking too much about interventions or programmes and too little about the change processes that they exist to support.

Desistance research, if taken seriously, would invert our priorities – recognising the change process as our central concern and considering offender programmes as but one aspect of the many means of supporting the process (McNeill 2010: 20).

In contrast to this, Laub and Sampson (2003: 278-279) suggest that ‘desistance may occur by default with little reflection and without any meaningful intention.’ It may be that spontaneous desistance can be triggered within prisons, allowing desistance traits to flourish and CBT and offender programs supporting, so it appears that desistance is not a new theory to subvert cognitive change programs, rather it highlights the individual change process for inmates and sees offender programs as supporting the change processes rather than the other way around.

Social Aspects & Generativity of Prisoners

Halsey has discussed the existing research on generativity and desistance in depth including the work of Barry 2006, McNeill and Maruna 2007, LeBel 2007 Healy and O’Donnell 2008,

Walker 2010 and Maruna 2001 (Halsey 2011: 75), but only the recent work of Halsey and Harris (2011) and Maruna (2004) exclusively address sentenced prisoners in the context of generative acts in prison. A refinement of this theme is found in the older work of Levenson and Farrant (2002) who investigate the potential of volunteering and active citizenship by prisoners. Of particular interest is the comment of Halsey and Harris (2011: 84) that ‘if there is [very] little one can control ... it is very difficult to become generative’. The routine of prison can leave not much to give, other than sweat or effort, and even these choices need to occur in a minimum rated environment where there are opportunities to contribute to community service activities as an enclosed prisoner. This highlights the need for generative opportunities to be made available along with the other aspects nominated in the research which could include intangible contributions such as sweat, effort or ‘creativity’ – regarded by Erikson as a synonym for generativity, and animal training – which can develop ‘responsibility for another living thing’ across the prison estate (Halsey and Harris 2011: 87). This is congruent with the research findings of the link to giving and community service activities. Contributing sweat or effort to community service programs such as assistance dog training (for people with disabilities) is clearly a generative act and can allow prisoners to make amends for their offences in assisting the community directly (Levenson and Farrant 2002: 200).

Desistance research points to the relationship between the offender and the community, and the social or relationship aspect of the desistance process. Maruna (2004: 146) discusses how in US jurisdictions the relationship between the corporate world and prisoners has been leveraged to make profit with assembly persons and telemarketers in every state prison, and suggests what if the non-government organisation sector were to discover the usefulness of prisoners? Since this was written in 2004 Australian prisons have made that link with the community sector and there are examples of the community and local governments collaborating (in both for-profit and non-profit arrangements) with prisons in most states see Corrections Vic 2012 and Corrective Services WA 2012. This bonding of the community with prisons can promote the expenditure and development of human capital for prisoners. However ‘interventions based only on human capital (the skills, knowledge and personal resources of the individual) will not be enough. Offender management needs to work on social capital issues’ which includes the *social* side of the relationships for government and the whole community (McNeill 2010: 20). This developmental addition is a key to current community service activities as described by this research. If there is no expanding of relationships, exploring new identity or creating new ties, the activity will be of low value for reintegration of prisoners and for the community. As Donati suggests ‘it is the social relation which is key to understanding society and social change’ and this is true in the context of community service activities (Donati 2011 in Weaver 2012: 397).

Desistance Principles & Approaches

Fortunately McNeill and Weaver (2010) have developed principles of practice for the desistance paradigm which are abridged and adapted below. Significant items for community service activities to consider especially are; the inclusion of hope into the language of prisons for prisoners, to avoid negative labelling and replace it with positive identities, building of pro-social relationships which are at the core of change, and to open up new contexts or communities to experience the new identities such as volunteer, citizen or stakeholder. While these principles are present in other models they are not the focus, and these practices should be central to community service activities for prisoners in correctional - community settings.

Table 7 - Significant Practice Pointers for Community Service Activities

<i>Practice Pointers</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be realistic: it takes time to change entrenched behaviours, so lapses and relapses should be expected. • Favour informal approaches: labelling and stigmatising children and young people as 'offenders' runs the serious risk of establishing criminal identities rather than diminishing them. • Build positive relationships: like everyone else, offenders are most influenced to change (and not to change) by those whose advice they respect and whose support they value. • Respect individuality: since the process of giving up crime is different for each person, criminal justice responses need to be properly individualised. • Recognise the significance of social contexts: giving up crime requires new networks of support and opportunity in local communities. • Mind our language: if the language that we use in policy and practice causes both individuals and communities to give up on offenders, if it confirms people who have offended as risky, dangerous, hopeless or helpless. • Promote 'redemption': criminal justice policy and practice has to recognise and reward efforts to give up crime. For ex-offenders, there has to be an ending to their punishment and some means of signalling their redemption and re-inclusion within their communities.

Source: Adapted from Changing Lives - Desistance Research and Offender Management (McNeill and Weaver 2010: 6)

Evaluation of the Literature

This overview of the theories and frameworks of desistance is not exhaustive and seeks to cover only the areas that are pertinent to the research, and so the narrative will weave between theories and contributions to desistance. The following table is a sampling of international empirical research and contributors to desistance theory, and the groups they worked with or studied in chronological order. The purpose of this table is to show how weighted the research is toward juveniles and ex-offenders, and that little work has been done with sentenced prisoners and this places the research question in the context of desistance theory and prisoners. During the literature search there were at least three parolee or juvenile studies for every prisoner study. It also reflects how the use of the word desistance was very

much owned by the psychology disciplines, with the research topic beginning in the 1930-40's, and then escalating in use in the research literature from the late 1970's to the present stage. It is worth noting the research includes longitudinal studies in different countries, studies across age groups and life course, both quantitative and qualitative studies, and studies which encourage transformation from offenders to citizens or volunteers.

Table 8 - Sampling of Desistance Research by Theory and Years

<i>Contributors to desistance theory</i>	<i>Juveniles or delinquents</i>	<i>Prisoners</i>	<i>Parolee's or ex-offenders</i>
Glueck, S & E. 1937 - one of the first longitudinal studies of ex-offenders and followed their life course			•
Meisenhelder, T. 1977 - interviews with inmates seeking to exit from criminal careers		•	
Cusson & Pinsonneault 1985 - interviews with ex-robbers			•
Clarke & Cornish 1986 - suggested that choices were important in crime and desistance, and rationality played a part in criminal choices			•
Liebrich, J 1993 - study of New Zealand probationers			•
Moffit, T 1993 - examined adolescent and persistent offenders	•		•
Sampson, R & Laub, J 1993 - examined the life course of 1000 disadvantaged men	•		•
Rex, S 1999 - Probationers study in the UK			•
Maruna, S 2001 - followed a group of ex-offenders in a longitudinal desistance study			•
Giordano <i>et al.</i> 2002 – follow up study of serious male and female delinquents, uses a control approach but aligns with life course theory	•		
Gadd & Farrall 2004 – analysis of the life stories of men desisting from crime			•
Maruna, LeBel & Lanier 2004 – the generativity of prisoners		•	
Maruna & Burnett 2006 – Strengths based resettlement		•	
McNeill 2007 – work with probationers and youth justice	•		•
Weaver & McNeill 2010 – desistance and probation practice			•
Halsey & Harris 2011 – generative acts and prisoners		•	

Source: adapted 'How & Why People Stop Offending: Discovering Desistance' (McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler, Maruna 2012: 3)

A wide reading of desistance literature reveal that the significant and emerging theoretical work of McNeill, Maruna, and Farrall have contributed to the current understanding of the process, and developed the paradigm from the original psychological concept and into social work, criminology and probation. McNeill (in figure 1) has succeeded in synthesising the six central themes presented as an emerging model for a desistance focussed practice, which are particularly applicable to community service activities and represents the current iteration of desistance theory.

Figure 1 - Six Central Themes of Desistance

1. Since desistance is an inherently individualised and subjective process, approaches to intervention must accommodate and exploit issues of identity and diversity (Weaver and McNeill 2010).
2. The development and maintenance not just of motivation but also of hope become key tasks for workers (Farrall and Calverley 2006).
3. Desistance can only be understood within the context of human relationships; not just relationships between workers and offenders (though these matter a great deal) but also between offenders and those who matter to them (Burnett and McNeill 2005; McNeill 2006).
4. Although we tend to focus on offenders' risk and needs, they also have strengths and resources that they can use to overcome obstacles to desistance – both personal strengths and resources and strengths and resources in their social networks. Supervision needs to support and develop these capacities (Maruna and LeBel 2003).
5. Since desistance is about discovering agency, interventions need to encourage and respect self-determination; this means working with offenders not on them (McCulloch 2005; McNeill 2006).
6. Interventions should work on 'human capital' or developing offenders' capacities and skills (Maguire and Raynor 2006), but also on 'social capital' developing relationships and networks that generate opportunities (Farrall 2002, 2004; McNeill and Maruna 2007; McNeill and Whyte 2007).

Source: McNeill (2012b: 13)

Critiques & Limitations of Desistance

As mentioned previously the majority of research around desistance has been with post release populations of probationers and parolees, with juveniles and to a lesser degree with prisoners. It has also been in predominantly countries like Scotland and England, which are progressive with strong links between policy, research and practice especially in areas of probation and social work.

One of the reasons Australian jurisdictions are enmeshed to a greater degree in risk-needs-responsivity, and to a lesser degree in strengths based models is the disconnection between government policy and academia investigating theoretical models of reintegration for prisons. Desistance proponents have made these links in other countries and have utilised them to drive new theoretical models and influence policy. This disconnection may allow gaps for specialised groups who are more powerless – those who have lost any 'effective means to influence their destinies' (Scruton 2009: 1), those with high and complex needs, mental health and disability, those indigenous peoples 'dispersed by police' (Cuneen 2009: 210 in Scruton 2009) and those with alcohol or drug use, may not fit the general model of desistance, and more research is needed to understand these issues of diversity. Also Baldry (2011: 259) suggests that the desistance debate is gender driven and 'informed by male experience' and that 'women's significantly different experience ... to the social bonds and controls' 'may not be oriented ... in the way men appear to be'. This critique is credible, and the researcher agrees that more work is needed to acknowledge the specific-desistance needs

for gender, diverse social groups, across differing socioeconomic status, or those with specialised needs.

Finally the issue of context and apart from the life studies documented, most desistance literature focuses on individuals, and the issue of social context is significant, because even if community service activities were adopted by prisons and programmed in for prisoners, if they were not situated in pro-social (micro) communities within agencies, they may fail. That is, if community service activities were purely functional in serving community need with no elements of respect, developing of social relationships or meaningful activities the desistance process would stall and be no different to static exchanges of products for broad based community service which has no social capital component.

The role of the community in service activities and desistance is ‘a two way process’ (Maruna 2004) and provides a non-custodial environment in the community with opportunities outside of prison, and a capacity to develop the social capital needed in addition to the specific project task. Having new networks reinforce emerging identities and provide alternatives to previous social contacts (Giordano 2007: 16 in Weaver 2012: 403). Sampson and Laub (2001: 2), first suggested that the bond between an individual and their community, with elements such as family formation and employment were important, and if weakened then offending was more likely however later research by Gottfredson and Hirschi partially discounted this theory (in McNeill *et al.* 2012: 4). In contemporary discussions of desistance, the role of the community is again coming to the fore in pro-social, respectful, or relationships of significance for the prisoner. The original life course theory may have been proved wrong, but the components and functions of relationships mentioned by Laub may now be providing building blocks for the desistance process. So while not an answer to the cause of desistance per se, they may have found contributing factors to the process. For further discussion of this see especially McNeill, Maruna, Lightowler and Farrall (2012), Maruna (2011) and Farrall (2004).

The following chapter moves to the level of the personal, with the experiences and voices of the practitioners in the field providing a resonance to the ideas and theories already discussed in the previous chapters.

Chapter 2

Methodology

This research is based on the belief that people can and do change and the methodology used is through the theoretical lens of the desistance paradigm (Maruna, LeBel *et al.* 2009: 50). The methods used in this research include 70 journal articles analysed using thematic coding, a focus group and semi structured qualitative interviews with practitioners, my field observations and critical reflections from working as reintegration consultant in Tasmania Prison Service.

My standpoint as a researcher and current practitioner is that I completed my Graduate Diploma (Criminology & Corrections) in 2008, and have been working in prisoner programs or assisting ex-prisoners in a variety of community programs since 1982, and employed at TPS since 2007. When I first approached my manager regarding this project they were supportive as it has a direct bearing on reintegration. The research was subsequently approved by the Director of Prisons and UTAS Human Research Ethics.

The recruitment and sampling method used was to contact the agencies in writing with the participants recruited from those non-government agencies that either sponsor or benefit from the community service activities from Tasmania Prison Service. A focus group was conducted at Risdon Vale Neighbourhood Centre in Risdon Vale Tasmania, onsite interviews held with other participants, total of 12 participants took part in this study representing the views of agencies. All of the sessions were audio taped and relied on the same set of questions and the protocol of invitations, information sheets and consent forms.

The data is triangulated from the sources of the interviews and focus group, with the agencies, the literature search and the practitioner observations. The significance of choosing focus groups, interviews and field notes as the research methods was to allow the subjects to have a direct voice in answering the research questions in a qualitative manner and ‘to generate a wide range of insights ... informed by the interaction of the group’ (Walter 2010: 314). While the strengths of this method is the directness and unimpaired honesty of the replies, without being subject to coding or translation into other methods, the limitations are that the subjects themselves are immersed interactively in the research and may bring their own bias to the discussions. Also the participant sample size was small (N=12) but the interviewed participants did represent and speak for the staff and volunteers of many more sites, agencies and activities than the interview size, and also brought comments made by the general public about the community service activities. Having said that, the drilling down through the narrow but deep channel to the core of the activities has justified the methodology in this application, and allowed the practitioners voices to be heard from the field and compared with the literature and research observations.

The Tasmanian Context

This research is set against the backdrop of the Tasmanian *Corrections Act* and *Breaking the Cycle* which is the strategic plan for Tasmanian Corrections 2011-2020 specifically includes ‘working with offenders to facilitate change by developing pro-social behaviour’ and with the ‘community to provide opportunities for reintegration’ (DoJ 2011: 5). The institutional setting is the Tasmania Prison Service which has five prison facilities of which three are located at Risdon Vale, the other two in Launceston and Hobart and which have a yearly throughput of approximately 1500 people. The actual daily population is trending on a 4 year decline and is approximately 480 to 490 and occasionally over 500. The organisation is diverse with a mix of custodial staff, therapeutic and justice staff, and some contractors, and amongst this backdrop the non-government organisations deliver services pre-release to prisoners. There are a range of organisations coming in representing advocacy, employment, accommodation, alcohol and other drugs, cultural, indigenous, education and vocational training and health services, and these collaborative partnerships are non-funded arrangements with the community agencies.

The advantages of this jurisdiction is that the prison population is small, and agencies can react quickly to needs, but the ongoing need to find funding is a challenge faced by most providers in delivering pre and post release services in Tasmania. The activities referred to in this research are significant, and the relevant partners in the provision of activities assisting reintegration have long standing relationship with the prison, and they have demonstrated their commitment by providing their own resources to make these CSA activities work. See table 8 for a full listing of community service activities.

The Focus Group & Interview Data

Minimum rated prisoners can participate in community service activities and this research is interested in seeing if participation creates social capital or assists in the process of desistance, and what contributions the community service activities make. The desistance literature indicates that the creation of social capital is an important part in the development of new identities and the discarding of negative labels or stigma. However Correctional programming of community service perceives these types of activities as meeting general societal needs and common public good. This research suggests that there are additional benefits at the individual level being overlooked which may assist sentenced prisoners in the process of desistance from crime and reintegration into the community.

The following sections explore these areas and are listed as thematic topics such as; why prisoners and community service activities; identity, ownership and skills; changes in the lives of prisoners; social and bridging capital, and generativity of prisoners.

Paying Back but Moving Forward

The focus group participants were asked to discuss the following; ‘Paying back is the phrase used to describe voluntary work that inmates will not benefit from, but is something that will

benefit our community or future generations. Why do you think inmates do this, what motivates inmates to do this, and will this voluntary work change them?’

The focus group participants and the participants who were interviewed separately all agreed that community service activities made positive changes to the inmates. They reported better socialisation and communication with agency staff and the public that were present on the projects, and spoke about the prisoners wanting to give; ‘one of the things he [the inmate] wanted to do was to give back to society, *“for so long we have taken and bludged on society, we want to make some kind of contribution.”*’ and another comment was that *‘inmates have time for reflection in prison and are wanting to repay that in some way’* and that they *‘have already met their debt, - now we are just trying to help out.’*

Surprisingly during the interviews there was no dissident voice of penal populism evident in the interviews or suggesting that ‘prison works’ as Michael Howard (British Home Secretary) once commented (Pratt 2007: 14). This may be because the agencies involved were clear about their motivation and rationale for their projects, and entered into the custodian arrangements from a philosophical standpoint that prisons *are* criminogenic, but needed - if only for a few, and that the opportunity to make a difference for only a handful of inmates was important, even if they were unable to change the system itself. This may account for the comment above that participants were unanimous in their quest for change and that this attitude or viewpoint is entrenched in the practices and philosophy of the community sector, and that the ‘deep structures’ that Pratt (2007: 146) attributes to penal structures may also have its antithesis in the community sector.

Other reasons cited for the change in prisoners was that getting out of prison would break the monotony, increase employability and skills, and *‘if you are doing something positive you feel better about yourself.’* Another mentioned the example of one of the inmates speaking to people passing by and answering questions about what they were doing. *‘He has a semi educational role – speaking to school kids.’* *‘We need more of these programs so the community stops feeling so paranoid.’*

At one of the sites the inmates work on the days when the public are not present, and so are unaware of their contribution, so the only comment on their work is from the agency staff; they *‘receive respect back from that person for the work that they do, get acknowledgement and thanks, unfortunately they can’t receive the physical benefit of seeing a child playing on the platform they built, but they know that what they are doing is benefiting the community’*. While at another activity the staff are enmeshed with the inmates and so *‘the people here thank them all the time so they do get that feedback.’*

The inmates are aware that the work they do onsite has a benefit to the community and while they experience the acknowledgement and respect of the agency staff, they realise the end user may never recognise their contribution.

Another aspect discussed was that by doing these activities in the community it would assist to break down stereotypes of prisoners and that the non-government agencies had a role to play in being an advocate in this. *'they want to feel part of the community this will break down fear in the community'* and *'one of our roles as an NGO is to promote the work they do'*, and *'I write to the Minister [for Corrections], and when it comes back I show the guys'*.

The role of advocate is an additional role perceived by this agency as part of the community service activities, and goes beyond being a passive recipient of the assistance the inmates provide. It demonstrates a connection to the inmates as a group and emphasizes the connection to community that the activity creates. This advocacy by the agency is a form of the community reaching *into* the prison. It draws prisoners out pulling them back into society, and starts the process of validating their work in the journey to become a member of society again.

Changes in the Lives of Prisoners

The participants were asked to discuss how they thought the projects will affect the prisoners lives? Roughly half of the participants indicated that there would be an ongoing relationship with the prisoners after they left prison and saw it as a seamless extension of the pre-release relationship. There was no mention of any negative relationships or incidents from the participants and the discussion was that there would be no change in the relationship post release.

The last thing we want to do is say "thanks a lot for your 300 hours of work and see you later!" We have an ongoing relationship and they start to engage with the rest of the organisation' and 'one of the guys has already got parole and still have contact with the group.

The group enthusiastically reported that the prisoners experienced increased responsibility, decision making and showed signs of emotional and social development on the activities.

They have heaps pride in doing it, being able to use initiative, and the community seems to respect them, and we trust them, they're quite trustworthy

We talk about everything, we had one [who was] very angry wouldn't talk and eventually opened up, [he's] going along really well

A few of the participants specifically mentioned the rehabilitative aspects of community service activities; *'I think these sorts of projects support all of the initiatives of reintegration for these inmates into the community, and especially given the fact they have an opportunity to engage these pre-release is a huge thing.'* This is supported by overseas literature (Levenson 2002: 200) from English prisoners who also thought that *'working for charity was worthwhile'* and allowed prisoners to make amends.

In reference to the training offered; that *‘gaining of extra skills will help them down the track’* and that the certificate offered was *‘portable’* to other work places. Also there was an identification that the community service activities also would affect employment opportunities and that *‘enhancing someone’s employment opportunities is certainly going to reduce the risk of them reoffending’* was a common theme.

The biggest challenge that prisoners on community service activities face is to initiate and develop new social contexts with the volunteers and staff in the agencies they are assisting. These contexts will ‘enable them to move away from crime and reintegrate into mainstream society’ (King 2012: 2) by assimilating into the new social group or context. The following describes optimal characteristics for building desistance focussed environments.

Table 9 - Characteristics of Social Contexts that Aid Desistance

Roles and responsibility	Social ties, increasing responsibilities and participation in socially and personally valued roles
Narrative and identity	Changing how a person thinks about themselves, a turning point for new beginnings, moving on from the stigma of being an offender
Human capital and capacity	Skills, competencies, the internal capacity to make positive contributions to work, volunteering or learning
Social capital and reciprocity	Positive relationships, social networks that model pro-social lifestyles
Hope and possibility	Optimism, aspirations, seeing a different future, having someone believe the person is capable of changing for the better
Paying back and generativity	Giving in ways that focus on and benefit others, redeeming oneself through reparative actions
Opportunity and mobility	Increasing social standing, de-labelling, moving past the past, changing from being a stigmatised outsider to citizens and stakeholders

Source: Graham, H (2012: 7 forthcoming) who draws on and cites Bottoms and Shapland 2011, Canton 2011, Farrall 2002, Farrall and Calverley 2006, Farrall *et al.* 2011, Frisher and Beckett 2006, Maruna 2001 and 2012, McNeill 2009, McNeill and Weaver 2010, McNeill and Whyte 2007, Uggen *et al.* 2006, Weaver and McNeill 2010.

These supportive micro environments of community service activities open up avenues for the formation of new identities, and the relationships needed to create them. Rumgay in King 2012: 5 talks about positive identity changes and suggests that ‘there needs to be opportunities to fulfil new identities available within the immediate social environment, and that such opportunities need to be accessible.’ This is especially true if the process of desistance is to be initiated within prison sentences – using community service activities - and not delayed until release, and it is to this issue of identity that we now turn.

Identity, Ownership and Skills

The participants were asked to discuss feedback they had received from prisoners on the projects, and the issue of identity came up as the inmates seemed to shed the prisoner persona on the community service activities. This in itself may not be unusual as Uggen suggests that prisoners may try on the role of productive or active citizen as a rehearsal for their release (2004: 265). It may also be that being on a community service activity presented a significant opportunity to not only leave the prisoner persona, but also explore, develop and expand new identities in opportunities denied to them inside the perimeter fence. The combination of being inserted into a new community, and have capacity to escape prison for the day as a builder/skilled labourer/volunteer may be just the impetus needed to investigate alternatives to the prisoner persona safely with Correctional and community consent.

‘They appreciate they are seen as an individual doing the project instead of a prisoner doing the project’, and one of the supervisors talking with one of his previous volunteers [from another project] said; ‘and I introduced them as the prison crew and they said - “Did you have to introduce us like that?”’

The issue of ownership of the work was also discussed and how on the way to the activity the inmates were planning the tasks and their sequence, materials and equipment needed; *‘they take ownership, it’s not a job.’* Also that the connection with other people working alongside them and participating equally was important for them; *‘just doing the work is a prison event but having the connection with other people doing what they are doing is important, they are connecting, smiling ..’*. *‘Some have trade skills and can teach others, they can take ownership and give somebody else some experience, which they can’t do within the prison environment.’*

Giving More Than Required

The participants were asked if any of the inmates had given more time – effort – skills than they were required to give on the project. From the 3 separate groups interviewed they all indicated that the inmates gave more than required, in either giving more time, bringing skills and experience or suggesting extra work to make the activities better.

Our crew does more everyday they always try to give that bit extra’, and ‘it was the crew’s idea to clean up the rubbish and now we do that all the time.

There was also an observation that the inmates carried the corporate or personal honour of the prison and wanted to deliver a great job. This manifested in doing extra work or always completing tasks and never letting the agency down. They *‘don’t want to be seen in a negative light and they go beyond the call of duty to do a job so not judged as this “bad” person.’*

Participants also mentioned that because inmates were involved in decision making and exercised initiative, they felt they achieved more than if they were in the prison, were

unshackled from prison bureaucracy, and observers and staff had more respect for their work than if it was carried out as a prison job in a prison setting.

It shows to the fact that they feel respected, in prison their services are used but rarely appreciated' and 'they get more things done, can make decisions, get things achieved outside the fence than inside the fence.

This correlates with the work of McIvor (2010) in Scotland with community service orders and the agency beneficiaries. They found that there was a high degree of satisfaction with the work and that they got on well with offenders, and that offenders had given more than required. Significantly 41 per cent of the 567 individual beneficiaries McIvor surveyed indicated that they had invited the offenders to continue in a paid or voluntary role. While the context of this comparison is post release, the significance of the process in aiding reintegration is comparable as the Scottish data showed 'lower conviction rates ... particularly among offenders with more extensive criminal histories' (2010: 52).

Benefits to Prisoners

The prisoners were informed that participation is voluntary on these projects and that they would use their life experience and trade skills. The research is interested in any benefits flowing back to them by participating, and will they take back any additional positive experiences, social skills, or pro-social learning?

The discussion showed that of the inmates completing sentences and finishing on the activities, some had elected to return and continue their work post release and continue to exercise agency through decision making and initiative.

About building those positive relationships, couple of them got paroled still come back, they feel like they are doing something out in the community, they organised getting the 10 tons firewood out into the community

The participants indicated that mixing with the people in the community, in the agency with staff and volunteers was positive. They stressed normalising the situation and reducing any barriers between the inmates and the community.

I think it definitely changes the people, the way they interact getting out amongst everyone else like part of the family.

Levenson (2002: 201) documents an insightful comment by the custodial officer arranging community placements in Kirklevington Grange, one of 3 resettlement prisons in England, who said 'you don't change people they change themselves. But we provide the tools.' This is similar to the comments provided by staff on Tasmanian community service activities in open discussions and visits to agencies.

It was pointed out by participants that the pro-social behaviour in agencies was a large positive for inmates to experience, and for inmates connecting with other likeminded

volunteers e.g., the XXX service crew who are all over age 70 with both parties expressing respect for each other's skills or experience. Examples were cited of the inmates having the youth and vigour but the service crew having the experience and wisdom, and when applied on the job it resulted in success bringing the two groups closer and bonding.

The connection with voluntary organisations is really important; [the inmates] meet good people with good values, [the ngo's volunteers] they do it all for nothing, where else would they come in contact with people like that?

McIvor's (2010: 52) work with probationers (not prisoners) on community service activities found lower rates of reconvictions for those that found it a 'worthwhile experience', and that positive reports came from community service activities that had 'high levels of contact between offenders ... that provided opportunities to acquire new skills ... and work that had value for recipients'. These findings are congruent with the focus group reports and field notes taken in this research and echo the comments of the participants.

Community Service Activities & Reducing Crime

The participants were asked if opportunities for inmates to contribute to community service projects such as Assistance Dogs, Community Garden and others while in prison makes any difference to reducing crime. There were differing opinions, but all reported positive indications on the research question of community service activities reducing crime. Some participants likened community service activities as a step toward more pro-social aspects such as employment enhancing human capital; others saw the relational aspect of mixing with community that had pro-social values such as creating bridging capital.

Yes, if the reason for the crime was the person did not function in society. This is an opportunity for community to embrace them and give them a sense of worth, they can find a sense of worth a contribution to the community, yes could do that.

Enhancing someone's employment opportunities is certainly going to reduce the risk of them reoffending. If you can make some social connections outside of where your crim connections used to be that's got to be a better start than going back to where you were.

A lot are in there because they did not have good role models, and they are getting some really positive stuff, of course what they are learning here when they get out I would hope they would want to continue with it therefore reducing crime and hoping they will not re-offend.

The participants broadly agreed that community service activities were good for those who come out to experience them, learn from them and participate in them '*and we need more [inmates] to do it', if we increase them and they are more of the norm people accept them, instead of "Look there's a creek crew!" does it reduce crime of course it does!*'

The participants were asked if there were any further comments or observations anybody would like to add? The question of ongoing contact of inmates leaving community service activities after being granted parole came up in separate groups. The parole board may specify that a parolee not associate with criminals, and participants saw a conflict between the benefits offered by pro-social community based activities where parolees may attend and associate with other parolees. This is noted and will be followed up separately rather than as part of this research.

Why Prisoners & Community Service Activities

The research was limited to only the agencies providing community service activities and their staff and volunteers in order to investigate their perceptions, their analysis of the efficacy of the activities, and to find out their opinions from their interactions with prisoners.

There are other studies which have larger samples of probation participants and longer timeframes see especially Laub & Sampson (2003), Glueck & Glueck (1937), and Calverley & Farrall (2006), which examine delinquents or parolees, but the subject of this research was to look at the agencies providing community service activities in the context of sentenced prisoners. There is a scarcity of Australian desistance research which covers sentenced prisoners and community service activities in this context, so this research is hoping to illuminate the value of community service activities and desistance in Corrections programming.

Human, Social & Bridging Capital

In discussing capital Coleman (1988: S99) describes organisations that facilitate social relations as ‘an especially potent form of social capital’ with skills in creating connectedness between members. The activities in this research have created social capital by facilitating the relationships and connectedness between the inmates and their agency community.

From a starting point of having no relationship between prisoners and the agency custodian, the agencies have been able to add value to and create improved relationships, for example from the original roles of prisoner volunteer becoming the organiser and distributor of labour, a trusted worker and supervisor, and stakeholder.

The ‘action’ that flows from these changes ‘exists in the relations’ between the inmates and agency staff and volunteers (Coleman 1988: S100), that is, the shift in identity, the relationship or label of prisoner becoming a contributor, trusted worker and stakeholder and a reduction of stigma in labels such as prisoner.

Just doing the work is a prison event, but having the connection with other people doing what they are doing is important, they are connecting, smiling - for some this is a challenge.

The interviews also suggest that the inmates come with skills and expertise honed by prison industries maintenance experience, for example in construction, landscaping, machinery and

as skilled labourers. This previous experience has created a situation where the human capital created appears to be less than for the social capital; that is, the inmate's pre-existing skill set was not increased by the community service activities as they were generic attributes of prison work, so in developing new relationships and a new community, the capacity to develop social capital was greater than the opportunities to create human capital.

Weaver and McNeill (2010: 41) suggest that 'bridging capital could be developed through participation in generative activities and employment'. These relations are different from social capital as they are 'inclusive' of others and make 'broader identities' thus enabling new associations to be made on community service activities and help the process of 'self-progression' that prisoners discover and utilise on community service activities. This was endorsed by participants who commented that the inmates '*become part of society*', '*get a level of acceptance out of it*', are '*part of a healthy belonging*', and '*they are accepted by the neighbourhood centre and our community.*'

It is worth noting that while employment is a significant contributor to the desistance process, it is the added dimensions that employment brings of the mutual ties between workers, shared commitment to the task that creates links and enhances community, and cements the roles of the new identity as worker or specialist (Sampson and Laub 1995: 146 in Maruna 2001: 31). So the role of community service activities may be an active mechanism in producing bridging capital for inmates, rather than simply a reintegration activity that benefits the general community. This deeper level of achievement is almost intangible to measure except in the changes of participants reported by the agency staff and volunteers on the community service activities over time.

This creation of capital and a new identity which is pro-social and linked and aligned to the community service activities objectives is an act of agency by prisoners choosing to invest in a new personality. They could just arrive at the centre, do the tasks and go back to prison but the evidence suggests from the focus group that they gain respect, build social capital, connect to the agency and forge a new identity other than prisoner.

Maruna (2001: 7) describes this process as 'to desist from crime, ex-offenders need to develop a coherent, pro-social identity for themselves' and the social and bridging capital created in the relationships with the community service activities staff may be a contributing element to the desistance process.

This is consistent with Weaver and McNeill (2010: 45) who discuss that 'the development of social bonds may be intermediate goals that lead to desistance' and these 'new commitments' bring in a 'new identity and a focus on a more altruistic set of goals' and also with the symbolic capital Barry (2006: 139) describes as prisoners 'wanting to offer restoration/reparation to the community'. These altruistic goals are discussed in the next section dealing with generativity.

The Generativity of our Prisoners

In the context of Corrections, prisoners who are located in minimum rated facilities have greater opportunity to engage in generative opportunities than maximum inmates do. This is because of the level of security in each domain, so these discussions focus on inmates who are rated minimum and have access to section 42 leave (Tasmanian *Corrections Act* 1997, s42.) to enable them to work in the community. There are typically over 100 section 42 applications granted each month and somewhere between 25% to 50% would be for community service activities, so between 25 to 50 minimum rated prisoners are involved in community service activities monthly.

McAdams & de St Aubin (1998: 20) describe generativity as ‘the concern for and commitment to promoting the next generation, manifested through parenting, teaching, mentoring’ (cited in Maruna & LeBel 2009: 132), of which community service activities fits into. This is relevant to this research question as our prisoners are part of ‘populations whose access to and ability to expend various forms of capital is limited’ (Harris 2009: 159 cited in Barry 2007). This can be observed in prison populations where decision making and responsibility are diminished and even basic functions such as eating and washing are scheduled and provided by the daily prison regime. The diminishing of self and responsibility is the opposite of the experience for prisoners on community service activities where these functions are fostered and developed.

They can actually make a decision, have input, we are creating opportunities for things that happen in everyday communities which the system can't provide.

McNeill and Whyte (2007: 55) discuss discovery of agency by prisoners and the role that ‘significant others’ play in reinforcing this ‘alternative identity and alternative future’, in this case the respect and relationship from the staff and volunteers. They also mention that in this ‘process of changing, involvement in generative activities plays a part in testifying to the desister that an alternative “agentic” identity is being or has been forged’.

I have been pleasantly surprised by his demeanour’ [the inmate gardener] ‘and how giving he was of his time and how he was not being a gatekeeper of his project cos he could be if he wanted to.

This feedback to the prisoner of the alternative identity being reinforced was evident by comments from interviews such as ‘*it shows to the fact that they feel respected, in prison their services are used but rarely appreciated*’. This comment refers to prison industries such as working in the kitchen or laundry, and the differences prisoners experienced between working in the community compared to working in the prison.

The critique of prison as a social institution that stifles generativity has been argued by Maruna and LeBel (2004: 133) convincingly that ‘no institution does a better job of hindering generativity than prisons and jails’ and that if ‘generative activities were promoted and

rewarded it would be more effective at reducing repeat offending'. This critique resonates with the participants reports in the interviews as they have heard the negatives of prison life from the inmates, however they verbalised hope that the community service activities they were involved with made a difference to '*one person at a time*' and that '*there should be more of them*'.

In a report by the English Prison Reform Trust regarding HMP prisons, comments were made that there was an 'institutional reluctance to give prisoners responsibility' and that the community service activities were only enabled by the 'determination of a few key members of staff' and 'support from voluntary organisations' rather than the prison administration. This competition with risk based operations, security protocols and performance can end in the role of generative activities, citizenship and building of responsibility and giving being minimised and even missed from reintegration planning altogether (Levenson 2002: 203).

This approach to community service activities as a secondary or optional aspect of reintegration is punitive and out of step with contemporary correctional practice. Until the role of community partnerships with non-government organisation's is established as a functional partner in sentence planning, the role of agencies presenting generative opportunities may be diminished and even removed altogether, and this topic is explored in the next section.

Agencies as Bridge Builders

Non-government organisations play a vital role in bridging between prison and the community by the provision of reintegration and transition services to prisoners, and this section seeks to investigate that function.

'I think these community based projects are a bridging gap in the middle' [between prison and community].

This comment supports the idea of altruistic opportunities for prisoners assisting social services using inmate skills and labours (Maruna & LeBel 2004: 146). The partnerships between the local non-government organisations and the Tasmania Prison Service are well developed and continuing to grow as part of corrections strategic plan *Breaking the Cycle* see goals 1,4 and 5 (Justice 2010).

'These groups lead to the community ... we need to make sure they can access these groups as part of breaking the cycle to integrate back into the community. We don't want to be extending the fence a bit further into the community, I actually see us extending the community back inside the prison.'

In contrast to the idea of extending the fence into the community, research on sentenced prisoners assisting the community *inside* prison is published by the English Prison Reform Trust. In a 2002 survey commissioned of prisons in England and Wales (Edgar and Jacobsen

2011: 5) they found that prisoners were used as volunteers to assist community groups with children who have physical or mental disabilities in facilities such as prison gymnasiums, but no data of activities such as these emerged in Australian prisons.

Since the opening of the new prison infrastructure for Tasmania Prison Service in 2006 the role of non-government organisations in service provision has been steadily expanded from a small group of community partners to a group of approximately 30 agencies. They are relied upon to deliver pre-release services such as peer mentors, personal and AOD counsellors, and post release services working with Community Corrections to address the criminogenic needs of prisoners, as well as a range of transition needs.

Unlike other states the non-government organisations who partner with Tasmania Prison Service are largely unfunded yet have maintained levels of service even during the global financial crisis. The community service activities that the prisoners go to involves them ‘in dignified and productive activities that have real benefits for others and can send “a message to the community that the offender is worthy of further support .. and to the offender that s/he has something to offer that is of value to others”’ (Bazemore 2004: 45 in Immarigeon & Maruna 2004).

Also prison interventions that are generative need to build the human and social capacity described earlier as prisoners progress to a lower security classification nearing release. Community service activities are provided in the active reintegration period of the last 3, 6, or 12 months of sentences and serve as a mechanism to re-align prisoners to look outward, after experiencing the security and containment of higher security classifications.

They allow prisoners working in these agencies to ‘build capacity, to participate, to make decisions’ in the safe external community provided by them. As White and Graham (2010: 271) point out this creates ‘an investment in people’ as well as ‘fulfilling organisational missions’ of Corrections, that is, the prisoners can discover new pro-social identities as helper and contributor, and Corrections can assist the local community with community service activities.

We communicate with likeminded stakeholders, share the same vision and talk openly outside of the prison of any problems we might be experiencing to work as an external group to benefit the inmates.

The finding of four agencies during the research who were working together independent of prison was an achievement for collaboration, and the fact that they had grown organically united by purpose was outstanding. Not only had they networked together but also visited each other’s site and initiated another agency Volunteering Tasmania Inc. validate the prisoners work with certificates for those achieving over 300 hours of service. This authentic collaboration can produce positive reintegration outcomes for the community, prisons and the prisoners by ‘creating new social bonds’ which ‘support a way of life in which offending is

less likely' as they receive respect and validation for their work (Raynor in Hucklesby *et al.* 2007: 27).

However there is a cautionary comment from Rungay (cited in McNeill and Whyte 2007: 176). that the 'use of community based services as a form of pseudo "penal" or law enforcement, rather than as agencies that can help individuals' can derail the process of gaining capital if the tasks are 'menial and punishing'. The risk for non-government agencies is that if the tasks do become menial or punitive, then they may become a de facto extension of prisons rather than a bridging agency that can create the discovery of new pro-social identities, providing safe haven for prisoners to contribute and develop to re-enter society again.

Activities Aiding Desistance

It's a natural thing of the projects coming together; the prison can do so much it's up to the community to assist in these projects by working together we can achieve the aim we are after.

In every jurisdiction in Australia there are strong links between Corrections and non-government organisations in the criminal justice process, in terms of providing reintegration services either in a pre or post release capacity. This is partly in reaction to diminished prison budgets or the services not being available within the prisons themselves. Hucklesby (2007: 177) notes that these organisations have a range of benefits including the ability to apply for funding not available to prisons, flexibility and innovation in service delivery, providing a range of agencies, and the capacity to assist varied groups of prisoners. These characteristics are particularly useful in assisting prisoners to desist and rebuild new identities and lives, and as interview participants noted there is only so much the prison can do.

William Booth (1890: 174-175 in Raynor 2007: 29) recognised this when he pioneered the work of The Salvation Army seeing no 'real reform in the interior of our prisons' and that 'we should seek access' to 'benefit them on discharge' in other words utilising a pre-release strategy of making contact and initiating relationship with post release support as used in contemporary prisons. This strategy combined with the multiple and complex needs of prisoners re-entering society places non-government organisations at the nexus of the prisoners needs, requiring a flexible and collaborative service delivery model.

One of the most poignant comments from a participant in the interviews was that '*if we can go beyond this a little bit further, the breaking the cycle isn't actually in doing this, it's in doing the next step in getting out and stay out, it's not just giving work experience or adding value but also setting them up for a future*' and '*It's important that these projects lead to something for when they get out .. Wouldn't want all the good work to stop.*'

The participant was referring to the ongoing role non-government organisations have in propagating desistance with prisoners, and post release as community members. Many of the

participants were able to locate themselves as part of the process, as a facilitator or enabler of setting prisoners up for a future and had grasped secondary desistance concepts utilising it in their practice framework.

Australia does not have a reintegration guarantee like the Norway Department of Justice (CEP 2011: 1), but there is a clear and defined reintegration process of prisoners being assisted by agencies in all Australian jurisdictions. These agencies provide as part of 'generative sub cultures within society' the capacity 'to accept and recognise' the contributions prisoners make allowing them a 'realistic prospect of "getting back" their status as fully included citizens' (McNeill and Maruna 2007: 236). We may not see a reintegration guarantee in Australia, but the community sector is enmeshed with Corrections in a way that compliments desistance practice and continues to provide opportunities that offer refuge in a society that has previously sentenced them to a period of incarceration.

The concept of paying back is not new and is present in restorative justice literature and especially discussion on earned redemption. Bazemore (1998: 771) has been prominent in this field and proposes that community service activities as a method of earned redemption have the qualities of providing support as mentors, advocates and employers. Interestingly he also supports the notion of families, community groups and citizens supporting the prisoners to repay obligations and be part of the restorative work on community service activities. This intermingling rather than separation is a tenet of restorative justice and is in stark contrast to the punitiveness and separation of judicial sentencing and incapacitation. Community service activities may have a bigger role than providing opportunities for community service, there may be opportunity to provide focussed individual strategies earlier in the sentence which are restorative justice based and yield social capital and reintegration outcomes, and still satisfy the requirement of the law.

Emerging Themes in the Research

The themes developed in while conducting the research include the following:

- One of the emerging themes from the interviews was a triad between the prisoners, the community and the agency, allowing connections to be made between each, and acceptance of the prisoners into the local community.
- While the purpose of the community service activities was to accomplish set prison program goals, participants identified rehabilitative aspects, such as enhancing employment prospects, connecting with new people, being seen as individuals, developing social and human capital as processes created in addition to the prison program.
- All participants agreed that prisoners gave more than the tasks required, with impressive quality levels and felt inmates achieved more than in prison as they were in charge of tasks and so could influence the pace, timing and outputs of activities. The exposure to a positive environment and pro-social attitudes seemed to propagate

initiative, agency in decision making, and ownership by prisoners. This was endorsed in the discussions by the agency custodians, and some prisoners who had completed the activity chose to voluntarily return and continue contributing as citizens after completion of the prison sentence.

- The focus group participants had differing opinions on how community service activities could reduce crime but all indicated that they thought it could make a difference. Both staff and volunteers valued and supported any evidence of personal change in prisoner's attitude and behaviours, and appeared to be slightly less concerned with the macro issues of reducing crime. This is not unusual in non-government organisations where staff are attuned to changes in individuals, possibly because grass roots community work may focus on people rather than the larger macro social outcomes.

As a practitioner investigating the research questions, it was exciting to see the organic relationships developed between previously unrelated agencies, and the unsolicited links made between them. These relationships resulted in outcomes that were not in the scope of the original prison community service program, but added value for both prisoners and agencies concerned. This included sharing of ideas in how to make community service activities run better, validating the prisoners work with certificates utilising a volunteering agency, providing opportunities to plan new community service activities, and promoting new ideas such as the mobile maintenance trailer assisting each community service activity. These tangible benefits created were in addition to the social, human and bridging capital formed in the relationships, and the propagating of new pro-social identities for prisoners in the community on day release. These bonus outcomes can enhance the role of community service activities at Tasmania Prison Service in a shift toward more desistance focussed practice.

As the desistance processes described in this report normally take place upon release in the community rather than in the reintegration period of a sentence, the role of community service activities may be a valid means for corrections to reduce recidivism and promote desistance for prisoners while still in prison.

Chapter 3 – Research Observations

Participant as Researcher

In order to write my own critical reflections I need to acknowledge myself as immersed in the research as a participant and acknowledge my ‘overt and explicit role’, promoting reintegration and desistance in my Correctional environment. The paradox of this research is that I can offer a ‘theoretically informed interpretation’ of the events and processes around me while utilising a reflective methodology. Willis (2011: 409) observes that: ‘Reflexivity acknowledges that the researcher is integrally bound up in the data collected, the way they are collected and the ways the data are analysed. The researcher is the research instrument, the conduit through which the data are collected. In this way the sensitivity of research instrument becomes an important factor in understanding the findings that result from the data’.

My intention is to share the findings that have become important from my applied criminology and to contrast this with the readings encountered during the exploration of the research. In the context of Willis mentioning the sensitivity of the researcher, my hope is that I have developed the capacity to see and understand the unfolding of human lives in the prison setting, and in the community service activities. This chapter of the thesis will provide critical reflections of working in a prison setting, and identify my own particular standpoint, observing the differences between the literatures bounded by my experiences as practitioner. It will also make a contribution to the research question of community service activities and desistance from a more micro and personal level, and interpret experiences through the lens of desistance.

Theorising my Lens on what is seen

The fact that I am a justice worker and not a custodial officer places me into a middle ground that is not as threatening with inmates. As a consultant I am constantly striving to promote quality improvement in the agencies I work with, and promote innovation in the pre and post release services for inmates. Therefore I am looking for change and effect, unlike custodial officers who are striving for security and containment and enforcing a static secure modality of behaviour. In the context of prisoners on community service activities, I am looking for and attuned to ‘signs of an emergent generativity’ or ‘generative signs’ of which ‘do occur within (and beyond) lock-up’ (Halsey 2011: 76) with the inmates participating in community service activities while sentenced in prison.

Another factor is that I am familiar with the literature of reintegration as applied to prisoners. This knowledge informs my practice and guides my thinking in planning projects involving community partnerships. As a practitioner with significant experience in a number of sectors within the community, I bring applied knowledge and sift it through the reintegration filter to create a context that allows that experience to be used. This immediately sets my position and

theoretical perspective apart from custodial staff – seeing the world differently and focusing outward toward community re-entry as compared to inwardly only within the prison. Most custodial staff would see reintegration as not their area; *‘we contain and secure – you do reintegration’*, however this is not an entirely universal point of view, there are some excellent reintegration practitioners who are custodial officers who can cross the philosophical divide.

My professional development has been informed by the reintegration literature of academics, criminologists, and psychologists but my intuition, observed behaviours and stages of functioning of inmates and ex-offenders have been acquired as a practitioner in housing, employment, and ex offender programs since early 1980. This learning is in addition to studying at university as my understanding of what works has come from the lives of prisoners or clients themselves.

My understanding or lens, perceives depth and context, unlike a risk based or deficit approach that sees the problem needing to be fixed or treated in a one dimensional way. When you are working with a client or inmate in community or prison, you are privy to the plethora of conflicts they are negotiating; to stay in housing, avoiding trouble, managing deteriorating health, fighting addiction and manipulation by others to participate in crime, yet somehow wanting to change. As McNeill (2004: 242) puts it ‘in order to sustain belief in the possibility of a different life in spite of the multiple disadvantages they face’ and to try to make positive steps away from crime. If desistance is complex then trying to stay ahead of the difficulties of going straight is even harder. I have never met an ex offender who thought that going straight was easy, more like attempting to run a race across hurdles while dragging your past behind you. In some ways the tangible barriers of employment and housing are easy to address, as compared to breaking free of the past and maintaining hope.

Negotiating the Relationships

Being a practitioner working in these situations brings you closer to the change factors enabling you to evaluate effect, and therefore strategically assisting and suggesting options that would promote good outcomes. This balancing act requires maintaining an empathetic and professional approach while acknowledging and observing the negative forces that are active in lives, perhaps reducing over time, and yet still encouraging hope. In these situations therapeutic relationships are a major lever when coupled with motivational encouragement to change. As McNeill (2012a: 2) observes inmates do respond to practitioners who can ‘value them’ with their deficits but who offer ‘respect’, resources and promote their motivation toward change which is critical to success.

Figure 2 - Two Prisoners

I witnessed a situation where it was clear from the interaction of the custodial officer with the prisoner that there was no respect demonstrated in the communications or in the process being applied to them. Not surprisingly the prisoner's response mirrored the manner in which the request was given. In walking away I was told 'see I told you he's no good', thankfully this is not the norm but it happens in prison and highlights the breakdown in relationships and loss of opportunity to apply motivational interactions.

In contrast there have been custodial officers whom I have seen make challenging requests of prisoners in a respectful and appropriate manner, and after a bit of banter and complaining the prisoners complied with the request. From this I learned that relationship and respect opens doors and gets things done in prison. While this is not always possible, especially if there are sociopathic or mental health issues operating, this is the therapeutic relationship in action and if coupled with respect and motivation to genuinely assist – not just saying yes to create favour but in a purposeful and applied manner, then progress and professional relationships are possible.

One of the long term relationships I had with an inmate as his case coordinator illustrated this. I was allocated this inmate because he had high and complex needs, no one else wanted him or had written him off and he could be a handful to work with. After getting over my initial trepidation, I started the process of doing a sentence plan assessment and deliberately set about listening to his story, asking questions, demonstrating respect and being authentic with him. In this case there were no resources on offer and the assessment was the reason for the interviews. After a few sessions he responded well and remarked that *'I was ok .. upstream from the others .. understood what he meant.'* Over a period of about 2 years I got to know him quite well and he understood clearly why he was in prison, verbalised that he had enough of prison at his age, and wanted to see his child, now a teenager, he had not seen for a few years. In hindsight I can see the beginning of generative acts and intent, the transition to starting a new pro-social identity and responding to a therapeutic relationship.

Even though this inmate relapsed and broke his parole and was re-sentenced, it was for a much lesser charge and the reduction in his criminal career was evident. Also with age being the best indicator of recidivism – he was well past age 30, which is statistically relevant, desistance was starting to kick in.

This inmate responded to my professional relationship with him and despite his many deficits and criminal career, I did see it start to reduce and positive changes taking place. In some ways he was the classic portrayal of desistance; he had ties with significant others in his family and Corrections that were pro-social and encouraging of change, he was ageing out of the cycle of crime, and was starting to build social connections in work and the beginning of

a new identity. At this point he is still crime free and not been sentenced again but secondary desistance is a process and only time will tell.

These experiences have shaped my lens in how I view inmates and propose positive choices. My own personal view is that we need prisons – for a few serious offenders, not the larger populations we see across Corrections in Australia and in other countries for drink driving or minor offences, so I am not a prison abolitionist. Seeing a person come to prison for a month or 6 week sentence is ineffective and may even promote criminogenic factors to offend. The use of diversion programs and Community Corrections delivers justice better than get tough on crime policies driven by successive governments and penal populism, and the efficacy of programs delivered in the community is higher than in prisons.

I am well informed on what works but I ask the question of what's needed? The changes I have made as a practitioner are that I acknowledge the inmate as sentenced and incapacitated, but view them in a dynamic process of making choices that will shape their future outcomes. I know what they have done - their crime - but I ask what can they do if they use agency to change their status? I see them in their present place of inmate, but I search for indicators in their actions that suggest change states, and optimistically I listen for hope in their language and acts. It is this combination of free information to the observer, and generative signs that inmates offer that allow us to place them somewhere on a social continuum of being ready or not, - have they turned the corner, or are they still enmeshed in criminal behaviours?

Learning Opportunities

I have an advantage when it comes to discovering or applying desistance practice, - I work in a prison. Practitioners who are in these positions are able to consider or assess ideas and concepts, and to compare them to the lived experiences. This is in contrast to other practitioners outside prisons who may only see offenders in the community for 15 minute appointments every month, such as parole officers may experience.

This offers an accelerated and intense environment where ideas can be explored, rather than a casual interview based interaction with probationers who may or may not have an open relationship. For prisoners, it is also on their turf and so often they own what they are saying. As a colleague said recently 'there are some things we just know' from working in this environment. This closeness allows observing of the milieu of prison life with the brief interjections of outside forces coming in and the settling once the gate closes, the looking for hope and redemption and the prisoners constant desire to be in another place or time away from prison. These reflections only come from time spent within the walls listening and observing and these are learning opportunities.

Challenges & Obstacles to Services

Life in prison is not without its challenges which include services getting access to prisoners due to lock-downs, programs concluding due to funding running out, worker turn over within

those services, environmental stress, and navigating difficult relationships with challenging people. Against this backdrop is the hope that some programs do work, that prisoners won't come back and desistance will eventually take effect.

Programs and workers that are effective in prison are usually relational, resilient to the challenges of prison, and able to be consistent in service delivery. The capacity to be consistent and optimistic is fundamental to working in Corrections in order to balance the negatives and stress that are experienced. Desistance practice in prisons draws on all these factors and includes hope and relationships at its core in a therapeutic manner. Community service activities have a role to play in providing, enhancing and promoting these qualities as they can be missing from prison environment, also they are flexible and compatible with these concepts and distinct from a culture of containment and security.

Intuition and experience are powerful teachers and in the changing environment of Corrections, mainly from resource cutbacks rather than opportunities, innovation is the key based on the previous experience. For example there are now no non-government services funded by our unit compared to the pre global financial crisis days of funding 2-3 agencies to deliver services in prison. This means that any new community partnerships will not be funded by the department but resourced by the Federal Government, philanthropic trusts or the community partners themselves.

This reverse model of justice reinvestment (taking taxpayers money out of prisons and redeploying it back into communities) with the community resourcing prisoner programs has not been without cost, as the turnover rate due to funding loss of practitioners and services has required new services to fill the gaps left behind. Fortunately the two factors of cost shifting and the non-government agencies have saved the day. When services which were state funded closed or completed the funding cycle, alternative relationships were brokered and submissions to commonwealth agencies were lodged to mitigate the situation. Examples of this include a child and family service, and prison support service funded by TPS are now funded by the community sector. This has proved an adequate strategy as the federal government has picked up some of these services, and has resulted in only a marginal loss of provision.

The other factor of community agencies seeing the prison as part of their community has allowed service to be maintained despite ongoing GFC cutbacks and newer cutbacks due to loss of GST revenue for the state government. This relationship between the community and the prison system is necessary as people move between each world and are closely interlinked. It is also underscored by the fact prisoners all get out one day and better to have an inmate returning to the community who has accessed rehabilitation and reintegration services, than an angry ex offender bitter toward society ready to re-offend.

As Jeremy Travis (2005: 33) famously commented ‘but they all come back’ or more specifically from his book ‘with the exception of those who die in custody, all prisoners return to a free society. This not only underscores the need for adequate funding of Corrections but also for the issues of community safety, crime prevention, and prisoner reintegration.

Reintegration as a Process

Reintegration is a process not a program. Seasoned correctional practitioners have known this truth before it emerged in literature (Laub & Sampson in Farrall *et al.* 2011: 224). When a program or course run in prison is successful, the temptation is always to scale it up and schedule it as a panacea for rehabilitation. My observation is that if an inmate made a successful transition from a course or program, it was probably what they needed at that time and place, tailored to their specific needs and responsivity. It does not follow that the course will supply similar results if scaled up across populations, and as McNeill (2012:16) comments ‘rehabilitative interventions do not cause change but they may support it’. That is the rehabilitative interventions themselves are only part of the process of reintegration.

My observations of successful reintegration with prisoners is that they received what was specifically needed, they may have basic human needs of employment and accommodation, which are singular factors, but each prisoner also has individual transitional needs that have to be met if they are to successfully re-integrate back into society.

The reintegrative process itself may include getting access to financial counselling to allay debts while in prison, to participate in an intervention program addressing causes of why they offended, or hepatitis B treatment while in prison, then having a safe place to go to on release and the support of pro-social family or friends. These factors are all intensely individual with no two prisoners needing the same assistance, the same sequence or even the same level of access.

This is why I have a healthy dose of scepticism when I hear about reintegration programs, it would be convenient if all offenders had the same needs but we know this is not true or even statistically probable. There are common traits across correctional populations of low levels of education, histories of poor housing and homelessness, broken family relationships, and high incidents of ABI, disability and mental health; however the reintegration processes required to address these deficits are unique for each prisoner and will require different sequencing for each individual. When I am involved in training recruits I use a metaphor for reintegration explaining that each prisoner has their own road back into the community and that there are many roads but the same destination. This highlights the unique nature of each person’s needs and the requirement of all Corrections in Australia to provide a tailored reintegration plan, and not a reintegration program.

You Rehabilitate Yourself

The first time an inmate said this to me I was dismissive and slightly miffed. After all we were the experts and how could he fly in the face of all interventions? What I now realise with reflection is that he was saying ‘I know what I need, and I know what won’t work for me’; could it be that the forces for ‘change are primarily interpersonal’? (Meisenhelder 1977: 333). Most inmates are quite open and tend to reflect in dialogue what they need, which invariably is not what they get in terms of rehabilitation in prison. This statement neither discounts the body of knowledge on which Integrated Offender Management is built or elevates the offender to the status of expert, it is more of an intuitive response from prisoners. The inmate who said this to me was lamenting the fact they could not access a particular service, the fact that the service was not an option did not seem to be important, they knew they needed it. This type of inner dialogue is similar to the person who said ‘they knew they had to see a doctor about their knee because it was so sore’. It is not based on empirical knowledge but rather subjective or personal knowledge which made sense to the person.

I met this prisoner later on in the community after he was released and he was telling me how well he was going, even repeating verbatim what he had learned in his CBT classes to me about unhelpful thoughts and healthy behaviours. Shortly after that meeting he was back inside prison for the same crimes, and perhaps he should have listened to his own advice and done what he intuitively thought was needed.

This personal private revelation is at odds with the programmatic responses based on groups of offenders who have committed similar crimes which is common in Corrections environments. As Meisenhelder observes perhaps the starting point for change is indeed relational, intuitive and personal.

In reflecting as a practitioner in Corrections, I have met lots of inmates and most know what they have done wrong, and what is needed to right it. This premise was the basis for the Post Release Options Program (PROP) in 2007 which included inmates as stakeholders in decision making and planning, offering them guidance and moderating, and a change in thinking from doing programs (Lewis 1990 in Maruna & LeBel). Since then other non-government agencies have adapted this methodology seeing prisoners as dynamic and capable of contributing to their own rehabilitation with assistance from practitioners. In contrast to this, apart from therapeutic services providing specific interventions, the most prevalent method in Corrections in modern prisons is to provide group and program based responses for prisoners, especially if they are scalable across prison populations.

There is an obvious benefit for prisons with economies of scale, but the advantage could be lost by not applying the specificity required for individuals. For example Cognitive behaviour therapy is used across many prison programs to assist inmates ‘understand the thoughts and feelings that influence behaviours, and is generally short-term and focused on helping deal

with a very specific problem' (Cherry 2012: 1). While CBT is useful it needs to be applied in conjunction with a range of measures designed for the individual. This can only come about with quality sentence and reintegration planning which assesses the individual's need in the context of the community they are returning to, and provides a plan that addresses the individual reintegration needs.

Tailored interventions which are timely and appropriate, targeting the biggest needs as identified by the inmate and corroborated by workers can deliver a solution which has efficacy and buy in. This in itself is nothing new but applied across high risk populations can produce results, more importantly highlighting that the inmate can engage agency as a stakeholder to provide a win-win situation, rather than 'I will do this program because it will assist in getting parole' response. The success of PROP has largely been by its personal approach to what was needed, the professional and therapeutic relationships, and the engagement of the prisoners themselves. This application to high risk prisoners produced a much lower recidivism rate than the state average, and demonstrated the viability of this approach in an economical manner.

Roles in Reintegration

It was Maruna's (2009: 53) quote of 'desistance is both a cause and consequence of reintegration' that took my thinking to a new level as I contemplated how desistance could be applied in a prison system based on risk-need-responsivity (RNR) principles. The conclusions I have reached are that:

- RNR is so massive as a correctional paradigm it is unlikely to change
- The Good Lives Model (GLM) was genuinely the opposite side of the same coin – the missing aspects of responsivity in RNR
- The desistance paradigm should be the underpinning methodology in which Corrections should apply both theoretical models in prisons. This leaves RNR and GLM as the foundational precursors for Corrections and places desistance as being wrapped around these models.

There are contradictions between desistance and RNR especially regarding labelling and processes that produce stigma and the creation of new identity, for example custodial staff only apply the label or identity of prisoner as this is their scope, but reintegration staff using a desistance model are seeking new identities to be explored on community service activities such as Volunteer, Contributor, Citizen and eventually Tax Payer and Community Member. This ties in with the separation of roles and is an argument without blame as each are acting within their duties. It is possible to apply the desistance practices in a RNR based environment, and for a list of desistance qualities that can be applied in Correctional settings see McNeill and Weaver (2010: 6).

So having established that RNR and GLM is still part of Corrections and unlikely to go away, this takes me to my passion for reintegration and how desistance can be applied. Prisoners' deficits can be large and complex and they have so much to gain with effective and tailored reintegration interventions, this then requires the connection between resources and the prisoner, and it is no accident that these duties are mainly carried out by non-custodial justice staff. There is a level of conflict between being a keeper of the security of a prison and the provider of reintegration services. This abstraction can only be resolved by the separation of the roles between custodial and non-custodial staff, and it also allows the reintegration staff to be a third party or broker of services between the prisoner and the community. Having separated these roles, this then allows the use of a case work or skilled practitioner style of intervention, and the process of gathering reintegration resources and linking to prisoners can begin.

Australian prisons have strong partnerships with non-government organisations in providing reintegration or transition services. These services are much more closely aligned to the desistance principles of respecting individuality, promoting redemption scripts, and contextualising the support beyond using risk or need factors to guide interventions (McNeill 2010: 6). They also manage to navigate and promote the shift in the label from prisoner to person, carer or volunteer much easier, and promote the creation of a new identity enabling prisoners to re-enter the community.

There are some negatives to utilising non-government organisations to deliver reintegration services pre-release. One of the biggest is the continuity of funding for the agencies themselves. Since most funding is either a pilot or a program that matures into a triennial cycle, we see agencies completing the first year of operations and if evaluations are successful, looking to continue operations. This usually leads to a situation where Corrections top them up to get to the next end of financial year, because of the completion of the original funding, and the process of financial drip feeding begins.

This lack of continuity of services is disruptive for sentence planning and service delivery, and has a real effect on applying desistance processes in the reintegration phase of the sentence, so there not only needs to be a change in what type of services are funded but also how they are funded in order to create a consistent environment for desistance to be applied. It is worth noting that some mainland states reached this point a few years ago and shifted to a tender based system where the services are contracted out, thus giving clear control and stable continuity of service delivery.

Desistance and reintegration are inextricably linked because to do one is to also do the other. It is also clear that there is a gap between the risk needs and responsivity paradigm and desistance, - that is a research paper in itself so beyond the scope of this thesis, and they are perhaps best left chronologically separated with prison sentences starting with RNR practice,

and working toward a reintegration exit strategy (the last 3, 6, 12mths) utilising GLM and desistance, in the context of Australian corrections.

This description is accurate because when an inmate gets close to the end of a sentence; the more involved they become with agencies, community service activities, and under the influence of justice staff who are able to utilise desistance focussed practices. It also requires the roles of those agencies providing reintegration services to become more focussed, and opens up new relationships, connections, opportunities and community for prisoners to attach to. Risk need responsivity is a relationship which will nearly always end up in a divorce or separation, as the reintegration processes take over. The processes are separated by both time and a differing philosophy and can peacefully coexist as long as there is a need to prepare prisoners to re-enter the community.

Virtues That Aid Desistance

The portrayal of desistance in literature has commonly been viewed with each discipline applying its own layers of intellectual concepts and values to the topic. I would put forward that there is also an ethical and behavioural dimension to desistance that does not attract much attention, yet is equally valid for both practitioner and prisoner, and in the delivery of corrections. At the core of most correctional legislation is the concept of the protection of the community, the ability to live in a society that is safe, and have neighbourhoods that are free from crime where residents do not live in fear. These entrenched values are pro-social, for the greater good of the community and universally acceptable. These are echoed in prison communities where ‘perceptions of justice, fairness, safety, order, humanity, trust and opportunities for personal development’ described as the ‘moral performance’ of the prison (Liebling 2004: 50) are also expected to be maintained.

The issue with these perceptions is that the interactions and relationships between practitioner and prisoner, or custodial and prisoner, can become fractured with the result that behaviour and expectations sink to a low standard, and end in conflict. As McNeill and Farrall (2012: 14) point out, the transmission of virtue does not happen in a vacuum and that these interactions are shaped by the structure and context of the surroundings. This then points to the importance of moral and social behaviour as prisons try to move inmates toward behaviours that are expected in good citizens (McNeill and Farrall 2012: 8) and desisting from lives of crime. If this is the case then how can moral virtue be promoted and prisoners engaged with the concept? Putting it another way, ‘it is not easy being or becoming virtuous in a vicious place, or when vicious people surround you’, or where people or institutions treat you viciously. On the other hand .. it may be easier to become virtuous for those who are exposed to virtuous people and institutions (Farrall 2012: 9).

In answer to this question I draw on my own experience working in prison and the community, and offer a response that respect is everything, that we come from different

places, and a practitioner is duty bound to treat prisoners or clients with respect in order to foster change and build relationship. There are no practitioners who can claim a 'value neutrality' or are free of 'moral judgement or political conviction' (Scruton 2007: 11), they all believe – or don't believe in moral behaviour; it is only a matter of degree. This question of morality, ethics and virtue shapes the environment and either assists or closes the opportunity to make a prison a place of change.

Most importantly 'the question of how staff treat prisoners is, in the end, shaped by the messages they receive from those around them (governors, senior management, ministers, home secretaries, the media and their 'lay' friends and families) about what kinds of prisons are desirable and achievable (Liebling 2004: 19).

Values are aligned with pro-social behaviour and there are no amoral workers, as each has a moral base. These values are applied in prison, and society expects positive values to be held and rehabilitation to take place as part of the moral performance of prisons. Therefore virtue, ethics and morals play a role in growing pro-social behaviour and are contributing factors toward desistance within corrections.

Implications for Change

Following on from the theme of community partnership with agencies and funding to enable desistance based practices, it is worth taking a brief look at the state of Australian Corrections funding these agencies. Nationally, the net figure for recurrent expenditure for Corrections is \$2.3 billion in 2010-11 (ROGS 2012: 8.3). With the current mineral boom economies of WA and Qld providing ample GST revenue, those states would seem to have enough capital to fund non-government organisations. However for the rest of Australia the situation is dire with the funding Tasmania corrections provides steadily declining in the last 5 years to almost nil for non-government organisations partnering with TPS in 2012.

This has required a reassessment of partnerships with non-government organisations as they now provide the majority of non criminogenic (and some criminogenic) services pre-release, and are depended on for reintegration services of employment, accommodation and transition services for prisoner's pre and post release. They may also be best placed to identify and deliver opportunities in reintegration and training (Justice 2010: 13) in this financial climate, given that community based organisation have low overheads, are flexible and can apply for funding that Corrections are unable to access.

Interestingly in the same period the amount and types of community service activities has increased from only a handful a few years ago to a suite of activities, of which only one was funded by Corrections, and all of which serve the community in key areas. This allows prisoners to have access to community service activities in the reintegration phase of their sentence. The table below lists the range of community service activities and their descriptions; see the appendix for images from these activities.

A brief assessment of the agencies listed shows that rather than producing a product which is handed over to the community with no interaction, e.g. manufacturing walking sticks or park benches, they actually develop or construct most of the community service benefits in conjunction with the agencies at their respective locations. For example prisoners participate in acts of service publicly in the gardens, collecting furniture donations, conserving the environment and caring for animals. This interaction with individuals, groups and the open community allows prisoners to develop the social capital described earlier, therefore from a desistance perspective, some community service activities are more aligned or have a higher value with an exchange and increase in human goods, unlike more static transactional exchanges of products.

From this observation we can extrapolate those community service activities which enhance interaction with community, or expand prisoner's boundaries and include new relationships, can have greater potential for the creation of social and bridging capital. This includes the creation of new identity – and the limiting of stigma or old identity, and the exploration of new pro-social relationships. This qualitative assessment of community service activities seems to be a new factor in exploring desistance based activities, and warrants further investigation. It also may benefit Correctional programming in assessing the value of proposals requesting assistance, and identifying the high value proposals which can contribute to the growth of social and bridging capital in prisoners.

There is a significant element missing across the community service activities available, and that is the act of redemption or rehabilitation acknowledging the work of prisoners on community service activities, and signifying entry back into the community. Maruna's (2009: 3) comment of 'if we are going to have secular damnation, surely we also need to have some form of secular redemption' resonates with me as a practitioner in prison; we see the crime and the punishment, but fall short of an act of redemption to bring the labelled prisoner back into society.

Regardless of the issue being either religious or secular, there is a need for a redemptive narrative and hope of releasing the label of prisoner and the creation of a new identity as a member of the community. This is echoed in the Tasmanian *Corrections Act* 'prisoners *can* change' [emphasis] but stops short of a judicial process to acknowledge it. Justice alone does not remove the label of convict, it takes an act of redemption and a reciprocal act by the community to restore and de-label them (Maruna 2009: 5). There is also the loss of being a trusted member of the community and the 'separation from decent men' resulting in the moral condemnation of the criminal (Sykes 1971: 165 in Jewkes and Johnston 2006), and these steps away from society into incarceration are not echoed in the return to the community, even after successful participation in community service activities.

This topic is worthy of further investigation and is beyond the scope of this research excepting to discuss the role of agencies in acknowledging the work of prisoners on the community service activities examined. The interview process revealed that independent of Corrections, one of the agencies had contacted the Volunteer Centre Inc. (an NGO agency) and arranged to have certificates presented in April 2012 by the Minister for Corrective Services acknowledging their work. This political, social and public act could be interpreted as one of redemption and signalling re-entry into the community. It is worth noting that it only occurred on the one activity in 2012 and was initiated by a non-government organisation. This redemptive act has much potential to foster the new identity and pro-social character desired by Corrections and is also worthy of more investigation as a process of desistance.

Gaining from Experience

It is pertinent to pause and ask what have I learned from these reflections and what questions are raised in the context of the research. Each of the following points are identified gaps in my research and offer possible future research opportunities to examine.

Which Activities Generate the Most Benefit?

If interaction with community, expanded relationship groups and exploring new identities are considered as benchmarks, then a qualitative measure can be made and activities ranked according to potential social and bridging capital. This implication for practice is valid as there are more requests for projects than labour available, and prison programs still see community service activities as a broader community response. However benchmarking of community service activities can assess the desistance value for prisoners and move away from the notion of broad community based activities as a panacea for criminal pasts.

Do Activities Encourage Desistance?

In my investigations there is a clear correlation between community service activities and desistance focussed processes. I base this on the data from the focus group, interviews and experience in the community and prison, but with certain caveats in place which are listed in the table below.

Table 10 - Qualities In Community Service Activities that Encourages Desistance

For Corrections	<p>Community service activities which foster desistance processes need to be identified and prioritised over generic opportunities.</p> <p>Investigate if alternate identities such as volunteer, organiser, stakeholder etc for prisoners are built into the proposed community service activities.</p> <p>Ensure tasks are creative, interesting and create a benefit to both the community and the contributor, and are not menial.</p> <p>Ensure there are opportunities to extend the amount and variety of pro-social relationships for prisoners in the community service activities.</p>
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For Agencies	<p>Ensure the sponsoring agency recognises the potential for change for prisoners, extends their own community to include prisoners, and sees them as partners and not just as labour.</p> <p>Ensure the sponsoring agency has the capacity to continue the pro-social relationship past release, including the probation or parole if possible.</p> <p>Acknowledge that the human capital (skills and abilities) contributions can be utilised, but extending or creating social and bridging capital (relationships and identities) behaviours are the desired outcomes.</p>
For Prisoners	<p>That the notion of paying it back is embedded in the community service activity and open to discussion of what this means, and how it is expressed.</p> <p>That the supervision in the community allows opportunities for responsibility, organisation, exchange of skills and abilities, creates mutual respect, and allows prisoners to develop the new identities – within the boundaries set by the Section 42 prisoner leave conditions.</p> <p>That the contributions by prisoners are voluntary and that they are aware that the community service activities may not include recognition or reward for effort by the wider community.</p>

Source: Adapted from the focus group and research interviews participant responses.

Spontaneous Desistance

This creates more questions than answers, but generative behaviours can be observed in correctional settings, perhaps as the result of life events, and depending on the meaning of those events, or of someone believing in the prisoner and sparking hope. These seemingly unrelated actions can be sporadic and zigzag in nature (McNeill 2005: 3) yet be consistently moving toward desistance goals, despite prison restricting and often actively extinguishing nascent generativity (Halsey and Harris 2011: 89).

The Desistance Based Lens of Non-Custodial Staff

This aspect of which lens is applied falls into the domain of therapeutic relationships, motivational interviewing and role delineation and perhaps is missed because it is not in the focus of current prison debate. It points to a clearer separation of roles for reintegration staff looking for generative potential, and needs to be reflected back to prisoners as part of a de-labelling process (Maruna 2004: 13), as well as part of the reconstruction of identity in contrast to the offender label (Maruna and Burnett 2004: 94). It also hints at the uneven power structure between custodial and non-custodial staff, as well as the decades of penal populism influencing prison policy in establishing the risk paradigm and excluding other correctional models. It may be that the non-justice staff will be the change agents in embracing desistance in the reintegration phase, leaving the previous parts of the prison sentence embedded in risk-need-responsivity practices.

Changing Prisoners Behaviours

As Maruna remarks in the seminal work *Making Good*; ‘societies that do not believe that offenders can change will get offenders who do not believe that they can change’ (2001: 166). This has implications for all Corrections staff and also agency volunteers and workers;

we need to treat them as we would want to be treated ourselves ... despite their acts of crime. Maruna is not asking for the removal of prisons, he is pointing to prison wide opportunities such as motivational interviewing – corridor conversations, fairness in treatments and therapeutic relationship and not relying solely on programs to promote change.

Identifying What is Needed

As McNeill (2010: 20) and others such as Farrall, Maruna suggests desistance is an individualised process, and Corrections needs to be able to work with issues of identity and diversity, as the one size fits all process does not work. This is linked to a resource issue however a pilot would establish if this has merit in Correctional practice.

Insights by Custodial Officers

Custodial staff are trained to deliver containment and security of prisoners, not to identify generative acts or create reintegration plans incorporating desistance processes. It poses a question of what would be possible if some custodial staff were trained as champions of reintegration – specialists in their unit, in a RNR environment. This also points out how important role separation is in Integrated Offender Management, and perhaps how reintegration is after all a process and not a program.

Is A Restorative Act Needed?

In the absence of a reintegration ritual provided by the state, i.e. to ritually bring the prisoner back into the community and to re-integrate them, - in contrast to ritually incapacitating them via the courts to prison - community service activities provide a pathway from the prison back into the community which is influenced by restorative justice principles, and nourish the concepts of transformation, new identity and citizen. There are no ceremonies involved but the agencies have provided a re-integrative experience in lieu of the state providing a re-integrative ritual.

Conclusion

Critics of community service activities may say it is a broad social benefit, so how could it assist individual prisoners? Since conducting the research I consider the research question answered, in that community service activities with prisoners does support the desistance process. The only negativity I found in participants was in those who were the most loosely connected to the activities themselves, and conversely the staff and volunteers who were more closely connected in the activities were the most positive and were able to offer qualified observations and first hand experiences to my questions. The former group tended to offer common social judgments rather than personal experiences and when questioned retreated to personal or media opinions rather than giving descriptions of real interactions with the prisoners themselves.

As practitioner I have gained a better understanding of desistance processes by listening to the voices of the agency staff and volunteers who contributed to the research questions. The key results of this research challenge the notion of allowing prisoners to contribute to broad categories of community service without first measuring the potential value of the relationships gained or extended, the type of social capital (human, social, bridging) enabled, the capacity to continue pro-social relationships after completion, and the ability for the prisoner to find, explore and consolidate a new pro-social identity within the activity. Also that some types of community service activities are better at assisting desistance than others; i.e. activities that simply exchange a product such as repairing bicycles or walking sticks and which have no social aspect of relationships, experiences or social content will produce lower results compared to those that do.

The implications of these research findings for policy is that future reintegration activities need to have a qualitative assessment component added to measure desistance values, and not simply be adopted because of community needs or political pressure. Also that the public perception of allowing the community to dictate what they think would be good for prisoners is not compatible with desistance research i.e. the use of menial or labouring tasks in community service designed to humiliate or punish offenders and broad community service activities with no social focus. Other policy considerations are the potential for increased use of community service activities in sentence and reintegration planning, relationships with non-government organisations to be elevated to strategic partnerships with prisons, and consideration of tendering out a pilot project to investigate how applied desistance practice in the context community service activities can best be implemented on larger populations in other jurisdictions.

The research has also brought forth other questions requiring consideration such as can the model of community service activities be utilised in the initial stages of sentences thus promoting desistance earlier? Also is this model able to be translated to a format in prison industries for higher security rated prisoners who do not have access to section 42 leave? And if community service activities are a means to promote desistance, can this model be used in other jurisdictions and on a larger scale without reducing the efficacy? If more jurisdictions utilised this model and replaced some of the more menial activities, would desistance from crime be increased, and would the pathway from crime back into the community be easier and achievable?

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Appendix

01 | Risdon Vale Stone Bridge

02 | Artists with Conviction

03 | Assistance Dogs Training in Prison

04 | Botanical Gardens & Government House

05 | Community Garden – One Garden in Three Places



01 | Risdon Vale Stone Bridge

Partners: Risdon Vale Neighbourhood Centre, Clarence City Council, John Hughes Contractor.



Free stone construction with no cement built by prisoners and supervisors



02 | Artists with Conviction

Partners: Art Society of Tasmania, Hobart Historic Chapel Penitentiary, Moonah Nextra, University of Tasmania, Reclink and Artery.
Prison Art Exhibition: 1-7 Nov 2012 at the Hobart Penitentiary Chapel Historic Site in Hobart.



03 | Assistance Dogs Training in Prison

Partners: Assistance Dogs Australia, Justice staff.
Dogs are trained in prison by inmates, and socialised by staff in the community on weekends, and then graduate to puppy school before being given to people with disabilities.
Image below from NSW Assistance Dogs





04 | Botanical Gardens & Government House

Partners: The Governor of Tasmania, Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens.

Tasmania Prison Service has supplied prisoners to tend the gardens and residence of the Governor for over 100 years.



05 | Community Garden – one garden in three places

Partners: Risdon Vale Neighbourhood Centre, Christian Family Centre and enclosed inmates at Tasmania Prison Service.

This garden feeds families and pensioners in Risdon Vale and vegetables are also sent to SecondBite who redistribute surplus fresh food to community food programs.





06 | The Lea

Partners: Scouts Tasmania.

Prisoners do essential maintenance when the site is closed to the public such as construction of the flying fox, and fitting out the stairs and safety equipment in the climbing tower.



07 | Charity Furniture

Partner: Hobart City Mission.

Every week we have a prisoner travelling on the Mission van collecting donations of furniture and bric-a-brac to assist the Mission.



08 | CoastCare

Partner: Bellerive Bluff Coastcare

Prisoner labour created a community space on the foreshore from a tip site adjoining the roadway. Extensive landscaping and conservation work was completed in partnership with volunteers.



10 | Refurbish Computers

Partner: UnitingCare

One talented inmate refurbished hundreds of computers for charity in the community.



09 | Taste of Tasmania

Partner: Hobart City Council and Reclink.

Hundreds of tables and stalls to set up, rows of seating and then pack it all away at the finish of the festival.



