“COMMUNITIES OF FAITH IN PRISON
COMMUNITIES: A case study”

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Finally I extend special thanks to my lovely wife Lee, who has encouraged and supported me in this adventure, with patience and good humour, and without a great deal of complaining.
DECLARATION 1

This thesis does not contain work that I have published, nor work under review for publication.

Signature of Candidate .................................................................

Signature of Research Supervisor ................................................
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge the role of the Department of Corrective Services in facilitating this research project.

DECLARATION 2

The opinions expressed in this thesis are my own, and as such can not be considered as being endorsed by the Department of Corrective Services. This thesis publication cannot be considered as being endorsed by the Department of Corrective Services. This thesis cannot be considered as being an expression of the policies or view of the Department of Corrective Services.
NOTE


- During the time of this research the WA Ministry of Justice changed its name to the Department of Justice, then the Department of Corrective Services. For convenience’ sake, it is referred to as the Department of Corrective Services (DCS) throughout this thesis.

- In the same period, the Conference of Churches of Western Australia changed its name to the Council of Churches of Western Australia. For convenience’ sake, I have referred to this body as the Council of Churches of Western Australia (CCWA) throughout.

- In WA the terms “prison”, “jail” and “correctional institution” refer to the same entity, and the terms are used interchangeably. The “East Perth Lockup” is a much less formal place, reserved for a few trusted prisoners. It is under the WA Department of Police, and is not part of the Department of Corrective Services.
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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of spiritual capital and how it found concrete expression in a specific in-prison (Christian) community of faith.

Generally speaking, prisoners are powerless people, and incredibly vulnerable (Coyle, 2005; Kimberley, 2012). Their situation as inmates of a total institution implies that they have little in the way of ability to choose or to make their own decisions (Goffman, 1961). However, my experience of the Christian community of faith in Acacia Prison, Western Australia, is that this is not so to nearly the same extent in this highly unusual group.

To an extent far greater than one would expect, these prisoners are showing initiative and making decisions. In addition, they are beginning “to perform praiseworthy acts irrespective of praise” (Sanghera, Ablezova & Botoeva, 2011, p.172). This thesis is an exploration of the development of spiritual capital by this faith community.

“Spiritual capital” is a new and emerging concept which is used by various people to mean different things in a variety of contexts. The researcher has undertaken this study to see how the term should best be applied in this unusual prison context, and in order to better understand this volatile and unusual faith community.

The researcher is the co-ordinating chaplain of Acacia Prison, a position he has filled since February 1st, 2001 – almost five months before the first prisoner arrived. This study is therefore an example of “insider research”. He is a leading member of the community of faith which he is studying.

This research is an intrinsic case study of a highly unusual community of faith in a prison environment. It is an intensive study in which the methodology chosen was participant action research. However, because of a two-year delay which was beyond the researcher’s control, the participation by prisoners in data-gathering lessened as the research progressed, and the focus has been that of action learning.
One aspect of the research was systematic observation of three “over-lapping communities” - the faith community itself, and two others which are sponsored by the Acacia community of faith. These are the “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP) and “Kairos”. Both of these activities began during the time of this research. STP is a model of restorative justice which uses groups of surrogate victims and groups of offenders. During the time of this research 18 “Sycamore Tree” projects were conducted in Acacia, involving approximately 200 prisoners. The first four Acacia STPs were in fact the first four in Australia. “Kairos” is a four-day short-course programme involving 18 prisoners and approximately the same number of visitors from “outside”. The aim of “Kairos” is to give prisoner-participants the experience of four days of Christian community and Christian love, whilst applying no pressure to convert or to become Christians. “Kairos” has been run three times in Acacia Prison. It has not yet been tried in any other Western Australian prison.

One unusual characteristic of the Acacia Prison faith community is the very great emphasis upon working with groups – through programmes and bible studies, as well as through regular meetings of a group of prisoners called the Term Leadership Group (TLG).

In this research, prisoners were interviewed, both pre-release and after they had been released from prison. In addition, interviews were conducted with all members of the Acacia chaplaincy team and with the co-ordinating chaplains of four other WA prisons. As well as this, the researcher asked one of his chaplaincy colleagues to interview him as part of this study.

This research included a review of the literature. An additional aspect which may have been even more significant was his “presence” in the prison. Throughout the time of the research, and for a considerable time before it, he was employed full-time in Acacia as senior chaplain. This fact provided him with additional data, and with a greater depth of data, and inevitably influenced his interpretation of findings.

As this study progressed, the researcher found that he wished to use the term “spiritual capital” in two related but distinctly different ways. The first of these acknowledges that spiritual motives and spiritual capital are not restricted to members of a faith community (Guest, 2010; Liu, 2007; Lybbert, 2008; Thomas & Zaitsow, 2006; Zohar, 2010). “Spiritual capital” is a term referring to behaviour
emanating from any motives that can be considered spiritual, such as honesty or the wish to serve some other person. The second refers to actions and attitudes of members of a community of faith. These may be similar in nature to the first kind, but they are generated by virtue of the fact that the persons involved are members of the faith community (Woodberry, 2000; 2005).

The best and the worst in human nature exist alongside each other in the prison environment (King & Liebling, 2008). For this reason systematic research in a prison, such as this study represents, has special value. In addition, as Wacquant (2013, p.371) points out, ethnographic studies in prisons, outside Europe, have been “in eclipse” in recent decades. Because of this, such a study fills a real gap in our knowledge. Focus on one particular prison gives sharpness to the data, and the fact that the researcher was already established in the prison adds depth and authenticity.

Although at time of writing the “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP) is running in more than 20 countries, very few qualitative studies have been carried out. Therefore the in-depth case study of Acacia Prison’s STP, presented in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis, is of value.

This study is a case study of the Acacia Prison (Christian) community of faith. As such, it consists of a word picture of an always-changing community. Most members of this community are wounded men who are incredibly vulnerable. They live in an environment which stifles initiative and altruism as well as many of the things that most of us might associate with being human. Yet within this remarkable community the researcher has observed the kindling of a sense of belonging and interdependence, and evidences of real initiative and purpose. This community is difficult to categorise. However the act of describing it and reflecting upon it has inevitably led to interesting additions to theory of community.

In addition, this study has led to helpful placement of STP within the restorative justice framework, and to reflections on the creation and investment of spiritual capital in a prison. Perhaps most of all, it has painted a word-picture of a vibrant and unusual community of faith.
CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, prisoners are powerless people, and incredibly vulnerable (Coyle, 2005; Kimberley, 2012). Their situation as inmates of a total institution implies that they have little in the way of ability to choose or to make their own decisions (Goffman, 1961). However, my experience of the Christian community of faith in Acacia Prison, Western Australia, is that this is not so to nearly the same extent in this highly unusual group.

To an extent far greater than one would expect, these prisoners are showing initiative and making decisions. In addition, they are beginning “to perform praiseworthy acts irrespective of praise” (Sanghera, Ablezova & Botoeva, 2011, p.172). I have chosen to call this the development of spiritual capital. This thesis is an exploration of the development of spiritual capital by this faith community.

Spiritual capital

“Spiritual capital” is an ‘elastic’ term, in that various researchers and authors use it in very different ways. One reason for this is the widely differing contexts in which they use the term. Another reason is that it’s an emerging concept (Shuurman, 2003). At this stage, not many people have written about it, and no mutually agreed meaning has been arrived at. In the course of this research, I wanted to discover the meaning of the term “spiritual capital” in this unusual environment.

I have initiated and carried out this research in order to understand more about what I had observed and was curious about. The first aspect of this (as I have mentioned) concerned the nature of spiritual capital, and why the community of faith in Acacia appears to be less than typical.

Community

As previously indicated, this study focuses upon the Christian faith community in Acacia Prison. I understand that there are differing views of what constitutes “community”, and of how the term should properly be defined. In Chapter 8 I discuss the concept of community and add some reflections upon it, in the light
of my observations of the Acacia community of faith. I see “community” as a sense of personal connectedness, rather than as a place (Boyes-Watson, 2005a; Gavrielides, 2005; McCold & Wachtel, 1998; Panelli & Welsh, 2005; Shantz, 2008; Silk, 1999), and as a place of difference and conflict as well as unity and harmony (Burkett, 2007; Mowbray, 2005). In short, I understand “community” to be dealing with human relationships “in all their messiness” (Burkett, 2007, p.239), rather than being something neat and tidy. In addition to all this, I am keenly aware that, when the community being analysed is a faith community, there are additional dimensions to consider. Christianity is not simply about private and personal experience – community is essential to the practice of Christianity (Carnley, 2004; Holtam, 2005; Westerhoff, 1985). Adherents believe that such a faith community is called into being by God, and that it is Spirit-filled. All these factors are dealt with more fully in Chapter 8.

**Why is a “faith community” important to me personally?**

For as long as I can remember, I have been part of what I think of as “the church family”. As with many other kinds of families, this community has known squabbles, pettiness and scandal. Yet it has also shown elements of nurturing and welcome, and has displayed moments of selflessness and grandeur. Membership of the church family has always been part of my life, and I have known with “head knowledge” that being part of the body of Christ is an aspect of every Christian’s life. Yet knowing this with heart and with a passion dates from the 1980s, when I was 40-something years old, a priest in a country parish.

We were undergoing what was called a “parish consultation”. This was a triennial event lasting for three nights, in which we assessed our strengths and weaknesses as a parish, and planned for the future. At one point in one of these events, we broke into smaller groups to discuss different aspects of ministry. And, as it turned out, one group had gravitated together to discuss my shortcomings as their priest. Their main complaint was that I didn’t conduct home visits. They were wrong. In fact I visited a great deal, but it’s a simple fact that if I’m visiting in one person’s house, no-one else knows that I’m doing so.

The group decided to list the people I should be visiting. And, when they reached the foot of the 4th foolscap sheet of paper, someone said, “No-one could visit all
these people!” Someone else cried out, “Anyway, he’s the wrong person to visit her – and her!” pointing to names on the list. They decided to do the visiting themselves, and they would ask me to assist by co-ordinating the group and by helping to train them. They would invite a visitor from outside the parish to take session one of the training, and ask me to conduct the remainder. I could join the visiting team if I wished.

This transformed the parish. People began to “own” other aspects of parish life as well, and to take real responsibility. People who had always valued their membership of this community of faith now knew that it was special. They began to experience a depth of fellowship with each other that they had not known before. And I came to realise what I’d always known, that the body of Christ – the “church family” – can be deeply significant.

Roof (as cited in Johnson, 2001, p.123) tells us that community is an elusive term, meaning different things to different people,

…but in practical terms it refers to a group of people who share their lives and communicate honestly with each other, ‘whose relationship goes deeper than the masks of composure and who have developed some significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together, and to delight in each other.

It is this kind of fellowship and commitment that I look for, and often find, in the body of Christ.

I carried this realisation with me as I began in Acacia Prison. My observation was that, in other prisons, chaplains walked with prisoners and staff members who were hurting. They ministered wonderfully well with individuals but to a very large extent appeared to ignore the biblical concept of “body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12.12-31). The Apostle Paul uses this anatomical image to describe each Christian community. It emphasises the inter-relatedness of members of the faith community, and it speaks of equality rather than uniformity (Borg & Crossan, 2009). It seemed to me that those who adhere to this particular model of chaplaincy are concentrating exclusively, or almost exclusively, upon one aspect of the job. It’s an important aspect and is central to the role of the prison chaplain.

Croft (2002) reminds us of the way in which Jesus called his first disciples to follow him, and formed them into a community. It was more than just a good idea,
he writes, or a passing inclination. They followed Jesus and were formed into a community because he called them (Westerhoff, 1985). In the same way, I consider that members of the community of faith in Acacia have been called by Christ to follow him, and have been formed into a community. It can be argued that chaplains who minister to individual inmates and never work with groups are missing out on a great deal, and that so are the prisoners in their care.

I resolved that this would never happen at Acacia Prison, and I said so publicly at that time. But the transformation I looked for didn’t happen. For the first year I was the only chaplain in Acacia, and I was overwhelmed by inmates and staff members approaching me with personal and family problems. In addition, of course, there was the challenge of setting up a chaplaincy department in a new prison, and of establishing working relationships with management and with other departments.

A year later, when three more chaplains were appointed, I spoke to them about my vision for the community of faith in the new prison. I told them of my failure thus far to achieve even 5% of what I believed to be essential in this regard, and I asked them to think about it and pray about it.

A few weeks later, Chaplain Bruce came to me talking about a Term Leadership Group (TLG). Bruce is chaplain in Acacia for one day a week, whilst for the remainder of the time he is pastor to an outside congregation which focuses on the 25-35 age-group. He has found that traditional parish councils are not viable in his situation, because people feel there is an expectation to remain a councillor for long periods of time. The lives of the people in his faith community are too full for them to make this kind of commitment. Instead, he instituted a “term leadership group”. People would volunteer to serve on this committee for a period of three months, at the end of which they nominate someone as a replacement. At the next Acacia chapel service, I outlined this as a possible way ahead. Six people volunteered, and the Term Leadership Group (TLG) was born.

The TLG consists of 6 to 8 volunteer prisoner members who meet fortnightly with either one or two chaplains. They pray for the prison and make significant decisions on behalf of the Acacia community of faith. The “leadership style” which the group has developed and now exercises is highly unusual in a prison setting. In effect, it is “counter-culture”, and is seen as such in the prison. This is
amply evidenced by their frequent concern for the faith community as a whole, and at times even for the entire prison population. In the prison environment, inmates are seldom expected to make mature decisions or responsible requests. So when staff members hear of the activities of this group of prisoners, they very often wrongly assume that it’s a staff group. In Chapter 4, I elaborate on the activities and influence of TLG.

Part of my motivation in doing this research was surprise. I wanted to know how all this had come about. And part of my motivation was my belief that every prisoner, as a human being, has potential (Gelsthorpe, 2014; Saleeby, 1992), and has the right to hope. I went about this research by means of an intrinsic case study of the Christian community of faith in Acacia. Stake (2000, p.437) writes that

I call a case study an intrinsic case study if it is undertaken because, first and last, the researcher wants a better understanding of this particular case.

**Communities of faith**

There are three faith communities currently active in Acacia Prison – in alphabetical order, Buddhist, Christian and Moslem. As co-ordinating chaplain, I am responsible for seeing that all three groups have the facilities that they require for functioning, and that visiting facilitators are cleared by Security. The Buddhist Meditation Group is very small indeed, currently only two or three prisoners. It meets weekly, with rostered visiting facilitators from the Buddhist Society of WA. Occasionally a Buddhist monk or a Buddhist nun will accompany the facilitator or take her or his place. The Moslem Prayer Group meets twice a month with a visiting imam and a scholar. Numbers attending range from 5 to 12 inmates, though attendances are much higher for celebration of Moslem festivals. Neither of these groups sponsors any activities between their weekly or fortnightly gatherings.

The Christian faith community, on the other hand, is much larger than both of these put together. In addition to the Sunday chapel services, the Christian community of faith is involved in Prison Fellowship meetings, bible studies, and programmes of various kinds. This includes the “Sycamore Tree Project” (the first four projects in Australia occurring in Acacia Prison) and “Kairos” (the first
three WA programmes, with a fourth being planned). Both of these programmes are described in later chapters. In addition, from time to time this group sponsors events for the prisoner population as a whole. Examples of these are the annual observances of Anzac Day and Remembrance Day and, in 2009, the visit of an up-and-coming rock band called “The Violet Flames”. Although I shall discuss the Buddhist and Moslem faith communities briefly in this thesis, when considering the concept of “community”, this research is restricted to a case study of the Christian community of faith. The Christian faith community consists of prisoners, chaplains and volunteers. These are discussed in this thesis.

My situation

I am the co-ordinating chaplain at Acacia Prison. Acacia is situated about 60 kilometres east of Perth, WA. It is a medium security prison which was built to house 750 inmates but which has recently been expanded to hold 1,000 inmates. It is soon to be extended to house 1,387. It is the largest jail in Western Australia and is the first privately run correctional facility in this state. Acacia began operations in May, 2001.

At time of writing, I have been a prison chaplain for 21 years, full-time and part-time. This has been in five different prisons, in two Australian states. I have served only in men’s prisons but have held appointments in maximum, medium and minimum-security institutions. I have been full-time ecumenical - or inter-church - chaplain at Acacia since February 1st, 2001. I am 71 years of age.

Because of the personal nature of this research – namely, that I am researching a faith community in which I play a leading role – this thesis is written in a narrative style.

Private prisons were introduced in the Eastern States of Australia in order to save money. They have been largely successful in this, but in WA there has been a different rationale. The WA parliament acknowledged that governments had been trying to change the prison system for 20 years, largely without success. In this instance they decided to retain ownership of the new prison and let out the day-to-day running to a private company which promised change. A large proportion of the money would be paid to that company in the form of “performance-based payments” (PBPs), in the hope that the innovations
necessary in order to reach the targets involved in this process might spread across the WA prison system. Each of these “performances” represented a target which, if the company running the prison was able to achieve it, resulted in further payment. Each target reached correlated positively with reduced recidivism (or re-offending) rates. So, for example, the company running Acacia would be paid less if there were a larger number of assaults, serious assaults or incidents of drug-taking within the prison in any given month. Similarly, they are paid less whenever a smaller proportion of the prisoner population is engaged in employment, educational activities or programmes. An even larger deduction would be made if there were an escape or a death in custody (other than natural causes). For the past six years, an additional payment of $100,000 per annum may be made, at the WA government’s discretion, for any innovation deemed to be “significant”. These have included, for example, new initiatives in resettlement, and in parenting training.

I am therefore in what may be a unique situation. For I head up a chaplaincy department in a new prison which encourages change – or, at least, in a prison which permits and authorises more innovation than one would normally expect. The four chaplains have been able to work together and try new strategies and new projects, involving the faith community as well as the broader prison population. The basis of my research is to better understand spiritual capital in this environment.

The Christian community of faith in Acacia is constantly surprising me. There is no doubt that in some respects it is the same as the faith community in every other prison in which I’ve served, or which I have visited. It consists primarily of men who have committed a whole range of crimes – some hideous or violent, others relatively trivial. Many of the men are vulnerable, some have come from terrible backgrounds and have gut-wrenching stories to tell. They come from many different countries and from every state in Australia. A few are well educated, while others cannot read or write. Around 33% of them are Indigenous. Many are mentally ill. But there the commonalities seem to stop.

At the same time the Acacia community of faith differs from others that I’ve come across, in this state or in South Australia. There are many differences, small and large, but for me three overlapping factors stand out as particularly distinctive.
The first of these is the importance placed upon being a community whose members know each other and trust each other. A chaplain to one of the other WA prisons spoke of Acacia recently as “a programmes prison”. He was referring to the fact that the chapel community in Acacia sponsors more group activities such as programmes, courses and bible studies than anywhere else in WA. The second major difference is that members of the Acacia faith community display a relatively high morale. Members of this community show initiative, make decisions, and have made sure that things are done. I shall elaborate on this in Chapter 4. On top of all this, the third great difference that I see is the “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP) – or, at least, STP as we practice it in Acacia. The first four STPs in Australia were conducted in Acacia Prison and preparations are in hand for Acacia’s 18th. In some respects, STP has changed the way we view ministry, and we believe that this project is run differently in Acacia from anywhere else. In Chapter 4, I intend to deal with the first two of the differences I have mentioned. STP is mentioned briefly in Chapter 4, and will be discussed at greater depth in Chapters 6 and 7.

The faith community in Acacia is never the same. Prisoners come and go, bring with them different needs, strengths and weaknesses. Numbers fluctuate greatly. The number of prisoners attending Sunday chapel services varies from around 28 through to about 45. In addition, there are smaller numbers attending weekly Prison Fellowship meetings, bible studies and programme sessions. Some of these are the same people, others are not. In the face of this, the staff remains remarkably constant. I have been full-time in Acacia from February 1st, 2001 – just five months before the prisoners arrived. Three part-time chaplains joined me a year later, two of whom are still ministering in Acacia, one having left after 8½ years. One other chaplain began with us as a volunteer, then became a chaplain-in-training, and is now serving as a chaplain. She has been with us for a total of 6½ years.

Volunteer helpers from “outside” play a large part in the Acacia faith community. Some are rostered to assist on Sunday mornings, while others enter the prison weekly as members of the Prison Fellowship team. Still others run bible studies or assist from time to time by facilitating programmes. Tewksbury & Collins (2005, p.27), in their USA research, found that religious volunteers in correctional institutions “appear dedicated to their work in their current institution, remain
involved for long periods, and report very high levels of satisfaction with their work.” This is certainly the case at Acacia. Some of our volunteers have been coming into Acacia for more than ten years. In a pre-release interview with a prisoner called Gareth¹, he said, “We just love those guys coming in from outside!”

As previously indicated, there are two smaller gatherings which “overlap” the Acacia community of faith. These are the “communities” formed by STP and by the “Kairos” short-courses. Each of these is sponsored by the faith community and in a sense is “owned” by it. Yet almost all members of both of these groups are not members of the Acacia community of faith. Indeed, over the years, a significant number of the STP group have been Buddhist, Moslem, atheist or agnostic. I think that most members of those two groups feel themselves to be “honorary members” of the faith community—members, and yet not members.

Outside all this, there is a “grey area”. Some who would not for a moment count themselves part of a faith community come to the chapel area for counselling or for prayer or for a time of quiet in order to grieve or to think. Some who are unable to attend the funeral of a relative or a friend will come to a chaplain to conduct some kind of a memorial service.

There is no doubt that ministry among individuals is vital. It is central to the work of a chaplain, and it must not be neglected. Yet I maintain that work with groups is equally important.

Jesus certainly undertook a great deal of ministry with individuals (e.g., John 8.1-11; Luke 8.43-48; Luke 13.10-13). However, throughout his public ministry he had an additional focus concentrating on the twelve apostles (c.f. Matthew 10.1-4; 26.20ff.) and a smaller number of women who were close to him throughout his public ministry (Mark 15.40-41). Within this group was an inner circle of Peter, Andrew, James and John (see Mark 9.2-10). Just outside it was a slightly wider group again (including, we are told, Cleopas and his companion, Luke 23.13-35). And outside that was a wider circle yet, of 72 disciples whom he sent out to

¹ Gareth is a prisoner who took part in this study. Names of all persons mentioned in this thesis are pseudonyms.
receive hospitality, to heal and to tell people that God’s kingdom is near (Luke 10.1-21).

Generating the research question and process

In Acacia there are two main sections, Protection and Mainstream. The Protection prisoners – numbering about 140 - are those considered to be at risk of assault from other inmates. I conducted two focus groups, one in each section, in order to determine a research question (Bryman, 2008). Both groups expressed the view that I should focus not only upon the community of faith within the prison but upon how the spiritual capital in Acacia affected individual members once they were released. In effect, each group thought I should examine whether or not the effects were lasting. So, for example, the first focus group, which was the group in the Protection part of the prison, came up with the following suggestion:

Does the spiritual capital in Acacia set up a solid foundation and supporting framework to ensure a successful (social) integration into the community once the individual has left the prison spiritual network?

They asked me to “polish this up at a later stage”. After the second group voiced very similar concerns, I decided upon the following as my research question for this study:

What can we learn about the development of spiritual capital in a prison by looking at the community of faith in Acacia, both in the prison itself and post-release?

One of the unusual features of the Acacia community of faith in Acacia is that, for the most part, its members show initiative and participate fully in decision-making. Because of this, I selected participant action research (PAR) as my methodology in this study. This meant that the prisoner-members of the faith community, as well as my Acacia chaplaincy colleagues, would be taking part with me in data collection, analysis and assessment. Reason (1994, p.329) defines participant action research (or “PAR”) in this way

PAR is a methodology for an alternative system of knowledge production based on the people’s role in setting the agendas, participating in the data
gathering and analysis, and controlling the use of the outcomes. PAR may use diverse methods, both quantitative and qualitative, to further these ends…

I strongly agree with the philosophy expressed by Heron & Reason (2001, p.179) when they write

We believe that ordinary people are quite capable of developing their own ideas and can work together in a co-operative inquiry group to see if these ideas make sense of their work and world in practice.

(see Kemmis, 2006; Tesoriero, 2010)

As I shall elaborate in later chapters, I was able to follow this methodology as planned, and with great effect, for more than half of the time I was researching in Acacia Prison. This began with the two focus groups who were decisive in devising my research question, and it proceeded in like manner from there. However, after the first 3½ years almost all of the prisoners who had contributed so fully at the beginning had been released or had been transferred to other prisons.

It was clear that the situation had altered. However, as far as possible I continued with the same methodology. I continued to consult with the TLG, who were acting as one of my focus groups in this study. They provided an opportunity to “member check” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.314; Maxwell, 1998, p.94; Robson, 2002, p.175). On a number of occasions, which I outline in Chapter 4, this led to a number of significant changes in the nature and direction of the research. In addition, I consulted frequently with focus groups set up after sessions of the “Sycamore Tree Project”, and occasionally with meetings of the Acacia chaplaincy department.

**Methods used**

Methods used in this research were as follows: research of the literature, observation, focus groups of prisoners as well as of chaplains, unstructured interviews of prisoners (pre-release and post-release) and unstructured interviews of chaplains. In addition, as I outline in Chapter 3, my presence in the prison over the years, experiencing the ambience, inevitably added further data and affected my interpretation of the data collected. As I embarked upon this case
study of the Acacia community of faith, it was important to be cognisant of the fact that I personally am a leading member of that community. In fact, I am the only person who has been part of that community from its beginning.

**Three over-lapping “Communities”**

As previously stated, this is a case study of the Acacia community of faith. However, inter-woven with it and over-lapping it, are two other “communities” which must be considered. The first of these is the community formed as part of the “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP). STP is a model of restorative justice in which groups of offenders meet with groups of victims of unrelated crimes. They work together for 7 or 8 three-hour sessions in a secure environment, assisted by trained, visiting facilitators. STP is operated by the Christian organisation, Prison Fellowship WA, and is sponsored by the chaplaincy department. However in Acacia great efforts are made to render STP spiritual rather than religious.

I acknowledge the difficulty in the word “spiritual” that Fewell (1995, p.18) is referring to when he writes,

> Many religious and nonreligious people use the term "spirituality," but you have to talk to each individual to find out what they mean.

However, I am using the term in the sense that Zehr (as cited in Bender & Armour, 2007, p.253) uses it in arguing that

> …restorative justice similarly relies on principles that are not related to any one ideology or religion but instead represent universal principles about human interactions.

(see Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2000; Pranis, 2012)

I see this exemplified in STP when participants “lower their guard” and reach out to each other in trust, honesty and caring. This happens time and again, and in every STP. In my opinion, it is all the more remarkable that such a thing can take place among groups of prisoners and victims of crime, within a prison environment.

Two distinguishing characteristics of Acacia projects are (a) that, although sponsored by the Christian organisation Prison Fellowship, Acacia STPs are reputedly less specifically Christian in flavour than in other prisons, and (b) those
prisoners perceived to be minimalising their offence/s, or their involvement in their offence/s, are permitted to participate.

There is a real sense of “belonging” among the groups that undergo STP. Some prisoner-participants are members of the Christian community of faith. However, others have been Buddhist, Moslem, agnostic, atheist or of no particular religious persuasion. Yet the community of faith clearly feel that they “own” STP, and those who take part in STP obviously feel no embarrassment about this. So it is that I call this an “over-lapping” community.

Another programme which is sponsored by the community of faith and which forms a community is “Kairos”. “Kairos” has been run three times in Acacia – in 2010, 2011 and 2012. These are the only occasions on which this programme has taken place in WA so far. Each year, “Kairos” has involved 17 or 18 prisoners and about the same number of visitors. The prisoners who have been invited to participate have been selected on the basis of their being leaders in their residential blocks. Preference has sometimes been given to gang members and “trouble-makers”. The aim has been for these men to experience four days of Christian community and Christian love. Many of them have never experienced genuine community before. This is another example of a community which is part of the community of faith but at the same time not part of it. There is no pressure placed upon participants to become members of the Acacia faith community. Again, there is complexity surrounding “community”. This is discussed more fully in Chapter 3.

I observe that each of these three, in its own way, encourages prisoner-participants to take responsibility for their own destinies, and supports them as they do so. This is a process of empowerment, though Gutierrez (as cited in Evans, 1992, p.139) calls it “liberation”. I am reminded of Gustaf, a prisoner-member of the Acacia faith community, who said to me one day,

Of course I want to walk wherever I want to walk, and to go wherever I want to go, but I’m free already.

Gustaf has experienced huge personal set-backs since that time – he has definitely had more “downs” than “ups”. However he has been greatly supported through this time by other members of the faith community. I think that, if asked, he would probably still claim to be “free already”. 
I like to call this process that is taking place the creation of spiritual capital, and I shall expound on this concept later in later chapters. At the same time, I acknowledge that there are other ways of explaining this behavior. I shall be looking at some of these as well.

**The significance of this kind of research**

There is no doubt that some of the characteristics and circumstances pertaining to the community of faith in Acacia apply equally to other prisons, particularly to the larger prisons for men in the metropolitan area of Perth, WA. However this study has not been conducted for that reason. It is an intrinsic study, undertaken in order to better understand this specific faith community. Stake (2000) states that “The search for particularity competes with the search for generalizability” (p.437). The particularity of this study makes it inappropriate to generalise with any confidence to other situations. As Schofield (2002, p.173) puts it,

*The goal [of a single-case study in qualitative research] is not to produce a standardized set of results that any careful researcher in the same situation or studying the same issue would have produced. Rather it is to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on a situation that is based on and consistent with a detailed study of that situation.*

Having said this, however, I hope for two related outcomes which may well be taken to be generalisation. The first of these relates to the prisoners who participated in this research. They are incredibly powerless and vulnerable persons who are beginning to find a sense of purpose and belonging. And, although their situation as inmates of a total institution necessarily implies that they have little in the way of ability to choose or to make decisions (Goffman, 1961), they are beginning to take hold of their lives and their future. I wonder what can be learned from this – and I hope and trust that this process can be reproduced in other comparable situations.

My second hope is related to this as well as to the methodology of this study. I consider that part of the reason all this has taken place is that, as much as is possible in a prison environment, the prisoners themselves have joined with the chaplains to determine policy and make decisions. In the Acacia faith community, this is how we were operating before this research began, primarily
through the TLG. In this study it has continued, in line with the PAR methodology. My hope is that this kind of procedure may be trialled and adopted in the faith communities of other WA prisons.

A road map through this thesis

Chapters 2 consists of a review of the literature on three important concepts that under-pin this research. These are as follows:

- **Theories of punishment** … These contextualise all that is presented in this thesis. In addition, they provide a “lead-in” to the second concept to be examined, namely restorative justice.

- **Restorative justice** … As previously indicated, the Acacia community of faith sponsors a restorative justice programme called the “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP). Restorative justice therefore occupies a significant proportion of this thesis.

- **Social capital, and spiritual capital** … As is demonstrated in Chapter 2, these two concepts are inter-twined. In this study, I examine the development of spiritual capital by members of the Acacia (Christian) community of faith. At the outset, I was aware that this term is used by different scholars in various ways, depending at least in part upon the context in which they are working. In the course of this work, I hoped to find the most appropriate meaning of the phrase “spiritual capital” in this unusual environment.

In Chapter 3, I outline more fully the methodology I have employed in this study, and my reasons for using that methodology. In addition, I outline the methods used and their effectiveness or otherwise. These consisted of research of the literature, my “presence” in the prison, systematic observation of the faith community in Acacia, focus groups and 28 unstructured interviews with various prisoners, ex-prisoners and chaplains. In conjunction with this, Chapter 3 contains some reflections upon the “insider research” which I conducted in this research. At time of writing, I have been co-ordinating chaplain in Acacia for more than eleven years. In this study, therefore, I have been observing a community in which I occupy an influential and a leading position. What difference does it make to be chaplain and researcher in the same environment? In addition, in this chapter I examine ethical
considerations which inevitably arise when embarking upon in-prison research. These focus mainly upon the vulnerability and woundedness of most of the prisoners involved.

Then in Chapters 4 and 5, I have presented a description of the community of faith in Acacia. Chapter 5 includes some comment upon my own role in the community of faith. It is clear that, as co-ordinating chaplain, I occupy a prominent position. Harness (2005, p.11) summarises the function of a prison chaplain when he speaks of “preaching, teaching and counselling” as “core competences” of this role, and Sundt & Cullen’s research (2007, p.133) finds that chaplains

…serve as administrators and coordinators of religious services and volunteers; they are ministers and spiritual guides; chaplains are ombudsmen, pastoral counsellors, educators and community liaisons.

(Sundt, Dammer & Cullen, 2002)

The remainder of Chapter 5 draws mainly upon the themes emerging from unstructured interviews with inmates and chaplains. In doing so, my wish is to present a word picture of a vibrant, exciting, disturbing and surprising faith community, because that is what it is.

Chapters 6 and 7 contain a more in-depth “case study” of the “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP), as it is conducted in Acacia. This is a truly remarkable programme which is potentially life-changing for victims of crime as well as for offenders. Then in the following chapter - Chapter 8 – I outline and reflect upon the kind of community I have been describing and analysing. This is a chapter in which data related to the concept of community is introduced and discussed.

In Chapter 9, I reflect upon the way in which I have observed the development of spiritual capital in the three “overlapping communities” already mentioned, and as a result of membership in them. Chapter 10 is the concluding chapter, summing up the findings of this research and making recommendations for further study.

Limitations and Outcomes

The company responsible for the day-to-day running of Acacia imposed a delay of two years on the active research in the prison. This took away some of the
impetus, and it forced a changed in the methodology. In addition, the findings were limited by the small sample of persons interviewed, as well as by the fact that a significant proportion of prisoners interviewed were unavailable for follow-up contact post-release.

Nevertheless, this research

1. proved that spiritual capital can be generated in a prison environment, and it showed what it looks like in Acacia Prison;
2. indicated that, at least in the Acacia faith community, this appears to be stronger because of a twofold emphasis – work among individuals as well as work with groups;
3. provides interesting insights into the nature of community; and
4. shines light in a new way upon restorative justice projects within the prison environment.
CHAPTER TWO – “THEORIES OF PUNISHMENT, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE, AND SPIRITUAL CAPITAL”

Introduction

As previously indicated, this chapter presents a “review of the literature” on three important concepts which under-pin this research. The first of these is theories of punishment, which contextualise all that has been done in this research. The second is restorative justice, which is important in this thesis because the Acacia community of faith sponsors a restorative justice programme called the “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP). The third of these is spiritual capital. When I began this research, I was keenly aware that the Acacia faith community was generating spiritual capital. However, I understood that the term is “elastic”, which is to say that various people attach different significance to it in the literature. Part of the reason for this is that it is being applied in quite different contexts. However, the main reason is that this phrase is an emerging term. It has not had time to settle into a standard usage. I wanted to see what spiritual capital looked like in Acacia Prison, and how best to use the term in this highly unusual environment.

Prisons are places of punishment

Ogilvie (2001, p.5) speaks of the often contradictory responses of the criminal justice system. She says that it represents “an uneasy (and shifting) reconciliation of the competing imperatives variously associated with punishment, rehabilitation, deterrence and denunciation” (see also Farmer, 2014; Liebling, 2014).

The Acacia Senior Management team frequently state that the aim of the company who run Acacia Prison – namely, Serco - is to produce “the responsible prisoner” (Bosworth, 2007; Pryor, 2001). Such a statement emphasises their ideal of rehabilitation. Indeed there are huge efforts in Acacia to change the existing prison culture\(^2\) (Crewe, 2007; Faccio & Costa, 2013; Johnstone, 2007b; 2014; Sutton, 2011; Workman, 2005). Large numbers of prisoners are engaged

\(^2\) In general terms, the principles of the prison culture, or “prison code” dictate that “prisoners have to be in opposition with official administration, be loyal to the fellow convicts and not betray each other, display emotional and physical toughness and mind their own business” (Faccio & Costa, 2013, p.386).
in apprenticeships of various kinds. Training is available in other job skills such as fork lift driving, and many prisoners have acquired a “blue card” (which entitles them to work in the construction industry after they are released from prison). In keeping with their stated aim of prisoner rehabilitation, Acacia authorities have always said that men have been placed there as punishment, not for punishment (Birgden & Grant, 2010; Liebling, 2011; Ogilvie, 2001). While they are in Acacia Prison, it is said, they are or should be subject to humane confinement, or as close to this as possible (Coyle, 1992; Dawes, 2006; Gouk, 1999).

However this is at odds with a prison culture in which everything is compulsory, and in which punishment for even slight infringement of the regulations is severe (Pryor, 2001). For the most part, prisoners are not treated as people who may show initiative or make up their own minds. Our legislators, as well as the general public, appear to agree that prisons are places of punishment. However, there is no consistent idea of what constitutes punishment or what it should aim to achieve. This is certainly evident from my observations in Acacia. What Randall (2013, p.475) says of Canadian criminal law applies to a very large extent in WA as well:

> Despite lofty rhetoric that suggests rehabilitation and deterrence are elements of sentencing in Canadian criminal law, these are both subordinated to the primary goal of punishment.

The various theories of punishment war with each other in Acacia Prison as well as in the criminal justice system at large. In this chapter I examine these theories. In addition, I discuss the ways in which restorative justice provides a different way of looking at, and “doing”, justice. Llewellyn, Archibald & Clairmont et al. (2013, p.284) write that

> To a considerable degree, restorative justice is a rebellious act of creative imagination which has animated community activists and justice professionals around the world to seek better ways of doing justice.

In addition, I will discuss how, why and whether restorative justice projects may be used alongside of, or in conjunction with other criminal justice responses (Daly, 2014; Roche, 2007; Wheeldon, 2009).
Theories of punishment

When looking at these questions, Lacey (1984) starts from a perhaps unusual perspective. She wonders whether theories of punishment derive from three suppositions. The first is that, since punishment involves some practice that is unpleasant or disadvantageous, it needs to be justified. This leads to a second, instinctual view, that it is worth justifying. And the third is that it can be justified, presumably as a necessary evil – that in fact, if it is an evil, there are compensatory good effects. It seems to me that she is approaching the heart of the matter. Garvey (2004, p.443) reminds us that

When the state punishes a person, it treats him as ordinarily it should not. It takes away his property, throws him in prison, or otherwise interferes with his liberty. Theories of punishment try to explain why such harsh treatment is nonetheless morally permissible, if not morally obligatory…

(see Dolinko, 1992; Sigler, 2011)

There is no single problem of punishment. In fact, as Kleinig (1991, p.401) points out, there are three problems relating to the authority to punish, namely the severity of punishment, method of punishment and the moral basis for punishment. Nevertheless, he adds, there is one underlying moral challenge posed by punishment:

Whatever else we may say about it, punishment is an imposition. It is, moreover, a deliberate imposition, an imposition by design, as a matter of principle, unlike quarantining, which is only contingently interfering, punishment is intended to inhibit another in the enjoyment of his/her life, liberty or estate.

(see also Barnett, 1977)

It follows from this that punishment needs to be justified in general and in every instance. An additional factor is that punishment is imposed differentially on the least powerful in our community (Randall & Haskell, 2013; Skotnicki, 2004). Hudson (1999, cited Scott 2-12, p.16 writes that “we should always punish with a bad conscience” (see Gilman, 2013; Pilsbury, 2009).

Lacey (1984, pp.28-29) therefore asks, if legal punishment is a “necessary evil”, what compensatory good effects is society hoping to achieve through its
imposition? She sees this in terms of the maintenance of certain principles of the legal system, and to the existence of the state itself. She acknowledges that this gives rise to a large number of other questions – such as the limits of criminal law and the difficulty of laws that are perceived to be unjust. She rightly points to the need to consider the state’s obligation towards individual members of society (Barnett, 1977), and to groups. Lacey’s approach to this topic does not give us the answers. However, it hints at different questions, and encourages us to think further.

What is punishment?

Most of the books and articles I have read, in the areas of criminal justice or penology, have given no definition of punishment at all. Those which have done so have provided such widely differing definitions that they may be speaking of differing concepts. Daly (1999a) writes of scholars who define punishment as “anything that is unpleasant, a burden, or an imposition of some sort on an offender.” Carlen’s definition of punishment (1983, p.205) as “the retributive infliction of pain” has the benefit of brevity but leaves the reader wondering what he means by “retributive” and who he thinks can be, or ought to be, punished. Quinton (as cited in Ten, 1987, p.14) says that “punishment is defined in part as infliction of suffering on the guilty” (see Wasserstrom, 1998). As an understanding of punishment, I prefer something like Hart’s 1987 definition (as cited in Adams, 2008, p.4), when he said,

For my purposes, punishment will be understood as the deliberate state-sanctioned infliction of harm distributed by officials to law breakers who have been found guilty.

The traditional theories of punishment may be divided into two categories: retributive and consequentialist (Bennett, 2004; Wood, 2002).

Retributive theories of punishment

Whitely (1998, p.2) writes that

Retributive theories claim that punishment is justified because, and only because, the wrongdoer deserves it for having done wrong.
These theories are called “backward-looking” or “retrospective”, because they 'look back' to the offence (Carlsmith, Darley & Robinson, 2002; Cragg, 1982; Muir, 2014). They focus on the perceived need to balance the scales of justice by giving the offender what he/she deserves. Retributivist theorists see this as the proper way to restore what Toews (2006, p.14) calls the “web of relationships” which has been disturbed, broken, shattered by crime. One aspect of retributive theories which is relevant to our later discussion about restorative justice is that these theories say nothing at all about the relationship of the victim/s of the offence to the practice of punishment. Zehr (2005a), reflecting upon the current “Western criminal justice system”, which he characterises as mostly retributive in nature, says that our preoccupation with blame-fixing means that we tend to be oriented towards the past. The questions, “what happened?” and “who did it?” take precedence over what to do with the problems resulting from the offence, and the situation out of which the offence arose (see Sim, 2015).

One topic which should be mentioned at this point is that of desert, a vital factor for the retributivist. Kleinig (as cited in Ten, 1987, p.47) says that

> The principle that wrongdoers deserve to suffer seems to accord with our deepest intuitions concerning justice.

(see Barton, 2001; Gromet & Darley, 2009)

The concept of revenge is often associated with retributive theories of punishment. Whitely (1998, p.11) tells us that

> The justice system, after all, grew out of the need to restrain the personal, overly intense reaction of vengefulness, so often called “wild justice”.

Stephen (as cited in Primoratz, 1989, p.189) comments,

> the criminal law stands to the passion of revenge in much the same relation as marriage to the sexual appetite.

In this way he is pointing out that the vindictive sentiments of the general population is given regular and public expression through the legal system (Ashworth, 1993). Ten (1989) maintains that the difference between revenge and
punishment is that revenge can just as well be exercised on the innocent as on the guilty, whereas this is not so with punishment (Bennett, 2004). In fact, he adds that revenge would probably work best when imposed upon the offender’s mother.

One complication in all this is that innocent persons are sometimes punished (Gross, 2008; Grounds, 2004; Jenkins, 2013). One participant in the first four Acacia STPs had served eight years in prison for murder before he was found innocent and released (Button, 1998). I wonder would Ten consider that this man’s imprisonment was not punishment, but simply a mistake? Besides all this, Dolinko (1992) argues convincingly that “X deserves punishment” is not necessarily accompanied by, or followed by, “It is morally permissible to punish X”.

At any rate, because punishment necessarily involves pain and suffering, Ten (1989, p.46) argues strongly for a utilitarian approach to the matter. He maintains that no person should be punished unless it produces good consequences such as deterrence, reformation or incapacititative effects (Wasserstrom, 1988). Bentham (as cited in Wright, 2008, p.3) wrote that “…Unless you have a reasonable prospect of preventing more pain than you inflict, you should not punish at all.” Fatah (2011) argues in a similar way, and finds that punishment is …morally wrong and serves no useful purpose, is not a reliable deterrent, is destructive, wasteful and not cost-effective.

Van Ness (1993, p.261) agrees with Ten, but shifts the emphasis somewhat. He believes that the purpose of punishment should always be to assist in the healing of the harms which have been caused by criminal acts: “The test of any response to crime must be whether it is helping to restore the injured parties”. I come back to this concept later in this chapter, as I deal with restorative justice.

**Consequentialist Theories of Punishment**

As the name implies, consequentialist theories are those which emphasise the results, or consequences of the punishment (Bennett, 2004; Ten, 1987). These aims and consequences are generally seen in terms of incapacitation (which most often takes the form of locking an offender away to protect the wider
community) or of deterrence (McGuire, 2000) - either to deter the offender from re-offending, or to deter others from committing similar offences. This could take the form of hard punishment or of attempts to transform the offender into a responsible citizen (Pryor, 2001). The latter is generally called “reformation” or “rehabilitation” (Tyler, 2006). A few philosophers (for example, Szaz, as cited in Carlen, 1983, pp.204-205) prefer to call this “treatment” rather than punishment. Consequentialist theories of punishment are often called “utilitarian” theories. Consequentialist theories are called “forward-looking” because they do not so much look back to the offence but forward to the hoped-for consequences of the punishment.

**Expressivist Theories of Punishment**

Some of the consequentialist theories of punishment are in fact “expressivist” theories (Primoratz, 1989; Sigler, 2011; Whitely, 1998). What they have in common is that they all see punishment as wholly or primarily a means of communication. This can be communication to the offender, or to the community at large, or to the victim, or to some combination of the above. Feinberg (1970) says of the prisoner that “…the very walls of his cell condemn him…” (also cited in Carlsmith et al., 2002, pp.285-286, and in Duff, 2003, p.43).

The main problem with such theories (it seems to me) is that, if punishment was intended to express disapproval, then it would be cheaper to simply say to the offender, “That was a really bad thing to do!”

It’s possible to see advantages as well as gaps in retributive approaches to punishment as well as to consequential approaches (Bennett, 2004). Because of this, some theorists search for some integrated, consistent theory on which to base all punishment. An example is Cragg (1992, p.58), who writes that

An obvious solution to this dilemma is to combine the two accounts. This option, however, poses serious difficulties since the principles that dominate the two distinct approaches seem incompatible. How then is this fundamental incompatibility to be overcome?

Various attempts have been made to combine these two kinds of theories (Obold-Eshleman, 2004; Wood, 2002). However, as Ten (1987, p.79) points out,
...any pluralist theory of punishment which recognizes several independent values which may conflict, cannot absolutely rule out the small sacrifice of one value for a big gain in another value.

The main objection to utilitarian theories is that punishment of the innocent is satisfactory if it leads to optimistic outcomes. So, too, are “pretend punishments” – hanging an effigy of an offender would be cheaper and less cruel than hanging the person herself or himself, and according to the utilitarian, this would be perfectly justified, provided the community thought it was real (Carlsmith et al., 2002). On the other hand, the objection to retributivist theories is that, according to those theories, punishment of the guilty is required, even if the results would be disastrous (Ten, 1987).

**Prisoner status or non-status**

Whatever the aim of punishment in our WA community, it is as if a “scatter gun approach” were being adopted. By this I mean that when a person is incarcerated, the sentence carries with it a number of “side-effects” that go far beyond the sentence imposed (Landenne, 2008, p.54). An example is the often devastating effect upon the families of prisoners, and upon their partners (Alderman, 2003; Christian, 2005; Codd, 2007; Comfort, 2002; Cunningham, 2001; Dallaire, Ciccone & Wilson, 2010; Demers, 2014; Hale, 2006; Howard, 2000; Jenkins, 2013; LaHurd, 2013; Rose, Clear & Ryder, 2001; Schwartz & Weintraub, 1974). It could be said that prisoners’ families are victims of crime (Zehr & Mika 1998). In addition, a great deal more happens to the prisoners themselves than is enumerated in their sentences.

In Acacia Prison, I take part in the training of new officers. One of my functions in the prison officer induction schools is to conduct sessions on the topic of “Good Grief!” I generally begin the main part of Session One by asking two questions: (1) “What causes us to grieve?” and (2) “What, specifically, causes prisoners to grieve?” I write responses on the white-board, and the responses to the second question are always fascinating (see Jeffreys, 2005). Prisoners have lost not only their freedom but their lifestyle, their families and friends, their self-respect, their privacy, their ability to choose (Doehring, 2006; Duce, 2013; Goulding, 2007; Landenne, 2008; Skotnicki, 2004). Sykes (as cited in Windzio, 2006, p.346) writes that "Inmates lose their status of 'citizenship' and of trusted members of society."
He goes on to say that prisoners confronted by rules usually receive no explanation of their meaning (Liebling, 2014). In this way, people who are accustomed to handling situations successfully and to relying on their decision-making outside the prison are reduced to the weak dependency of children. Hartman (2008, pp.172-173) comments,

Prisoners may be, in fact, the only adult, conscious, fully sentient human beings who are assumed to be incapable of making any decisions about their own lives.

Martin Leyva, himself a former prisoner, asks “Can you imagine how I feel - to be treated as a little boy and not as a man?” (in Leyva & Bickel, 2010, p.56; see Windzio, 2006). Duce (2013, p.3) comments,

Prison is one of the extreme environments of life because of its physical characteristics, its sensory deprivation, its restriction on social and sexual intercourse, and its special psychological character as authoritarian, punitive and relentlessly regimented.

Prisons, as I said, are sick, violent places (Landenne, 2008, p.54). It is easy to accept Liebling’s statement (as cited in Curran, 2002, p.120) that “prison is all about pain”.

**Overcrowding?**

Prison overcrowding is a direct result of political decisions based upon theories of punishment. The increase in number of prisoners at Acacia is not as extreme as it is in any of the other adult male prisons in the Perth metropolitan area. Nevertheless, as the numbers have “ramped up”, various problems have begun to surface. I suspect that these will increase as time passes. There is no doubt that there is adequate food, clothing and bedding for the larger population of inmates. However, I think of overcrowding as an increase in prisoner numbers without commensurate increase in the number of toilets, telephones and teachers (Grant & Memmott, 2007). Chaplaincy is a case in point. When there were 250 prisoners, we had funding for 9 chaplaincy-days per week; now that there are 1,000 prisoners, our allocation has risen, but only to 10.

Employment of prisoners is a highly relevant factor. I have been impressed at what I see as genuine efforts on the part of Acacia management to provide more
opportunities for training, constructive jobs, and education. However, despite some notable achievements, it has not kept pace with an expanding prison population. This has resulted in a significant number of inmates being unemployed, and in some others having jobs that are trifling. I consider that idleness is most unfortunate in a prison (Shaw, 2005; Stewart, 2007).

Research indicates that overcrowding in prisons can lead to various other problems. For example, it may result in an increase in the number of violations leading to disciplinary action (Davies, 2004; Megaree, 1976, as cited in Farrington & Nuttall, 1980) and to increase in deaths in custody, especially among older inmates (Davies, 2004; Paulus, McCain & Cox, 1978). Other problems include assaults (Farmer, 2014; Paulus et al., 1978), ill health (Demers, 2014; Grant & Memmott, 2007), mental illness (Stewart, 2007) and self-harm (Davies 2004). In addition, prison overcrowding has been associated with stress and anxiety (Paulus et al., 1988, as cited in Sharkey, 2010); a greater number of suicides (Huey & McNulty, 2005; Sharkey, 2010; Stewart, 2007) and rape and sexual coercion (King, 1992, as cited in Grant & Memmott, 2007; Steels & Goulding, 2009). Lemmert (as cited in Grant & Memmott, 2007) found that where low-risk prisoners were incarcerated with high-risk prisoners - an eventuality far more likely in a situation of over-crowding – there was a greater likelihood of re-offending.

I observe in Acacia that, as prisoner numbers have gone up, stress levels among custodial and non-custodial staff have increased. Hartman (2008) notes that one effect of overcrowding in the larger USA prisons has been that staff members are less likely to see prisoners as fellow human beings. Haney (ud., p.12) defines overcrowding as “having more prisoners than a facility can accommodate in a psychologically healthy and humane way”, and he writes that overcrowded prisons are unlikely to be able to cope adequately with vulnerable or problematic inmates (p.14), or with prisoners who are mentally ill (p.4). Liebling (2001) cites a report by Gover (1980) on prison suicides, which states that prison staff’s lack of knowledge of individual prisoners was a concern. This is more likely to happen in an overcrowded institution (Bosworth, Campbell & Denby et al., 2005).

It is not a simple picture, because there are various contributory factors. The “amount of space per inmate” in a living unit (Paulus et al., 1978, p.109), in
combination with other circumstances such as boredom, idleness and inaccessibility to various facilities can place prisoners at some risk.

**Rehabilitation**

As I have indicated, there is some debate as to whether or not rehabilitation is, or should be, one of the purposes of punishment. Barnett (1977) and Elliot (2007) tell us that to imprison an individual in order to rehabilitate him or her is indefensible. Barnett (1977, p.281) speaks of “the intentional, forceful manipulation of an individual’s thought processes”, and has this to say:

To say that an otherwise just system has incidentally rehabilitative effects which may be desirable is one thing, but it is quite another to argue that these effects themselves justify the system. The horrors to which such reasoning can lead are obvious from abundant examples in history and contemporary society.

**Why punish?**

There is considerable confusion, at a policy level and in our courts, concerning the purpose of punishment (Liebling, 2014). Are people sent to prison to “pay” for what they have done? Or is this carried out in order to achieve some purpose – whether deterrence, incapacitation or rehabilitation, or to communicate some message to the community or to the wrongdoer? Until we decide why we punish in our community, it will always be difficult to say whether or not such punishment “works”.

**Restorative justice**

In what ways do theories of punishment inform our understanding of restorative justice?” or, to put it differently, where does restorative justice fit in all this?

Over the years, a huge amount of work has gone into defining and exploring theories of justice and of restorative justice. However, in this thesis, I am more concerned with punishment and with where restorative justice fits within it.

Whitely (1998) paints a word picture of the present justice system, in which the victim of an offence is seldom involved, except sometimes as a witness for the prosecution (or, perhaps, in a “victim impact statement”), and in which the
offender is very often little more than a bystander. The traditional justice system assumes that the state is the victim, and the harms inflicted upon the actual victim of crime are largely ignored (Daly, 2006; Muir. 2014). Restorative justice represents what Zehr (2005a, p.124) calls a “paradigm shift”, for its aim is to heal rather than punish. White (2004, p.43) points out that

In abstract terms, clear differences can be drawn between a system of justice based primarily upon retribution, and one based upon restoration.

(see also, for example, Crocker 2013; Gavrielides, 2013; Rugge & Scott, 2009; Worthington 2000)

Later in this chapter, I enumerate five “entry points” for restorative justice projects (Latimer, Dowden & Muise, 2005, p.128). These range from “Police (or ’pre-charge’)” to “Parole (or ’pre-revocation’)”. In restorative justice projects at all of these entry points, care is taken to treat both the victim of crime and the offender with dignity, and part of the aim is to assist the offender to take responsibility for his/her own actions. Restorative justice provides a bridge towards overcoming some of the negative effects of punishment. Perhaps in this way it becomes a connector to justice.

STP is a “corrections” or “post-sentence” restorative justice project (Latimer et al., 2005; Wilson, 2007), and it aims to restore prisoners. It takes prisoner-participants through the time-honoured restorative justice steps of responsibility, confession, forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation and restoration, and it leads them towards healing (Van Ness, Erwin & Grant et al., 1996). But this is a limited view of STP, for it aims to assist victims of crime as well as offenders (Van Ness, 2005a).

**Punishment and Restorative justice**

As previously indicated, Daly (1999a, p.4) writes of a number of scholars who define punishment as “anything that is unpleasant, a burden, or an imposition of some sort on an offender.” If we accept this way of thinking, then we would say that restorative justice projects are a form of punishment. For “[r]estorative justice insists on accountability, even when that is painful” (Van Ness & Strong, 2006, p.51; see also Hamlin, 2011). It may well be that this is the kind of pain that assists
people on the way towards healing (Zehr, 2005b). Yet, even if this is true, it does not make the hurt any less.

However, it is painful for the offender as well as the victim. Are the scholars Daly refers to saying that restorative justice punishes victims of crime? Perhaps these viewpoints assume that sentencing will take place at the restorative justice sessions rather than in a courtroom (at the “crown” entry point, see below), because this is the case in some jurisdictions. In STP, victims and offenders volunteer to take part, and it takes place in a prison – well and truly post-sentencing (Bakker, 2007; MacKenzie, 2009; Ridgeway, 2005; Van Ness et al., 1996).

Our system of crime management is predicated on the social contract that the state acts as protector and representative of the individual’s interests. For this reason, all criminal acts are seen as being directed against the state rather than against the individual citizen. Zehr (2002, p.14) rightly points out that “Victims often feel ignored, neglected or even abused by the justice process.”

The fact is, as Barnett (1977, p.288) commented, “*The armed robber did not rob society; he robbed the victim*” (italics in the original). The offender’s debt, therefore, is not to society; it is to the victim (Barton 2001; Fernández-Manzano, 2014). Most victims experience a real need to be kept informed. In addition they feel a need to tell their story and have someone really listen (for example, McBroom, 2009; Schellenberg, 2014; Wright, 2001; Zehr, 2008). At the same time, victims of crime often feel that control of their own lives has been taken from them, and may need assistance in restoring this (Clear, 2006; Taylor, 2005). In addition, most victims need some kind of vindication, or restitution – even if it is only by being treated with dignity, and being taken seriously (Randall, 2013). However,

research shows that general satisfaction with justice is increased when victims have the opportunity to express their views and they feel their wishes are not being ignored.  

(Clear, 2006, p.10; see also Daly, 2006; Morris, 2000; Strang, 2002)

To a large extent, restorative justice has arisen in order to meet these needs. Van Ness & Strong (2006, pp.62-63) explain that encounter – genuine meeting between parties – is a feature of restorative processes, but they remind us that
encounter is greatly restricted in conventional criminal justice proceedings. Such factors as rules of evidence and representation by lawyers virtually exclude the participation of primary as well as secondary victims,

…but even defendants are silent pawns in the courtroom, often failing to even comprehend what is taking place because of the arcane language and procedures used.

Steels (2009-2010, p.249) reports that, because prisoners in his study had been unable to state their case or apologise or make any comment, 14 of them said they “felt the whole thing was prearranged, leaving them without a chance of being seen or heard”. Most models of restorative justice, therefore, represent an attempt to restore a balance which is usually not present in the conventional justice system, and to right a wrong. Many victims of crime taking part in restorative justice projects, and some of the offenders as well, speak of having been “cheated” or “left out” or “forgotten” in their respective courtroom cases (Guthrey, 2013; McBroom, 2009; Randall, 2013). Schiff (20007, p.228) writes,

Restorative processes include stakeholders not traditionally involved in criminal or other adversarial processes (or perhaps only minimally or peripherally included) and do so because it is viewed as central to a fair and just outcome…

What is restorative justice?

Klein & Van Ness (2002) characterise the present justice system (which they call “the so-called crime control model stressing the 'doing justice approach'”) as “Trail 'em, nail 'em, and jail 'em” (p.98). Zehr (2002, p.21) and Toews (2006, p.17) assert that the questions asked by the criminal justice system are these:

1. What law was broken?
2. Who did it?
3. What do they deserve?

In contrast, the “guiding questions” of restorative justice are as follows (Zehr 2002, p.38; 2004 p.312):

1. Who has been hurt?
2. What are their needs?
3. Whose obligations are these?
4. Who has a stake in this situation?
5. What is the appropriate process to involve stakeholders in an effort to put things right?

Definitions

Restorative justice certainly resists an easily agreed-upon definition (Daly, Hayes & Marchetti, 2006; Daly, 2006; Dzur & Wertheimer, 2002; Johnstone, 2014; Wallace & Wylie, 2013). Ashworth (2003, p.164) comments that

Vessels of widely different shapes, sizes and modes of propulsion sail under this particular flag, particularly because RJ… is to some extent a practice-led movement.

Many other researchers, such as Harris (1998), Sherman & Strang (2007) and Valk (2006), write in a similar vein. Harris (as cited in Gavrielides, 2008, p.169) tells us that

Arguably, the only agreement that exists in the literature is that there is no consensus as to its exact meaning.

(See Shapland, Atkinson & Colledge et al., 2006)

While some appear to be concerned about this lack of unanimity in defining restorative justice (e.g., Coker, 2002, as cited in Stubbs, 2007; Doolin, 2006-2007), others see it as inevitable. So, for example, Gavrielides (2008) points out that theoretical disagreements and conflicting definitions are common in the field of criminology. He adds that there is some debate about what constitutes “criminal law”, “criminology”, and even “crime”. Johnstone (2004, as cited in Daly, 2006) argues that restorative justice should be seen as a set of ideas that challenges the criminal justice system in fundamental ways. She comments (in Daly, 2006, p.135) that there is “much to be commended” in such a long-term political project. Lokanan (2009, p.37) writes that

Some of its advocates argue that since restorative justice lacks any definitive rationale, it may mean different things to different people; others have argued
that it is its openness and flexibility as a model that make it appealing as an alternative justice paradigm.

There is considerable debate about whether a definition of restorative justice should be process-based or outcomes-based. One of the two “favourites” among the process-based definitions is, firstly, Tony Marshall’s 1996/1997 definition as a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offense come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offense and its implications for the future.


The second has been adapted from Marshall’s definition by Zehr (2002, p.37; 2004, p.307):

Restorative justice is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and to put things right as far as possible.


One of many attempts to provide an outcomes-based definition of restorative justice is put forward by the Restorative Justice Consortium (1999, as cited in Wright, 2001, p.2):

Restorative justice seeks to balance the concerns of the victim and the community with the need to reintegrate the offender into the society. It seeks to assist the recovery of the victim and enable all parties with a stake in the justice process to participate fruitfully in it.

Morris (2002, p.600) writes as follows:

There is no ‘right way’ to deliver restorative justice… The essence of restorative justice is not the adoption of one form rather than another; it is the adoption of any form which aims to achieve restorative processes, outcomes and objectives.
Marshall (2001) looks firstly at practitioners and scholars who see the distinctiveness of restorative justice in its *process or practice*. He then looks at others who appear to be at odds with them, perceiving the distinctiveness of restorative justice rather in its *values or commitments*. He goes on to say that there is no need to set the two against each other, “for it is the values that determine the process, and it is the process that makes the values visible” (Marshall, 2001, p.4).

Interestingly, when Llewellyn et al. (2013, p.294) ask the question, “What is restorative justice?”, they point to the fact that this question has almost always invited a descriptive rather than a definitional (in the sense of conceptual) response. They suggest that anyone wishing to imagine or assess success needs to do more than describe restorative justice practices. What is needed, they say, is a consideration of not only the way in which restorative justice seeks justice but also the justice it seeks. They encourage readers to look to conceptual or theoretical accounts of restorative justice in order to imagine, understand and assess (c.f., Crocker, 2013; Llewellyn, 2011; Randall, 2013).

Llewellyn et al. (2013, pp.283-284) acknowledge that the form taken by restorative justice varies with local contexts, but that

Restorative processes are usually community-based, informal, dialogical, participatory, and egalitarian in many respects the opposite of hierarchical and formal traditional criminal justice.

However, they add that the thread running through all such projects is that restorative justice views criminal behaviour in relational terms, it has a relational understanding of the causes of crime, and it sees prevention and reduction of crime as relational considerations. They therefore propose that restorative justice must be understood primarily in relational terms (Bottoms, 2003; Crocker, 2013; Fernández-Manzano, 2014; Gustafson, 2004; Marshall, 2014; Naylor, 2010; Obold-Eshleman, 2004; Williams, 2013).

The notion of restorative justice being relational is not new. Braithwaite’s theories of reintegrative shaming and republicanism are relational in character.
(Braithwaite, 1993; 2003b; Braithwaite & Pettit, 1994; Heuer, 2011; Sherman & Strang, 1997; 2007; Tyler, 2006; Tyler, Sherman & Strang et al., 2007), and so are some others. For example, Zehr (2005a) points to restorative justice as a new “lens” through which we focus on the individuals first, then on their relationships, and he comments (2004, p.309) that the values of restorative justice “can be seen as reflecting an underlying worldview based on a sense of interconnectedness” (see Toews, 2006). However such accounts have not explored why relationships are central in restorative justice processes. Llewellyn et al. (2013, p.296) suggest that the reason for this lack of attention may be that Zehr and others have grounded their work in a Christian tradition which orients their idea of “right relations” as an ideal of justice that needs no further defence or explanation. Llewellyn (2011, p.102) sees “equality of relationships” as the goal of restorative justice, and she says this:

The latent potential of the equality of relationship at which restorative justice aims helps to see the sense in which “restore” [in the term, “restorative justice”] is intended – it is to bring out, or to realize, our full potential and capacities as relational beings.

(see Williams, 2013)

**How restorative is your restorative justice project?**

**Who participates?**

Braithwaite (1999, as cited in Bottoms, 2003, p.79) says that

…for informal justice to be restorative justice, it has to be about restoring victims, restoring offenders, and restoring communities

Wilson et al. (2002, p.373) speak of the concern for victims of crime which is expressed in restorative justice projects. They then go on to express the view that any intervention claiming to be restorative justice which does not include the actual victims of the actual crime with the actual perpetrator is “only wannabe restorative justice”. However, others suggest a “restorative continuum” (for

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3 Baldwin & Rukus (2014) write that Veterans Treatment Courts in the USA do “not fully embody the restorative justice agenda” (p.1) because not all stakeholders are not “fully present” (p.22) in the process, and because there is an element of coercion in the programme.
example, Toews, 2006; Wright, 2001), ranging from fully restorative to mostly restorative. This concept is discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

McCold (as cited in Harris, 2008, p.40) identifies “macro-community” and “micro-community”. “Micro-community” refers to the relationships affected by the crime. It includes those persons most affected by the criminal act. The term, “macro-community” deals with larger collectives such as geographic communities, workplaces and clubs. Harris sees restorative justice as properly dealing with micro-communities. Van Ness (as cited in Dzur & Wertheimer, 2002) considers that society at large, or its representatives, has a part to play in restorative justice – calming their own fears, expressing support for victims as well as offenders, and “being schooled” that offenders are human beings. Dzur & Wertheimer (2002, p.7) tell us that

The third party in this critique is civil society - the community in which someone was victimized and to which an offender must return.

Interestingly, Strang & Van Ness (1997, as cited in Dzur & Wertheimer, 2002) add that the wider community carries the responsibility for underlying social, economic and moral factors that contributed to the conflict within society that is the cause, or the partial cause, of crime (see Archibald & Llewellyn, 2006; Fernández-Manzano, 2014; Llewellyn, 2011; Llewellyn et al., 2013; Randall, 2013; Sims, 2015). This throws into focus the expressivist theories of punishment (see above). These writers suggest that the due punishment of crime, through the employment of restorative justice, should proclaim to the macro-community not only (a) that crimes, and the harms that they cause, are being taken seriously, but (b) that the community bears some responsibility for what has taken place.

Shantz (2008) describes an in-prison restorative justice project called “Face to Face”, which bears some similarity to STP. It involved 5 offenders, 5 victims of crime and one other person who represented the community. In “Face to Face”, this additional person’s function is to give a perspective of the crime from the perspective of neighbours living next-door to the crime scene. In STP, as it is practised in most WA prisons, a chaplain “sits in” for each session (Ridgeway,
He or she is sometimes mistakenly taken to be acting as a representative of the community, and I expound on this in Chapter 6.

Verity & King (2007, p.473) comment that

…the narrow, simplistic view of ‘community’ to be found in the restorative justice literature is problematic.

**Surrogate victims of crime**

One accusation sometimes levelled against STP – as if to say that this project is not as restorative as some others – is that the offenders and victims of crimes are of unrelated crimes. The offenders have really offended, and the victims have been of real and horrific crimes, but they are unrelated crimes.

A number of researchers and practitioners - for example, Barton (2000) - simply assume that “surrogate victims” are not sufficient, or that they are somehow second-rate. It may well be that in some circumstances this is the case. However, as Zehr & Mika (1998, p.53) point out,

> Face-to-face encounters are appropriate in some instances while alternative forms of exchange are appropriate in others.

(see Stobbs, 2013)

So it is that Lovell et al. (2002) are able to write that, in the project they conducted, hearing unrelated offenders admit to their crimes offered consolation even though it was “not the person who had harmed them” (Lovell et al., 2002, p.266). I consider that, in some kinds of restorative justice projects, surrogate victims are preferable, and likely to more effective (Schantz, 2008; Stobbs, 2013). Because STP is a group project, and is conducted within prison precincts, having surrogate victims makes the project possible. And the fact that STP touches the lives of participants in real ways indicates that it is certainly worth-while.

**Entry points**

Latimer et al. (2005), among others, point out that most of the current forms taken
by restorative justice projects can be grouped into three categories: circles, conferences, and victim-offender mediations. STP does not quite “fit” into any of these, and I shall deal with this later in this chapter. There are five “entry points” currently possible in some place or another, for restorative justice (Allard, 2008a; Archibald & Llewellyn, 2006; Latimer & Kleinknect, 2000; Llewellyn et al., 2013; McGlynn et al., 2012; Naylor, 2010; Randall, 2013; Williams, 2013). These are:

- Police (pre-charge)
- Crown (post-charge)
- Courts (pre-sentence)
- Corrections (post-sentence)
- Parole (pre-revocation).

It’s clear that “Sycamore Tree” is within the “corrections”, or “post-sentence” category (Bakkar, 2007; Feasey & Williams, 2009; Feasey et al., 2005). This category brings with it a large number of specific challenges, and I refer to some of these in Chapter 6.

There is some debate as to whether post-sentence restorative justice projects should be conducted early in a prisoner’s period of incarceration, or immediately prior to release (MacKenzie, 2009; Wallace & Wylie, 2013). Bazemore & Maruna (2009, p.379) consider that restorative justice “appears to be ideally suited for the reintegration of individuals into their communities”, while Walker & Greening (2010) point to the Huikahi restorative circles, in Hawaiian prisons, as effective examples of this. In Acacia, there is a somewhat different approach, and I deal with this in Chapter 7. In addition, Settles (2009) advocates the use of restorative justice in post-incarceration settings, to assist in the creation of supportive social capital, whilst Fox (2012) describes a re-entry programme, which includes post-release restorative justice, in the state of Vermont. Settles (2009) and Fox (2012) both point out that such programmes, in their focus upon offender re-entry, minimise the interests and issues of victims of crime. This is clearly contrary to the “core values” of restorative justice.
Gemeinschaft

Tay and Kamenka (1980) write of three different functions of social interaction, each of which poses different problems and requirements for law. The first of these “strains” is referred to as Gemeinschaft Law which, they tell us,

…seeks to establish and maintain what Lenin called certain simple fundamental rules of living together, known to all ages…

This, then, is connected with the educative and moral image of the law. It “takes for its fundamental presupposition and concern the organic community” (Bottoms, 2003; see Dallmayr, 1996), and it is the over-riding concern of Toews (2006, pp.12ff.), with her “web of relationships” (see Tonnies, 1955, as cited in Liepins, 2000). The second “strain” is that of Gesellschaft:

Law provides principles and practices for conflict-resolution between individuals and groups within a society. In doing so, it sets what at any given period become the proper limits within which such individuals and groups may serve or please themselves…

Essentially, then, Gesellschaft takes for its fundamental presupposition and concern the individual who is “theoretically – for the purpose of the law – free and self-determined, limited only by the rights of other individuals” (Bottoms, 2003, p.101). The third is what Tay and Kamenka (1980, p.26) call “bureaucratic-administrative law” – which “concerns itself with areas, activities or groups, rather than individuals as such”. Bottoms (2003, p.101) says of this kind of law that its concern is “neither an organic human community nor an atomic individual, it is a non-human ruling interest, public policy or ongoing activity, of which human beings are subordinates, functionaries or carriers” (see Dallmayr, 1996).

Bottoms (2003) comments that, although these three are distinguishable from each other, they can sometimes be discerned on a co-present basis in a given legal situation. He speaks of a “hungering for gemeinschaft” in recent times, which would be consistent with the rise of restorative justice.
I shall refer again to these terms – *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* – as I write about “community” in Chapter 8. In a sense I hesitate to do so, because both terms are “romanticised” by so many authors – not least by Tonnies, who is referred to by Etzioni (1998, p.x) as “an early and ‘old’ communitarian”. Nevertheless, provided these concepts are not taken to extremes, perhaps they can be helpful tools.

**Empowerment and Restorative Justice**

Barton (2001, p.1) tells us that

> The status quo in criminal justice silences, marginalises and disempowers the primary stakeholders in the criminal justice dispute.

He goes on to say that this is the main reason restorative justice came into being in the western world, and that empowerment is an essential element of restorative justice (Barton, 2000; Braithwaite, 2002; 2003a; Brooks et al., 2014; Doolin, 2006-2007; Dyck, 2006; Dzur & Olson, 2004; Van Ness & Strong, 2006; Zehr, 2002).

Bush & Folger (1994, p.2) define empowerment in this way:

> In simplest terms, *empowerment* means the restoration to individuals of a sense of their own value and strength and their own capacity to handle life’s problems.

(see Guthrey, 2013)

This definition arises from the context of mediation. Sawin & Zehr (2007) point out that some connotations of such a definition might not be applicable to restorative justice. So, for example, some crime victims might object to the assumption that, following a particularly traumatic event, they can be expected to “handle life’s problems” as competently as before. Returning to power over life’s problems will be a lifelong journey for many, and for some this may never be achieved (Achilles & Zehr, 2001). However the victim’s disempowerment related to the criminal act and its aftermath is the reason the justice system, and restorative justice, seeks to restore power to the victim. For this reason I find Bush & Folger’s definition a helpful starting-point.

There is some debate as to whether empowerment is a process or an outcome (Laverack & Wallerstein, 2001). In STP it is definitely a **process**. In effect, it is a
journey upon which prisoner-participant have now begun, or have taken some significant steps (Wilson, 2007). However prisoners are incredibly powerless people (Randall & Haskell, 2013). They are subject to written and unwritten rules at every point in their existence, and they have little opportunity to make their own decisions (Duce, 2013). If empowerment is an outcome of restorative justice, they have not achieved it. However,

a. Prisoners – as well as victims – are empowered when others listen to their stories with respect (Miller & Hefner, 2015; Pranis, 2005; Sawin & Zehr, 2007; Toews, 2006; Verity & King, 2007); and

b. Taking responsibility for past actions and making constructive plans for the future gives prisoners a sense of empowerment (Bolitho, 2012; Miller & Hefner, 2015; Sawin & Zehr, 2007; Toews, 2006).

Harding (2011, p.75) distinguishes between “power-over” - being power over others -and “power to” which is power to achieve shared goals - and is very clear that restorative justice aims to give the latter to participants. Riger (1993) sounds a note of caution when she asks whether this sense of empowerment matches the facts (Aertson, Bolivar, Mesmaecker & Lauwers, 2011). In this research, I wanted to know whether taking part in Acacia STPs had made a difference in the way prisoner-participants lived their lives – in the prison, in the way they planned for their future, in the way they prepared for post-release (Wilson, 2007).

There is further debate as to whether empowerment should be regarded as pertaining to communities or to individuals. So, for example, Woodall, Warwick-Booth & Cross (2012, p.742) write that “…it is about giving and taking power in unison.” This is reminiscent of Freire’s (1972) “critical awareness” or “conscientisation”. In chapters 5 and 6, I note that considerable strength and encouragement has been engendered in community – whether in STP, or in Term Leadership Group, or in “Kairos”. However my impression has been that prisoners have been empowered in different ways and to differing extents (Feasey & Williams, 2009), and therefore that empowerment has usually been an individual journey. In small and in large ways, prisoners – against all odds – begin to take some control over their lives (Van Ness, 2005a; 2007).

The training and expertise of facilitators is a vital element in restorative justice projects (Aertson et al., 2012; Barton, 2000; 2001; Edwards & Haslett, 2011-
If the facilitator is not properly trained, or if she or he has an ill-defined vision and poor understanding of how to implement restorative justice principles, participants will not be empowered. Similarly Choi et al. (2013) emphasise the importance of having facilitators who understand and apply principles consistent with restorative justice theory (Busch, 2002; Maxwell & Morris, 2001; Naylor, 2010). The process of empowerment is impeded, Barton (2001, p.23) writes, “when participants are not prepared, encouraged, supported to speak their minds…”

Randall (2013, p.473) states that

Skilled restorative justice facilitators are essential participants in the conference as they guide and structure the process.

(See also Harding, 2011; MacKenzie, 2009; Umbreit & Armour, 2010)

**Oral language competence**

Hayes & Snow (2013) assert that what they call “oral language competence” (OLC) is an important element in restorative justice projects, especially in an in-prison environment. This refers (p.2) to

...the complex two-way process of sending and receiving information via the auditory-verbal (listening and talking) channel.

And McBroom (2009, p.152) writes that, in restorative justice project sessions, conversation “leads us to experiment with new explanations, new realities, and new relationships.”

Choi, Gilbert & Green (2013, p.115) write of the importance that every restorative justice project is “dialog-driven” (see Bolitho, 2012; Cheon & Regehr, 2006). Johnstone (2014, p.4) says that the emphasis in restorative justice is on “the power of the dialogue”, and Sered (2011, p.50) calls restorative justice “a dialogue process” (see Kohn, 2010). If OLC is lacking, it is highly unlikely that a project will be empowering for participants (Arrigo, 2006; Snow & Powell, 2011).

It is equally clear that a significant proportion of prisoners are deficient in these skills (Snow & Powell, 2005; Snow & Sanger, 2011; Snow, Sanger & Caire et al., 2014). Walker & Greening (2010, p.43), when writing of in-prison projects in Hawaii, tell us that
language is used to help people discover their inner strengths and establish their goals and ways to achieve them.

Snow & Sanger (2011) tell us that people who are deficient in OLC may lack the skills needed in choosing vocabulary and ordering their thoughts in useful and appropriate ways. They add that, because of this, such persons may be alexithymic, which is to say that they may be unable to express their emotions, and may approach people in an unempathetic and detached manner. They may therefore appear to be lazy, rude or unmotivated. I come back to the topic of OLC later in this thesis.

**Competing or reconcilable?**

Some see restorative justice as an alternative way of doing justice (Jenkins, 2004; Zehr & Mika, 1998). Fattah (2011) argues vigorously that retributive punishment should, can and will be phased out, and be replaced by restorative justice in its various forms. He adds that the community at large are highly likely to accept this when they see restorative justice’s obvious advantages. Other scholars maintain that restorative justice and the current criminal justice system are reconcilable and should complement each other (for example, Archibald & Llewellyn, 2006; Blagg, 2013; Brooks, Burman & Lombard et al., 2014; Dancig-Rosenberg & Gal, 2013; Dhami et al., 2009; Joyce & Keenan, 2013; Marshall, 2014; Muir, 2014; Wheeldon, 2009). Villa-Vicencio (1999-2000) says that retributive and restorative justice need each other. Lavin & Carroll (2014, p.253), following a description of a restorative justice project involving two offenders and multiple victims, comment that the restorative justice approach

…does not diminish or disempower the criminal justice system but had the effect of enhancing the process for all concerned

Gromet & Darley (2005) are examples of a decreasing number of scholars who see restorative justice as part of a (merged) justice system, yet applying to only the less serious offences. However, this is a reasonable and lively debate, because of the differing history and underlying philosophy of these two ways of doing justice. So, for example, Gavrielides (2013, p.79) asks whether restorative justice was ever intended to be “mainstreamed”.

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Roche (2007, p.82) tells us that many of those who have opposed merging the two justice systems were early advocates of restorative justice whose writings had a slightly rhetorical tone. It was more about introducing a new idea, he writes, than about faithfully representing current practice (Daly (2014, p.1). Immarigeon and Daly (1998, p.12) speak of “exaggerated claims” by some restorative justice practitioners (Blagg, 2013), and Hudson (2006, p.274) expresses concern if restorative justice “oversells itself”. Zehr (2002, pp.58-59) says that, whereas in his earlier writings he had drawn sharp distinctions between the two systems, he now saw overlaps and similarities. In particular, he states that both theories acknowledge a basic intuition that a balance has been thrown out by wrongdoing, and that both attempt to restore that balance (Johnstone, 2007a; Karpa, 2014; Obold-Eshleman, 2004). The difference, he says, lies in the means employed in attempting to restore that balance.

Van Ness (1993) writes that restorative justice should be the means used wherever possible. However, he considers that the traditional justice system remains essential for the following reasons and purposes:

- In many instances, it will be needed in order to determine guilt or innocence (Kasparian, 2013; Trenczek, 2003);
- The voluntary nature of restorative justice requires that the court system is available for those who do not opt for restorative justice conferencing (Kasparian, 2013; Muir, 2014);
- The setting of upper and lower limits for sentencing, or for the ratification of sentences decided upon in restorative justice conferencing (O’Doherty, 2004);
- Compulsion may be needed for non-compliance with decisions reached in restorative justice processes.

Van Ness & Strong (2006) identify the state as one of the four crucial elements of restorative justice. This is along with the three other more well-known participating parties: victims, offenders and community (Archibald & Llewellyn, 2006; Randall 2013).

Archibald & Llewellyn (2006, p.342) write of “the complementary justice systems” of restorative justice and the more traditional criminal justice system in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia (see Archibald, 2005). These have been in
operation together for some years, and they report that the combined system has been operating “relatively smoothly”. See also Llewellyn et al. 2013; Roach 2006.

Daly (2014, pp.5-6) envisages justice been done through a combination of two “justice mechanisms”, namely “conventional” (the current justice system, in its various forms) and “innovative” (less formal processes, including restorative justice. Innovative responses, she writes, may work alongside, or be integrated with, criminal justice, or it may be part of administrative procedures or operate in civil society. She adds that these two kinds of justice aren’t “good” or “bad”, but rather (p.6) that

…the theoretical and empirical tasks should be to determine the degree to which conventional and innovative justice mechanisms can address victims’ needs or interests.

(see Joyce & Keenan, 2013)

She insists that “victims’ needs or interests” are different from surviving or coping needs (“safety, food, housing”) or from service needs (“e.g., information, support”). In addition, she reminds us that the emphasis of these factors will differ according to each individual. So, for example, a person with disabilities may have special needs. Daly is referring specifically to offences involving gendered violence. However, she comments that her recommendations could be generalised to “all severe crime”.

When dealing with offenders who have a mental disorder, Hafemeister, Garner & Bath (2012) advocate the use of restorative justice in all cases except those in which the victim/s or offender/s are unwilling to do so. However they point out that the facilitator must be specially trained to work with such offenders and be able to work with the programme bearing the offender’s disorder in mind. Burns (2013-2014, p.447) argues that restorative justice contains special value for offenders with disabilities, because it “supplements community services by contributing to reintegration”. She refers to offenders with a mental disorder as “de facto victims” (p.150). McClain (in Perlin & McClain, 2014) says that the use of restorative justice in cases where the offender has a mental disorder helps to restore respect and dignity by combating stigma, and will reduce recidivism. Dieleman (2014) reports that restorative justice is one of the strategies being used to care for offenders with mental disorders, post-release from prison (Ellem,
Wilson & Chui, 2012), and Campbell (2008) writes that restorative justice can be an effective strategy when dealing with victim-survivors and offenders who are experiencing the mental/psychological effects of rape.

**Gendered violence**

The question must be asked: Can restorative justice be used safely in cases of gendered violence? Zehr (2002, p.11) comments,

> Domestic violence is probably the most problematic application [of restorative justice], and here great caution is advised.

Stubbs (2007) is cautious about the use of restorative justice in cases of gendered violence, because of the evident power imbalance in such cases (Brooks et al., 2014; Julich, McGregor & Annan et al., 2011; McGlynn, Westmarland & Godden, 2012; Pali & Madsen, 2011). She emphasises that a single session is insufficient, and stresses the need for on-going monitoring of the offender’s behaviour (Busch, 2002). Katounas (in Katounas & McRae, 2002) stresses the need for preparation (Bletzer & Koss, 2013; Cook, 2013; Julich et al., 2011; Madsen, 2004; Miller & Iovanni, 2013), and contends that all sex offenders participating in a restorative justice project should undertake an additional course of instruction before their first session. Godden (2013) emphasises that that survivors/victims of sexual assault who have suffered greater levels of harm will need other forms of support and services alongside restorative justice (McGlynn et al., 2012). Daly (2002) says that restorative justice should be used, but with care, and not for all cases (Presser & Gaarder, 2000; Morris & Gelthorpe, 2000; Pali & Madsen, 2011). Hudson (2002) argues strongly for the use of restorative justice in some, if not most cases of gendered violence (Dancig-Rosenberg & Gal, 2013). She considers that participation in a well-managed restorative justice programme empowers the victim – also that it forces the offender to acknowledge that the harm is real (p.624; see Godden, 2013) and that he is responsible for that harm (p.625). If this is so, then it moves beyond the victim-offender “zero sum” (Zimring, 2001, pp.163-164), that what is good for the victim must be bad for the offender, and vice-versa. Singer (2014, p.68) says that “Getting men to take responsibility for their [intimate partner] violence can reduce future violent behavior and enhance women's safety…” Dickson-Gilmore, (2014, p.417), in her research into intimate violence and family violence in
northern Cree communities, looks to restorative justice “with its promise of relational repair and sustainable healing” (see also Miller & Iovanni, 2013). She sees huge challenges because, as she says (p.418), this kind of crime “renders it uniquely resistant to restorative justice processes that rely on trust, apology and meaningful communication”. However she finds hope in what she calls “restorative justice within reason” – restorative justice assisted and reinforced by the courts. She writes that they must “work cooperatively, respectfully and meaningfully together” (p.435). Ansfield & Colman (2012) are definite in rejecting the use of the current legal system in all cases of sexual assault and intimate partner violence, and they advocate using restorative justice processes as part of way forward for many of their clients. At the same time, however, they emphasise that the safety of victim-survivors must be held paramount. Julich et al. (2011) report on a remarkable NZ programme called Project Restore, which deals with victims of sexual assault. It chooses to employ restorative justice for some, but not all participants. They insist that, where restorative justice is used, facilitator/s must be fully conversant with the implications associated with gendered violence (Bryant, Jabbar, Seigle & McGeorge, 2010; Kasparian, 2013). Pali & Madsen (2011) add that the skill of the facilitator will largely determine whether the risk of further harm is too great to proceed with restorative justice in a given instance (see also Brooks et al., 2014; Godden, 2013). Daly (2002) points out that one can neither fully endorse nor totally disparage the use of restorative justice in response to cases of sexualised violence. Pemberton, Winkel & Groenhuijsen (2008) remind us that victims of crime are all different, and that there is variation within the criminal justice system and between restorative justice projects. For this reason, they say, every case should be treated on its own merits. So, for example, instead of asking whether restorative justice is better that criminal justice, they write that “we could ask ourselves under what circumstances restorative justice is better suited and under what circumstances criminal justice or some combination of the two” (n pn). On the other hand, Doyle (2014) says that, because of the power differential involved in all instances of sexual abuse, restorative justice can never be an option in such cases. However, she argues strongly for its use in repairing reputations of organisations in whose leaders have offended in this way. In a slightly different context, Marchetti & Downie (2013) write of two strategies which they say could lessen the impact of
power imbalance in cases of intimate partner violence: (a) the use of support persons, and (b) the use of shuttle mediations.

Randall (2013, p.477) favours the use of restorative justice for cases of gendered violence, but exempts “cases of significant and ongoing violence, and cases which pose threat and danger to victims and the community.” She considers that the state has a part to play, ensuring (a) that rights are protected (Wright 2006), and (b) “that some standards are met with respect to restorative processes” (p.496). Miller & Iovanni (2013) suggest that, for many cases involving gendered violence, post-conviction projects hold special benefits. They say that, for example, offenders have had time reflect on their misdemeanours and to empathise with victims - also for victims to be less focused on retribution (Wager, 2013). Kasparian (2013) calls for the use of differing models of restorative justice, and various pilot projects, to be used with respect to cases of sexual assault, and at a range of entry points. She insists that we should reject any “one-size-fits-all” notions in this matter. Hopkins (2012) says that it is highly beneficial for victims as well as offenders to engage in truth-telling. Cheon & Regehr (2006) write that, in cases of intimate partner violence, many offenders lack empathy and lack the ability to see their own fault (Hopkins, 2012). For this reason, they maintain that only some cases can be dealt with adequately by means of restorative justice. They further point out that such cases typically involved deeply entrenched patterns of control (see Godden, 2013; Kohn, 2010): as a consequence, “restorative justice interventions with men who batter are only a beginning step to change” (p.388, italics in the original). Bryant et al. (2010) consider that, in cases of intimate partner violence, the actual acts of violence cannot be negotiated. However, they add that on-going contact – particularly where there are children - can often not be avoided. Additionally, if a couple is to remain together, kinds of treatment and counselling are proper topics for discussion. Field (2014) favours the limited use of restorative justice for acquaintance rape or “date rape”. He believes that this would assist in altering societal opinions on this matter, and he asserts that such a strategy would offer victims a chance to take power over their lives back from their rapists. All of these authors are practitioners who acknowledge the possibility of re-victimisation in restorative justice projects, particularly those projects involving gendered violence (Ptacek, 2014; Wager, 2013), and especially those projects which are under-prepared or
mismanaged. Yet it’s true to say that the likelihood of victimisation is far greater in the traditional justice system (Hoyle & Sanders, 2000; Randall, 2013). In this respect, Herman (2003, p.159) comments,

…if one set out intentionally to design a system for provoking symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, it might look very much like a court of law.

In all this, two factors are being addressed (see, for example, Daly, 2014; Joyce & Keenan, 2013; Kasparian, 2013): (1) that most victims of gendered crimes do not report the offences to the police, and (2) that the criminal justice system is profoundly unsuccessful in dealing with those which are reported. Goodmark (2014) writes that, for many persons subjected to abuse, the process of the criminal justice system is the punishment. Hudson’s question (1999, p.245) remains unanswered:

How does one move away from punitive reactions which - even when enforced - further brutalize perpetrators, without by leniency of reaction, giving the impression that sexualized... violence is acceptable behaviour?

(see also Godden, 2013; Kasparian, 2013)

Wager (2013) writes that, in restorative justice projects implemented in response to sexual violence, it is important that evaluation of the experience of victims - or “survivors” - extends beyond seeking levels of satisfaction with the process. She suggests the use of instruments to measure

…change in the degree of self-blame, evidence of letting go and moving on with one’s life, restoration of damaged relationships, an increased sense of safety and perceptions of increased social capital.

Cusack (2013) favours the use of restorative justice in instances of intimate partner violence, provided that the programme is conscientiously designed to empower women. However, she urges government expenditure on prevention:

It could be more beneficial for society to train women to be strong and independent than to expect a program to save women from their abusers.

In addition, because of the high prevalence of gendered violence and intimate
partner violence in the lives of women with lower income, Hahn & Postmus (2014, p.80) a right to remind us that

The economic empowerment of impoverished domestic violence survivors is vital to ensure long-term safety as well as economic well-being.

The organisation ‘Philly’s Pissed’ (Ansfield & Colman, 2012; Kelly, 2010) aims for offenders in cases of sexual violence to acknowledge accountability for their actions. Kelly (2010, p.53) explains that, in doing so, they are to

1. Recognize the harm they have done, even if it was not intentional;
2. Acknowledge that harm's impact on individuals and the community;
3. Make appropriate restitution to the individual and community;
4. Develop solid skills toward transforming attitudes and behavior to prevent further harm and make contributions toward liberation.

McGlynn et al. (2012, p.214) write that debate on these competing claims has largely taken place in “an empirical vacuum”. However, on the basis of their research into one programme, they recommend the use of restorative justice “for those victim-survivors who request it and where the necessary support is available”. Madsen (2004, p.60) writes that, for the victim-survivor of sexual violence, mediation is not an easy road, and that the decision to go ahead with can be very difficult. However, “for some women it is a necessary and rewarding step to take on the way to reclaiming a subject position in their lives”. Singer (2014) reminds us that neither the criminal justice system, nor restorative justice, can be seen as a “solution” to the problem of gendered violence. Other additional factors must come into play – such as safe and affordable housing for women experiencing sexual violence, and adequate funding and training for service providers (Kohn, 2010; Neff et al., 2012). In addition to this, because of the high prevalence of gendered violence and intimate partner violence in the lives of women with lower income, Hahn & Postmus (2014, p.80) are right to remind us that

The economic empowerment of impoverished domestic violence survivors is vital to ensure long-term safety as well as economic well-being.
Trauma

Zehr (2004; 2008, p.5) believes that trauma is involved in many situations of conflict and wrongdoing (Achilles & Zehr 2001; Randall & Haskell 2013; Sered, 2011; Toews, 2006). He writes that most or all instances of violence arise from experience of trauma, and he adds that trauma is experienced by offender as well as victim (see Gustafson, 2004; Randall & Haskell, 2013). Trauma can be multi-dimensional and pervasive, he says, and he introduces the concept of “perpetrator-induced trauma”, and its role in perpetuating the cycle of victimisation and offending. Zehr observes – and I have noticed this in the stories of many prisoners in Acacia - that severe offending can and does cause trauma in offenders. Maschi, Dennis, Gibson, MacMillan, Sternberg & Horn (2011) report on research in the area of “lifetime trauma” among prison populations, whilst Maschi & Aday (2014, p.19), when writing about older prisoners, refers to “cumulative trauma”.

Ellis & Ellis (2014, p.35) remind us that the disadvantages pertaining to survivors of sexual abuse result from a complex interplay of psychological and relational factors, and they refer to these as “complex trauma”. Randall & Haskell (2013) consider that every case of gendered violence involves trauma, and that trauma-informed restorative justice is ideally suited to deal properly with most of these cases (Fan, 2014; Gustafson, 2005). Fan (2014) adds that this is also the case for instances of severe violence, and she believes that restorative justice is best placed to cope with power imbalance. Randall & Haskell (2013) acknowledge that all legal institutions and processes can become more effective by being trauma-informed but they add that restorative justice, in order to be true to its own stated ambitions, must work from a trauma-informed perspective. They contend that healing is best understood as a dynamic process which is often life-long. In addition, they believe that healing from trauma takes place through connection, through developing healthy attachments with others. This is because restorative justice is essentially a relational process (Cheon & Regehr, 2006; Crocker, 2013; Fernandez-Manzano, 2014; Llewellyn, 2011; Llewellyn et al., 2013; Mobley, 2014a; Obold-Eshleman, 2004; Randall, 2013; Toews, 2006; Zehr, 2005; 2008).

Arnzen (2014, p.18) refers to story-telling – which Gavrielides (2013), Koss (2014) and Shaw (2014), among others, remind us is central to restorative justice
– as “a healing intervention” (see also Mobley, 2014a). She writes that it is important for those who experience trauma, and specifically for survivors of domestic abuse (see also Kohn, 2010). She says that telling the story challenges the individual to explore the past and how it informs and shapes the future. The action of telling the story assists in dealing with the consequences of trauma, notably the erosion of memory, self and relationships. In addition, she writes, story-telling dispels minimalisation and self-blame (Gill et al., 2014). Story-telling is itself relational, allowing individuals to connect with themselves and their audience (see Karpa, 2014). Guthrey (2013) says that, in telling their stories in restorative justice projects, rape victims can experience empowerment, catharsis and social recognition or acknowledgement. These are three factors, she says, in a process of healing (Karpa, 2014).

McBroom (2009, p.153) writes that, in restorative justice projects involving trauma,

> Glimpsing the hurt, helplessness, grief and humanity of another transforms our humanity, how we feel and think, what we want to do, and the choices we make.

(see also Stauffer, 2011-2012)

Herman (2003) tells us that, because of the potential power imbalance in restorative justice projects, it is seldom used in cases involving trauma or severe violence (Miller & Iovanni, 2013). McBroom (2009, p.154) adds that any project involving trauma “demands high skill, responsibility and maturity from the mediator”. There is no doubt that the use of restorative justice in cases of gendered violence requires a great deal of sensitivity, and many safeguards. Gustafson (2004; 2005) is a Canadian restorative justice practitioner who deals with in-prison, one-to-one projects involving prisoners and victims of the same crimes. He comments on the essential nature of adequate facilitator training, and he writes that

Insufficiently skilled or careless practice could put vulnerable people at risk, trigger past trauma or create new harms.

(2004, pp.304-305; see also Edwards & Haslett, 2011-2012; Murray, 2012; Neff, Patterson & Johnson, 2012)
Gustafson (2004, p.310-311) delivers a timely warning. Practitioners of restorative justice must be aware of the risks associated with trauma, and must be trained so that they emulate “best practice”. Potential risks, he writes (p.310), include the following:

- psychological ‘melt-down’;
- suicide;
- new institutional charges if they ‘act out’ their expression of anxiety and their need for additional support as they enter (or exit) the process; and exposure to harms at the hands of other prisoners…

(see Cheon & Regehr, 2006; Zehr, 2008)

Writing in a slightly different context, Shalinsky (2014) insists on the importance of practitioner-training in trauma-related issues. She contends that this benefits not only the victim of crime but the practitioner, in that it reduces or eliminates vicarious trauma (Berger & Quiros, 2014; Neff et al., 2012). Gustafson (2004) states that lack of practitioner competence “can turn participant involvement into a perilous journey” (p.311). Guthrey (2013) observes that story-telling in the restorative justice context is harmful if it meets with a negative response or if the facilitators limit the story-telling in some way. However Gustafson (2004) comments that, given the right precautions and in view of “the immensity of the need”, restorative justice programmes are well worth the risk. Cook (2013, p.53), in her study of the use of restorative justice in a forensic mental health setting, comments that facilitators are required to exercise “complex judgements regarding assessing capacity and risk”.

Cheon & Regehr, Gustafson, Llewellyn, Randall and Zehr are all writing of projects which involve offenders with victim/s of the same crimes. I wonder to what extend their observations hold true for projects involving surrogate victims of crime. Emotions certainly run strongly in STP projects (Wilson, 2007). However I suggest that the group nature of STP would be likely to provide access to a greater degree of support during and between sessions, as well as in follow-up (MacKenzie, 2009).

Yet restorative justice would seem to provide a way that is less polarising and more healing than “the punishment model of most courts and tribunals” (Zehr, 2008, p.13; see also Fan, 2014; Sered, 2011). With all its difficulties, I am inclined to apply something which Braithwaite & Rashed (2014, p.5) wrote in a different context:
The logic of restorative justice is that where it is hardest to do, it is most important to do.

**Human rights**

Zehr (2002; 2005a) is adamant that, although restorative justice projects are likely to result in reduced recidivism, this is not the primary purpose of the endeavour, or even one of the purposes (see also, for example, Bazemore & Maruna, 2009; Bevan et al., 2005; Hamlin, 2011; Hayes, 2007; Randall, 2013). Restorative justice is offered to people because it is the right thing to do. The dignity afforded to participants, and the fairness which is, or should always be, an integral part of restorative justice processes (Bolitho, 2012; Braithwaite, 2002) accords with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), when it states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and human rights” (Article 1), and

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel or degrading treatment or punishment. (Article 5)

This is echoed in the preamble of the United Nations *ECOSOC Resolution 2000/12, Basic principles in the use of restorative justice programmes in criminal matters*, which contains these relevant phrases concerning restorative justice:

*Stressing* that this approach enables those affected by crime to share openly their feelings and experiences, and aims at addressing their needs…

and

*Aware* that this approach provides an opportunity for victims to obtain reparation, feel safer and seek closure; allows offenders to gain insight into causes and effects of their behaviour and to take responsibility in a meaningful way.…

As well as this, the 1985 *United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power* is highly relevant. It states that victims of crime and abuse of power are to be “treated with compassion and respect for their dignity” (Article 4), and that they are to “have access to justice and fair treatment” (Articles 4-7). It further states (in Article 7) that informal mechanisms for the resolution of disputes – “including mediation” – are to be utilised wherever appropriate.
McDowell, Libal & Brown (2012) write of a number of other United Nations protocols which relate to their work as family therapists. These have bearing on restorative justice as well, and they are as follows: the *International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights*, the *International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights*, the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (ICERD), the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), the *International Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* (ICMR), and the *International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD).

McDowell et al. (2012) advocate using a human rights framework in the promotion of restorative justice, and they take domestic violence as “a case in point” (p.10). It is clear that traditionally domestic violence has been seen as occurring within the “private domain” of the family. However, seeing this offence from the perspective of human rights immediately places the societal, or structural, aspect of the criminal action/s on the agenda. For example, it makes clear that the state has a responsibility to develop an infrastructure capable of protecting women (McDowell et al., 2012).

In addition to this, they suggest that when a man strikes his partner/wife, he may well apologise and say that his actions were “over the top”. But if he can be brought to see that his actions were a violation of his partner’s human rights, he may begin to see things differently and take real responsibility for what he has done. His actions have denied a woman’s right to experience freedom and autonomy, and her right to maintain “bodily security”. If it can be pointed out that his action was not only of male dominance seeking control, but also a violation of UDHR articles 1, 3, 5, 13.1, 18, 20.1 and 27.1, it may highlight its gravity to all concerned.

Perlin (2014, p.537) applauds the promulgation of CRPD. He writes that it

…firmly endorses a social model of disabilities and reconceptualizes mental health rights as disability rights.
Application of the provisions of CRPD in programmes involving persons with mental disabilities, he says, will ensure that they are treated as rights-holders rather than as objects needing society’s mercy. The stigma experienced by people with disabilities, in the community as well as in the church, is amply outlined by Forsyth (2001). Perlin advocates the use of restorative justice in such instances (in Perlin & McClain, 2014), because of its emphasis upon relationships, and because it aims to restore respect and dignity.

“Community” in restorative justice

Gerkin (2012) reports on observation of a large number of restorative justice projects, which were in lieu of court cases, in North Carolina. He is concerned that, in many of these projects, community involvement is either non-existent or extremely limited. “Macro-community” and “micro-community” (McCold, 2008, p.40) should both be involved, he writes, because both have been harmed. He tells us that the community’s role in restorative justice is to support victim/s and offender/s, to affirm community values, and to re-integrate victims and perhaps offenders as well into the community (see Zehr & Mika, 1988). In doing so, the community re-affirms its collective conscience. Gerkin (2012, p.282) asks, “Is justice restorative without these communities’ participating?”

Gaarder (2009) sounds a note of caution regarding the community’s values in respect of their involvement in restorative justice. There is always a possibility that the community may have adopted the offenders’ rationalisation about their behaviour (Zehr, 2002). Because of this, preparation and “screening” of community representatives is important.

“Forgiveness” in restorative justice

The concept of forgiveness is a vexed theme in restorative justice – whether or not forgiveness is a necessary component, and what it may or may not involve. So, for example, Acorn (2004) considers that apology (by the offender) and forgiveness (by the victim) are essential features in each restorative justice project. With this in mind, her major criticism of restorative justice lies in the ease in which an offender might feign contrition, and genuine apology. For this reason,
she says, forgiveness achieved in restorative justice projects is questionable. Zehr (2002) tells us that restorative justice is not primarily about forgiveness or reconciliation. Rather, he says, it is more like providing a context in which either or both might happen. Minow (1998b, pp.969-970) sees forgiveness and reconciliation as central aspirations of restorative justice, but adds that RJ can also afford victims the position of relative power presented by the capacity to forgive - whether or not the individual victims proceed then to forgive particular perpetrators.

(see also Misztal, 2011)

During a group project in the course I attended in Ontario, someone asked me my understanding of forgiveness. I recall responding to the effect that, when I forgive, it is as if I were saying, “I refuse to allow this terrible thing you have done to me continue to cripple my life.” This seemed to me to be the essence of forgiveness. I did not say that other things flow from this action, but they do. For example, if I could make this kind of statement to myself, I would no longer be bitter towards the offender, and I would no longer seek revenge, even though revenge might be justified.

Interestingly, another member of the group said to me very firmly, “Alan, you are wrong – God forgives you!” She is right that God forgives me, but she may have missed the point of what I was saying. It seems to me that when God forgives us, it is as if God were saying something like this:

I refuse to allow this awful thing that you have done, which hurt me dreadfully, to stop me from loving you, with no strings attached. I will continue to love you, no matter what you do or what you become.

Or even, “I will not permit this terrible act to stop me from being me – for, after all, I am love.”

All this reminds me of something that Gabriel, one of the two main facilitators in Acacia’s STPs, has said at a number of sessions: “There are two alternatives in life – forgiveness or eternal bitterness.”

Luskin (2002) defines forgiveness as the ability to make peace with your own life by no longer arguing and objecting to the way it unfolds:
It means that difficult things happen in life, and first you have to grieve them, and finally move on.

(as cited in Simic, 2006-2007, p.31; see also Harding, 2011)

Bishop Desmond Tutu (as cited in Carter, 2008, p.35) said this:

When you nurse a grudge, you’re allowing yourself to continue in bondage. When you get to the point where you are able to forgive – even if the other person doesn’t want or doesn’t ask to be forgiven – you have moved out of the situation of being a victim, you’re no longer held to ransom by that person.

(see also Gill, Cantacuzino, Grant & Miles, 2014; Heuer, 2011; Zehr, 2000)

I said earlier that it seemed to me that this was “the essence of forgiveness”. I still believe this is so. However the group member who disagreed with me was at least partly right. Forgiveness can be intrapersonal (i.e. it can be an inner process), but it can also be interpersonal (something that occurs in relationships). Forgiveness is something we give and receive. And many people who become Christians do so in order to experience the forgiveness of God (Worthington, 2009).

Baumeister, Exline & Sommer (as cited in Schimmel, 2002, p.43) have this to say:

To forgive someone means to cease feeling angry or resentful for the transgression…in this sense it is even meaningful to speak of forgiving someone who is dead or absent or who, for other reasons, would have no way of knowing whether he or she had been forgiven…

(see also Bussell, 2005; Misztal, 2011; Pemberton et al., 2008)

However,

On the other hand, forgiveness is a social action that happens between people. It is a step toward returning the relation between them to the condition it had been before the transgression. Forgiveness signifies that the victim will not seek further revenge or demand further reparations.

(Schimmel, 2002, p.43; see also Exline, Baumeister, Zell, Kraft & Witvliet, 2008)
Forgiveness, then is “the letting go of our identity as victim” (Gill et al. 2014, p.198; see also Heuer, 2011).

Minow (1998a, p.17) is referring to interpersonal forgiveness when she writes,

 Forgiveness is a power held by the victimized, not a right to be claimed. The ability to dispense, but also to withhold, forgiveness is an ennobling capacity, part of the dignity to be reclaimed by those who survive the wrongdoing. 

(see Godden, 2013; Picoult, 2013)

Stauffer (2011-2012, p.522) maintains that, since victims of severe crimes can never be fully compensated,

…it would be wrong to push them into a process where they will get even less than the not-enough they might have gotten from a retributive proceeding.

Braithwaite (2002) applies this principle to restorative justice. He says that in restorative justice, forgiveness and respectful listening differ in at least one important way. We seek to persuade restorative justice participants to listen respectfully (Mobley, 2014a; Pranis, 2005), but we don’t urge them to forgive. The reason for this is that interpersonal forgiveness is a gift (Baliga, 2012; Godden, 2013; Minow, 1998a; 1998b; Misztal, 2011).

Is forgiveness a “once-off” process?

Luskin (as cited in Simic, 2006-2007) points out that forgiveness is not a once-off response – in fact that it’s about becoming a forgiving person.

The process of forgiveness is often long-term, requiring considerable emotional investment and upset (Denton and Martin, 1998; Enright & Zell, 1989; Simic, 2006-2007).

What about forgiving someone who has not had a change of heart?

Intrapersonal forgiveness is essential if we wish to be set free from the crippling hold of past events on our lives. Interpersonal forgiveness, on the other hand, is far more complex. If forgiveness were simply the opposite of malice or vengefulness, there would be little doubt in our minds. After all, both can be
claimed to be wrong. Forgiveness, presumably, would always be appropriate. However this is not so, and questions arise.

One of these questions is whether or not repentance should be a condition of interpersonal forgiveness. In other words, should forgiveness be extended only where there has been a change of heart on the part of the offender, and a demonstrated wish not to re-offend? Simic (2006-2007, p.31) asks a relevant question: “Does forgiveness undermine justice, or do we need to reexamine our ideas about justice?

Many Christians consider that, because God forgives unconditionally, so should we. In outlining what they call “the Christian model” of forgiveness, Scobie & Scobie (1998, p.378) have this to say:

When the individual acts as a forgiver ideally they are supposed to act in a way that mirrors Divine forgiveness, that is, unconditionally, requiring neither punishment, recompense, nor guarantee of future behavior…

The argument goes something like this… God forgives every one of us, whatever we have done, whoever we are, and whatever we might become. Our part is to accept this gift of forgiveness. There is then a moral imperative to forgive others in exactly the same way.

I am uncomfortable with this, for several reasons. I see God’s forgiveness in a rather similar way, but my first reason for lack of comfort is that the entire argument seems too “cut-and-dried”. It seems to me that, whenever we become definite or precise about who God is or the way God acts, it’s then that we have probably missed the point. Shepherd (2009) asks how can we manage God when we can’t even imagine God. He goes on to say that

All the statements we could make about God are actually only childish things that eventually we shall have to put away when finally we see God, face to face.

(Shepherd, 2009, p.35)

The closest we can get to God is through image and symbol and metaphor, and these are constantly shifting and moving out of focus. Nevertheless, I wish to take issue with Scobie & Scobie’s “Christian model”, from two other perspectives.
The first is provided by Dulles (2007), that it doesn’t ring true to our observations of everyday life:

Well-ordered love may require that aggressors/offenders be resisted and punished rather than appeased.

(Dulles, 2007, p.5)

He points to the example of parents, who “in exercising authority over their children, should always be available to them with tender love and compassion”:

They must be disposed to forgive, but not to dispense with repentance.

Because of this,

…They’ll want to forgive, and they’ll do so, but they’ll also want their children to make amends for what they’ve done wrong, and to behave better in the future.

Dulles (2007) goes on to argue – I think, convincingly – that scripture supports the “rightness” of this approach.

He then discusses Jesus’ words from the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). We assume that he is judging his executioners to be guilty, though partly excusable. The saying is relevant in this discussion, because he makes no mention of remorse or repentance. Dulles (2007) asks whether it is significant that, instead of directly forgiving his enemies, he appeals to the Father to do so…

Jesus may well be supposing that the process of forgiveness that he is initiating will not become complete until the malefactors repent.

(Dulles, 2007, p.7)

Wetzel (1999, p.99) writes of unconditional love, and explains, “…but I mean by ‘unconditional’ a love that is unreserved, not indiscriminate.”

In a 2008 radio interview, Charles Griswold strongly expressed the view that apology and repentance are part of the process of interpersonal forgiveness:

I think that one would wish for some indication – trustworthy indication – that the offender is committed to becoming the sort of person who will not repeat the injury and this commitment should be shown through deeds as well as
Reconciliation

As enumerated elsewhere, reconciliation is one of the main themes of restorative justice, and of STP (Van Ness et al., 1996). As with forgiveness, it’s a theme which must be understood and put into effect differently in any in-prison restorative justice process (Van Ness, 2007), yet it’s important that it be given due consideration.

When we use the term, “reconciliation” in conversation, we are generally referring to the act of restoring a relationship that has been broken, shattered (Petersen, 2004; Toews, 2006). Agyenta (2006) – carelessly, I think - equates “forgiveness” with “reconciliation”. It seems to me that reconciliation can occur only after forgiveness has been offered and accepted (McKay, Hill, Freedman & Enright, 2007). “Reconciliation” indicates a relationship which has been restored or renewed. Worthington (as cited in Petersen, 2004, p.2) writes that “…Forgiveness happens inside an individual; reconciliation happens within a relationship.”

I think that Agyenta’s lack of precision in the matter is understandable because, in his thesis, he is analysing a biblical narrative. In the New Testament, forgiveness and reconciliation are always linked, and in the Old Testament the two concepts are almost always considered together.

In STP, this kind of reconciliation is almost always impossible or irrelevant. The victims of crime frequently did not have a relationship with their offenders before the criminal action took place, and the prisoner-participants often did not know the victims of their crimes. In many instances the victims of their crimes are separated from victims by a legally imposed violence restraining order.

Indigenous issues

Some years ago, I ministered for more than 10 years in an Aboriginal settlement in South Australia. At that time, I came to realise in that place that Indigenous people love story. I suspect that, deep down, most human beings love story, but the Indigenous people I ministered among were less sophisticated than people.
I’d grown up with and studied with. Most, if not all of them, thought in “picture-language” and in stories rather than in propositional form. It occurred to me that STP, based as it is upon stories, would be particularly suited to Indigenous men.

STP touched people’s hearts (MacKenzie, 2009; Ridgeway, 2005). It occurred to me that perhaps this was because it centres upon (a) the stories of Zacchaeus and David, (b) hearing the stories of other participants, and (c) telling one’s own story (Van Ness et al., 1996).

Yet it seemed to me that Indigenous people are a special case, for a number of reasons. One is the huge difference of custom and culture (Behrendt, 2002; Forsyth, 1998; Habel, 1995). A second is that many of Acacia’s Indigenous prisoners are away from their country, a fact that is far more significant to an Indigenous person than to someone of European descent. Habel (1995, p.2) writes,

For Aboriginal Australians the land is sacred, filled with ancestral dreamings that determine kinship, sacred site, and ceremony. All species of life, including humans, are bound to the land. Land does not belong to people; people belong to the land.

Forsyth (1998) reminds us of the unwritten, often unstated, spirituality of Australian Indigenous peoples, usually centred upon their relationship with the land. And Behrendt (2002, p.182), herself an Aboriginal woman, has this to say:

Land has always meant different things to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians We bond with the universe and the land and everything that exists in the land. As my father says: “You can no more sell our land than sell the sky.”

And

He would describe our relationship to the land in the following way: “Our affinity with the land is like the bonding between a parent and a child. You have responsibilities to look after and care for a child. You can speak for a child. But you don’t own a child.”

(Behrendt, 2002, p.102)
The other consideration is the incredible victimisation of Indigenous peoples in Australia over the past 200 years (Blagg, 2013). This permeates so many matters relating to Indigenous people in this country. Among other things, it has led to an extraordinarily high proportion of Aboriginal people in our prisons (McGinty, 2002).

In Canada, where many of the issues are similar, in the case of R. v. Gladue the court stated (as cited in Savarese, 2005, p.183),

> The sentencing judge is required to take into account all of the surrounding circumstances regarding the offence, the offender, the victims and the community, including the unique circumstances of the offender as an aboriginal person.

(also cited in Turpel-Lafond, 1999, p.1)

And it goes on to say this:

> Sentencing must proceed with sensitivity to and understanding of the difficulties aboriginal people have faced with both the criminal justice system and society at large.

(Turpel-Lafond, 1999, p.1)

Arrigo (2006, pp.473ff.) reminds us that what we say or read, and how we interpret, are not neutral or objective endeavours. Nor is language itself neutral or objective. It is always and already permeated with implicit values and concealed assumptions about social life and about the make-up of each human being. Arrigo (2006) asserts that, without realising it, restorative justice promotes activities compatible with dominant cultural interests and values (Blagg, 2013; Braithwaite, 2002; Utheim, 2014; Wilson, 2007). He therefore maintains that restorative justice stresses prevailing cultural norms – the status quo. Interestingly, Riley (2014) argues that, because of this, facilitators should be activists who seek to redress the power imbalance that exists in the community at large (Berger & Quiros, 2014).

I believe that, although reinforcement of current norms is more likely to take place
in the current criminal justice system than in restorative justice, it is a valid criticism, and a timely warning. Nevertheless, it is the facilitator who guides the process (Bruce, 2013; Randall, 2013; Riley, 2014), and the fact that restorative justice processes are of their very nature extremely flexible allows a skilled facilitator to lessen the risk of this taking place. Braithwaite (2002, p.565), in suggesting standards for restorative justice, says that “We must avert accreditation that crushes indigenous empowerment”. However, it is probably impossible to entirely eliminate this kind of unintended cultural emphasis.

Archibald & Llewellyn (2006) argue strongly that cultural background needs to be considered seriously in the planning and implementation of restorative justice (Zehr, 2004). They describe the way in which the Mi’kmaq (First Nation) Customary Law Program is governed by the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Protocol but interprets it in a manner consistent with Aboriginal tradition (Liebemann, 2011). In 2006 they wrote of plans for an Afro-Canadian restorative justice programme. Seven years later, Williams (2013, p.443) reviewed that programme, which was by then in place, and she argues strongly for restorative justice projects which are truly “culturally-specific” (Jenkins, 2004). What she observes (pp.421-422) concerning the Canadian environment is equally true in Australia, namely that

racialization, racism, and white privilege are constitutive elements of Canadian life, including the Canadian legal system. That is, they are part of the air we breathe and are interwoven throughout our legal structures and systems.

So, too, is her comment that the defining aspect of racism in her community is the denial that it exists. However she adds (p.420) that “…At its best, restorative justice offers a transformative response to the oppressive dimensions of the criminal justice system”.

Hamlin and Hokamura (2014, p.291) point out that, despite cultural differences, restorative justice theories and concepts have been accepted in many countries. However they note that cultural differences greatly affect their implementation. Their work in restorative justice in Japan prompts them to write that
important concepts such as control, choice, harm, responsibility, apology, shame, reconciliation and forgiveness vary greatly in the manner in which they are perceived from culture to culture.

They add that culture-sensitive restorative justice projects could be implemented in Japan, but that they would be unrecognisable by Western standards. Utheim (2014, p.360) points out that the group dynamics and/or peer pressure, which are an essential element of restorative justice, presuppose “some shared set of sociocultural referents”. She therefore asks for a deep analysis of the cultural norms of participants, and of what constitutes “procedural fairness” in restorative justice conferences. Menkel-Meadow (2014, p.4) says that

Histories, cultures, atrocities and harms, as well as the stories or “narratives” told about them, are differentially experienced both within and between cultures and peoples.

She therefore adds that practitioners should be sensitive to these differences, even to the point of pursuing different goals and outcomes (see Hamlin, 2011).

Disparities leading to power imbalances, as well as cultural differences among the parties, should be taken into consideration.

Mackenzie’s study of STP in WA (2009) focuses upon the experience and views of facilitators and co-facilitators. She has this to say (p.10):

Facilitators expressed that the program appeared just as effective for indigenous people as for non-indigenous people.

This calls to mind Morris’s comment (2002, p.607) that

And of course restorative justice practices were specifically introduced in New Zealand to make the youth justice system more culturally appropriate and more culturally sensitive, something which conventional justice systems have found virtually impossible to achieve.

She adds in a footnote (p.607),
Restorative justice processes for adult offenders in New Zealand… reflect the values of cultural sensitivity…

And in another place (as cited in Mackenzie, 2009, p.55), “RJ encourages cultural relativity rather than cultural dominance.” Murray (2012, p.252) writes that “[e]ffective facilitators are aware of cultural issues”, and she adds that restorative justice is a process which allows such cultural practices to be an important part of each conference.

Societal issues

Zehr (2005a) tells us that, as with the current criminal justice system, restorative justice projects are taking harms that have larger social, economic and political dimensions and treating them as individual wrongs. Insofar as this is true, practitioners are helping to ignore underlying social problems (Aertson et al., 2011; Arrigo, 2006; Doolin, 2006-2007; Sims, 2015; Valk, 2006; Zehr, 2008). Van Ness & Strong (2006, p.13) tell us that restorative justice should “monitor the structures whose interplay affects the criminal procedure”, and Wallace & Wylie (2013, p.61) add that failing to address underlying societal causes of crime
contributes mightily to the “cycle of crime” (see de Beer, 2014; Morris, 2002; Sims, 2015). Szablowinski (2008, p.406) comments on what he sees as an absence of “truth, justice and forgiveness” in the wider society. Johnstone (2002) and Shapland et al. (2006) point to modern urban communities which have thin, weak social bonds. In such an environment of limited social capital, offenders and potential offenders have fewer ties or links with anyone. Daly (2002, p.67) says that gendered crimes are a special case. They have been “over-tolerated” by the community at large, while Randall (2013, p.473) reminds us that trauma, and gendered violence in particular, are “a social and public problem” (see Presser & Gaarder, 2000; Stubbs, 2007). Randall & Haskell (2013, p.515) write that

Marginalized and disempowered people are more often involved with the criminal justice system, both as offenders and victims, than are people from more affluent and secure socioeconomic backgrounds.

(see also Blagg, 2013; Lofton, 2004; Sims, 2015; Snow et al., 2014)

Soering (2010, p.10) writes that many prisoners – for example, those who are old or Indigenous or mentally ill – are “powerless, voiceless and friendless.”


…often raise awareness of the causes of crime, but they offer no strategy to eliminate these causes.

On the other hand Llewellyn (2013), Randall (2013) and Randall & Haskell (2013) consider that, because of community involvement in its sessions, addressing such matters is one of its great strengths. Clearly, however, they do not have in-prison projects in mind.

Gabel (2012, p.19) says that criminal law

…understands social violence of all kinds as freely chosen acts against the state calling for punishment of the individual actor rather than as social acts expressive of distortions in an inherently social fabric that calls for repair of the social fabric itself.
He points out that our legal culture sees human beings as isolated individuals rather than as members of a community, and he calls for an increased use of restorative justice.

**Assessment of restorative justice programmes**

Bazemore & Ellis (2007) write that assessment of restorative justice projects should be on the basis of the following:

1. The extent to which stakeholder groups – victims, offenders and the community – are represented in the programme (Toews, 2006).
2. The extent to which the stated goals of restorative justice have been aimed for. They list these aims: (a) an emphasis on the offenders’ personal accountability by key participants; (b) an inclusive decision-making encouraged; (b) (pursuit of) the goal of putting right the harm of the offence/s.

A number of scholars and practitioners see victim satisfaction as either the sole indicator of success in restorative justice programmes, or as one of the main indicators (Barton, 2000; Clothier, 2008; Daly, 2006; Gustafson, 2005; Latimer et al., 2005; Morris, 2000; Strang, 2002). As set out elsewhere, Daly (2014, p.6) sees achieving “victims’ needs and interests” as the main aim of restorative justice, and as the sole criterion for judging a project’s success or failure.

Van Ness & Strong (2006, p.5) stress three broad principles which, they say, must be considered in the assessment process: (1) Repair; (2) Stakeholder participation; and (3) Community/government role transformation. Interestingly, a number of scholars suggest that restorative justice is not being assessed on its own terms (for example, Bevan et al. 2005; Crocker, 2013; Dyck, 2006; Hayes, 2007; Kohn, 2010; McCold, 2008; Zehr, 2008). Crocker (2013) considers that restorative justice is a relational theory of justice (Archibald & Llewellyn, 2006; Llewellyn et al., 2013; Randall & Haskell, 2013; Williams, 2013), and she complains that the methods typically associated with programme evaluation do not allow for collection of data which could shed light on whether the justice being done was “relational”.

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Llewellyn et al. (2013) tell us that the question, “Does restorative justice work?” has often been bounded by the notions of success in criminal justice terms. So the questions are asked about whether restorative justice brings down crime rates or reduces recidivism. Are compliance rates for restorative agreements higher than for probation orders? Are victims and offenders more satisfied with restorative justice programmes than with court proceedings (Barton, 2000; Clothier, 2008; Daly, 2006; Gustafson, 2005; Latimer et al., 2005; Morris, 2000; Strang, 2002)? Llewellyn et al. (2013) acknowledge that these are important questions which must be answered. However they point out that all of these measures assume that human beings “are atomistic, individual actors making rational decisions about the consequences of their behaviour…” (p.285; see Arrigo, 2006; Hamlin, 2011; Lofton, 2004). But this, they remind us, is a fallacy. Crime, as well as its causation and its reduction, are relational in nature. Restorative justice takes all this into account, and assessment should reflect it. Llewellyn et al. (2013, p.297) say that

The challenge and weakness of previous and current attempts to measure success are, at least in part, born of a lack of clarity about that which is being measured.

In the UK and in New Zealand an instrument called Crime Pics II is administered to prisoner-participants before and after each STP (Bakker 2005; Feasey et al., 2005; Feasey & Williams 2009). This instrument measures attitudinal change in five categories, owing to participation in STP. It has been shown that increased scores in Crime Pics II correspond positively with reduced recidivism rates. There is no corresponding scale to measure the effect of STP on visitor-participants. However in England and Wales this is not surprising, seeing that only one victim of crime is permitted to take part in each STP (Feasey et al., 2005). I discuss this matter further in Chapter 7.

Armour et al. (2008) and Wilson (2007) tell us that quantitative assessments of all restorative justice projects are problematic to some extent:

the voluntary nature of participation in restorative justice programs create the possibility that positive findings are the result of a selection bias.

(Armour et al., 2008, p.164 – see also, for example, Latimer & Kleinknecht, 2000; Marshall, 2005; McCold, 2008; Poulson, 2003; Shapland et al., 2006)
The question remains, then. Why does this programme work? Why does it touch lives in these remarkable and observable ways (Van Ness, 2005a)? Why is it that groups of offenders meeting and working with groups of victims of unrelated crimes have any effect at all? This question is tackled in Chapter 6.

**Spiritual capital in STP**

A number of Acacia staff members, and more than a few STP visitor-participants, have asked me why it is that chaplains sponsor STP. This is a reasonable question, because they see that people of all faiths and no faith enter fully into this programme. In effect, their question is asking for the connection between religion and restorative justice. My answer to this question is strongly linked to that of another question, namely how do I see creation of spiritual capital emerging not only from the community of faith but from the operation of STP?

Volona (2000, p.5) points to the fact that the term “religion” is derived from the Latin word “religio”, which means “to bind back together” – to restore to unity what is separated. Because of this, she is able to say that

> From a chaplaincy perspective, restorative justice is the practical application for the spiritual foundation of all major Faith traditions by the very nature of the function of religion.

She cites many examples from the Old Testament – such as Micah 7.18-19, Isaiah 61.1,4 and Psalm 103.2-4 – in which two concepts are evident. The first is that people suffer when they cause rifts of injustice. The second proposition is that God forgives, heals, restores and binds back together the broken pieces of individuals as well as communities.

Christians believe that Jesus personified God’s mercy and love by his life of compassion, especially towards people who were poor, outcast or despised by society. Gutierrez (1987, p.xii) writes,

> The scorned of this world are those whom the God of love prefers. This is a very simple matter, but for a mind that judges everything by merits and demerits, worthiness and unworthiness, it is difficult to grasp…
McFague (1987, p.52) refers to Luke 4 as “the heart of Jesus’ ministry” – good news to the poor, release to the captives, liberty to the oppressed – and comments:

…what is manifested as well by his healings of the sick is pushed to the extreme by his invitation to the ritually unclean to eat with him. Jesus offended by inviting the outsiders to come in, not merely as needy outcasts, but as his friends in joyful feasting.

However Volona (2000) finds the values of restorative justice to be prominent in not only the Judeo-Christian tradition but in writings of the Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic faiths. In addition, she discovers that these values are to the forefront in Australian Aboriginal fire rituals.

Volona (2000) reminds us that the term “restorative” is problematic in this context. Restoring prisoners to the social and relational conditions they knew before their offence and subsequent imprisonment would frequently not be beneficial to the individual or to the community (Barton, 2001; Doolin, 2006-2007; Llewellyn, 2011). However restorative justice, when properly understood and properly carried out, can be constructive on a number of fronts. A real beginning is made in mending the rift within the offenders themselves, which is often the cause of crime in the first place. As well as this, restorative justice can begin to mend the rift between offenders and their respective families, and the rift of mistrust between offenders and the community at large. At the same time a similar kind of healing process is taking place in the victims of crime who are taking part. Clear (2006, p.467) writes that, according to restorative justice theorists,

…to restore those afflicted by crime (actor and target alike) to full citizenship and wholeness of mind and body is the highest aspiration we might ask of the justice system, and it is the criterion against which all actions of the justice system ought to be measured.

The promotion of STP in Acacia Prison has reminded me that this inner and relational healing – this “binding back together” – is the ultimate aim of chaplaincy as much as it is of restorative justice.
In Chapter 9, I trace the development of spiritual capital resulting from STP. Some of this is within the group (“bonding capital”, Cattell, 2001; Johan, 2013; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 1993; 1995), while the remainder is out in the prison precinct independent of the STP group (“bridging capital”, Putnam et al., 1993; Putnam, 1995; 2004).

**Restorative justice in a prison environment?**

Johnstone (2007b, p.15) is clear that

If we start with the belief that justice requires us to impose proportionate pain upon offenders, imprisonment seems a useful and indeed indispensable social practice.

Imprisonment deprives people of something which most people in our society value highly, namely their freedom. In addition, the amount of pain caused can be varied, however crudely, by lengthening or shortening the sentence. He points out that “other central goals of criminal justice”, such as incapacitation, can be achieved at the same time.

Imprisonment has clear advantages over fines. As with imprisonment, fines deprive people of something which is of value and which may be varied. However, (a) persons other than the offender can pay the fine, and (b) in a society in which money is unevenly distributed, a fine will have differential impact.

Incarceration has obvious disadvantages, seen basically in terms of its cost and its unintended harmful consequences (Dolinko, 1992). Johnstone (2007b, p.15) points out that advocates of restorative justice quote these from time to time. Far more significant however, is the fact that

By arguing that there are other and better routes to justice in the aftermath of crime, restorative justice attacks the idea of imprisonment at its heart.

Johnstone (2007a) lists three standard arguments against running restorative justice projects in a prison environment:

- Incarceration encourages prisoners to assume that imprisonment is adequate “repayment” for harms caused;
• It gives them little opportunity to undertake reparative work; and

• Where it is difficult enough to arrange meetings between an offender and his/her victim when both are out in the wider community, it is well-nigh impossible in prison.

Lovell et al. (2002) and Van Ness (2005a; 2007) tell us that most restorative justice projects take place outside the prison setting. One of the reasons Van Ness offers for this is that restitution is far less complicated outside the prison. Another is that, in many instances, restorative justice project are used as a diversion from an overcrowded court and prison system. However, Van Ness (2007, p.312) adds that,

...there have been efforts in recent years to explore how restorative justice might be used in the context of a prison.

After a visit to Belgium, where restorative justice is an officially recognised part of the prison system, Tim Newell (2001) writes of the difficulty in reconciling the basic values of restorative justice with those he observes in prison administrations. Specifically, he writes of the way in which restorative justice requires respect, the assuming of responsibility, and the freedom to solve problems. Such attitudes, he says, “are opposed to the deprivation of freedom and limited personal responsibility that form the basis of current prison practice” (Newell, 2001, p.4; see Liebling, 2011).

McGuire (2000) and Day & Howells (as cited in Mackenzie, 2009) find that better outcomes are obtained in restorative justice programmes which are run in the wider community that in an institutional setting. They argue that this is because the prison culture is constantly teaching and reinforcing values that are contrary to the values being taught and learned in restorative justice projects (Farmer, 2014; Johnstone, 2007b; 2014; Van Ness, 2007; Workman, 2005).

Elliott (2007, p.193) sees problems in nesting restorative values in “a punitive total institution whose over-riding emphasis is on security”, which depends upon separation rather than on healthy relationships. She declares that this mitigates against the effectiveness of any prison-based restorative justice project. In similar vein, Wright (2008) tells us that prison rules compel unquestioning (and often resentful) obedience, rather than responsibility. He adds that all punishment is
based upon fear, which makes people think of themselves – not of others, such as victims of crime.

Van Ness (2007) points to an additional problem encountered by restorative justice in prisons, namely their inevitable prisoner focus (Hudson, 2006). This problem is confronted in various degrees by all restorative justice projects, he says (see Gromet & Darley, 2009; Wenzel et al., 2012), but prisons are where the offenders, not the victims, live.

However Dhami et al. (2009) remind us that the issue is not as simple as it is sometimes assumed to be. They point out that restorative justice and imprisonment are both multifaceted. There are different kinds of restorative justice programmes, and differing types of prisons. Dhami et al. point out that imprisonment and restorative justice share a number of common aims, particularly where both are pursuing the main goal of rehabilitation (Zehr, 2002). One example they give is that both restorative justice and imprisonment aim to combat the offender’s past criminal behaviour by tackling the root cause of his or her behaviour. They write that

> If the contradictions between RJ and imprisonment… can be reconciled, there can be potential benefits of implementing RJ practices in prison.

(Dhami et al., 2009, p.434; see also Kolar, 2013)

Even so, with Landenne (2008), they conclude:

> However, philosophical and practical divergence between RJ and imprisonment also reveal potential limitations of RJ in prison.

(see Dhami et al, 2009)

McLellan (as cited in Wilson, 2007, p.7) goes so far as to say that

> Prisons always do harm. That’s the most important thing that people have to get into their heads: that prisons always do harm.
Based on his experience of attempting to establish a restorative unit in an Italian prison, Guidoni (2003) posits six reasons why restorative justice programmes cannot be effective in a prison environment. These are as follows:

One: Conflict over the Reconstruction of Self: The prisoner-participant is mapping out a new self-image. Yet, Guidoni asserts, the prison is a total institution and, as such, its aim is “to destroy the self through degradation rituals” (p.62).

Two: Competing with Prison Culture (p.62).
As Van Ness (2007, p.381) reminds us, “Prison subcultures are typically deviant, making rejection of deviancy more difficult for prisoners” (see Crewe, 2006; Johnstone, 2014; O’Brien, 2001a; Thomas & Zaitsow, 2006; Workman, 2006). Guidoni himself states that the prison subculture “is antithetical to any kind of treatment or restoration (p.62).

Three: Nonviolent Conflict Resolution Versus Prison Disciplinary Action (p.63)

Four: The Difference Between Stated and Perceived Goals (pp.63-64)

Five: Autonomy Denied (p.64)

Six: The Social Conditions of a Restorative Justice Prison (pp.64-65)

In relation to Guidoni’s fourth objection, it is right to comment that a very large proportion of prisoners who enquire about STP ask whether taking part in it will advance their chances of parole. Generally speaking, this is not the case with STP (Wilson, 2007). However I discuss this matter further in Chapter 7. In this regard, Van Ness (2007, p.322), states,

…if the programme participants do not over time begin to share some of the objectives of [programme] staff as a result of their experiences in the programme, one may wish to question the extent to which the programme is achieving its objectives.

The sixth objection stated by Guidoni (2003) is not relevant to Acacia STP programmes. Apparently in Turin those prisoners permitted to take part in restorative justice projects were those who were already privileged persons, the “government collaborators”. STP Selection procedures form an important part of this thesis, and they are discussed in Chapter 7 and elsewhere.
**STP in Acacia**

So then, the “entry point” (Latimer et al., 2005, p.128; Williams, 2013, p.444) of STP is “post-sentence”. And it takes its place among restorative justice projects conducted “in the context of prison” (Van Ness, 2007, p.212; see, for example, Bakker, 2007; Feasey & Williams, 2009; Feasey et al., 2005). It is a project involving groups of offenders, who meet and work with groups of victims of crime. It engages in the use of “surrogate victims”, which is to say that the crimes they have been involved in are unrelated crimes (Van Ness, 2005b; Van Ness et al., 1996). A large proportion of the victims of crime who have taken part in STPs have been victims of extremely severe crimes, and prisoner-participants have been incarcerated for all kinds of offences (Feasey & Williams, 2009; Feasey et al., 2005). Yet people’s lives are touched, and attitudes are changed (Bakker, 2007; Feasey & Williams, 2009; Feasey et al., 2005; Mackenzie, 2009; Ridgeway, 2005; Van Ness, 2005a). It would be difficult to disagree with Wilson et al., (2002, p.369):

> What makes this process so powerful is that we would not normally expect these events to occur in a situation where the principal reason for meeting is a breach of the law and the infliction of harm on another.

**Spiritual capital in STP**

It is clear that a lively community is established in each STP, and there is potential for spiritual capital to be generated within it. In this expectation, we now move to discussion of the concept of spiritual capital.

**Social capital and spiritual capital are related concepts**

On a theoretical level, social capital and spiritual capital are inter-twined. Different scholars associate the two in differing ways. So, for example, Berger & Hefner (2003, p.3) say that, in its sociological version, “social capital refers to the power, influence, knowledge and dispositions an individual acquires by membership in a network or group” (see Malloch, 2010, p.756). Echoing Innaccone & Klick (ud), they then go on to say that
…Spiritual capital might be thought of as a sub-species of social capital, referring to the power, influence and dispositions created by participation in a particular religious tradition”

(IIannaccone & Klick, as cited in Berger & Hefner, p.3, my own underlining.
See Baker & Smith, 2010; Casson, 2013; Dsouli, Khan & Kakabadse, 2012)

Woodberry (2003) presents spiritual capital as arising out of social capital but as being different in kind from it. I shall go into this later.

Social capital

Social capital is variously defined in the literature, owing in part to the perspective from which each piece was written (Schuurman, 2003). So, for example, Cohen & Prusak (as cited in Malloch 2003, p.3) emphasise the aspect of membership in a group, when they write that social capital consists of

the stock of active connections among people, the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviors that bind members.

Putnam (1996, p.3) words his definition in this way:

By “social capital” I mean features of social life – networks, norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives.

(see also Healy & Hampshire, 2002; Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti, 1993)

Field (2001, p.1) maintains that trust is the “crucial element” of social capital, and defines the concept quite simply as “teamwork”. The definition offered by Beyerlein & Hipp (2008, p.65) has the benefit of simplicity, whilst retaining specific mention of “community”:

We conceptualise social capital as network structures linking individuals in communities.

Various writers tell us how very beneficial social capital can be, both to a community and to the individuals within it. For example, Putnam (2004, p.14) writes, “The core idea is very simple: Social networks have value”. And he adds,

Dense networks [such as barbecues] even benefiting local people who don’t themselves go to the barbecue.
Putnam (1995) points out that networks of social engagement foster the emergence of trust, with the likelihood of opportunism reducing as a result. Lin (2000, p.786), looking to the value of social capital for individual citizens, writes,

The general proposition is that social capital enhances the likelihood of instrumental returns, such as better jobs, earlier promotions, higher earnings or bonuses, and expressive returns, such as better mental health.

(see Wright, Cullen & Miller, 2001)

**A “moral resource”**

Putnam et al. (1993, pp.169-170) speak of one characteristic of social capital which is important to mention at this point. He says that most forms of social capital, “such as trust”,

are…“moral resources” – that is, resources whose supply increase rather than decreases through use and become depleted if not used. The more people display trust towards one another, the greater their mutual confidence.

**“Bridging” and “bonding” capital**

Putnam (2004, p.15) brings two kinds of distinction to our attention. The first of these is between “positive” social capital (which is beneficial to the individual), and negative social capital (which is not).

Most of the social capital in the community of faith in Acacia Prison would be considered positive. As briefly discussed in Chapter 5, Chu (2007), O’Connor & Perreyclear (2002) and Wheeldon (2009) speak of social attachment theory. By this theory, they maintain that the more contact a person has with major institutions such as family, education, politics and religion, the less likely he or she will be to commit criminal acts. This is because they will have more to lose by doing so.

Social learning theory, on the other hand, holds that, since criminal behaviours are learned behaviours (Haynie & Osgood, 2008), offenders are able to learn non-criminal behaviours through access to positive modelling (Wheeldon, 2009). O’Connor (2004-2005) maintains that this kind of “positive modelling” is provided by chaplains and volunteers in most prison environments (Burnside & Lee, ud; Elliot, 2007; Hipp, 2009; Levitt & Loper, 2009; O’Connor & Perreyclear, 2002). Presumably, constant association with members of the Italian Mafia would be
considered “negative social capital”. Negative social capital is readily available to prisoners in Acacia.

The other kind of distinction put forward by Putnam et al. (1993) and Putnam (1995; 2004) is between bonding capital and bridging capital. “Bonding” social capital consists of links among people who are similar in age, ethnicity, social class, whereas “bridging” social capital refers to links that cut across various kinds of social cleavage. Putnam insists that a healthy community will have plenty of examples of both “bonding” and “bridging” capital (de Beer, 2014). Lin (2000, p.787) refers to Putnam’s “bridging capital” as “cross-group ties”.

A number of researchers, such as Cattell (2001), Johan (2013) and Portes (1998) point out that, while bonding capital is often seen as a positive factor – for example, in obtaining employment – it can also be negative. Johan (2013) suggest that this is especially so for young people. Bonding capital may at times result in exclusion of outsiders from a group, imposition of excessive claims on its members, and downward levelling of norms (de Beer, 2014). Brauer (2009, p.931) writes of differentiation association theory, which claims that

individuals who associate with criminal others and who learn more
definitions favorable to crime are more likely to commit crime themselves.

**Spiritual capital**

Starke & Finke (as cited in Finke, 2003, p.3) define spiritual capital as being “the degree of mastery of and attachment to a particular religious culture” (see Barker, 2007). In this definition, Starke & Finke do not seem to see any great difference between human capital and spiritual capital, except that one is “related to a religious culture”. Woodberry (2003, p.1), on the other hand, maintains that spiritual capital differs from other forms of capital:

…not because religious groups don’t have material resources, skills, trusting relationships, and cultural-valued knowledge – that is, financial, human, social and cultural capital. They do. But religious groups are concerned with more than these…
He gives two examples (p.1) of what he means by “more”. The first is that most religious groups consider themselves to be more than mere “social groups”:

They often stress that their relationship with God is central and that the focus of group activity is precisely to emphasize and actualize that.

The other is that participants would claim that people can access spiritual resources anywhere without respect to group solidarity (Woodberry, 2003; 2005).

Woodberry (2003, p.1) reminds us that the concept of social capital is used by scholars in different ways. Some, he says, use it to refer to “a generalized social trust that is beyond the individual and thus the individual cannot transport it to different contexts” (Healy & Hampshire, 2002; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 1996; 2004; Putnam et al., 1993). Others treat it as an “individual characteristic”, rather like human capital (Field, 2001; Park & Smith, 2000; Wright et al., 2001). Woodberry (2003, p.1) tells us:

Empirically, social capital research has tended to focus on memberships in formal organizations where people learn compromise, reciprocity, and come into contact with people of other groups.

He suggests that, if such interaction is in fact the crucial factor in generating social capital, then the religious content of the group should not matter (Woodberry, 2003; 2005). But it does matter. For example, members of religious groups tend to volunteer far more than those who do not belong to such groups (Beyerlein & Hipp, 2008; Greeley, 1997; Park & Smith, 2000; Van Tienan, Scheepers, Reitsma & Schilderman, 2011; Wilson & Musick, 1997), and are more likely to join volunteer organizations (Lam, 2000). In addition, they give more generously to the poor (Regnerus, Smith & Sikkink, 1998). Woodberry (2003, p.1 and 2005, p.12) sums this up when he says that in the United States

...highly religious people tend to live longer, have fewer health and mental problems, steal less, volunteer more times, and give away more money than others. Even when other relevant factors are controlled for statistically, these differences persist.

Elsewhere in this thesis, I will deal with the extent to which members of the Acacia faith community engage in what Park & Smith (2000, p.272) call “formal
volunteering” (e.g., participation in a local organisation of some kind) and “informal volunteering” (e.g., helping a neighbour).

“Spiritual capital” is a metaphor

Woodberry (2003, p.2) has this to say

...religious people invest money and skilled work, risk certain relationships, and forego chances to learn culturally-valued knowledge in pursuit of spiritual returns. In the process, they build up spiritual, material, and intellectual resources that shape both themselves and society.

He contends that the metaphor of “spiritual capital” should assist in investigating the effect all this has upon society.

Most religious organisations are repositories of financial, human, social and cultural capital. Yet there is generally far more than this. They are also sources of moral teaching and religious experience which, as Woodberry (2003, p.3) puts it, “may motivate, challenge and strengthen people to reach particular ends”.

To use the metaphor of “spiritual capital” is to liken religious and spiritual resources to other forms of capital. In effect, it is saying that adherents or practitioners of a particular religion, or practitioners of a particular spiritual or religious observance, “invest” in order to attain specific goals. This is certainly true, but only up to a point. There are limitations to this metaphor (Guest, 2010; Woodberry, 2003; 2005).

The first such limitation is that it over-emphasises religion as a means to reach particular goals or ends, whereas religion is also about shaping or changing the goals which people aim for:

Religious traditions assist people to change themselves, to decide what they should want and the means they should use to meet those ends.

(Woodberry, 2003, p.3)

My own story is a case in point. When I began my Christian journey, prison chaplaincy was not even part of my wildest dreams. However, through my commitment to God and my participation in his church, I changed, and so did my priorities.
This metaphor might also suggest that the main aim of religion is personal profit. This may be true for many people and perhaps for some religious traditions. However, some religions maintain that spiritual profit is a ‘spin-off’ – a by-product of losing the self or “dying” to self. So, for Christians, the goal is to love God and seek his rule (Deuteronomy 6.4-9; Matthew 22.37-40; Romans 6.3-4; Luke 11.2), and there is the example of Jesus, who chose to follow the Father’s will for his life rather than his own (Luke 22.42 et al.). To view God’s gifts as a primary goal would be idolatory. Woodberry (2003, p.3) points out that, for orthodox Theravada Buddhists, to seek material possessions is to be trapped by desire: “The goal is to release all desires so that you can be freed from the cycle of suffering and reach enlightenment.”

The term “spiritual capital” is elusive. It is used by different people in remarkably different ways. Perhaps, as with the concept of restorative justice, this is partly due to the fact that the term is evolving. We see that researchers such as Starke & Finke (2003) and Barker (2007) choose to “confine” spiritual capital to what takes place within specific faith communities. Holt, Shulz & Williams et al. (2012, p.1062) differentiate between “religious capital” (deriving from membership of a faith community) and “spiritual capital” (from relationship with “a higher power e.g. God”). In her research in three Catholic schools, Casson (2013) understands religious capital as linked directly with Catholic faith tradition, while she presents spiritual capital as having a more tenuous link with that tradition, and consisting of such things as “moral vision” (p.206), “identity” (p.212) and “values and attitudes” (p.214). Others see spiritual capital in terms of the observable difference which active participation in a faith community makes in the lives and behaviours of its members (e.g., Malloch, 2003; 2010; Woodberry 2003; 2005). A number of practitioners use the term “spiritual capital” as they attempt to apply religious or spiritual values to commercial enterprises (for example, Dsouli, Khan & Kakabadse, 2012; Kapoor, 2014; Malloch, 2003). Liu (2007) examines the principles that should be borne in mind in any attempt to apply a financial value to spiritual capital. Lybbert (2008) does precisely this as he assigns a dollar value to the spiritual capital invested by volunteer members of a faith community of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints in feeding homeless people and in constructing a place of worship. In a fascinating article, Dsouli et al. (2010) use the term “spiritual capital” as they argue persuasively for the application of
Shariah law to global economics. Liu (2007, p.5) divides spiritual capital into three “levels” – individual organisational and national. Kapoor (2014) understands spiritual capital in terms of respecting the rights of others so that our own rights can be respected. Acting according to this standard would be so different from the status quo that Kapoor (2014, p.206) calls it “a moral revolution”. For countries and corporations, it would involve pursuing policies of sustainability. In a presentation concerning special education, Caldwell (2014, p.3) refers to spiritual capital as “the strength of moral purpose and the degree of coherence among values, beliefs and attitudes about life and learning”. He observes that in some schools spiritual capital has its foundation in religion, whereas in others it may consist of ethics and values shared by members of the school and its community. Dsouli et al. (2010), Middlebrooks & Nogui (2007) and Rowles-Waetford (2007) all remind us that there is a cultural context, and cultural differences, in any analysis of spiritual capital.

Middlebrooks & Noghui (2007, p.2) provide us with the following definition of spiritual capital:

The effects of spiritual and religious practices, beliefs, networks and institutions that have a measurable effect on individuals, communities and societies.

Lybbert (2008, p.59), on the other hand, writes of spiritual capital in this way:

Spiritual capital emanates from spiritual relationships that connect the individual to the divine, whether embedded as deity or not.

Smith (2015, pp.42-43) uses the terms “spiritual capital” and “spiritual assets” interchangeably, and he considers that all spiritual capital is given by God’s Spirit. He laments the apparent reluctance, in many approaches to spiritual capital, to include or discuss the notion of spirit, in any transcendent sense:

Essentially, reference to spiritual assets is conducted in a way that neither questions nor undermines a modern, largely Western, world view.

Liu (2007, p.11) asserts that every person has some spiritual assets, and he tells us that the use of those “spiritual assets” create spiritual capital. He goes on to describe the kind of observable differences which result. These include
showing integrity, being accountable and honest, offering hope, being loyal and trustworthy, loving and encouraging others, exhibiting good stewardship, being fair, creating order and serving others.

Negative indicators, he says, include corruption and cheating.

I particularly like Woodberry’s use and exposition of the term (see above), because he gathers together empirical facts concerning groups as well as individuals. He looks at the very great difference active participation in a faith community tends to effect, and he points out that this difference can be seen not only within the group but when the individual is separate from it. He is clear that he’s looking at a tendency rather than at every individual. Also that although some persons join religious groups to gain financial capital, social capital or cultural capital, many seek something spiritual, which cannot be reduced to money, sex or power (Woodberry, 2005). I believe that the facts he draws upon are true, and that his reasoning is valid. At the same time, however, I do not feel that his idea of spiritual capital is sufficiently broad. I feel much more comfortable with Zohar (2010, p.4), who has this to say:

I argue that [for the generation of spiritual capital] there need be no necessary connection with religion. One might be a committed atheist, yet live according to deep values, a sense of higher purpose, and be driven by a motivation of service.

She goes on to make two very valid points. The first is that, when practised with tolerance, humility and open-mindedness, religious affiliation can both nourish and express spiritual intelligence. It can be a source of great strength. However such affiliation is not absolutely necessary in order to find meaning and purpose in life, or to be or become a good person (Guest, 2010; Liu, 2007). Her second point is that, unfortunately, a person can be a staunch supporter of some religious group “and yet be bigoted, mean-spirited and vengeful” (p.4). Zohar (2010) considers that service is one of our highest motivations, and that it drives us to create spiritual capital which can empower our lives, practices and projects. She adds that services don’t have to be on a grand scale:

Simple acts of kindness, expressions of compassion, offering a beautifully prepared meal for family or friends, getting up in the night for our children, are all everyday examples of service.
From this perspective, it would be reasonable to posit that spiritual capital in a prison derives from spiritual motives, which are not necessarily associated with specifically religious groups (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2000; Bender & Armour, 2000; Fewell, 1995; O’Connor, 2004-2005; Zohar, 2010).

Thomas & Zaitsow (2006, pp.244-245) observe that just as there is a social culture in “the free world,” there is a sub-culture evident in prison (Crewe, 2007; Faccio & Costa, 2013; Johnstone, 2007; Shaw, 2010; Workman, 2005). They write that prisoners adjust to control by finding natural ways to adapt to unnatural circumstances. They speak of “…Aggressive and predatory behaviour, passivity, withdrawal, manipulation, and conning” as some of the more common adaptation techniques employed by prisoners in adapting to prison culture.

Thomas & Zaitsow (2006, p.246) comment that little research attention has been given to a means by which a significant minority of prisoners adapt to their environment – namely, that of spirituality, especially associated with religion. Spirituality, they say, plays an important part in assisting prisoners to become productive in their environment.

**Conclusion**

As previously mentioned, our discussion of theories of punishment in this chapter places the whole of this research in a context. We noted that there are various theories of punishment, which apply to some extent in our community, and that one o result of this confusion is overcrowding in the WA prison system.

This debate led to a consideration of restorative justice and some of the issues relating to it. The topic, restorative justice has direct bearing on this thesis, because Chapters 6 and 7 consist of an in-depth study of an in-prison restorative justice project called the “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP).

Among the topics dealt with under this heading was the question of whether restorative justice and the present criminal justice system are competing or in some way reconcilable. Some scholars and practitioners (e.g., Fattah, 2011; Jenkins, 2004) consider that the criminal justice system - which they see as essentially retributive in nature – should be phased out and totally replaced by restorative justice, while others (e.g., Daly, 2014; Dancig-Rosenberg & Gal, 2013;
Godden, 2013; Joyce & Keenan, 2013; Marshall, 2014) argue that the two systems can and should complement each other. We looked, too, at whether the use of surrogate victims is justified in restorative justice projects. This is particularly relevant to this study, because all the prisoner-participants in STP, and most of the visitor-participants, have already been subjected to the court system and are now participating in STP.

The issue of whether in-prison restorative justice projects are appropriate, or even possible, is an even more contentious issue. Guidoni (2003) and others argue strenuously that the culture and values of prison life are so contrary to the aims of restorative justice that such programmes will be rendered fruitless. Others, such as Van Ness et al. (1993) and Van Ness (2007), see the difficulties, but are equally adamant that in-prison restorative justice is workable, worth-while and thriving. In this chapter, other matters relating to restorative justice – such as oral language competence (OLC), gendered violence, trauma, and indigenous issues – have now been introduced. They are discussed further elsewhere in this thesis.

One of these topics is that of spiritual capital. It is a central issue in this thesis, and it is relevant to STP. Surprisingly few people have researched or written about spiritual capital. Those who have done so have used the term in different contexts, given the phrase varied meanings. As previously mentioned, “spiritual capital” is an emerging concept. Given the various ways in which the metaphor of spiritual capital is used and understood, I suppose that in this research I was intent on finding my own meaning for the term. I wanted to work out what spiritual capital is for me, and what it looks like in Acacia faith community.

**Community**

In tracing the development of spiritual capital in the Acacia (Christian) community of faith, light is inevitably thrown on the whole concept of community. I deal with this matter more fully in Chapter 8.
CHAPTER THREE - “METHODS AND METHODOLOGY”

Research question

It was important to me that my research question/s should be a true reflection of my real interests in the area and of the reason for the research I hoped to conduct (Bryman, 2008; McMurray, Pace & Scott, 2004). However, the method of deciding upon the research question/s was just as important as the question/s themselves.

A remarkable fact about the community of faith in Acacia is that most aspects of its communal life are prisoner-initiated. This is highly unusual, given the low morale we have come to expect of prisoners generally. Because of this, I considered it important that the members of the faith community, almost all of whom are prisoners, played an active part in deciding upon the research question/s or for this study.

The Acacia Prison population is divided into Mainstream prisoners and Protection prisoners. Protection prisoners are those who are perceived as being at risk of assault from other inmates. Mainstream prisoners are seldom permitted to mingle with Protection prisoners, so focus group sessions concerning my research question had to be held separately in the two sections of the prison. Both groups said that I should describe the community of faith in Acacia, reflect upon it and place it in a context. However, both groups were adamant that I must re-define the community of faith so that I would consider the community of faith within the prison, as well as the progress of individual members of it in the critical period of post-release. Bearing in mind what both groups had expressed, I came up with the following:

What can we learn about the development of spiritual capital in a prison by looking at the community of faith in Acacia, both in the prison itself and post-release?

At a later time, I checked with a smaller group called the Term Leadership Group (TLG), as well as with individual members of the two initial focus groups, that this met with their satisfaction.

Case study research
The form that this present study takes is that of case study research. There are different definitions of this kind of work. However I take case study to be – quite simply – the study of a single case (Bryman, 2008; Flyvbjerg 2006; Stake, 2000). Johansson has this to say:

A case study is an in-depth study of the particular, where the researcher seeks to increase his or her understanding of the phenomena studied.

(as cited in Ruddin, 2006, p.798)

There are a number of different kinds of case studies, and various reasons for conducting them. So for example some researchers select a typical case, so that generalisation can reasonably be made to a larger population of cases. Yin, (1998, p.239) calls these “classic case studies”. Stake includes in his list of “Basic criteria of case studies” that “…it studies typical cases” (as cited in Sarantakos, 2005, p.212).

Flyvbjerg (2006) vigorously defends the case study as a valid form of social research. Like Yin (1998), his contention is that it is valuable because valid generalisation can be made from the study of single cases. However he believes that this can be best accomplished through the selection of what he calls “critical cases” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.226) – i.e., selecting, in each particular study, a case which can test or falsify a hypothesis.

Sometimes multiple case studies are conducted, so that findings in various studies may be compared, contrasted or collated in some way, and perhaps generalised to a wider population. Stake (2000, p.437) says of this exercise that “… a researcher may jointly study a number of cases in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition. I call this collective case study.”

The present study is an intrinsic study, which I am undertaking in order to better understand the working of the Acacia faith community as it contributes to the development of spiritual capital in Acacia. Stake (2000, p.437) writes:

…I call a study an intrinsic case study if it is undertaken because, first and last, the researcher wants better understanding of this particular case. Here, it is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because
it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest.

I have decided to study a single case, and this is not because it is typical. Quite the contrary: I have chosen to study this faith community because it is highly unusual, and perhaps unique (Maxwell 2002, p.54). Without doubt there are similarities from one prison to another and from one community of faith to another, so some of the findings could almost certainly be applied in other situations. However this is simply not the purpose of what I am doing.

**My hope**

Having said all this, I hope that the research practice used in this study may be taken up and exercised in some of the other WA prisons. It was in fact adapted from practice already current in Acacia. I consider that faith communities in prisons should be constantly reviewing their priorities, their direction and their “performance”, and deciding on future projects. I further believe that this process should be undertaken not only by chaplains but by chaplains and prisoners together.

This conviction derives in part from my understanding that every member of a faith community is gifted by God for ministry and should therefore be encouraged to exercise that ministry. In prison contexts, there is an additional factor, namely that inmates generally have an extremely low self-esteem. It is important that, where possible, they be permitted and empowered to make significant decisions.

**Epistemology**

I come to this study from a constructionist perspective (Bryman, 2008; Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2002; Schwandt, 2000), which is to say that I don’t go out into the field to find “truth” and “meaning”, as if these were fixed entities waiting to be discovered. Rather, I go out there to create meanings for what I discover and, importantly, seek to understand the meanings which others independently construct from their experiences. However I don’t live in a vacuum, I live in community. As such, I inherit a whole brace of shared meanings. It is because of these that we are able to communicate. And it is because of these that I approach this research as a “social constructionist” (Crotty, 1998, p.159; Schwandt, 2000,
pp.197-198). It is significant that constructionist research shares with various
global qualitative approaches the use of researcher as instrument.

In this study I aim to discover the meanings of the spiritual capital and of the
community of faith which have been constructed by prisoners. Their meanings
then become part of my data as I create my own meanings.

**Methodology**

Almost every other aspect of the lives of prisoners is governed by policies and
procedures or by unwritten expectation or by direct orders. This leaves very little
room for initiative to be shown by them. I have therefore selected participant
action research, or PAR as my methodology. Reason (1994, p.329) defines this
as follows:

PAR is a *methodology* for an alternate system of knowledge production based
on the people’s role in setting the agendas, participating in the data gathering
and analysis, and controlling the use of outcomes. PAR may use diverse
methods, both quantitative and qualitative, to further these ends.

Heron & Reason (2001, p.179) comment:

We believe that ordinary people are quite capable of developing their own
ideas and can work together in a co-operative inquiry group to see if these
ideas make sense of their work and world in practice.

(see Kemmis, 2006)

Reason (1994, p.326) makes a clear distinction between two kinds of research
strategy (Mertens, 1998):

- “*cooperative inquiry*” - which involves participation of all people in the
  research process without explicitly addressing power relationship and the
  potential transformative effects of that involvement;

- “*Participatory action research (PAR)*” – which similarly involves all people
  in the process but with explicit recognition of power issues and an aim of
  transforming society.

While this is a distinction worth making, it is more true to say that there is a
continuum (Moxley, Alvarez, Gutierrez & Johnson, 2003), with many research
projects somewhere between the two. This present study has moved along that continuum as it has proceeded. When the project began, it was with the intention of following a fully-fledged participant action methodology. Two focus groups of prisoner-members of the Acacia faith community decided on the content of the research question, and strongly influenced the form which the enquiry would take. Prisoner focus groups joined with me in providing data and advised where systematic observation could most productively take place. Focus groups of chaplains, and focus groups of prisoners, provided data and valuable “member checking” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.314; Maxwell, 1998, p.94; Robson, 2002, p.175). However, by the time 3½ years had passed, prison numbers had increased without commensurate increase in number of chaplains, and almost all of the prisoners who had initially been fully engaged in the project were either released or transferred to other prisons. Advice from focus groups was still helpful and influential, but the process had become much more of personal reflection than of participant action.

Examples of PAR in action which are given by Kemis & McTaggart (2000) all have a primary or secondary aim of liberating groups of people from some kind of oppressive regime. Similarly, the examples cited by Heron & Reason (2001), Reason (1994) and Stringer (1996) are in terms of giving or restoring power to people who are without it. In the current instance I am aware that, now the research is over, many of the prisoner-participants are still prisoners and, as such, members of a powerless group. Even so, the experience of taking part in this research, and of knowing that their participation was valued, has made a considerable difference to some of these men. They can see that, because of our joint efforts, some small but real changes have been made to the spiritual capital in Acacia. This matter will be discussed later. The involvement of prisoners in this way has raised their awareness of issues, given them additional skills and raised their morale.

An example of this was Gareth, whom I interviewed in another prison as part of this research. He had been in one of the focus groups who formed the research question. In addition, he had been a member of the TLG, and was generous with advice and assistance through much of this research. He said in his interview that “The whole process [of data-gathering, and of checking your findings with our group] was magic!”
Reason (1994, p.328) speaks of the PAR strategy having “a double objective”. The first is

The production of knowledge and action through research, adult education, and sociopolitical action…

This clearly includes not only the aim of data-collection but that of social change. The second is highly relevant to the present project. It is this:

to empower people at a second and deeper level through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge.

Collaboration with prisoners in this way has a number of advantages:

1. This approach honours all members of the community of faith in Acacia as people created by God and as meaning-makers in their own right, both individually and collectively.

2. The increase in awareness, knowledge and skills for the prisoners themselves. Patton (2002, p.269), when reviewing a range of what he calls “participatory and collaborative approaches”, states that “a supplementary agenda is often to increase participants' sense of being in control of, deliberative about and reflective on their own lives and situations” (see Maguire, 2006).

A good example of this was the topic of suicide. I was truly amazed when a number of prisoners and former prisoners interviewed for this research told me they had come close to committing suicide. I wanted to know whether I had interviewed an unusual sample of persons, or whether such thoughts and intentions were widespread among newly-released former prisoners. I took the matter to the TLG, a gathering of prisoner-members of the community of faith who were acting as a focus group for my research. The five men present had all been released at some time, and all had later re-offended and returned to the prison system. They all said they had come extremely close to “topping themselves”. This led to an interesting and constructive discussion on
stresses experienced in the first three months of post-release from prison.

3. The fact that they themselves are the true “experts”. Guba, in the foreword of Stringer’s book, *Action Research: A Handbook for Practitioners* (1996, p.x) says this: “I insist on this joint approach because local stakeholders are the only extant experts on local culture, beliefs and practices, and because moral considerations require that local perspectives be honoured” (see Heron & Reason, 2001; Kemmis, 2006; Tesoriero, 2010).

4. The additional ideas, insights and perspectives that will be available to me as researcher.

5. The opportunity that such partnership provided for checking the validity of research findings. This particular kind of assistance should be available not only at the beginning but at various stages through the process, and at the end. A number of researchers refer to this process as “member checking” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.314; Maxwell, 1998, p.94; Robson 2002, p.175).

I find it interesting that Maxwell (1998, p.94) warns at this point:

> However it is important that you do not assume that the participants’ reactions are necessarily valid…; their response should be taken simply as evidence regarding the validity of your account…

His comment seems to assume a different understanding of validity from my own, or perhaps he has in mind a different kind of research project. What I want to discover is the meaning which the members of the community of faith construct concerning Acacia’s spiritual capital and the Acacia faith community. To the extent that the focus groups doing the member checking reflect the general view of the community of faith, their judgments are valid. On the other hand, as I construct my own idea of the community of faith and the Acacia spiritual capital,
their judgments and opinions are important evidence, and the understandings I reach may not co-incide with theirs.

Later in this chapter, I deal specifically with the huge differential in power between me and the prisoners who took part in this research. This is not a simple matter. By this I mean that, although, as members of a total institution (Goffan, 1961, p.18), these men are essentially powerless, yet they are becoming empowered, to some extent, through their membership of the faith community and through the influence of the TLG (see chapter 5).

Moxley et al. (2003, p.6) ask the question, “To what extent are the participants actors within the context?” (see Schein, 2006, p.185). As already mentioned, the extent to which prisoners were involved in decision-making and data-gathering in this research began to decrease from about half-way through my PhD journey. However prisoners as well as chaplains were consulted throughout, and at various points were highly influential. So, for example, I took the advice of the TLG on where I should conduct my observation, and on where the interviews might take place. I de-briefed with them in general terms about the topics emerging in pre-release and post-release interviews, asking them whether these findings were true to life. I asked them whether chaplains-in-training should be interviewed, and took their advice. In addition, (a) at the periodic chaplaincy department meetings I consistently kept my colleagues informed of progress, and asked advice, and (b) from time to time chaired focus group meetings of prisoners following sessions of the STP. Wood (as cited in Novek & Sanford, 2004) asserts that, when researchers and subjects see themselves as interdependent, the dialogues and personal relationships that ensue are increasingly valued as explicit components of research.

The emergent nature of this research

It is clear that research which derives from a participant action research methodology must of necessity follow an emergent strategy. This is to say that insights gained through the research are continually being used to strengthen and re-focus the research (Grills, 1998, p.10). In this study, I took the advice of focus groups to design the research question and, later, to alter significant aspects of the research design. The weakness of emergent approaches is that it
can very easily become “woolly” and non-directive. I countered this by three means:

**By rigorously following the decided-upon research strategies**

Although Sudman & Bradburn (1983) were not writing of emergent research, but rather of questionnaires, their advice holds good for all kinds of interviews:

1. Every time you write a question, ask yourself, “Why do I want to know this?”
2. Answer it in terms of the way in which it will help you answer your research question. “It would be interesting to know” is not an acceptable answer.

   (Sudman & Bradburn, 1983, p.14)

PAR has its own structure. Its direction and its findings are less predictable than those of a questionnaire, for two important reasons. The first is that the practice of “member checking” (see above) may lead me in unexpected directions. The second, at least in this project, is that the interviews are unstructured, or “in-depth”. Because of this, they differed quite markedly from each other, sometimes in surprising ways. Even so, it was important that, where possible, each part of this study should contribute towards answering the research question; because of this, it was important to follow the research strategy decided upon.

Amongst other things, this makes careful planning a necessity. Woolcott (as cited in Maxwell, 1998, p.96) provides what Maxwell calls “a useful metaphor for research design”:

> Some of the best advice I’ve ever seen for writers happened to be included in the directions I found for assembling a wheelbarrow: Make sure all parts are properly in place before tightening.

Maxwell points out that, like a wheelbarrow, a research design needs to have all the required parts properly in place, it has to work – to function smoothly and to accomplish its tasks. He calls this “coherence”. The research design is important, and it is equally important to keep within the parameters set.

As part of this research, I interviewed three chaplains from prisons other than Acacia. They were the co-ordinating chaplains of four WA prisons, because one person is co-ordinating chaplain of the two WA women’s prisons. My aim in conducting these three “outside” interviews was to throw light upon the Acacia
faith community, and to help me place it in a wider context. What I wanted was to hear these three persons’ perspective on the communities of faith in their respective prisons. These three “outside” interviews assisted me to see the Acacia community of faith more clearly.

**By “triangulation” – i.e., by combining multiple observation, theories, methods and data sources.**


Denzin (as cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p.40) says that

> By combining multiple observation, theories, methods and data sources, [a researcher] can hope to overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from single-methods, single-observer, and single-theory studies.

And Singleton, Straits & Straits (1993, p.127) write that

> the construct validity of a concept is only as compelling as the amount and divergence of the evidence supporting it.

In this study, I employed

*Data source triangulation* – involving the use of multiple sources of information, e.g., interviews with prisoners, chaplains and chaplains-in-training.

*Methods triangulation* – involving the use of multiple methods. In my study, I included review of the literature, “presence” in the prison, observation, focus groups, and unstructured interviews.

*Researcher triangulation* – in this study, a number of researchers were at work: prisoners, four other Acacia chaplains, one associate chaplain, and me. The prisoners and one of the chaplains assisted by observing and reporting back to me. One of the other chaplains agreed to be interviewed a second time when she believed she could contribute significant data. In addition, she agreed to interview me personally. Prisoners as well as chaplains, in groups convened for other purposes, were generous with advice and “member checking”.

Liamputtong & Ezzy (2005, p.41) present a different approach to triangulation, and one which needs to be taken seriously. It is, simply stated, that such a strategy will add richness to the data collected:
Early advocates saw triangulation as a way of overcoming bias and seeing what is “really” taking place. However more recent qualitative researchers have cautioned against this approach. Rather, they see triangulation as allowing the researcher to gain a complex picture of the phenomenon being studied which might not have been available if – for example – only one method were being used.

Morgan (as cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p.80) points to the importance of research design in what he calls “multi-method studies”. He argues that

In these combined uses of qualitative methods, the goal is to use each method so that it contributes something unique to the researcher’s understanding of the phenomenon under study.

As indicated earlier, in this study, “researcher triangulation” was given less weight than initially intended. After the first 3½ years the methodology became less of participant action research and somewhat more of personal reflection research.

By reflexivity

By “reflexivity”, I mean designing the research so that data, as well as data-gathering methods, may be examined and re-examined at various points along the way (Heron & Reason, 2001; Maguire, 2001; Marshall, 2006; Moxley et al., 2003; Reason, 1994; Stringer, 1999; Walsh et al., 2014). In this project, the main means of achieving this was by asking my chaplaincy colleagues and other members of the community of faith for their comments and suggestions. Lincoln & Guba (1985, p.314) called this “member checking”. Most notably, this was done through focus groups. The cyclic nature of action research is what Stringer (1999, p.160) calls “Look-Think-Act”, or “LTA” and is a reflective process.

As the research progressed, prisoners engaged with me in the action-reflection cycle outlined by Heron & Reason (2001), Marshall (2006) and Reason (1994). In this study, there were two main advantages in adopting a practice of reflexivity:

1. It increased the trustworthiness of the findings. Focus groups, as well as individual members of the community of faith, were able to tell me whether the data gathered were “true to life”. In several instances, their comments resulted in changed strategy and direction, to the enhancement of the
research. I concur with O’Reilly (2005, p.45) when she says, “I believe it is important to be reflective in a systematic and thoughtful way.”

2. In social research and observation, a policy of reflexivity takes the complexities of human interaction seriously. O’Reilly (2005, p.14) has this to say:
   Contemporary ethnography is often described as, or attempts to be, reflexive, that is to say it is conducted in full awareness of the myriad limitations associated with humans studying other humans’ lives.

**Research methods**

In this study, data were collected in these ways:

1. Review of the literature;
2. “Presence” in the prison;
3. Observation;
4. Focus Groups;
5. Unstructured interviews;

**Review of the literature**

In this thesis, I use the literature in three main ways. The first of these is that I use it to influence the research question and to inform the research structure. Second is to use the literature as data in this study. However, most of all I use the literature in analysing the data.

**“Presence” in the prison**

My presence Acacia during this time was more than observation, and far more than participation in focus groups or unstructured interviews. For some years prior to my PhD research, then throughout the research period, I was present in Acacia five or six days a week, as a member of the faith community. For all this time, I was gathering experiences and impressions which would greatly affect the meaning I would construct from the research data.

It is important to mention the following aspects of my presence in Acacia over the 6½ years of research:
• During this time, I kept a journal, making detailed entries on many or most days (Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005; O'Reilly, 2005; Spradley, 1979). Those entries included not only many of the events I observed but also my reflections upon them. I frequently added my emotional responses such as admiration, surprise or disappointment.

• Since early in the prison’s history, I have sent monthly reports to Acacia’s senior management. These reports listed (a) programmes conducted during the month, (b) special services, memorial services and special events, and (c) religious visitors. During the research period, I submitted 79 of these reports.

• I sent monthly statistical reports to the Department of Corrective Services (DCS), until part-way through this time, when the Department asked that these reports be quarterly instead. DCS reports included such matters as (a) services, bible studies and special events, with the number of prisoners involved in them, (b) the number of “significant pastoral contacts”, both “in depth”, and “casual contact”, and (c) the number of religious visitors, and whether ordained, lay, or Indigenous.

• I have been senior chaplain in Acacia for more than a decade. In this capacity I have been in constant contact with the other Acacia chaplains and, in conjunction with the Term Leadership Group, have planned for the future.

• For one year during the time of this research I was deputy chairperson of the Prison Chaplains’ Association of WA, then for 18 months was chairperson. Although this was not part of my PhD research, it assisted me to see the Acacia faith community from a wider perspective.

• The experience of being in the prison, as part of the community of faith, rendered invaluable data. In addition, it inevitably and quite properly influenced the conduct and interpretation of my research.

Observation

Through most of the 6½ years of this research, I was engaged in participant observation of the activities of the Acacia Prison faith community. This involved careful observation of the services and programmes which I personally led, or in which I took part, as well as asking questions about the daily life of prisoners,
chaplains and volunteers, carefully noting details and findings in my research journal (Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005; O'Reilly, 2005; Spradley, 1979). At the outset of this research, it was difficult to decide which of the activities of the Acacia faith community to systematically observe. So much was happening, among Mainstream prisoners as well as Protection, that I could not possibly deal directly with all of it. At the time, I was conducting somewhat over half of the Sunday chapel services, and memorial services, and was busily conducting counselling sessions and facilitating Mainstream programmes. Members of the TLG advised me to observe and notate all the chapel-sponsored activities in which I was already engaged, but no more. They said that this would give me a “feel” for the total amount of spiritual capital being produced in the faith community. They added that they would inform me of anything new or significant that cropped up elsewhere. I took their advice, and kept a careful journal thereafter. I was able to keep in touch with a wider range of chapel-based activities by means of monthly chaplaincy department reports (which I compile), and through occasional “de-briefs” with my fellow chaplains in Acacia.

Focus groups

Travers (2006, p.106) says that focus groups are

…a form of in-depth interviewing, but conducted with a group of people rather than with an individual participant.

However, he goes on to add that it is not just about conducting lots of interviews at once. Rather, it is about harnessing group dynamics and group processes along the way. One aspect of focus groups which is worth noting is that it acknowledges the way in which meaning is normally created. O'Reillyph (2005, p.133) has this to say:

Here the notion of how people react to something in interaction is emphasized; how meaning is created in groups. In this way focus groups are faithful to the idea that people’s feelings, perceptions and attitudes are formed not in isolation but in interaction with others.

Five different focus groups took part in this research. Two of these were in existence before the research began. And, because of the nature of the prison environment, membership of the four prisoner groups was constantly changing
throughout the period of study. My experience of focus groups in this research validated Morgan’s argument (as cited in Patton, 1988, p.177) that

…the hallmark of the focus group is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group.

Two focus groups worked with me to devise a research question, and one of these groups continued to meet monthly for somewhat over a year. In addition, the Term Leadership Group (TLG) acted as a focus group throughout the research period. The chaplains, in their occasional meetings acted as a “sounding board” throughout this research, and focus groups of prisoners met after most STPs.

**Unstructured interviews**

O'Reilly (2005, p.116) compares the “unstructured interview” with the “structured interview”, and says of the latter:

An unstructured interview is more free-flowing. The interviewer may have a guide or plan, or simply a topic to address, and the interviewee is given the opportunity to respond in a leisurely way. This is more like a conversation than an interview…

Bryman (2008, p.438) calls them “almost totally unstructured interviews”, and presumably has two reasons for this:

1. That the ethnographic interview is not simply a conversation, but rather a conversation with an explicit purpose (Marshall & Rossman 1999), which is to assist in answering the research question.

2. To assist in achieving this purpose, the interviewer will often carry an aide memoir” (Bryman, 2008, p.148) or “interview guide or plan” (O’Reilly, 2005, p.116). This is much less specific than the interview schedule employed in a structured interview. It is typically a list of prompts to remind the interviewer of the topics to be covered. The order in which these topic areas are dealt with generally varies from interviewee to interviewee.
Liamputtong & Ezzy (2005, p.56), who prefer the term “in-depth interviews” to “unstructured interviews”, tell us that

Structured interviews may yield worthwhile results in large quantity surveys. However, in-depth interviews aim to explore the complexity and in-process nature of meanings and interpretations that cannot be examined using positivist methodologies.

Punch (1998) suggests that researcher and researched become co-creators of data (Kvale, 1996).

Marshall & Rossman (1999, p.112) comment:

Volumes of data can be obtained through [unstructured] interviewing, but the data are time-consuming to analyse.

In this study, I conducted unstructured interviews with the following persons:

- one “pilot interview” with a Sunday morning regular volunteer;
- three Acacia chaplains;
- two Acacia “chaplains-in-training, one of them twice;
- three co-ordinating chaplains of other prisons;
- eleven prisoners prior to their release;
- seven former-prisoners, post-release.

I interviewed one of the chaplains-in-training a second time - though by the time of the second interview she had become fully qualified, and was employed in Acacia as a chaplain. She had “sat in” on a particularly interesting session of STP. And, as she spoke to me about it afterwards, it seemed important to record her observations in an unstructured interview.

In addition, near the beginning of my PhD journey I asked one of my Acacia chaplaincy colleagues to interview me. I did this in order to clarify my own thinking and to see whether my views would alter as the research progressed. As it happened, I think that having to verbalise my opinions on a number of topics did assist in clarifying my thinking. However, the questions were probably too general to indicate how much my ideas have changed over the past 5 or 6 years. The main benefit accruing from this interview lay in an area that surprised me. It
caused me to think further about the interviews I was to conduct later in my research journey. I shall expound on this later in this chapter.

I decided not to interview the volunteers from “outside”. They are definitely part of the faith community, and I am sure that we would be severely diminished without their help and their influence. However, individual volunteers are seldom in the prison area for more than a few hours per week each. I considered that interviews with them would probably not add much new data. Nevertheless, almost all of them have signed consent forms, indicating their willingness to be included in this research. In addition, I conducted a pilot interview with one of our volunteers.

**Unstructured interviews with prisoners**

My original intention was to interview 12 active members of the Acacia community of faith prior to release from Acacia Prison, then to follow each of them up with a further interview six weeks after release from the prison system. I hoped that, from this small sample, I might gain some insight into the development of spiritual capital.

One of the twelve prisoners was released suddenly, and far earlier than expected. Two others were transferred to another prison without warning. Accordingly, I interviewed the first of these in the place he was staying, and obtained authorisation to interview the other two in the other correctional institution. One of those two has remained in prison, having been found guilty of earlier offences.

The pre-release interview with a prisoner called Jonathan was a “comedy of errors”. I made four appointments with him in Acacia prior to his transfer to the East Perth “lock-up”. On the first of these occasions, the prison was “locked down”, and he was not permitted to keep the appointment. Each of the other three times the interview was arranged, a prison officer – a different one each time – called in as we began, pointed to the prisoner and said, “I want to see you – out here, now!” Jonathan had done nothing wrong. The prison officers had no knowledge of the interview, and there was no “campaign” against Jonathan or against me. But this frustrating episode illustrates some of the kinds of difficulty encountered when researching in a prison (Bosworth et al., 2005; Castellano, 2007; Hart, 1995; Jewkes, 2012; King & Liebling, 2008; Liebling, 1999; 2001;
Incredibly, my first appointment with Jonathan at the East Perth “lock-up” clashed with that of his lawyer, so I had to return on another day – the interview took place on the sixth attempt!

The stumbling blocks encountered in prison research may be part of the reason ethnographic research in prisons has been “in eclipse in recent decades” (Wacquant, 2013, p.371) in most parts of the world.

One misgiving in respect of interviews with prisoners was that most interviewees considered that participation in this research would win them favourable consideration for parole. The more I informed participants that this was not so, the less they believed me.

Another misgiving I had was that some might have considered participation in the interviews inside Acacia Prison to be compulsory. My reason for thinking this was that most other activities in a prison environment are indeed compulsory. However, from the relaxed atmosphere of almost all of my interviews with prisoners, I had to assume (a) that with most of the prisoners involved, this was not the case, and (b) that, if it was the case for some of them, this wrong belief did not greatly affect the interviews. The follow-up interviews six weeks after release were not, of course, perceived by anyone as compulsory.

Once again, I was concerned at the power differential between myself and the prison inmates being interviewed. This is an especially critical factor in a prison for, as Liebling (2011, p.546) notes, “Prisons constitute a ‘special case’ of the use of power”. Some of the prisoners interviewed were members of the focus groups involved in this research, so this was not a problem for them. However, most were not. The fact that these interviews were unstructured assisted greatly in overcoming this potential problem. This kind of interview is far less likely to be paternalistic than a structured interview might become, and a more equal relationship can develop between the interviewer and respondent. It can help avoid what Reinhartz (as cited in Punch, 1998, p.179) calls “the hierarchical pitfall”. Punch (1998, p.179) adds that it enables “greater openness and insight, a greater range of responses, and richer data”.

A further consideration I had when approaching unstructured interviews with
prisoners was my extensive experience of interviews which were similar but with differing aims. I deal with this matter later in this chapter.

**Interviewing people whom I already know**

As I prepared for my first batch of interviews, it occurred to me that all persons being interviewed in this research project would be people whom I know – most of them people I know well. This would have advantages as well as disadvantages. The great advantage in knowing the interviewees would be that I would be aware of their interests and outlook, so I would have a good idea of the kinds of questions to ask each one. The attendant disadvantage would be that, by tailoring the questions (and topics?) in this way, I might also be influencing their responses. I decided that, in order to counter this potential problem, I would ask a number of what Spradley (1979, p.62) calls “grand-tour questions” or “descriptive questions” – O'Reilly (2005, p.116) calls them “open ended questions” – which allow the interviewee plenty of room to think and to prepare an answer. In the event, this gave them the opportunity to decide which direction the interview would go. It was only after this that I asked more specific, “mini-tour” questions (Spradley, 1979, p.88).

I believe that this stratagem was largely successful. My reason for thinking this was the way in which topics raised in the interviews, and opinions expressed, constantly surprised me. These were not topics and opinions that I had “fed” to my interviewees. Here are two examples:

- Hugo was my first prisoner interviewed in this study, shortly before his release. He said that he was not a believer, but that he attended bible studies and some services because the chapel was the only place in the prison where he felt safe. He felt physically safe there, and he knew that, whatever he said in the chapel area, he would be really listened to. This was not something I’d thought to ask him about, and was far from the forefront of my mind.

- I interviewed another man – Jonathan - while he was still in the prison system, then a few months after his release. Even though he had family and church support, and no financial problems, he had found the going immensely tough. He had great difficulty in adjusting to family life and to
life in the wider community. He said he had very nearly committed suicide. This was the last thing I expected from Jonathan, who had always appeared to me to be stable and somewhat predictable. I was shocked and, because of this, I incorporated a question about suicide in almost every later interview with a prisoner or group of prisoners.

_Frankness_

Angrosino (2004) was reporting on his research in a monastery. He reflects that in “total institutions” (Goffman, 1961, p.18) many residents have let go, or had taken from them, almost everything except their private thoughts. He observes that this may be the reason the respondents in his study were not frank in their responses. Coggeshall (2004) and Schlosser (2008), in their research projects in prison environments, both found inmates similarly reluctant to share their private thoughts. In addition, Novek & Sanford (2004, p.23) report that they experienced a “lack of candour” when interviewing women prisoners. I wondered whether this might be so for me in this study. However my own experience was quite the opposite. I believe that most prisoners are so unfamiliar with the experience of being treated as a person that, if you are prepared to spend time with a prison inmate, and really listen, he is likely to be very responsive (Sutton, 2011; Waldram, 2009).

_Unstructured post-release interviews_

The unstructured interviews with prisoners post-release did not happen quite as scheduled. As previously indicated, I planned to interview 12 members of the Acacia faith community prior to their release from prison, then six weeks post-release. This was a small sample, but I hoped it would provide some understanding of the development of spiritual capital. I chose an interval as brief as six weeks because, if I waited longer, so many other influences would crowd into their life that it would be difficult to interpret the data meaningfully.

In the event, one of the twelve was released with little warning, sooner than he expected. I interviewed him outside the prison, in the place he was staying, instead. Of the other eleven,
• 1 was not released, but was sent to a maximum security prison because of former offences;
• 1 was under the influence of cocaine at the time the interview would have taken place;
• 2 gave me telephone numbers, but did not return my calls;
• 3 promised to telephone me, but never did;
• 1 was re-arrested quite soon after his release (and I re-interviewed him before his next release from Acacia).

I interviewed four persons whom I had previously interviewed in prison. Two of these interviews were in the wider community, and one was in Acacia after the man had broken the conditions of his bail and been re-arrested. In addition, I interviewed one former prisoner who had been released four years earlier. He had been in prison for eleven years. Although it had been a relatively long time since his release to the wider community, he had been central to the Acacia faith community, and his reflections were very fresh. It was a very emotional interview. This interview added unexpected depth to the data. So, for example, he spoke of the completely changed relationship with his family:

…my son and my daughter were 21 and 23, so whilst they were mature adults, they were very young. Of course, coming out, they’re now 36 and 38.

Before he went into prison, he was head of the household. Now he is “renting a space”:

Not like before I went in: I owned the house, they lived under my roof. Now
I’m living under their roof.

At the same time, he spoke warmly of their acceptance and of their forgiveness.

One of the two Acacia chaplains-in-training offered to arrange a barbecue to which he would invite a number of recently released men who had been active in the Acacia faith community. The idea was that by this means I could conduct focus groups and obtain the kind of data I had hoped to receive. However, it rained on the day the barbecue was scheduled. Only two former prisoners I had not previously interviewed in Acacia arrived at the barbecue. I interviewed them together.
Unstructured interviews with three Acacia chaplains and two “chaplaincy volunteer helpers”

At the time of the interviews, I had worked closely with the three Acacia chaplains for more than eight years. All three were part-time in Acacia – one for two days per week, the other two for one day a week each. I respect them highly as colleagues, and they are my friends. At the time of their interviews, the two chaplains-in-training had been working in the prison two days a week each, for two years and four years respectively. By that time, they too were very much part of the chaplaincy team. Colic-Peisker (2004) decided to leave people she knew intimately out of her samples, as she believed it would be too hard to eliminate the “backstage data” (Colic-Peisker, 2004, p.84) she had obtained as a friend. However, I decided not to follow suit, because they are integral parts of the Acacia community of faith. In an attempt to deal with “backstage” data in this thesis, I have restricted quotes from members of the chaplaincy team to what they have said in their interviews, and I have mostly limited comments I have made about them to matters which are public knowledge in the prison. Even so, I acknowledge that they might not have responded to my questions in the way that they did if I had not been their friend and colleague.

I recorded the various interviews and took careful notes. I offered to show those notes to my respective colleagues, with the intention of giving them the option of altering any reference to them or to their opinions that they wished. All three said that they did not need to do so.

Unstructured interviews with three chaplains of prisons other than Acacia

I had hoped to interview the co-ordinating chaplains of the six metropolitan area prisons and one major country prison. One lady was co-ordinating chaplain of both WA women’s prisons, so this meant that I was planning to conduct six interviews.

All six persons initially agreed to be involved in this way. However, one was not available because he was preparing to retire and emigrate, and two other interviews just didn’t happen. Nevertheless, the three interviews that took place were enlightening and enjoyable. They helped to place my Acacia research in a wider context.
Unstructured interview with me personally

Near the beginning of my interview journey, I asked one of our two chaplains-in-training to interview me. I gave her an “interview guide or plan” (O’Reilly, 2005, p.116), and asked her to use this or ignore it as she thought best.

I found my own interview disappointing, in a number of ways. The first of these was that I truly believed I would be wiser and more perceptive than I turned out to be in this session. The second was that in several instances, and without realising it, the interviewer cut my answer short when I was “warming up” for a considered and more lengthy response. This is not to say that she was a poor interviewer. On the contrary, she showed much more than average skill and in fact caused me to think deeply on several matters. Even so, this was a real factor in the interview.

It occurred to me to wonder how many would feel disappointed after interviews conducted by me. I really wanted to know what they think and feel, and I want them to benefit by co-operating with me in this research. And I wanted them to know how much they were assisting my research by their active participation. It seemed to me, once again, that in these interviews I must give real attention to asking “grand-tour questions” (Spradley, 1979, p.62). Also that I must be sure to concentrate on active listening.

I expected that the unstructured interviews would complement the on-going participant observation in a number of ways:

1. Whilst observing various events and activities would give me an idea of what is happening, and of its social setting, the interviews would provide explanations and opinions.
2. Observation would give an excellent idea of the present, but not of the past or the future. This could be supplied through the interviews.
3. The interviews would provide opportunity to join with the respondent in construction of meaning.

Ethical considerations in this research

Some of the main ethical issues in connection with this research arose from the nature of the institution and the status of most persons involved in the study.
Almost all the research was done in Acacia Prison, and most people involved in the study were inmates. Because of their status as prisoners, these men generally lack the power to make decisions about their own lives (Sutton, 2011). Most prisoners have low self-esteem. Not only this, but they may perceive me, as researcher and as senior chaplain, to be a person of authority. I have an office in the prison, and I wear a radio and a duress alarm. Some probably participated in order to be considered favourably for parole, or partly for that reason. I am fairly sure that, when I told people that participation in this project would not help with parole, not everyone believed me.

The follow-up interviews were planned for six weeks after release from Acacia into the wider community. As outlined elsewhere, this plan could not be followed in every instance. However I expected that many of these men would be at a low ebb. The period immediately release from prison is a notoriously stressful time for most (e.g., Bosworth, Campbell & Demby et al., 2005; Ogilvie, 2001). In short, I was aware that research can be conducted in ways that can cause harm to participants (Dudley, 2005, p.38).

I expected to be working with vulnerable people and, at times, dealing with sensitive and intimate matters. Kinner, Forsyth & Williams (2013, p.47) refer to prisoners and ex-prisoners as “this profoundly marginalized population”. Because of this, I considered it important to apply the following conditions:

a. That all participants would be involved on the basis of voluntary, informed consent;

b. That, wherever possible, participants be involved in decision-making prior to and during the data gathering process;

c. That the research strategy be rigorously adhered to.

Bryman (2008, p.128) speaks of “ethics codes” for social research. I am sure that these are very useful. They impose boundaries and prevent some of the more outrageous research practices. Yet I believe they are not enough. Tobin (as cited in Harries, 2001, p.3) says this:

Ethics is about doing the right thing and – more importantly – about being the kind of person who can be relied on to do the right thing.
Tobin then presents what she sees as the risks of rule-governed ethics. She considers them seriously flawed, because they assume a simplicity which is seriously deceptive:

…they pay little attention to the moral significance of particular relationships.

Similarly, Bryman (2008, p.128) speaks of “marginal areas of ethical decision making”. Batchelor & Briggs (as cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p.42) tell us that the researcher should ensure that the study be handled in a way “which is respectful of the human rights and needs of the participants”.

O’Reilly (2005, p.63) writes,

Ultimately, there are no easy answers, but ethics is about trying to ensure that you cause as little pain or harm as possible and try to be aware of your effects on the participants and on your data.

In the unstructured interviews with prisoners, there were many examples of this. When these men spoke of their struggles with addiction, and with feelings of helplessness, it was important to really listen and to honour their confidences. In addition, it was vital that I give them the opportunity to have personal details erased from the taped recordings of the interviews, as well as from any data already included in my notes or in this thesis.

Ethics committees

Bryman (2008, p.117) writes of gaining authorisation from “an ethics committee of your university or college”, while Liamputtong & Ezzy (2005, p.41) write that

…ethics and political aspects must be addressed procedurally. This involves obtaining ethical approval from the various organizational bodies that may have jurisdiction over the particular research project.
In my case, such authorisation was required from ethics committees attached to the University of Western Australia and to the Department of Corrective Services, as well as permission from Serco, the company responsible for the day-to-day running of Acacia Prison.

The University ethics committee were very prompt. After a few questions for clarification, they gave their “tick of approval”. The Department of Corrective Services research committee took only a few months longer. However it was not until two years later that Serco gave written authorisation for me to conduct research in the prison. I think it unlikely that the delay was for reasons related to ethics, because the responsible persons did not request any alteration to the research proposal. In addition, Serco asked no questions about what I intended to do.

Consent - explanation

O’Reilly (2005, p.62) tells us that consent is “one of the most difficult issues”. And I am forced to agree that it is a complicated area.

It seemed to me that the first and most important thing to do was to explain what I was doing, and why. But even this was not without its complications. Some participants didn’t understand my explanations. Some did not understand straight away what “observe” means, or why I was doing it, and most were unsure about what a PhD might be. When observing sessions of STP, it was easy to understand that part of my reason for undertaking the study was that we might “do things better.”

It was easier when conducting unstructured interviews. Quite often, when a topic became sensitive or personal, I would say to a prisoner-interviewee, “Are you sure want to keep this in the interview record, or would you like me to wipe it off the tape?” On one occasion I said this to Albert, a man who had just told me, I came within a hair’s breadth of topping myself, Alan, I really did. It was only my faith that stopped me from doing it.

After I’d asked him whether he was sure he wanted to keep this on the record, he said, That’s all right – you’re changing my name anyway, aren’t you?
O’Reilly (2005, p.63) says that

Sometimes all you can do is reaffirm consent and its limits as you go along, especially when participants are sharing intimate or private details with you.

**Consent forms**

I gave each potential participant an information sheet concerning my research (Mertens, 1998), and a consent form (Mertens, 1998). There were two kinds of consent form:

1. An “Information Sheet and Consent Form”, which was designed by me and approved by the ethics committee of the University of Western Australia and the research committee of the Department of Corrective Services, was issued to every participant in this research. See “Appendix B” to this thesis.

2. Some time later, the research committee of the Department of Corrective Services directed that I send a second consent form, worded by their committee, to every person interviewed who was not a prisoner. See “Appendix C”.

Before asking each person to sign the first of these consent forms, I explained the nature of the research and explained the items listed in the information sheet. I emphasised that it was not compulsory either to sign the form or to take any part in the project. I explained that, in my thesis, I would not quote or refer to any person who opted not to sign the consent form. I always added that if any persons had “second thoughts” about taking part, I would willingly shred the forms they had signed and omit any data already inserted.

Colic-Peisker (2004, p.88) writes that

The need to collect signed consent forms often undermined my insider status.

This was not my experience. Most prisoners who signed these forms did so with good humour, then seemed quite unaffected for having done so. Some of them thought it was hilarious. However, it must be added that there were very often a few who didn’t sign. I assume that some of these simply forgot to do so, but I surmise that others may have thought that at last here was a voluntary choice in which they would not be punished for non-compliance! Whatever the reason, I exercised care not to quote or refer to any individual who had not signed a consent form.
I was concerned that a number of men whom I knew could not read might react negatively to the whole idea of signing a consent form. I took special care on those occasions to see that my explanation of the study was clear to them. In all instances I noticed that the men were able to sign their names, and were glad to do so.

**Considerations of power inequities**

Forsey (2004, p.69) draws our attention to “the complex array of power that exists in any social setting.”

And Harries (2001, pp.4-5) has this to say:

> There are at least two important matters here:
> 1. We need to be clear that there are a number of unequal power relationships in any research endeavour
> 2. We need to understand that to deny this inequality is probably as suspect as overt abuse of it.

As previously mentioned, most members of the Acacia community of faith are inmates of the prison. As such, they have very few choices available to them. It was important that I bore in mind that, to a very large extent, they are powerless and vulnerable. My intention was not only not to do harm, but rather to provide positive results that would benefit participants. I address this matter of benefit to prisoner-participants elsewhere in the thesis.

**Confidentiality**

In this study, the matter of confidentiality is complicated, in that there must be differing levels of confidentiality in the reporting. Specifically, there are varying levels for chaplains, and for the prisoners.

Because of the particularity of this study, I could see no realistic way of disguising the fact that it is situated in Acacia Prison. It is identifiably the largest prison in WA, and the fact Acacia is a privately run correctional institution is an integral aspect of this thesis. Moreover, it is the only medium-security prison in WA. I have changed the names of the chaplains, but any person familiar with the prison would recognise each one. For example, Boadicea is the only woman chaplain in the prison, and Paul is the only former offender who has ever served as a prison
chaplain or associate chaplain in this state. Both of these persons affected the community of faith in very significant ways, and this matter is discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

At one point during the research, I interviewed three co-ordinating chaplains of other prisons. In this thesis I have altered their names. I think it likely that only those who already know the WA prison system well would recognise them in this work. All of these issues were discussed with the people involved, before they signed the consent forms as well as after the interviews were completed.

In this respect, the prisoners are in a different category. By changing their names, and by altering or omitting any other readily identifiable data, confidentiality can and has been maintained.

In accord with university policy, interview tapes and notes associated with this research will be kept in a secure place for five years, then destroyed.

**Reporting**

The nature of research by participant observation requires that the researcher goes out into the field, forming relationships. He or she then reports on it in an entirely different context. Burbank (1994) reminds us that there has long been an undertone of worry about the kind of things fieldworkers do in the process of such observation. Words like “colonisation” and “exploitation” are juxtaposed with the words “fieldwork”, “ethnography” and “participant observation”. Stacey (1988, as cited in Burbank, 1994, p.11) sums up her mistrust of this kind of research endeavour when she writes,

> I find myself wondering whether the appearance of greater respect for and equality with research subjects in the ethnographic approach makes a deeper, more dangerous exploitation.

and:

> Precisely because ethnographic research depends upon human relationship, engagement and attachment, it places research subjects at great risk of manipulation and betrayal by the researcher.

(as cited in Burbank, 1994, pp.11-12)
Stacey is here finding two kinds of conflict: the conflict between the ethnographer as related person (i.e. “participant”) and as exploiting researcher (i.e. “observer”), and the clash between fieldwork practice and research report. She illustrates her point about the “exploitative” nature of participant observation by being both a “friend” and a “researcher” on the death of a key informant. She is uncomfortably aware that “the funeral and grieving process [would] serve as a further research opportunity” (as cited in Burbank, 1994, p.12).

Stacey’s misgivings spring from her perception that “research” is in opposition to “relationship” and is therefore inherently inhuman – also that the researcher is “using” the persons observed and “is thereby turning subjects into objects.” I believe that a social researcher must always actively pursue the welfare of participants in her/his research.

I consider that “research” and “relationship” need not be in opposition to each other. I further consider that the persons being observed are by no means passive objects without power. Burbank (1994) says that the persons in her research were neither of these, because (a) she made it a pleasant experience for them, and (b) she paid them for their involvement. In my own research they were not paid, but many of the persons involved were active participants through membership of focus groups. Indeed, the initial intent was that it was their research as well as mine, in line with the methodology of PAR. In addition, the fact that a significant number of prisoners opted not to sign a consent form, and not to be part of this research, indicated that those who participated chose freely to do so.

Colic-Peisker (2004, p.89) wrestles with the same apparent dichotomy of “relationship-versus-research”, and adds,

This human attachment, rather than just engagement in “role playing,” made the inevitable retreat from the research field akin to betrayal, and the research itself akin to manipulation.

Woolcott (as cited in Liebling, 1999, p.167) says that leave-taking is something of an unrecognised art:

It has been pointed out that with sexual liaisons, getting out of bed gracefully requires more art than getting in it. I think there is an apt parallel with getting
out of the field, especially after we work energetically to create the image of researchers so deeply interested and sympathetic.

In the instance of this present research, I did not leave the “field”, and the relationships were able to continue.

**In researching the Acacia community of faith, what difference did it make that I am its co-ordinating chaplain?**

**Familiarity with the research field**

Carter (1996) has some advice for persons setting out upon a project of participant observation. So, for example, he writes (p.105) that

> Because of the nature of ethnography, it requires long term immersion in the “field” of operation. Although times vary according to the resources, setting and subject matter it is recommended that the researcher should have regular or daily contact with the research population for six to ten months….

(see also Liebling, 1999)

As co-ordinating chaplain of Acacia, which in this instance is the “field of operation”, I had no need of a period of familiarisation. For a similar reason, there was far less need than there would have been for what O'Reilly (2009) calls “mapping”.

- She writes about **physical mapping**, that “You may be greatly hindered later if you can’t find your way round in the suburb being studied or the corridors of companies where you are interviewing.”
- O'Reilly says that **social and cultural mapping** will be more complicated, and could take much longer, “…getting knowledge and gaining acceptance, finding proposed research contacts, and becoming familiar with the behavior and language of those you wish to research.”

I have been a leading member of the Acacia faith community from its very beginning, and part of the Acacia Prison environment from before the first prisoners arrived – 11½ years ago. By the time I was authorised to begin researching in the prison, I had already been ministering in it for 6½ years. I know my way through every part of the facility, and I am known by management, staff and many of the inmates. Clearly, “physical mapping” was not necessary for me.
So, then, my knowledge of Acacia Prison, and of its community of faith, is thorough and extensive. Yet it’s probably important to add that this knowledge is the meaning I have made of this environment in my role as a chaplain. My knowledge would have been different if I had approached it in a different role – say, that of a prison officer or a prisoner or a psychologist. In part, my choice of PAR was an attempt to expand my horizons. By collaborating with prisoners in this research, and by interviewing prisoners as well as colleagues, I have tried to catch a glimpse of the Acacia Prison faith community from the perspective of people who are in quite different roles from my own. Through this process, I hoped to grow as a person, and to change.

In a similar kind of way observer training, considered by Sarantakos (1998) to be “important” and “very useful”, was to a very large extent superfluous for me. In retrospect, I would say that, although I had to learn through practice how to be a researcher, formal training was not possible or practical in the present study. It is worth reflecting that, because I am a chaplain in the prison, I already possessed most or all of the characteristics which he writes would or could be acquired through such training:

- thorough understanding of the research topic;
- knowledge of the peculiarities of the population;
- familiarity with the categories… and their effective use;
- [familiarity with] ways of overcoming unexpected problems and conflicts;
- adaptability and flexibility;
- ability to observe several subjects and categories at the same time.

In short, the present study takes the nature of “insider research”. I have not been a stranger coming in from outside to investigate a strange environment. Rather, I am an already established member of the body of Christ in Acacia, undertaking collaborative research in order to better understand the workings of the same faith community. Insider research carries with it some enormous advantages in many areas of social research. Carter (1996, p.105) tells us that

A good [participant] researcher will be able to gain access to the research group, reaching into the emotional heart of that culture, examining and experiencing many issues which are extremely sensitive and at times heart rending.
It may be that insider research is a means that is particularly suited to matters related to faith. Clear et al. (2000) remind us that religion very often deals with a mystery that is not easily observable, namely a deeply personal experience of the spirit. They add that religion is also a group phenomenon. Skotnicki (2002, p.194) says that

...one must enter in some committed way into a community of faith in order to gain accurate insights into what transpires there...

and he adds:

Much of the literature on religion and deviance reveals a caricature, or anecdotal understanding of religious involvement and, as such, provides no real help in exploring this complex and potentially fruitful area of study.

It seems to me that the culture of a prison is different from anywhere else (Crewe, 2006; Farmer, 2014; Johnstone, 2007b; O’Brien, 2001a; Thomas & Zaitzow, 2007; Van Ness, 2007; Workman, 2005). So too its use of language, and these are things that are learned subconsciously through participation over a lengthy period. Without this kind of familiarisation, quite important subtleties of meaning will be lost. As chaplain in a medium security prison, I wear a radio and duress alarm, and carry a bunch of keys. I am there nearly every day, but I go home at night. For these reasons, I can never be fully part of the prison culture, or at least not of that part of prison culture which belongs to the prisoners. Nevertheless, because I am a chaplain, prisoners afford me the immense privilege of inviting me into their lives at critical times for them. For example, many of them tell me their story, or parts of it, at the birth of their first child or when their father is dying or their mother has been raped. Sometimes they come to my office and talk about nothing in particular. And they do this because they know that a chaplain won’t repeat what they say, or because they sense that chaplains are interested in things that matter. Or perhaps they tell me their story because they know that I will listen. What I’m attempting to say is that, although I am not fully part of the prisoner-culture in Acacia, through the generosity of many prisoners I am a kind of “honorary participant”. I believe this has helped me greatly in my research. It is a privilege, but it’s a privilege I’ve had to be careful not to abuse. My main way of guarding against this has been to be very open about my research and the reasons for it. I have spoken frequently about it at chapel services, in focus
groups and in programmes, and with individuals. Almost all have been extremely positive about it. On the very rare occasions on which individuals have expressed any unease or doubt, (a) I have asked them to please refrain from signing the consent form, and (b) I have assured them that I would neither mention them nor quote them in my thesis.

“enough distance”

All of this brought into sharp focus some of the special features of research within one’s own environment. It is clear that I am researching a faith community of which I am a leading member. Other members of the community of faith were acting as co-researchers, particularly in the focus groups. In a sense, I was researching my own work, and researching my research. This had huge advantages as well as some disadvantages. I was reminded of comments by Colic-Peisker (2004, p.83), who found herself in a similar situation:

My choice of research topic [for my PhD] made sense: I was an “insider” and had pre-existing networks and contacts.

However, she adds that

The experience of doing research, as a sociologist-ethnographer [within this situation] brought satisfaction as well as awkwardness, advantages as well as pitfalls…

(Colic-Peisker, 2004, p.83)

Abu-Lughod (1991, p.139) wrestles with “…the conviction that one cannot be objective about one’s own society…”, and adds,

The problem with studying one’s own society is the problem of gaining enough distance…

Colic-Peisker and Abu-Lughod were researching amongst immigrant people of their respective national origins. My research situation was similar in that I am part of the Acacia community of faith yet, as researcher, was observing this community of which I am a member. However it is possible that the matter of “gaining enough distance” may have been more of a challenge for me than for either of these researchers.
I have interviewed a range of prisoners, and have systematically observed their interaction on the faith community. Yet, because of my role as chaplain, I know them personally, often at a very deep level. I know something of their respective journeys. I know of their family situations, if they have any, and I know of their hopes and fears. In some instances, I have spoken with family members.

Then, of course, there are the chaplains whom I’ve interviewed. These are men and women I have prayed for at least once a day for 11½ years. I have worked with them, argued with them and rejoiced with them. I am committed to them. Under these circumstances, how was I to gain “enough distance” to make real observations and valid comments? I have approached this question from a number of perspectives.

The first is to acknowledge that this is not necessarily a bad thing. As not only researcher but also a member of the faith community I have been researching, it has been necessary to explore my role. It is true to say that my study report is autobiographical, at least in part. Colic-Peisker (2004) points to the danger that research such as hers – or mine – could become an opportunity for navel-gazing. She suggests that the researcher could become too self-absorbed. I accept this. Yet it is also true that, in effect, my experience is a significant portion of the data in my study. It is a tool rather than simply a source of bias.

Second is to realize that much of this is probably true for all kinds of participant observation, and perhaps for most kinds of social research. Fischer and Wertz (2002, p.276) point out that

…just as we participate in our daily affairs, shaping them as well as being shaped by them, so as researchers we contribute to the shape of what we discover.

What they say next is particularly relevant in this context:

Objectivity is best served when we acknowledge our contribution to the form of our findings, encouraging others to approximate our perspective and see for themselves what appears.

(Fisher & Wertz, 2002, p.276)
Interviews with my fellow chaplains

As I prepared for interviews with my Acacia chaplaincy colleagues, I was keenly aware that I know them well. I wondered what kinds of challenges this would pose. However, it was not a problem at all. None of them required much prompting from me, and they spoke from widely differing perspectives. So, for example, Boadicea spoke mainly of the way in which her Acacia experience had impinged upon her understanding of love and of God. Paul had spent 20 years of his life going in and out of prison as an offender before coming to faith in Christ and enrolling in a bible college. He spoke movingly of his struggles and his triumphs, and was grateful that I had listened to him. Seth spoke from a depth of spirituality and from profound experience of chaplaincy in various prisons. Perhaps their readiness to speak with such frankness, and at depth, arose in part from the fact that the person conducting the interviews was also a chaplain.

I expected that interviews with co-ordinating chaplains of other prisons would pose various problems. This turned out not to be the case either, and I’m unsure whether this was because of my skill or their generosity. I suspect that the latter is more likely, though it may simply be that each of them had something to say and wanted to say it.

I have been a prison chaplain for longer than any of them, and some of what we have been doing in the Acacia chaplaincy department has been seen by some of the chaplains in other WA prisons as unusual and innovative. Examples include (a) STP, and the “Kairos” programme, (b) introduction of trainee chaplains, and (c) chaplaincy performance which is accountable to DCS. At meetings of the Prison Chaplains’ Association of WA, whenever I’ve spoken of any project in Acacia, a lady called Juliet, who is co-ordinating chaplain of one of the other prisons has always said, “Of course, we are not full-time, and we’re not in a private prison!” There is truth in this statement. I am greatly privileged, and it’s not unreasonable to expect more from chaplaincy in Acacia than in other WA prisons. Yet I feared that what I saw as a “chip-on-the shoulder” attitude might adversely affect some of the interviews. However it was not evident at all. What I wanted was to hear about was the creation and maintaining of faith communities in different prisons from Acacia. The chaplains I interviewed have spoken freely and openly about this. They have told me of their achievements, their difficulties
and their hopes for the future. This may not help in answering my research question, but it has certainly assisted me to place the findings of my Acacia research in a broader context.

My interview with Juliet was a case in point. I emailed, asking where she would like to meet, and the place she suggested turned out to be her favourite coffee house. It was almost deserted, and Juliet took what appeared to be her accustomed spot, far away from the entrance. She turned out to be a competent professional with a clear overview of the prison scene. She was delighted to be interviewed, and I think that she appreciated having her opinions taken seriously. I felt privileged that she had shared views with me that had been won through years of experience.

Another surprising interview was with Quincy, co-ordinating chaplain of one of our two metropolitan area minimum security prisons. Quincy was relatively new to this position. However he is an experienced former pastor of a parish, highly intelligent and a quick learner. Before I had even turned on the tape recorder Quincy said to me, “I’m so glad that you’ve come, because I want to hear from you different models of chaplaincy.” I remember thinking, “There goes any control of this interview I might have had…” At the same time, I was reminded of O’Reilly (2005, p.116) who, when comparing the “structured interview” with the “unstructured interview”, said that it is more free-flowing, and that it is more like a conversation than an interview.

Minute by minute, my interview with Quincy was becoming less like an interview and more like a conversation. I felt that Bryman (2008) would disapprove. He refers to “almost totally unstructured interviews” (p.438, italics in original), partly because the ethnographic interview is, or it should be, a conversation with a specific intention, to assist in answering the research question. In fairness to myself as researcher, I should probably reiterate that my interviews with co-ordinating chaplains of other prisons were not intended to be or become a central part of the research. My intention was that they would throw light upon the workings of faith communities in prisons, thereby perhaps assisting me to see the research question more clearly. It follows, I think, that I was not 100% certain what I hoped would arise from these interviews, or what direction I thought they might take. It is certainly clear that, in this wide-ranging interview, we eventually
covered most items in my *aide memoir*, but we did more than this. Punch (1998, p.179) suggests that researcher and researched become co-creators of data (Kvale, 1996, p.226), and I think that Quincy and I did this in a number of areas. One of these was as we looked at the whole concept of chaplains-in-training. Another was that we discussed chaplaincy-sponsored programmes and activities. Until recently Quincy’s prison had held a full complement of less than 200 prisoners. However, with recent overcrowding this number has almost trebled. Quincy said that “…of course, prayer and scripture are at the centre” of all of our programmes, and he added:

My desire is to get a critical mass… like there is at Acacia, whereby activities are going on…

I thought to myself, “How interesting! Quincy doesn’t believe for a moment that overcrowded prisons are good. But some of the many blessings at Acacia might not have been possible without at least moderately large numbers….” Perhaps unfairly, it also occurred to me that the “critical mass” Quincy spoke of had already been reached in the prison where he served as chaplain.

**My experience in counselling**

A further consideration I had when approaching unstructured interviews with prisoners was my extensive experience of interviews which were similar but with differing aims. For more than forty years, as parish priest and as prison chaplain, I have conducted interviews in which people have told me their stories. However in almost every instance it has been *in order that* they be enabled to take the next step, or so that they can decide for or against taking a new direction, or whatever. In other words, the interview has been a means to an end. In the interviews in this study, although I hoped that that their stories would throw light upon the research question, in fact I simply wanted to hear their story. I wanted to know what meanings they were creating from the Acacia community of faith and the spiritual capital. Before the interviews began, I wondered (a) whether I might overstep the mark, through sheer force of habit or for some other reason, and (b) whether some of the prisoners might begin to confide in me as their chaplain instead of tell me their story as to a researcher.
A simple but frequent example of a “chaplaincy interview” would be when I am called to speak with a prisoner whose mother or father has died. My aim in such a session is to give the man an opportunity to speak of his feelings, or of his helplessness as a prisoner in these circumstances, or to tell me about the person who has died – in effect, to help him to grieve, if he wishes to do so. It may be that I can assist in some practical way as well, perhaps by writing a letter on his behalf - a vital matter for some Indigenous prisoners who cannot write, and who tell me they may later be punished for not attending the funeral – or by arranging a memorial service. However the main point of the interview is to enable the prisoner to be in charge of his own life at this critical time, and perhaps to reassure him that someone cares.

Of course, people come to me from time to time with specific questions. Yet, even here, specific answers are not always the appropriate response. An example of this was Benedict, who came to me recently asking which gospel was written first. I could have said “St. Mark’s Gospel”, and gone back to what I was doing on the computer. But it seemed to me that the interesting point about Benedict’s question might be why he was asking it. This turned out to be the case. When I asked him, he said he was a fairly new Christian and wanted to know more about the bible. This led to a series of conversations with me and with one of the other chaplains, covering such topics as what is a gospel, how they were compiled and why, reasons for reading them today, and how best to do so.

So then, my chaplaincy interviews are for the most part unstructured interviews with the aim of assisting powerless people to take charge of their own lives. Paradoxically, I believe that, ultimately, this is achieved as a person draws upon the God within them. The interviews in my research project are likewise unstructured, yet their aim is different. I hoped that their stories would throw light upon my research question. I expected that some of the stories I hear may be the same, but I asked the questions because I wanted to know the meanings they were creating from the Acacia community of faith, and the spiritual capital. It occurred to me that I would need to maintain more of a “distance” in my research interviews than was my usual custom in chaplaincy counselling. I decided that, if I felt that the latter was occurring, I would ask the interviewee whether he wished that part of the interview to be included in the record. I was reminded of the comment of Angrosino (2004, p.29) that
On the face of it, an ethnographer conducting an interview by recording the supposedly innermost thoughts of people for posterity would seem to be cast in the role of an invader of privacy…

There were two interviews with prisoners where I felt that what the interviewee was saying was so personal that I needed to intervene. I thought it possible that both men were speaking to me as chaplain rather than as researcher. In each instance, the person involved was talking about a situation that was so extreme that he had come very close to suicide. One of these men had attempted this seriously on several occasions. The other is Albert, whom I have already mentioned. In each interview I stopped and said, “Are you sure you want this included in the record…”, and each participant assured me it was okay to keep it in. It is not possible to know how much of this response was due to the fact that all of the prisoner-participants in these interviews already knew me as chaplain, and that a level of trust had already been built.

Unexpectedly, the matter came up in a more crucial way in two interviews with chaplains. The first of these was with Bradley, a chaplain who had been ministering in Acacia for more than 8 years at the time of the interview. Bradley had acted as facilitator and co-facilitator for STP in two other prisons, and I had heard glowing reports of the quality of his work in that capacity. In the interview, he spoke warmly of a handbook issued by a Texan prison programme called “Bridges to Life”. He said how helpful it was to be able to hand this out to every STP participant at the beginning of the course.

I laughed and said, “Isn’t that interesting! I couldn’t disagree more…” When he asked why, I gave three reasons: (1) That more than 30% of STP participants in Acacia couldn’t read, (2) That I preferred the STP topics to emerge from small group discussions rather than from a book which had been read beforehand, and (3) That the book drew its topics from scripture and was specifically Christian throughout, whereas some of the STP participants were Buddhist, Moslem or atheist, and many were of no specific faith group: I thought that the book was an imposition. Having said all this, I suddenly realised that I had not just stepped out of the role of researcher – I had leapt out of it. As it happened, this didn’t matter. Bradley told me why he thought the book was good, then we moved on to other topics in a really constructive fashion. Meanwhile, our conversation had reminded
me that STP is run differently in different places, and still works effectively. I had learned something about myself, too, that I needed to be more open to new data.

As I reflected upon this incident, I wondered why the interview had proceeded as it did, even after I had stepped out of the role I had cast for myself. Was it a testament to the relationship Bradley and I had established over the years? Or had he come with the intention of saying particular things, and said them anyway? Perhaps both were partly true.

I have already mentioned a second interview in which my role as researcher began to unravel. It was the interview with Quincy, co-ordinating chaplain of one of WA’s minimum security prisons. Before the interview began, he had already “flagged” that he had agreed to the interview in the hope of obtaining information from me. Accordingly, at various points along the line an observer might have been forgiven for wondering who was the interviewer and who was the interviewee. I found myself answering leading questions about chaplaincy-sponsored courses and about bible studies. But, as with my interview with Brad, it didn’t matter. Quincy and I were co-creators of data (Punch, 1998; Kvale, 1996), which presumably was the aim of the interview, and we finally covered most of the topics listed on my aide memoir.

Analysis of data

I used a card index system to analyse transcripts of 26 interviews and detailed notes on the remainder. Key words, phrases and themes kept recurring, and these are presented and discussed in Chapter 5. See Appendix A for an example of the way in which raw data was used in this study.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented and discussed the methodology employed and the methods used in this research. In Chapters 5-8 I present the data obtained by these means.

It is important to note once again that this study is an example of “insider research”, that it is a case study of a faith community of which I am a leading member. One of the implications of this is that my role, my attitudes and my approaches influence the community in significant ways and are therefore data.
That given, I have made every attempt to view the data in an objective fashion, by triangulation and by involving others in the research process as much as possible.
CHAPTER FOUR – “THE ACACIA COMMUNITY OF FAITH [1]”

Introduction

As indicated in Chapter 1, two smaller groupings “overlap” the Acacia community of faith. These are the temporary communities formed by STP and the “Kairos” short-course. This research consists of a case study of the community of faith. However STP is a major component of it. “Kairos”, whilst as influential in the prison environment as STP, is a community in itself (Burnside, 2008) that needs to be chronicled in this thesis.

Chapters 4 and 5 present a description of the Acacia faith community, including some mention of the chaplaincy-sponsored programme “Kairos”. Then Chapters 6 and 7 together form a “case study” of STP. Chapter 8 contains reflections about community, based upon data gathered in this research, and Chapter 9 discusses the way in which spiritual capital is developed by and within these three intertwined and over-lapping communities.

The importance (in Acacia Prison) of being a faith community

There is no doubt that, when I arrived at Acacia, creating and maintaining a community of faith in that place was an important priority for me. I think that this sense that a faith community is important has been “catching”. I think that to quite a large extent it is now shared by the chaplains, volunteers and prisoners who make up this community.

The Term Leadership Group (TLG)

In Chapter 1, I wrote briefly about the Term Leadership Group (TLG). This group is important for a number of reasons. One of these reasons is that its members have shown initiative and have achieved a great deal. In doing this, they have acted in a manner that it not generally expected of prisoners, and in doing so they have set an example for others in the faith community.

I mentioned in Chapter 1 that Acacia is known in some of the other WA prisons as “the programmes prison”. This is because of the large amount of group work done in the community of faith in Acacia Prison – in bible studies, chaplaincy-
sponsored programmes and courses, and in other activities. In a real sense, the example and activities of the TLG act as a focal point and catalyst for all this.

The TLG (see Chapter 1) consists of 6-to-8 volunteer prisoners. They meet approximately every two weeks, together with either one or two chaplains, to pray for the prison and to make significant decisions on behalf of the congregation. The original idea was that membership of the TLG would change over in its entirety at the end of each school semester. However we soon found that there was need for some continuity. It seemed important not to lose the vision of what can be done as a group. As well as this, each “generation” of prisoners has seen a value in passing on skills, techniques and ethical values to the next. As Baroness Lydia Dunn (2000) reminds us,

> A good leader is one who leaves behind women and men who possess the conviction and the will to carry on without them.

(as cited in Lawrence, 2004, p.216)

And Lawrence (2004, p.216) tells us that “There is no success without a successor.”

Membership of the Term Leadership Group has changed dramatically over the years. It has usually consisted mainly of Mainstream prisoners, though at times membership has been predominantly of men from Protection. Typically, when the majority of the TLG has been new and inexperienced, the group has been more inward-looking. However it has been a privilege to see this group increasingly looking beyond themselves to matters concerning the prison as a whole and/or the wider community.

I consider that their influence upon the Acacia community of faith has been enormous. The depth of fellowship they have established with each other has been infectious — it is “catching”. And the fact that these men are showing initiative, and making real decisions, makes a significant statement in the prison environment. Albert Schweitzer (as cited in Lawrence, 2004, p.220) was not overstating the case when he wrote that “Example is not the main thing in influencing others... it is the only thing.”

During the past 8½ years, the TLG has at times been very strong and courageous, such as in the setting up of a half-way house outside the prison
precincts. They have made extraordinary decisions which have affected not only the faith community but also the whole prison. I think, for example, of their agitation to have a “congratulations!” certificate included in a prisoner’s file following a negative drug test (see below for details). At other times, the group has been relatively stagnant, seeming to meet primarily for fellowship and reflection. Yet, even then, I believe that this group’s symbolic value has been considerable (Reicher, Haslam & Hopkins, 2005). Barker (1997, p.352) compares the leadership process to a river:

> Contained by its bed (the culture), it can be said to be flowing in one direction, yet, upon close examination, parts of it flow sideways, in circles, or even backwards relative to the overall direction.

He adds that it is always changing in speed and strength. Sometimes it is unified in direction, and powerful. At other times it may be weak or flowing in many directions at once.

**The seating in the chapel**

In the chapel services I lead, I try to arrange the seating so that it expresses a theological and sociological truth. I almost always have the seats in a circle, facing each other, in order to remind those present that we belong together as the body of Christ in this place, that we depend upon each other, and that we are equal in God’s sight.

For some, however, being seated in a circle can be confronting. The Sunday morning service is one of the few occasions on which Protection and Mainstream prisoners are allowed to be in the same room at the same time. In Australian prisons there is a rigid “pecking order” – one in which child sex offenders are looked down upon and despised by almost everyone else. Most people assume (wrongly, as it happens) that all Protection prisoners are sex offenders of some kind. For many prisoners, therefore, the first few attendances at chapel can be experiences of fear, hostility or both. Continued attendance typically results in friendships and reconciliation across huge barriers.

**The prisoners who attend services**

When Acacia Prison began, Senior Management argued strongly that there
should be separate services for Protection and Mainstream prisoners. Protection prisoners are those who are perceived to be at risk from of assault by others in the prison population. I argued strenuously against this proposition, on three grounds:

1. That, ever since colonial days, Protection and Mainstream prisoners had worshipped together at chapel services in WA prisons. There had never been a major incident recorded at such an event (interestingly, since that time the ruling in this respect has altered in Hakea Prison).
2. That, in my opinion, serious assaults in prisons were almost always traceable to poor relationship between staff and inmates. I believed that, in the new prison, that relationship would be better than in the other prisons, not worse. If Management insisted on separate services, what statement would they be making?
3. I added a third reason which I said should not influence their decision on a security matter, but which I had to make. It was that separate services would be a statement that some people are more forgiven than others, which is contrary to the gospel I preach.

My argument prevailed on this occasion. Up to this point, Protection and Mainstream prisoners worship together at Sunday services in Acacia. Some of the implications are discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

Programmes

One of the distinctive features of the Acacia faith community is the large range and number of bible studies and courses (or programmes) available to prisoners. I see this as a powerful statement that we belong together as the body of Christ. St. Paul writes that “…you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12.27).

In addition to this, the various courses have been an occasion of real growth. In one of my interviews with Chaplain Boadicea, she spoke about the way in which many prisoners had begun to “open up” and to trust one another:

I would say that the primary objective of every course I do is to allow people an environment to speak what is in their hearts.
Anders was a prisoner who experienced some major problems while he was in Acacia, particularly in relation to drugs. However for nearly a year he was given the responsibility of being the facilitator of a weekly bible study. He grew immensely as a human being through this experience, and he took part in a number of chapel-sponsored programmes. He had this to say:

I’ve matured – that's something I’ve taken from all the courses… I am very much more inclined now to listen, and to love and to respond to the very relationship [with God, with visitors and with members of the faith community] that we have been talking about.

In a post-release interview with a prisoner called Donald, I asked if he had found the courses in Acacia helpful. He said that

Every bit of it was helpful! Not only the courses, but we were together, it was good. But it was all of ‘em – all of ‘em! That's how you want to spend your time in there!

And he added,

When I was still at Acacia, I said then that I wanna keep those courses going when I get out. I’m doin’ ‘em now.

Gunnar – another prisoner - was speaking mainly of the programmes when he told me,

God doesn’t answer your prayers directly when you want him to, though he does answer them in such a manner that he teaches you what he wants you to learn at the time

and

I believe that God is a journey, you know, and that it’s a journey that builds your faith…

Over the years, we have presented a very large range of programmes in Acacia. Algernon, in my interview with him, commented that

There’s a wide range of course[s], but each one has its benefit.
The various categories of programmes which are available in the Acacia faith community are listed in figure 1. The Term Leadership Group have asked that all six categories be kept running in every medium-term schedule. They’ve acknowledged that need will be expressed from time to time for a specific course or kind of course – also that volunteers will sometimes step forward asking may they facilitate a particular “favourite”. However the TLG emphasise that all six kinds of course should always be borne in mind as we plan.

Algernon spoke about the programmes as well as bible studies offered in Acacia:

All of this has been a growth for me, and halleluia! It’s sparked in me a passion for God’s word…and understanding to take what’s…important. It’s the courses that are doing it.

Inmates have found almost all of the chaplaincy-sponsored programmes challenging in one way or another. So for example, Olaf says of the pastoral care course, “People Caring for People” that it “…really hit hard and made me think about m’self.”

Algernon, in my interview with him, commented that because of the programmes he finds himself asking more and more questions. He thinks this might be a healthy thing. He says he has noticed that “a lot of people… are starting to ask questions”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig. 1 Acacia Chapel Programmes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introductory or “general knowledge”</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>e.g., “Alpha”, “Count Me In!”, “Christianity Explained”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>“Discipling” – i.e., the next step</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g., “Growing in Christ”, “Dayspring” “A Life worth Living”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Courses addressing offending behaviour, from a faith perspective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g., “Celebrate Recovery”, “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP), “Breaking Out!”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Programmes assisting members of the congregation to minister</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g., “People Caring for People”, “Good Grief!”, training as facilitators of programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life-style</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g., “Keys to Change”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g., “Faith and Beyond”, “Music behind the Bars”, “My Father Has Died!”</td>
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“The Case for Christ” [was really interesting]. It proposed the case against Christ. A lot of people get something out of that, because a lot of people aren’t sure. “The Case for Faith” was another one…

Gareth is a well educated man with a churchgoing background. To his great surprise, however, he found “Alpha” to be a course that touched his heart (Curran, 2002; Race, 2006). It prompted him to dig deeper into himself and to explore and deepen his relationship with God. “And then I went to “Alpha”,” he said, “and that blew me away!”

Jimmy, a long-term prisoner with a reputation for violence, said in an interview, “I’m doin’ these kinda courses… and finding out what faith is.”

Although “Music behind the Bars” (First and Second Movement) provided some intellectual content, I saw their appeal as being primarily to the emotions. So, in his pre-release interview, Jonathan said that

To me the music has always been vital, and being able to play with the music programme [in chapel services] has been very good, and with [the music courses run by] Boadicea.

Tyrone comments, “The music that I did with Boadicea – that was a godsend to me, Alan…”

When it came time for Boadicea to facilitate Mainstream courses, she was very nervous. She had led programmes in Protection confidently and with flair, but she knew that some leading members of the Mainstream group strongly disapproved of women teaching in faith communities. Prominent among these was a Maori prisoner called Thadeus. In fact the first two or three sessions turned out to be extremely awkward for this reason. By the fourth session, however, Thadeus had decided that she wasn’t teaching “directly” from the scripture but was sharing her experiences, testimonies and observations. My own opinion is that he had been won over by Boadicea’s courtesy and by her genuine nature – though it may have been partly that her teaching style differed from what he had expected. But, whatever the reason, other prisoners followed Thadeus’s lead, and Boadicea found that she was suddenly accepted and acceptable. In my interview with Thadeus, he said,
Honestly though, Alan, I know the bible well enough and in Corinthians it talks about women shouldn’t teach – women should sit silent.

And “…for a women to teach the direct doctrine of the Bible is not really my cup of tea.” However, he then added,

But, yeah, now she teaches her experiences, her testimony, her revelations, her explanations of it. All gells one hundred per cent… She’s a wonderful sister…

Over the years, about 40% of programmes have been facilitated by various chaplains and another 40% by volunteers from outside the prison. The remainder have been led by prisoners.

Gareth had been co-facilitator for a number of addiction programmes which were run in the Protection part of Acacia. He said,

We [Christian prisoners] really worked well together. We loved doing the “Celebrate Recovery” course. I was really surprised how the group really related, and that we could relate to the group.

He added:

I really believe some of the other programmes could be done like that. “Alpha” could be done like that… Because we all start at a basic level…

Hugo was not a believer, but he said that he found “safety” and “welcome” in the Acacia faith community. He spoke to me primarily about bible studies and chapel services, but was including his experience of programmes as well:

The different people running it, the different perspectives and the different methods people have used have been further enlightening to me. Because if it was just one person…, it would have been a negative thing, and I probably wouldn’t have learned as much as I have.

Hugo went on to say,

It’s definite that some people [chaplains and other facilitators] have grated me the wrong way… but that’s important too. [Interviewer: It's good to be challenged?] Yes!

Sometimes I am surprised at the people who enrol in the chaplaincy-sponsored courses. On a number of occasions, officers have approached me to ask whether
I knew that this-or-that participant in a course or bible study was a drug dealer or a gang leader. I am, of course, aware that there are risks, but I believe that every person has value and every person has potential for change (Gelsthorpe, 2014; Saleeby, 1992). Olaf said, in one of his two interviews, “I’m really amazed at the people who come on board a lot of programmes...” Jimmy had spent much of his life in prison. Involvement in STP had motivated him to turn his whole life around. He came to a number of chapel programmes and was amazed to find a number of his old friends taking part: “The majority of ’em, I’ve never seen pick up a bible and reading it, but they’re doing it, it’s interesting them.”

and:

I can see the change in them, the crims themselves. They’re not mucking around. They’re not using it [to impress others]. They’re trying to use it for their own purposes, because they’ve had enough of banging their heads against the wall. They’ve had enough.

Gunnar had this to say about prisoners taking part in chaplaincy-sponsored programmes:

Everyone was human when they came to church [programmes] because they dropped their guard a lot, y’know... They got no ego. No apprehensions, or they’re not trying to show off or big-note themselves.

And he adds,

They’re in damage mode, you know, they’re trying to recover, they’re trying to rebuild their lives, they’re trying to restructure their lives.

One thing that has surprised me enormously at Acacia is that almost every programme we have run in the chapel area has been effective. By this I don’t mean that we have administered attitudinal tests before and after every course, or that we’ve found statistically significant improvement as we’ve done so. In retrospect, I regret that testing of this nature was not carried out for some of our courses. However, I mean that the courses have involved people in positive ways. Participants have spoken what was in their hearts, and they have come back for later programmes. In many instances, we have seen positive change in people’s attitudes and behaviour.
Through all of our programmes – even the very few that were a “flop” – two aspects have been prominent. The first of these has been the extent to which participants have trusted each other and been prepared to be vulnerable. Tony senses this when he compares the chaplaincy-sponsored programmes with others run elsewhere in the prison:

[In other courses] lots of guys just sit and watch, but in the Christian courses people say, “Hey there!” or “Would you like a cup of coffee?”

The other element is that of enjoyment. Of course, there are times when men are working through difficult issues in their lives, and this is not easy. However, through it all is an entirely unexpected spark of joy. Tyrone, in an interview shortly after release from Acacia Prison, said this:

When you go down to the chapel [for Prison Fellowship or bible study or courses], they’re real bubbly sorts of times, because you share something…

**High morale**

As previously mentioned, one of the remarkable aspects of the Acacia community of faith is its high morale. This is evident in a number of key activities:

**In the chapel services**

It is difficult to know whether the informal and confident behaviour shown by prisoners at chapel services derives primarily from confidence or primarily from ignorance of the kind of “proper conduct” that would be expected in most congregations outside the prison. Yet I’ve not noticed this kind of behaviour to nearly the same extent in other prisons. I suspect it’s a mixture of these two factors, but it certainly seems to fit into the over-all picture of ‘high morale’.

A simple example of what I mean is that, if an Acacia prisoner considers that what is being said or done in a chapel service is not relevant to his world, he simply walks out. This is not intended as insulting or personal – it is simply that there is no point in staying for something that is geared for other people or for no-one.

Another example is the extent to which prisoners speak up during my sermons. And, although I have seldom attended services conducted by other chaplains, I understand it is so for them as well. People ask questions, add their own
comments, agree or disagree, or object to a whole line of argument. I do not consider this to be an interruption but rather to be part of the teaching and preaching process. But it's certainly unusual.

On one occasion, while I was preaching perhaps my worst sermon in several years, one man started to stand up in his place. He was obviously about to walk out but, as it happened, he was seated next to Bryan, a tattoo-covered former gang member who had been convicted of two extremely violent offences. Bryan pulled him back to his seat and said in an audible whisper, "It doesn't matter how irrelevant his talk is, as long as it's said in the right spirit!" His neighbour didn't move for the remainder of the service, and I finished the sermon as quickly as I could.

For me, all this is exemplified by something that took place in an Acacia chapel service not long ago. A little over forty of us were seated in a circle – four or five volunteers from outside, about 37 prisoners, and me – and I was in the midst of saying something I thought was interesting and dramatic. Just then, a huge black man I had never seen before, who was seated on my extreme right hand side, stood up and began to walk slowly across the circle. He had all the expression of a loaf of bread. As he passed me, it crossed my mind for a brief second, "Perhaps he's going to hit me." But he didn't look at me, and he continued walking. When he reached the other side of the chapel, he picked up a guitar and played beautifully for about four minutes. He put down the instrument, walked back to his seat, and sat down. I thanked him and continued with what I was saying.

Jennifer, who is one of our regular Sunday morning volunteers, once said,

   Every service in Acacia is real. There's no pretence. There is more reality here in every service than there ever is in our parish.

**The Term Leadership Group**

High morale is evident in the TLG (see above). I have already mentioned, in this thesis, the fact that members of the TLG have increasingly taken responsibility for their own lives and made significant decisions. This is a group of volunteer prisoners who have met fortnightly with either one or two chaplains. They have prayed for the prison and have made decisions on behalf of the congregation. Sometimes, instead of actually deciding, they have discussed a matter and have
then taken it back to the whole congregation to consider. Two examples of this are given later in this chapter.

Prisoner membership has changed considerably over the time. We began by making a rule that there should be a complete change-over of TLG membership at the beginning of each school semester, but it soon became evident that we needed more continuity than this, so some TLG members have stayed longer. One of the current members has been with us for several years.

The influence of the TLG has been, and is, quite remarkable. I see that influence in four main areas:

1. In the life of the Acacia faith community;
2. Post-release
3. In this study.
4. In the prison as a whole

I will single out just three examples of TLG projects which have affected the whole prison. The first of these is the example of pastoral carers. At the second TLG meeting, a prisoner called Denzil surprised me my saying this: “Guys have heard that we’re on the committee, and they’re coming to us with their problems, but we just don’t have the resources to deal with it.” Another TLG member, whose name was Kelvin, said (looking straight at me), “Would you give us a course in pastoral care?” Because of this, I devised a 23-hour course called “People Caring for People”, and seven men enrolled in it. With the permission of Senior Management, these 7 were authorised by the TLG and the chaplains to represent the congregation as pastoral carers throughout the prison. Over the years that have followed, I have run this course six times. The number of pastoral carers has risen and fallen, and their ways of approaching the task have varied considerably. Yet they have consistently been a valued resource, called upon by staff and prisoners in every residential block. My second example is of a system of DVDs which runs to every cell in Acacia. Kelvin came to a meeting one day and said, “We’re in here for sex crimes and drugs and violence, and we’re tryin’ to turn our lives around. But when we’re lonely [at night] and go into our room and turn on a DVD channel, we get porn and drugs and gangsters.” He added that

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4 The DVDs to which Kelvin is referring were available for public distribution and were available from a DVD rental franchise.
“Yer put crap in, yer get crap out.” The meeting asked if I could gain permission for a chapel-sponsored night per week to provide some kind of alternative. I went to see the Director, who said, “I’ve just come from a prison in the UK where the chapel sponsored a whole channel. Why don’t you do that?” I said I would ask the TLG (the stipulation was that prisoners pay for the DVDs on that channel). The Director said that Acacia would put some money towards the cost, but this never happened. TLG members welcomed the idea. They said they would begin as soon as they had raised $1,100 from prisoner-contributions, and they would aim to provide one new DVD per week in the same way. They asked that “a good number” of the films be religious, that some be wild-life movies, and the remainder be ‘feel-good movies’ (one of the men said, “movies I could take my family to, if my family was here”). This channel has now been in operation for seven years. In addition, during that time, The TLG has been instrumental in the installation of (a) a 24-hour Christian radio, and (b) a free-to-air Christian television channel.

My third and final example of an action of the TLG which affected the entire prison is that of tests for drug-taking. At one point in the prison’s history, people were being refused parole because of a positive urine test, even when that result had been some years earlier. One TLG member said, “Since then, I’ve become a Christian, and I’ve had three negative piss tests - why can’t a ‘CONGRATULATIONS' certificate be issued when the test is negative? That way, it could go on our file.” The TLG asked me to speak to the Director about it, or write a letter. I said no, they were perfectly capable of writing a letter themselves. They did this, and received no response. At my urging, they wrote again, and after the third letter the rule was changed. This may not seem a huge victory to someone outside the prison, but it was a moment of empowerment. I always tell this story, and others like it, to new members of the group, because it seems important for them to know about change that has been achieved in the past (Reicher, Haslam & Hopkins, 2005).

**Within the community of faith**

Prisoners are constantly told what to do. They have little or no choice about what to wear, who their companions will be, or what work they will do (Goulding, 2007). New TLG members typically find difficulty in adjusting to having their opinions and decisions taken seriously. They generally begin tentatively, and they start
with decisions that affect only the Acacia faith community. Here are a few simple examples:

The Acacia chapel has quite an extensive library, consisting chiefly of second-hand books donated by outside congregations in which I have been guest speaker. In recent times, a Christian prison officer has added some very fine new volumes. The books were initially either in one rather sub-standard book-case, supplied by the prison, or displayed on a nearby desk. The TLG said this was not good enough. They obtained a quote for materials to make a large, top-quality jarrah item of furniture, to be constructed in the prison work-shop. It was $900. Using me as an intermediary, they negotiated with Management that the prison would supply $300 if the TLG raised the remaining $600. Two members of the faith community joined in making this very handsome set of shelves.

On three occasions in the prison’s history, the TLG has expressed a wish to change the format of Prison Fellowship meetings. PF volunteers come into the prison on Saturday mornings to conduct sessions of prayer, bible reading, singing and testimony. Each time that the TLG has discussed these meetings, members have expressed gratitude for all that is done for them by the volunteer team, but they have wanted greater opportunity for informal fellowship, and more chance to provide specific input. On each occasion, they have decided to approach the PF team leader themselves, rather than have me do it on their behalf. And, on each occasion, their suggestions have been acted upon.

Another example of an initiative shown by this group is that TLG members requested a farewell service for Chaplain Bradley, who was about to leave after 8½ years at Acacia. The other chaplains had not thought of this, and were happy to comply.

**Outward-looking decisions by the TLG**

At the suggestion of the TLG, the Acacia faith community has readily taken on (a) sponsorship of a child in Swaziland, through the agency of World Vision Australia, and (b) participation in what was called “Project 54”. The latter is a programme in which various WA congregations contracted to pray regularly for one of the 54 member-countries of the British Commonwealth, prior to the
Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, which was to be held in Perth in 2011. For reasons I never discovered, the TLG selected Nigeria.

**Post-release**

I mention only one of the TLG’s “post-release initiatives” because, even though it failed, I see it as the most significant. Several years ago, prisoner-members of the TLG decided that what they sorely needed in the first six months of post-release was a “half-way house”. An Anglican church in the Perth suburb where many of our prisoners used to live supplied a large house for this purpose, and a local Baptist pastor promised to “look in every day” to oversee the venture. TLG members decided on rules, and they selected, as the first six tenants, six Christian prisoners who were about to be released.

It didn’t work. The main reason was that the people involved genuinely believed that forgiveness involved allowing tenants to break the rules set down. All six were persons with a drug history and, once one or two of them were bringing drugs into the house, the end was nigh. As well as this, the supervisor was not experienced in dealing with addicts or former-prisoners, and he considered any advice given by chaplains to be unduly harsh.

Despite the apparent failure of this project (the house remained open for only about six months), there were some real “positives” that came from it. The first of these was that it highlighted an urgent need in the WA community. Second was that it gave hope and a sense of empowerment to a group of ex-prisoners. No-one would have thought they could achieve anything as concrete as this, but they did it. Third, it provided the TLG and others with some important hints and guidelines for planning future projects. I think it’s significant that the ex-prisoners who were directly involved look back on it now as entirely positive.

**In this study**

I consider that the existence of the TLG has affected the whole nature of the community of faith in Acacia Prison. In my experience, prisoners have generally been people with exceedingly low self-esteem. They are so accustomed to being told what to do that they seldom show initiative. It is a truism that “flying under the radar” is part of the prison culture (Faccio & Costa, 2013). Yet here is a group
who increasingly think for themselves. As they grow and develop, TLG members are learning to take responsibility for their own lives, and to make decisions. I observe that, over the years, many of them have worked with chaplains or with prison psychologists in order to deal with their personal problems, and I see them beginning to plan for their future. I find it interesting, too, that some of this attitude appears to “rub off” on other members of the Acacia faith community. They, too, begin to show more initiative than one would expect among prisoners. I am impressed. It is because of this that I began this study.

I wondered to what extent is this unusual characteristic of a prison congregation due to the TLG? Or is it due mainly to the influence of STP in Acacia? And to what extent will these attributes of the faith community in our prison continue post-release? Will they assist prisoners in that critical time immediately after they are released? Will it affect their rates of re-offending? These were questions for a later study.

As previously stated, the methodology I have chosen for this research is participant action research. In fact, the nature of the community of faith which I’m studying (and of which I am part) in my opinion renders any other methodology illogical and irrelevant. These people have broken the mould by taking the initiative and by making decisions. PAR would encourage prisoners to take an active and responsible part in this research. I hoped that they would assist me in gathering data, in verifying findings, and in providing advice concerning the direction the research should take.

The TLG had already been formed for a purpose independent of my research. However, with their permission, I have used them as one of the focus groups in this study, at various points along the journey. So, for example, I asked them whether the issues being raised in my interviews were valid in their experience – post-release accommodation, finances, establishing relationships with family members, relationships with friends, drugs, employment, loneliness. They said yes, that these truly were the issues.

Another example was the matter of suicide. When the people being interviewed in three successive interviews said how close they were to committing suicide, I was appalled. I took the matter to the TLG and said that this had cropped up quite frequently and would they be prepared to tell me if suicide had been an option for
any of them or, if not, for any of their friends? To my surprise, every one of the
five prisoners at that meeting said he had seriously considered suicide, either just
before leaving prison or immediately post-release, and had come close to doing
so.

Membership of the TLG has changed dramatically over the years. So, too, has
this group’s priorities and level of maturity. Almost every new member during this
time has been sceptical or cynical concerning the ability of the TLG to make any
significant difference in the life of the prison or of the faith community (Reichers,
Wanous & Austin, 1997). However, this attitude has generally changed in the light
of experience. At times the main focus of the TLG has been upon the “big picture”
– looking at the prison as a whole, and at the situation of offenders post-release
as well as during the time of incarceration. At other times, the TLG has been
entirely, or almost entirely, inward-looking. All of the current members except one
are new to the group, and they are learning slowly that that their opinions are
valued.

Sometimes over the years my influence in this group has been positive –
encouraging, nurturing, empowering. On other occasions, this has not been so.
An example of the former was the issue of “congratulations” certificates for
negative urine tests. Another example was the sponsorship of a World Vision
child. The idea came from members of the Term Leadership Group, about 6½
years ago. This was against my advice, which was based on the fact that
prisoners come and go. They then took it to the congregation, who decided
almost unanimously to do this, still against my advice. All these years later, that
sponsorship continues, despite the fact that many of those who made the original
decision have moved on.

These are instances in which the initiative came from prisoners. Support was
available from chaplaincy, but was hardly necessary. These are the kind of
projects which have “worked”, and whose influence in Acacia has lasted. It is a
process called “change from below” (Ife, 2002, p.101) or “bottom-up” (Mowbray,

It is the prisoners who have first-hand experience of life in Acacia. They
understand best the strengths, weaknesses and special characteristics of this
environment (Heron & Reason, 2001; Kemmis, 2006; Tesoriero, 2010). So it is
logical and reasonable for me to encourage them to make the choices and decisions. There will be times when centralised decisions are necessary, and the range of choices available to inmates of a prison are inevitably more limited than would be the case for people who meet “outside”.

Part of the problem is that prisoners – whether in Acacia or elsewhere – are accustomed to being told what to do. Even more than in outside communities, they are encouraged to accept “top-down” structures and practices as a matter of course. TLG members, particularly new members, expect that their opinions and suggestions will not make a difference. Sometimes, without intending to do so, I have fallen into the trap of making decisions on their behalf.

A recent example was early in 2011, when I heard that a large number of WA churches were joining in what was called “Project 54”. This was in connection with CHOOGM (the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, being held in Perth in 2011). Many outside churches had selected one of the 54 countries in the British Commonwealth, and were praying for that country in preparation for the meeting as it approached. My idea was that, through involvement with the wider church community in a grand project, the Acacia faith community would feel valued, connected and empowered. This idea was a good one, but it foundered because it was mine. Instead of “sharing” the idea (Ife, 2002, p.105), I presented Project 54 as a finished product. The TLG agreed to it and asked me to announce it to the chapel congregation. It was and is a “top-down” project, which no-one “owned”.

In advising community workers, Tesoriero (2010, p.143) writes that

While recognising that for some purposes more centralised decision making, or at least coordination, is required, the principle involved is that no decision or function should occur at a more centralised level than is necessary.

On the whole, however, I think that my recent action with Project 54 was an exception. One of the distinctive features of the TLG has been that they have frequently come up with their own ideas and made their own decisions.

**Bradley**

Chaplain Bradley influenced our community of faith in a number of important ways. He was with us for one day a week for 8½ years and, as I look back on his
ministry in Acacia, I see three main contributions that he made. The first of these was that, as a Pentecostal pastor, he had a different way of looking at the scriptures, and at life, from the rest of us. This was sometimes irritating but almost always beneficial. In addition, prisoners who were Pentecostal found a “kindred spirit” in Bradley.

The second contribution he made was by being a lateral thinker (I said once that “Bradley thinks round corners”). An example of this was when he conducted what is called “prisoner induction sessions”. This is the chaplaincy contribution to the induction week for new prisoners to Acacia. Bradley enlisted the aid of prisoner-members of the faith community, and did so in a variety of ways.

Bradley’s third contribution to the life of the faith community in Acacia was the teaching of Theology at tertiary level. He did this for six years with incredible flair. Prisoners who had never read a book before they went to his classes were bubbling with liveliness and enthusiasm for study. The effect upon the faith community as a whole was enormous.

However, during his final 18 months with us he was diagnosed with a mild form of clinical depression. Not long afterwards, he retired from ministry at Acacia Prison. Boadicea, who was at that time a chaplain-in-training, was the successful applicant for a new chaplaincy position that was advertised. In this new situation, her specific duties include assisting the co-ordinating chaplain in matters related to restorative justice as well as to the training of chaplains.

A female chaplain in a male prison

Boadicea has now been a member of our chaplaincy team at Acacia for 6½ years. She came in as a volunteer helper for the first two years, averaging two days a week. She was then a chaplain-in-training for two years, and is now a fully accredited chaplain. The fact of being a female chaplain in a male prison is not unique, but she is the first in Acacia, and it has made a difference to our faith community.

The first difference I notice is that many more prisoners and staff members than before come to us with family concerns, whether that is to do with partners or with children. I find it intriguing that this is not only for Boadicea, but with me as well.
I can only surmise that the presence of a woman either brings these matters to the forefront of people’s minds or encourages them to raise the matter with us.

Boadicea tells me that being a woman in this context can sometimes be a hindrance. Quite a number of prisoners who approach her do so first and foremost because she is a woman, and only secondarily because she is a chaplain. She said to me once that

I have to get them past that somehow, to see me as a person who can really help.

Boadicea’s input concerning chaplains-in-training has been substantial. I believe that what she has done in this area will result in more of these people joining us for varying amounts of training. This in turn has positive effects in the faith community.

An ex-offender as part of our chaplaincy team

It is important to write of a former offender called Paul. He was part of our chaplaincy team for almost exactly four years. It was the first time that such a thing had taken place in a WA prison, and his effect upon the Acacia community of faith was considerable.

Paul is tall and broad-shouldered. He is bald-headed, has an extraordinary number of tattoos, and his voice is like a gravel pit. He looks as if he could effortlessly throw me out the window, and as if he just might do that. Paul is probably in his mid-forties, and was in and out of prison (juvenile and senior) for about 20 years.

Somewhere along the line, in one of our WA prisons, Paul was converted to a simple faith in his risen saviour. On release, he attended a local bible college and successfully completed a two-year Advanced Diploma of Theology – an outstanding achievement for a man who had done very little schooling, and hardly any reading at all before that time!

Paul came into Acacia Prison for two days a week for two years as a volunteer helper. He then applied successfully to become a chaplain-in-training. He served for a further two years in this capacity in Acacia, still for two days per week. Paul was and is very excited about the gospel. Coming to faith had made such a huge
difference in his life that he earnestly wished that everyone else he met would share that experience. Chaplain Bruce said of Paul, when I interviewed him, that “Some people think he’s a bit full on…”

Two prisoners independently told me of an occurrence in a bible study Paul was conducting. Paul was speaking in a dramatic fashion about the complete change coming to Christ had effected in his life. He said something like,

When Christ came into my life, I was completely changed. I am a different man.

One of the prisoners there said,

Bullshit! I knew you before you were a Christian, we did crime together. You were an entrepreneur. You sold drugs with energy and pressure and skill. You were an entrepreneur and you’re still an entrepreneur. The only difference is that now you are selling Jesus.

Paul was not remarkably pleased. However, I don’t find it distressing that Paul was using his God-given energy and skills in a healthy direction rather than a sick one.

Very early in his time with us, I spoke to Paul about this. Paul was probably not attempting to evangelise, but I felt uncomfortable at the degree of pressure he often applied when speaking with prisoners about Jesus. I said to him that I personally would not apply as much pressure as I saw that he was doing. He replied, “I hear what you’re saying, Alan, but you simply don’t understand….” He went on to say that people who are addicted to drugs are under so much pressure to continue or resume drug-taking that the kind of pressure he applied was necessary. I still felt uncomfortable about this, but I acknowledge that he may be right.

Paul has been a symbol of hope to prisoners. They sense that, if God can change this man, then there is hope for them as well. In a slightly different context, Griffin (as cited in Burnside, 2008) has this to say:

What is needed is an example, a model, of someone who has been there, done that, and God has healed them, so it gives them hope that, “yes, it can happen to me.”
In a pre-release interview, which was part of this study, a prisoner called Olaf reflected on a programme called “Keys to Change”, which had been facilitated by Paul:

This guy [Paul] used to run around with guns in the boot… This guy has completely changed.

It was clear that Olaf found huge comfort from the fact that Paul understood, from first-hand experience, the problems of crime and drug-taking.

In a slightly different context Mobley (2014b, p.81), himself a former prisoner, writes that

If we are serious about finding ways to meaningfully reduce felon recidivism, we need to foster the participation of reformed ex-prisoners in prisoner rehabilitation programs.

Paul has been a symbol of hope for many of the custodial officers as well, for they see that what they do may actually make a difference.

For a great deal of the time Paul has been on our chaplaincy team, relationship between him and me has not been easy. I think there are several reasons for this. One is that his natural way of operating has been to see a problem or an opportunity, then deal with it straight away. Thinking came later. As head of department in a major prison, I have found this difficult. I readily acknowledge that prison regulations are often arbitrary and sometimes pointless, but this does not mean that we should ignore them. In addition, I readily acknowledge that I have sometimes allowed this attribute of Paul to get under my skin. As well as this, I think that his background leads him to be suspicious of authority figures, and I think Paul sees me as an authority figure.

At the same time, I see enormous value in his contribution at Acacia. He is able to relate to people who would never be within the range of any of the rest of us. I have seen people’s whole approach to life change for the better through his ministry. In addition, I honour his commitment to the task – he came to Acacia on two days a week, free of charge, for four years. In more recent times, he sold his business to allow him more time to minister among prisoners and ex-prisoners.
I have had huge problems with Paul’s theology. My difficulty is not that it’s different from mine. That isn’t my point. We are appointed by the Council of Churches, not by our own respective churches, so allowance must always be made for varied theologies. My problem arose from the apparent fact that Paul seemed unable to see how other people’s approaches to life and to the scriptures could reasonably differ from his. However it seemed to me that, when he led a programme or a bible study, what he taught was a valid part of Christendom. As well as that, it seemed to me that the main impact did not come from his teachings. What shone through was the character and example of this warm-hearted, remarkable, generous, loving man. I miss Paul greatly, and I miss his ministry.

Over his fourth and final year with us, I acknowledged the difficulty in our relationship by assigning direct supervision of Paul to Chaplain Bruce. This is on the strict understanding that I be kept informed of progress, and that, if either sees an issue where it seems advisable for me to be consulted or informed, this should happen. Conversely, that, if there is some issue which I believe should be brought to their notice, I should do so.

I interviewed my chaplaincy colleague Bruce before Paul had left Acacia. He said this of Paul: “If anyone asked me, what are some of the great achievements of Acacia Prison, I would say releasing someone like Paul into prison.” And he added that

He comes from a different tradition from you [i.e., me]. His approach to evangelism is different from yours, but I’ve just been to guy after guy whose lives have been just set free [because of Paul’s influence]. They have expressed this continually.

Bruce spent some time praising me for enabling Paul’s ministry to take place. I found this embarrassing.

I hadn’t thought of this before, but it’s one of the good things that you’ve been able to do. I know it hasn’t been easy for you at times – your tradition, your background – but you can see the fruit, too.

Bruce spoke of Paul as “part of the prison culture”, and he gave an example, of a prisoner whose partner had become involved with heroin. “He was so
desperate that he said to Paul can you help, and he said, ‘Yep, I'll make a 'phone call.’”

Paul’s ministry was not restricted to inside the prison. I interviewed a former prisoner called Donald, not long after his release. He spoke glowingly of Paul’s ministry to ex-prisoners following release into the community. He began by saying this:

> When I got out, I should’ve been soarin’, but I really went flat. Cos I cut off everyone I knew before, to try to succeed. But I just come out of a prison…, where people are everywhere… and the next thing I was by myself… just sitting there alone, and I’m not normally that kind of person. You get out, y’wanna do the right thing, and there’s no one.

Then he went on to say,

> I rang Paulie and he came round and we spent the day together, and he hooked me up with a job. So, really, the support after [I’d] been released, Paulie really came through.

Later in my interview with Donald, he said something else which showed – I think – something of the high esteem in which he held Paul. Donald said that he hoped one day to re-visit Acacia Prison to be the kind of influence for good that Paul had proved to be. However, he added that “I gotta make sure that I’m right first…”

In his final six months with us, my relationship with Paul lifted perceptibly. The reason for this was his presence at two talks that I gave. The first was a session concerning (a) security issues, and (b) encouragement, given at a training weekend for the team about to enter Acacia for the “Kairos” programme. The other was a plenary session I conducted at the “Caring for Ex-Offenders Conference 2010”. The latter was about the fears held by many prisoners as they approach release, and some of the difficulties experienced immediately post-release. I think that Paul suddenly realised that I care deeply about prisoners.

Paul is a strong man, a leader, and a person with a clear vision for the future. He doesn’t always see himself in that way. In my interview with him, he spoke of his childhood and of his time as a prisoner. I remember finding it chilling that this extraordinary human being, who had achieved so much, towards the end of the interview said this:
It's really great that the big panjandrum is actually interested in what I have to say!

I wrote in my journal the following day,

If he had been joking, I’d have thought this was a humorous remark, but he wasn’t. I think of myself as a mild-mannered old geezer, much more like your favourite Uncle Henry than like Mussolini or even a crabby physics teacher.  

(Journal entry July 3rd, 2010)

And I went on to say this:

I thought it sad if I was wrong about this – but much more sad if it’s just that this is the way he sees me. We have been colleagues for four years. I think that his horrific background of abuse, addiction and incarceration has led him to see most older males and all persons who have some kind of authority as “them” and as “the enemy”.

At the end of his four years, the Department of Corrective Services barred Paul from WA prisons. We have not been given a reason for this. However we assume that it is because he is a former offender, because a member of the Prison Fellowship team at Casuarina Prison, who is also a former offender, was barred at the same time. I wrote at that time,

Paul has been an honoured member of our chaplaincy team for four years, during which time he was no more or less an ex-offender than he is now.

**Chaplains-in-training, and students**

Over the years in Acacia Prison, we have provided placements for five bible college or theological college students for one semester each, as well as three for two semesters each. One of the latter was in his final placement in preparation for appointment and ordination as a minister of the gospel in the Uniting Church of Australia. An additional two theological college students entered Acacia to co-facilitate a 5-week programme. This is a “win-win” situation. It provides each student with experience and awareness. In addition, staff and prisoners see that there are people from “outside” who care enough to spend time in a prison.

This is particularly evident when I take these students to the residential blocks for what I call “lurking with pastoral intent”. These students are given opportunity to
interact with prisoners. They are within sight of me and/or of officers, but are out of hearing.

In addition to this, four chaplains-in-training have been part of the Acacia community of faith for differing times. For some years, we were the only WA prison prepared to do this. As indicated above, two volunteer helpers became chaplains-in-training. Since that time, Boadicea has become a chaplain, and Paul has been barred from entering prisons. In their various ways, both have been wonderful additions to our faith community.

**Conclusion**

This chapter contains

a. Some observations about the Acacia community of faith as a collective entity, and

b. An outline of the way in which the body of Christ in the prison has developed and has been operating.

In Chapter 6, I continue my description of the Acacia faith community, and describe the way in which spiritual capital is generated, both within the prison and post-release. Clearly, there are other possible explanations for this phenomenon. I shall deal briefly with some of these in Chapter 8. In Chapters 7 and 8, I present a “case study” of the “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP), as it is run in Acacia.
CHAPTER 5 – “THE ACACIA COMMUNITY OF FAITH [2]”

Introduction

In this chapter, I complete what was begun in Chapter 4, namely a “case study” of the Acacia (Christian) community of faith. In addition, I deal with the generation of spiritual capital within the faith community, both within the prison and post-release.

As previously stated, I am a central figure in the community of faith which I am researching – as, indeed, are the other Acacia chaplains. I shall begin this chapter by reflecting upon prison chaplaincy, models of chaplaincy, and my own role as chaplain in Acacia Prison. I then intend to discuss briefly the theoretical base for a study by O’Connor & Perreyclear (2002) of religious interventions in a Connecticut correctional institution. My reason for doing so is that the same theoretical base applies to a very large extent in this present study. I then wish to look at some of the themes which emerged in pre-release and post-release interviews in this research. Specifically, I shall be discussing the sense of belonging which was evident among all of these prisoners and former prisoners despite the very obvious difference between individual members, then the feeling of safety expressed by inmates, and the “rawness” of the faith community which was remarked upon by chaplains and volunteers. I conclude this chapter by reflecting on the generation of spiritual capital in the Acacia community of faith.

On being a prison chaplain

In September 2010, I made a presentation to the School of Social Work and Social Policy of the University of Western Australia. It was on “Forgiveness in Restorative Justice”. This took place in the Social Work Seminar Room, where six or eight of us sat round what looks rather like a large kitchen table. Although I used a power point presentation, it was all very informal. Somewhat to my surprise, I was nervous. I missed out some of the points I meant to include, and I certainly did not feel comfortable.

Afterwards, I tried to work out why this was so. After all, I make presentations all the time. I preside at services, and preach. I facilitate or co-facilitate programmes,
chair meetings and make reports. In almost all of these situations, to a large extent I feel quite at home. In the Acacia chapel, I am intent on putting other people at their ease.

The atmosphere in an Acacia chapel service is of course quite different from that in a Social Work and Social Policy research forum. Yet there are some great similarities. In the chapel service, we are very informal. We sit on chairs “in the round”, and most of the prisoners present have never experienced the formality expected in many churches – or, if they have, it was generally when they were little children. My sermon is, of course, highly prepared, but I deliver it seated and in a relaxed fashion. Facilitating or co-facilitating a programme, again, is almost always in the chapel, but it has many similarities to the Social Work and Social Policy gathering. It’s a relaxed format with lots of discussion… Why, then, was I nervous presenting a mini-paper at this research forum?

My research supervisor suggested, when I mentioned this, that part of the reason may have been that I did not have a great deal of time in which to prepare. However, (a) I know the topic extremely well, (b) I have led discussions on it in other settings, and (c) I’ve generally been able to manage a presentation quite competently when I have been ill, or extremely busy on other things, or tired. In other words, I don’t think this was very relevant.

Part of the reason may have been that this was my first PhD presentation in which I had mentioned God. This should not have been a cause of hesitation, but it probably was. I wasn’t sure how a specifically religious reflection would be received. Previous Social Work and Social Policy presentations had been about my hopes for my PhD journey, restorative justice, STP, theories of punishment. But this was about forgiveness.

As I reflected on this matter, it occurred to me that probably the greatest difference between these two kinds of presentation was the venue. The ambience in the chapel was created by me. I was there from the beginning. I chose the furniture, or lack of it. No changes have been made except as instituted by me or with my agreement or approval. I spend more waking hours in the prison than I do at home, and most of my time in the prison is spent either in the chapel or in my office, which opens onto it. I welcome other people to the chapel. In a real
sense, it is my space. All of this led me to make preliminary reflections on my role as chaplain.

I see myself as a servant (a) of people in need in Acacia Prison, (b) in a special sense, servant of the community of faith in Acacia, and (c) of the other chaplains. And it is fairly likely that a small number of people – very properly – see me in those terms. However, there is no doubt at all that most people in Acacia do not. The main reason for this is the prison environment. The whole life of the “guys in green” is structured by the orders of other people. Almost every person they see in the prison who is not an inmate is either an authority figure or potentially so. It must be very difficult to see a chaplain in terms that are starkly different from these.

In addition to this, there is the ambivalent status of a chaplain. I am in the prison as a representative of Christ, who was prepared to challenge the authorities of his day, and who cared deeply for individuals whatever their status. I do my best to give to each prisoner and staff member the honour due to him or to her as a human being (Hall, 2004). I will not repeat what someone says to me unless I have that person’s permission to do so. All of this sets me apart from members of the staff. Yet at the same time I have an office and a computer and I carry a two-way radio and a personal alarm. When I send an email to Senior Management, they read it and frequently act upon it. In comparison with a prisoner, I am a person of great power.

Another reason is my age. Most prisoners in Acacia are under the age of 32 years. Many members of the faith community see me as something like a father figure, or an “uncle figure”. Some would see me as a “grandfather-figure”.

Yet, over-arching all of this, I suspect, is the regard, respect, and traditional way of envisaging a minister of the church, particularly a male. In some religious denominations, such a person has always been regarded as the “vicar of Christ”, the person who stands in the place of Christ within the local fellowship. Whenever I am viewed in this way, I am very uncomfortable. I do not have all the answers, or even most of them. I even think that some people who see me in this way are saying, in effect, “You are the person who should be close to God”, and using this to opt out of their own spiritual growth. However, whether this is true or not, I have
no doubt that some view their chaplain in this way.

**A role imposed on me by others?**

To some extent, my role as a chaplain is imposed upon me by other people’s expectations. These inevitably influence greatly the way I behave and the way I see myself. However, at the same time I have my own ideas about how a chaplain should act, and my vision of what he or she can be. These two factors are often in uneasy tension.

About ten months ago, a new member of Acacia’s education department staff, called Menzies, began at the prison. On his first day he asked me, “What do you prefer to be called?” “Alan,” I said. There was a long pause, then Menzies said, “I shall call you pastor.”

I hate being called “pastor” – or “father” or “chaplain”. This is because such titles are often barriers to real contact with human beings. Insofar as this is so, they are contrary to my concept of a chaplain’s role. I understand the need for boundaries in pastoral ministry – also that I would not (for example) provide a prisoner with my address or telephone number. Yet Menzies’ apparent need to “distance” me out of respect for ‘a man of the cloth’ is an example of someone else’s needs, and perhaps insecurities, imposing boundaries on our relationship.

**Models of chaplaincy**

When I arrived at Acacia, I had a limited view of prison chaplaincy. It seemed to me that all chaplaincy I had observed to that point fell into two categories:

**“Have Water, Will Travel”**

The first of these was what I thought of as “have-water-will-travel”. One of my colleagues in a South Australian prison told me once that “Every contact I have with a prisoner is another opportunity to bring someone to Christ.” I found this so unattractive as to be repulsive. There is so much pain in a prison environment (Liebling, 1999; 2001; Windzio, 2006) that it has always seemed to me that we need to deal with the pain before we begin to talk about Jesus. I understand the words of Jesus, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...
in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit…” (Matthew 28.19), and I am glad that some people take these words as their priority. Yet I believe such persons have no place in prison chaplaincy.

“**The Lone Ranger**”

I am simply impressed at the wonderful work done by prison chaplains in this state. They spend long hours, giving of themselves for prisoners, often at great cost to themselves and their respective families. They walk and talk with individual prisoners who are hurting, and I honour them for this. Yet, rightly or wrongly, my perception is that – like those in the first category - they have ignored the biblical concept of “body of Christ”. By this I mean that they have worked conscientiously with individuals, but seldom with groups – with the exception, in some instances, of a weekly chapel service and, with some, an occasional “Alpha” programme (Duce, 2013).

I find both of these models of chaplaincy disturbing. The first seems to focus upon “notches on the belt” as an evangelist, instead of scratching where it itches, as a pastor and as a chaplain. I have to acknowledge that this chaplaincy model also serves as a helpful reminder for me. There are times when I am so caught up with the difficulties of the day that I forget my twofold motivation for being in the prison: a genuine love of people, and a wish to follow Jesus. So this chaplaincy model reminds me of why I came to Acacia Prison in the first place.

The second model – that of “the lone ranger” – worries me for a different reason. As previously mentioned, I consider that those who adhere to it are concentrating exclusively, or almost exclusively, upon one aspect of the job. It is an important and central part of the chaplain’s task, but I see it as only part of the picture.

When I interviewed one of the other Acacia chaplains in this study, he cautioned against too great an emphasis upon programmes and other forms of group ministry. He himself generally speaking is a proponent of the “lone ranger” model of prison chaplaincy. Yet he concluded by saying,

> There is a real need for a loving and accepting community for prisoners to turn to when they are incarcerated…
A dilemma for chaplains

It seems to me that, if chaplains are ministering effectively, one of the results will be that many prisoners will be less unhappy in a prison environment which is in constant need of reform, review and change. Sundt & Cullen (1998), following a wide survey of USA chaplains, write that “chaplains report spending a large amount of their time helping inmates adjust to prison” (as cited in Sundt & Cullen, 2007, p.133). Clear & Sumter (2002, p.152) found that there is a relation between prisoners’ “religiousness” and their adjustment to prison, in terms of fewer infractions and better psychological adjustment (O’Connor, 2002). It follows that, if we do our job well, it may contribute to the perpetuation of the status quo (Hall, 2004; Scott 2011; 2013; Skotnicki, 2004).

I would feel much easier about this if I were assured that others in the wider body of Christ were exerting consistent pressure towards reforming the system. Some truly outstanding instances of this have in fact taken place (Duce, 2013). Unfortunately, however, they have been few and far between.

The Acacia chaplaincy department

The chaplaincy department in Acacia Prison differs from those in other WA prisons in two main ways. The first is that instead of being appointed by our respective churches, Acacia chaplains are appointed by the Council of Churches of WA. It follows (a) that we are appointed as a team, rather than as individuals, and (b) that we represent a large number of denominational groups.

The second difference is that, in each other WA prison, chaplaincy is a small independent department within the prison structure. In Acacia, on the contrary, we are part of a wider department called Offender Services. This includes such groups as education, psychology, sentence management, Indigenous support, art, resettlement, and recreation. There are obvious advantages for chaplaincy in this arrangement. Notable among these are, firstly, that we are more likely to be informed about what is happening in the prison and, secondly, that Heads of Department meetings give us an opportunity to be heard. However, because chaplains are not employed by Serco (the company who runs the prison), we have a little more independence than the other “mini-departments” that make up
Offender Services.

**My role as chaplain**

I believe that my primary role in the prison is to be a sign that there are other possibilities – other possible ways of living, other possible ways of looking at the world. Various tasks evolve from this basic function, and I will mention three which take up most time (though these are not in any specific order).

The first that I mention is of creating and maintaining a community of faith within the prison community. This involves pastoral as well as liturgical and teaching functions, and some counselling (Harness, 2005). In a sense, this work amongst the faith community is the most important, but the pressures of busy-ness result in my not being able to spend nearly enough time upon it. Kirk (as cited in Holtam, 2005, p.7) refers to the high importance he places on worship, when he writes:

> It is not that conduct is the end of life and worship helps it: but that worship is the end of life and that conduct tests it.

In our responsibility for nurturing the faith community, Acacia chaplains depend greatly upon the assistance of the Prison Fellowship team, and other volunteers.

The second chaplaincy task I mention is that of counselling. This takes up much more of our time than either of the other two functions. Sometimes counseling is on faith-related issues, but the topics raised can be almost anything. Charles Brookes, a retired WA prison chaplain, wrote this:

> Aspects of the work have been helping prisoners to work through intense depression and personal pain; listening to them pour out hurts caused by the break-up of a long relationship; anxiety over past traumatic events; the need to deal with crippling guilt; problems with anger and authority; the death of loved ones… and a great deal more.

(As cited in Forsyth, 2003, n.p.n.)

He adds,

> If the church sets real store by Jesus' teaching on ministering to those in prison, and the lost being more precious than those safely in the fold, then it is essential that such work continue to be afforded its proper priority.
Part of the reason many of the people come to chaplains in Acacia on these matters is that they know we are not part of the prison system. We are not employed by Serco, so we are not obliged to report to them. In addition, most of them know we will not repeat what is said to us in confidence. However I believe that the main reason chaplains are so busy in one-to-one counseling in Acacia is that people sense we will treat prisoners, as well as staff, as human beings, not as numbers or as problems. Sadly, I observe that this is a rarity in prisons.

I make presentations on the topic of “Good Grief!” to officers-in-training at every prison officer induction school in Acacia. In addition, I speak to trainees about spirituality, and I encourage them in the work they are about to undertake. At one of these training schools, I was asked, “What do prisoners talk about when they come to see you?” I replied,

Their friends, their families, their faith, their farms their finances, their future – anything that starts with “f”, really.

(Chaplaincy Department, 2002, n.p.n.)

These two areas of responsibility apply to every chaplain. However the third applies only to me as co-ordinating chaplain. This concerns a WA programme called the Approved Pastoral Visitors Scheme. Under the provisions of this scheme, every WA prisoner has the right to pastoral ministry from up to two approved representatives of his or her faith/cultural group. This scheme operates through the co-ordinating chaplain of each prison. In this capacity in Acacia, it is up to me to ascertain that the visitor is an approved representative of the nominated faith group, to verify that the prisoner wishes to be visited by him or her, to arrange for security clearance, and to see that each visitor knows how to book the visit and how to behave in the prison setting. These visits can be as often as every two weeks, and they take place on a one-to-one basis in the Visits Centre. By extension, I am also responsible for religious groups visiting the prison. However, so far there have been only Christian, Buddhist and Moslem.

An O’Connor and Perreyclear study (2002)

The theory underlying a study by O’Connor & Perreyclear (2002) is highly relevant to this present study of the community of faith in Acacia Prison. Their
theorising was based on a theological understanding of religious conversion and faith development, and on a criminological understanding that rehabilitation comes about through a process of social attachment and social learning.

Conversion

O’Connor & Perreyclear (2002, p.18) state that

Our spiritual nature means that we are capable and desirous of having an ultimate and meaningful sense of connectedness or relationship with other people, our world, and God.

And they point to the Letter to the Romans, where Paul sets out a Christian understanding of the source of conversion: “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5.5).

Many members of our faith community over the years have been newly converted Christians. Others have refreshed or re-awakened their faith after many years away from it. This topic is discussed more fully elsewhere in this thesis.

Social attachment theory

Chu (2007) and O’Connor & Perreyclear (2002) speaks of social attachment theory, which

…holds that the more attached a person is to the major institutions of life (family, education, work, politics and religion), the less likely he or she is to commit crime, for he or she has something of value to lose by committing crime.

(O’Connor & Perreyclear, 2002, p.19)

Social learning theory

Social learning theory, on the other hand, believes “that criminal behaviours are learned behaviours in a given social and cultural context” (O’Connor & Perreyclear, 2002, p.19; see Brauer, 2009; Hipp & Yates, 2009; O’Connor, 2002; 2004-2005; Wheeldon, 2009). According to this theory, since all criminal behaviours are learned behaviours, offenders are capable of learning non-criminal behaviours in a different social and cultural context. Both of these processes – increased social attachment and new social learning – are likely to
be accelerated in the community of faith in Acacia. This is an environment in which prisoners will mingle with chaplains and volunteers. These are people who are highly committed to the major institutions of life as well as to pro-social learned behaviours. Because of these factors, O'Connor & Perreyclear (2002) suggest that increased involvement with chaplains and volunteers by prisoners will increase social adjustment and learning, not simply in spiritual matters but in other areas of life as well. Further, they hypothesise that such social learning and adjustment will assist in rehabilitation. Levitt & Loper (2009, p.6) state that “Chaplains and volunteers can provide positive role models” (see Elliot, 2007). In a slightly different context, Burnside & Lee (ud, p.53) write of the constructive influence of “…mature, caring volunteers in long-term committed relationships with inmates”. Lawrence (2004) speaks of leadership by means of positive example.

Some Christian volunteers enter Acacia Prison in a predominantly teaching role. For example, at time of writing, a man called Gottfried enters the prison weekly in order to conduct a bible study and facilitate one programme. Others come in a capacity that is mostly fellowship and encouragement. Here I have in mind the many people who over the years have been part of rosters of folk who accompany chaplains at the Sunday morning chapel services. For some members of our faith community, these are the only visitors they will ever have in the prison.

This research, and the Acacia community of faith

Some themes emerging from interviews

As previously indicated, this research consists of a case study of the Acacia community of faith. This is a complicated matter, for two reasons. The first of these is that the prison is constantly changing, and so is the faith community. Second is that I am a leading member of the community I observe and describe in this research. This fact of “insider research” is both an advantage and a disadvantage (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Colic-Peisker, 2004; Jenkins, 2013). Western (as cited in Olesen, 2000, p.275) in in a similar situation when she writes,

A single body cannot bridge that mythical divide between insider and outsider, researcher and researched. I am neither, in any simple way, and yet I am both.
Nevertheless, I hope to successfully convey the impression of a lively, supportive and surprising group of people.

**A sense of belonging**

In my interviews with prisoners soon to be released, there was a real sense of belonging and of gratitude. Some of them had never experienced genuine community before. Some looked to the future with trepidation, wondering whether they would ever again be accepted for who they are. One of my interviews, a man called Simon, was in prison for child sex offences. He had recently been released for a few months and had returned to prison. This is a man who longs to turn his life around, and to live his life constructively for others. He said that he had attended church each Sunday. The congregation had been warm and welcoming, and at the end of each service the pastor had shaken his hand and chatted with him:

> But would they have been so welcoming if they’d known who I really am, if they knew what I’d done? The only people who accept me for who I am are children, and I’m afraid! (see, for example, Earle & Wakefield, 2012)

Sadly, he looked back on his time at Acacia Prison as one of the few times in his life in which he had been treated as a whole person. He belonged.

Algernon was a young man – perhaps 30 or 31 years of age. He had been in prisons as a juvenile and an adult for a total of nearly 15 years, for a string of petty, drug-related offences. He had come to faith whilst in the prison system, and he spoke with gratitude of the Acacia faith community:

> It’s just good that there is a community of faith in the prison. The chaplains have offered so much support.

And, later in his interview,

> The thing that I like most is that this chapel door is always open.

I’m sure this expressed a real sense of belonging. However, for Algernon, there was also a fear of the unknown – a fear of how he would cope with the world outside the prison system. On an earlier occasion, he had said to me, “When people ask me what I’ve been doing all these years, I don’t know whether to tell
the truth or to do what I did last time.” “What did you do last time?” I asked. “I told them I’d been holidaying in Peru.”

Anders and Tony were two of many that I interviewed who spoke glowingly of the depth of fellowship they enjoyed as members of the community of faith. So, for example, Tony said this:

Yes, it’s the friendships. These other people [in the prison] are always sayin’ “I done this” or “I done that”. But those Christian brothers are different. The others, they miss a lot – a lot.

In addition, before the tape began to run, I explained to Tony that I would be asking - among other things - what he and Donald (who were together at the time) thought were the good things about the Acacia community of faith. He responded straight away:

Oh! The great thing was the [Christian] friendships you made!

Anders had this to say:

I get a lot of support from me brothers, within this prison. I feel more close affinity with, ‘cos we’ve shared over the years understanding, and we’re not judgmental of one another, and we’re more like encouragers in the faith.

Gareth found a sense of belonging and of achievement as he and another Christian prisoner co-facilitated chaplaincy-sponsored addiction courses:

We [Christian prisoners] really worked well together. We loved doing the “Celebrate Recovery” course. I was really surprised how the group really related, and that we could relate to the group.

Tyrone was a prisoner who found a sense of belonging and of fellowship as he participated fully in the activities of the Acacia faith community:

You can sit down and read your bible and pray in your cell, I suppose, but being involved with something gives you an expression of that faith.”

and

Coming to chapel, and getting involved in the things that were happening there, gave me opportunity to find my inner person again.

Hugo also found some comfort as he joined in chapel-sponsored activities:
It hasn’t helped me to be happy so much, coming here, it’s helped me not to be so miserable.

Safety

One theme that emerged very strongly from almost every one of the interviews was that of safety. Various prisoners, as well as chaplains, looked to the Acacia community of faith as an environment that was safe, in some way or another. However, it was clear that they saw “safety” in very different terms, whether it was safety from different things, or safety to do or to be differently. One of my chaplaincy colleagues used powerful imagery to express his conviction that safety in the faith community resides in, or depends upon, a particular leadership style. As I listened to all these interviews, it occurred to me that “belonging” and “safety” were two overlapping and related themes.

Physical safety

When you look at some prisoners, you can see the word “VICTIM” written right across their foreheads. It can be for any number of reasons. Hugo was definitely one of them. He was gentle and – for want of a better word – genteel. He was young and well-travelled and spoke as if he had been to a private school. He felt out of place in the prison, and he was out of place. I felt it was likely that he would be teased or “stood over” or frightened out of his wits. I half-expected I would hear that he was assaulted.

In my interview with him, Hugo had a great deal to say about his sense of safety in the Acacia chapel and in the community of faith. He began by contrasting it with that of Hakea, which is WA’s remand prison:

At Hakea, they have bible studies there too, but I never felt as safe there. This feels very safe.

He went on to say that, even though he did not consider himself a Christian, or a believer, he had found safety and belonging in the chapel community:

Out there in the mainstream of the prison it’s a bit scary, surrounded by people who are lost in a lot of ways. That’s not to say that people in the church don’t feel lost themselves at times, but I guess the majority believe in Christ and teachings, and stuff, and strength that takes them beyond…
In addition, Hugo had this to say

When it comes to faith and spirituality, I'm not sure that I wholly buy into it, but people [here] who are at least contemplating it have a more decent attitude toward me.

I think that Hugo saw himself as being in physical danger in the prison, and he may have been right. He had certainly been threatened. In addition, however, he was referring to the likelihood that he would be listened to and taken seriously. He knew that he would not be judged, and he had spoken of this from time to time. I believe that, initially, he expected that chaplains would want him to "measure up" to some kind of moral or spiritual yardstick. However he was thrilled when he found this was not the case.

Jimmy was another prisoner whom I interviewed who saw the chapel community as a place of physical safety. In his instance it was a place where he could be safe from the threat of sexual interference. Jimmy is a very vulnerable Indigenous man who, as a child, was molested by a male person. At the time of the interview he had been in the prison system for a total of about 20 years, and he had a reputation for extreme violence. He had begun to change dramatically, and he attributed that change to participation in STP. In his pre-release interview, he surprised me by describing the members of the faith community in this way:

They're calm people. They're not too aggressive or anything like that.

In this statement, and in this conversation, I saw evidence of his insecurity as well as of his relief that, in the chapel, he was safe. I don't think that I was imagining things as I read into it a sense of relief that one of our chaplains is a woman.

At one point along the line, I detected a look of surprise on his face. Rightly or wrongly, I took this to be realisation that, over time, he had begun to trust me, and to speak of matters that were confidential. Jimmy said that

I'd like to see more other prisoners in the system get involved and have faith in themselves and not to be ashamed. And there's no trouble in finding a bit of peace and quiet in yourself and where your life has been…

I find the whole matter of guilt and shame interesting and relevant. It may be that Horsborough (2011) is right when he says that guilt is an acquisition – which is to say that it is something we acquire – whereas shame is loss. Perhaps, through
participation in the activities of the Acacia faith community, Hugo has begun to regain something that was lost. He was finding a place of safety not only in the chapel area but within himself.

Safe to trust

In a post-release interview with Donald, I asked him, “What do you look for in a community of faith? Did you find it at Acacia?” He replied,

*Trust*, trust! To find people you can trust, in a place like that! Those sort of people who'll look out for your back. It was quite helpful.

I was surprised at what Donald said, but even more surprised at the vehemence with which he said it. Nevertheless I looked back on his time in prison, and it began to make sense. I remembered a time at which Donald believed – not without cause – that he was in physical danger. He was fairly safe in his own room, but definitely safe in the chapel area. He had found a place where trustworthy people were located. They would “look out for his back”. More than this, however, with three of our chaplains (one of whom happened to be me), and a small number of prisoner-members of the faith community, Donald could let down his guard and speak his mind.

Mixed in with Don’s response was resentment that this situation had existed – also, I think, a modicum of pride that what had caused this to be a possibility was his own honest but counter-culture action.

Safe to be yourself

Hugo spoke of the safety to relax and simply be oneself:

*This is the soul of Acacia Prison, this place. I think that's important, a place needs a soul.*

and

*It's suited my spirit, to be in this place, and helped me to sleep at night.*

Gunnar was a huge man who looked menacing and was not trusted by prison authorities. In my interview with him he said how important it was to him that, in the faith community, he found respect and acceptance for who he is:
I think most people don’t turn to religion until they have something traumatic that happens to them in their life which is really unsettling. So, I thought, I’ll go back to God and give it a try. And… it helped me a great deal, with people just helping and respecting me and making me feel at ease…

Anders was another interviewee who felt that he could let down his guard in the chapel area. I have already mentioned that he said in an interview,

…we’ve shared over the years understanding, and we’re not judgmental of one another, and we’re more like encouragers in the faith.

Donald said something similar in his pre-release interview:

The chapel is the place you can go and speak to people about things other than burglaries and drugs and bitches [i.e., grumbling about things]. That’s basically all conversations consist of. You can have some intelligent conversations with people.

He was particularly enthusiastic about the chaplaincy-sponsored courses and programmes, seeing them as an oasis of safety:

It’s true, because it’s a pretty hostile environment, and y’go into the chapel there, and it’s all friendly people who actually care, and it’s like a little refuge…

This put me in mind of a statement by Hicks (2008, p.405) that “Oftentimes the chaplaincy was equated with a warmth in a cold place, a light in the darkness.”

The Kairos Organisational Manual (1998, as cited in Burnside, 2008, p.8) says that the “Kairos" short-course is designed to help bring prisoners into

…a safe Christian environment… as opposed to a coercive or manipulative environment”.

Later in this chapter, there is further discussion concerning “Kairos”.

A safe place for wounded people

In my interview with Chaplain Bruce, he said that

There are a lot of guys here who want to feel the reconciliation and the father-heart of God.

I saw in this statement, as well as in his attitude and actions over the previous nine years, a real sympathy with and empathy for prisoners, especially those in
distress. Bruce is a man who is always striving to create a space in which wounded people can be safe.

I was reminded of a statement made by Todd & Tipton (2011, p.3) in a Cardiff report:

The prison chaplaincy space is a valued and cherished safe location within the prison; providing a crucial support mechanism for the vulnerable, and those struggling to manage the demands of incarceration.

On the basis of what was said in many of these interviews, this is certainly so in Acacia Prison.

*Safe to express your faith*

Tyrone, just a few weeks after release from prison, looked back in amazement that the Acacia faith community had been so strong:

I personally think what the Acacia Prison has there is outstanding… The ability to be able to freely express your Christian belief in a prison…

I think that, as he looked back upon his experience of being a Christian person in various prison environments, he was saying something not only about the faith community in Acacia, but about Acacia Prison itself. He went on to say this:

In an environment that is not always healthy, where it’s quite often hostile, where it’s quite abrasive – to be able to express your faith and to be able to freely worship, to be able to read your bible and communicate freely. I think it’s a good and healthy thing.

My chaplaincy colleague Bruce spoke of the need in a prison for a place where people of all Christian denominations and backgrounds could meet and worship together:

There needs to be space for people of different approaches to faith – different denominations – to participate, to exercise their spiritual gifts…

After he said this, I wondered how much he – and I, for that matter – assists in creating an environment in which this is likely to take place. Certainly, we both try to do so. Yet both of us are experienced clergy, deeply embedded in our own denominational churches. I think it remains a challenge for us.
The safety of confidentiality

Silas had been in prison 11½ years. I had known him in Casuarina Prison, then in Acacia. In fact I had testified on his behalf at an appeal hearing against an order of deportation. For part of his time in Acacia he had headed up the peer support group. In that capacity he and I had worked together on a large number of occasions to assist prisoners in various kinds of distress. In his post-release interview with me, Silas looked back on his involvement in the faith community, and said,

It was a safe place for me to go. It was a nice place for me to go. I could speak about anything, knowing that the confidentiality was there with you. And I’d do the same with Seth at times – [Chaplain] Seth... - I really enjoyed that part of my belief there.

They’re not to be given the steering wheel

In my interview with my chaplaincy colleague Bruce, he explained that, since the Acacia community of faith is ecumenical, he views it as a large ship rather than as a small boat. As prisoners come and go, he’s happy to create space on the side of the boat or the bow of the boat or wherever, even on the bridge where decisions are made, “to try things that might not be my flavour”. However, he adds,

But I’m very clear that they’re not to be given the steering wheel... To me, that’s the key to maintaining a safe environment.

I think this is a really powerful image. It certainly indicates Bruce’s idea of what makes for a safe environment. However, I think there are other elements in play. For example, as I listened I wondered whether this thought was an indication of insecurity on his part. I had not noticed this in his attitude or behaviour in the prison, but did he feel that control might slip out of his grasp if he acted differently? At the same time, it caused me to reflect on the whole question of authority. Where does authority lie in the faith community, and what kind of authority/leadership exists within it?

Perhaps I am showing a sense of insecurity here, but I wondered whether Bruce was feeling or expressing discomfort at the kind of leadership I exert in the Acacia
faith community. Perhaps so. I am prepared to change policy and direction if my colleagues or – for example – the Term Leadership Group come up with a reasonably persuasive argument. Do I do this too readily?

Built into what Bruce is saying is a sense of reality. He is stating, in effect, that the community of faith needs clear and consistent leadership. Perhaps he’s right. In a meeting of the TLG, there are times when I will either (a) on the grounds of security or of prison regulations say that a particular project is “not on”, or (b) ask whether a suggestion is in line with the general direction we have previously agreed upon. To what extent does this attitude and practice spell out agreement with Bruce?

“the rawness of the prison community”

In Chapter 2 I wrote of Jennifer, a member of our Sunday morning roster of visitors for 9 years, who said that “Every service in Acacia is real. There’s no pretence…” Hilda, another Sunday morning volunteer, added that “People in our home church wear masks…”

Bruce had been chaplain in Acacia for one day a week for 9½ years when I interviewed him as part of this study. I said to him, “Would you like to talk to me about the community of faith?” He responded,

I think there’s a realness about it… I’m not saying that people don’t have masks that they set in place... They do. But I feel that, even though those are there, every so often you can feel people reaching through them. It’s very real.

Later in the interview, he added,

In some ways, I wish I could bring my town into prison for six months. I’m sure we’d be a lot more spiritual [as a result].

An Indigenous prisoner called Jimmy marvelled at the change he saw in a large number of prisoners who were now members of the Acacia faith community. He could see similar changes beginning in his own life and attitude:

Yeh, especially with me. All I’ve ever done [before] is hurt people, rob people.
And it makes you think.

I think that, as well as this, he could see that maintaining this changed outlook would not be easy.
Gunnar, a man with a reputation for unpredictable violence, had started attending chaplaincy-sponsored programmes. To his surprise, he had found welcome and respect. In my interview with him, he had this to say:

Everyone was human when they came to church [here in Acacia] because they dropped their guard a lot, y’know... They got no ego. No apprehensions, or they’re not trying to show off or big-note themselves. They’re in damage mode, you know, they’re trying to recover, they’re trying to rebuild their lives...

In one of two interviews with my chaplaincy colleague Boadicea (who was, at that time, a chaplain-in-training), she said:

I think there’s a sense of urgency [in the Acacia faith community] that I don’t experience in my own community of faith... being that the problems in people’s lives are imminent, they’re right there, in front of them.

In my interview with him, Bruce spoke several times of “The rawness of the prison community”, and he said,

The community of faith is important to me. It’s a privilege to be involved in it. I see aspects of Christ in it that I often find it more difficult to see in church outside the prison.

As he said this, it occurred to me that this is one of the real attractions of prison ministry.

**Vietnamese Bible Fellowship**

For almost two years, two Vietnamese pastors have been entering the prison on a fortnightly basis to conduct a “Vietnamese Bible Fellowship”. The turn-over has been enormous, possibly because most Vietnamese-speaking prisoners have been in Acacia for relatively minor offences. The number of prisoners present has ranged from 7 into the 20s. Our two visitors are lovely, gentle folk whose influence is healthy and positive.

However, I find myself pulled in several directions in this matter. Over the years Acacia has been in operation, I have consistently turned down applications from representatives of Christian denominations, and from branches of the Buddhist religion, to facilitate groups of their own persuasion within the prison. I have done this on the grounds of precedent. There have been applications from so many
groups that Acacia simply would not have the staff or the facilities to cope with all of them. I acceded to the pressure applied vigorously by one of the other chaplains, who asserted that this was a language group rather than a denominational division. But I felt uneasy about it.

Some of my misgivings arose from the thought that, in time, the Vietnamese bible fellowship might become an “alternative church”, an instrument of division. My other, related difficulty with this development was theological (Padilla, 1982). Belief in Jesus is or should be a focus for unity rather than of division. St. Paul writes about this in his letters – about the way in which Jew and Greek, slave and free person, find a one-ness in Christ. So, for example, in writing to the Christian congregation in Galatia, he has this to say:

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

(Galatians 3.28)

In authorising this group to begin meeting in Acacia, I explained carefully to the visiting pastors, and to the participants, that it was on condition that sessions of this new group never became substitutes for chapel services. They readily agreed, though I was far from sure that they understood what I had said. However, I have to acknowledge that, to this point, they have kept their word, and that this group has been a very positive influence in the Acacia faith community.

“Kairos”

In the video, Love Is Not a Luxury (Lee, 1995), someone says, “Most legal systems around the world deal with the symptoms of crime rather than with its causes.” I believe that the chaplaincy-sponsored programme, “Kairos” is a real attempt to tackle some of the causes. Many of the men I come across in prison are isolated and abused persons who have never experienced love or respect. “Kairos” is, I think, a genuine attempt to provide such men with four days of Christian love, without applying pressure to respond or to become a Christian.

This programme has been operating in prisons in other countries for some time, and in recent years, in other Australian states. However the three occasions on which we have run “Kairos” in Acacia are the first three in WA. It has been a four-day “short course”, which has involved about 18 prisoners and either 17 or more
volunteers from outside the prison. Prisoner attendance is entirely voluntary, invitations being delivered to leaders in the various residential blocks. Most of these are not people of faith.

I was in several minds about authorising “Kairos” to begin in Acacia. I attended two “information evenings”, and I came away from these with the impression that the primary purpose of the exercise was to proselytise. It seemed to me that, if this was the case, it did not sit easily with the purpose of chaplaincy in Acacia. We are pastors, teachers and counsellors – not evangelists (Harness, 2005). However, I was informed that pressure would not be applied to prisoner-participants, and that the major emphasis was upon the experience of Christian fellowship. I asked the other Acacia chaplains for their views, and I asked the TLG to decide. Both groups left it up to me. Eventually, and with some misgivings, I invited “Kairos” personnel to come in, and I did so for two reasons. The first was that I heard that, in almost every case in other prisons, post-release activities had been established. I believed that the period following release from prison is so critical that positive Christian support at that time could be invaluable. My second reason for deciding to establish “Kairos” in Acacia has turned out not to be valid: I thought that other WA prisons were welcoming the programme (which they were not), and that our men might be missing out on it.

In the event, “Kairos” has been a blessing in Acacia. Part of the reason for this has been the involvement of so many volunteers from the wider community. I consider that volunteers are the heartbeat of this programme (Burnside, 2008). Another reason is the informal nature of the sessions. The men sit round tables with others who are like them and with male volunteers who have become their friends. They work together and eat together for four days. It’s the kind of situation that many of them long for or can relate to. Burnside (2008, p.8) comments,

…it is much easier for the prisoners to integrate what they’ve learned with what their lives are like if this sort of integration is modelled by the intervention itself. The method and the message should go together.

Very few of the 53 “Kairos” prisoner-participants were members of the community of faith, and only three or four of the others have become regular attenders at chapel services or bible studies since taking part in this programme. However, as with STP, it formed a little community of people who felt a strong bond with each
other. Almost all have continued to meet on a regular basis since that time. They are content to use the chapel for these gatherings. There is a real connection between the faith community and the “Kairos” community. The “Kairos” group is part of the community of faith, and yet not part of it.

**Conclusion**

Chapters 4 and 5 have presented a description of the (Christian) faith community in Acacia Prison, and Chapter 5 included a brief description of the chapel-sponsored programme “Kairos”. The next two chapters – 6 and 7 – contain a more in-depth “case study” of the Sycamore Tree Project” (STP), as it is conducted in Acacia. Chapter 8 consists of reflections about the kind of community that is described in these four chapters. Chapter 9 deals with the spiritual capital generated and expended in these three “over-lapping communities”: the community of faith, STP, and “Kairos”.
CHAPTER SIX - THE “SYCAMORE TREE PROJECT” [1]

Introduction

Chapters 6 and 7 together present a “case study” of the chaplaincy-sponsored programme STP, as it is practised in Acacia Prison, with some reflections upon it. This is necessarily an incomplete picture, because at time of writing there have been 17 groups, which have differed dramatically from one another.

In this chapter, I speak of the way in which I became acquainted with STP, and of the beginnings of this project in Acacia. In addition, I point out some of the ways in which STP has led to the creation of spiritual capital. I contend that communities of faith and restorative justice projects have similar or over-lapping aims (Volona, 2000), namely that of restoring, or “binding back”, that which is separated. The healing or mending that takes place, or should take place, within each participant as well as in her or his relationships is likely to result in the development of spiritual capital. Part of this is evidenced in the group dynamics within each STP. And part is seen in the reaching out in kindness to others, whether within the group or beyond (Liu, 2007; Lybbert, 2008; Woodberry, 2003; Zohar, 2010). In addition, I deal briefly with a number of general themes which emerge from observation of Acacia STPs. These are as follows:

- The extent to which STP is, or is not, religious;
- The “voluntariness” of this programme;
- Oral language competence (OLC);
- A matter which is almost always an underlying consideration in Australian prisons – that of child sex offenders;
- Pastoral care of STP participants;
- “Recruitment” of visitor-participants in STP; and
- Indigenous issues.

My own introduction to the STP and restorative justice

My association with STP did not begin with this research, or even with the STP programmes in Acacia. It started with a visit of Daniel Van Ness to Perth, two or three years before our first Acacia STP. He spoke about STP at a public meeting
which was sponsored by Prison Fellowship WA. At that gathering he introduced himself to me and, later that day, he visited us at Acacia. Van Ness did his best to persuade me to run STP in Acacia. However I declined, because we did not have the resources or the manpower. Even so, this “prepared the ground” for the second approach, which took place 2½ years later. This time it was different. Two men, Gabriel and Jack, said they wished to discuss the matter with me. If we went ahead with STP, they would be prepared to co-facilitate the project and to recruit, prepare and de-brief the visitor-participants. I would be responsible for all in-prison arrangements. Once STP was “up and running” in Acacia, I was able to observe the formation of community in what for me was a new and different context, and I observed the creation of spiritual capital.

In 2005, I attended a public lecture in Perth WA on restorative justice delivered by Mr. Graeme Taylor, who was then a researcher with the Centre for Justice and Reconciliation, in Washington DC. And not long after our Acacia STP journey began, but still some time before this STP research started, I was invited to an informal meeting and seminar to welcome another guest to Perth. This was Professor Bruce Archibald, a scholar and restorative justice practitioner from Nova Scotia. He gave me a copy of an article he had written⁵. In retrospect, I see that these visits increased my interest and curiosity in matters concerning restorative justice.

**Change**

There is a significant part of me that resists and resents change. When Gabriel and Jack approached me about "Sycamore Tree", I thought, "Oh no..." Even at that stage I sensed that, if we headed down that path, it would mean huge changes. Accepting STP would entail changes in the way we approach chaplaincy in Acacia. Good or bad, it would probably involve a different kind of interaction with the Senior Management Team, the custodial officers and the Intelligence department. And the fact that STP participants would most likely be drawn from every faith group on the planet might well cause me to be more aware of people of faiths other than Christianity and to change my attitude towards them.

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I was sure that this would be beneficial to everyone involved, including me, but I was equally sure that it would entail huge change for me.

As previously mentioned, I already knew a little about STP. I believed that it was a quality programme which could benefit large numbers of participants, and I sensed that this was probably an opportunity I could not refuse in good conscience. Van Ness (2005b, p.4) writes of the programme in this way:

> The aim of the programme is to help offenders understand the experience of victims, and to consider how they can begin to make things right in their own cases. However, we wanted the programme to serve victims as well, and we have consistently found that they do benefit from it.

(see also Johnstone, 2014)

And he adds (2005b) that this is a simple programme which can have a profound impact.

STP is a model of restorative justice in which groups of offenders meet with groups of victims of unrelated crimes. In Acacia Prison, STPs began with six sessions, lasting an average of 2½ hours each. However the projects expanded quickly to consist of eight 3-hour sessions. This project is currently being run in 23 countries. We understand that the way in which it is conducted in Acacia differs significantly from everywhere else. This will be explained later in this chapter.

Adding to my reluctance at that time was the fact that the decision to proceed or not to proceed with STP would be solely mine. In addition, it seemed at that stage that, if my answer was "yes", no other chaplain would work with me on such a project. One said that he was very much in favour of "Sycamore Tree" coming to Acacia. He had been a member of a restorative justice committee in Perth for some years, he knew the issues and the potential. However, when I asked what kinds of contribution he felt able to make in this area, it became clear that he did not wish to do anything. The other two chaplains told me that, if I wished to go ahead with "Sycamore Tree", they would certainly not stand in my way. My heart sank.

Indeed all of the changes I anticipated have taken place, and more. STP has
greatly influenced the ways in which chaplaincy relates to staff as well as to inmates in Acacia. This remarkable programme is potentially life-changing for prisoner-participants as well as for victims of crime. And, in a sense, it has provided a prism through which we have come to view a great deal of our chaplaincy work. A large proportion of our ministry is aimed towards assisting prisoners to take responsibility for their lives, to build or re-build relationships and with God's help to plan for the future. The aims of chaplaincy and the aims of “Sycamore Tree” may not be identical, but they definitely over-lap (Volona, 2000).

“Don’t worry, Gabriel, I shall be there!”

Gabriel, who was to be one of the two facilitators for the first STP, said that he would leave “some articles” about STP at the Acacia Prison gatehouse for me to read. To my consternation, it was a huge stack of articles, reports and assessments – mainly in connection with STP in New Zealand and in the U.K.

He rang me a few weeks later and asked had I read the reports on pilot programmes in those two countries? Did I notice that reports from the U.K. said that some participants had broken down and had left the room? Gabriel then said that, because of this, he would require a second room close by as well as some person who would be able to minister to anyone who had to leave the session. Wondering what on earth I was letting myself in for, I said, “Don’t worry, Gabriel, I shall be there!”

This is how the practice began of a chaplain “sitting in” on the project. I took part in an international diploma course in restorative justice in Queen’s Theological College, Ontario in 2007. I was told that, of the 18 countries then running STP, we were the only one in which a chaplain was present without actually being the facilitator. I believe that it’s a very positive innovation.

In quite a few of our Acacia STP sessions, people have broken down in sobs, but no-one has left the room because of it. However, it has been more than convenient to have a chaplain present, because the chaplain is easily able to liaise with management and staff. In addition, he or she is ideally suited to explain security matters and to escort visitors to the toilets. The matter of morning tea and lunch is simplified because the chaplain “sitting in” is familiar with the prison context. And the fact that a chaplain is present in the sessions enables her or him
to exercise follow-up pastoral care of the prisoners involved. The first four STPs in Australia took place at Acacia. Since then, seven other WA prisons have taken it up in slightly different ways, but five of them have taken up the practice of having a chaplain present during each session.

One thing I always explain to the STP group during Session One is that, because I am a priest, I will not repeat what any person says unless that person has given me permission to do so. I tell them that I will report to Senior Management on the process of the project – whether it has gone well, for example, or badly – but not on what any person has said.

We have now conducted 17 STPs in Acacia Prison, and are preparing for the 18th and 19th. After the first four, it seemed to me that this project was changing the face of the faith community in our prison. I had “sat in” on those four, but I believed strongly that every other chaplain should do this for at least one project. I thought it was important for them to gain a “feel” for what was happening. I have sat in on eleven of the seventeen, and have been associated in various ways with the other six.

“In that case, we shall cancel the programme”

The date was set for the first session of the first “Sycamore Tree Project” to be held in Australia, which was in October 2005. The victims of crime had been prepared, the list of offenders had been changed several times but was now finalised. The Assistant Director responsible for Offender Services called me to a meeting with her and with the officer in charge of security for that block.

The latter said to me, “There will be an officer sitting in on the programme…” Before I could remonstrate, she went on to say that there would be six offenders sitting in a room with five men, three women and a chaplain. One of the prisoners was a murderer and most of the others were sex offenders. She said that this was a security issue and she must insist that an officer be present. I said that “In that case, we shall cancel the programme.”

I went on to explain that prisoners needed to be able to tell their story. They would be reluctant to do so if an officer was listening in but, if any of them did speak frankly, they could well say things that an officer would be duty-bound to report. I
added that, for all I knew, some prisoners might wish to speak about the officers. Prison officers would be welcome to patrol the corridor, and I hoped they would always be available. I would be participating in the session, and I would carry a radio. If this was not acceptable, then the programme must be cancelled. It was clear that these two persons had misgivings about this. However they accepted my argument.

**And what about sex offenders?**

I proposed that the prisoners involved in the first STP all come from the Protection segment of the prison (see Chapter 1). A large proportion of these would be sex offenders. The assistant-director and staff member at that meeting both questioned the wisdom of such a decision, and one of them said to me,

> What about sex offenders? Are you sure that you want sex offenders in the "Sycamore Tree Project"?

I responded that

> I don't want them to be excluded from anything, unless there's some special reason to do so – and I do not see any special reason in this case.

I could see that they were unhappy about this, but they raised no further objections, at least in my presence. The outstanding success of the first STP convinced them, I think.

At my 2007 course in Queen’s Theological College, many of the other participants came from countries where STP was being run. As I spoke with them, I discovered to my surprise that Acacia Prison was the only place in the world where child sex offenders participated in STP. I asked why they were excluded in other places. All but one said it was out of consideration for the victims of crime, who would be obliged to listen to horrific stories from sex offenders. The one exception came from United Kingdom staff members, who independently informed me that they had made this decision out of consideration for facilitators⁶.

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⁶ See, for example, Berger & Quiros (2014), Neff et al. (2012) and Shalinsky (2014) for discussion of vicarious trauma among service providers who are working with victims of crime. In addition, Hoing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang (2014) identify negative as well as positive effects among Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) volunteers from working with sex offenders over an extended period.
At that stage we had conducted four STPs in Acacia, two of which had been among Protection prisoners. I had seen “horrific stories” as a major issue, but not from sex offenders! Perhaps unkindly, it crossed my mind that practitioners from those other countries might be prejudiced against child sex offenders.

In my opinion, the best and most effective restorative justice programmes for child sex offenders would be “circles” which include as many stakeholders as possible (Boyes-Watson, 2005b; Hannem & Petrunik, 2007; MacRae & Zehr, 2004; Walker & Greening, 2010). By this I mean as many family members and close friends of the victim as possible, as well as of the offender (in fact this will frequently be the same family), preferably over a lengthy period. Because of the logistics of the prison environment, none of this is possible. However, STP assists many of these men to begin the journey towards taking responsibility for their lives and their actions. It touches them at a very deep level. Perhaps this is because STP goes part of the way towards creating the kind of circle I have described. STP provides a real sense of community and an atmosphere of trust. There is a palpable feeling in the group that “we are in this together”, even though the participants are victims and offenders associated with unrelated crimes.

In STP, almost all prisoner-participants experience real change in attitudes and self-awareness (Bakker, 2005; Feasey et al., 2005; Feasey & Williams, 2009; Van Ness, 2007; Wilson, 2007). The danger that comes with this is that some could mistakenly think that they "have arrived". In fact they have made a significant step in a journey which in many instances may continue for the rest of their lives. I believe this mistake may be more likely to be made by child sex offenders than by most others. The step they have taken is probably a very small one. Yet, if it has involved taking increasing responsibility for their actions and their lives, it could be highly significant.

**To what extent is the “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP) religious?**

When I interview prisoners who have applied to take part in STP, I carefully explain that in Acacia we do not run STP as a specifically “religious” programme. I tell people that participants will be invited to tell part of their life story. For some participants, faith will have been part of that story. However, once a person says
or implies that “You must believe it too!”; the facilitator will stop him. It’s not part of the programme.

Two men I’ve interviewed have found difficulty with this. Both were convinced Christians, and both saw “witnessing to the gospel” as an important feature of their faith. One was a Maori prisoner called Thadeus. He said to me, “I’ll have to think about that, and come back to you.” This is what he did. After considering the matter seriously, he decided that he could enter into it fully “for Jesus’ sake”, without evangelising, and that his sincerity would be a witness to his faith. In an interview prior to release, Thadeus spoke glowingly of STP, particularly of insights gained through meeting victims of crime:

… actually coming in here and seeing the results and how long it takes for them to get over something which I thought was nothing has actually done to their lives and changed their whole lives!

Donald made a similar decision but was unable to keep to it. About half-way through his STP, he made an appointment to see me, and said,

But it’s too hard, Alan! They need to hear about God’s forgiveness – because it’s true, and because it makes a huge difference!

After a long conversation with me, Donald decided to continue, and to make real efforts not to evangelise. I was not “sitting in” on this particular STP, but I understand from Donald’s fellow-participants that he was not always successful. However it is important to note that, so far as I have observed, Donald was an exception.

A devout Christian called Algernon, who was a prisoner-participant in STP8, said later in an interview in this research,

And there wasn’t too much faith being pushed, but there was the underlying thing because of the sycamore tree story, about Zacchaeus.

Algernon’s Christian belief was strong. Yet he was aware that most people in his STP group were not persons of faith. I think he was acknowledging what I would call a “spiritual” basis to a course that was not in his opinion so religious as to be offensive to participants.
On the other hand, one of our visitor-participants who came in for two STPs, in her second “Sycamore Tree” took it on herself to implore prisoners to come to Jesus in order to receive God’s forgiveness. When she spoke with me afterwards, she could not see that this might have been an inappropriate thing to say, or an inappropriate context in which to say it. Two things probably need to be said. The first is that, as far as I know, this is the only time something of this nature has been said by a visitor in an Acacia STP. The second is that this particular lady has not been invited to join us for a third project.

More than half the STP sessions have taken place in the chapel, and sometimes the facilitator has asked specifically for this. I feel uneasy about this, because in my opinion it says very loudly that this is a religious project (the venue is “saying” something that isn’t true). The facilitator and most of the other visitors are happy with the chapel as a venue, because it is comfortable, carpeted and easily adaptable to small and large groups. The fact that I am its “gatekeeper” ensures that there will be no interruption, and it is adjacent to my office (which happens to be the only office in the prison which has a sink and hot and cold water taps). I suppose, too, that, as the prison becomes increasingly overcrowded, other locations are harder to find.

But the chapel has a large crucifix on the wall, and three book cases full of bibles and other Christian literature. In addition, the majority of visitor-participants are Christians, and some of them will say something about that as they tell the group what has happened to them.

I think that most of our STP visitors do not realise how irrelevant Christianity appears to be to most Acacia prisoners. I imagine that more than half of our prisoners do not know who Jesus is – also that many of the others have bad experience of Christians who are forbidding or unloving.

During STP sessions, we “tease out” one or more biblical stories. However we would not do this because they are in the bible but because of what these stories contain.

- We always use that of Zacchaeus (in Luke 19.1-10) – a rich, corrupt tax collector who climbed a tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus as he travelled through Jericho, and how his encounter with Jesus prompted him to
change his whole attitude to life. The story of “Zac” is examined from the perspective of the offender (Zac himself), the victims, and the community.

- In addition, we sometimes use the story of David (in 2 Samuel 11 & 12) – how he arranged the death of his loyal officer Uriah the Hittite in order to keep Uriah’s wife Bathsheba for himself. David received forgiveness because he repented, but the horrific consequences of David’s actions remained.

Later in this chapter, I speak of two members of a small group in STP13 who said that they “clicked off” at any mention of Jesus or God. They said that they did this as soon as they heard the story of Zacchaeus. It is fair to add that the programme was so powerful that both were “sucked in” at a later stage, one of them less than thirty minutes later. He was a prisoner called Wilhelm who said that he used to “do debt collects”. Wilhelm began to take responsibility for his actions, and to see that he had caused severe harm to another person, simply for money.

In comparison to almost all other programmes sponsored by chaplaincy in Acacia Prison, STP is not at all religious. However I am aware, as I write this, that I am not only a convinced Christian but I have been ordained for 44 years. What seems neutral to me may be mind-blowingly religious to someone else. I remember being surprised in the final session of STP6, when a prisoner called Marty said that STP had “heavy religious content”.

Marty is a Maori and was known to be one of the leaders of a well known bikie gang. When it came to the final (celebratory) session of the project, in which every prisoner-participant had the right to invite one guest from within the prison, it was interesting to note that more than half the guests were Maoris and members of Marty’s gang. When he spoke, it was mainly to them. Marty said that there was “heavy religious content” in the programme, but that he was able to deal with that (“and if I can deal with that, anyone can…”). However he recommended that, if they had the opportunity to take part in a future STP, they “do it like a shot”. He said that, although it came from a religious background,

it dealt mainly with feelings and emotions, and you don’t have much
opportunity to look at emotions and feelings in a prison. You can’t, because you’ve got to get on with your day to day living. It makes you vulnerable… At the end of the first three sessions, I went out into the prison crying, and I thought, “Fuck! I’m not coming back next week!” But I did…

Bender and Armour (2007) are adamant that spirituality and “religiosity” are two different things (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2000; O’Connor, 2004-2005), and they explore the idea that there is spiritual content in restorative justice projects. As Fewell (1995, p.2) tells us, "Many religious and nonreligious people use the term ‘spirituality,’ but you have to talk to each individual to find out what they mean.” Bender & Armour (2007, p.253) embrace Zehr’s idea (2002; 2005a) that spirituality relies upon principles which are not related to any one religion or ideology but represent universal principles about human interaction (they define spirituality as “reverence for life”, and they take reverence as “being in awe of, deep regard, or veneration”). I think that the aim in Acacia STPs, which has not always been achieved, has been to provide a deeply spiritual programme – one which deals with principles of human relationship – without being specifically religious (Galanter, 2006).

Buddhist and Moslem prisoners have been among the participants in Acacia STPs. All of these men have spoken to me of the welcome and the respect that has been accorded to them. All of them have added that the principles of STP have sat easily with the beliefs and teachings of their own faith group. One real “plus” in this regard has been that our current facilitator is a devout Christian who is nonetheless widely read in Buddhist literature.

I note with interest that Volona (2000) sees restorative justice as entirely consistent with the sacred writings of the Christian Jewish, Buddhist and Moslem faiths. In addition, she finds restorative justice principles inherent in some of the Australian Aboriginal dreamtime stories.

**Why does STP “work”?**

We cannot say with any degree of statistical certainty that STP, as it is conducted in Acacia Prison, is effective or ineffective. An “assessment form” has been distributed to participants at the conclusion of the six or eight most recent projects. However, filling them in is optional, the questions are far from
systematic, and the purpose of the form is to ascertain the participant’s opinions and feelings at the conclusion of the course. No such form has been distributed at the beginning of STP projects. I regret this situation. As Immarigeon (as cited in Liebmann & Braithwaite, 1999, p.24) points out,

…it is vital that process and evaluation studies are conducted with empirical data and critical perspectives. This information can be used to improve programmes and to establish whether they achieve their aims and objectives.

Zehr (2005b, p.300) is clear that we should evaluate processes as well as outcomes:

We need to evaluate what we are doing and how it compares with what we think we are doing.

He insists that we continue to ask ourselves how we evaluate as well as what values are implied in our approach to evaluation.

In the case of Acacia STP, I would add that such evaluation and assessment would have enabled promoters of STP to speak with authority and confidence to representatives of the Department of Corrective Services. Brookes (1996, p.1) sounds a note of warning in this regard. He reminds us that

There are certain restorative processes which, for various reasons, we don’t (or don’t know how to) measure that are essential to restorative outcomes.

(see Konstan, 2001; Llewellyn et al., 2013; Williams, 2008)

Brookes (1996) has a different model of restorative justice in mind. Yet the note of warning he sounds applies equally to STP. He cautions that practitioners of restorative justice should not be so governed by numerals and statistics in the assessment process that “the metaphysic of empathy and forgiveness” (Brookes, 1996, p.1) is overlooked, and the extent to which lives have been touched or changed.

There was brief discussion in Chapter 2 concerning “selection bias” in restorative justice, owing to the voluntary nature of all or most programmes (Armour et al., 2008; McCold, 2008; Shapland et al., 2006). Selection bias is likely to be stronger
in the UK, and perhaps in New Zealand as well, because of the conditions of entry to the programme which are imposed upon applicants. There is no doubt that this instrument accurately measures attitudinal change in prisoners owing to participation in STP. Nor is there any reasonable doubt that these changes correspond strongly with reduced recidivism rates. However comparison with over-all re-offending rates needs to be modified in the light of the voluntary nature of participation as well as the conditions of entry which apply in the UK.

So we have no “proof”, as such, that STP, as conducted in Acacia, is effective. Yet I observe that it touches lives. Not only I, but others as well, see changes in people’s attitudes and behaviours as a result of “Sycamore Tree”. Participants cry and shout and become depressed and elated and lose their tempers and lose sleep. I know that it is real. Moreover, I observe changed attitudes and behaviours, and so do the custodial officers who are based in the prison’s residential blocks. This programme works.

“How did you survive?”

Years ago, when I was a teenager, our family provided accommodation in our home for Ronald, a new young minister in our parish. It was going to be for two weeks while he found an apartment, but it ended up as six months or more. Part-way through that time, he invited us all to his family home for lunch. Before the meal began, we were all taken out to the back yard to meet his elder brother Charles. Charles was stripped to the waist, working in the garden.

I have been a hospital chaplain, and have worked in crisis care wards. But I have still never seen a more grossly deformed back than Charles’s. It was covered with terrible welts and swelling. Someone asked what had happened – what had caused these ghastly injuries? He explained that he had been a prisoner of war in Japanese concentration camps for five years - in Changi, then at the Kwai River. The welts were caused by horse whips. There was an awful silence, then one of the group said, “How did you survive?” He replied, with some intensity, “Hatred.”

I remember thinking at the time how terrible that, in order to survive, his hatred had to be more intense than the cruelty meted out to him. Years later, as I looked back, I wondered how he managed when he no longer needed to hate. Did
someone assist him to work through that? Probably not. It seemed to me that he had placed all that hatred and bitterness and resentment in a little box (so to speak), so that he wouldn't have to think about it. Why would Charles do that? So that he could survive. So that he could continue with his daily life. That “little box” was his defence.

It seems to me that every victim of crime does the same thing. The person who has been offended against puts her or his woundedness and bitterness, and perhaps his or her justified desire for revenge, into a box in order to survive – in order to continue with daily life.

I think that the same thing applies to almost every offender as well. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Zehr (2004) writes that most or all instances of violence arise from experience of trauma. He adds that trauma is experienced by offenders as well as victims (Gustafson, 2004; Randall & Haskell, 2013). There is no doubt that severe offending can and does cause trauma in offenders (Maschi et al., 2011). The offender can’t live anything like a normal life if, every moment, he’s overcome with guilt and remorse. He, too, tucks it all into a box and forgets about it, for all or part of the time, in order to continue living. If he is incarcerated, the prison system will assist him in this. In prison he will probably be treated without respect and as a non-person, and he may soon consider himself to be a victim rather than an offender.

I believe that what happens in STP is that offenders and victims of crime begin or continue to work through their “defence” boxes together. As they do so, they find that they have much in common.

Mahmoud, a prisoner-participant in STP14, said that

> The other programmes [in the prison] are good on theory, but they don’t teach emotions, and feelings. This programme is real…..

Interestingly, one of the STP facilitators in Mackenzie’s study (2009) comments that victim-participants, in order to heal,

> have to be prepared to be emotional for maybe a long time afterwards because they have constructed a wall that has protected them..

and adds that
…now the wall is not there, so they can’t protect themselves anymore from that emotion. If that’s going to happen then they need the support afterwards to do the work and be healed by it.

“Voluntariness”

At some point in almost every STP, someone raises the issue of the “voluntariness” of the project. A good example was Werner, a prisoner-participant in STP13, who said, “This is such a terrific course that every prisoner in Acacia should be made to do it!”

This came to a head at the final (celebratory) session of STP 10, when the Director of the prison approached me to say, “What would you say if we made ‘Sycamore Tree’ compulsory for all prisoners?” I’m afraid that I responded, “In that case, I would withdraw the support of the Chaplaincy Department.” My reasoning was that harmony and right relations, which are prominent elements in STP, cannot be established by coercion and force (Bevan et al., 2005; Harris, 1998; Johnstone, 2007; Obold-Eshleman, 2004).

Armour et al. (2008, p.164) speak of “the voluntary nature of the process in restorative justice programs” (see, for example, Gavrielides, 2013; Gavrielides & Coker, 2005; Gustafson, 2004; Johnstone, 2014; Marshall, 2005). Wilson (2007, p.5) refers to restorative justice as “a process entirely dependent on voluntary participation” (see Williams, 2013). And, in setting out arguments against restorative justice programmes in prisons, Johnstone (2007) writes as follows:

The coercive, segregative and authoritarian nature of the prison will, in any case, undermine any efforts at genuine restorative justice, which requires voluntary involvement, engagement with the community, informality and flexibility.

(Johnstone, 2007, p.70, my own underlining)

Representing “the community”?

In Chapter 2, I wrote of the statement by Braithwaite (1999, as cited in Bottoms, 2003) and Wilson et al. (2002) to the effect that no project could claim to be restorative unless it seeks to restore victims, to restore offenders and to restore
community. On the basis of my experience of STP, I find myself disagreeing strongly with Braithwaite as well as with Wilson and colleagues. As previously stated, STP is a project in which offenders meet with victims of unrelated crimes. Yet community is formed and lives are changed (MacKenzie, 2009; Ridgeway, 2005; Wilson, 2007). These are perceptible changes which happen in project after project. No amount of defining can explain this away. Many of the victims and offenders who take part in STP have previously been disempowered by their experiences of one or more criminal acts, then by their experience of the criminal justice system. I now witness their empowerment through participation in STP (Wilson, 2007). Prisoner-attitudes are altered due to participation in STP, and it is highly likely that this is reflected in reduced recidivism rates (Bakker, 2007; Feasey & Williams, 2009; Feasey et al., 2005; Wilson, 2007). Because of all this, and on the basis of my own observation, I am prepared to call this project “restorative justice” I am reminded of Barton’s statement (2000) that the difference between conventional and restorative justice can most usefully be articulated in terms of empowerment and disempowerment of the primary stakeholders. For this reason I am far more content with McCold and Wachtel’s suggestion (as cited Gavrielides, 2008, p.5) of a “restorative continuum”:

…there are ranges of restorative practices, from “fully restorative” to “mostly restorative” to “partially restorative”

(or, as Wright, 2001, p.5 puts it, “restorativeness’ is not an all-or-nothing characteristic”). They add that a “process definition” could rule out “mostly restorative” and “partially restorative”. On the other hand, in theory an entirely outcome-based definition might rule out some central restorative rule such as non-violent communication or open and honest dialogue (Hamlin & Hokamura, 2014).

I suspect that STP might be seen as falling short of the “fully restorative” mark, because of the lack of significant representation of “community” (Bazemore & Ellis, 2007; Toews 2006). This topic of community, however, warrants further analysis. McCold & Wachtell (1998, p.71) write,
Community justice initiatives, such as community policing and restorative justice, have tended to define community rather loosely, if at all. This has led to confusion about it and variation…

(see, for example, Verity & King, 2007)

I don’t have many points of reference at my disposal. However my feeling is that it’s unhelpful to be deciding whether STP, as conducted in Acacia Prison, is “more restorative” or “less restorative”. My instinct is to say that it IS restorative (Van Ness, 2005a), while acknowledging that it is differently restorative.

On several occasions it has been suggested to me that the chaplain “sitting in” on each Acacia STP might be filling the role of “community”. However, I must respond that this is not a valid comment. I have two reasons for saying this. One is that, when I am the chaplain “sitting in”, I certainly don’t feel that I am representing any segment of the community “outside”. My other reason, which may be the same, is that I am too much part of the prison scene for this to be so.

Shantz (2008), reporting on an in-prison programme called “Face to Face”, tackles this issue in an interesting way. “Face to Face” projects involved five offenders, five victims of crime, and one additional person who represented the “outside” community. He or she was to give a perspective of the crime from the point of view of the neighbours living next door to the crime scene.

“for those who have been silenced….”

In Acacia’s first six or seven STP’s, a strict ratio of one victim of crime to one prisoner-participant was kept. At the end of that time, STP began at Wooroloo Prison Farm. They reported a ratio of one visitor to every two prisoners, and said that it worked very well. We decided to try this out at Acacia. When we saw little or no diminution in the strength of the programme, we decided that this ratio would always be our aim. In more recent times, we have tended to reduce the number of visitors still further, whilst maintaining an absolute commitment to having at least three victims of crime whose stories contain “oomph” (this is in addition to the facilitator and the co-facilitator). Both facilitators we’ve had at Acacia have been men, though most of the visitor-participants have been female. Most of these, though not all, have been around retiring age.
Most of the victims have espoused strong Christian values and beliefs, and – especially in the earlier STPs – some of them were comfortable and confident in describing their experiences in those terms (Ridgeway, 2005). However, with one exception which I describe elsewhere in this thesis, there was little if any sense of proselytisation. It should be added that there have been a number of atheists among the visitor-participants, and one or two with no faith at all.

Prisoners have been of all ages, from 18 years through to mid-70’s, though the majority have been between the ages of 25 to 35 years. “Lifers” and “long-termers” have tended to be older than the others. Prisoner-participants have been selected on the basis of their wish to be involved, rather than on the basis of their offence. Because of this, there has been a wide range of offences represented in most groups. Almost all Acacia STPs had at least one participant who has been convicted of murder, and some have included three or four. Prisoner-participants have been of many nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. After the first five STPs (in which there were no Indigenous prisoners), there have been increasing numbers of Indigenous participants. From STP5 onwards, there has been a real effort – quite often successful – to include at least one Indigenous victim of crime. There were six prisoners taking part in STP1 and, in one other STP, we “experimented” by having 21 offenders. With these two exceptions, however, there have been between ten and fifteen.

Almost all of the visitors have been victims of horrendous crimes. There have been people whose daughter, husband, son or sister have been murdered, a man who had been kidnapped, another who had been wrongly imprisoned for some years. An elderly lady had been mugged and robbed. About two-thirds of the visitor-participants in Acacia STPs have been women, and perhaps half of these have experienced gendered violence. As I have listened to the stories of many of them, I have become aware that these persons have experienced deep trauma, and that many of them are still in that situation. I note that most, if not all, of the prisoner-participants have experienced trauma – either because they too are victims of crime, or as a result of committing a particularly offence. Zehr (2008, p.5) calls this “perpetrator-induced trauma” (see also Gustafson, 2004; Randall & Haskell, 2013; Zehr, 2004). I find it interesting that, in some instances, the
facilitator has advised potential victim-participants not to proceed with involvement in STP, and that he has done so because he has considered the risk of further harm to be too great (see Pali & Madsen, 2011).

The first session of every STP programme has begun with a game whose twofold aim has been to “break the ice” and to help participants remember people’s names. The next item on the agenda has always been to ask participants to set the “rules” for the coming programme. These have been surprisingly similar over the years (Marshall, 2005; Pranis, 2005). They have always included respect, confidentiality, not interrupting, honesty, “no bullshit”, non-judgmental. In a somewhat different context, Llewellyn (2011, p.93) characterises restorative justice as “relational justice”, and associates this with relational values of respect, concern and dignity. Crocker (2013, p.5) writes of the core values (or the “five Rs”) of restorative justice – relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration.

A soft toy or a coloured ball has always been used as a “talking piece” (e.g., Farley, Brunoe & Francis, 2012; Mobley, 2014a; Pranis, 2005; Raye & Roberts, 2007; Umbreit & Armour, 2010). Only the person holding the talking piece may speak at any time, and he or she is not to be interrupted. Boyes-Watson (2005b, p.197) tells us that this simple device creates a profoundly different environment in which to speak and be heard, particularly for those who have been silenced in our society.

See also Mobley (2014b), who writes that the use of the talking piece created an intentional space in which he and his fellow-participants were enabled to share their stories.

At various times, STP sessions have taken place Education Department classrooms, in the activities room of the Geriatric Wing of the prison, in the Visits Centre, in the Medical Centre, and in Crisis Care. However the majority of sessions have been in the chapel, which is what the facilitators have consistently requested. For most of the time STP has been run in Acacia, I have resisted or regretted the chapel as a location. Using the chapel for this purpose proclaims
something false about STP, namely that it is religious. I consider that this is a spiritual programme whose underlying principles are consistent with Christianity and other major faiths, but it is not religious per se. As the number of prisoners in Acacia has increased, other locations have become difficult to find – the fact that I am the “gatekeeper” of the All Faiths Spiritual Centre (as the chapel is called in Acacia) renders the chapel far more convenient, and almost always available.

“I want to understand why me!”

We sat in a circle in a little games room in “K” Block of Acacia Prison. “K” Block was the Protection wing, and this was Session One of the first STP in Australia. The idea of the circle was that it would be a statement, in symbolic form, that we were not two groups but a small community of equals (Boyes-Watson, 2005b; Llewellyn, 2011). However I remember that on my right were six victims of crime and two co-facilitators, and on my left were six offenders in green uniform. The symbolic statement was not working well, or perhaps it was. The reason there were only six offenders and six victims of crime was that we were at pains to see that, in this first project, nothing would go wrong.

In Session Two, a few of the “guys in green” were seated among the visitors. And, in the third session, the fifteen of us were totally mixed. The “circle” made sense by then. But in this first session the 12 participants looked apprehensive and the co-facilitators looked far from confident. I don’t think I was nervous, but I had no idea of what to expect.

After introductions were over, Gabriel, who was the main facilitator, asked that anyone who wished to do so, say at the outset what he or she hoped to gain from participation in this project. The first visitor to speak was a South African lady called Veronica. She said,

I hope, during the next two or three weeks, to understand why me.

I remember being deeply moved. I said to myself, “Wow! It has begun – and it’s real.”

A difference of opinion

At the end of STP13 Joseph, who had been facilitator of the programme, emailed
his feelings about the project. Amongst it all, he mentioned his misgivings about whether two of the prisoner-participants should have been included in the first place. For me, this raised four quite important issues. The first of these is the extent to which these men must take responsibility for their actions before they “qualify” for inclusion in STP. My email in response reads, in part,

   your comments raise the whole matter of selection and/or screening of applicants. I know that [one of my fellow-chaplains] & I have differing views about this one… He thinks that applicants should already understand and own…responsibility for their crimes before they begin STP and have incorporated all that fully into their lives. I see that as the main aim of STP rather than as one of the qualifications for enrolment.

   (personal email to Joseph, March 26th, 2010)

At the same time, I readily acknowledge that prisoner-participants must have already begun their journey towards acceptance of responsibility for their actions, before they embark on STP. Lovell, Helfgot & Lawrence (2002, p.271), reporting on a restorative justice project conducted in Washington State Prison, note that two participants claimed to be innocent. One of these had been convicted of a well-publicised murder, and his refusal to speak of it “caused significant discomfort” to others. They tell us that “…A policy decision was then made to restrict participation to offenders who admitted the crime for which they were incarcerated”.

A prisoner called Shamus, who applied to take part in Acacia’s STP9, had his application initially refused by Senior Management on the grounds that he was in “total denial” of guilt for the offence for which he was imprisoned. Shamus responded that he was in denial because he was innocent of that offence, but that he had never entirely come to terms with previous offences. I interceded on his behalf, and the facilitator wrote a letter to Senior Management. Shamus was permitted to participate.

The second issue which emerged from Joe’s email is the expectation by some people that all prisoner-participants will make huge and dramatic strides as a result of participation in STP. Many do – people often comment straight away on the difference the project has made to this-or-that prisoner’s behaviour and attitudes. Others make smaller steps, which may not be as easily seen but which
may be highly significant. Third is the apparent expectation that changes induced by STP will be immediate. This is not always so. I remember a prisoner called Winston, who took part in STP2, interrupting a meeting to speak with Chaplain Bruce and me. He said this:

When I was in “Sycamore Tree” 18 months ago, I didn’t open up. But I am now, and I need help.

My point at the moment is not that he needed help. I deal with that matter later, when I address the topic of follow-up pastoral care. My point is that effects of STP can be delayed, and often are.

The fourth and final matter raised for me by Joseph’s email relates to who should be included in, or excluded from, STPs. It is the matter of minimalisation. My view on this matter is that prisoners who are minimalising either the seriousness of their offence/s or their part in them have moved away from total denial (in that they have now acknowledged that they committed whatever it was) and are or may be on the journey to full acceptance (Shaw, 2009; 2010). I considered that some men applying to join STP13 were certainly minimalisers, and I was prepared to accept them into the programme. Most prison chaplains I have spoken to disagree with me about this, and I don’t understand why. I sent an email to Joseph, outlining my approach to minimalisation, and I finished that email as follows:

I am seldom if ever able to be certain about people’s sincerity. I suspect that we are all of us a huge mixture of sincerity and insincerity, of good motives and bad ones. I don’t have a sincerity meter and, even if I did, it might just measure how sincere the person is at one particular moment and not another. For me, the most surprising people have gained massive amounts from STP – I’d rather give people the benefit of any doubt than risk a prisoner missing out on that. This may sometimes result in a “wrong” person participating in an STP, but I’m not sure about that either.

(personal email to Joseph, March 29th, 2010)

**Oral language competence (OLC)**

In Chapter 2, I wrote of the importance in restorative justice projects of oral
language competence (OLC), which Hayes & Snow (2013, p.2) define as “the complex two-way process of sending and receiving information via the auditory-verbal (listening and talking) channel.” Interestingly, this has been a factor in only a very few Acacia STPs. One was a prisoner-participant called Philip who answered almost all questions with “Good”, or “Okay”, or with a shrug of the shoulders (see Snow & Powell, 2005; 2011; Snow & Sanger, 2011). This was frustrating to the facilitator and to other participants, and I knew that Philip understood the meaning of all or most of the words that were used in the programme. However I realised later that he had probably been unable to discern the tones of voice, nuances and shades of meaning used by the others. In addition, the body language, which most people take for granted, had possibly escaped him.

In another Acacia STP Igor, for whom English was a second or third language, did not participate in the conversation as fully as I had expected. I believe that this was partly because of his personality and partly because he was not ready to “tell his story”. Yet it was probably mainly because OLC is learned from infancy (Snow & Powell, 2011). Igor was brought up in a household which spoke a different language. I find it interesting that OLC has been a pertinent factor in very few Acacia STPs. I assume that the main reason for this has been the voluntary nature of the programme.

**Mental disorders**

A significant proportion of the prison population experience mental disorders, such as schizophrenia (e.g., Burns, 2013-2014; Dieleman, 2014; Hafemeister et al., 2012). At Acacia, there was no attempt made to exclude persons from STP on these grounds. For this reason I anticipated that the function of projects might be affected in various ways – for example, would some participants find difficulty in relating to other people? Or would some prisoners be unable to empathise or to tell right from wrong or to take responsibility for their actions (Hafemeister et al., 2012)? In the event, such matters were not a challenge to any noticeable extent. I wondered whether this was because Joe, our main facilitator, is a sensitive man and is a psychologist by profession. On the other hand, it may have been that prisoners with severe mental disabilities did not apply to take part, or were eliminated for some other reason in the initial selection process.
None of the victims of crime who took part in Acacia STPs were people with mental or intellectual disabilities. This is of interest because persons with intellectual disabilities are over-represented as victims of crime in criminal justice systems world-wide (Benedet & Grant, 2014; Waxman, 1991). In addition, as Kilcommins & Donnelly (2014, p.315) tell us, where the victim is a person with mental or intellectual disabilities “only the strongest cases reach the trial stage” (see also Benedet & Grant, 2014; Piggott, 2011).

**Child sex offenders: prejudice and/or healing**

Part-way through STP7, the facilitator was emphasising the importance of coming to terms with one’s own situation as an offender, a victim of crime or both. Praise or blame of another person is irrelevant, and can get in the way of one’s own journey towards healing. To emphasise the point he was making, he said something like, “Even if the other bloke is a paedophile, you really need to leave that aside….”

He may not have realised how raw the nerve was that he was touching. Many Mainstream prisoners are passionately antagonistic towards child sex offenders. Three or four men shouted in protest. One in particular seemed incapable of being drawn away from this topic. This was Session 3, and I wondered if he would return for Session 4.

Later in the day I emailed my concerns to Joseph the facilitator, and I rang him a few days later. It seemed to me at the time that, by raising such an emotive issue in an STP session, Joseph was drawing attention away from the main themes of the project. Joe disagreed. He said that he had intentionally raised this emotional topic in order to highlight the themes, not to detract from them. He continued along the same lines in the following session.

I may have been wrong. Although it took a great deal of time – and time away from what would otherwise have been considered in the programme – the men worked hard at this, with Joseph’s help. All of them were challenged by what he said, and I believe that all but one made real advances. However I raise the topic to highlight what is a huge issue in WA prisons. There is a rigid “pecking order”, observed by almost everyone, with child sex offenders at the foot of it. This
attitude definitely affects the way in which prisoners approach chapel services as well as meetings of the TLG - for most sex offenders are in the Protection part of Acacia, and these events are two of the very few occasions on which Protection and Mainstream prisoners are permitted to mingle.

In 2010 Ralph, an ordination candidate in the Uniting Church of Australia, was with me for a 28-week placement in Acacia. When he had been in the prison for nearly a semester, and had become accepted and highly respected, he made the mistake of calling a Mainstream prisoner he knew really well, “a lying dog”. He said this in a joking fashion and a playful tone of voice, but he was not aware that, in WA prisons, child sex offenders are often referred to as “dogs”. The room was crowded, and there was a sudden and deathly silence. Eventually Elvis, the man he was talking to, said, “If it’d been anyone but you, I’d have shivved you” [a “shiv” is a hand-made knife].

My chaplaincy colleague Boadicea “sat in” on STP10. This particular programme was for Protection prisoners, but it happened that only a minority were sex offenders. Two of the original participants opted out of the course – one during the week before the course began, the other on its first day – declaring they had done so because there were sex offenders among the participants. In one of her two interviews in relation to this research, Boadicea spoke of:

a. The courage of a prisoner called Paulo. Paulo was not a sex offender and was not known as a particularly kind man. But he threw the ball – which acts as a kind of “talking piece” (Bender & Armour, 2007; Boyes-Watson, 2005b; Pranis, 2005; Raye & Roberts, 2007) in Acacia STPs – to Gideon, a man believed to be a child sex offender.

b. The change in Gideon, once he had spoken of his offence and his struggles.

c. The altered relationships in the group because of what was taking place.

On-going care of STP participants

Victims of crime

Until quite recently, I have been impressed at the degree of on-going care afforded to victims of crime who participate in Acacia STPs. In addition to initial
interviews and conversations, there is at least one preparatory group meeting prior to Session One. I have been to one of these. On the way home from each session, there is a “de-brief” over a cup of coffee in a nearby BP diner. Depending on the need, this can be as short as 20 minutes or as long as 3½ hours. I have been invited to attend these meetings but so far have not done so. I am told they generally last between 1½ and 2 hours. Approximately every four months there is a get-together of people who have been involved in Acacia STPs. This is often over a barbecue and is only partly “social”. I attended two of these and was impressed at the care shown for each person present. There is an annual reunion and training day for all persons interested in “Sycamore Tree”. This latter event is not restricted Acacia people, though some who have taken part at Acacia are always likely to be there. I have attended every one of these, and was “M.C.” in 2012.

In recent times, however, a significant number of visitor-participants have told me that they need far more on-going and specific care. They have said that the care available to them is now on an ad hoc basis, and that it is left to the facilitator, who is not always the most appropriate person to perform this task. The state-wide STP committee, of which I am a member, has recently commissioned a small group of persons who will plan and implement a new strategy in this matter.

**Prisoners**

I have already mentioned a prisoner called Winston, who approached Chaplain Bruce and me for pastoral care, nearly 18 months after his participation in SP2. This alerted me to the fact that follow-up should be available for all prisoner “graduates” of STP, even when their STP participation had not been recent.

At the next meeting of the chaplaincy department, I outlined a suggested stratagem of care for prisoners who had taken part in Acacia STPs. I had made a list of all those who were still in the prison, and divided the list into four. I would take the largest group – half of them – because I was full-time. I suggested that Seth take half of the remainder, and that Bruce and Bradley be allocated one eighth each. My idea was that we should call on each of them weekly for the first month and monthly thereafter. I thought that most of these visits would be very short – if we said, “I’m wearing my ‘Sycamore Tree’ hat today, do you need to
talk?”, most would say no. But some would say yes, and the effort would be worth-while.

This worked very well for about six months. But we then ran two STPs at the same time in Acacia, and suddenly it was out of the question to continue this level of follow-up care - the number of “graduates” was far too great. We stressed at the end of each STP that chaplains were available, and we resolved to be especially careful of those we knew to be vulnerable. We knew this was inadequate.

A further complication has been added by the fact that I have given priority, since about STP6, to applicants who are leaving the WA prison system before the next STP is over. This has the obvious advantage that these men can take part without eliminating the possibility that other applicants may do so in a later project. However, it brings with it the disadvantage that follow-up pastoral care can be administered to far fewer prisoner-participants. I think that this whole matter must be re-assessed.

Mackenzie (2009, p.49) states that

…offenders appeared to be well supported by chaplains, the facilitators and one another, particularly in instances where the group was cohesive.

My observation at Acacia has been that support of prisoner-participants between the sessions of each project has almost always been strong. However support of these men once the STP project is over has been patchy. The exception to this has been those projects involving Protection prisoners. I assume that the reason for this is that most Protection prisoners live in the same residential block, and they generally know each other. Mackenzie (2009, p.49) adds, very sensibly, “The prison environment was not ideal for putting this new understanding into practice.”

Reunions

Over the time, we have held three “STP reunions” in the prison area. These have been opportunities for prisoners who have completed STP and are still in Acacia to renew their friendship and acquaintance with as many STP visitors who have
been able to come. The first of these was unstructured – a social event, and no more. At my suggestion, the other two have followed themes which (a) reflect the themes of restorative justice, and (b) might assist prisoners as they approach release.

One result of these events has been to strengthen links that exist between prisoners who have participated in STP. It does not seem to matter greatly which programme they have been involved in – on these occasions, most prisoners present seem to discover a common bond with all others who’ve participated. One of our facilitators included the following statement in a recent email:

> Once a course is completed they frequently experience a sense of solidarity with other graduates of the programme based on their experiences together.

(extract from an email from Gabriel to Daniel Van Ness, May 28th 2011)

“Who cares for the facilitators?”

I was invited to attend a meeting of STP facilitators, which took place towards the end of 2007. At that meeting I asked, “Who cares for the facilitators?” The reason I raised this topic was that, at one point during the preceding twelve months, two Acacia STPs were running at the same time. I found this extremely draining on my reserves of energy, and it occurred to me that the man who was facilitating both must be feeling it too. The fact is that other things in life do not have the courtesy to stop while STP is running. At the final (celebratory) session of one of these two projects, his wife was one of the guests. She mentioned to me that he had been finding it an enormous strain. One of the facilitators in Mackenzie’s study (2009, p.33) was asked about the “emotional impact” of facilitating an STP session. The reply was as follows:

> It takes about thirty six to forty eight hours to recover, emotionally. I feel very drained.

The answer given to my question, “Who cares for the facilitators?” came after some hesitation. It was that the facilitators keep in touch with each other and care for each other. This may be sufficient, but I have to admit that I was not impressed at this response. It seemed to me that some kind of formal structure may be needed in order to ensure that adequate pastoral care takes place.
Two Indigenous prisoners applied to join one of our early STPs. I interviewed them both, but only one of them attended the preparatory meeting with the facilitator and the other applicants. Clearly, he looked and felt out of place. He was a man from the desert, accustomed to long silences, few words and slow speech. Yet everyone spoke quickly, and the meeting was full of words. He said nothing at that gathering, and I visited him afterwards. I asked him would he prefer to withdraw from the project and wait until we had another that was more suited to him. He looked very relieved and said yes he would.

Because of this, and because of my experience of ministering among Indigenous peoples in South Australia (see Chapter 2), I approached the two STP facilitators and recommended strongly that they consider working towards a new kind of STP, without abandoning the old. I said that what we should hope for and plan for was an STP in which all of the participants, both prisoners and visitors, were Indigenous. If an Indigenous person could be recruited and trained to facilitate the project, that would be a bonus but, whoever was the facilitator, it would have to be someone who understood Indigenous issues and was sympathetic. I think that my concern here was that the good intentions and efforts of the facilitators and others might be inadvertently perverted and that STP in Acacia might simply reinforce the supremacy of white middle-class values (Williams, 2013; Wilson, 2007).

I believe the Acacia facilitators genuinely misunderstood my emails. They were at great pains to include one Indigenous lady among the victims of crime for the next project, two for the one after that, and at least one for almost every STP thereafter. But they did not catch my vision of what this project might become, and they’ve not referred to it since.

From my perspective, the odd thing is that what they have organised has been very effective. With one exception – an Indigenous lady called Florence, who left after the first session of one project – Aboriginal victims of crime have been enthusiastic about the benefits of the course. And Indigenous prisoners are applying to join. Those who have taken part have been very positive indeed about
In Acacia Prison, the facilitators are the people who recruit, screen and prepare the victims of crime who take part in STP. They seem unaware that there are different tribes and groupings of Indigenous peoples, and that some of these are antagonistic towards one another. This antagonism is a cause of constant tension in the daily running of Acacia, and I wondered how it would affect STP. Again, to my surprise, it simply hasn’t mattered. So, for example, very early in the piece, we ran a programme in which there were two Nunga prisoners and one Wongi victim of crime. The stories of the three families were so extreme and so similar to each other that there was an immediate emotional link across racial and cultural barriers.

The influence of this Indigenous content upon the group as a whole has in my opinion been quite profound. Sometimes it has been relatively subtle, as non-Indigenous prisoners, without realising it, have become familiar with the kinds of prejudice and victimisation that Indigenous people experience. At other times, it has been direct introduction and exposure to some aspect of Aboriginal culture. There have been many instances of the latter, but I shall enumerate only four of these:

- A Wongi lady in STP6, who was part of the same discussion group as three Aboriginal offenders, was asked if she had any advice or encouragement for a young Indigenous prisoner-participant who had just spoken. He was a quiet, shy person who had been going through a great deal of personal difficulty. Like her, he was a Wongi Aboriginal person. She said, “Yes, I have this to say to you, Listen more. That’s the blackfeller way of learning – listen!”

- A victim of crime who was also a Wongi Aboriginal woman had a daughter who was an internationally renowned Aboriginal painter. She made small prints of one of her daughter’s dot-paintings available to every participant in STP6. At a follow-up meeting afterwards, I asked the men what they thought this action added to the session. Every one of them said he
appreciated this very much. “It was good,” one of them said. “It showed that a visitor cared enough to actually give us something… Yes, it was good.”

- A young Indigenous prisoner called Kingston, who had recently taken part in an Acacia STP, came to see me in my office. “I learned a lot,” he said. “I didn’t say much – I was only the younger brother in the course, so I listened. I learned a lot.”

- Marge, an Indigenous victim of crime who came from north of Kalgoorlie, asked permission to bring a tray of Kalgoorlie sand into the prison. When I asked her why, she said, “So I can tell my story.” This was not an STP in which I was “sitting in”, but I understand that she told the story of her life, then of her victimisation, tracing the events in the red-brown sand. It was apparently of great significance that the sand was part of her country.

However, on the basis of feedback from Canada and South Australia, I have to consider that our Indigenous prisoners and victims of crime are probably not receiving the full benefits of a restorative justice project. Towards the end of her study of STP facilitators and co-facilitators in this state, Mackenzie (2009, p.59) recommends several areas for further study. One of these is as follows:

Further investigation regarding the applicability of this program for indigenous participants. Initial observations were that the program was equally effective for indigenous and non-indigenous alike. Given the very high incarceration rate of indigenous people in Western Australia, this seems an important direction to pursue.

“Recruiting” appropriate visitor-participants

On the one hand, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit sufficient numbers of appropriate victims who are willing to participate in STP. Daly (2014, p.1) is referring to restorative justice projects conducted at a different entry point (Allard, 2008a; Archibald & Llewellyn, 2006; Latimer et al., 2005; Randall, 2013; Williams, 2013) when she writes that “ideal victims” are in short supply. However it’s
certainly true for STP as well. On the other hand, we are overwhelmed by increasing numbers of prisoners who wish to “take the plunge”. The word spreads round the prison very quickly that, although STP is not an easy programme, it is worth doing. Many prisoners have commented favourably that religion “is not rammed down your throat”. One notable feature of Acacia STPs has been that, in every project, there has been a point at which a deep level of trust has been reached, and a deep sense of community, of belonging.

Lovell et al. (2002), who have conducted in-prison restorative justice projects in Seattle, Washington, report similar difficulty in recruiting sufficient numbers of appropriate victims of crime (p.271):

Connecting with interested victims who would benefit from the project remained a constant challenge to staff.

**Conclusion**

This is the first of two chapters which collectively present a “case study” of STP in Acacia. We have touched upon a number of topics that bear particular relevance to the creation of spiritual capital.

The first of these is the principle of inclusion. With the exception of matters relating to security, and to Senior Management’s perception of total denial of culpability, all Acacia prisoner-applicants have an equal right to participate in STP. The obvious example of this is that child sex offenders have taken part in Acacia STPs from the very beginning. Another example is our firm commitment not to exclude prisoners who are minimising their involvement in criminal acts.

Second is what I call the “communality” of experiences and emotions in STPs observed in this research. Even though great differences were noted between the various groups, and between individual participants, there was a real sense that “we are in this together”.

Third was “voluntariness” – that prisoners and visitors wanted to participate. In fact there have always been more prisoners applying than spaces available in the programme. Fourth was the aspect of “giving voice”. Although there has never been any pressure applied to participants to lever participants into speaking out,
yet they have always felt able to speak what was in their hearts and minds, and they have done so. Admittedly, in some STPs there have been one or two individuals who have needed two or three sessions before they felt comfortable to do this. However, with very few exceptions indeed, prisoners and victims of crime have spoken of their experiences and voiced their emotions.

The two main limitations of Acacia STPs which are noted in this chapter are

1. The dependence upon the spoken word – upon oral language competence (OLC) – which must inevitably limit the “pool” from which prisoner-participants are drawn.

2. The chaplaincy department’s inability to provide adequate follow-up pastoral care. This can be seen as particularly critical, given the vulnerability of STP “graduates” and the nature of the prison culture (Crewe, 2006; Duce, 2013; Faccio & Costa, 2013; Farmer, 2014; Gustafson, 2004; Shaw, 2013).

The coming chapter examines the ways in which Acacia STP works through the classic restorative justice themes (Van Ness, 1986; Van Ness, Erwin & Grant et al., 1996), namely accountability, confession, repentance, forgiveness, restitution, and reconciliation.
CHAPTER SEVEN - THE “SYCAMORE TREE PROJECT” (STP) [2]

Introduction

This thesis represents a case study of the Acacia (Christian) community of faith. This faith community sponsors two programmes in which smaller and “temporary” communities are formed, which are the “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP), and “Kairos”. In Chapters 6 and 7, I present a more in-depth “case study” of STP, as it is run in Acacia.

Chapter 6 dealt first of all with my own introduction to restorative justice and to STP. This was important and relevant because it helped to shape the way in which STP was formed in this place. In addition, it inevitably affected my interpretation of data. In the same chapter, I then dealt briefly with the beginnings of STP in Acacia, and with a number of general themes as they emerged in the programme. This chapter continues the “case study” of STP. In doing so, it works through the six restorative justice themes (Van Ness, 1986; Van Ness et al., 1996) of accountability, confession, repentance, forgiveness, restitution, and reconciliation.

Accountability

Prisoner-participants

In the first session of every “Sycamore Tree Project” in Acacia, and sometimes in the second and third sessions as well, we have dealt with the first of the five classic themes of restorative justice. This is the accountability – the need to take responsibility for one’s own actions and one’s own life (Skotnicki, 2006). The other “themes” – confession, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and restitution – either reinforce this theme of accountability, or result from it. Because STP is conducted in a prison environment, using surrogate victims rather than victims of the actual crimes committed by prisoner-participants, “reconciliation” and “restitution” are tackled in ways that are specific to this programme. These are described later in this chapter.

I observe that, as prisoner-participants in STP increasingly take responsibility for their life and actions, many of them begin to create and expend more spiritual
capital. By this I mean that they become kinder people. They begin to trust other people more, and to reach out beyond themselves to others. This is firstly within the STP group (“bonding capital”), and then elsewhere in the prison environment (“bridging capital”, Putnam, Leonardi & Nanetti, 1993; Putnam, 2004; 1995).

Horrie is a clear example of a prisoner coming to terms with his criminal actions. He is a tough-looking prisoner who was amazed and almost overwhelmed at the experience of meeting and coming to know victims of crime as real people. In one of the STP sessions, he said this,

“I’ve never previously given a fuck about my victims. They were just things, and we laughed about them, and sneered… I can’t ever do that again, I’ll think about the person first before I commit another crime.”

Shaw (2010) states that, when a prisoner takes full responsibility for his actions, two processes have in fact taken place:

1. He no longer believes that, in the situation he found himself, there was only one thing to do; he realises that he had choices, and that he made the wrong choice in that situation.
2. In addition, he accepts responsibility for acting differently in the future.

McKendy (2006) writes that coming to responsibility cannot be coerced, and he adds that it’s never a solitary activity. It is always in a social context, he claims, in relationship with others. I’m not sure whether to agree with this or not, though I observe in STP that community is formed, and that many participants certainly begin to take responsibility for their lives and actions. McKendy (2006, p.498) goes on to say that developing new understandings of past actions depends upon the individual being given new positionings in the present moment, “ones that give him a chance to stray beyond ‘the same old story’, to overhear himself saying surprising things.” This has been the case on very many occasions in Acacia’s STPs.

Accepting self-responsibility for thoughts, words and actions is a huge part of STP as I have observed it in Acacia Prison. I remember a double incident in STP13.
We divided into about four smaller groups during Session 3. A sort of mini-drama had just been enacted – “Zac” - i.e., Zacchaeus – coming to a realisation that what he’d done was wrong and that he was responsible. The assistant facilitator was part of our group, and she asked what each of us had thought about the story (“What are your gut feelings about it? How did it strike you personally?”). Two members of the group said that, as soon as Jesus and God were mentioned in the story, they “clicked off”. The story didn’t strike them at all because they didn’t believe. A third, an unshaven man called Gustaf, spoke up. He was covered in tats and looked like a failed professional wrestler. He said that, like Zac, he now knew that he was responsible for what he’d done. He started to cry, and was confused and embarrassed about this.

When we came back to the larger group, Wilhelm - one of the two who had said the story hadn’t impacted them - said, “I used to do debt collects…”. He was unable to say anything more. Joe, the facilitator, said “That’s all right” and moved on. But later on Wilhelm said something like this:

> I used to do debt collects. And one man wouldn’t pay. He couldn’t pay. Three of us went to his house to get him to pay the money he owed, but he couldn’t pay it. We hit him and kicked him [begins to sob and choke] - the three of us [more sobbing],

Joseph said, “There’s no need to carry on”, but he said,

> No, no… We hit him, and he fell… Anyway, he got a broken back. He was in a wheelchair. He’s still in a wheelchair I suppose, and it was just for money… [more sobbing]. How could I do it, just for money? I feel like a pile of shit, doing it just for the money.

A Moslem prisoner, Abdullah, had this to say during STP14:

> I’m pissed off with “I just snapped” or “I was drugged at the time” and “I was drunk”. I chose to “snap”. I chose to take drugs. The buck stops with me!

In STP8, one of the prisoner-participants whose name was Drew mentioned to the group – almost in passing,

> I’m not really a criminal type – I only do drugs [i.e., “I only deal drugs”].
A short, motherly-looking victim of crime called Maria became extremely emotional about this. As she explained, she began to sob. As a younger person, she had been systematically raped by cult members, she said, so severely that part of her bowel had to be replaced and she now had to wear a colostomy bag and follow a very restricted diet. She could handle all this and had come to terms with the constant pain. What she couldn’t handle was that her son had incurred bipolar disease at age 21 and that the doctors had attributed this to drug use. She realised that he had had a choice, but his whole life would not have been ruined if “some bastard” had not given him a choice:

If I could get my hands on the bastard who gave him that choice, I’d strangle him!

She said she wasn’t blaming any prisoner-participant for what had happened, but she wouldn’t countenance for a moment that drug-dealing was not a real offence.

After a few moments, in which there was absolute silence, she hurried across the room, saying, “Not you, Drew – not you!” And she hugged him.

In the final (celebratory) session of the same project, an Indigenous prisoner said quietly that by meeting victims of crime and hearing their stories, he had become aware for the first time that victims of crime were real people who hurt. As well as this, he had come to see a “ripple effect”. He had never thought that people other than his direct victims were touched in any way by what he had done, but now he knew that they were.

In an interview with me, a prisoner called Anders said this:

When I was hearing a victim’s testimony, it was quite horrific, it actually brought a whole [PAUSE], I mean, reflecting on my own very crimes in which I did it. And there was one where I still remember the man’s eyes, you know, and it was a real front-on fing, you know.

Then he added,

And I think that, in that, God was giving me an opportunity to let that go… And I think that he was using that as a mechanism for prevention. And that’s what I’ll take from this course. .. It was a reality-check.
A prisoner-participant called Francis wrote as follows:

I have learned [in STP] that the choices we make are our own responsibilities; that we cannot lay the blame for our misfortunes on others. I can be responsible for the good things in my life as well as the bad.

(Francis, in an Open Letter, dated 16th August 2007)

Roche (2007) speaks of the way in which taking responsibility for one’s actions is something far more likely to be accomplished in the semi-formal context usually associated with restorative justice programmes than would be likely in a courtroom. Dzur & Olsen (2004, p.92) reflect upon the traditional justice system and the need to accept personal responsibility:

…like victims, offenders are largely bystanders in their own cases. Others – prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges – make determinations of responsibility. Reintegration requires opportunities for offenders to recognize and accept responsibility for the harm they have caused.

(see also, for example, Herbert, 2012; Zehr, 2002)

The STP experience is a significant step along the journey towards accepting full responsibility, but for most prisoner-participants there is a great deal of work still to be done. Many of them realise this, and speak about it. So, for example, I remember Igor speaking in a small group in one of the STPs:

Nothing can replace the rush of a high-speed chase or of creating mayhem, causing chaos. Nothing. And if I didn’t believe in God and in Christ, I would go straight back and do it again in a flash. God gives you another kind of rush. It’s not the same. I have to choose between this kind of rush and that kind. They’re different…

Igor went on to say that

…nothing can replace the rush of a high-speed chase, can it? But I don’t want that. I think of the hurt I’ve caused to other people, and I think of what I’ve done to me. And what if I’d had an accident while I was in a high-speed chase? I could have really hurt someone! I’m appalled. I don’t want that. But I couldn’t change without faith.

He added a little later,

Some people can change just like that” [he clicked his fingers]. “Not me! I
can only do it a little bit at a time, because of what I’ve made myself into. I’m glad I came to prison. I need lots of time, and I’ll need my faith.

I recall, too, a tall, thin, very black Sudanese prisoner in STP2 called Rajik, who said that he was amazed when he had met victims of violent crime in STP, including people whose sons or daughters had been murdered, who had been able to forgive. Rajik said that he had spoken with them over lunch, had got to know them a little, and had returned to his room and cried.

   My parents, and 15 members of my family, have been butchered in unprovoked attacks in the civil war in my country. They had done nothing, and were not part of the struggles, but they were killed because they are the leading family in the area.

He went on to say,

   My grandparents are intent on violence, on revenge… And they want me to go back. I will be the leader of my people when I return. But I can see that this [violence] will never end. I have decided not to go back – I will not go back until I have learned to forgive like these people do.

And he added, “I want to teach people to forgive.”

Bjorg was an older prisoner – probably in his mid-60s, though he looked and spoke as if he was much older. Bjorg had not long finished a gruelling course of chemotherapy for life-threatening cancer. He was in remission, but looked frail. He was participating in STP13, and was finding that participation constructive and life-giving. He told the group that, because of “Sycamore Tree”, he had found himself able to “really speak” with his wife for the first time in their life together. Up to that point, he said, he had never really listened to her, and had never really shared with her either. They were planning a round-Australia holiday as soon as he was released. This was evidence of healing and of repentance. He had an entirely new attitude to life and was turning his life around. He attributed all this to STP but – clearly – there were other contributory factors. These included

   • His illness and remission;
   • 18 months of faithful ministry by Chaplain Boadicea; and
   • A decision to return to his Christian faith.
Nevertheless, it is highly possible that, without STP, this change in Bjorg's life might have been slower, or different, or even not at all.

Over the years, I have been immensely impressed with the effects of the STP experience on the lives of almost all of the prisoner-participants. Yet there have been instances in which I have doubted the wisdom and advisability of all that we have been doing. One such instance was the example of Selwyn. In one of our STPs, Selwyn told me that the project had touched his heart. For the first time in his life he had taken full responsibility for his actions, and he really wanted to turn his life around. But he had two small children who depended on him. His partner was addicted to drugs and was in and out of prison, and so were all his friends. Every adult he knew on the “outside” took drugs and had been in gaol. Selwyn said he knew that churches would provide a supportive group for him, but he wasn’t religious, so he would feel like a hypocrite if he went to a church.

I ached for this man. Through STP we have created a longing in him that may never be satisfied. We have awakened a need for community, and this need will probably not be met. We just don’t have the resources to follow up STP with post-release support. I have argued and pleaded for years for funding for community chaplaincy – for a pilot project in which one chaplain could be two days a week in the prison and three days in the community. Such a person would liaise with faith communities outside, and could set up and oversee circles of support and accountability (Gavin, 2005; Hannem & Petrunik, 2007; Haverty & Schmidt, 2013; Hoing, Bogaerts & Vogelvang, 2014; Moltzahn, 2005; Van Ness, 2005a; 2007; Wilson et al., 2007). But this proposal has so far fallen on deaf ears. I am reminded of Johnstone’s comment (2014, p.7) that

the fact that the Sycamore Tree course is unaligned with other activities in the criminal justice system means there is only hope, and no guarantee, that any steps forward taken during the course will not be offset by other influences on the prisoner’s future life.

I suppose that, for Selwyn, it’s arguable that STP has been a total failure, and yet I want to say that it wasn’t. I’m not entirely sure what reason or reasons I have for thinking this, but perhaps his awareness of the issues is important. Perhaps years down the track, other influences may combine with that of STP to assist Selwyn
or his partner or his children to make important decisions. In the meantime, I’m convinced that it’s important for Acacia chaplaincy to keep trying.

In Acacia STP sessions, structural and societal issues are raised and discussed from time to time (these are mentioned briefly in Chapter 2), because they figure prominently in the stories of participants. However these issues are not raised in any specific or intentional way – and, because STP is conducted in prison, little if anything can be done to affect or eliminate the factors discussed. The facilitator has often said that, while there were many contributing causes – e.g., poverty, up-bringing, or sexual molestation – the choices made by perpetrators are entirely personal. Dyck (2006, p.540) adds that so, too, are the effects of crime. He goes on to recommend that administrators of all restorative justice programmes should train facilitators in structural, or societal, issues.

Albert was similar in some ways to Selwyn (see above). In his first interview with me, he said that STP had

[helped me to] see the responsibility we have to accept and acknowledge what we’ve done to people and also acknowledge what we are doing to ourselves.

He had enrolled in the course with the idea that he would assist victims of crime, but “I actually found out that it was myself who needed help as well…” However, after my second interview with him had finished, Albert continued talking. He admitted to being terrified of what he might encounter post-release:

It really isn't easy because I don't know an Albert who doesn't take drugs and doesn't drink alcohol, and who isn't involved in some kind of crime. For 15 years, that's been the Albert I know, and so it's difficult.

A little later in our conversation, he said that

I really get depressed and I wonder - I wonder just who I am, who this Albert is and what I'm to do. I don't know whether I can go and get a job, I don't know whether I can do something I'm not being ordered to do… And so I get really depressed and I really wonder who I am. It's not easy, Alan.

Again, I admit to wondering whether STP creates a sense of community and of belonging which some prisoner-participants may find difficult to continue or replicate after they are released from prison.
The victims of crime

It is important to note that, just as many of the prisoner-participants are beginning to take responsibility for their past actions, the visitor-participants are typically making significant steps in coming to terms with what has happened to them. At time of writing, the victims of crime who have taken part in Acacia’s “Sycamore Tree Projects” have been truly remarkable people. Almost all have been victims of horrific and violent crimes. In my opinion, all of them have shown outstanding courage in entering a prison to work with offenders.

I think, for example, of Leister, a participant in STP11. Before the project began, he asked the facilitator to intercede with me on his behalf. It happened that the man who had viciously murdered his son was an inmate in Acacia. Leister did not wish to meet him, even by accident. I went to see the prisoner involved. I told him that this was his home and that, if he said no to my request, it would not be held against him and there would be no repercussions. I then explained the situation and asked if he would mind avoiding that area while STP was in progress. The man told me that he would not have been going there and that he would now make sure that he didn’t. However, when I returned to my office, there was a telephone message waiting for me from the STP facilitator, asking me not to bother. Leister had decided that he would not allow his life to be run by his son’s killer any longer. He would come in whether he met the man or not. I was impressed at the courage of this deeply wounded man. Having said this, it is perhaps understandable that one of the most difficult aspects of organising STP has been locating victims of crime who are willing to take part. Writing of victims of crime in relation to restorative justice projects, Szablowinski (2008, p.405) has this to say:

> Often neither revenge nor refusal to deal with a violent past is any help to them. The memories of the traumatic event tend to return in repeatedly embodied anger, resentment and hostility. Healing and reconciliation need to come about in order to prevent a traumatic past from poisoning the victim’s future.

Some visitor-participants in STP express a need to take part again. In fact, if it had not been for some of them returning two or three times, we would have been
unable to continue this programme. In STP12 Sheila, whose teenage son had been brutally murdered, and who was taking part in STP for a third time, said,

Each time I come, I clear away more shit... It's like peeling away more layers of an onion. I peel off more layers of pretence, till eventually I'll get to who I really am.

Maria, who had been raped as a small child, then later ritually and repeatedly raped by a satanic cult, was taking part in her fourth or fifth STP. She had discharged herself from hospital to be present at this session, and she knew exactly what Sheila meant. She nodded emphatically and said “YES!!”

“I can eat water melon!”

It is often said that STP is not an easy programme for prisoner-participants. However, it is important to note that this is so for visitors as well. There are a few who continue to come to STPs in order to “make up the numbers” of visitor-participants, or because doing so gives them a good feeling. But visitors who come for the first time, as well as those who repeat because they need to do so, are often in a dark place indeed, and they are frequently helped enormously.

At the January 2010 “reunion” of many who had taken part in STPs, a lady called Cynthia, who had participated in STP5 said that the project had led her “into deep, dark places” but that she had emerged and, over all, it had been “the most liberating experience I have ever had.”

Clara had been involved in STP3 and STP5. She said she had not expected the two to be so different. It crossed my mind that in fact every STP group in Acacia has been radically different from every other. But I wondered had it occurred to Clara that she herself had changed over that time. She went on to say that, during STP5, she had become “genuinely suicidal”. “But I’m still here!”

Birdie, who had participated in STP2, said that for her the project held “a horrified fascination”. And I found it interesting that Joseph, one of our two Acacia STP facilitators, interjected at this point to say that “It’s my job to see that everyone is safe.” I recalled that Zehr & Mika (1998, p.8) had written that, in restorative justice
projects, “…the safety of victims is an immediate responsibility” (see also Riley, 2014).

Part-way through Session Three of the very first Acacia project, the facilitator invited participants to say in a few words how they were feeling, how they were travelling through this experience of “Sycamore Tree”. One after another, victims as well as offenders spoke of flash-backs, lack of sleep, headaches. They were feeling terrible. All except one – a huge Polynesian woman called Bronte. She stood up and said,

I feel over the moon – just a little guilty that I’m the only one feeling good, but I feel great! And I’ll explain why….

She went on to say that, the previous evening, she had been to a barbecue. Someone had offered her watermelon, and she had been able to eat it.

Y’see, when I discovered the body of my dead husband, his head was split open like a watermelon, and I’ve not been able to eat watermelon ever since.
But last night I could eat watermelon for the first time in 3½ years, thanks to you guys!

Freia, a lady who was probably in her mid-40s, couldn’t stop shaking for the first 3½ sessions. She was in STP3, and she was terrified. After Freia’s first session, I arranged for a tough-looking prison officer to escort us wherever we went in the prison (normally, I would be the person doing this). But, part-way through Session Three, Cynthia stood up tall and said,

My offence took place when I was very young. Since then, I have always lived a life of fear. I know that I have a great deal of work still to do, but I shall never be afraid again. Thankyou.

Confession (“telling our stories”)

As previously indicated, in the restorative justice framework, confession is a stepping-stone towards full acceptance of responsibility for one’s past life and actions. In my opinion, this in turn leads to the creation of spiritual capital. Joseph, facilitator of thirteen of our eighteen Acacia STPs, calls forgiveness “telling our stories”. He is fond of quoting James 5.16, “Confess your sins to one another… so that you may be healed.” Joe stresses that, though confess is a “churchy”
word, it is in fact a commonsense idea. We need to tell our story to someone who will really listen. It’s a selfish process, we don’t do it for anyone else (Verity & King, 2007). As the author of James’s letter points out, we confess to someone else “so that we may be healed” The telling of stories is very much part of restorative justice (Bletzer & Koss, 2014; Daly et al., 2006; Gavrielides, 2013; Guthrey, 2013; Karpa, 2014; Wright, 2001; Zehr, 2004), and Shaw (2010, p.29) refers to story-telling as “the heart of the process”. The stories come thick and fast from victims of crime as well as from prisoner-participants. At a 2011 STP reunion and training day for facilitators and others, one man said,

I have taken part in three “Sycamore Trees”. I’ve found it hard to believe that so much actual healing can result from simply telling your story. (see Gill et al., 2014)

In a slightly different context, de Beer (2014, p.5) speaks of

…the creation of safe spaces in which [sinners and sinned against] could tell their stories in order for them to move beyond woundedness to healing and constructive engagement, with each other but also with society at large.

And Braithwaite (2002, p.564) speaks of empowering people by listening to their stories:

Kay Pranis’s (2000) great insight about how empowerment works with restorative justice. Pranis says we can tell how much power a person has by how many people listen to their stories.

And he points out that

The deadly simple empowering feature of restorative justice here is that it involves listening to the stories of victims and accused offenders, both groups which the criminological literature shows to be disproportionately poor, powerless and young.

It follows that, by the simple fact of being listened to, people are being empowered (Braithwaite, 2002; Lovell et al., 2002). In this context, I find Crocker’s comment (2013, p.6) interesting:
Narrative provides a route into peoples' experiences that traditional methods may miss. Asking for stories rather than opinions changes what people recount.

Almost all of the victims of crime who have participated in Acacia STPs have been victims of horrendous physical offences. For example, three of them have had sons or daughters murdered, one was sister of a murdered woman, and the husband of another had been brutally murdered while she was held down then beaten. One man had been kidnapped and bundled into the boot of a car, and five women have been raped. One elderly lady had been mugged and robbed, and one had been ritually raped by a satanic cult. As these persons have told their story, they themselves have been helped in the telling. In addition, the offenders hearing them have shared their pain and have been given an understanding of what it must be like to be victimised. Schweigert, (2002, p.38) writes that victims and offenders testify to the power of being seated face to face in restorative programmes, “seeing each other as human beings like themselves…” (see also Gill et al., 2014).

Forgiveness

Gordon, who participated in STP11, was typical of many prisoner-participants in Acacia STPs. He was, of course, an offender, but as a child he had been sexually molested, then as an adult he had been a victim of theft and assault. In Session 3 of the programme, when the group dealt with the topic of forgiveness, Gordon shouted out, “Forgive them? That would be weak – I won’t do it!”

At the time I assumed – as did the facilitator – that Gordon had confused the idea of intrapersonal forgiveness with that of interpersonal forgiveness. But Vitz & Mayo (1997a, p.70) offer a different explanation. They write that hatred is attractive to the hater because it is a defence mechanism. In addition, they point out that the joy of the direct expression of violence and anger has been long known, and that hatred and revenge provide a purpose to life and make a person feel more powerful. They remind us that the pleasure of revenge, in fact or in fantasy, is a popular theme in literature as well as in the media, and that control of others has obvious rewards. Given these rewards deriving from hatred, it is no wonder that forgiveness is frequently seen as weakness or as the giving up of
power. By Session 7 of the STP, I sensed that Gordon was beginning to concede that relinquishing his right to bitterness and revenge might be to his own advantage, but I felt that he probably needed to build up his sense of self in order to proceed further along this road (Vitz & Mayo, 1997b). McKay et al. (2007) point out that forgiveness is often a lengthy process, and Vitz & Mayo (1997a) say that genuine forgiveness is never easy.

For the most part, the forgiveness expressed in STP is intrapersonal (see Chapter 2). This is the process that involves giving up the right to revenge and/or bitterness, but does not entail saying “I forgive you” to the perpetrator. Gabriel, one of our facilitators, has come to call this “phase one of forgiveness”. He has done this to avoid confusion and ambiguity, but I think that it adds another complication. When prisoner-participants have discussed and dealt with “phase one” of forgiveness, there is almost invariably an expectation that they can now move on to “phase two”, namely interpersonal forgiveness. This is generally not possible for them. Even if they were not incarcerated, the fact is that their respective victims are frequently dead, or overseas, or simply don’t want to see them. Joseph, our current STP facilitator, is fond of saying that we should name the offence, experience the real hurt, and move on.

Bronte, who in STP1 suddenly found that she could eat watermelon, and that she was set free, was a Christian lady who said that she had forgiven the offender immediately she found her murdered husband. She said this:

As soon as I knew where he was, I went to the prison and demanded to see him. I confronted him in his cell, and I said to him, “I forgive you!”

But Bronte had done nothing of the kind. She had not experienced the real hurt and she had not moved on (Heuer, 2011; Northey, 1998; Toews, 2006; Wetzel, 1999; Zehr, 2005a). Heuer (2011, p.59) writes that “Unforgiveness, in my view, imprisons a person or an experience in the past”. Without the man ever realising it, Bronte had allowed her husband’s killer to rule her life for 3½ years. Participation in STP had assisted her to take the step of forgiveness, and she had begun to set herself free. I think, too, that in her eagerness to obey what she saw as God’s command in the scriptures, she may have forgotten how difficult forgiveness can be.
Forgiveness is not a “once-off” process

I mentioned in Chapter 2 that the process of forgiveness is often long-term, requiring considerable emotional investment and upset (Denton & Martin, 1996). In one STP session, Joseph was telling us all that we need to name the offence, feel the real hurt (“because it really hurts”), and move on. “And then,” he said, “you’re free!” A burly prisoner called Stanislav said feelingly, “What happens when the hurt comes back again?” Joseph’s answer was, “Then you go through the process again.”

What if the perpetrator has not had a change of heart?

This question is asked in almost every STP programme. My own view is that intrapersonal forgiveness is absolutely essential for on-going and healthy living. However, for reasons I outline in Chapter 2, I consider it pointless to offer (interpersonal) forgiveness to someone who intends to continue offending in the same way as before.

Before STP13 began, Bernadette – who was to be one of the participants – said that she wanted to speak with me. She had been subjected to repeated sexual abuse when she was younger. The perpetrator was a man I had known very well, and worked with, some years ago. Bernadette knew this, and did not want me to be offended or surprised as she told parts of her story during the programme. She had been involved in an earlier STP in another prison, she said, but it had been with Mainstream prisoners. She was apprehensive about STP13 in Acacia, because almost all the prisoners were sex offenders. In Session One of the programme, she said, “I am apprehensive – I am terrified – of working with you, because you are sex offenders.” A little over half-way through STP13, she was still uneasy, but she was becoming less uncomfortable:

Now that I’ve met you, and come to know you as human beings, I’m still having problems, I still don’t understand why, particularly as the man who did this is related to me, and he still won’t admit that he did anything wrong. But because I’ve met you men, and come to know you, I think I’ll find life a little easier.

I think that STP had helped Bernadette to travel a little further down the road towards intrapersonal forgiveness.
Repentance (“choosing to turn around”)

Repentance indicates and involves a change of heart, a change of attitude, a change of mind. As such, it is both a contributor to and resulting from the action of taking responsibility for one’s past actions. It is a factor in the creation of spiritual capital in the prison environment. In the scriptures, “repentance” is the translation of a Greek word μετάνοια, which literally means “a changed mind”. Yet it seems to me that, if there has been no change of behaviour, then there has been no change of mind or of attitude.

The results of STP can be gradual, so the evidence of repentance is not always easy to observe. We have noted Igor saying in an STP12 session that “Some people can change just like that” [click of the fingers]. “Not me! I can only do it a little bit at a time, because of what I’ve made myself into. I’m glad I came to prison. I need lots of time, and I’ll need my faith.

In similar vein Maria, who had participated in a number of Acacia STPs, said that “Each time I come, it helps me to grow a little.”

As previously discussed, in the UK and in New Zealand the five-point scale Crime Pics II is used in order to test the extent to which STP influenced the recidivism rate of prisoner-participants (Bakker, 2005, Feasey et al., 2005; Feasey & Williams, 2009).

This is one of the main questions asked by officialdom about STP. Yet I find myself questioning whether testing re-offending rates of prisoner participants was an adequate or reasonable way to assess the programme. I say this for three overlapping reasons:

1. At no point in the Acacia STP journey have I been promoting “Sycamore Tree” with the primary aim of reducing re-offending rates. I have had in mind something I think of as inner, or essential, change in each person. If this is achieved, it will in all probability result in altered behaviour patterns, but those behaviour patterns are not the primary aim.

2. Even if inner change is achieved in prisoner-participants, some of them have very limited choices in life, owing to their up-bringing or to their social
environment post-release.

3. STP, as it is carried out in Acacia Prison, exists to benefit offenders as well as victims of crime, and Crime Pics II does not consider the victims of crime in any way.

Incidentally, when I was in Canada taking an international diploma, the UK STP training person put us through an abbreviated course as if to qualify us all as facilitators. I observed screening processes for including a prisoner in an English STP are much more intensive than in Acacia. UK applicants are required to be far further advanced along the road to accepting responsibility for their crimes than they are in WA. I was told, for example, that if they were perceived to be minimising their role in their offence/s, they would not be accepted into the programme. I wondered whether they were accepting into STP only those prisoners who were already less likely to re-offend.

Nevertheless, repentance is a key issue in any model of restorative justice. If there is no indication of offenders – as well as victims of crime – choosing to turn their respective lives around, then the project has probably failed (Van Ness, 2007). Here are some examples of observable repentance, associated with Acacia STP….

Wayne owns and manages a medium-sized business. He was the person who discovered the body of his daughter, who had been brutally murdered in their home. There was blood in every room, from which we deduce that she had run desperately from room to room in an attempt to escape her assailant. Wayne was still finding difficulty in coming to terms with all this. When his wife Sheila decided to take part in an Acacia STP, he disapproved. Even so, to please her, he agreed to attend the final session of that project. The final session is always a celebratory event, and visitors are invited to come.

Wayne was so impressed with what he saw and heard in that session that it made a difference to his whole attitude. Two days later, he was asked would he employ a particular man who had just been released from prison. Wayne told me later that “A couple of days earlier, I wouldn't even have considered it….” He hired the man, and Wayne tells me that this former offender is now his most trusted employee. Much later, Wayne himself participated in two STPs in Acacia.
Jimmy is an Indigenous prisoner who was known throughout the WA prison system as “Angry”, because of the aggressive approach he has shown to just about everything. In an STP session, Angry said, “I’m a new man. I’ve changed. I don’t want to be known by that name no more.”

In the months that followed his STP, two officers in Jimmy’s residential block rang me independently to say how “Angry” had changed, and how helpful he had been in the block when fellow-prisoners were having a hard time. And, in my interview with Jimmy prior to his release, he said this:

If I can do it here, Alan, turn the cart around, then I can see I can turn the cart right around [in my whole life].

And he went on to say that

Like I’m going through problems with my wife. I love my kids, but my marriage is no good. And I can [now] talk with her and not get angry. I can talk in a calm and respectful way. I’ve changed, Alan, I know in myself.

He summed it up by saying that, for the first time in his life, he was dealing with issues head-on.

Winston was no daffodil. He was a large strong man, respected by other prisoners because he was tough. He didn’t speak much but, when he did, his attitude was sometimes surly and often very close to threatening. Winston was addicted to drugs. I had been greatly surprised when he had expressed a wish to take part in STP. Nevertheless, he took part in STP3, and 18 months later he enrolled in a chaplaincy-sponsored course called “Alpha Express”. He worked a great deal at that time with Chaplain Bruce, and his attitude in the prison changed markedly. On one occasion I visited his residential block to assist a semi-literate Indonesian prisoner to fill out a form. The man could not understand my explanation, and Winston stepped forward to help. As he did so, he was clear-faced and obviously pleased to be of assistance. It seemed to me that this was a clear example of spiritual capital in the prison setting, due at least in part to participation in STP and in the faith community.

Five prisoners who had taken part in STP5 spoke of the support they had gained from each other in their STP experience. They were friends before the
programme began, and lived in the same wing of the Protection residential block. They said several times that this was a positive factor. After STP5 was over, they met every day, supporting each other and seeing how each was progressing. One other participant, who lives in the same block but was not one of the group before the programme, became a firm friend and support because of the STP experience. They believed they were helping each other to travel further and deeper into healing and resolution. I joined them for some of these sessions, and can testify that this is so. They continued doing this until their release.

Veronica is the lady who, in the very first session of STP1, asked the vital question, “Why me?” At an STP re-union and training day in 2011, she told me she had left her previous job – which was a high-paying position in the city – to become a nurse. I asked her how she was finding this new occupation. She said, “Alan, it’s wonderful!” Later, she said to the whole group, “This remarkable programme has changed my life in a number of ways.”

**Reconciliation**

The facilitator of STP14 re-defined reconciliation as “healing the brokenness within and between”, and said this:

> Do all you can to mend the brokenness within you, and between you and the people you’ve hurt – and, when you’ve done all you can, that’s enough.

In one of the sessions of STP7, prisoners and visitors were invited to bring in with them some small item – a card or a poem or a photograph – which summed up STP for them. A few did this. Sheila brought two poems to share with the group. She had written one of these ten years earlier, shortly after her son had been murdered in their home. The other poem was ten years later. I print these below, with her permission. The first is called “Separation”:

**Pain rips through me like a knife**  
**Tearing my soul, burning my heart**  
**Scorching, searing, agonising pain**  
**Making me breathless**

> How is it possible to endure such pain and go on living?  
> My mind tortures me with images…
With screams and pleading, panic and bleeding
Horror that is inescapable

Try as I might to shut it out,
It returns, daily to torment me...
Reminding me of my child’s last moments
Unspeakable horror endured alone

Evil loose in our house
Destroying everything in her wake
Leaving a trail of destruction and broken lives
Without an ounce of remorse

A boys life cut short
Hopes and dreams shattered
A future wiped out in one morning
A killing rampage unchecked

How to deal with this...how to pick up the pieces of our lives
How to forgive, how to go on without our child
How to see a future without Jess
Unthinkable

The other poem that she read had, she explained, been written much more recently – ten years after the death of her son. She explained that during that time she had “done a great deal of work” and that one-and-a-half STPs had been an important part of that. At one of the STP7 sessions, she had told us that a grandson had been born the previous night, and that she was “over the moon” about this. At that time she went on to say that it was just ten years since the murder of her son. She was deeply moved at the thought of this co-incidence.

She had told us in an earlier session that, whereas a few years earlier she had felt suicidal and without hope, she now knew that she had real choices.

JOY

At last I can feel again
Life is looking good
My confidence is back and I am on track
I feel reborn
The darkness has turned to light
I am alive and grateful for it

Memories of Jess are softer
More gentle
The horror has faded

I look into the eyes of my grandchild and feel love
I see a new life full of hope and possibilities

I look ahead and see a road filled with challenges
Of new beginnings
Of laughter and love

I am no longer afraid
Of what life will dish out
I am master of my own destiny

I make the choices, I reap the rewards or live with the consequences
I take full responsibility for my life and the choices I make

I have come through the dark days, battle weary and wiser for it.
Bitterness and fear no longer plague me. I am free of the shackles of the past and I rejoice in being me.

Life is a grand adventure
And I fully intend to embrace it.
I am free

Over lunch in this final session, this secondary victim of crime spoke with me at some length about feelings of suicide. She talked of her earlier wish to end her life. She told me how close she had come to doing so, and spoke of what had prevented her. She was happy for me to have copies of the two poems she had read out, and she offered a third. This had been written in the same year as “Separation”, shortly after Jess’s death. Here it is:

**SUICIDE**

I am inside a black hole now. It is dark. Blackness envelopes me. I am choking on apathy. I have no energy to go on. I yearn for death, yet I am
not able to take that final step.
Something is holding me back, stopping me from taking my
life the pain will go away. I curse God or whoever it is that
created us. I curse myself and I curse the youth that took my
sons life. I have no insights into how I drag myself out of this hole I
have put myself in. Life has no joy anymore. My self misery is
all I know, and it washes over me leaving no room for
anything else. No one can help me. I have built a stone wall
around myself which nothing can penetrate. Only death.
That is the only way out but still something holds me back.
Some glimmer of light at the end of that dark tunnel.
My self indulgent self inflicted misery rises in my throat like
bile. I choke on it and it burns my throat like liquid fire,
burning all the way down till pain envelopes me.
Somewhere in the distance is a tiny spark. That spark has not
gone out, despite my best efforts. The spark of hope. I
recognise it, though I don’t want to acknowledge it yet. It
glimmers softly and away in the recesses of my mind a seed is
planted. In some dark corner of my soul there is warmth
enough to nourish the seed – and allow it to grow. In
desperation I cry out for help, I cry out to my God in surrender,
and in that moment I feel the seed growing, that tiny spark of
hope begins to light the darkness. The pain starts to recede.
Darkness turns to light and I begin my fight back to the land
of the living.

I find it interesting that the author of this poem had, on several occasions in two
“Sycamore Tree” programmes, stated that she is “not a religious person in any
way” and that she does not believe in God. In an earlier session of STP7 she said
that the main reason she did not ascribe to the idea of God was that she rejected
any notion of surrender. She was her own person, and this fact was important to
her.

I did not read this third poem until after I had returned home that night. Had she
given it to me to give me some idea of her spiritual journey? Had she been
encouraged to do so by the fact that I had said at some stage that God was not
always something or someone spelt ‘G-O-D’? Was it significant that she gave this
poem to me, and not to anyone else associated with STP? I don’t know. But,
whatever the reason, these poems speak to me of healing and pain and growth and reconciliation.

**Restitution**

In STP14, the facilitator asked me to outline what had been done in the past concerning a fund to aid victims of crime. I reminded the group that, in STP, offender-participants are not meeting or working with victims of their own crimes. For this reason, reconciliation and restitution must be largely symbolic. In minimum-security prisons such “symbolic restitution” can take the form of community service. And I understand that prisoners in some UK medium and maximum-security prisons have decided to express this part of the programme in terms of drama, paintings or sculpture (Liebemann, 2011). In Acacia, the prisoners in STP1 asked permission to set up the Victim Relief Fund, to aid victims of crime. This would be what was called a “prisoner-led fund” which is to say that, for every $1 contributed by a prisoner, any person “outside” may add another dollar. Over the 6 years that have passed since then, outside contributions have added an average of $3.40 for every dollar given by a prisoner.

Joseph the facilitator took up the theme of “restitution”, and urged participants to do what they could to mend what was broken and to heal what needed healing. Again, he stressed, “When you’ve done all that you can do, it’s enough.”

I "sat in" on a small group in which prisoner-participants outlined what they hoped and planned to do in the community to “make up for” what they had done. They were clear that these plans were to benefit themselves – to help with their own healing – as much as they were for others. Perhaps more. A Moslem prisoner had begun to assist and advise younger Moslems, and he hoped to continue doing this post-release. Another was just completing a four-year course in youth counselling. A third said he was “a bit of a handy-man” and would like to help people in the community by doing odd jobs for them. I wondered whether the fact that these men have criminal records might inhibit some of them from going ahead with these plans (see Earle & Wakefield, 2012).

One prisoner in STP1 was a man called Olaf. He came to my office one day, concerning the prisoner-led fund, and said,
I have given all that I can to this fund. All I can do now is paint leaves.

I thought to myself, “Poor man, he’s loopy.” He then explained that he could paint eucalypt leaves with a craft sealant, then with paint and finally with something called leather sealant. The latter made the finished product flexible as well as durable. The leaves could be sold separately as bookmarks or could be attached to coloured cartridge paper and sold as cards. Olaf presented me with his first bookmark. It was remarkably beautiful. As he handed it to me, he said, “If you die in ten years, your bookmark will live on…”

Sale of Olaf’s leaves has contributed many hundreds of dollars to the fund – and, by the time others have added to those amounts outside the prison, this has come to more than two thousand dollars.

There are other elements of STP which I consider to be part of the spiritual capital generated. These will be discussed later in this thesis.

Conclusion

Chapters 4 and 5 looked at the Acacia community of faith. It dealt with my role within that faith community, as well as with data obtained through observation and in-depth interviews with prisoners as well as chaplains. That particular section of this thesis included consideration of the chaplaincy-sponsored programme, “Kairos”. It was explained that “Kairos” and STP are chaplaincy-sponsored programmes which are sponsored by the Acacia community of faith yet are not simply for its own members.

STP has included participants who are Christian, Buddhist, Moslem or atheist. It is sponsored by the Christian community of faith and the (Christian) Prison Fellowship WA, yet in Acacia it is not run as a “religious” programme. “Kairos” is markedly different from STP in that it is specifically Christian. Its aim is to provide prisoners with four days’ experience of Christian love and non-judgmental community. However it is noteworthy that, up to this point, many of its prisoner-participants have not been members of the Acacia (Christian) faith community. What these two temporary communities have in common is that they are part of the community of faith, and yet not part of it.
In these four chapters, therefore – Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 – we have looked at three different, yet linked, communities. Chapter 8 consists of reflections on the concept of community, in the light of observations made concerning these three remarkable groupings in Acacia Prison. Chapter 9 contains some reflections on spiritual capital generated by these three groupings.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I have explored notions relating to STP and to restorative justice. In later chapters, these are linked with the concept of spiritual capital. There are many such links that are perhaps obvious. So, for example, the central aspect of taking responsibility for one’s life and action frequently leads to or involves treating other people in good faith and with honesty. The work of healing and restoring is a group experience as well as an intensely personal one. It is an example of spiritual capital, and it very often extends beyond the STP group. I see the whole experience of growth and change, which I observe in STP sessions, as having a great deal to do with the production of spiritual capital. I observe that many STP participants are developing in themselves a wish to help others and, as they do so, they themselves are helped enormously. In later chapters, I will reflect on this concept of spiritual capital, and upon the way in which this research has led me to understand it.
CHAPTER EIGHT – “COMMUNITY”

Introduction

In Chapters 4 and 5, I presented data obtained through observation of the community of faith, as well as from in-depth interviews with prisoners and chaplains. Chapter 5 included some coverage of a smaller, temporary community formed by and in the chaplaincy-sponsored programme: “Kairos”. Chapters 6 and 7 represented a more in-depth “case study” of STP, as it is run in Acacia. STP is sponsored by the Acacia faith community, and in a sense the STP group is “owned” by it and part of it, yet it is also separate from it. So it is that as many as two-thirds of prisoners who have completed STP in Acacia are not members of the community of faith. I have gathered all this together under the one heading of Acacia Community of Faith.

This chapter contains some further data in relation to the concept of community, as well as some of my reflections upon it.

Community

Part-way through the time of my research, a well-known Australian radio and television personality was expecting her first child, and she knew that it would be a boy. She said in a radio programme that “What I want, above everything else, for my son, is that he will be an independent person.”

I was surprised at this statement. She seemed to be saying that the network of familial and social relations, which I have always thought essential to a well-rounded human being, were not as important as being independent of them. Yet my impression of her, throughout her career, was of a person who assigned a high priority to those same networks. Perhaps her statement was an example of hyperbole. It may be that she simply hoped her son would not be so dependent upon others that he couldn’t make up his own mind. But, whatever she meant to convey, her statement raises for me two important themes that I intend to discuss in this chapter: individuals, and groups. However it is important for me to be as clear as I can about what I mean by the term “community”.

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“Community” is a difficult concept to define. Bryson & Mowbray (1981, p.255) point out that

Community is one of those ‘motherhood’ words with great potential for mystification of social issues.

Williams (as cited in Bryson & Mowbray, 1981) tells us that, unlike other terms of social organisation, it never seems to be used negatively (Fraser, 2005). Burkett, 2001, p.236) cites Popple as saying that “...many writers suggest that a somewhat simplistic and romantic view still predominates,” and he says that

The traditional view...represents community as a place of warmth, intimacy and social cohesion.

(Popple, as cited in Burkett, 2001, po.236)

There are a few similarities between this “traditional view” and the Acacia community of faith. For example, the chapel very often provides a place for quietness and reflection in the turbulence of prison life, and for quite a number of prisoners the chapel community represents safety and/or belonging. But the Acacia community of faith is always active, always changing. People are constantly leaving and being replaced – they are either released, or transferred to another prison, often with very little notice. There always seems to be some crisis or another. And the STP and “Kairos” groupings fit into the picture awkwardly, if at all.

Perhaps the answer can be seen in the ideas of *gemeinschaft*, which I mentioned in Chapter 2 – that we are looking here

   to what Lenin called certain simple fundamental rules of living together, known to all ages....

(Tay & Kamenka, 1980, p.26)

It may be that we are reflecting upon simple matters of trust, and relationship between people. Is the faith community in Acacia a group of people who are beginning to trust each other? The community I have been describing is one in which two priorities are apparent:

a. It is a community in which the individual person is valued. Paradoxically, and perhaps arising in part from this,
b. It is also a community which takes group activities and processes seriously.

Early in the prison’s history, my chaplaincy colleague Bruce wrote this:

Jesus gives us a great example as a good shepherd. We [i.e., the prison chaplains] are called to minister to the ninety and nine, the group, but I love the picture of JESUS going out and looking for the lost sheep and carrying it home.

(Chaplaincy Department, 2002, npn)

And, together with this, he wrote that

Chaplaincy involves group ministry. It seeks and provides support and strength for the individual who is lost and alone in a dangerous place, weighed down with regret, frustration, and often anger.

(Chaplaincy Department, 2002, npn)

So then, ministry with groups and ministry with individuals are inter-twined. As Burkett (2001, p.239) puts it,

Community is made up of a network of relationships, and so examination of each individual and the way he/she relates to others is not irrelevant to the proceedings.

In any large organisation, there is a danger that the individual can be overlooked. This is particularly so in a prison, for inmates are placed there against their will and are constantly supervised. Boyes-Watson (2005a) says that a number of aspects of organisation life undermine connections between people. The first of these, she says, is that organisations are structured around tasks rather than persons:

The result is a kind of responsibility vacuum: a teacher may teach, counsellor advise, therapist listen and doctor prescribe, yet no one, through an organized relationship, has responsibility for the welfare of the whole person

(Boyes-Watson, 2005a, p.364)
In Acacia, this is to some extent inevitable, for we have a thousand prisoners and more than 350 staff members. I am constantly impressed at the extent of genuine and continuing concern shown by many custodial officers, and members of the psychology department and teaching staff, for prisoners at risk. Yet their lines of authority are clearly marked, and each department is desperately short-staffed. It is probably true to say that, in Acacia Prison, the faith community is much more likely to be dealing with “the whole person”. It is there that each inmate has a very good chance of being honoured as a person in his own right and as a member of an accepting community.

A community which honours the individual person

A huge proportion of the time spent by Acacia chaplains in the prison is in fact in counselling individual prisoners. Sessions with chaplains and individual inmates vary enormously. Yet I consider that a legitimate aim of such counselling is each person’s acceptance of realistic responsibility for himself (Close, 1970). This is very different from blame, which can produce shame and neurotic guilt. Close (1970, p.24) says of this kind of responsibility that it is

…”owning up to oneself.” It says, “This is me, with my assets and liabilities, my successes and my failures. I can own my feelings, my action, myself; I can acknowledge the depth of all that is within me, both good and evil.”

I pause to reflect that acceptance of responsibility for oneself is also the primary aim of the restorative justice programmes sponsored by the chaplaincy department in Acacia Prison. It seems to me that this is the point at which the two priorities of this faith community meet – valuing the individual person, and taking the whole concept of community very seriously.

Community, and the Acacia community of faith

The question must arise concerning which takes temporal priority, the individual Christian or the Christian community of faith of which he or she is a member. By this I mean that the question is this: Is the faith community basically made up of individuals who believe in Jesus and decide to join together, rather like people who like football so decide to join a football club? Or do the individual members take on their identity as Christians from their membership in the body of Christ,
from their membership of the group? Perhaps there is something of both in the Acacia faith community. At any rate, I observe that, for many of its members, the initial conversion experience is intensely personal, yet almost all of their growth and development from that point onwards is in fellowship with others (Curran, 2002). I note that the disciples in Antioch, who were the first to be called “Christians” (Acts 13.26), appear to have acquired this name because they were already a community who were “turning the world upside-down with their teaching.” Individual Christians in Acacia go out into the wider prison community as members of the Acacia community of faith. In Chapter 9, I will contend that members of the community of faith are creating spiritual capital not only within the faith community but also when they are separate from that community, functioning as individuals within the wider prison precinct (Woodberry, 2003; 2005; Zohar, 2010).

Nancy (2000) maintains that there is no knowledge or meaning or identity which is separate from, or preceding, community. We construct meaning, and we derive identity, as community, or as members of community. He tells us that “…A single being is a contradiction in terms” (Nancy, 2000, p.12) and that “There is no meaning if meaning is not shared” (Nancy, 2002, p.2). So he is saying that all our understandings are at least to some extent socially determined. In saying this, he is taking a very different stance from many other thinkers – for example, Descartes, with his cogito ergo sum. I observe the close relationship between members of Indigenous groupings within the prison, and I assume that these prisoners would take Nancy’s view in this matter for granted. They would probably be repelled by Descartes’ individualistic outlook, and they would say “We are, and that’s an end of it.”

Panelli and Welch (2005) rightly point out that Nancy is not thereby maintaining that communities are uniform or monochrome. In fact at various places, he states that communities are not complete and are not characterised by consensus. However, his Of Being Singular Plural (2000) contains repeated insistence that individuals cannot be imagined or defined except in reference to others, and that all our understandings are socially determined (e.g., pp.2,12,29,60). Scholars such as Bernasconi (as cited in Watkin, 2007) and Crichley (as cited in Watkin, 2007) take issue with this approach to separate-ness, or “alterity”. My own view is that Nancy’s stress upon “community” is so heavy that he is effectively spelling
out the death of the individual. It may be that Nancy’s philosophy is, at least in part, a reaction against prevailing postmodern attitudes, in which regard for others (and “being-with”) is notably absent (Guest 2010; Johnson 2004).

In the Acacia community of faith, as previously stated, I observe a twin emphasis. This group of prisoners is growing in its vitality and initiative. At the same time, perhaps encouraged and strengthened by this group characteristic, many individual members are beginning to take responsibility for their own lives, and to make decisions. Although individual community members still act for social recognition and approval, many are beginning to pursue praiseworthy acts irrespective of praise (Sanghera, et al., 2011). The spiritual capital generated and “invested” by members of this group can be seen in several areas:

(a) Within the group – that is to say that, like social capital, it inheres in relationships. It can be seen in chapel activities such as worship, bible studies and fellowship. In addition, it can be seen in the quality of relationships within the faith community.

(b) The other area in which we observe spiritual capital bears far more resemblance to human capital (Coleman, 1990), in that it inheres with each individual. Because of the commitment to Christ made by many members, and because of the presence of God’s spirit within each believer, we expect to see acts of self-giving in many aspects of their lives. Such behaviour will not be restricted to activities within the community of faith, but will extend far beyond it.

Lacey (1988, p.171) writes from a very different perspective to that of Nancy, but she comes to a similar kind of conclusion:

…to put it bluntly, the conception of an a- or pre-social human being makes no sense. What individual human beings perceive as the proper boundaries of autonomy around themselves, how they regard their relations with each other, and a thousand other questions…, are ones which we simply cannot imagine being answered outside some specific social and institutional context.

(see Valk, 2006)
Gavrielides (2005, p.101) cites Lacey (1988) and says that we learn from restorative justice that “community is more than a place”. In saying this, he is echoing McCold and Wachtel (1998, p.72), who say,

What is community? Community is a feeling, a perception of connectedness – personal connectedness both to other human beings and to a group.

(See Boyes-Watson, 2005a; Forrest & Kearns, 2000; Panelli & Welch, 2005; Silk 1999).

McCold & Wachtel (1998, p.72) add that “Where there is no feeling of connectedness among a group of people, there is no community”.

These thoughts are consistent with scriptural teaching. So, in the Old Testament, the concept of “knowing” is the same as that of “being at one with”. This is especially so when reference is made to knowledge of God. So Hosea is stressing the priority of a relationship with God when he writes these words, as if from God:

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

(Hosea 6.6)

It is clear that, when the psalmist writes, “Be still, and know that I am God!” he or she is not referring merely to awareness or cognition – though certainly to these things – but rather to an experience and relationship which is likely to impact upon one’s attitudes and priorities. In similar vein, in the Old Testament, knowledge of other people is the same as “being at one” with them. This is particularly so when referring to sexual intercourse – for example, Genesis 4.1 and 4.25 Adam and Eve, Genesis 4.17 Cain and his wife, 1 Samuel 1.19 Elkanah and Hannah.

When we look at the New Testament, the picture is a little more cloudy. Over the years I have heard many sermons from preachers who appear to assume that the priority in the writings of St. Paul is upon individual commitment. I believe that this is mistaken, and the main emphasis is in fact upon community. There is an element in Paul’s letters which deals with the individual, presumably because of his personal experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9.3-19; Galatians 1.13-17), and at other times (1 Corinthians 9.1 and 2 Corinthians 12.1). This will be developed later in this chapter. However there are several other elements, or
“layers” in Paul’s letters. One of these is very much to do with “community” – he sees himself as “an apostle to the gentiles” (Romans 11.13), and he writes a great deal about the “body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12.12-31; Romans 12.4-8; 1 Corinthians 6.15).

Paul addresses the long-standing division between Jew and gentile, and he says that the coming of Jesus, and his good news, implies that

As many of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.

(Galatians 3.27-29)

Borg & Crossan (2009, p.196) pose the question, whether Paul’s emphasis upon being “one in Christ” is about unity or about equality. For, clearly, the two are not the same. In a time of national crisis, the Prime Minister might say, “We are all Australians.” The message would be clear: “Despite all our differences, we are united in our love and concern for country.” But she would not mean that we are all equal. Borg & Crossan (2009, p.196) tell us they believe Paul is writing about equality of value, and not simply unity:

We don’t think he was saying, “Can’t we all just get along despite our differences?” That might be a good thing… But Paul’s vision was about much more than this. It was about equality instead of about acceptance of hierarchy and superiority within Christian community.

This has huge implications in a prison faith community. People are beginning to learn that, at least within this community, hierarchy is irrelevant. In addition, it has implications in this research project, namely that I am obliged to treat every participant with respect, as a fellow-member of the body of Christ, and as equal in value. This is highly consistent with the methodology of this research, namely with participant action research. Borg and Crossan (2009) refer us to Paul’s Letter to Philemon, where his vision of “life in Christ” meant that a Christian master could not have a Christian slave. As Preiss (1954, p.42) puts it,

[The Christian ethic] seeks only to express in daily life the unheard-of fact that in Jesus Christ all are one: in him there is no more slave nor free.
It is important to note that, although conversion is a personal process, Paul was not simply in the business of conversion. He created communities. Borg & Crossan (2009, p.185) tell us that

He converted people to a new life in community, to live together “in Christ”. The phrase is shorthand for a way of life in community radically different from that in the normal societies of this world.

Holtam (2005, p.5) writes,

So the community is essential to Christianity, faith is not just about private personal experience.

Paul did not see life “in Christ” as a matter for individuals, in the way that “spirituality” and “religion” are often seen nowadays. Borg and Crossan (2009, p.186) write,

This was not simply because “it’s important to be part of a church,” but because his purpose, his passion, was to create communities whose life together embodied an alternative to the normalcy of the “wisdom of this world.”

In this regard, two phrases are used repeatedly by Paul in his letters. The first of these is “body of Christ” – a term I referred to in my interview near the beginning of this research. My interviewer had asked my theological perspectives on the community of faith in Acacia Prison. My response was that one of the strains of my thinking was what I called “body of Christ theology.” I said this:

I find that part of what drives me is that every member of the community of faith is in fact a member of the Body of Christ….

(c.f., 1 Corinthians 12.27)

I went on to say that each of us is gifted by God, each of us has immense potential, and each of us deserves and has a place. I remember that I had in mind Paul’s teaching that

…just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and all were
made to drink of one Spirit.

(1 Corinthians 12.12-13)

In that interview I stated that, “rightly or wrongly”, in the other prisons in which I had served, I saw that this biblical concept of body of Christ had not been observed in any significant way:

I think that part of what I was trying to do in coming to Acacia was to insist that we are a congregation together and that all...of us are members of Christ.

“Body of Christ” imagery is helpful in that it reminds us that we are a community with the privilege and responsibility of continuing the work and ministry which Jesus began when he was walking and talking among us in Palestine. This responsibility and privilege is shared.

The other term that is frequently used by Paul in his letters is that of “brother” (or “brother and sister”, in our newer translations). By constantly addressing members of the body of Christ as “brother” or “sister”, Paul was indicating and emphasising a close relationship to each other in this new community. Christians had the same responsibility for each other as if they were members of the same biological family. In the urban world of Paul, this had special significance. Extended families were shattered, dysfunctional and sometimes lost completely, due to migration to the cities and early deaths. These communities would be “new families”. One of the implications is that these will be a new and different kind of community. They will be spiritual communities, in which we should expect individuals to invest and expend spiritual capital.

**Diversity**

Near the beginning of this research journey, I asked Boadicea, who is an Acacia chaplaincy colleague, to interview me. Part of my response to a question about my theological perspectives on prison ministry was in terms of “...the nature of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” I was aware that there is considerable debate and contention concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. Indeed Roman Catholic teaching on this matter is that any claim to understand the Trinity is heretical. Nevertheless, I had two ideas in mind.
The first is that the idea of the triune God becomes a doctrinal symbol of the mutual interdependence of persons. The Trinity is perceived as three distinct persons, in communion with each other. Carnley (2004, p.294) writes that this is “clearly incongruent with the liberal ideal of individual autonomy and independence from the restraints of the many”, and comments that “It explains why we Christians can never be simply ‘liberals’”. McLaren (2012, p.56) writes of “community-in-unity” and “unity-in-community”. What I had in mind in my interview was that this image fits with the fact that there’s a huge diversity - not just of church background but of nationality, of problems, of history, of all those things - in the Acacia faith community. At the same time, however, there is a real sense that we belong together.

My second thought in that interview, as I spoke of the Trinity was that we are invited to join in the life of the Trinity (“to become participants of the divine nature”, 2 Peter 1.4). In my interview in relation to this research, I said,

I'm always reminded of an icon in the monastery in which I trained…of the Trinity being three persons around a table, but there's a fourth side which is much wider and is clearly meant to be stretchable to fit everyone else; we're all invited into the life of God…

So it is that I find the Trinity to be a potent symbol of what the Acacia faith community can be and sometimes is – a community to which all are invited, in which wide diversity is welcomed, and yet in which people find unity and meaning. Carnley (2004, p.294) says that “the essence of being a person, as distinct from being an individual, is that a person is related to another” (see also Croft, 2002).

Iris Marion Young (1990, p.237) refers to the modern city as “a community of strangers”. She welcomes the city because it is large enough for people to be part of smaller groups, yet be accepted and acceptable as they participate in activities of the wider community. She speaks of “social differentiation without exclusion” and, as examples of what she means, cites sub-groups of gays and lesbians. She acknowledges that it does not always work out satisfactorily – in fact, that from time to time it goes horribly wrong – and that the model she has put forward is to a large extent “aspirational”. And those of us who have been involved in any kind of social work are only too aware of the crippling loneliness and isolation that is present in modern cities, even among many people (Castells,
as cited in Forrest & Kearns, 2000). Chalmers (2007) writes of small communities of lesbians, gays, Aboriginal people, and class and ethnic persons finding a place of belonging within the wider community of western Sydney. However, in doing so, she writes also of alienation, loneliness and clinical depression. In a different context, Boyes-Watson (2005a, p.363) asks what she calls “an even bigger question”:

whether communities can be inclusive of those who are considered “outsiders” - ethnic groups, foreigners, strangers, people across the globe whose values, norms and culture are different.

To a somewhat limited extent, Young’s model holds good with the community of faith in Acacia. STP and “Kairos” - temporary groups - are part of the community of faith, and yet are not part of it. For, as previously outlined, these two groups are sponsored by the Acacia faith community, and form “temporary communities”. But most members of these two groups do not belong to the community of faith.

Still other groups, particularly the Indigenous tribal and family groupings, feel welcome to avail themselves of the ministry of chaplains for such events as memorial services. At those times, and at some others, they know and feel that they are fully part of the faith community. The Vietnamese Bible Fellowship is mainly made up of prisoners who attend the weekly chapel services but whose knowledge of English is limited. However, Young’s phrase (1990, p.237), “community of strangers” describes the Acacia faith community very well indeed in a different way. This little community is made up of vastly different kinds of people with hugely varied backgrounds. They come from different countries, have differing interests, and see the world through quite different eyes. Yet they find welcome and a sense of belonging in this community of faith.

Rose (as cited in Panelli & Welch 2005, p.1593) suggests that community is constantly performed as process rather than product. She adds that community is a collection of contradictions rather than one agreed notion, and “a series of voices rather than a unified, substantive object.” The membership and the activities of this improbable collection of men are constantly changing. Yet there is a real sense of community and of spirituality. In an environment which encourages apathy and cynicism, these men are showing initiative and courage. There is a core of selfishness within the group, yet – unexpectedly – there is also
concern for others, both within the group and beyond. These prisoners are increasingly creating and investing spiritual capital.

**Entering and joining the faith community**

Not every convinced Christian comes to faith through a conversion experience which is “sudden and profound” (Miller & C’deBaca, 1994, p.258). However, it often happens this way, and especially in prisons. In the New Testament, there are numerous examples of dramatic conversion. Notable among these is found in Acts 9. Saul, a hunter and persecutor of Christians, after experiencing a “blinding light” on the road to Damascus became Paul, whose letters are regarded by Christians as sacred writings two millennia later (see also, for example, 1 Timothy 1.12-15). In contrast to this, Timothy is seen as a man of faith who was brought up in a Christian family. So Paul is able to write this to him:

> I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you…

(2 Timothy 1.5)

Finding God behind bars (Lyons 1998) may seem too convenient to be believable (Kerley & Copes, 2009). However, coming into the prison system, especially for the first time, can be an immense shock:

> As an ‘extreme’ environment, the prison provides a stark and vivid social context for exploring the conditions that allow for quantum personality change.
> Prison can be identified as one of the social contexts in which self-identity is most likely to be questioned.

(Maruna et al., 2006, p.163)

Maruna et al. (2006, p.169) write that

> Being imprisoned can cause one to see the fragility of the web of meaning they previously took for granted. This realization can lead to reflection on issues of existence, life, and death, which are usually bracketed from everyday consideration.

Williams, Taylor & Walker et al. (2013) interviewed and assessed a cohort of 257 randomly selected newly-incarcerated UK prisoners on entry or re-entry into the prison system, then again three weeks later. 75% of them had been in prison
before and were short-term “revolving door” prisoners. Researchers were surprised at the number of positive emotional responses to entry or re-entry – “coming off drugs”, “positive inmate relationships/ staff helpful”, “asylum from the outside”. However, by far the majority of responses were negative.

Some of the men who come into my office at the prison seem to have lost everything they had previously thought made them who they are (Doehring, 2006). In one blow they have lost their family, their employment, their privacy, their self-respect, their ability to make significant decisions, their right to sexual relations, control of their future (Curran, 2002; Goulding, 2007; Hall, 2004).

Irwin (as cited in Maruna et al., 2006, p.169) has this to say:

One’s identity, one’s personality system, one’s coherent thinking about himself, depend upon a relatively familiar, continuous and predictable stream of events. In the Kafkaesque world of the booking room, the jail cell, the interrogation room, and the visiting room, the boundaries of the self collapse.

Liebling calls this experience “entry shock” or “transition trauma” (as cited in Curran 2002, p.114). There is no doubt that, in this kind of “marginal situation” (Berger & Luckman, as cited in Maruna et al., 2006, p.163), people can no longer take so many things for granted, and many will take stock of their lives. Quite often, this culminates in a religious experience of some kind, and leads to faith (Curran, 2002; Hall, 2004; Kerley & Copes, 2009; Lyons, 1998; Thomas & Zaitsow, 2006). Nelson Mandela once said on National Television: “If you don’t find God in prison, you will never find Him.” (as cited in Landman, 2005, p.17).

Kerley & Copes (2009, p.229) remind us that

Although the religious epiphany is seen as a life-changing event, it is only the beginning and not the end of a spiritual journey.

It’s clear that the form religious conversion takes is essentially individualistic, and from that point onward we can expect a new focus on self-improvement. However the means by which inmates stay on track and cope generally with the problems of incarceration are primarily social (Kerley & Copes, 2009). Or, as Gallagher put it,
Saul may have become Paul in the aloneness of religious ecstasy, but he could remain Paul only in the context of the Christian community that recognised him as such and confirmed the “new being” in which he now located his identity.

(as cited in Curran, 2002, p.61)

“Community” as a verb, not a noun

“Community” has often been treated as an end in itself – as a “thing” which can be created, or which can be destroyed by technology or social processes. Instead of this, Burkett (2001, p.237) encourages us to see community as a verb, “a ‘doing word’, including action, process and change”. Viewed in this way, community is seen as “always-changing, always in a state of becoming” (Tesoriero, 2010, p.167).

Membership of the Acacia faith community is always changing. Activities, relationships are in a constant state of flux. However the chaplaincy department staff has remained relatively stable, and I have continued as co-ordinating chaplain from the beginning. Yet with each change there has been a subtle, or not so subtle, shift in priorities, and an alteration in the activities of the whole group. Some “landmark changes” that spring to mind are as follows:

- A huge change as Bradley began teaching Theology at tertiary level in the prison. This activity brought with it an increased liveliness and curiosity in relation to many aspects of the Christian faith. See Chapter 5 of this thesis.
- A massive change to our outlook and activities as STP began in Acacia. I go into this more fully in Chapter 6. Introduction of this project reminded us of the importance of taking responsibility for one’s own life (see Chapter 6).
- The adoption of a programme of chaplains-in-training (see Chapter 5).
- The very great changes that accompanied arrival of Boadicea, our first female chaplain. See Chapter 5.

More than all this is the day-to-day network of relationship which is always shifting, changing, decaying, entangling, growing. Some of the men who become part of the Acacia faith community have never experienced significant or meaningful community before. Many Protection prisoners have to overcome real
fear in order to mingle with Mainstream inmates at chapel services or in TLG meetings, and some of our Mainstream prisoners find it difficult to overcome their loathing of child sex offenders. Thus community is not necessarily a site at which practice occurs, rather, it

becomes a frame of reference which is neither map nor territory but an orientation which emphasizes the relationality and contextuality of human practice, in all its messiness.

(Burkett, 2001, p.239)

A communitarian model?

I have already mentioned, in Chapter 2, the statement by Bottoms (2003, p.101) that nowadays “there is a hungering for gemeinschaft. Here Bottoms is speaking of the kind of law whose main focus is community, and he recalls that this “hungering” has coincided with the rise of restorative justice and an emphasis upon communitarianism. In a similar way, Braithwaite (as cited in Bottoms, 2003, p.86) describes contemporary restorative justice as “individual-centred communitarianism”. Braithwaite is referring to the fact that, although the transformation in restorative justice is primarily in individuals, each restorative justice project is firmly in the context of community.

Assessment of these statements depends upon one’s understanding of the term “communitarianism”. As previously mentioned, Burkett (2001) cites Popple (1995) as saying that “community” is traditionally seen in very nostalgic terms as a place warmth, friendship and harmony (Butcher, Banks, Henderson & Robertson, 2007).

She quotes Nancy (as cited in Burkett, 2001, p.236) that, seen in this way,

…notions of community are whitewashed, and represent uninterrogated reconstructions of the past, presenting a world that never was - one in which “goods and services were fairly distributed, authority was justly exercised, and where each member identified with the living body of the community”…

The fact is that the concept has been romanticised by many. Etzioni (1993, p.247) speaks on behalf of the communitarian movement when he writes,
"What is communitarianism?" we are frequently asked. We are a social movement aiming at shoring up the moral, social, and political environment. Part change of heart, part renewal of social bonds, part reform of public life.

The communitarian model sees community in terms of “a warm, supportive institution” (Clarke, 1996, p.18). Many of the interviews in this study, as reported in Chapter 3, affirm that some prisoners see the Acacia faith community partly in this way, but it is far from a complete picture of the way it is.

If we take “communitarianism” to refer to the tendency which “takes for its fundamental presupposition and concern the organic community” (Bottoms, 2003, p.101), it becomes an acceptable and useful tool. Boyes-Watson (2005a, p.365), when writing of restorative justice, tells us that the adoption of restorative justice moves us towards “more communitarian values”, and:

…the enduring need for communitarian ways of thinking are rooted in basic human necessity. To both survive and thrive, we need to trust and care for one another.

In Chapters 2 to 5, I have described a community which includes “human practice in all its messiness” (Burkett, 2001, p.239). I warm to Burkett’s description:

Community is a paradoxical experience – it is about difference just as much as it is about unity, about conflict and harmony, selfishness and mutuality, separateness and wholeness, discomfort and comfort”.

(Burkett, 2001, p.242)

She wisely adds,

To privilege one of these aspects of tension in interpreting community is to deny the transformatory powers of human communion and to resort to fixed ideas about community.

(Burkett, 2001, p.242)

The Acacia faith community is lively, vibrant and messy. It is made up, in the main, of wounded men. Many are or have been addicted to drugs, some are suicidal, a large proportion of them are mentally or psychologically ill. They come from every continent except Antarctica. Most of the time, this community is forward-looking, but not always. It is a community that doesn’t fit easily into any “model”. When the Sunday morning volunteers tell me that the gatherings are
“real”, I think they mean that pretence is at a minimum in this faith community. In the context of this community, people’s lives are touched in ways they have never been touched before. My chaplaincy colleague Bruce, in his interview with me, spoke of the “rawness” of this community. Boadicea, who at the time of her interview, was a part-time chaplain-in-training, said that

I think there’s a sense of urgency [in the Acacia faith community] that I don’t experience in my own community of faith… being that the problems in people’s lives are imminent, there right there, in front of them.

Jimmy has been in prison, juvenile and then adult, for more than half of his life. He was molested as a child, and has a reputation for extreme, unpredictable violence. He found himself – unbelievably, but probably due to ex-offender Paul’s influence - in a bible study. He expected to find a mixture of “goody-goodies” (as he put it) and others who hoped to favourably influence their parole hearing. He was astonished at what he discovered:

I can see the change in them, the crims themselves. They’re not mucking around. They’re not using it [to impress others]. They’re trying to use it for their own purposes, because they’ve had enough of banging their heads against the wall. They’ve had enough.

And he went on to say,

You can see more better and you can see more clearer what they’ve got to do to get their life in order. They’re setting it out, they’re making plans.

Jimmy has known many of these men for years, in various prisons and in criminal circles outside. He knows their backgrounds and he is in a position to know how genuine they are. I am impressed that, like Jimmy, “They’re setting out, they’re making plans.” Even if they don’t all succeed at their first attempt, they are starting out. “They’ve had enough.”

Jennifer has been on a roster of Sunday morning rostered volunteers, at least monthly, for the past 9 years. She said one morning that

Every service in Acacia is real. There’s no pretence. There is more reality here in every service than there ever is in our parish.
Counter-culture

A prisoner called Albert came to see me in my office. He had been in the Detention Unit (in “solitary confinement”) for two weeks. I was greatly surprised, for although he had been a gang member on the “outside”, he had come to a lively, sincere faith. Indeed, he was now one of our two pastoral carers, exercising pastoral care throughout the prison on behalf of the congregation. “I’ve been down the back [i.e., in 'solitary'],” he said. “I know,” I responded, “Do you want to talk about it?”

“Yes I do,” he said. “I thumped a guy.” I was aware of Albert’s background. I was aware that “thumping” meant a brutal punch in the face. I knew that the “guy” involved would have sustained severe injuries. Albert continued, “He said a bad word about Jesus.” He paused for a moment or two, then he said, “Then I thought about it. I thought, ‘That was wrong – Jesus was a servant, and I should be a servant too.’ That’s right, isn’t it?” He sat back for a long moment. Then he said, “But gee it felt good!” This reminded me that what we are embarking on in the community of faith is counter-culture. It is contrary to the culture not only of the prison but of society at large.

Christian ideals and behaviour are more obviously counter-culture in a prison than in the wider community, though they are counter-culture there as well. Instead of getting and having, Christianity advocates giving away and giving of oneself – and, instead of dominating, we try to follow Jesus who is a servant. This attitude is shown in the prison in small and large matters. Carnley (2004, p.290) tells us that

The Church works with an understanding of human destiny that is quite out of kilter with that of the surrounding culture. Indeed, one aspect of our mission may be to call into question the ideological underpinning of Western liberal democratic society as a fundamentally inadequate set of values, which may even hold within it the seeds of its own self-destruction.

Other communities in Acacia Prison
Faith groups other than Christianity

Observation of other communities within Acacia Prison was not part of this research. Nevertheless, it is a reasonable question to ask: are these characteristics we see in the Acacia community of faith present in other communities in the prison – especially in the other communities of faith? I am aware that Hick (1995, preface, pp.ix-x) writes that

The rainbow, as the sun’s light refracted by the earth’s atmosphere into a glorious spectrum of colours, is a metaphor for the refraction of the divine Light by our human religious cultures. This conception has been welcomed by some but strongly criticised by others.

(see also Lybbert 2008; McLaren, 2012)

John Hick is an Anglican priest and a committed Christian. Yet he knows that human beings are largely formed by their culture. So he is able to write (1995, pp.7-8),

Is it because of carefully weighted arguments that I am a Christian rather than a Muslim or a Buddhist? Does it not rather have a great deal to do with the fact that I was born in England rather than, say, in Saudi Arabia or Thailand, so that when the moment of religious awakening came the experience took a Christian rather than a Muslim or a Buddhist form?

I am aware, too, of the very reasonable question posed by Shepherd (2002, p.20): “if Christianity is true, are other religions false?”

Palapathwala (2004, p.4) writes that we live in an age in which many people take some aspects from one religion and some from another:

…many in our world today see the sea of faiths as a smorgasbord from which they may make selections.

This is not remarkably so at Acacia, though some members of the Christian faith community have learned meditation methods in the Buddhist Meditation Group. A prisoner called Gunnar was one such person. He said to me in my interview with him,

I’ve been gaining a lot of peace from learning meditation in Buddhist classes.
When I said, “Good idea!” he looked so relieved that it was almost comical. My opinion is that this makes eminent sense. I consider that, if we say that one religion cannot learn from another, or that one religion contains all the truth, we have made a significant error.

However, these are not the questions at hand. Rather, we are asking - though not in depth, because it is not part of the research – how the Christian faith community in Acacia Prison compares with other communities in the prison, and what this might tell us about the creation of spiritual capital in Acacia.

As I do so, I am reminded of Disbrey’s fascinating study (2004), in which she conducts in-depth interviews among people of different faith groups in East-End London. She goes to congregations of Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims and Sikhs, asking a set of standard but searching questions. Topics range from fellowship to meditation/prayer to liturgical practice. Her research leads her to the conclusion that very few of the claims often made about the uniqueness of her own Christian faith are likely to be valid. In effect, most of the same claims are and can be made about the other faiths as well. So she asks (Disbrey, 2004, p.196), “What is unique about Christianity?"

Brother Angelo… summed it up for me when he said, “Christianity has got Jesus Christ and the others haven’t.”

Disbrey (2004, p.196)) elaborates:

These conversations have impressed upon me that it is not our personal beliefs, as one particular branch of the Christian religion, our assessment of the human problem, our perception of another dimension of being, our method of reaching out and finding it, our hope for more authentic and satisfying lives, that mark our Christian religion as a unique phenomenon in the world.

On the basis of her research, she can say that

As we have seen, similar beliefs, perceptions and hopes weave their way through the other religions too.

I find it interesting that she concludes,
What marks us [Christians] out from these other religions is our story. We have Jesus Christ, and closely connected with that we have a community with a ritual that brings the story alive for us – the eucharist.

(Disbrey, 2004, p.196)

She adds,

This story and this ritual are embedded in the whole story of the Bible and the whole practice of the Church. We use them to imagine, to experience, to take hold of the divine, to inform and strengthen us and to bind us together – it is this that makes our religion unique.

(Disbrey, 2004, p.196)

As co-ordinating chaplain, I am responsible for all formal religious activities in Acacia. Because of this, I am in fairly frequent contact with them. And, although detailed comparison is not part of this study, it is reasonable to ask whether the dynamics I have observed in the Christian community are present in other groups within Acacia.

**Buddhists and Jews**

There have never been more than one or two practising Jewish prisoners in Acacia at any one time. The Buddhist Meditation Group has met regularly, but the numbers have been tiny – generally one, two or three. For this reason, comparison with the Christian faith community is not helpful.

**Moslem Prayer Group**

In the past 2½ years, the Moslem Prayer Group has increased in numbers, liveliness, and regularity of meetings. Two factors have brought this about: (1) larger number of Moslems in the prison, and (2) increased reliability and regularity of visiting facilitators. Regular meetings are now fortnightly instead of monthly, and major festivals are observed. Numbers of prisoners at the fortnightly meetings are around 10, though this increases to over 60 for festival observances. There are reputedly very few Sh’ite Moslems in the prison, but these stay away. And Moslems from Indonesia remain separate. It is noticeable that the Moslem group consists of people from Middle East countries.
It seems to me, from a casual observation, that this is a racial and cultural group as much as it is religious. The huge variety of outlook, background and racial origin which is evident in the Christian community is simply not present. Evans (1992) reminds us that, in Islam, moral and ethical behaviour is centred on the will of Allah, and that his will is given in the divinely instituted law given to the prophet Muhammad. This provides a framework for all personal behaviour as well as for all relationships with each other:

Thus, moral and ethical duties in Islam often includes the requirement to give alms or otherwise support a brother or sister in need. The focus of such benevolence and charity, however, is the maintenance of a society which is Islamic.

(Evans, 1992, p.137)

I have noticed that members of this group assiduously care for each other. In Chapter 2, I call this “bonding capital” (Putnam 2004, p.15; 1995, p.66). However I have not seen any member of the Moslem Prayer Group perform acts of kindness to persons outside the Islamic community. This would have been “bridging capital” (Putnam 2004, p.15) or “cross-group ties” (Lin 2000, p.787). In the Moslem faith community, emphasis is very much on group experience of teaching and prayer, yet I have seen two examples of very fine ministry with individual members of the group. And, although I have observed instances of prisoners being consulted on many matters, I note that important decisions have been made solely by the visiting imam and scholars. So the Moslem community of faith carries similarities to the Christian community, as well as differences.

**Single-interest communities**

As Boyes-Watson (2005a, pp.204-205) says,

There are many ways to define community, but at least one element common to all communities is a perception of mutuality among its members.

It is reasonable, then, to look to the workplace and the sporting group for community. In Acacia, the great majority of prisoners are engaged in employment of some kind within the prison, or in education. However, two recent developments have “watered this down”. The first of these is that the dramatic upsurge in number of prisoners has not been accompanied by a commensurate increase in meaningful employment. This has resulted in more unemployed
inmates than before, coupled with a surprising number of jobs which either carry very little satisfaction or require very few hours to complete the tasks involved. The second development is that, during the past few years, departmental policy has steadily decreased the number of hours of work for a “fully employed” prisoner. Both of these developments have resulted in its being less likely that “community” would be found in the Acacia workplace.

This is not so to nearly the same extent with Australian-rules football. Players look forward to their football practices and matches. They pride themselves on their high standard of playing, which is due not only to exceptional talent but to a rigorous and enthusiastic training schedule. Acacia footballers tend to walk and talk with each other even when it is not time for football. However I observe that more than 85% of Acacia footballers are Indigenous prisoners, which leads me to surmise that the “link” may be racial, tribal and cultural more than it is sporting. The huge difference between membership of the community of faith and membership of a single-interest group, such as a football team, is the spiritual capital being created and invested.

In Chapter 9, I will be dealing with the matter of spiritual capital. I will be demonstrating that evidences of the spiritual capital generated by members of the Acacia community of faith can be observed within the faith community as well as beyond the group. This is because members of the Christian community, whether they realise it or not, perform acts of kindness and of ministry either as members of the faith community or as a result of their membership. This is not the case with members of a work gang or of a football squad. They certainly interact with people outside their group, but they don’t do so as workers or as footballers.

Gangs

Gangs are a feature of Acacia prison life just as much, I suppose, as they are in other prisons. Yet I admit that I see very little of this. From time to time, a gang member will participate in a “Sycamore Tree” programme. On one occasion, the other members of an STP participant’s gang came to the final (celebratory) session.
In addition, some prisoners taking part in our two “Kairos” programmes have been gang members. I have no doubt that I have spent time with other gang members without knowing that they belong to a gang. However the sporadic nature of my contact with gangs in Acacia doesn’t qualify me to comment on their culture or community.

**Indigenous groups**

Man Keung Ho, when reporting on his research in North America (1987, p.86), writes that American Indian people prefer to receive family counselling from other American Indian people. However he finds that, in their absence, they will “make do with” counsellors of European or Chinese descent.

This is not remarkably different from our experience of ministry as chaplains among Australian Indigenous prisoners. It was encouraging to see their response to the ministry of Clifton, an Indigenous chaplain-in-training, who was with us for a few months in 2011. These men would prefer an Aboriginal chaplain, but in the absence of such people they are generous enough to receive ministry from me and from other chaplains on the current staff.

When Paul was still ministering in Acacia, he was more effective than the rest of us in this area – at least partly because he was known to be a former prisoner (see Chapter 5). Over the years, Paul had developed a relationship of trust – which Field (2001) equates to social capital – with many of those in the prison. This was bonding capital (Putnam et al., 1993) with co-offenders and with many of those who’d been incarcerated with him. Others, including Indigenous prisoners, who had heard that he’d been in prison himself were ready to trust him. There was already a situation of bridging capital, or “cross-group ties” (Lin, 2000, p.787).

Indigenous prisoners make up a little over a third of the Sunday chapel congregation, and the proportion is probably higher than this in most of our bible studies. In addition, (a) we conduct large numbers of one-to-one counselling sessions with Indigenous prisoners, and (b) we receive many requests for memorial services to honour relatives and friends of Indigenous prisoners.

Probably the closest thing in Acacia Prison to the kind of community I have described would be the Indigenous tribal groups. It’s different in a number of
important ways. The main difference is that the tribal links already exist before these men come to prison. The other huge difference is that Indigenous prisoners share a culture, a way of looking at the world, a sense of familial closeness. They share, too, knowledge of oppression and a sense of injustice. In addition, many of them are away from their country, and they share a sense of loneliness and dissociation.

Two final comments concerning Indigenous communities into Acacia:

- There is not one Indigenous community in WA, as is sometimes supposed. In fact, in Acacia there are two larger tribal groupings, and a number of smaller ones. Some of these have a history of antagonism towards one another. This fact is reflected in Acacia, and sometimes leads to violence.
- Indigenous groupings are not uniformly welcoming to every member of their respective groups. So, for example, homosexual Aboriginal prisoners are likely to encounter suspicion or even rejection from their own extended families. These men are extremely vulnerable.

So it can be seen that there are other groupings in Acacia which have characteristics of community – whether in the relationship between members, or in their shared beliefs, values or perspectives. All of these groups have their own customs or guiding rules, as well as their own external and internal definitions of belonging. As indicated above, I see the difference between the Christian faith community and the other groups in terms of the spiritual capital generated. I personally witness some of this, but I have no doubt that there is a great deal that I do not see.

“Common unity?”

I have listened to sermons in which preachers have maintained that the term “community” derives from two terms, “common” and “unity”. The argument runs that this ultimately refers to a deep connection between all human beings. Burkett (2001) points out that this “play on words” is a linguistic error. More than this, however, I suggest that this reduction on “community” to “common unity” runs the risk of overlooking the difference and complexity of human relationships. It gives the impression of birds of a feather flocking together, which is by no means the case in the Acacia faith community. It is a fact that joys and sorrows, conflicts and
contexts, are a fundamental part of community life. Without a doubt, these are part of the always-changing life of the faith community in Acacia.

Burkett (2001, p.238) sees community as a network of relationships, and writes about “the nakedness of its everyday practice”. I find this way of speaking constructive as I endeavour to describe the Acacia community of faith.

I find it interesting that Mowbray (2005, p.263) tells us that

…an active ingredient in community strengthening is tension or discord with others.

In theory, I agree strongly with this. There have been many instances in my life outside the prison where relationships have been strengthened and constructive decisions reached through argument and discussion. Holtam (2005, pp. 5-6) writes,

The trouble is, as a rabbi once said, “Where there are three Jews you will have four opinions”. This is true of any group and usually disagreements are resolved in favour of the most powerful, but it is part of the purpose of the Eucharistic group to model diversity, confident in the unity of God and of the Eucharistic action given us by Christ”.

Yet, as I reflect upon it, I see that there has been a surprisingly low level of “tension or discord” in the Acacia faith community. I am not sure why this is so. Part of the reason may be the submissive and conformist behaviour which prisons tend to impose upon inmates. But I observe that this kind of attitude is far less prevalent in the faith community than it is elsewhere in Acacia Prison. Perhaps some of the reason is that, in chapel-sponsored activities, prisoners can begin to relax their guard. Perhaps they are a little more likely, in this context, to accept themselves and each other as real human beings.

Over the years, there has probably been more conflict between the chaplains than between the prisoner-members of the community of faith. Each of the chaplains brings with him or her a rag-bag of assumptions and ways of thinking. We all come from different backgrounds of churchmanship as well as of life experience. So, for example, my way of looking at the scriptures, and at life, differs markedly from those of several of the other Acacia chaplains.
An aspect of community development advocated by Tesoriero (2010) is co-operation, as contrasted with competition. It is clear that such cooperation has been and is a central facet of the Acacia faith community, as seen in consensus decisions in almost all chaplaincy department meetings and in meetings of the TLG. In both kinds of meeting, we have not been prepared to move forward on any important matter until consensus is reached. Tesoriero (2010, pp.171-172) tells us that

…consensus basically means working through an issue, however long it takes, until everyone is comfortable with the outcome.

Kerley & Copes (2009, p.232) point to another, related factor:

The inmates encountered daily the struggles of prison life such as inconsistent rules and regulations, threats to safety, poor living conditions, and inadequate health care...

In this situation, they found their practice of religion to provide a contrast and a constructive help:

They claimed that religion could help them reinterpret their current situation and more effectively manage the negative emotions associated with prison life.

(Kerley & Copes, 2009, p.232)

Nevertheless, there is truth in Mowbray’s statement. Somehow the wide variety of influences, personalities, backgrounds and opinions come together in this community to make up a network of constantly changing relationships, “in all its messiness”. Daly (as cited in Liepins, 2000, p.24) suggests that community is “neither a fixed nor a stable referent,” and Burkett (2001, p.239) writes,

…creation of a community is not a “project” which can be achieved. Rather, it is a “never-ending story”.

**Becoming empowered**

In this thesis, I describe and reflect upon a group of incredibly vulnerable men (Coyle, 2005; Kimberley, 2012). They have been deprived of everything that was familiar to them “outside”, and they are subject to other people’s direction in almost everything they do. Prisoners find that powerlessness
sets in motions a series of self-reinforcing defeats which have been described in the literature as learned helplessness, loss of self-esteem and feelings of hopelessness.

(Evans, 1992, p.142)

Paulo Freire (1972, p.37) writes,

The peasant begins to get courage to overcome his dependence when he realizes his dependence. Until then, he goes along with his boss and says “What can I do? I’m only a peasant.”

He adds (p.37) that “In the end they become convinced of their own unfitness”. I am sure that generally speaking this is so with prisoners. We come to expect that they will accept the status quo, and that their morale will be low. Yet – incredibly – members of the Acacia faith community are initiating change in themselves and their environment. In small and in large ways, they have been empowered. By this I mean that they have begun to take their lives into their own hands. The actress Susan Sarendon, in the movie *Thelma and Louise* (Scott, 1991), says “You get what you settle for”. These are men who have decided not to settle for what they have been given in the prison setting. Many members of this community of faith take part in small group bible studies or in programme sessions which, as Chaplain Boadicea puts it, “allow people an environment to speak what is in their hearts” (see Chapter 5). Many have taken part in restorative justice programmes – STP, and “Kairos” – where one of the main aims is to assist people to take responsibility for their actions and their lives.

A number of scholars have put forward definitions of “empowerment” which are helpful to this discussion. So, for example, Gutierrez (1990, p.149) says that empowerment

is a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situations.

Evans (1992, p.142) says that empowerment “concerns one’s perceived ability to determine the course of one’s own life and ability”. And Miller (1984, as cited in Evans, 1992, p.141) sees power as the capacity to produce change –

…but that is, to move anything from point A or state A to point B or state B.
The extent to which prisoners are or can be empowered is of course severely moderated by their environment and their situation. Within this small community within the prison, there is a sense of real achievement and of hope. In the Acacia community of faith, much of this has seemed to originate with the Term Leadership Group (TLG). The TLG is an interesting group of prisoners. There’s no doubt at all that there is a hard core of selfishness in most of their concerns. Yet there is also an increasing awareness of the welfare of others. The matter of negative urine tests (see Chapter 5) is an example of this. TLG members raised the topic because they wanted to receive parole, but it led to tackling a social justice issue and improving the situation of many other prisoners.

As the TLG has seen positive results resulting from their own actions, they are encouraged to take more initiative than before. And I observe that this process seems to be “infectious”, others in the faith community are becoming less hesitant. To a very large extent, the whole process is “fed” by small group work and STP. Evans (1992, p.142) and Gutierrez (1990, p.151) both refer to small groups as the “ideal modality for empowering interventions”.

**Beginning to hope**

Freire (1973, p.64) writes that “Nor can dialogue exist without hope”. I consider that hope is a huge factor in the Acacia community of faith. Members of this faith community are discovering in themselves, and in their collective relationship, competence and value which gives them hope.

As with Burnett & Maruna (2004, pp.395-396), I understand hope as being different from simply wishing that something will happen. They see hope as requiring “both the ‘will and the ways’: the desire for a particular outcome, and also the perceived ability and means of achieving the outcome” (see also Luthan & Jensen, 2002, p.306 who remind us that “Where there’s a will, there’s a way’ is only partly correct”). In their 10-year research project with 130 men leaving prison, Burnett & Maruna (2004) observed long-term positive correlation between lower recidivism rates and related higher levels of hope prior to release. In addition, they report that participants with higher levels of hope appeared better able to cope with social problems encountered after leaving prison (such as unemployment and marriage breakdown).
Within Acacia, I think for example of Grimsby and Seth, two prisoners who co-facilitated four courses of the chaplaincy-sponsored addiction programme, “Celebrate Recovery” (Baker, 1998). They did this with authenticity and growing confidence. Seth remarked upon this with warmth and surprise in my pre-release interview with him as part of this study.

O’Connor & Perreyclear (2002, p.20), when speaking of social learning theory and social attachment theory (see Chapter 5) maintain that

The chaplains and volunteers are a tremendous resource as role models and teachers of the very skills and lifestyles that many offenders lack but desire.

I think this is very likely to be true. However, I would add that association with fellow-prisoners who are learning to trust each other, and who are growing in their ability to develop spiritual capital, is probably far more influential. The social attachment and learning which takes place in the Acacia faith community helps to awaken and reinforce hope. Perhaps, in addition, it may assist in rehabilitation.

**On being “community” in Acacia Prison**

Almost all the members of the Acacia community of faith are incredibly vulnerable people, simply by virtue of their being prisoners (Coyle, 2005; Kimberley, 2012). Their whole lives are governed by rules and regulations set by others, and by unwritten but inflexible expectations. They have very few choices available to them. Liebling (2011, p.546) writes that

One of the problems with prisons is that “the dignity of man is based on his freedom” (Frankl, 2000, 80) and that this is by definition taken away in the act of imprisonment…

This is painful and damaging in itself. In addition, however, so are the behavioural expectations laid upon a prisoner by his fellow inmates, in what is sometimes called “the prison code” (Crewe, 2007; Johnstone, 2007b; Workman, 2005). Yet, within the Acacia Christian community, many are discovering a sense of belonging and of safety. To their surprise, some are beginning to make decisions and to take responsibility for their own lives. This seems to begin with the small group who make up the Term Leadership Group (TLG), and it is “catching”. As I
see it, this results in the development of spiritual capital, both within the group and beyond it. In the prison environment, this is certainly counter-culture.

One counter-culture element in the make-up of the Acacia faith community is their tendency over time to look not only to benefit themselves but to promote the good of others. This is not an over-night transformation, but rather a gradual process of growing. I see this process as consistent with their being the body of Christ in Acacia.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have reflected on various models of community, finding some elements in each of them that “ring true” to the way I see the Acacia faith community, but finding also that none of these models quite “fits”.

I lean towards the image of the Trinity, where there is emphasis on diversity as well as unity. I have cited Carnley (2004) and Holtam (2005), who wrote that the Christian life is about personal experience but not just personal experience. I.M. Young’s phrase (1990), “a community of strangers” (p.237) seems to “fit” the Acacia faith community, though not in the way in which she means it. Her evocative phrase speaks to me of the way in which prisoners who would never otherwise associate with each other find to their surprise that they belong together. The on-going tension between Protection and Mainstream prisoners in this faith community remains in this gathering, and there is ample evidence of this. Perhaps, as with so many aspects of “community”, it is a work in progress.

However, most of the models of community I have looked at in this chapter leave me feeling uncomfortable, because they appear too “neat”. We are reflecting upon a group that is always changing – in its membership, its activities, its moods. We are dealing with a gathering of criminals who are sometimes passive, sometimes aggressive, always human. I am trying to describe human relationships “in all their messiness” (Burkett, 2001, p.239).

**Spiritual capital**

As indicated in Chapter 1, this is a community of individuals who – perhaps unexpectedly – are beginning to find a sense of purpose and belonging. This is
an individual as well as a group phenomenon. With this has come a new-found confidence and an increased creation and expenditure of spiritual capital. This matter is elaborated and discussed in the coming chapter.
CHAPTER 9 – “SOME REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL CAPITAL”

The community of faith

As indicated elsewhere, the Acacia community of faith bears some similarity to most of the models of community in the literature. However, this highly unusual gathering doesn’t fit easily into any of them. Analysis of this extraordinary group of prisoners says interesting things about community.

A number of group activities undertaken by and within the Acacia faith community are presented in Chapters 5 and 6. I will suggest that one way of describing what is taking place in these gatherings is that participants are generating spiritual capital. This takes place not only with these groups (“bonding capital”) but elsewhere (“bridging capital”).

Spiritual capital generated by and in the community of faith

I do not suggest that spiritual capital in Acacia has been or is generated only by members of the Christian community of faith, for this is simply not so (Guest, 2010; Liu, 2007; Lybbert, 2008; Zohar, 2010). Spiritual capital derives from spiritual motives, which are not necessarily associated with specifically religious groups (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2000; Bender & Armour, 2000; Fewell, 1995; Liu, 2007; O’Connor, 2004-2005). However at this point it is important to enumerate the kinds of evidences of spiritual capital which are clearly discernible and which have been generated by members of the faith community because they are members of that community.

In setting out such evidences, I do not wish to give the impression that the members of the Acacia community of faith are saints who never do anything wrong and who live in a kind of “other Eden”. This isn’t the case. Almost every member of this faith community is a criminal, and they are struggling in an environment which is far from conducive to Christian living.

I think, for example, of a man called Anders. He is addicted to drugs and is a repeat offender. Until his recent release, he was also a central member of the
Acacia community of faith, and for more than a year he facilitated one of our weekly bible studies. Several members of the study came to me one afternoon to tell me that Anders had succumbed to his addiction and was once again taking drugs. The TLG discussed the situation and urged that for the time being he be permitted to continue facilitating study group sessions, but that he must very soon stop taking drugs. When I asked could I help in some way, one of them said, “Not yet, we will speak to him.” A few weeks later, they said “Now is the time for you to chat with him!” I sat with him for an hour or so. Anders had given up taking drugs and was in recovery. He told me he would no longer facilitate a bible study because he felt he had set a bad example to the others.

I have no doubt whatever that Anders will relapse again at some stage. I have no doubt, either, that he will try very hard to conquer his addiction - and that he will be greatly assisted by members of the community of faith. And, as I reflect on this incident, I see it as a lively example of the exercise of spiritual capital.

Boadicea has been in the Acacia chaplaincy team for 6½ years – 2 years as a volunteer, 2 years as a chaplain-in-training, and more than 2½ as chaplain. One of my two interviews with her took place in her first few days as a trainee. At the beginning of my first interview with her, she said this,

I think that the community of faith in the prison is one of the most incredible I’ve ever been involved with, because I just think that these people have got so much to be concerned about in their own lives, and what amazes me at Acacia is that in the community of faith they are actually prepared to put aside their own problems and take the time to help other people.

She returned to this topic later in the interview, and said that it was the greatest thing that struck her about this faith community. She added, “I’m not sure that I could be that gracious in their situation, I might be more self-absorbed.” She was obviously keenly aware of “their situation”, and saw the kindness of these men as if it were a light shining in a dark place (Burnett & Maruna, 2006). I wrote the following in my journal:

I was surprised that Boadicea singled this item out as – in effect – the most amazing aspect of the faith community. Now that she mentions it, I realise
that this is a prominent feature of the Acacia faith community. I suppose that
I take it for granted…

My interview with Bruce, who has been one of our chaplains from the beginning
of 2002, elicited something very similar, though from a different perspective:

If I was asked where is the spiritual capital in Acacia, I think I would be corny
and say that everyone is made in the image of God, with a desire to love, and
a desire to be loved, and a desire for justice, and I think those things aren’t
easily extinguished. Those things I’ve seen in [Acacia].

I am so impressed that this extraordinary group of people are generating spiritual
capital in this adverse environment. They are incredibly vulnerable (Kimberley,
2012), and remarkably courageous.

**Spiritual capital within the prison**

Members of the Acacia faith community interact with each other in different
activities and different events. These include Sunday services and mid-week
memorial services, TLG meetings, Prison Fellowship meetings and bible studies,
and sessions of various programmes. In addition, there are sessions of STP and
“Kairos”. Over and above all this, prisoner-members of the community of faith
gather informally in the chapel and elsewhere. We can see evidences of spiritual
capital at all of these gatherings as well as in other places within the prison
precinct.

**In chapel services and organised groups**

One of the greatest examples of spiritual capital in action that I see at chapel
services and in the various programme sessions is the welcome and acceptance
that people extend to each other. In the prison, every inmate becomes
accustomed to being an “object” rather than a “subject” (Freire, 1972, p.58; see
also Perlin, 2014). Day by day, each prisoner is subjected to rules and
regulations, and he must obey orders without any explanation being given
(Goulding, 2007; Hartman, 2008; Leyva & Bickel, 2010; Windzio, 2006). Yet here
in gatherings of the community of faith each prisoner finds that he is accepted as
a person, and trusted. I have already mentioned Anders, a prisoner who spoke
of “getting support from his brothers” in the Acacia chapel community, and a
young man called Hugo who discovered “a more decent attitude” being shown to him in the faith community. In the same chapter, I quoted an interview with Tony, who compared chapel-sponsored programmes with the others available in Acacia. Instead of sitting and watching, he said, in chapel courses the men say “Hey there!” or “Would you like a cup of coffee?” It takes some people considerable lengths of time to realise that this is so. However, in time, many begin to respond to this and to show welcome and kindness to others. In chapel services, as well as in meetings of TLG and Prison Fellowship, it has been interesting to see that even some of the considerable emotional barriers between Mainstream and Protection prisoners have begun to erode.

In Chapter 5, I listed some of the main theories which have been posited to explain the development of these kinds of behaviours in faith communities within a prison environment. These are:

- Conversion (O’Connor & Perrey-clear, 2002);
- Social attachment theory (Chu, 2007; O’Connor & Perrey-clear, 2002); and

**Volunteers from “outside”**

Volunteers have been entering Acacia for weekly Prison Fellowship meetings for 11½ years, for Sunday chapel services for 10 years, and for about 8½ years to conduct programmes. They have proved to be a truly remarkable cohort of people, providing invaluable contact with the outside community and with the wider body of Christ. Burnside (2008, p.11) found that

> Because volunteers come from the local community, they are potent symbols of the community to which the offender is seeking reintegration.

He added his opinion that prisoner-contact with what he called “freeworld volunteers” (Burnside, 2008, p.1) is one of the largest drawcards of religious interventions in a prison (Bright & Graham, 2006; Fewell, 1995; Sundt et al., 2002; Wright, 2006). At the same time, however, volunteers claim to have received a great deal from prisoner-members of the faith community. In a similar kind of way, Gavin (2005), Wilson et al., (2007) and Wright (2006) write of the huge and

**Spiritual capital centred upon chaplains**

I am constantly impressed at the genuine concern shown by each of my Acacia chaplaincy colleagues towards prison inmates as well as to members of the prison staff. This is shown in their conscientious one-to-one counselling, their conduct of formal and informal worship, and their teaching (Harness, 2005). Above all, I see this concern in their willingness to put themselves out to assist people in need, even at considerable cost to themselves (Todd & Tipton, 2011). Landenne (2008, p.59) writes that

> In keeping with tradition, chaplaincies want to remain confidential, open ‘places of refuge’ in which healing and restoration of community ties can occur amid deep respect for and faith in human relationships.

In all of our dealings in the prison, one of our aims and hopes is that the people placed in our care may become – in Freire’s words (1973, p.58) – “subjects” rather than “objects” (see Perlin, 2014).

**The prisoners**

**Within the faith community**

I have already written about the Term Leadership Group (TLG), with its fortnightly meetings, and the leadership this group exerts within the community of faith. Elsewhere in this thesis, there is mention of the way in which membership of this group is constantly changing, as people enter and leave. However the “whole becomes more than the sum of its parts” in that an ethos has developed and is transmitted, sometimes more strongly than others. This “ethos” could also be called spiritual capital. In addition, I have written briefly about the pastoral carers, who have been given access into every residential block in Acacia. The other group exercising spiritual capital in an “official” way, within the faith community is a handful of prisoners who have facilitated or co-facilitated programmes. This has been extremely telling, particularly with a course called “Celebrate Recovery” (Baker, 1998), a faith-based programme dealing with addiction issues.
On one occasion the manager of one of the residential blocks rang me. She had always appeared to disapprove of chaplains, and of any chapel-sponsored project. However she had heard a (false) rumour that I was about to rescind the entire system of pastoral carers. In a very firm voice indeed, she said something like this:

Don’t you **dare** cancel the pastoral carers project! They are doing far too much good out here in the blocks....

I was delighted to receive her call, and pleased to be able to inform her that I had no intention of doing so.

I have written, too, about the unexpected level of trust and consideration found in this unusual community of faith. In-depth interviews revealed a sense of safety and of belonging within this gathering, and a joyousness which is not generally associated with incarceration. All this results from and feeds into the generation of spiritual capital.

*Out in the prison precinct*

Members of the community of faith create spiritual capital not only within the chapel family (“bonding capital”) but also in their dealings outside it (“bridging capital”). The latter is seen in two rather different areas. The first of these is in paid employment. Of the various employment opportunities available to prisoners in Acacia, some are what I see as “caring positions”. I have in mind such jobs as peer tutors, members of the “peer support group”, and the individuals who assist with prisoner inductions or with compiling parole plans for other prisoners. All of these positions either consist entirely of caring for other people, or have a large caring element within them. Well over half of these positions are exercised by members of the Acacia faith community.

The other area in which spiritual capital is created is in individual acts of kindness. I can report only a few of these, because I am generally not present to see them. However, I gain the impression that those which I see are typical of many. I think, for example, of a central member of the faith community called Silas. He heard that men in the Assisted Care Unit (a number of whom are geriatric, and frail) were nervous about going to the central part of the prison for haircuts. Silas took classes in haircutting, purchased barbering implements, and visited the Assisted...
Care Unit with free haircuts every ten days or so for some years. I heard about it only after he’d been doing this for a year.

I have mention elsewhere – in Chapter 6 – unsolicited good reports from prison officers concerning Jimmy (or “Angry”). Instead of always being aggressive and violent in his attitude towards prisoners as well as staff members, he was very often pleasant and helpful to both. The difference was perceived and commented upon. In addition, in Chapter 3 I mentioned an act of kindness from Brian. This took me by surprise at the time. I mentioned, too, the way in which Winston gladly assisted a semi-literate Indonesian prisoner to fill in some rather complicated forms.

In recent times, Chaplain Boadicea has been ill, and Chaplain Bruce has had two deaths in his close family. I have been deeply moved by the genuine sympathy and concern shown by many prisoners in the absence of one from the prison, then the other. And I have been equally moved by the care prisoners have exerted for my two colleagues as each has returned to Acacia.

In my first interview with Boadicea, she spoke about an incident that occurred during a coffee break in the midst of a programme session she was conducting. A very young prisoner came to her during the break, and quickly told her some of his story. She commented to me that it was one of the saddest stories she had ever heard, and that she had wondered how she could ever help the lad in what remained of a 20-minute coffee break:

And out of nowhere two fellows… just came up to me and said… “We talked about this, remember? We’re meeting this afternoon and we’re going to write a letter, do you remember that?” “Oh yes,” the boy said, “I do remember that.”

After a quick few words with the young lad who had the difficulties, one of the other two prisoners turned to Boadicea and said, “Don’t you worry about this, miss. We know what to do, we’ve got it sorted!” As I reflect on this mini-incident, I see it as evidence of spiritual capital created by members of the Acacia faith community. These men wrote a letter for the young man, talked with him for a while, and prayed with him. I am sure that this kind of thing happens far more often than I know.
Post-release

The period following release from prison is a critical time, and the difficulties faced by prisoners as they attempt to re-integrate back into society are considerable (Bales & Mears, 2008; Goulding, 2007; Hochstetler, DeLisi & Pratt, 2008; Kinner, 2006; Kinner et al., 2013). Leach, Burgess & Holmwood (2011) write of “post-incarceration syndrome”, and Watterson (as cited in Ogilvie, 2001, p.1) notes that... people getting out of prison, like soldiers returning from battle, often experience post-traumatic stress disorder... and most are filled with fear and the numbness of alienation, rage and guilt.

In my contact with former members of the Acacia community of faith who are now released from prison, and in all of the post-release interviews in this research, I found an earnest wish to “give back” to the community. I am not sure whether this should be called “social capital” or “spiritual capital”, and I am even less sure that it is helpful to distinguish between the two in this instance. Certainly the men themselves say that they are doing this in the strength that God gives, and that they are doing it as Christian persons.

In my seven post-release interviews, and in the eleven unstructured interviews with soon-to-be-released prisoners, I found a number of recurring concerns (Gelsthorpe, 2014; Goulding, 2007a; Kolar, 2013; McGinty, 2002; Ogilvie, 2001). Five of these echoed the concerns located in O’Brien’s study of women former-prisoners who had “made good” in the free world (O’Brien, 2001a, p.289). She reports that all of these were evident to some degree with every woman she interviewed:

- Finding shelter (Chisholm, 2005; Dutreix 2000; Morgan, Wild & Williams, 2000; Ogilvie, 2001; Pratt, Piper & Appleby et al., 2006; Rydberg, Grommon, Huebner & Bynum, 2014; Walsh, Rutherford, Kreig & Bell, 2013);
- Obtaining employment/legal income (Bolkas, 2002; Berg & Huebner, 2010; Visher, Smolter & O’Connell, 2010);
- Reconstructing connection with others (Moltzahn, 2005);
- Developing community membership (Gutierrez-Lobos et al., 2001; Rydberg et al., 2014);
• Identifying consciousness and confidence in self (Goulding, 2007; Mobley, 2014a).

See Wolff, Shi & Schumann (2012), who add to all these the need for reliable transport (Chisholm, 2005) and the provision of job training and for anger management courses. Kinner, Visher et al. (2010, p.16) speak of the “challenge” of following supervision requirements. Forsyth & Williams (2013) write that there are many other risk factors for these men and women which were present before entry into the prison, and they add that there is an elevated risk on release. Because of the stigmatisation (Goffman, 1961) and self-doubt experienced by many or most of these persons, Mobley (2014a, p.467), himself a former prisoner, refers to them as “ex-civilians”. It is clear that there is a real need for willingness by the community at large to accept these releasees’ return (Burnett & Maruna, 2006).

When these topics began to recur in the interviews in this study, I took the matter to the TLG, who at that stage were acting as my main focus group. I asked was this true to life? Are these the major concerns of former prisoners in their first weeks and months post-release? They unanimously declared I was on the right track. I was reminded of Maslow (as cited in O’Brien 2001b, p.131), who indicated that “the lower level needs generally have to be met before the higher needs of belongingness and love, esteem and self-actualization are met.” Gutierrez & Lewis (as cited in O’Brien, 2001b, p.127) discuss community

…in terms of power and empowerment that derives from a person’s ability to make a home for herself in the world, feel included as a citizen and have the personal agency to affect change in the immediate environment.

However, through it all was another concern which I found in every interview – which was a wish to continue constructive contact with a church congregation outside the prison. With three of the seven interviewed post-release, this had already been achieved (two with some difficulty), but for the others it was still “a work in progress”.

McDermott (2014), herself a probation officer, writes of various efforts to empower ex-offenders to make real choices. However, she points out that very frequently there are limitations on the choices that genuinely exist for them. Such persons, she says, must be approached in a contextualised way that recognises
“the social and political parameters of their lives” (p.360). She adds later that the economic and psychological aspects are inter-related with these. McDermott is dealing with women, but the same principles apply to men recently released from Acacia.

All of these things were far more difficult for Olaf, whom I interviewed pre-release and post-release, because he had been released under the provisions of the Dangerous Offenders legislation. This legislation has been used mainly to cater for repeat child sex offenders. Olaf had been a long-termer, and it was now against the law for him to contact any of the men who had been his friends and mentors over the years. When I last saw him, the many strict conditions under which he had been released were making life extremely difficult for him (see, for example, Rydberg et al., 2014).

One of the prisoners I interviewed in Acacia was unavailable for a follow-up interview because he was under the influence of cocaine. Another had returned to prison because he had marijuana in his possession. As well as this, five others whom I had interviewed could not be contacted following release from the prison system. Could the reasons for this involve drugs? Seaman, Brettle & Gore (1998, p.426) write of the stresses experienced by ex-prisoners in their first few months following release (Bales & Mears, 2008; Forsyth et al., 2014; Kinner, 2006; Kinner et al., 2013). They comment that the risk of death from overdose may be greater among injecting drug-users following a period of incarceration, which is “an effective period of abstinence” (see Binswager, Nowells & Corsi et al., 2011; Bird & Hutchinson, 2003; Farrell & Marsden, 2008; Forsyth, Alati, Ober & Williams, 2014; Karaminia, Butler & Corben et al., 2006; Kariminia, Law & Matthews et al., 2007; Pratt et al., 2006; Shewan, Hammersley, Oliver & Macpherson, 2000).

Despite all these difficulties, in my post-release interviews in relation to this study I came across many evidences of spiritual capital. I take this opportunity to mention some of those which seem more outstanding, and which illustrate different kinds of spiritual capital.

The first of these was mentioned by three prisoners in their interviews. It is an African gentleman called Hetherington, who by sheer hard work has established a top restaurant in a fashionable part of the city. He is so grateful for the influence
of the Acacia community of faith on his life that he will not allow any chaplain or former prisoner-member to pay even one dollar for an evening in his establishment.

The second is a half-way house which has been set up under a scheme called “Life after Green”. LAG is the brain-child of two long-termers, Silas and Gustaf. Silas has been released, and I interviewed him as part of this study. Gustaf is still in Acacia, hoping to be released soon. These two men have been central to the faith community for a long time, and are my friends. They were my pastoral assistants in a former prison, and Gustaf is the man who said to me, “I'm free already.” They have had the good sense to establish a board of governors for LAG, made up of well-known and responsible citizens. “Life after Green” has been promised a substantial government grant, and someone has donated a house that is large enough to house 25 men. It is to be specifically for long-term prisoners after release from Acacia Prison. Silas has recently been offered paid employment for three days a week to look after the house and its residents. There is a huge need for half-way houses in WA – particularly, I believe, among newly released long-termers. I was interested that O'Brien (2001a, p.:289), in her study of female ex-prisoners, says that a half-way house was mentioned by at least one as being “helpful”.

Another example concerns Paul, the chaplain-in-training who is currently not permitted to enter the prison (see Chapter 4). Two of the men that I interviewed spoke of frequent gatherings he organises “outside” for former members of the Acacia faith community and their dependents. In the summer, these are barbecues by the Swan River, whilst in the winter these meetings are for worship and study in his home. As I have mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, Paul has provided employment, encouragement and support for former prisoners.

Bradley, who left our chaplaincy team after 8½ years owing to ill health, has maintained a part-time ministry in one of our local hospitals. Whenever Acacia prisoners are sick or injured, and are transported to that hospital, he provides a valuable contact. It is worth saying at this point that all of our chaplains, including myself have some limited contact with former prisoners and with families of prisoners. Although this contact is necessarily limited, it is enough to show us that there is a huge need for the kind of off-site support that we are unable to provide,
due to lack of time and resources. Once again, it reveals the critical need for “community chaplaincy” (see above), and for Circles of Support and Accountability.

I should mention also the real wish of many prisoners to obtain qualifications in order to help other people. When I interviewed Jonathan, only a few months after his release from prison, he had begun studies to become a pastor. Two others he spoke about were well on their way to obtaining qualifications as youth leaders. One of those two wanted desperately to warn people, from first-hand experience, of the dangers of drug-taking.

When Olaf was an Acacia resident, he was an active member of the faith community, and he took part in one of the very early STP programmes. At that time he made literally hundreds of outstandingly beautiful greeting cards which featured distinctively-painted eucalyptus leaves. These were sold as part of the prisoner-led fund (see Chapter 6), to assist victims of crime. Olaf, who has now been released from prison, continues to construct cards and bookmarks to aid crime victims. In addition, he gives the equivalent of 1½ days of voluntary work per week to Prison Fellowship WA in gratitude for their efforts on his behalf over the years.

My final example is in fact a “multiple example”. It is of the deep concern for family members, shown by a number of people interviewed. I was touched by Silas’s description of family relationships. I mentioned in Chapter 5 that, 16 years ago when he was arrested, his children were youngsters, living in his house and accepting his direction without question. He is now a guest in his son’s home, sometimes assisting in the up-bringing of his three grandchildren. As he described activities of the family, I could not fail to be impressed at his efforts – usually successful, though not always – and at his very real gratitude. Jonathan, on the other hand, has a wife and three teenage daughters. He spoke of their difficulties and his priorities and his efforts. In both of these instances, I was aware of huge amounts of spiritual capital. In these interviews, I gained the impression that those who were likely to “make good” were the ones who were prepared to be active agents in the world rather than passive. It was these men who would decide what to do in those first months following release from prison, and seek help to achieve it. This cannot be easy for ex-prisoners. However, it is possible
that membership of a faith community in which it is the custom to show initiative and to create spiritual capital may give people a better chance. I hope so.

It is right to add that it did not work out in this way with everyone in this study. Two of the men I interviewed prior to release had high hopes, and expressed great concern for their respective families. Anders had been a facilitator of a bible study in Acacia for more than a year, while Albert was a pastoral carer. Both had drug histories, and both were repeat offenders. Anders was full of confidence, whilst Albert was afraid. On their release, Anders and Albert both started well, but both began to take drugs. Albert returned to Acacia, where I administered his follow-up interview.

Ottobini (2003, as cited in Burnside, 2008, p.7) comments that “it is a usual mistake… to think that religion itself is enough to prepare prisoners for their return to society”. He might well have added that the generation of spiritual capital in the prison is not sufficient in itself to prepare people to be contributing citizens post-release. As already noted in this chapter, prisoners typically face huge problems as they re-enter the community outside prison, and many of them are in no fit state to cope with such a challenge. Bales & Meares (2008, p.290) comment that

Not only is recidivism highly likely… but so too are other adverse outcomes, including homelessness, unemployment, mental illness and drug addiction.

Their experience is very frequently of isolation, abuse, chemical dependencies, isolation from the church and/or their families.

It is therefore not entirely surprising that quite a few members of the faith community do not become shining members of the wider community immediately after release from prison. I have observed that some central members of the Acacia faith community return to the prison three or four times for lesser times and lesser crimes before finally “making good” (O’Brien (2001a; 2001b). My chaplaincy colleague Bruce is fond of observing that, for many of the men, this is a necessary part of their journey. Perhaps he’s right.

**Spiritual capital in and from “Kairos”?**

It is difficult to assess with any precision the effects of “Kairos” upon participants. There are a number of reasons for this:
The small sample – at time of writing, there have been only three “Kairos” small-courses, involving a total of 53 prisoners;

Some of this small number were either released or transferred to other prisons shortly after their participation in “Kairos”; and

The aims of the programme – the experience of love, and of belonging – are hard to quantify or assess.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that community is formed, that all or almost all of the prisoner-participants are highly appreciative and genuinely moved. Burnside (2008) found that, in his study of a large number of prisoner “Kairos” programmes, 87% described the experience in positive terms, and over one-third in extremely positive terms. He adds (p.9) that in each case the survey was conducted several months after “Kairos”, thus eliminating the after-programme “high”.

Very nearly all prisoner-participants – or, at least, almost all those still in Acacia – continued with the (follow-up) Journey Programme. Burnside (2008) suggests that, while the 4-day short-course represents an introduction to Christian love, the Journey Programme has a great deal to do with community living.

The volunteers involved are quite extraordinary men. Some of the prisoners they are mingling with are unstable, are unable to maintain viable relationships and are in rebellion to authority. However, in time the visitors win them over by being genuine, and by treating these wounded men as human beings. To the prisoners, these religious visitors to Acacia are “expressions of surprising hope” (Burnside, 200, p.15).

There is definitely bonding capital in these groups. I expect that a programme as positive and as dramatic as “Kairos” would almost certainly result in development of bridging capital as well. However, for some of the reasons enumerated above, I cannot say that I have observed it to a significant level.

**Spiritual capital and STP**

I now address the way in which members of the Acacia STP groups begin to develop spiritual capital, within the group and then beyond it. Field (2001, p.1) speaks of trust as “the crucial element” of social capital, and of social capital (or “teamwork”) as “that which makes society more than the sum of its parts” (p.2).
In Chapter 7, I argue that, although restorative justice is not specifically religious, it has deeply spiritual components (Bender & Armour, 2007; Pranis, 2012; Volona, 2000). I therefore contend that, as STP participants come to trust one another and begin to reach out to other persons, they are in fact generating spiritual capital. I consider that one of the major steps in this process consists of taking responsibility for one’s life and actions. This takes further shape as STP participants plan for their future and begin to turn their lives around. A number of examples of this process are presented in Chapter 7.

**Spiritual capital generated by other prisoners**

Wuthnow (as cited in van Tiernan, Scheepers, Reitsma & Schilderman, 2011, p.367) asked the question,

> Suppose someone claims to be moved by a deep sense of spirituality. Is this faith likely to compel caring activities if it is held apart from involvement in any religious community?

The answer is a resounding “Yes”, and such caring activities are definitely instances of spiritual capital having been generated. Stark and Glock (as cited in van Tiernan et al., 2011) looked at the various ways in which religiosity could be manifested, and divided them into two aspects: collective and individual. They pointed out that the individual aspects (e.g., private prayer, belief, experiences, consequences and knowledge) “do not necessarily involve community or network, but are merely a matter of conviction” (van Tiernan et al., 2011, p.368).

In Acacia Prison, the chaplaincy department distribute as many as 500 Gideon bibles to prisoners who request them. In addition, we make available free copies of a booklet called “The Daily Bread”, which contains notes for daily bible studies. Every three months we distribute two hundred copies of this booklet to prisoners who ask for them. I understand that many who take these booklets do not use them every day, and I suspect that some who ask for them do so because they are free. Yet many prisoners indeed read their bibles from time to time, and some use these study notes. Many of these men are not members of the community of faith. In addition, it is not at all unusual for me to be told by prisoners who never attend chapel functions that they pray regularly. I have no doubt that some of these men regularly generate spiritual capital.
When van Tiernan et al. (2011) write about what I call “spiritual capital”, they focus their attention upon volunteering, both formal and informal. Their reference to “formal volunteering” is to voluntary work as members of formal groups, whilst informal volunteering is defined as “helping out”, such as running an errand for an elderly neighbour (Wilson & Musick 1997). They find that formal volunteering is highly related to religious affiliation and attendance (Wilson & Janoski, 1995; Wilson & Musick, 1997), but that it is also strongly related to individual religiosity, such as bible reading and private prayer (Park & Smith, 2000; Wilson & Janoski, 1995; Wilson and Musick, 1997). van Tiernan et al. (2011) assume that collective and individual religiosity independently increase the likelihood of volunteering, but they observe that, in practice, these aspects are likely to reinforce each other. Membership of a faith community means integration into a community that encourages and supports generation of spiritual capital. The actions of the TLG and the ministry of the pastoral carers (see Chapter 2) are obvious examples of this. So, too, is the intention expressed in many STP groups, as well as in almost all post-release groups in this study, to “give back” to the community.

Other explanations

There are, of course, other explanations for this behaviour. One of these is derived from game theory.

Game theory

Game theory is a mathematical method for analysing outcomes and circumstances, such as games, where a person’s success or failure depends upon the choices of others (Chen & Deng 2006, p.1; Nowak & Komarova, 2005). Game theory is widely used in a number of disciplines. It is highly credentialed, as evidenced by the fact that ten game-theorists have won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, and that John Maynard Smith was awarded the Cranfoord Prize for his application of game theory to the biological sciences. Levine (1998) applies standard game theory to games of chance in which money is involved, and says that

standard theory…assumes that participants are selfish in the sense that they care only about their own monetary income.

(Levine, 1998, p.1)
Harsanyi (2007, pp.68ff.) makes the same assumption, and implies that all human interaction is in reality an exercise of power – or, as he puts it, “A’s power over B”.

There is no doubt in my mind that this is an important part of the truth, and it certainly applies in the Acacia community of faith. I think of Olaf, as a fairly extreme example, who for some years was central to the faith community. He set out the chairs for almost every Sunday service during that time. He probably took part in more programmes than anyone else. He went to a great deal of trouble to advertise chapel events, to help people out who were in special need, and refer critical instances to chaplaincy. Yet, for much of that time, his primary motivation in doing good deeds was to place others, in a sense, in his debt, so that they would perform favours for him in return, though not necessarily in the foreseeable future. Hagen and Hammerstein (2006, p.344) remind us that this kind of behaviour cannot be classed as altruistic:

The essence of an agent with a conditionally cooperative strategy like TIT-FOR-TAT is that it is conditionally cooperative, full stop.

I observed that this aspect of Olaf’s motivation faded over the years, being replaced, to a very large extent, by a genuine wish to help other people. But Olaf was simply a more obvious example than most. The fact is that all of us are usually a rag-bag of changing emotions and motivations. I am a prison chaplain partly from a genuine wish to help vulnerable others – partly, too, because I need to exercise this ministry. In other words, selfish reasons are an important part of the picture for me and, I assume, for others as well. If I am able to help someone to take control of his life and to master a particularly difficult situation, it gives me a good feeling. This is what Palfrey and Prisbrey (as cited in Levine, 1998, pp.620-622) call “the warm glow effect”. And I would be lying if I said that this was entirely altruistic.

Yet I have a number of questions to ask in this area, mostly centred upon the topic of context. Classical game theory is constructed by means of experiments carried out in laboratory conditions. Various assumptions are made, such as that players do not know each other, that all players understand the rules of play, and that assumptions made by players concerning the preferences of other players
are correct. These experimental conditions are helpful, and may even be essential, in obtaining a result and in establishing broad principles. However it’s a moot point whether data obtained in these ways should be applied directly to real life situations. I wonder, for example, what different results would be obtained if players knew each other before the game – in other words, if community had already been established.

Levine (1998) establishes that in fact some players tend to be generous towards other players (they have a “coefficient of altruism”, p.586), while others tend to be self-centred in their attitudes (a “coefficient of spite”, p.587). He assumes that the player will be affected by not only his/her own coefficient of altruism (or spite) but by what he/she believes his/her opponent’s coefficient to be. He finds that “The departure of preferences from selfish preferences is substantial” (Levine, 1998, p.587). Hagen & Hammerstein (2006) tell us there is increasing evidence that a number of contextual matters play an important role in the explanation of game results. They draw our attention to such factors as culture and emotions, as well as in game play between cultures and even within cultures.

In Acacia Prison, I note that many inmates appear to co-operate with other people only when doing so is to their own advantage. In the Acacia community of faith this is partly the case, but is frequently not so at all. I consider that this has something to do with their commitment to Christ and their membership of the faith community. And I call this spiritual capital.

**Evolutionary theory**

Another possible explanation can be derived from biological evolutionary theory. Hagen and Hammerstein (2006, p.339) reject a great deal of what game theory asserts, speaking of

…the economists’ implicit view of the human brain as a utility maximizer
(subject to constraints)…

Instead, they make out a case of the evolutionary biologist’s implicit view of the brain as “an assemblage of evolved, specialized mechanisms.” Their argument in this respect is that, over thousands of generations, human beings evolved into co-operating beings. The human brain is “wired” in this way, they say, in order to
facilitate survival. They agree with game theorists that people who co-operate for self-regarding reasons are essentially selfish, and they write that

Because “other regarding” can clearly evolve by group selection, this evolutionary mechanism seems necessary to explain the genuine altruism that we all experience within ourselves and see in others.

(Hagen & Hammerstein, 2006, p.344; see Kanazawa & Savage, 2009)

However Hagen and Hammerstein (2006, p.346) remind us that, up to this point, results of experiments provide no convincing evidence that “genuine care of others” is a group utility or norm, and they conclude that human cognition is still a profound mystery that will require the combined efforts of all fields of biology and the social sciences to unravel.

(Hagen & Hammerstein, 2006, p.347; see Nowak & Komarova, 2005)

Again, I look towards the population of Acacia Prison. I observe that genuine care for others does not appear to be a characteristic common to all prisoners. It seems that many have chosen not to exercise such care. This fact seems to suggest that we should be hesitant in fully accepting the evolutionary theory.

Social capital theory

Classic social capital theory provides yet another possible explanation of the behaviour which I have described and which I have called “spiritual capital”. Bourdieu (as cited in Portes, 1998, p.3) captures the essence of this manifestation of social capital theory as he asserts that social networks are not a natural “given” and that they must be constructed through whatever investment strategies are appropriate to the group or organisation. He maintains that

…the profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible.

The idea is that every time we enter into a relationship with another individual, and every time we enter a group relationship, we do so in order to obtain some kind of advantage for ourselves. We have “invested” an aspect of social capital so that we might obtain a return on that investment. Coleman (1990, p.306) writes in similar vein as he refers to “credit slips”:
…if A does something for B and expects B to reciprocate in the future, this creates an expectation in A and an obligation on the part of B to keep the trust. This obligation can be conceived of as a "credit slip" held by A to be redeemed by some performance by B.

Coleman (1998) points out the difference between various kinds of capital. Physical capital, he says, is tangible, being embodied in observable material form. Human capital is less tangible because it consists of skills and knowledge acquired by individual persons. Social capital, however, is even less tangible, because it is to be found in relationships between people (it “inheres in relationships”, Coleman, 1998, p.302). Yet, according to this version of social capital theory, all capital can ultimately be reduced to physical or economic capital. Portes (1998) points out, for example, that through social capital actors gain direct access to such resources as subsidised loans, investment tips and protected markets.

According to this kind of theory, the motivation for investing social capital can be either consummatory or instrumental (Portes, 1998, pp.7-9; Sanghera et al., 2000, p.170). So, then, persons acting on consummatory motives may do so because of internalised norms, which is to say that a threat of sanctions makes the behaviour possible, or that their fate and interests are bound up with those of the group. On the other hand, it could be through what Sanghera et al. (2011, p.170) call “bonded solidarity” – which is to say that individuals acting in this way do so either in the expectation of being repaid later (though the context and timing of such repayment are not specified) or in the hope of approval and esteem in the community.

I consider this to be a fair and accurate explanation for a great deal of human behaviour, definitely including much of the behaviour I observe in the Acacia faith community. Yet to explain all human behaviour in this way does not seem to me to be true to life experience:

The oversocialized conception of human action does not allow individuals to exercise judgments or to possess critical reflexivity, so their ethical deliberations become detached from their lived experience.

(Sanghera et al., 2011, p.171)

Benhabib (as cited in Sanghera et al., 2011, p.172) points out that
...overly rationalistic accounts of moral action neglect the variety and richness of human experience.

It seems to me that, by proposing that all human behaviour is driven by norms, social conventions and rules, and that individuals are motivated solely by self-interest, social capital theorists are overlooking important aspects of lived experience. I have in mind “critical reflexivity” (Sanghera et al., 2011, pp.167ff.), moral judgments, and the part played by emotions, sympathy, compassion, and care for future others. We are all a huge mixture of motives, some of them good, some of them self-centred and downright evil. Sanghera et al. (2011, pp.172) point out that, although individuals can act for social recognition and approval, “they can also pursue praiseworthy acts irrespective of praise”. So it is with the Acacia community of faith. I have already referred to Burkett (2001, p.239), who describes community in this way:

Thus community… becomes a frame of reference which is neither map nor territory but an orientation which emphasizes the relationality and contextuality of human practice, in all its messiness.

Once again, I am reminded that many Acacia prisoners choose not to co-operate with others, or care for others, except when it is to their own advantage to do so. However, members of the Acacia community of faith increasingly decide to do this. Many of them make such choices quite specifically for God and because of their commitment to Jesus, and I observe that membership in the community of faith appears to encourage the men along this path.

Clearly, this is not always the case. Some members of the Acacia faith community do not make this kind of choice. Though when it is in evidence, I call it “spiritual capital”. Perhaps, in part, this is the “freedom” Gustaf spoke about (see the beginning of this chapter, where I reported that this member of the Acacia community of faith said that he was “free already”). These men have come to faith and, even though they are incarcerated, know that they are free to make some choices. It is real empowerment.

Conclusion

I began this research with a wish to trace, and to better understand, the generation of spiritual capital by and within the Acacia community of faith. At the
same time, I was aware that the phrase “spiritual capital” was used in hugely different ways in rather different contexts (Schuurman, 2003). In the light of this fact, I wanted to discover how best to use the term in this unusual environment of a prison.

In a paper I presented at a workshop in the School of Social Work and Social Policy in the University of WA in 2008 I suggested a particular way of looking at spiritual capital. I said that, since human beings are made in the image (*ikon*) and likeness (*homoiosis*) of God, all interaction between people is sacred. In this sense, social capital could be considered a “sub-species” of spiritual capital. This is not the way I looked at it in this study, but it is a defensible position.

Instead, as I proceeded with this research I found that I wanted to use the term in two differing, but related, ways.

1. The first acknowledges that spiritual motives, and spiritual capital, are not restricted to members of a faith community (Guest, 2010; Liu, 2007; Lybbert, 2008; Thomas & Zaitsow, 2006; Zohar, 2010). “Spiritual capital” refers to behaviour emanating from any motives that can be considered spiritual, such as honesty or the wish to serve another person.

2. The second refers to actions and attitudes of members of the community of faith, similar in nature but generated by virtue of the fact that they are members of a faith community (Malloch, 2003; 2010; Woodberry, 2002; 2005).

As outlined in this chapter, spiritual capital can take the form of bridging capital, or bonding capital, or both. I acknowledge that there are other ways of explaining these attitudes and behaviours. However I have argued that each of these explanations, whilst containing real insight, is unsatisfactory in some way or other.
CHAPTER 10 – “CONCLUSION”

This thesis set out to answer the question,

What can we learn about the development of spiritual capital in a prison by looking at the community of faith in Acacia, both in the prison itself and post-release?

I went about this by means of a case study of the Acacia Prison (Christian) community of faith. I began this task with the methodology of participant action research (PAR), in which others joined with me in data-gathering and in some interpretation of data. This was not fully viable in the emerging situation. However, I maintained this methodology as far as possible, involving others as participants to a very great extent. Even so, after the first 3½ years, the methodology was much closer to that of action learning in which the personal reflection led to better understanding of the nature and activities of the community of faith in Acacia.

Spiritual capital

At the beginning of this research, I was well aware that the community of faith was generating spiritual capital. However, I was equally aware that this emerging and “elastic” term was used by different authors and researchers quite differently in varying contexts. Part of my motivation in this study was to “put the finger on” a meaning of the phrase spiritual capital that would best suit the faith community in which I was participating. Then as I proceeded, I found that I wanted to use the term in two different ways. The first derived from observation that it was not only “religious” people – not simply members of faith communities – who develop spiritual capital. I observed that whilst all persons are very likely able to be unkind, all appear to have potential to perform acts of kindness to others, and that they exhibit behaviours that derive from motives I would call “spiritual” (Guest, 2010; Liu, 2010; Lybbert, 2008; Thomas & Zaitsow, 2006; Zohar, 2010). This is one way in which I wanted to use the term “spiritual capital.

The second was that I wanted to look specifically at attitudes and behaviours exhibited by members of faith communities because they are members of faith communities (Malloch, 2003; 2010; Woodberry, 2002; 2005). Some of this would
be bonding capital (Putnam, 1994; 1995; 2004) and some is bridging (Lin, 2000; Portes, 1998; Putnam et al., 1993).

I was observing three over-lapping communities – the Christian faith community itself and its activities, as well as STP and “Kairos”, and I referred to them collectively as the Acacia community of faith. In addition, I observed, participated in, and reported upon the Term Leadership Group (TLG), a much smaller grouping within the faith community. In each of these four contexts, I noted that community was being formed and that members were generating spiritual capital because of their participation in the group.

I observed also that individuals were beginning to be empowered (Evans, 1992; Gutierrez, 1990; Hoyle & Sanders, 2000; Riger, 1993; Sawin & Zehr, 2007). Members of these groups were increasingly behaving in a manner that was contrary to the prison culture (Crewe, 2007; Faccio & Costa, 2013; Farmer, 2014; Johnstone, 2007b; 2014; Sutton, 2011; Workman, 2005). They were generating spiritual capital.

“Twin emphases”

The Christian community in Acacia Prison has earned Acacia the tag, “the programmes prison”. This is because of the comparatively large number of bible studies, programmes and special group events sponsored by the chaplaincy department. At the same time, I observe that the heart of chaplaincy remains one-to-one counselling, particularly among prisoners and staff who are in distress.

On the one hand, the prisoners in the pre-release interviews obviously appreciated the group dynamics, whether in the services, programmes and STP, or in the fellowship within the faith community. On the other hand, many spoke of feeling safe and affirmed and valued as individual human beings.

The post-release interviews in this study presented a similar picture. About half of the former prisoners interviewed spoke of the personal transformation they underwent, primarily or partly owing to or assisted by the ministry of one or other of the chaplains. The others spoke equally warmly of the programmes and/or of the network of friendships and support they experienced in the Acacia faith community.
It seemed to me, as researcher, that the TLG has served as a focal point and catalyst for this community’s vitality and for its generation of spiritual capital.

My examination of the concept of spiritual capital inevitably led to a deeper understanding of community, and of restorative justice.

**Community**

When this research began, I had already been a leading member of the community of faith for 6½ years, and this situation continued throughout the research journey. The fact of “insider research” provided advantages as well as disadvantages (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Colic-Peisker, 2004). However, one of the advantages was that I had a real “feel” for this unlikely community.

The first finding in respect of community was the perhaps surprising discovery that community can and does take place in a prison.

The second observation to be made is that observation of this community confirms the often-stated idea that community is not simply a place (Boyes-Watson, 2005a; Forrest & Kearns, 2000; Gavrielides, 2005; McCold & Wachtel, 1998; Panelli & Welch, 2005; Silk, 1999). It is a perception of connectedness, a sense of belonging. This is very strong indeed in this extraordinary community. Post-release in-depth interviews with former prisoners showed that this “sense of belonging” persisted even after its members left Acacia. It was not nostalgia for a particular location, or even for a particular activity, but rather a sense of involvement, of belonging, and of safety (though various people interviewed saw “safety” in quite different ways, whether being safe from or being safe for).

**Acceptance of diversity**

Boyes-Watson (2005a) asks an important question: namely whether or not a community can be inclusive of outsiders, people who are considered “different”. I observe that members of the Acacia faith community, as a group, are growing in their acceptance of diversity. To some extent it is reminiscent of I.M. Young’s “community of strangers” (1990, p.237). This can be seen in the equal welcome extended to Indigenous and non-Indigenous prisoners, which used not to be so, but certainly is the case nowadays. In addition, the Vietnamese Bible Fellowship is seen by almost all of the community of faith as an important part of their
schedule and of what they offer the prison. And the multiplicity of programmes
caters to a range of different kinds of people. However the vexed question of
acceptance of men who have been convicted of child sex offences remains a
challenge. Small advances in this matter have been made by each “generation”
of prisoners, but this is a prejudice that prisoners generally have found difficult
to overcome. It may be that, in part, this is a reflection of community attitudes
(Wilson, Stewart, Stripe, Barrett & Cripps, 2000). Gavin (2005, p.397) has this to say:

Child sex offenders are further constructed in history and today as
members of “outgroups” similar in ways to labeling witches as “outsiders”,
thus making it possible for communities to take collective action against
them.

(See Brown, Deakin & Spencer, 2008; Carter, 2008; Freiberg, 2008;
Hannem & Petrunik, 2007; Silverman & Wilson, as cited in Wilson et al., 2007)

As I have indicated, in the Acacia faith community this is a “work in progress”.

In this research, I have looked briefly at models of community presented by
Nancy, I.M. Young and others, finding that the community of faith in Acacia
shares some of the characteristics of each. Yet it doesn’t fit neatly into any of
them. It is far closest to the concept of community set forward by Burkett (2001)
of human relationships “in all their messiness”. Membership is constantly
changing, and there is huge ethnic and national diversity, as well as varied
educational background, denominational allegiance and mental health. Yet there
is a real sense of belonging and of shared purpose. It is an example of powerless
people being empowered (Evans, 1992; Freire, 1972). In all this, I find the
Christian doctrine of the Trinity to be highly relevant. It is a powerful image of
mutual interdependence of persons (Carnley, 2004) – of the fact that the one and
the many can be equally emphasised and fully present. This image proclaims that
the essence of being a person, as opposed to being an individual, is that a person
is in relationship with another (Archibald & Llewellyn, 2006; Carnley, 2004;
Llewellyn, 2011; Llewellyn et al., 2013; Randall, 2013; Randall & Haskell, 2013;
Zehr, 2008).

I see all this in terms of our being the body of Christ in Acacia Prison (1
Corinthians 12.27). In the wider community, such an entity is counter-culture,
intended as a radical alternative to the normalcy of the “wisdom of this world” (1 Corinthians 1.20). Yet in the prison environment this is even more obviously the case. Instead of focusing on getting and having, members of the Acacia faith community find themselves growing in a different direction – towards being for others. This can be achieved, but only through inner change. And many of the members of the faith community are enlisting the aid of the Holy Spirit in order to do this.

Some general observations

It is difficult to summarise my observations concerning this faith community, because it is far from static. This community is always changing, growing, decaying, developing. This is probably the case to some degree or another for all communities. Yet it is particularly and obviously so in this instance. Many of its members are released or are transferred to other prisons, and are replaced by others. Prisoners typically are people with low morale. They live in a world dominated by rules and regulations, by explicit commands and unspoken expectations of behaviour. It is not surprising that they tend to simply “wait for something to happen”. Yet this is not the case with the Christian community of faith in Acacia Prison. This is a lively, unpredictable group of men who show surprising initiative and who, despite the confines of their situation, have achieved a great deal.

Another reason it is difficult to summarise my observations is that the Acacia Prison community of faith is, in effect, a kaleidoscope of smaller communities. Two of these – STP and “Kairos” - are “over-lapping” communities, which are part of the faith community and yet not part of it. Others are firmly embedded within the community of faith: the regular bible study groups, temporary groups formed for programmes and special courses, and the on-going Term Leadership Group (TLG). In all of these gatherings, I observe that community is being formed and spiritual capital being engendered.

When Burkett (2001) writes of the idea of community in the modern world, with its increasing mobility and its constant change, some of her observations hold true for this constantly changing faith community in Acacia. She writes that there can be no fixed ideas as to what constitutes community: “what this means is that
we resign ourselves to uncertainty and to mystery” (p.243). Yet within this community of faith there is a growing sense of belonging and of interdependence. In an environment in which it is expected, and almost obligatory, to look after “Number One” first, these men are beginning to look outward to each other as well as to those outside the group. In the interviews conducted in this research, and in the various programmes observed, a significant number of members of this faith community claim that the changes they are perceiving and experiencing in their lives are evidences of the presence and workings of God.

“Overlapping” communities

During the time of this research, two chaplaincy-sponsored programmes began, each of which had the effect of setting up a kind of “mini-community”. These were STP and “Kairos”. Both of these communities were, in effect, part of the Acacia community of faith, yet separate from it. They over-lapped onto the faith community in an organisational sense, but – more importantly – they over-lapped onto the community of faith in their aims and outcomes. The aim of “Kairos” was to give prisoner-participants the experience of Christian love and of Christian community. This was particularly poignant in that many of these men had probably never been part of an accepting and supportive community before. STP was and is more complex, because it aims to benefit victims of crime as well as prisoners. In respect of the prisoner-participants, however, I suppose that the main aim was to assist them to take responsibility for their offences and for their lives. Through meeting and working with victims of crime, this involves such processes as forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation and restitution. I observed that most of the prisoners who participated in either “Kairos” or STP (or, in a few instances, both) were more likely afterwards to empathise with others than they had been. Most of them were more kind, and most were far more likely than before to create spiritual capital.

Zehr (2000, p.5) writes that although the term “restorative justice” encompasses many different programmes and practices,

…at its core it is a set of principles, a philosophy, an alternative set of guiding questions. Ultimately, restorative justice provides an alternative framework for thinking about wrongdoing.
STP is one of many models of restorative justice. It is intended for use within the prison, and one of its characteristics is that it uses surrogate victims (Zehr & Mika 1998). The first 4 STPs in Australia were in Acacia Prison. In this thesis, I have devoted Chapters 6 and 7 to a “case study” of STP as it is practised in Acacia. In addition, Chapter 2 deals with punishment and restorative justice, and STP’s place within that framework. This is not only because of its very great effect upon the community of faith but also because of the way in which this project has influenced me personally. Because of STP, I have seen chaplaincy and the faith community with new eyes. It has reminded me forcibly that one of our main aims in chaplaincy is to assist prisoners and staff to take responsibility for their own lives and behaviour. With God’s help, and in fellowship with others, they can begin or continue to live fulfilled lives.

In some ways, STP does not sit easily with the Christian community of faith. It is much more a “spiritual” project than “religious” (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2000; Bender and Armour, 2007; Pranis, 2012; Zehr, 2005a). Yet I note that in Acacia the faith community “own” STP, and that those who take part in STP do not appear to resent association with the chapel. Hence I have no hesitation in calling STP an “overlapping community”.

Yet, over and above all this, my research emphasised the power of community and the “specialness” of a Christian community of faith. In the bleak, alienating context of prison life, these men had found hope and purpose and power. It was not like a football team, even though belonging to a football team in a prison is far more significant than it could ever be “outside”. This is because the implications of membership in this faith community – I have called this, or a great deal of it, spiritual capital – permeate to every aspect of life.

Members of the Acacia faith community are learning and growing. In many instances, their faith and their commitment are hesitant. Most of them are very vulnerable, and they are not without personal and family problems.

I am grateful to O’Brien (2001b, chapter 5) for the phrase “It could be otherwise”. She in fact cites Saleeby (1993) as its originator. It seems to me that members of the community of faith - unlike many, or even most, other Acacia inmates - have begun to realise that indeed it could be otherwise. Change may be possible. It might not be necessary to continue living as powerless
individuals. What prompted me to begin this study was the fact that these incredibly vulnerable human beings were defying the odds by showing initiative. They were making decisions, displaying considerable imagination, and acting on behalf of themselves and others, in an environment which is far from conducive to these things.

I suspected that part of the reason was that they are a community. Incarceration can be, and is, an isolating experience, even in a prison with 1,000 inmates. Members of the Acacia congregation are able to gather at Sunday chapel worship, at Prison Fellowship meetings and bible studies, and at a wide range of chapel-sponsored programmes. As a Christian person, I would go further than this – I contend that this is a community which has been called together by God (Borg & Crossan, 2010; Westerhoff, 1985), and which is spirit-filled. I take this as a self-evident truth. Yet it is a fact that this faith community exhibits more liveliness in the gospel than I have observed in other comparable communities of faith.

STP provides a second, over-lapping community which has a real sense of belonging. At one level, the over-riding element in each STP is that of hope. Most participants are beginning to see that there could be light at the end of the tunnel, that it could be otherwise. As well as this, “Kairos”, with its very limited aim of providing an experience of four days of Christian community, gives participants a gift of hope (Burnside, 2008) and an experience of being loved.

The Term Leadership Group (TLG)

As previously stated, Acacia sometimes been referred to as “the programmes prison”. The reason for this is that the Acacia chaplaincy department has always seen working with groups of people to be one of its main priorities. As a result, over the years there have been regular bible studies and innumerable programmes, or special courses taking place in this faith community. These have been among Mainstream as well as Protection prisoners and (very occasionally) involving a combination of both. All this has been in addition to the Sunday services and the Saturday morning Prison Fellowship meetings. To varying extents, community has been formed in each of these groups, and
spiritual capital expended. Yet, among all of these groups, the Term Leadership Group (TLG) is seen as unique and as highly influential.

McDermott (2002, p.80) gives examples of a group which was formed “by accident” but which, when presented with a common problem to be solved, changed dramatically. To a very large extent, this was so with the TLG. When it was formed, the group’s aims were not fully articulated. But once they began working together to accomplish specific goals, they became a small community. Each member began to know the others as individual persons, and to care about them. This became more so as the group began to achieve things. In this process, powerless men are becoming empowered (Bush & Folger, 1994; Evans, 1992; Freire, 1972; Gutierrez, 1990). It is interesting to note that empowerment has proved to be “catching”, that others in the community of faith have started to believe that change is possible (Barker, 1997; Nahata, 2001; Reicher et al., 2005). They do not need to settle for what has been meted out to them (Scott, 1991).

I observed that each “generation” of TLG has grown in liveliness and in confidence. In addition, resolutions emerging from group discussions tended to be more mature and much more adventurous than any of the individual ideas had been. One of the participants in McDermott’s study (2002, p.33) comments in this way about her experience of group dynamics:

A group’s an organic thing… it’s far more like growing plants than running a machine.

As previously mentioned, this lively little group is constantly changing, as people enter and leave. Yet – again – an ethos has developed and the “whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts”. This could well be seen as a form of spiritual capital.

Every one of these men has been found guilty of some crime or series of crimes. In other words, they are not simply innocent victims of circumstance. Some of them, due to family upbringing or psychological illness or systemic factors, had limited choices available. Yet, ultimately, these men have been imprisoned because of their own bad choices and criminal actions. Unfortunately, from that moment on, they have been treated for the most part as numbers or as problems, instead of as real human beings. Their lives have been governed by...
commands and regulations and by unwritten expectations (Goulding, 2007; Hall, 2004; Windzio, 2006). The stresses of prison life are enormous, and the morale of prisoners is typically very low. For this reason, the empowerment observed among TLG members and in the Acacia community of faith is remarkable.

Members of the Acacia faith community are still prisoners, and the range of choices available to them is still remarkably limited. However, they have begun to show initiative. They are beginning to hope (Freire, 1973).

The “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP)

It was a real delight to witness the excitement in Acacia at being the prison to introduce STP to Australia. This excitement was catching, and it was felt not only by the faith community but by staff and prisoners who were not directly involved.

The main innovations to this project which were brought in by Acacia were (a) a chaplain “sitting in” on each project, and (b) the involvement of child sex offenders in STP.

STP affected the way in which the chaplaincy department viewed and evaluated their ministry. Although STP was not religious (in the sense that it was not specifically “Christian”, or pertaining to any other faith), it was clear that its aims “overlap” those of chaplaincy. STP assists participants to heal relationships, as well as to take responsibility for their lives and actions. Chaplains were content to “own” STP, because healing and taking responsibility are also a very large part of their chaplaincy aims.

I observed that almost every prisoner-participant was empowered through participation in STP (Wilson, 2007), and that the majority of visitor-participants were helped as well (Van Ness, 2005a). People were empowered as they told their stories to people who genuinely wanted to hear (Bolitho, 2012; Pranis, 2005; Toews, 2006; Verity & King, 2007). They were further empowered as they took responsibility for the actions and their lives and began or continued to plan for their future (Sawin & Zehr, 2007; Toews, 2006). It was interesting to note that Barton’s comment (2000) that the difference between the conventional justice
system and restorative justice can most usefully be articulated in terms of empowerment and disempowerment. Achilles & Zehr (2001) write that the disempowerment experienced by victims of crime in the court system was the main reason for the implementation of restorative justice in Western countries (Bazemore & Ellis, 2007). In fact, empowerment is seen as an essential element of all restorative justice projects (Braithwaite, 2002; 2003a; Doolin, 2006-2007; Dyck, 2006; Zehr, 2002).

McBroom (2009) draws our attention to the very great importance of language in restorative justice projects (Arrigo, 2006; Choi et al., 2013). And Hayes & Snow (2013) speak eloquently of the importance of oral language competence (OLC) in such programmes (Snow & Powell, 2011; Snow & Sanger, 2011). Their concept of OLC embraces not only the meaning of the words that are spoken, but also such things as implications, nuances, facial expressions and body language. They contend that participants who are deficient in OLC will be limited in the extent to which they can contribute to or gain from restorative justice.

We noticed that there was very little difficulty in this regard in Acacia STPs. I observed one prisoner-participant who was definitely OLC-deficient, and one who probably was. I surmised that the main reason it was as rare as this was the voluntary nature of the programme – people would be unlikely to apply if they thought they might not be able to cope. Prison populations typically contain an unusually large proportion of persons who might be deemed “oral language incompetent” (Snow & Powell, 2005; Snow & Sanger, 2011; Snow et al., 2014). In Acacia Prison, more prisoners apply to take part in STP than there are places available. Even so, I am concerned that many prisoners who may need the kind of assistance and empowerment that restorative justice offers are probably not applying at all.

The apparent success of STP in Acacia, and the huge demand for it by prisoners, are contrary to the claims of Guidoni (2003) and others that in-prison restorative justice projects cannot be effective. However their misgivings underline the advisability of adequate follow-up pastoral care for STP “graduates”.

The pastoral care of visitor-participants in Acacia STP projects has always in the past been the province of the facilitators. However, in the course of this research
it became apparent that this is no longer sufficient. It is important that an adequate strategy be set in place and that it be constantly evaluated and updated.

As co-ordinating chaplain, I was concerned that there be STP projects in Acacia which were truly culture-sensitive (Archibald & Llewellyn, 2006; Liebemann, 2011; Williams, 2013; Zehr, 2004). Shortly after STP4, I emailed the two Acacia facilitators, suggesting that they consider implementing a “fully Indigenous” STP. I was aware that a number of Aboriginal tribes and nations are represented in Acacia, but it seemed to me that a regular STP that was specifically for Indigenous prisoners and victims of crime might go a long way towards filling a real need. I suggested that, if an Indigenous person could act as facilitator, it would be ideal. If that was not possible, I wrote, it should be some other man or woman who was culturally sensitive. I think that our facilitators genuinely misunderstood my email. They made real efforts, from that time forward, to include one or more Indigenous victims of crime in each project, and they were far more sensitive to the inclusion of Indigenous prisoner-participants. I was disappointed at what I thought was an inferior compromise. However, to my huge surprise this “compromise” worked very well and was greatly appreciated by STP participants. The Indigenous prisoner-participants expressed their delight, and other prisoners as well as visitors were very positive. Even so, positive experience of culture-specific projects in Nova Scotia (Archibald & Llewellyn, 2006; Jenkins, 2004; Williams, 2013), New Zealand (Morris, 2002), and elsewhere (Liebemann, 2011; Nikkel, 2003) suggests to me that Indigenous prisoners in Acacia may be missing out on something important. Blagg (2013, p.5) calls for Indigenous restorative justice programmes in Australia. Ivec, Braithwaite & Harris (2012, p.85) write that restorative projects for families of Indigenous people

provide authorities with ways to learn about and respect culture, change unfair processes and clarify purposes to build shared community expectations, and

empower families to own and develop their own solutions.

In the various STP groups, we observed a growing sense of “togetherness”. This was even – or especially – in the face of deep previous divisions owing to cultural diversity and/or prejudice regarding child sex offences. In many instances, this phenomenon lasted far beyond the duration of the project. I regarded all this as evidence of spiritual capital, and as “bonding capital” (Cattel, 2001; Johan, 2013;
Portes, 1998; Putnam, 1993; 2004; Putnam et al., 1993). In addition, I saw remarkable and positive attitudinal changes in the lives of many prisoner-participants, and prison officers remarked upon acts of kindness by these men out in the prison precinct. I see this as further evidence of spiritual capital (Guest, 2010; Johan, 2013; Putnam, 1995).

“Kairos”

We were the first – and are still the only – Western Australian prison to run the “Kairos” programme. This annual four-day “Kairos” short-course has involved a relatively small number of prisoners – 17 or 18 prisoners per year. It involves a similar number of visitors, and its aim is to give participants the experience of Christian love and acceptance. Although some of the prisoner-participants in these programmes have been Christians, others have not, and many of these men had probably not experienced any kind of accepting community before. Results have been perceptible. “Kairos” has never been a “recruiting drive”, so it has not been either a surprise or a disappointment that very few prisoner-participants in “Kairos” have suddenly become chapel-attenders or participants in bible studies. However, I have observed a strong sense of belonging and – in very many of these men – development of kindness towards others. This has been frequently remarked upon by prison officers and other staff members. I see these things as indications of the formation of spiritual capital. This “mini-community” is one that over-laps with the Acacia community of faith. It is part of the faith community and sponsored by the chaplaincy department, yet it is also separate from the community of faith.

Limitations of this study

Serco

As set out in Chapter 1, at the time this research began, the day-to-day running of Acacia Prison was the responsibility of a private institution called AIMS (“Amalgamated Integrated Management Systems”). Shortly afterwards, this role was let out for tender, and the successful tenderer was a British company called Serco. I have already referred to the delay in granting permission to begin
researching in Acacia. This caused some problems which I have outlined elsewhere in this thesis.

A large proportion of Serco’s payment comes with the meeting of a number of targets – “performance-based payments” (PBP). An additional payment can be made for “significant innovations”. I have therefore been in the unusual situation of setting up a new chaplaincy department in a brand new prison that encourages change, or at least change within the boundaries of a prison environment. Because of this, it may not be entirely surprising that our little department have been able to try new things that might not have risen to the surface in an older, government-run prison environment. I have in mind such things as the Term Leadership Group (TLG), STP and “Kairos”. None of these things have been instigated or suggested by Serco, but their contract relationship with the Department of Corrective Services has resulted in fewer barriers in the path of such programmes than I would have expected in other prisons in which I’ve served as chaplain. So it is that, although Serco’s action in delaying permission to commence research in the prison severely hampered this project, if it had not been for the attitude to innovation shown by AIMS and then Serco, I would probably not have had the same motivation to begin this research in the first place.

**Availability of interviewees**

One of my disappointments in this research was that a number of the persons I had planned to interview were not available. It is difficult to know whether, or to what extent, this influenced my findings. Some of the prisoners I had interviewed in the prison environment could not be interviewed again in the critical post-release period. The data gathered from interviewing “substitutes” may have been very similar to what would have been obtained, but I cannot be sure of this.

**Indigenous issues**

I indicated in Chapter One that Indigenous prisoners were not specifically targeted in this research. However, bearing in mind that over one-third of the Acacia prison population is Aboriginal, it was inevitable that some Indigenous prisoners would be included in the research considerations. Because of this, some Indigenous issues surfaced, particularly in relation to STP.
**Number of persons interviewed**

I had originally intended to interview many more prisoners. However, I then decided on participant action research (PAR) as my methodology. This methodology necessarily involves a smaller number of participants. Even though I was unable to continue with PAR fully after the first 3½ years of this research, I maintained it as fully as was possible in the changing prison environment. Even so, it seemed to me that, if time had permitted a larger number of interviewees, a clearer picture of the Acacia faith community might have emerged. However it should probably be acknowledged, (a) that the observation in this research was over an extended period of some 4½ years, (b) that, by the time this research was completed, I had been in Acacia full-time for more than twice that time, and (c) that I employed the technique of “member checking” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.314; Maxwell, 1998, p.94; Robson, 2002, p.175) extensively. These factors added considerable depth to the data.

**Recommendations for further research**

This research suggests a number of areas for future enquiry:

1. The need for a long-term study of the effects of STP participation upon Indigenous prisoner-participants (MacKenzie, 2009). I suspect that such a study might indicate need for fully-Indigenous STPs in Acacia. See Archibald & Llewellyn (2006) and Williams (2013) for a brief overview of Canadian experience in this regard.

2. There is a critical need for further research into the effects of STP upon both the offenders and the visitor-participants. Such assessment should not be restricted to recidivism rates and participant-satisfaction (for use in discussion with the Department of Corrective Services, and others), but should be assessment of restorative justice “on its own terms”.

3. Research into the needs of former prisoners, post-release, and ways to meet those needs.
Contributions made by this study

Special value

The best and the worst in human nature exist side by side in a prison environment, in a concentrated form (King & Liebling, 2008). Because of this, there is special value in prison research.

Scarcity of prison ethnography in an age of mass incarceration

As Wacquant (2013, p.371) points out, ethnographic studies in prisons, outside Europe, have been in eclipse for a considerable time. In addition, a large proportion of those who have undertaken such research report that they have encountered stumbling blocks (for example, Bosworth et al., 2005; Castellano, 2007; Hart, 1995; King & Liebling, 2008; Liebling, 1999; 2001; 2011; Peacock, 2014; Sutton, 2011; Wacquant, 2013; Waldram, 1998; 2007; 2009). Waldram (2009) tells us that “Prisons are highly regulated environments that constrain more than they enable research.” In this thesis, I have mentioned (a) the delay imposed by Serco upon the beginning of my research in the prison, and (b) the difficulty I encountered in interviewing one of the prisoner-participants in this research. However, these were two of many examples of thoughtlessness and/or mistrust that I came across in my in-prison research.

Rhodes (2009, p.6) writes, “…the ethnographer hoping to study prisons is met by extraordinary obstacles”. She adds that

...research on the “inside” is generally seen by the institutional gatekeepers as threatening to the control of information, problematic for prisoners, and potentially dangerous for the researcher. At the same time, the need for ethnographic research on US prisons could not be greater.

Her observations concerning USA research are equally true in Australia. This study therefore goes a small step towards filling a real need.

The researcher already established in the prison

There are very few examples of in-prison research conducted by persons already employed in that environment and immersed (as it were) in the atmosphere and culture of the research field. This study adds a perspective which is rare indeed.
As previously mentioned, the fact that it is conducted in a particular prison adds depth. My employment as senior chaplain in Acacia Prison for some years prior to the outset of this PhD journey, as well as during it, not only provided additional data but inevitably influenced my understanding of data collected.

**Spiritual capital**

This study has shown that spiritual capital can be, and is, developed within a prison environment. Perhaps more importantly, this study has shown what it looks like in this particular instance.

**Community**

The case study of this faith community has thrown light upon the concept of community.

**“Twin emphases”**

This study points to the importance of group activities within a community of faith, and perhaps to the special value that it has in the authoritative environment of a prison. Such a finding does not detract from the crucial importance of one-to-one ministry among prisoners as well as staff, for this forms the basis of chaplaincy in a prison. In fact, the finding in this research was that this “twin emphasis” appeared to have value and power.

**The “Sycamore Tree Project” (STP)**

- This study contains one of the very few examples of qualitative research of the “Sycamore Tree Project”. It joins MacKenzie (2009) and Wilson (2007), which were the only other thorough-going qualitative studies of STP that I could find. This means that there is a real need for a systematic analysis such as this study provides. In addition, the fact that both of those researchers deal with STP in such diverse ways – MacKenzie (2009) to see the effects upon facilitators and co-facilitators, and their reactions, and Wilson (2007) to consider the effects of STP upon recidivism – underlines that need.
Zehr & Mika (1998, p.52) tell us that “Face-to-face encounters are appropriate in some instances while alternative forms of exchange are appropriate in others” (see Shantz, 2008). STP is an in-prison restorative justice programme which used surrogate victims. This research confirms findings in other places that participation in STP results in changed attitudes among prisoners (Bakker, 2005; Feasey et al., 2005; Feasey & Williams, 2009; Van Ness, 2005a; Wilson, 2007) as well as victims of crime (Van Ness 2005a). In so doing, it confirms Zehr & Mika’s statement (1998) that using surrogate victims of crime is appropriate in some kinds of projects (Schantz, 2008; Stobbs, 2013).

A final comment

This research has been conducted in an environment in which vulnerable people are rendered even more vulnerable. However I observed that, in this unlikely context, real community was formed and experienced, and spiritual capital was generated. In the process of conducting this research, I came to deeper understanding of what constitutes community – also of the nature of leadership, and of what I take to be the action of God in Acacia Prison. By the time the research was completed, I had come to a deeper understanding of spiritual capital and a firmer knowledge of how I wished to use the term in relation to the Acacia community of faith.


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APPENDIX A - Interpretation of raw data

In this study, there were twenty-nine “unstructured interviews” (O’Reilly, 2005, p.166) or “in-depth” interviews” (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p.56). I worked with transcripts of twenty-five of these and detailed notes of the other four. One of the interviewees began speaking before the dictaphone was unpacked, and two started speaking again after I had thought the respective sessions were over. In each of these instances, I recorded my recollection of what had been said, immediately after the person interviewed had left. I worked from the transcripts of these recollections. These findings were confirmed in general terms through the process of “member checking” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.314; Maxwell, 1998, p.94; Robson 2002, p.175), by means of focus groups of prisoners and/or chaplains (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998).

Using a card system, I then divided the data into themes, adding material from my notes and journaling. I was intent to record not only what the interviewees had said, but also what they had “really” said (Ricoeur, 2007). I took note of their hesitations, their body language, and their silences. In some interviews, tone of voice seemed important as well. I found a large number of “cross-references” between the themes on the cards. Because of this, I then transferred the material onto computer, using broader but over-lapping categories.

As this process continued, I made some decisions about which data to include in my thesis. The grounds on which such decisions were made varied somewhat, but those grounds included the following:

1. Topics were repeated in various ways in different interviews. The two main examples of this were “safety” and “a sense of belonging”.
2. Themes which echoed with, or were confirmed by, my observations of chapel-sponsored programmes or of some other activities of the Acacia faith community.

I take the topic of “the rawness of the prison community” as an example of the way in which data gained from interviews was processed to contribute to the thesis…
I took data from a large number of cards to gather in a computer file under this heading. In part, the section reads as follows:

**FAITH COMMUNITY – IT’S “REAL” – A SENSE OF URGENCY**

Jennifer (a Sunday morning volunteer from “outside”) - “Every service in Acacia is real. There's no pretence. There is more reality here in every service than there ever than there ever is in our parish.”

And

Hilda (volunteer) – “People in our home church wear masks…”

This kind of comment is constantly being made by volunteers and visitors.

Boadacea - “I think there’s a sense of urgency [in the Acacia faith community] that I don’t experience in my own community of faith… being that the problems in people’s lives are imminent, there right there, in front of them.”

There’s no doubt at all in my mind that this is true.

Bruce - [Interviewer: Would you like to talk to me about the community of faith?] – “I think there’s a realness about it… I’m not saying that people don’t have masks that they set in place... They do. But I feel that, even though those are there, every so often you can feel people reaching through them. It’s very real.”

This is a balanced view and – again – there’s no doubt that it’s true.

Bruce - “The community of faith is important to me. It’s a privilege to be involved in it. I see aspects of Christ in it that I often find it more difficult to see in church outside the prison.”

This is one of the huge attractions of prison ministry.

Bruce - “the rawness of the prison community"

ditto.

Gunnar - “Everyone was human when they came to church [here in Acacia] because they dropped their guard a lot, y’know... They got no ego. No apprehensions, or they’re not trying to show off or big-note themselves.
They’re in damage mode, you know, they’re trying to recover, they’re trying to rebuild their lives, they’re trying to restructure their lives.”

- Gunnar surprised everyone, including himself, by enrolling in a chaplaincy-sponsored programme. It was entitled “Breaking Out!”, and was co-facilitated by Susan and me. Ian was surprised and delighted that, when he spoke up, people not only listened but did so with respect, and took note.
- He came to my office on a number of occasions. I think that he was really pleased to be treated as a human being.

**Toby** - “… because it’s all stripped away, it’s real isn’t it?”

Toby is saying something similar to Ian, but different. He is saying that, because everything is “stripped away” in a prison, prisoners have a real opportunity to concentrate on God.

**Gilbert** - *(shortly before release, with expression of regret and fear)* – Yeah, it’ll be different. I mean, I’ll miss the guys. You know, I mentor a lot of blokes here that are very genuine.”

In the interview, Gilbert was torn between optimism and dread at the thought of release. With that came regret at leaving Acacia and friends. He was very fragile.

**Boadacea** - “I’ll never forget a course in Protection & hav[ing] a young boy come up in the coffee break and begin to tell me his incredibly sad story, and I was so angry at God. ‘What do you expect me to do in the 3 minutes I’ve got for coffee, God? What do you expect me to do? I’ve just heard possibly the hardest story I’m ever likely to hear, and I have what, gosh, three minutes to say something profound & deep & supportive.’ And out of nowhere two fellows… just came up to me and said… ‘We talked about this, remember? We’re meeting this afternoon & we’re going to write a letter, do you remember that?’ ‘Oh yes,’ the boy said, ‘I do remember that.’ One of the chaps said, ‘Remember I said to you that if you come by & see me we’ll talk about it further & we’ll… organize a prayer session.’ He looked at me, ‘Don’t you worry about this, miss. We know what to do, we’ve got it sorted.’”

- I commented to someone quite recently that I sometimes feel as if chaplains are busy applying a band aid to an open wound. The problems we come across, and
there are so few of us. In addition, the environment in which we work mitigates against almost everything we do. I think there is something of this in what Boadacea is saying.

- Perhaps, too, we see a reference in what she says to the extraordinary fact that prisoners (and staff) come to us with their stories.
- Clearly, another aspect of this is the fact that prisoners are looking after each other – very often in a wonderful way.
- I think that her little story speaks volumes for the strength and depth of the Acacia community of faith.

The portions in bold are quoted directly from transcripts or, in the instances of the two volunteers, direct quotations from my journal. Observations in normal print were added by me shortly afterwards, and were included in my computer file.

A number of statements seemed to me to “fit” with each other. The visitors had spoken of the Acacia chapel services as “real” and having “no pretence”, and of the members of the faith community “not wearing masks”. Chaplain Boadacea described a “sense of urgency’ and said that “the problems are imminent”. Chaplain Bruce sensed “a realness” about this community of faith, and Gunnar told me that “they’ve dropped their guard a lot, you know”. And another prisoner, Toby, said that in the Acacia chapel environment everything was “stripped away” so that he could concentrate on what matters. I gathered all this together under the heading of “rawness”, which was a phrase used by Chaplain Bruce in my interview with him as part of this study.

As it happens, this is a section where a large proportion was included in the body of the thesis, where it became as follows:

“the rawness of the prison community”

In Chapter 2 I wrote of Jennifer, a member of our Sunday morning roster of visitors for 9 years, who said that “Every service in Acacia is real. There’s no pretence…” Hilda, another Sunday morning volunteer, added that

People in our home church wear masks…
Bruce had been chaplain in Acacia for one day a week for 9½ years when I interviewed him as part of this study. I said to him, “Would you like to talk to me about the community of faith?” He responded,

I think there’s a realness about it… I’m not saying that people don’t have masks that they set in place... They do. But I feel that, even though those are there, every so often you can feel people reaching through them. It’s very real.

Later in the interview, he added,

In some ways, I wish I could bring my town into prison for six months. I’m sure we’d be a lot more spiritual [as a result].

An Indigenous prisoner called Jimmy marvelled at the change he saw in a large number of prisoners who were now members of the Acacia faith community. He could see similar changes beginning in his own life and attitude:

Yeh, especially with me. All I’ve ever done [before] is hurt people, rob people. And it makes you think.

I think that, as well as this, he could see that maintaining this changed outlook would not be easy.

Gunnar, a man with a reputation for unpredictable violence, had started attending chaplaincy-sponsored programmes. To his surprise, he had found welcome and respect. In my interview with him, he had this to say:

Everyone was human when they came to church [here in Acacia] because they dropped their guard a lot, y’know... They got no ego. No apprehensions, or they’re not trying to show off or big-note themselves. They’re in damage mode, you know, they’re trying to recover, they’re trying to rebuild their lives…

In one of two interviews with my chaplaincy colleague Boadacea (who was, at that time, a chaplain-in-training), she said:

I think there’s a sense of urgency [in the Acacia faith community] that I don’t experience in my own community of faith... being that the problems in people’s lives are imminent, they’re right there, in front of them.

In my interview with him, Bruce spoke several times of “The rawness of the prison community”, and he said,
The community of faith is important to me. It’s a privilege to be involved in it. I see aspects of Christ in it that I often find it more difficult to see in church outside the prison.

As he said this, it occurred to me that this is one of the real attractions of prison ministry.

I turned to the computer section on “Community of Faith” for Chaplain Bruce’s comment about bringing his whole town into Acacia. In addition, when addressing the topic of “spiritual capital”, later in the thesis, I made reference to Chaplain Boadacea’s story of the young prisoner who came to her with a problem.

In other sections, I omitted or included more of the material, or used it in a more “scattered” way. However this gives an idea, however incomplete, of the way in which I interpreted raw data in this study.
APPENDIX B - "Information and Consent Form"

This "Information and Consent Form" was given to every potential participant in this research project.
This research is being undertaken for a Ph.D. with the University of Western Australia. It is being done in order to increase our understanding of the way a community of faith operates within a prison community. Most of the work will be done in Acacia Prison. We expect that the results of this work will be as follows:

- As we come to understand better the operation of the community of faith in Acacia Prison, Acacia chaplains should be able to “do our job better”.
- Prisoners who co-operate with me in this work will gain through increased knowledge, skills and awareness. In turn, this should positively affect others whom they work with and relate to.
- Chaplains of other prisons may learn from the way we do this and from what we discover together.
- One effect of this study could be that, in the wider community, stigma directed against ex-criminals may be lessened.

Methods to be used in this research

1. I will spend some time simply observing what goes on in our Acacia community of faith;
2. With the permission of the men taking part, I will interview six active members of the Acacia community of faith. They will be selected on the basis that they have been fully active in chapel-sponsored activities in Acacia, and they are soon to be released. Each interview will take about one hour.
3. There will be follow-up interviews with the same six persons, as close as possible to six months after they have been released.
4. With the permission of various chaplains, I will interview some of them as well. I hope to conduct interviews with each of the other three Acacia chaplains. Also with the co-ordinating chaplain of each other WA prison.
5. At various points along the line, I will check with groups of prisoners who are members of the community of faith, in order to see whether the impressions I am gaining in the research “rings true” to them. At no point will I mention the names of any prisoners I have interviewed.

Disadvantages in taking part in this study

Some prisoners may believe that, by taking part in this study, they might be considered more favourably for parole or “work release”, or that their treatment in the prison might improve in some other way because of it. This is simply not so.
Some important points to note

1. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Any persons wishing to pull out at any time, even at the very end, may do so without it being held against him by anyone at all.
2. With the permission of persons being interviewed, interviews will be tape recorded. The tape will be locked away in the Discipline of Social Work, in the University of WA, and will be destroyed in 5 years’ time.
3. Your participation in this study does not prejudice any right to compensation you may have under statute or common law.
4. Your name will not be mentioned in any report of this research.

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information provided and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw at any time without reason and without prejudice.

I understand that all information provided is treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required to by law. I have been advised as to what data is being collected, what the purpose is, and what will be done with the data on completion of the research.

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name and other identifying information is not used.

________________________________________
Participant
Although official approval had been given for the first "Information and Consent Form" (see Appendix B), the Department of Corrective Services instructed that a second consent form be sent to all persons interviewed in this research who were not prisoners.
Participant consent – *Communities of Faith in Prison Communities: A case study*

I am aware that reference to me is incorporated in Alan Forsyth’s thesis, *Communities of Faith in Prison Communities: A case study*.

Signature: ______________________________

Date: ____________________________

I have had an opportunity to read the relevant sections of the thesis in which I am referred to under a pseudonym.

Signature: ______________________________

Date: ____________________________

I am aware that, despite the use of a pseudonym, I may be able to be identified from this thesis.

Signature: ______________________________

Date: ____________________________

I give my consent for reference to me, under a pseudonym, to be included in the thesis *Communities of Faith in Prison Communities: A case study*.

Signature: ______________________________

Date: ____________________________