

The imprisoned prisoner: Interpreting ways to facilitate recovery and growth for prisoners.

How do rehabilitative services in prisons support prisoner well-being?

A hermeneutic literature review

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Abstract

Rehabilitative services currently delivered in prisons support prisoners to reintegrate into society as low-risk, law-abiding citizens. These services focus predominantly on mitigating criminogenic behaviour, and while some are effective, the prisoner's greater wellbeing is given less importance. Moreover, rehabilitative services in prisons are often disrupted or influenced by rigid and complex prison cultures and systems. Using a hermeneutic literature review, this research study investigates how rehabilitative services can support prisoner wellbeing. This paper explores different approaches and techniques, including those less widely used, that can support prisoner wellbeing.

Before investigating how rehabilitative services can support prisoner wellbeing, we need a better understanding of their inner worlds, including their authentic selves and deeper therapeutic needs. This research study will therefore examine the intrapsychic and interpersonal experiences of prisoners that remain or keeps them 'imprisoned'. Prison systems commonly encourage a culture of obedience and oppression, leaving prisoners feeling further disconnected from themselves and others. The treatment that prisoners receive in such environments reinforces a false sense of self and overlooks prisoners' needs to feel seen and heard at a deeper level.

In this paper, there will be an analysis of frameworks and therapeutic techniques that are currently being used or can be further developed to rehabilitate prisoners. Some of these approaches will include the ideas of psychoanalytic theories that support this research, such as Winnicott's 'true and false self' (Winnicott, 2018) and Reik's 'third ear' (Reik, 1983). These theories discuss the notion of reaching into authentic parts of the individual that are hidden behind what is presented on the surface. Similarly, the eastern Hindu concept of the 'third eye' highlights seeing and connecting with truths beyond our normal perceptions. One therapeutic approach, influenced by the theories of Winnicott and Reik which can be used to support prisoner wellbeing is psychodynamic psychotherapy.

This research study examines the position of psychodynamic psychotherapy, as well as general psychotherapy, in prisons by discussing some of the benefits and limitations of practising psychotherapy in this environment and the impacts on prisoner wellbeing. Research studies show that there is a great need for mental health support for prisoners, as well as support with developing life skills, identity and sense of self, and purpose in life. However, the challenges lie in finding ways to align therapeutic support with rigid environments.

Findings that emerged in this research revealed that prisoners respond well to receiving support from therapeutic and empathetic interventions and that most want to be treated and seen as human beings, but often feel dehumanised. Psychodynamic psychotherapy or more therapeutic approaches were seen to positively influence the emotional wellbeing of prisoners and reduce their chances of reoffending, through the strengthening of relational skills and their sense of self and supporting prisoners to express emotions in a safe space.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In this research study I explore how rehabilitative services support prisoner wellbeing. I have chosen a hermeneutic literature review as the research method as it looks at uncovering deeper meanings to reveal truths and increase understanding. This approach relates to my research topic which is about ways to reach parts of the prisoner that are left 'imprisoned'. This chapter provides descriptions of the prisoner in relation to the prison context, my interest in this topic, rehabilitative services in prisons, theories that support my research topic, and a definition of key terms I use throughout my study.

The Prison System and the Prisoner

The purpose of prisons is to deter, punish, and rehabilitate prisoners (Pollock, 1998). The era that we are currently in is the punishment era, where there is very little investment directed towards rehabilitating prisoners (Pollock, 1998). The punitive nature of prisons tends to enforce obedience and compliance from prisoners. On one hand, it can be seen as an effective way to manage disordered behaviour, while on the other hand it may be seen to reinforce prisoners' feelings of powerlessness, worthlessness, nonautonomy, and emotional detachment. The emotional needs of these individuals, including their needs to be deeply seen and heard, can be easily overlooked in the rigid and bureaucratic prison system. Prisoners are not only imprisoned physically, but also emotionally, psychologically, interpersonally, and spiritually.

Most prisoners come from already traumatised backgrounds (Wood, 2019). Traumatic experiences can lead to people becoming detached from their experiences, feelings, relationships, body, thoughts, identity, and sense of life purpose (Herman, 1992). The prison setting may exacerbate the consequences of trauma for prisoners and subsequently block their road to recovery. The rigidity of the environment encourages a 'right and wrong' way of being, with the potential for harsh consequences if these are not met. These conditions can provoke ongoing fear for prisoners which may hinder the potential for growth to occur (Van der Kolk, 2014).

My Connection to this Topic

As a psychotherapy student working in rehabilitation in a New Zealand prison, my role has been to deliver brief interventions to prisoners. My training has been in psychodynamic psychotherapy and my role at the prison has involved incorporating my skills into the forensic field. Working closely with prisoners in my current role, I contemplated effective ways in which they could be supported in their recovery and growth for their greater wellbeing.

My interest in this research topic emerged both out of personal interest and my professional goal to work more effectively with prisoners in their rehabilitation. On a personal level, I connect with

feelings of being confined and restricted. I am of Fijian Indian descent and my socio-cultural background is of a collective culture. I have close familial ties where my sense of identity is enmeshed with theirs. As I delved deeper into my research topic, I became curious about the predefined roles set by family members that I felt I was expected to live by. I questioned my sense of identity which at times feels imprisoning. Further to this, my experiences of early trauma made it difficult to feel free. Imprisoning myself felt like the only way I could preserve and protect myself.

Feeling imprisoned is a phenomenon that perhaps many of us can relate to. It can be manifested in many ways, including but not limited to mental illness or repeated destructive behaviours. Engaging in my own personal therapy has helped me to connect with and free parts of myself and those parts of me want others to feel freedom and connection with oneself.

My Search

In my research study, I hope to understand how rehabilitative services in prisons can facilitate recovery and growth for prisoners. To support their wellbeing, I would like to explore and gain further insight into the deeper therapeutic needs of prisoners and what is left imprisoned. While I do not intend to minimise or accept criminal acts, I want to demonstrate that prisoners can be identified as more than violent offenders or criminals. I would also like to highlight that while I discuss the prison system in relation to the prisoner, I do not intend to cast prisons in a negative light, as prisons play a major role in protecting the community as well as prisoners from ongoing risk of harm. Additionally, there are many successful interactions that I have witnessed in prison settings that have positively supported prisoners.

For my research I am identifying effective therapeutic skills which can be utilised by various practitioners working in prisons to support the rehabilitation of prisoners. The three areas related to my research topic that I will be exploring in my dissertation are: firstly, uncovering what is imprisoned by understanding the therapeutic needs of prisoners and their experiences. For this I will be drawing on the literature and integrating my experiences working with this population. Names of prisoners that I have worked with, and specific details of their cases will not be included. Furthermore, my research does not focus on prisoners of a specific gender or ethnic group. Nor does it focus on prisons in a specific geographical region. Secondly, I will be looking at psychosocial interventions as specified in the literature and highlighting effective techniques for practitioners to use when rehabilitating prisoners. Thirdly, I will explore the role of psychodynamic psychotherapy in prisons.

Rehabilitative Services

There is a myriad of useful rehabilitative programmes offered to prisoners, which often have a criminogenic focus. Generally, rehabilitative services in prisons help prepare prisoners to reintegrate into society by encouraging them to adopt law-abiding behaviour (Ward & Maruna, 2007). The practitioner's role involves supporting prisoners to name, identify, and think about their states of mind

in relation to their crime (Pollock et al., 2006). Some of these interventions may include challenging offending behaviour and thinking patterns, strengthening problem-solving abilities, enhancing emotional regulation and interpersonal skills, providing support with substance dependency, and improving mental health (Ward & Maruna, 2007).

Beliefs about the effectiveness of rehabilitating prisoners have evolved over the years. American sociologist Robert Martinson conducted a research study on the effectiveness of rehabilitative services offered in the 1970's and concluded that nothing worked (Brown et al., 2014). The results of the study revealed that only a small number of rehabilitative programmes in prisons achieved positive results but that overall, nothing could overcome the tendency for offenders to continue in criminal behaviour (Brown et al., 2014). Martinson's 'nothing works' doctrine offered a bleak image of the ineffectiveness of interventions in prisons (Brown et al., 2014). However, later studies have challenged this less than optimistic view. Research studies conducted by psychologists Mark Lipsey, Paul Gendreau, and Robert Ross found that interventions were in fact effective in reducing recidivism (Brown et al., 2014).

Rehabilitation can be defined as the restoration of the individual's previous state of wholeness (Pollock, 1998). In the justice system, it can be understood as the restoration of the individual's previous state of non-criminogenic behaviour (Pollock, 1998). In my dissertation, I will refer to rehabilitative treatments, programmes and interventions as 'rehabilitative services'. I have decided to combine them under one heading as there is a broad range of treatment methods used to treat prisoners. Furthermore, since my field of study is in psychodynamic psychotherapy, I will focus more on this form of intervention in prisons. Psychodynamic psychotherapy was derived from the ideas of psychoanalysis (Cabaniss et al., 2017) and has its own unique traits. A brief description is that it is identified as a form of depth therapy where the client is supported to uncover the problems and patterns that lead to distress by understanding unconscious elements of their psyche (Cabaniss et al., 2017). The client is assisted with identifying defences that have been developed from early childhood and understanding how the internalisation of early interpersonal relationships impacts current experiences (Cabaniss et al., 2017). The therapeutic relationship and strengthening the relationship are important components of the approach (Cabaniss et al., 2017).

Rehabilitative services in prisons are commonly influenced by the prison system as the justice system places expectations and objectives onto staff to enhance community protection. Therefore, in my research study I will be exploring the impacts of rehabilitative services on prisoners, their responses to receiving rehabilitative services, and addressing how rehabilitative services may support prisoners with their wellbeing.

Key Theories

Because I will also be discussing the use of in the prison setting of psychodynamic psychotherapy, which is influenced by psychoanalytic thinking and theories, I will be drawing on some

key psychoanalytic ideas that have helped strengthen my research topic. One of the main theories that I will be drawing from is Donald Winnicott's theory of the 'true and false self', from the chapter *Ego distortion in terms of true and false self* in the book *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development* (Winnicott, 2018). In his paper, Winnicott defines the 'false self', how it is formed, and how it serves the individual. Winnicott then highlights the mother's role in facilitating the infant's authentic self: their 'true self' (Winnicott, 2018). Through her devotion and attunement, the 'good enough mother' helps promote the growth of the 'true self' (Winnicott, 2018). The 'not good enough mother', however, favours her own needs and fails to meet the needs of the infant, which then generates excessive compliance in the infant's behaviour (Winnicott, 2018). I will refer to Winnicott's theory to deepen my understanding of how rehabilitative services and the prison environment can impact the formation of a 'false self' for prisoners, and what it may mean for the individual's 'true self'.

Another theory which also helped provide grounding for my research question was psychoanalyst Theodore Reik's concept of the 'third ear'. In his book *Listening with the third ear: The inner experience of a psychoanalyst*, Reik highlights the role of the therapist as the receptive listener who tries to understand the deeper meaning conveyed by the client (Reik, 1983). This links with my interest in understanding the parts of prisoners which get imprisoned internally, such as things which cannot be articulated or spoken. A similar theory that also links with Reik's theory is not a psychoanalytic theory but an ancient Hindu concept, the 'third eye'. The third eye is commonly depicted in images of the divine figure, Lord Shiva, and is shown as an additional eye positioned vertically on the forehead between the two eyes (Tejparkhi, 2019). It is an invisible eye that represents untamed energy, intuition, a state of enlightenment and the awakening of higher consciousness (Tejparkhi, 2019). It allows a deeper understanding by the individual of the truth and meaning of things that we did not know existed (Tejparkhi, 2019). In reference to my research topic, this theory links with the idea of seeing a part of the prisoner that is left "imprisoned" and which cannot yet be seen. I have decided to include this concept as it speaks to my interest in spirituality and brings another dimension into the prison setting. Throughout my childhood, spirituality provided me with comfort and connection to things. It represented an extension to the world I knew by providing a sense of abundance, freedom, safety and an escape from what felt like chaos in the world I lived in.

Figure 1:

'Third eye'.



Note: An image of Lord Shiva's face with a depiction of his 'third eye'. From *Secrets of Shiva* (p. 73), by S. Tejparkhi, 2019, WOW Publishings. Copyright 2019 by Sirshree Tejparkhi.

The 'third ear' and 'third eye' concepts parallel psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion's idea of the 'O', which represents the search for the absolute truth within the client (Bion, 1970). 'O' lies beyond the grasp of the external senses and is only experienced inwardly (Alisobhani & Corstorphine, 2019). It represents something that is 'unborn' (Bion, 1970). In this theory, the therapist joins the client without judgment in the client's raw primitive experience and helps them transform the experience into thought (Alisobhani & Corstorphine, 2019). By introducing this metaphysical perspective to traditional psychoanalysis, Bion helped create a bridge between psychoanalysis and metaphysical or mystical ideas (Alisobhani & Corstorphine, 2019). His theory helped confirm my approach of looking for something that has not yet taken form or come into existence.

These theories emphasise the importance of searching for a form of truth within that requires facilitation to emerge and plays an important part in healing and transformation. In reference to my research topic, it draws on the idea of seeking out the person who is left imprisoned: the person beyond that which is defined by their criminogenic behaviour and criminal identity and the part of them that requires to be seen, heard, experienced, and brought to life.

Definition of Terms

Practitioners - describes staff providing rehabilitative services to prisoners. These practitioners may act as programme facilitators or mental health practitioners such as psychologists, social workers, counsellors, and psychotherapists. In my dissertation I will also make some references to other custodial staff and prison guards and officers, however my research will be centred around practitioners.

Therapist - refers to psychotherapists or psychanalysts.

Prisoner - refers to incarcerated individuals in prisons.

Recovery - refers to finding or regaining a sense of oneself that was previously lost (Herman, 1992), which is one's authentic self beyond the criminogenic behaviour (Pollock, 1998). It refers to the renewal of connections with one's authentic self and others (Herman, 1992) and living a more satisfying and hopeful life even with the limitations of illness (Slade et al., 2017). Aspects of recovery include initiative, autonomy, identity, intimacy, and competence (Herman, 1992).

Growth - often refers to individual's psychological, emotional, relational, and spiritual development leading them closer to their authentic self or away from criminogenic behaviour.

Posttraumatic growth - refers to positive personal growth by individuals transcending adverse experiences, and in doing so, increasing their resilience to future distress (Kazemian, 2020).

Wellbeing - can be linked with a state of being healthy and content (Slade et al., 2017). This can reflect the spiritual, relational, psychological, physical, and emotional state of the individual. Wellbeing means greater life satisfaction, positive relationships, ability to better manage distress and having a sense of meaning and purpose (Slade et al., 2017).

Literature - refers to my selected research material for this research study, including books and articles.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a description of my research topic, details about my interest in the topic, and a brief introduction to how the prison context impacts prisoners' wellbeing. I also outline key theories that helped develop my thinking and form the foundation of my research and describe how they relate to supporting prisoner wellbeing.

Chapter Two: Methodology and Method

In chapter one I express my desire to understand how rehabilitative services in prisons can support prisoner wellbeing in a punitive environment. In this chapter, I discuss why I chose my research topic, my selected research method and methodology, and how I have implemented my research using this method.

The Beginning

At the beginning of my research process, I brainstormed ideas for a research topic that I would be passionate about. While carrying out this task I felt overwhelmed, confused, and resistant. I could not make sense of how and where to begin. It was only later in the process that I realised that at this point my research process had already begun.

In my clinical experiences, after completing interventions with prisoners, I would commonly experience prisoners as having a sense of deep grief and yearning for something more. In the bureaucratic space that was the prison, the objectives of what I felt was a brief intervention had been met. I realised the limitations of the prison system, noting that this was not an uncommon occurrence. I was curious about the deeper needs of prisoners and how rehabilitative services could enhance their wellbeing. I discussed my experience and my ideas with my clinical and dissertation and supervisors. This led to further exploration and soon after themes for my research topic began to emerge. The themes were centred around dilemmas I commonly faced in my clinical practice within prison systems. I felt unease about the jarring contrast between the harsh and rigid prison system with the tenderness of what I experienced in the therapeutic space. There was also a desire to incorporate my personal experience and beliefs into my research enquiry. The Hindu concept of the 'third eye' contrasts with the world of prisons, however it fits well with my research topic and eventually would bring solace and guidance to my research process.

My dissertation supervisor assisted me with identifying some psychoanalytic theories that compliment my research enquiry. To help me define what an imprisoned prisoner was, we were led to Winnicott's theory on the 'true and false self' (Winnicott, 2018). Another relevant theory identified was psychoanalyst John Steiner's theory on 'psychic retreats' (Steiner, 1993) to help me understand more about blocks and defences. My supervisor also encouraged me to incorporate the 'third eye' concept, as it plays with the idea of seeing something beyond limitations and defences. To help illustrate this eastern concept, my supervisor introduced me to Reik's theory on the 'third ear' (Reik, 1983), and Bion's theory of the 'O' (1970). Like the concept of the 'third eye', all three theories focus on finding something deeper from within as an important process towards healing and transformation.

I merged these concepts together and linked them with my interest in rehabilitative services in prisons, to form the basis of my research. I began to read articles and books on the topics of

practicing psychotherapy in prisons and the overall context of prison, such as *Psychotherapy and despair in the prison setting* (Gee et al., 2015), *Coping strategies and posttraumatic growth in the prison* (Leijssen et al. 2018), *Inside Story: Working in a Women's Prison* (Fletcher, 2014), and *Rehabilitation* (Ward & Maruna, 2007). The literature helped broaden my knowledge and offered new insights into what I was already seeing in my experience working in a prison. I was particularly drawn to content that was evocative and that I could connect with based on my experiences working in a prison. Later I began to find resources that brought me closer to the direct experience of prisoners, their narratives, and their responses to rehabilitative services.

Aim of Research

The aim of my research is to increase my understanding of how rehabilitative services in prisons can support prisoner wellbeing and facilitate recovery and growth for prisoners. To achieve this, I would like to gain further insight into the rehabilitative needs of prisoners and how practitioners can meet these needs. I feel there is also a need to explore the position of psychodynamic psychotherapy in supporting prisoner wellbeing, and the benefits and limitations of practicing in prisons.

Selecting a Research Paradigm

To address my research question in a meaningful way, I selected a qualitative research approach using hermeneutics as my methodology. Specifically, I will be carrying out my research using a hermeneutic literature review. I felt drawn towards hermeneutics as a research approach concerned with understanding human experiences and how we relate to the world (Grant & Giddings, 2002). Hermeneutics is underpinned by the epistemology of interpretivism, which is a paradigm that concerns the philosophy of meaning making, interpreting, and understanding the world through the subjective experiences of people (O'Donoghue, 2019). Interpreting text through my own personal experiences and beliefs is valuable to me as a researcher. As a mental health practitioner working with prisoners, my findings will provide me with new insights into the rehabilitative needs of prisoners. Rehabilitative services in prisons often come from a positivist framework where scientifically based methods are used to help understand criminogenic behaviour and the treatment needs of prisoners (Pifferi, 2021). While this approach is very valuable, the interpretivism approach provides a different perspective, by permitting the subjective interpretations of the researcher (O'Donoghue, 2019). Interpretivism appreciates the researcher's subjective experience and their interpretations from their research (O'Donoghue, 2019). I hope that my personal interpretations and insights bring new understandings of my research enquiry.

Methodology: A Hermeneutic Approach

Hermeneutics refers to the interpretation of text or symbolic expression (Ong, 2017). It aims to seek truth and establish greater understanding through uncovering hidden meanings behind the text (Kidd, 2019). The term 'hermeneutics' derives from the ancient Greek verb *hermeneuein*, which

means to 'interpret' or 'translate' (Crotty, 1998). Traditionally, hermeneutics was used to interpret religious texts (Prince, 2017) and it is believed that the origin of hermeneutics is linked with mythological figure and Greek god Hermes (Ong, 2017). Hermes was thought to have operated as a messenger between the realms of God and humankind (Ong, 2017). He transmuted information from the gods that was beyond human understanding into a form that could be better understood by humankind (Ong, 2017). Hidden messages were communicated through literature, language, and thoughts (Ong, 2017). Traditional hermeneutics then evolved from its focus on religious texts only to understanding texts and other symbolic expressions in general (Ong, 2017). Friedrich Schleiermacher was a philosopher and founder in the development of hermeneutics, which then continued to develop through the contributions of other influential philosophers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Martin Heidegger, Paul Ricoeur and others (Prince, 2017).

The origins of hermeneutics are echoed in key theories that I will explore throughout my research: namely, Bion's 'theory on thinking' (Bion, 2013), Reik's 'third ear' concept (Reik, 1983), and the Hindu concept of the 'third eye'. These theories and concepts focus on the idea of communication and are associated with the act of receiving and translating information between people as well as within the individual. Bion's theory, for instance, looks at the transmission of unformed thoughts from the client to the therapist who then receives and translates the information back to the client in a way that is easier to comprehend (Bion, 2013). Reik's 'third ear' concept is concerned with the therapist's act of receiving information from the client through hearing, including things that are unclear or unexpressed, to understand the deeper meaning of what is being communicated by the client (Reik, 1983). The symbol of Hermes and the concept of the 'third eye' are linked with the divine and both play a role in receiving communications from divine sources to reach a higher consciousness.

A link between hermeneutics and my research study is that they both aim to seek truth and uncover hidden meanings (Ong, 2017). Winnicott's theory of the 'true and false self' (Winnicott, 2018), Bion's 'O' (Bion, 1970), and the 'third eye' all place significance in discovering truths. I too hope to uncover truths by understanding prisoners' experiences in prisons, their responses to rehabilitative services, their therapeutic needs, and their authentic selves. In hermeneutics, however, it is said that the search for truth does not imply that the researcher will find a final answer or ultimate truth (Gadamer, 1975). Instead, the field of hermeneutic study aims to provoke thinking (Gadamer, 2001).

Another characteristic of hermeneutics, which is underpinned by the principles of interpretivism, is that it values the researcher's empirical experiences and subjective interpretations of texts. The researcher's presence, reflexivity, self-understanding, and creative and intuitive processes provide rich sources of information for the research (Crowther et al., 2017). Gadamer highlighted that the researcher's present engagement with the text is influenced by their past experiences (Gadamer, 2001). Thus, my interpretations and research process as I engage with the text will be heavily influenced by my life experiences, cultural factors, and professional experience working in a prison. This also means that I will need to be mindful of any biases that shape my research study (Gadamer,

1975): particularly in relation to my previous experience in delivering rehabilitative services in a prison, where I am constantly gaining new knowledge. It is also important to note that my subjective experiences mean that I cannot speak the evidential truth of the prisoners. I can, however, provide my own interpretations of their narratives and what they evoke in me, from my reading of them.

Method: A Hermeneutic Literature Review

My chosen method, a hermeneutic literature review, is a method of research study which is used to examine existing knowledge in a particular area of enquiry (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). It is based on hermeneutic principles and involves the researcher's analysis and interpretation of literature to increase insight (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). Its general process comprises an overview, critical assessment of research on the topic, findings and reflections, and further research suggestions (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). More details about my literature review process are provided later in this chapter.

Language and the interpretation of language are key features of this approach (Ong, 2017). Language and words play an important role in communication, understanding, and human connection. Hermeneutic literature reviews place emphasis on what is unspoken and what is left absent (Smythe & Spence, 2012). The researcher is encouraged to notice these gaps in the literature when they arise as they provide opportunities for interpretation (Romanyshyn, 2013). As I engage with the texts, I will interpret the language that is present in the texts and that which may be absent by paying attention to any associations I make or emotions that arise within me. Like my research topic, my interpretations of what is absent may represent aspects that are imprisoned within the text and the voices of prisoners who are unable speak their truths.

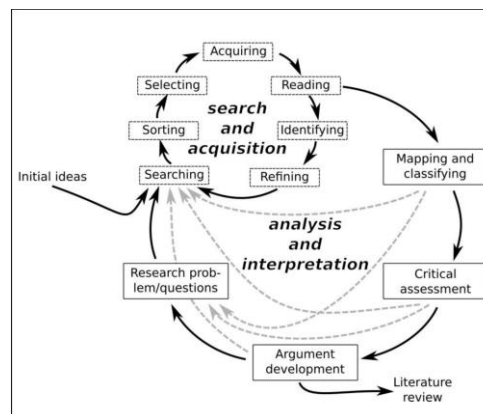
Another characteristic of the hermeneutic literature review is an interest in elevating consciousness (Romanyshyn, 2013). Through ongoing interpretation of the text, the researcher uncovers deeper meanings and brings what is unconscious into consciousness. Heidegger discusses the phenomena of 'wakefulness' which is to do with information that we know, but is stored in our unconscious (Heidegger, 1889). To get to the point of wakefulness requires openness from the researcher (Heidegger, 1889). The 'third eye' concept also connects with the idea of elevating consciousness. It represents the act of bringing light into the unknown to experience higher awareness and enlightenment. Moreover, the idea of stretching one's limits of awareness, reminds me of the hermeneutic idea of broadening one's 'horizon' (Gadamer, 1975). The 'horizon' is referred to by Gadamer as the researcher's totality of insight, which is initially narrow (Gadamer, 1975). As the researcher engages with the literature, their 'horizon' shifts to form a new 'horizon' (Gadamer, 1975). Gadamer termed this phenomenon 'fusion of horizon' (Gadamer, 1975). Thus, the literature provides me with opportunities for growth and to expand my thinking. As I engage with the text in my research process, I hope to be led to new insights and to expand my 'horizon'.

Based on hermeneutic beliefs, a hermeneutic literature review also encourages the researcher to be guided by their intuition to achieve clarity (Romanyshyn, 2013). The researcher engages with literature which they are drawn to. This contrasts with the prison system which does not often allow the flow of new ideas without restrictions. Schleiermacher introduced the concept of intuition to hermeneutics as he believed that understanding is in fact intuitive (Romanyshyn, 2013). I find this feature of the method exciting, particularly in contrast to a prison environment fixed on following strict regimes. I appreciate the fluidity, flow, and creativity that emerges from the use of intuition. This feature introduces another dimension of thinking that expands the limitations of the human mind. The difficulty however with the intuitive process for me, was that it also evoked a lot of self-doubt. The rigidity of the prison system often leads me to question whether my ideas are objective or scientific enough and what is 'right' and 'wrong'. I sought ongoing support from my supervisor who helped me explore my doubts.

The Hermeneutic Circle

Figure 2:

'Hermeneutic framework for the literature review process.'



Note: An image of the framework consisting of two major hermeneutic circles and the different stages of the literature review process. From "A hermeneutic approach for conducting literature reviews and literature searches," by S. Boell & D. Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014, *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 34(12), 264 (<https://doi.org/10.17705/1CAIS.03412>). Copyright 2014 by Sebastian Boell & Dubravka Cecez-Kecmanovic.

Figure 2 above is an illustration by Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014) of the 'hermeneutic circle', which is a framework used to carry out a hermeneutic literature review (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). This framework best demonstrates my research process. In the hermeneutic circle, the researcher enters a cycle where they interpret and reinterpret literature to increase insight (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). The researcher passes through different stages in the cycle as they interpret the literature, including searching, reading, mapping and classifying, critical assessment, and argument development (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). For myself, the

hermeneutic circle acted as a frame to provide structure during what felt like a chaotic and overwhelming experience.

The framework consists of two circles which are intertwined with one another. These include the 'searching and acquisition' circle, which is the smaller circle, and the 'wider analysis and interpretation' circle - the larger circle (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). So far, the two circles have provided me with a framework in which I oscillate between working within the smaller circle to develop and deepen my research question, and then the larger circle to look at the wider scope of my research. Overall, I felt moved towards the cyclic pattern of the hermeneutic circle as a symbol of human growth and the movement of life.

Search and Acquisition Circle (Smaller Circle)

Searching and Sorting

After researching key historical theories relevant to my research question, I began searching for articles that were relevant to my research inquiry. I carried out my search using databases including the AUT Library Search, Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing, and PsychArticles. Keywords used to search for articles related to my research topic included 'Winnicott true and false self', 'psychotherapy prison', 'rehabilitation prison', 'how facilitate incarcerated', and 'program prison'. I found myself overwhelmed by the large volume of literature found. I collected relevant articles and began to sort them into separate virtual folders according to dates, themes, and relevance to my research enquiry.

Most of my resources were found online due to the pandemic, which restricted my ability to seek resources physically during the initial stages of my research. I was reminded of parallels with prisoners' experience, where due to their imprisonment, they do not have easy access to resources. While the lockdown initially caused unease, it eventually led me to accessing an increasing number of resources online.

Selecting and Acquiring

At this stage I noticed further themes and ideas begin to emerge, which assisted me with selecting suitable literature to evaluate. A pattern that disrupted my process was my tendency to judge what is 'right' and what is 'wrong'. While I value the intuitive process, I could not help but feel a deep pressure to seek resources that were more scientific in nature, as I felt it was the 'right' thing to do. It took me time to trust my intuition to guide me towards literature that inspired me. I came across one of Heidegger's comments which comforted me. He explains that when the researcher is inclined towards a specific text, then the likelihood of discovering something significant embedded in the text increases (Smythe & Spence, 2012). I decided to follow my intuition, as it was drawing me towards valuable learning.

During the selecting and acquiring stages I continued to read, write my reflections, and talk with others (Smythe et al., 2008). This process assisted me with selecting suitable literature. I noticed that my selection of literature evolved over time and some earlier literature became less relevant as my thinking developed. The literature that I chose to include in my literature review were books and articles, however I also allowed myself to be inspired by ideas from dreams, quotes, conversations and images as ways to inform me.

Reading, Identifying, Refining

Through the process of reading and then rereading, I was able to develop my understanding of the text and sometimes find hidden meanings behind the text. Over time, as I reengaged with the text, my understanding deepened and central themes and topics of interest began to emerge (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). Additionally in a hermeneutic literature review, the researcher is encouraged to engage in analytical reading rather than leisure reading (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). Thus, through analytical reading I started to identify key themes which then led me to refine my research and searches. I began reading and interpreting individual texts, then compared them with other texts on a broader scale. On other occasions, I noticed my resistance to reading, due to feelings of overwhelm due to the excessive quantity of information I was being exposed to, and the emotions evoked through reading. I found myself frequently withdrawing from my research process. During these moments I continued to write my reflections and seek inspiration in other sources outlined in the paragraph above. For the remainder of my research, I am trying to remain open and to surrender to new insights that may emerge for me. Smythe and Spence (2012) advise researchers of the importance of being open to new knowledge during the hermeneutic research process. Gadamar (2001) also emphasises the importance of the researcher's act of engaging in otherness and being open to new knowledge.

Analysis an Interpretation Circle (Larger Circle)

Mapping and Classifying

Mapping and classifying are ways of systemising ideas identified through analytical reading (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). It helps provide a picture of the thought processes during the research and how each element may be linked. I experienced this stage as difficult yet satisfying. I carried this task out digitally by sectioning each topic into subcategories, such as 'frameworks' or 'grief'. I continued to add further notes and reflections under each subcategory throughout my research process.

Critical Assessment

This stage involved the act of analysing and evaluating thinking in the literature that is related to my research topic and identifying weaknesses (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). Critical assessment involves a broader analysis of the body of my selected literature, identifying what thinking has been done, which aspects are useful for my research, and what is hidden or absent in relation to

my research topic (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). I continued to record ideas and reflections on my analyses. I found that sharing thoughts and ideas with my supervisor during this stage particularly helpful for developing my critical thinking.

Argument Development and Research Problem/Questions

Argument development builds from the previous stages – in particular, the critical assessment stage, which leads to identifying insufficient areas and gaps of knowledge in the body of literature. For instance, after researching about the experiences of prisoners I would identify unexpected gaps, which then led to the development of further arguments about interventions. I continued to note new arguments that arose, such as, 'do prisoners want to be 'seen' and 'found'?' Future arguments and research questions are also developed during this stage to prompt further research in this area (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014).

Writing

Communication and language play a significant role in hermeneutics. I began to write notes on my experiences to help me make sense of things. This included noting details from dreams, reveries, images, symbols, synchronicities, feelings, clinical experiences, and conversations with others that have helped me in my thinking process. Later, when I felt more inspired and open to learning, I would read and engage with the literature to expose myself to new insights. I spoke to others in the hopes of finding inspiration and comfort. On some occasions when I felt stuck, I used images to help me conceptualise my inner experiences and bring them to life. One of the images that helped me understand my experience was that of a marble slab. I felt as if I were slowly chipping away at a marble slab for months but was unable to see any form emerge. Such images helped me understand my experience and make links with my research process. It became clear to me that this experience was both hard, yet very delicate. Through these images, I was then able to put my experience into words and share it with others. These experiences acted as a catalyst in the progression of my research. I was reminded of how images and symbols are often used as a way of providing guidance and to help bring light into the unknown.

Figure 3:

'Slave, Named Atlas.'



Note: This marble sculpture was produced by Italian sculptor, Michelangelo Buonarroti in 1519. From *Michelangelo* (p. 14), by E. Müntz, 2005, Parkstone Press International. Copyright 2005 by Eugène Müntz.

Leaving the Hermeneutic Circle

The hermeneutic circle values the process of understanding (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014), where learning, growth, and searching for truth occurs as an ongoing process (Crowther et al., 2017). The research therefore does not lead to an end but draws the researcher closer to finding truths and gaining new perspectives (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). It suggests to me the idea that learning, development, thinking, and interpretations are ongoing. It also mimics the process of growth and recovery as an ongoing cycle. However, literature reviews do have to come to an end (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014). For this research, I will have to eventually end my research process and acknowledge that the answer to my research question will never be complete.

Introduction to My Selected Literature

There were many books and articles available related to my topic, but there was a selection that I was most drawn to during my research process. I felt emotionally engaged with these resources and they helped expand my thinking on my topic. These resources are listed below.

Coping Strategies and Posttraumatic Growth in Prison by Siebrecht Leijssen, Mia Leijssen, and Jessie Dezutter (2018).

This article is about a study conducted with 365 prisoners in Belgium to explore how prisoners experience growth after the experience of imprisonment. The article identifies factors which contribute to growth, including access to psychotherapy.

Counselling Women in Prison

Joycelyn Pollock (1998).

Pollock provides insights into work with female prisoners and working within a prison setting. She provides descriptions of the lives of these prisoners and their experiences of incarceration before exploring clinical approaches to prisoner rehabilitation.

Ego Distortions in Terms of the True and False Self

Chapter from book: *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development*, by Donald Winnicott (2018).

In this chapter, Winnicott defines and discusses his concepts of the 'true' and 'false' selves and how they are formed. He talks about the self as divided into two parts, where one of these parts functions as a false identity and the other as the individual's true identity. Winnicott explains how the 'false self' serves, preserves, and protects the individual's 'true self'.

How to Escape from Prison

Paul Wood (2019).

In his autobiography, ex-prisoner Paul Wood talks about his experiences leading up to his imprisonment and his experiences of being incarcerated. Wood shares his reflections on these experiences and how his early life experiences, and those of the general prison population, may have contributed to his imprisonment. Now a Doctor of Psychology, Wood discusses how he had kept himself mentally imprisoned in the past and how he emerged from his limited views about himself and the world.

Inside Story: Working in a Women's Prison

John Fletcher (2014).

In this article, the author shares reflections on events and experiences working as a therapist in a women's prison, highlighting the challenges they face in the work and reflecting on how they feel that prisoners are affected by these challenges.

Positive Growth and Redemption in Prison: Finding Light Behind Bars and Beyond

Lila Kazemian (2020).

This book includes narratives of prisoners' experiences and discusses how prisoners can thrive throughout their incarceration and experience positive growth. It explores the struggles and barriers that prisoners face and what supports them in their journey towards growth and transformation.

Psychotherapy and Despair in the Prison Setting

Joanna Gee, Del Loewenthal, and Julia Cayne (2015).

This article outlines the authors' experiences as therapists working with despair, in the prison setting. They explore the challenges while discussing the necessity of addressing prisoners' despair as part of the therapeutic process.

Rehabilitation

Tony Ward and Shadd Maruna (2007).

This book looks at therapeutic approaches to the rehabilitative needs of prisoners, in comparison to punitive approaches. The book investigates the 'Risk-Needs-Responsivity' model and the 'Good Lives Model' and discusses how each serves the therapeutic needs of prisoners.

Surviving the Prison Place: Narratives of Suicidal Prisoners

Diana Medlicott (2001).

This book describes prisoners' experiences in prison, and the internal and external suffering they endure in this environment. The book highlights narratives of prisoners who describe their experiences and struggles.

Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror

Judith Herman (1992).

Herman's book provides insight into the impact of trauma on individuals and how the experience of trauma affects one's sense of self and connection to society. The book also provides information on the stages towards recovery for traumatised individuals.

Chapter Summary

This chapter briefly outlines the events that led me to my research topic, and then provides a more in-depth description of my chosen method and methodology for carrying out my research. I describe the different stages of my research process, and my experiences during these stages using a hermeneutic literature review as my method. The following three chapters outline my findings.

Chapter Three: The Imprisoned Prisoner

In the next three chapters, I shed light on some of my key findings. But before identifying how rehabilitative services in prisons support prisoner wellbeing, it felt important for me to first deepen my understanding of their inner worlds. In this chapter I outline key findings that helped me gain insight into their experiences.

Early Life Experiences and Imprisonment

One of the aspects that I could not overlook as I read through my selected literature was the degree of trauma that prisoners have often experienced throughout their lives and continue to grapple with during their incarceration. Many prisoners are in fact victims of crimes themselves and their offending tends to be about survival (Fletcher, 2014). The early lives of most prisoners are made up of experiences such as unstable environments and attachments, sexual and physical abuse, childhood neglect, exposure to domestic violence and housing instability (Ort, 2019). Other factors include rejection by peers, undiagnosed or untreated mental illnesses, poverty, and academic difficulties (Morash, 2006). Most prisoners have been raised in families lacking in parenting skills and have little hope for a different way of living (Wood, 2019). Their early experiences often lead to the onset in later life of psychological difficulties such as emotional dysregulation, underdeveloped coping skills, relationship and identity problems, and an overwhelmed and disorganised self-defence system (Herman, 1992). Poor coping skills may lead these individuals to try to escape from reality by turning to harmful substances and committing crimes (Wood, 2019). Crime and violence become common ways that they relate with the world (Wood, 2019).

The literature I gathered highlighted the ongoing difficulties prisoners experience during incarceration. Some of these difficulties include prolonged isolation, hostile corrections officers, loss of control and privacy, intrusive schedules and routines, and concerns for personal safety (DeVeaux, 2013). Other complications include facing the stigma of incarceration (DeVeaux, 2013), drug withdrawal symptoms, boredom and the lack of meaningful activity, and distance from loved ones (Ort, 2019). One of the factors that causes me unease and is widely discussed in the research content is the dehumanisation of prisoners by the prison system. In his autobiography book, Wood (2019) expresses his direct experience of feeling dehumanised as a prisoner:

I looked up and saw a line of faces looking down at me. They must have been criminology students...and they were studying me as I walked. At last, after days of feeling nothing but nausea and misery, I felt something different: as though I were an animal in a zoo. I now felt exploited and powerless, and I was enraged. (p.67).

This statement reveals the powerlessness, disrespect, and inhuman treatment that prisoners endure in prison. Such experiences seem to add to their existing painful life experiences and may lead to further harm. The research content highlights the damaging effects of incarceration on prisoner

wellbeing. Incarceration is said to increase the risk of mental deterioration, identity confusion, personality changes, self-harm, and suicide (Volker & Galbraith, 2018).

Anger and Violence

During my research process, I noticed feelings of anger emerge as I engaged with the texts. I often found it difficult to make sense of and articulate the inner turmoil and anger I felt, which led to feelings of futility and powerlessness. In my perception, feelings of rage and anger also appear to be an underlying emotion behind the expressions of prisoners and staff in the research content. In *Surviving the prison place*, Medicott (2001) captures a prisoner's response to the anger they felt towards the prison environment. The prisoner states: "Prison is so oppressive...it's very degrading you know. They treat you like a piece of shit, excuse my French. Go here, do this, do that" (p. 110). This statement exemplifies the feelings of anger that prisoners may experience due to the disrespect, and loss of control and freedom they experience in prison. In fact, in the prison environment it is common for prisoners to be generally treated as children and perceived as incapable of making decisions (Morash, 2006). They are also usually viewed as psychologically disturbed rather than seen as individuals like others who are experiencing stress from the reality of their life (Pollock, 1998). It is likely that their lack of agency, choice, control, and access to regular coping strategies can intensify their feelings of anger and inhibit the development of healthy and trusting relationships with staff.

Furthermore, for some individuals, mental illness or traumatic life experiences can result in an inability to manage and express anger in safe ways. Individuals may choose anger over vulnerable emotions such as hopelessness and anxiety, as anger is thought to provide feelings of power (Herman, 1992). Anger, coupled with other underlying emotions, can quickly escalate to severe aggression and violence, which become ways for individuals who may be unable to regulate their emotions to act out and express feelings of anger (Pollock, 1998). While not all prisoners have committed crimes related to violence, for many the rage they may feel has been acted out either through violence towards others or turned inwards through self-harm (Kazemian, 2020). Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud hypothesised that violence and crime represent a defence against underlying depression (Pollock et al., 2006). In other psychoanalytic literature, violence is seen as a defence against humiliation and ego-destructive shame and an impaired capacity to mentalise (Pollock et al., 2006). The act of inflicting pain onto others therefore becomes a direct reflection of the individual's own level of distress.

Paranoia, Fear, and Helplessness

As I carried out my research, I noticed my feelings of paranoia and helplessness increase. Stepping into the unknown evoked for me feelings of fear as I was afraid of what I may find. The nationwide lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic heightened these feelings of paranoia, helplessness, and fear. The lockdowns helped me understand, to a degree, the layers of unsettling experiences prisoners may endure during their incarceration: specifically, social isolation from loved

ones, adapting to change, feeling unsafe, and not having any control of or knowing what the future holds. I struggled to stay with these unsettling feelings of uncertainty that were evoked during my research process and the pandemic. As I read through my research content, I noticed that paranoia, helplessness, and fear were feelings that were also prevalent within the texts, and these echoed the experiences of prisoners. The following quote highlights the fear and paranoia experienced by a prisoner: "You're ready 24 hours a day, you're alert, your instincts. It's not your feelings, it's instincts. Instinct takes over, it's a natural instinct to want to protect yourself" (Medlicott, 2001, p. 113). This extract sheds light on the general fear and paranoia that is ubiquitous in the prison population. Prisoners often fear being physically and psychologically bullied by other prisoners and custodial staff (Medlicott, 2001), and what they themselves may be capable of (DeVeaux, 2013). Being in a continuous state of fear can be detrimental to one's wellbeing and make it extremely difficult to achieve any level of growth and development (Van der Kolk, 2014).

Grief and Hopelessness

Grief, loss, and hopelessness were other common emotions apparent in the literature and noticeable in my clinical experiences. In the article *Psychotherapy and despair in the prison setting*, Gee et al. (2015) explain that despair is commonly experienced by prisoners due to the challenging and coercive prison environment and the losses that prisoners feel while incarcerated. Some of these losses include relationships, freedom, choice, dreams, and hope. The following statement expressed by a prisoner demonstrates their feelings of grief, loss and hopelessness: "...you have 24 years to do in this little space...you are in it for 23 hours a day...well you can imagine for yourself...(weeps). Trying to survive is a problem...it's not possible" (Medlicott, 2001, p. 155). The prisoner's immense grief and feelings of loss extend to hopelessness. In his book *Deprivation and delinquency* Winnicott (1990) links antisocial traits with feelings of hopelessness. He explains that deprived individuals seek hope from their external environment through stealing and destructiveness in attempts to regain what was lost during infancy, which according to Winnicott was the presence of the infant's mother (Winnicott, 1990). As mentioned earlier, Freud on the other hand linked crime with underlying depression. Both theories are concerned with feelings of hopelessness, loss, and grief. The prisoner's statement above reveals ongoing losses and the lack of hope reinforced by the prison environment. Throughout my research process I have been reminded of some of my own painful feelings of grief, loss and hopelessness. On some occasions I experienced painful dreams where I faced the sudden loss of loved ones and the loss of time. Talking with others helped me give a sense of hope, grieve my losses and let go.

Loneliness

Loneliness was a theme that came up in the literature as I tried to deepen my awareness of the inner experiences of prisoners. While carrying out my research I frequently felt lonely as I sat alone with my grief and tried to make sense of my inner turmoil. I thought about the lack of support in the lives of many prisoners who are isolated from social connections through the experience of

imprisonment and emotional disconnection. The emotional disconnection may be an outcome of unfortunate circumstances, such as past trauma and troubled relationships. The impact of trauma can play a major role in feelings of loneliness, alienation, and the disruption of social bonds (Herman, 1992). Traumatized individuals often feel unprotected and cast out of human social systems and tend to feel disconnected in most of their relationships (Herman, 1992). For instance, in the article *Forensic psychotherapy and counselling in prisons*, Towl (2011) states that prisoners are often seen as the “other” by both the public and the justice system. As a result, they may experience feelings of alienation, indifference, and loneliness. Literature indicates that loneliness and alienation play a role in the outcome of criminogenic behaviour. Specifically, when basic needs such as connectedness, love, and meaning are not met for prisoners then they seek fulfilment through crime (Leijssen et al., 2018).

Feeling Stuck

When I think of the term ‘prison’, the two key thoughts come to mind are feeling ‘stuck’ and ‘trapped’. Feeling stuck was a position that I grappled with throughout my research process. I was in limbo for months as I sat with a burdensome feeling. Writing anything felt difficult. I often felt exhausted from the emotional turbulence within me and the destructive thoughts that hindered my ability to make progress. I felt overwhelmed and completely lost in the stuck-ness. I desperately wished to move past the intensity of unpleasant emotions and pressure I was experiencing, but failed to see anything beyond the position that I was in. Not only was I feeling stuck, but I often felt trapped. As mentioned earlier, engaging in conversations and the use of symbols guided me past my feelings of stuck-ness. However, other occasions were more challenging. Over time painful memories from childhood surfaced. My stuck-ness reminded me of the limitations that I was continuously exposed to in life. These limitations were set in place to ensure safety, certainty, order, and survival, but hindered my growth.

I ruminated on the stuck-ness that prisoners grapple with throughout their lives, in their experiences of imprisonment and when undergoing interventions. Their stuck-ness may be associated with their hopes to change, however may feel trapped in their circumstances as they wrestle with painful feelings and unhelpful thoughts that emerge during the process of change (Brown et al., 2014). The following extract describes a prisoner’s thoughts on their efforts to make change while feeling debilitated by their fear of change:

“Change is something I am frightened of, though. Because I don’t know what’s going to happen when I change...I want to change, don’t get me wrong, I don’t want to be this bad person on me life...What happens when I do change?” (Medlicott, 2001, p.169).

The prisoner’s expression echoes statements made by prisoners during my clinical experiences. Making change can be extremely difficult for prisoners who must confront their vulnerable feelings and self-limiting beliefs that hinder their ability to make change. Many prisoners may not have the coping skills and resources needed to survive in society.

Experiences of past trauma can often cause individuals to feel stuck and remain in a state of “freeze” in their present circumstances (Van der Kolk, 2014). Trauma can cause individuals to give up instead of risking experimenting with new opportunities (Herman, 1992). Therefore, they stay stuck in the fear they already know (Herman, 1992). In the book *Positive growth and redemption in prison: Finding light behind bars and beyond*, Kazemian (2020) highlights that many prisoners often felt that they were ‘stuck in time’. While this statement reflects prisoners’ feelings of being stuck in past experiences and experiencing a warped sense of time, the statement highlights for me how prisoners often feel imprisoned and are symbolically serving ‘time’, whether they are incarcerated or not. Imprisonment for prisoners occurs in other symbolic ways and begins prior to their incarceration (Morash 2006). Prisoners become psychologically imprisoned through social conditioning in their communities, past trauma, or family and living circumstances (Morash 2006). The limitations within minds shaped by trauma, neglect, and the lack of appropriate parenting affects chances later in life (Hopkin et al., 2018).

Cycles

My research process seemed to progress in a cyclic manner. It mostly felt as though I were moving around in circles and making limited progress. It was a frustrating experience and it often felt impossible to move forward. This was reminiscent of one of the themes that emerged in my research which was to do with the tendency for prisoners to become ‘institutionalised’ and repeat their offending behaviour, resulting in prisoners being in and out of prison. The literature revealed that prisoners report feeling ‘institutionalised’ due to their long history in institutions and their struggles while trying to adapt to the world outside of prison (Medlicott, 2001). As mentioned earlier, trauma can cause individuals to remain stuck in their situation. Repetitive behaviour can be a way in which traumatised individuals relive a traumatic event and repeat what is familiar to them, to protect themselves from disturbing emotions and entering a new way of being (Herman, 1992). An extract that I found in my literature search highlights a prisoner’s personal experience of trying to cope outside of prison. Brown (et al., 2014) states:

“Every other time I’ve been released from prison it’s been like I’ve been kicked out of the gates, thrown back into society and not been able to cope...And because I wasn’t able to cope, then I turned to drugs and then eventually the drugs have led to crime and then you know it’s a vicious circle...I’d go back time and time again.” (p.188).

The prisoner’s statement demonstrates a sense of helplessness and powerlessness over their circumstances. It reveals how prisoners seem to stay “stuck” in a repetitive cycle and find it difficult to break free from this cycle.

Wood (2019) also provides a similar example in his autobiography, where he shares his observations on the behaviours of fellow prisoners. He states: “Institutionalised prisoners will often

find it necessary to mess up just prior to their slated release or to reoffend immediately on release” (p. 135). His statement highlights the difficulties prisoners experience trying to cope outside of prison and how dependent some individuals become on institutions, so much so that they engage in self-destructive behaviour to keep themselves imprisoned. Self-sabotaging behaviour is a common symptom in individuals who have experienced trauma (Herman, 1992). It is particularly common for prisoners during times of distress and before transitioning into the community, to acquire misconduct reports (Leijssen et al., 2018). Transitioning into the community from the prison environment is highly stressful and can often lead to negative outcomes for prisoners (Hopkin et al., 2018). Some of the difficulties prisoners may experience outside of prison include ongoing traumatic life experiences, poor literacy skills, mental illnesses, identity confusion (Hopkin et al., 2018), limited employment opportunities, loneliness, interpersonal difficulties, and racial segregation (Volker & Galbraith, 2018). These factors make prisoners susceptible to reoffending behaviour.

As described earlier, behind the prisoner’s physical position are thoughts and beliefs which keep them psychologically imprisoned. In his autobiography, Wood (2019) shares some of his old circling thoughts and self-beliefs during his imprisonment which kept him going back into the same states of mind when he tried to move forward:

Prison suited the kind of person I thought I was. I was surrounded by relentless negativity. People in there shared my own, unarticulated view of myself: that I was worthless and belonged in a place like the one I found myself. (p. 68).

I was drawn to this statement as it evokes for me feelings of disgust, yet it reveals an underlying sense of belonging and certainty that Wood may have experienced at the time which kept him in a cyclic pattern. Trauma is said to destroy the individual’s sense of safety in the world, the value of the self and a meaningful order of things (Herman, 1992). Repeating destructive behaviour and negative beliefs about the self and the world are common ways in which prisoners find their place in the world as it is a position that brings certainty and familiarity.

The Facilitating Environment

As I engaged with my selected literature, something that stood out for me about the justice system overall was the heavy emphasis on the behavioural traits of the prisoner rather than on their emotional wellbeing. It appears that rehabilitative services focus on the prisoner’s behaviour as it is a feature that is easier to identify and measure than human suffering (Kazemian, 2020). The justice system works from a criminogenic perspective where crime or addiction is addressed as the core problem, and solutions to resolve these problems seem to be its main objective (Kazemian, 2020). However, my research findings indicate that focussing on eradicating criminogenic behaviour does not address the underlying causes (Kazemian, 2020) or ease the individual’s distress. As a result, interventions may lead to the same outcomes and further emotional strain for the prisoner. The literature seems to suggest that the prisoner and the internal harm are less concerning than their

outward behaviour and the harm they have caused society. Research findings emphasise that rehabilitative services in prisons therefore serve mainly to benefit the needs of the community rather than address the prisoner's core rehabilitative needs and development of life skills (Ward & Maruna, 2007). I recall my own clinical experiences working in a prison environment where I often felt that deeper wellbeing, emotional, and relational needs of the prisoners, were overlooked by the justice system.

Rehabilitative services in prisons at times reinforce a sense of disconnection. In my research process, I often felt disconnected and disengaged when reading and attempting to write. I wanted to escape from all the literature and my feelings of overwhelm, and instead, I wished to engage in meaningful discussions with others or read content that felt emotionally connecting. It was not until I gave myself permission to explore what I was drawn to when ideas finally started to flow. One of the extracts from the literature that I was drawn to was one made by Ward (2007), where he states:

Rehabilitation has become synonymous with workbook-centred lectures delivered in grim, windowless prison basements: tiresome bureaucratic exercises that are as meaningless to participants as they are to staff administering them. Nothing more than a way to tick a box and pass some dead time during the long years of incarceration. (Ward, & Maruna, 2007, p. 2).

This extract sheds light on the detachment, futility, and "deadness" of rehabilitative services in prisons, which prisoners are often required to attend. Ward's statement captured my attention as it articulated an experience that most prisoners and staff can at times relate to. In my clinical experiences, I yearned to just be with the present emotions of prisoners and to meaningfully connect with them, but often had limited time to as objectives needed to be met. Prisoners would express the same, verbally, through silences, or through their body language. Many wanted to be heard and to connect, and while still engaging in the work, felt resistant to take part in banal paperwork that diminished their life experiences.

In the justice system, there is a culture of withholding warmth and kindness towards prisoners (Lasher et al., 2017) and the belittling of prisoners is still a common occurrence (DeVeaux, 2013). Most of the literature I gathered highlights that the prison system is flawed and that the punitive approach generally does not work (Skotnicki, 2019). Instead, it is believed that imprisonment may in fact promote further offending due to the psychologically and emotionally damaging effects it has on the prisoner's wellbeing (Bales & Piquero, 2012). Rehabilitative services in prisons function in accordance with prison operations and may therefore enact similar values such as an emphasis on surveillance, control and discipline which can impede psychological development. Such treatment can weaken the therapeutic alliance, impede therapeutic progress, impact negatively on mental health, and contribute to early dropout rates (Brown et al., 2014).

The Imprisoned Self

For my research study, I wanted to gain clarity about what it is that may be 'imprisoned'. Winnicott's theory provided me direction in my search. Winnicott (2018) proposes that the self is divided into two parts: the 'true self' and 'false self'. He explains that the 'true self' is the true nature of the person and is capable of creativity (Winnicott, 2018). The 'false self' on the other hand, acts as a mask that adapts to the individual's external environment and serves to protect the individual's authentic self (Winnicott, 2018). The existence of the individual's 'true self' is determined by the way in which the individual's early environment facilitated their development (Winnicott, 2018). The 'early facilitating environment' refers to the relationship between the mother and her infant and the way in which the mother helped promote the development of her infant's sense of self (Winnicott, 2018). As briefly mentioned in chapter one, if the mother attends to her infant's omnipotent needs, then this leads to the healthy development of the infant's 'true self' (Winnicott, 2018). However, if the mother fails to recognise and adapt to her infant's needs, then it can lead to over compliance in the infant's behaviour and result in the formation of a 'false self' (Winnicott, 2018). The development of the 'false self' is influenced by the mother's inaccurate mirroring of her infant's emotional expressions, which leads to the lack of development of the infant's own experience of a 'true self' (Winnicott, 2018).

If I link Winnicott's theory to the prison setting, it demonstrates how the environment can play a role in facilitating the growth of the individual or keeping them imprisoned. From my research findings, I noticed how prisoners develop a "prison identity" to help them adapt to the prison environment. Like Winnicott's concept of the 'false self', this identity may appear as a façade that protects vulnerable parts of themselves and for prisoners, it is a *tough* façade that protects them from being victimised by fellow prisoners and staff (Crewe et al, 2017). Other times I noticed that different identities, such as the prisoner who is expected to "comply", or the bad "other" who does not belong in society, were forced onto them by their environment (Kazemian, 2020). The following is an extract from ex-prisoner DeVeaux's (2013) article where he shares his reflections on his identity in prison: "I was forming a prison identity, rather than resisting becoming a prisoner. I was in prison, but being a "prisoner" was neither who I was nor who I wanted to be...I wanted to grow, but grow into what?" (p. 257-278). His statement reveals how the prison environment can deeply reshape the prisoner's sense of self. Prisoners begin to struggle with identifying their authentic selves, developing into themselves, and understanding who they are in relation to the world. Identities that are formed in prison serve to help the prisoner survive in prison, however, are not compatible with life outside of prison and can create subsequent problems (Crewe et al, 2017), for instance: becoming institutionalised, mistrusting others, losing a sense of empathy, experiencing difficulty engaging in relationships, having impeded decision-making skills, and experiencing social sensory disorientation (Liem & Kunst, 2013). The harsh prison environment may negatively impact the psychological wellbeing of prisoners by promoting a false sense of self and disregarding what may be authentic to them. For many prisoners, their 'true self' remains protected, imprisoned, and undiscovered.

The Facilitator as the ‘Good Enough’ and ‘Not Good Enough’ Mother

In reference to Winnicott’s theory, I wanted to explore the role of the practitioner and their influence on the development of the prisoner’s psychological growth and recovery. In his article, Winnicott emphasises the importance of the mother’s role towards facilitating the development of the infant’s ‘true self’. The attuned devotion of the ‘good enough mother’ towards her infant helps generate the healthy development of the ‘true self’ (Winnicott, 2018). The ‘not good enough mother’ on the other hand, fails to meet the needs of her infant and prioritises her own needs over her infant’s (Winnicott, 2018). Winnicott explains that when the mother is unavailable or anxious, she shoves the bottle into the infant’s mouth, which creates more distress in the infant (Winnicott, 2018). She is not able to recognise and adapt to the gestures and needs of her infant (Winnicott, 2018). The ‘not good enough mother’ repeatedly fails to meet her infant’s needs, which results in excessive compliance in the infant’s behaviour (Winnicott, 2018).

From the information that I gathered in my selected literature; it appears that like the ‘not good enough mother’ the demands of the role give practitioners little capacity to be receptive to the deeper needs of prisoners. I was drawn to a statement found in the literature, expressed by a therapist working at a prison who described their observations about the treatment that prisoners receive from various prison staff. The practitioner expresses: “It’s like a not good enough mother, so it takes care but takes care quite badly. It feeds you, but it feeds you shit” (Gee et al., 2015, p. 141-156). The statement reiterates the general negligence and lack of care that prisoners receive from the justice system. If we apply this statement to staff who deliver rehabilitation services in prisons, it suggests to me a lack of attunement and deeper care for prisoners and their needs. It is common for staff to be preoccupied with the demands of having to achieve custodial targets such as meeting deadlines and completing paperwork (Pollock, 1998). This creates a lack of reflective space and results in staff overlooking the emotional expressions of prisoners.

Practitioners and custodial staff are preoccupied by looking out for their own safety in the prison context and being cautious of any misbehaviour displayed by prisoners (Kazemian, 2020). Kazemian (2020) states: “The prison systems exaggerated emphasis on security measures results in a crippling neglect of the reintegration needs of prisoners” (p. 182). This statement reveals how the bureaucratic operational regimes of the justice system take precedence over and disregard the rehabilitative needs of prisoners. Prisoners continue to be instructed and rarely given opportunities to express themselves. Due to feelings of powerlessness and fear of harsh consequences, they may choose to adapt by compromising their needs. This is often the intention of the justice system which is to encourage the practice of compliance and law-abiding behaviour (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). Any defiance displayed by prisoners against staff and prison protocols can result in harsh consequences (Volker & Galbraith, 2018). These examples suggest how prisons, without awareness, can recreate bad attachment patterns for prisoners instead of providing new opportunities that support their recovery and growth.

As mentioned earlier, the justice system places emphasis on addressing the crime, and further research findings also discuss the system's need to 'correct' offending behaviour. The justice system views prisoners predominantly as 'criminals' and values the idea of correcting 'bad' behaviour, rather than investing in the identities of individuals (Kazemian, 2020). Rehabilitative services in prisons have been criticised for their need to 'fix' the individual and for viewing prisoners as flawed (Skotnicki, 2019). The mere fact that many prison services globally are called 'corrections' suggests the idea of 'fixing' something that is 'wrong' or 'incorrect' about individuals. Skotnicki (2019) argues that the drive to 'correct' can increase prisoners' feelings of shame by emphasising their 'bad' behaviour, while their conceptual sense of self is left neglected. If we relate this to Winnicott's theory, like the 'not good enough mother', the demands of the facilitating environment leave little space for the prisoner's authentic self and personal strengths to emerge. While criminogenic behaviour is a pivotal area that needs addressing in rehabilitation, I question whether there is an overemphasis on correcting behaviour and less on developing the identity of prisoners. Kazemian (2020) says that the individual's identity is not limited to their behaviour but extends beyond it. Therefore, do corrective programmes create further psychological damage for prisoners? Prisoners already judge themselves harshly for their crime and view their behavioural and psychological issues as flaws (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). Keeping this in mind, how do rehabilitative services best support prisoners' recovery and growth?

Prisoners' Views on the Facilitating Environment

To understand ways to facilitate recovery and growth for incarcerated individuals, I wanted to gain some insight into the personal responses of prisoners to rehabilitative services. What I noticed in the literature was the mixture of responses from prisoners about rehabilitative services. One such response is that prisoners *are* interested in receiving support to prepare them for their release or with their mental health, however there is a lack of practitioners available to meet this need (Fletcher, 2014). The absence of support and regular follow-up intensifies the struggle for prisoners, particularly for those who do not have support from family and friends (Kazemian, 2020). My research brought my attention to a statement made by a prisoner expressing their thoughts on the lack of rehabilitative support in prisons. The prisoner states:

They do nothing to help us reintegrate here. When we finish our sentence, they throw us back out into the wild, and we get by on our own....It's easier for a person who has a family that can give them the means to reintegrate but someone like me, when I get out, I will find myself homeless. (Kazemian, 2020, p. 181).

This statement indicates a sense of frustration and a lack of faith in institutions due to the neglect prisoners often experience. It is apparent that prisoners long for support and resources to help them survive outside of prison. Secondly, prisoners expressed that rehabilitative programmes are helpful, but only if they are predominantly based on empowering prisoners rather than urging them to change

(Pollock, 1998). These examples indicate that there is a need for such services, but prisoners would appreciate a more supportive stance from practitioners and more access to them.

Having said that, numerous findings also indicate that prisoners tend to mostly feel resistant towards the idea of undergoing rehabilitation. As I read through my selected literature, it became apparent to me that prisoners are likely to feel unsafe opening up to practitioners. In the article *Opening up while in lockdown*, Ort (2019) highlights the experience of a prisoner who expresses such fears:

I would basically be punished if I shared how I felt. I was hurting so bad inside...I was severely depressed. I was in a really dark place. I couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel. But most people who visited the psych department were either placed on watch, solitary confinement, or were given drugs. I didn't want any of those, so I held all my feelings inside. (p. 308-321).

This statement reveals the pain and anxiety that prisoners frequently grapple with but choose to withhold due to the unfavourable consequences they may experience after opening up. In the prison context, vulnerable feelings such as despair can easily be misinterpreted or considered a pathology (Gee et al., 2015). Other unfavourable consequences for prisoners opening up may include being transferred elsewhere, being misunderstood, or increased chances of receiving a misconduct report which may impact their parole (Gee et al., 2015). The prisoner's statement reflects this and implies feelings of fear, mistrust, powerlessness, and unsafety around the likelihood of their emotions being misunderstood by authorities.

The other common reason for prisoners to feel unsafe is due to a belief that emotional vulnerability is a sign of weakness which can be easily exploited by others (Wood, 2019) and the reality is that prisoners are in fact highly susceptible to abuse and exploitation from other inmates and staff if they reveal their vulnerable feelings (Gussak, 2015). Prisoners learn not to trust others, to act tough, and to conceal emotions (Saunders, 2011). The prisoner's statement above evokes for me feelings of pain as it reminds me of how prisoners keep themselves emotionally and relationally imprisoned and how unsafe it can feel to freely verbalise one's emotions. Unformed thoughts and emotional expressions have no language or anywhere safe to exist. It also spoke to some of the intense feelings that I could relate to throughout my research experience. I felt for a long time that I was stuck in a dark place and struggled to express myself authentically. It took me back to some of my early experiences, filled with feelings of helplessness.

Another theme that emerged around the responses of prisoners towards rehabilitative services was a sense of both purposelessness and pressure that prisoners experienced through their engagement with these services. Engaging in rehabilitation is usually not voluntary rather an expectation for prisoners when they have parole coming up or are near the end of their sentence. This

statement captures a prisoner's response to this meaningless approach and its disregard for their authentic needs:

Me, they asked me to go see the psychologist. Really? "Yes, yes, you must go." I thought about it, I told myself, but what are they talking about? It's 20 years I'm in prison, and now they ask me to find a purpose to my incarceration?...It's already too late. She [the psychologist] came too late. It's useless for me to go see her. She can take care of the inmates who just arrived, but when they arrive. Things are done in the wrong order. (Kazemian, 2020, p. 182).

The prisoners' statement reveals their frustration around the generality, misattunement, and superficiality of rehabilitative services in prisons. Many prisoners believe that little is done to prepare them for their release into society and that more efforts need to be initiated at the beginning of their sentence. Some of my research findings indicate that prisoners experience interventions to be "superficial" and that they do not address in-depth issues in relation to their crimes (Kazemian, 2020), however, they feel pressure to participate in these interventions as disengagement from interventions will be regarded unfavourably by the parole judge (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). The support that they do receive in preparation for release focuses largely on their past offenses rather than on building inner strengths and skills that can help them reintegrate more successfully into the community (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). Such experiences could leave prisoners feeling unseen and disregarded. My research findings emphasise the importance of rehabilitative services having relevance and making sense to prisoners for them to be effective and ensuring that prisoners are in fact willing to participate rather than doing it as a mandatory task (Ward, & Maruna, 2007).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I bring to light some of my findings on the life experiences of prisoners, including early life events and experiences during their incarceration. I then describe emotional reactions that emerged within me as I engaged with the text, which gave me some brief insight into their worlds. I also investigate how prisoners relate to the prison context, how the environment may impact them, and how they may be perceived in that environment. I explore the idea of what it may mean to be imprisoned, and lastly, I discuss prisoners' responses to rehabilitative services.

Chapter Four: Psychosocial Interventions in Prisons

There are various frameworks and techniques used in prisons that support prisoner wellbeing, and each offer something valuable. In this chapter I will highlight some frameworks and techniques, identified in my selected literature, that are used to rehabilitate prisoners. I will also draw on psychoanalytic theories and make links with some of these techniques.

Common Frameworks and Models Used to Rehabilitate Prisoners

Risk-Needs-Responsivity Model

A rehabilitative framework adopted by many prisons worldwide is the Risk-Needs-Responsivity model (RNR model). The RNR model was developed in 1990 by Canadian researchers James Bonta, Donald Andrews, and Paul Gendreau, in response to Martinson's 'nothing works' theory (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). It involves an estimation of the offender's risk of reoffending in the community and specifies suitable treatment needs to reduce these risk factors (Pattavina & Taxman, 2013). There are three key rehabilitation principles in the RNR model that form the basis of this framework: 'risk', 'needs', and 'responsivity' (Pattavina & Taxman, 2013). The framework is supported by a large body of empirical evidence and has resulted in reduced recidivism rates in many countries that have implemented this framework (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). However, the framework is critiqued for its restrictive view of human nature, in that it fails to meet the broader range of human needs (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). As I read more about this framework, I identified more limitations. For instance, it has minimal emphasis on wellbeing, self-agency, the development of higher levels of personal satisfaction and a sense of identity, social functioning, therapeutic processes, and the development of sound therapeutic relationships (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). To me, these limitations appear to be major deficits in relation to prisoners' rehabilitative, employment, relational, and personal needs.

Good Lives Model

During my research process I discovered a rehabilitative framework that is more aligned with my values as a therapist in the way that it humanises the prisoner. This is the 'Good Lives Model' (GLM). Developed in 2002 by clinical psychologist Professor Tony Ward and colleagues, the GLM follows a strengths-based approach (Zeccola et al., 2021). The GLM evolved from frameworks such as the RNR model and aims to provide a chance for prisoners to live better lives by considering their preferences, interests, and values (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). The framework focusses on promoting 'human goods' and reduced the risk of offending (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). The term 'human goods' refers to factors such as relationships, a sense of belonging and purpose, and autonomy (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). The GLM supports the idea of reconstructing identity and shifts the focus from the criminogenic needs of offenders to what they *can* do instead, to make their lives purposeful, for instance, by contributing to society (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). The framework aims to motivate individuals to change their offending behaviour by identifying the benefits that they gain from their

offending and then exploring more appropriate ways to obtain what it is that they value (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). The model promotes the idea that offenders are human beings who have similar needs to nonoffending members of society, who however had little opportunity, or the support required to acquire skills necessary to achieve a fulfilling and sound life (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). The criminal acts therefore represent their attempts to gain desired 'goods' as they do not possess the skills required to obtain these goods by other means (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). The framework follows the idea that individuals can desist from offending if they are given the skills, capabilities, knowledge, opportunities, and resources necessary to achieve a 'good' life (Zeccola et al., 2021). Therefore, the GLM also focuses on creating new skills and capabilities relevant to the individual's life plans (Zeccola et al., 2021). Additionally, the GLM pays specific attention to the therapeutic alliance and motivating individuals to engage in the process of change (Zeccola et al., 2021). I appreciate the aspects this framework values, which are synonymous with the psychodynamic approach, for instance, its emphasis on the therapeutic alliance and on the process of self-exploration.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Motivational Interviewing

Other common approaches used to run rehabilitative services in prisons include methods such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and motivational interviewing (MI). CBT is a therapeutic method developed by American psychiatrist Aaron Beck in the 1960s which aims to reduce problematic behaviour through the alteration of cognitive processes (Beck & Beck, 2020). CBT focuses on the connection between thought process, affect, and behaviour (Beck & Beck, 2020). From a CBT perspective, thinking patterns are learned over time and are linked to core beliefs developed in early childhood (Beck & Beck, 2020). In CBT, distorted thinking patterns can be unlearned by developing control over thought processes and destructive responses can be replaced by more constructive responses (Beck & Beck, 2020). When treating prisoners, CBT offers accountability for prisoners and attempts to teach prisoners to understand their thinking processes and the choices which they *do* have control over (Beck & Beck, 2020). Research indicates that CBT is an effective method to help reduce recidivism (Ward, & Maruna, 2007).

MI on the other hand is a person-centred and strength-based therapeutic approach which aims to motivate prisoners to change their behaviour and work through their ambivalence around behaviour change. MI was created by clinical psychologists William Miller and Stephen Rollnick in 1991 (Miller & Rollnick, 2012). The approach is driven by four principles to guide practitioners expressing empathy, developing understanding of the discrepancy between clients' values and behaviour, rolling with their resistance in the therapeutic space, and supporting self-efficacy (Miller & Rollnick, 2012). In MI, the practitioner works with the client's resistance to change by exploring and resolving the ambivalence that the prisoner experiences towards changing their behaviour and thinking (Miller & Rollnick, 2012).

Sometimes these frameworks and therapeutic approaches can be integrated to increase effectiveness. For instance, CBT may provide the prisoner with insight and self-awareness about their

thinking and behavioural patterns, while MI encourages their readiness to change (Kertes et al., 2011). Or the RNR framework may be integrated with more relationally-focussed therapeutic approaches, such as psychodynamic psychotherapy, to strengthen the therapeutic alliance. Integrating different approaches can enhance the effectiveness of treatment as it compliments and adds further depth to aspects that are lacking (Kertes et al., 2011). However, it can become difficult if the values of the treatment approach being used do not align with those of the framework. For instance, the values of the psychodynamic psychotherapy approach may not align with those of the RNR framework due to psychodynamic psychotherapy focussing primarily on attending to the individual's therapeutic needs as opposed to reducing reoffending behaviour.

In my research findings, there were discussions about the strengths and weaknesses in both CBT and MI. A strength is that they both have therapeutic value in the way in which they honour client autonomy, raise self-awareness, and work on addressing behaviour change: which may be sufficient in the prison context. However, limitations lie in the disregard for more complex issues around trauma and the hidden emotions behind the behaviour in question (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). In both approaches, there is little space or less attention paid to working with grief and loss, and the emotional processes that emerge during the process of change (Ward, & Maruna, 2007).

Psychotherapeutic Techniques used in Rehabilitative Services in Prisons

Creating a Frame

I have briefly discussed some of the frameworks that are used in prisoner rehabilitation. My research findings indicate the importance of creating a frame for rehabilitation and therapeutic work with prisoners. Creating a frame is a fundamental technique used in psychodynamic psychotherapy and is defined by the therapist's act of setting an environment and a relationship with the client which allows the client to feel safe enough to discuss their life events with the practitioner (Cabaniss, 2017). Examples of a frame could be setting up a consistent time and place to meet and building rapport to establish a trusting relationship. In the article *Life within hidden worlds: Psychotherapy in prisons*, Saunders (2011) highlights that consistency is important when working with prisoners. Prisoners often prefer environments that provide structure and routine (Tonry, 2005). Therefore, providing a consistent space for them to open up and explore their internal experiences can provide a sense of safety.

Reading through my selected literature, it was also evident to me how challenging it can be for practitioners to create a consistent therapeutic frame in the prison setting. Practitioners often have trouble trying to navigate between maintaining a therapeutic frame while following the strict operational regimes of the prison (Fletcher, 2014). Issues around privacy, room availability, and meeting consistency seem to be difficult to resolve and yet these are essential factors when working with traumatised individuals (Ort, 2019). In the article *Inside story: Working in a women's prison*, Fletcher (2014) highlights ways in which a practitioner navigates such issues to protect the

therapeutic frame, such as warning prisoners early on that if the practitioner misses a session they have not forgotten about the prisoner or advising the prisoner that they sit with their backs facing the corridor to avoid distractions from passers-by. These can be effective ways to maintain the therapeutic frame in an unpredictable environment. I have tried this approach in my clinical work, while also communicating regularly with the prisoners, and as a result there was a higher chance of engagement with them. A consistent therapeutic frame establishes a sense of safety and trust in prisoners, which may allow them to put their efforts into their growth and development and may even provide a sense of healing.

Warmth and empathy

A theme that kept emerging throughout my research was that prisoners mostly favour a warm, supportive, and empathic approach from practitioners (Ort, 2019). Demonstrating empathy is highlighted as vital in developing and strengthening a therapeutic relationship (Saunders, 2011) and is said to produce better therapeutic outcomes for offenders as opposed to using confrontational approaches (Kazemian, 2020). Kazemian (2020), states that, in general, individuals are most responsive to kindness and compassion and that, for many individuals, simply interacting with another person can have a powerful positive impact on motivation towards change. A warm supportive environment is said to be more effective in reducing distress (Saunders, 2011) and encouraging prisoners to feel safe (Gee et al., 2015). When a practitioner demonstrates empathic understanding of the prisoner's inner world, prisoners are encouraged to engage in a deeper reflective process in relation to their crimes and sometimes traumatic past experiences (Gee et al., 2015). Leijssen et al. (2018), describe a case study involving a therapist working with a prisoner. The case study demonstrates that through the therapist's support and acceptance of the prisoner's negative feelings of vulnerability, pain, and anger, the prisoner no longer felt the need to deny or distort their inner world. The client was surprised to learn that they were still accepted by others without having to keep up an alternative image or 'false self' (Leijssen et al., 2018).

I did observe some concerns in the literature about providing warmth and empathy to prisoners. One of these concerns is that many prisoners have limited capacity to receive empathy (Fletcher, 2014). Prisoners can feel easily overwhelmed by the intensity of emotions evoked (Fletcher, 2014), which can lead them to feel more overwhelmed, distressed, and confused. It is also common for trauma survivors to often feel that others may not understand their experiences and feelings (Gee et al., 2015).

Another concern about displaying warmth and empathy to prisoners is that practitioners often felt conflicted about supporting prisoners while also perceiving them to be dangerous. A section from the article *Inside story: Working in a women's prison*, demonstrates a practitioner's reflection as they come to terms with the prisoner's potential for dangerousness. The practitioner describes:

I was reminded of the danger of thinking of our clients only as heroic survivors of abuse and neglect; that some of these women had committed acts of extreme violence, including murder

and were capable of manipulation and coercion and some posed a threat to other inmates and prison staff. (Fletcher, 2014, p. 28-31).

The practitioner's statement reminds us of the reality of the prisoner's potential for dangerousness. In *Psychotherapy and despair in the prison setting*, Gee et al. (2015), suggests ways to work with this challenging situation. They recommend staying alongside the prisoner and displaying empathy, yet also holding in mind the prisoner's potential for dangerousness, both within the space and when released into the community (Gee et al., 2015). Winnicott also shared his thoughts on working with individuals possessing antisocial tendencies. He says that these individuals require "management" rather than "psychoanalysis" (Winnicott, 1990). This may be due to the 'destructiveness' and aggression that lurk inside the individual, which have the potential to do harm to themselves and others. However, the success of these approaches can perhaps be dependent on finding the right balance. Being overly cautious or taking on a managerial approach may potentially create distance, disrupt the therapeutic alliance, and may reinforce for prisoners how others view them.

I am reminded of some of my own clinical experiences during the research process when I felt distraught hearing or reading about the horrific life stories of prisoners; yet from a forensic viewpoint, I was reminded of the reality of the danger they pose. Sometimes this conflict is influenced by the prison culture and the justice system which tend to promote deterrence and punishment and enforce change. Psychodynamic psychotherapy, while it is influenced by psychoanalytic theories, may take a different approach to Winnicott's suggestion about individual's requiring management. In psychodynamic psychotherapy, the therapist works to minimise the client's distress while holding in mind the dynamics of the client's early childhood (Cabaniss, 2017). The therapist then uses the therapeutic relationship to demonstrate safe ways to relate with others and create new opportunities for the client to heal what has been ruptured (Cabaniss, 2017).

Empowerment and Power Dynamics

Empowering prisoners on their rehabilitative journey appears to be recognised as a valuable outcome in my research findings. Most prisoners grapple with feelings of powerlessness and nonautonomy as an outcome of their living situation in prison, where they experience psychological vulnerabilities and a lack of support and resources (Wood, 2019). Herman (1992) observes that the underlying experiences for individuals who have experienced psychological trauma are a sense of disempowerment and disconnection from others. According to her, recovery is therefore dependent on the empowerment of the individual and the creation of new connections with others (Herman, 1992). My research findings talk about the complexities of both the overt and covert power dynamics that exist in the prison setting. For instance, it is common for practitioners working with prisoners to have access to some of their personal information and criminal history prior to meeting with them (Fletcher, 2014). Some practitioners may choose not to read the prisoner's file, however in so doing, may risk their own safety or miss significant details about the prisoner. In my own clinical experiences, compliance with the rules of the prison system by reading their notes conflicts with my values of being

a therapist and respecting their privacy and ability to share information by their own free will. In my literature selection a practitioner working with prisoners' shares a similar experience to mine and states:

I wanted to approach them as I would any other client and to acknowledge their autonomy in deciding what to bring to therapy...it felt very important to me that they could do it at a time of their own choosing. They had mostly led disempowered lives and were further disempowered in prison; I wanted their time with me to offer them an experience of choice and, at the very least, the authorship of their sessions. (Fletcher, 2014, p. 28-31).

Here the practitioner throws light on the vulnerability they observe in prisoners and the absence of choice that prisoners have. For many prisoners, undergoing rehabilitation is not always their choice but, as the author suggests, the way prisoners use their time in the sessions can be (Fletcher, 2014). The practitioner favours working towards a relationship that steps away from the power imbalance and instead looks at empowering prisoners (Fletcher, 2014). They highlight the need to prioritise the prisoner's therapeutic and basic human needs over prison operational requirements (Fletcher, 2014). Herman too, explains in her book that traumatised individuals must be the author of their own recovery because interventions which take away their power will continue to harm their recovery and wellbeing (Herman, 1992).

Other ways in which practitioners reduce power imbalances and empower prisoners, as indicated in my research findings, are through communication, transparency, and partnership with the prisoner. In the article *Inside story: Working in a women's prison*, Fletcher (2014), demonstrates how the practitioner and collaboratively works through obstacles with the prisoner. The practitioner states: "Explicitly naming these issues to clients as deficiencies and discussing how we could deal with them together conveyed empathy and respect and helped to support a therapeutic frame" (Fletcher, 2014, p. 28-31). The author highlights the importance of communication and respect, and emphasising the prisoner's needs as significant (Fletcher, 2014). Discussing such matters and talking through challenges with the prisoner as a collaborative and transparent exercise can make them feel included and informed, which may ultimately strengthen the prisoner's trust towards the practitioner and contribute to therapeutic progress. An important consideration for practitioners is that many prisoners, understandably, may experience transference towards the practitioner as an abusive caregiver (Herman, 1992). They may associate the practitioner's intention with the perpetrator and the dynamics may be re-enacted during their treatment (Herman, 1992). Additionally, in the reality of the prison context, the practitioner holds a powerful position in that they have a say in the prisoner's progression out into the community.

In my clinical experiences, I was very aware of this power that I had and would frequently talk through the program agenda and therapeutic needs with the prisoners. I would also discuss other basic items such as offering them a choice of time and day to meet for sessions, as opposed to

setting meetings according to my preference. I noticed a higher level of commitment from them to attend sessions after taking on this approach. Furthermore, discussing such matters may potentially enhance the prisoner's interpersonal skills and their sense of worthiness in relationships. Herman also emphasises the importance of communication for individuals who have experienced trauma. She advises practitioners that when treating traumatised individuals, they should not be left in the dark as these individuals have already been left feeling a loss of power and control (Herman, 1992). Herman (1992) encourages practitioners to find ways to restore the individual's sense of power and control. Practising communication, transparency, and partnership with prisoners may ease the power imbalance and negative transference experiences. In turn, this has the potential to create new experiences for prisoners that can contribute to healing.

Feeling heard

To support their wellbeing, prisoners need to feel and be heard, however they may feel unsafe or not have the means to express themselves. Expressing themselves may be difficult for reasons such as having to bear painful emotions, not having a safe space to be heard, an inability to process emotions and articulate feelings, and having to face harmful repercussions if they were to express themselves. During my research process, I began investigating how individuals can feel better heard. Firstly, I noticed my own feelings in situations where I had difficulty making sense of and expressing my own internal experiences in words. On frequent occasions my supervisors and therapist supported me by hearing, understanding, and validating my deeper experiences. Through this process I was able to articulate myself, make links with past experiences, and then began to proceed forward. My experience of feeling heard led me to Reik's theory of the 'third ear'. In his theory, Reik describes the role of the therapist as a receptive listener who understands the deeper meaning of what was conveyed by the client (Reik, 1983). To achieve this, Reik proposes the idea that the therapist listens to their client as well as listening to their own inner voice and internal processes (Reik, 1983). This may include countertransferences evoked in the space (Reik, 1983). Reik also adds that the bad listener, on the other hand, does not slow down or pay attention to their own feelings when they listen (Reik, 1983). Often listening becomes associated with deference and obedience which disconnects one from one's authentic self and those of others (Reik, 1983). This leads them to respond without processing the information that has been communicated at a deeper level (Reik, 1983).

Reik's theory emphasises the importance of listening to the client and oneself at a deeper level. In the prison context, a practitioner's emotional unavailability due to the demands of the role may mean they are unable to pay attention to the deeper expressions communicated by the prisoner (Pollock, 1998). Practitioners may defend themselves from connecting with the painful emotions evoked within the therapeutic space. Reik's theory highlights the act of listening to and understanding what the client is saying: through the words, beyond the words, or in the absence of words. This means listening out for the client's expressive terms, descriptive words, and sentences which provide links to unprocessed feelings which are yet to be accessed, such as pain, fear, stress, hatred, anger,

love, and anxiety. For the client, being listened to, received, and acknowledged may support them to work through distressing emotions and open new depths of understanding. In the article *Inside story: Working in a women's prison*, Fletcher (2014) highlights a practitioner's experience of working in a women's prison and demonstrates the practitioner's realisation about prisoners' wishes to feel heard:

It seemed to me that what these women needed in therapy was to be really listened to and understood without judgment. They had been judged one way or another throughout their lives and were mostly harsh judges of themselves....I hoped that being received and acknowledged in this way, however briefly, would enable them to develop new insights and different understandings of themselves and their lives (including their offences) that could be the seeds of change and growth. (Fletcher, 2014, p. 28-31).

The author shares their views on the power of deeply listening to, understanding, and receiving what is spoken by the prisoner. I share similar beliefs with the author, in that offering new experiences where the prisoner is heard and understood can be beneficial towards their growth. In my clinical experiences prisoners would often express how important it is for them to feel heard, by simply "venting" or being deeply understood when they did not have the words to express themselves. For prisoners, the act of deeply connecting with and feeling understood by others can have a healing effect on the individual (Herman, 1992). Being listened to supports individuals to work through the emotional elements of distressing events and to create new narratives and meanings (Herman, 1992). Ultimately this can be seen as an effective and crucial technique to support their wellbeing.

Being Seen

When I think about how important it is for clients to feel heard on their journey towards wellbeing, to feel 'seen' seems equally important. I question how we 'see' what is imprisoned and how we make sense of it and put it into words. I am curious about how prisoners can feel 'seen' as their authentic selves. The prison environment usually cultivates suspicion towards prisoners rather than viewing them from a place of interest or curiosity (Pollock, 1998). To protect themselves from further harm, it is common for prisoners to withhold their authentic thoughts and feelings. The 'third ear' portrays the idea of hearing and understanding expressions that are beyond the words of the client and about the therapist's own felt experience. The 'third eye' is a similar concept, which represents connecting with our deeper consciousness and seeing beyond what is presented to the naked eye (Tejparkhi, 2019). According to this concept, our two sensory eyes are outward facing and limited to seeing only what is within the bounds of our peripheral vision and consciousness (Tejparkhi, 2019). The 'third eye' however, is an invisible eye looking inwards and represents one's 'inner vision' (Tejparkhi, 2019). Both the 'third eye' and 'third ear' concepts suggest the ability to receive information communicated from beyond our physical senses. They represent the existence of something beyond the limitations of our beliefs, judgements, and experiences. The concepts also value the idea of obtaining information from what is within and through one's intuitive processes. In a practical sense however, the 'third eye' concept provides useful ideas, but I do not focus on the practise of entering a meditative state during the sessions. I am simply alluding to the idea that, as is

frequently expressed by prisoners during my clinical experiences, there is a part of them that wants to be acknowledged for their authentic self rather than being seen for their crime only. Further to this, the practitioner's ability to notice the authentic parts of the prisoner can potentially lead to the strengthening of the prisoner's wellbeing.

The 'third eye' is known as the eye of the soul or the 'spiritual eye' and is considered to be the bridge between the material and spirit world (Tejparkhi, 2019). The soul represents the essence of the individual and what connects the self with others (Beaumont, 2012). Our soul is said to connect to our sense of meaning and purpose (Beaumont, 2012). When an individual experiences trauma, it is said that the soul believes it needs to close itself off (Beaumont, 2012). Therefore, it seems vital to help the prisoner recover this part of themselves that has been imprisoned. This may be achieved through facilitation by the practitioner who supports the prisoner with identifying what gives them purpose, meaning, deep satisfaction, and connection to self and others. If I relate the idea of spirituality to the prison system, it provides me with another dimension to a context that feels almost two-dimensional and limiting. I was pleasantly surprised to discover literature regarding rehabilitating prisoners that places some importance on the idea of spirituality. Kazemian, (2020) states that spirituality or religion instils a sense of hope for prisoners and Leijssen et al. (2018) note it can be a useful resource for them. Spirituality is an element that contributes to one's overall wellbeing. It is a dimension that seems important to include as part of prisoners' rehabilitation and to support their wellbeing.

Conceptually, it is suggested that when the third eye opens, individuals become more receptive to the world both around them and within (Tejparkhi, 2019). The concept represents an awakening and awareness of material that lies deep within our unconscious (Tejparkhi, 2019). It suggests the idea of an understanding that transcends the vision of the two eyes and sees the world for what it is (Tejparkhi, 2019). The material that lies in our unconscious can appear as symbols in our thoughts or dreams, for instance (Tejparkhi, 2019). These images may provide useful links with our internal experiences (Tejparkhi, 2019). This is particularly useful for some individuals who may find it difficult to make sense of or articulate their internal experiences. Similarly, in psychodynamic or psychoanalytic practice it is typical for the client to 'free associate' during therapy to allow content to emerge from their psyche (Freud, 1856) and make meaning out of it as part of the therapeutic process (Cabaniss, 2017). Ultimately this process leads to greater awareness for the client. In the 'third eye' concept, it is said that self-awareness, enlightenment, and understanding can bring about change and lead to the liberation of the 'self' (Tejparkhi, 2019). For me, the 'third eye' concept links with the idea that the truth, which is the authentic self, is imprisoned. An increase in awareness can help the individual connect with themselves and their truth, which may be a freeing experience. The psychodynamic approach mirrors this idea, in that the therapist helps facilitate the process of liberation and recovery of the self.

As I read through the literature, I was drawn to a statement made by Wood (2019) where he shared his reflections after gaining more self-awareness:

As soon as you become aware that there are alternative ways of seeing things, it calls your own thinking style into question. You begin to perceive the crucial truth that you have a choice in the way you think. The most potent realisation is that everything you dreamed of when you were a free-born child is within your grasp, no matter how the walls have closed around you since. The first step in gaining your freedom is to contrast your present situation, your sense of what is possible for you, with what you might have hoped for yourself when you were younger. (p. 156).

His statement draws on the idea of moving away from feelings of helplessness, self-limiting beliefs, and the 'false self'. Wood indicates the importance of seeing beyond and pushing through stuck-ness and restoring one's sense of self. His statement suggests that freedom can develop through awareness of one's limiting world views. Practitioners delivering interventions to prisoners can similarly support prisoners to explore past their current limitations, re-establish a sense of self, and regain some control over their lives. It may also be helpful for the practitioner to be mindful of their own limitations and that of the context in which they are working. The practitioner's way of supporting the prisoner to move past their limitations and closer towards their authentic self can aid their recovery and growth.

Having Faith in What Cannot be Seen

A useful approach is for practitioners to help facilitate the emergence of the prisoner's 'true self'. This means being receptive to the authentic self-expressions of the prisoner which represent what is trapped and suppressed inside. During my research process when I felt stuck, an image of a marble slab appeared in a vision and later drew me to a quote by Michelangelo Buonarroti who stated: "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free" (Kearsley, 2011, p. 783-787). This quote for me symbolises finding strength and potential in something that cannot be easily seen. This can be an effective perspective for the practitioner who helps facilitate the emergence of the true self, including the strengths and beauty of the prisoner that may not be frequently seen by others. When I think of the notion of what cannot be seen, I am reminded of Bion's theory of 'O' (Bion, 1970). 'O' is a symbol of that which is yet to be brought to life: that which is unborn (Alisobhani & Corstorphine, 2019). It represents one's raw experiences that are yet to be transformed into thoughts. For me, this becomes a symbol of what is imprisoned: the true self. To reach the point of truth and awareness, Bion proposes the idea that the therapist must join the client without judgement wherever they currently are (Alisobhani & Corstorphine, 2019). This is where mental growth happens, by just 'being' and not feeling the need to find facts or reasons (Alisobhani & Corstorphine, 2019). Bion places emphasis on having faith in this intuitive process to allow the emergence of truth and transformations to occur in an organic way. This reminds me of the work with prisoners. Thus, is it then just about being with them in their experience as who they are without feeling the need to reach objectives?

But Do I Want to Be Seen?

The question around this, however, is whether the prisoner wants to be 'seen' and 'found'? Being seen can raise feelings of pleasure but can also bring up uncomfortable feelings such as shame, fear, vulnerability, and overwhelm. In his theory on 'psychic retreats', Steiner defines the psychic retreat as the client's act of psychologically withdrawing from the therapeutic space as a temporary escape from the therapist, and from reality (Steiner, 1993). The retreat becomes a safe space for the client where they seek refuge and protect themselves from distress, exposure, and psychological and emotional difficulties (Steiner, 1993). Emerging from the retreat can bring upon anxiety and suffering for the patient (Steiner, 1993). The idea of being 'seen' in the prison context also confronts me with the reality that prisoners are always under surveillance. Whether it is under the surveillance of prison guards or surveillance cameras, prisoners are always being observed but only what appears on the surface is seen, not always the prisoner's true experience. Thus, it seems important for the practitioner to recognise the wish for these individuals to be seen, noticed, and valued for who they are, while, keeping in mind that prisoners may not be ready to be 'seen' and to confront their true experiences. In my own research experience, I thought of how difficult it has been to attend to my emotional experiences and at the same time feel exposed and 'seen' for sharing my experiences and internal world.

Accessing Grief

Addressing details of the offence may result in the resurfacing of devastating early life experiences for prisoners, leading to an increase in feelings of grief (Gee et al., 2015). As I engaged with different literature, I noticed conflicting views about practitioners' encouraging prisoners to access their feelings of grief. I have always been curious about and wanted to explore the impacts of accessing grief when working with prisoners. Is it something important that is not given enough attention? Or is it unsafe territory? Much like my own questioning, most of the research content questioned whether prisons are safe places to encourage the expression of grief. Many prisoners are in a vulnerable position as they do not have access to privacy, social support, and their usual coping strategies. It can be complex in the prison setting and can lead to more harm for prisoners who are then left to manage their emotions on their own after the session (Kazemian, 2020). Such situations may add to mental health problems for prisoners and their susceptibility to being victimised by fellow prisoners. In my clinical experiences, I felt unsettled if I ever overlooked prisoners' feelings of grief. Yet, I also felt concerned if the grief was accessed in the space and they might not have had the coping mechanisms to be with the grief when they went back to their cells. Would it then be more appropriate for prisoners to process grief outside of prison when they have access to other means of support and coping strategies, and have regained their sense of autonomy? Perhaps it may be important for practitioners to ensure that they do not urge prisoners to process their feelings of grief during interventions as it can bring up other emotions such as shame, anger, mistrust, or further distress. This may also rupture the therapeutic relationship. Practitioners could possibly make themselves available to those prisoners who are ready to process their grief, or offer follow-up

sessions, or provide self-regulating strategies to help manage their grief post-session. This approach may give prisoners new experiences of processing grief in safe ways.

However, other research findings support the idea of accessing the prisoner's grief during their rehabilitation. Pollock et al. (2006) indicate that the initial step towards desistance is to address 'unresolved internal suffering'. Similarly, Herman (1992) explains that remembrance and mourning are key processes in the stages of recovery from trauma. According to Herman (1992), unresolved suffering or grief can result in a sense of entrapment in the individual's traumatic recovery process. Grief manifests in various ways and may be expressed outwardly through violence, aggression, or crime, or inwardly, through anxiety or depression (Pollock et al., 2006). Speaking about traumatic experiences can help increase self-awareness and access to the emotions attached to their crime, namely feelings of grief, despair, and loss (Pollock, 1998). Thus, when addressing the prisoner's crime in rehabilitative interventions is it equally important to make space for the process of grief? In the article *Psychotherapy and despair in the prison setting* Gee et al. (2015) emphasise the importance of staying with the prisoner's pain and discomfort and making space for it rather than focussing predominantly on psychoeducation or strategies (Gee et al., 2015). The author then goes on to explain that despair is a healthy response to adjusting to the change and loss of normal life, therefore it may be valuable for the practitioner to normalise feelings of grief (Gee et al., 2015).

Many psychoanalytic theories also support the importance of processing feelings of grief. Winnicott (1990) for instance states that the client with antisocial tendencies needs to experience despair to heal (Winnicott, 1990). The act of processing grief also reminds me of Steiner's theory on 'psychic retreats'. In this theory, individuals may be heavily dependent on retreats to protect themselves from experiencing painful feelings and disconnecting from reality (Steiner, 1993). He explains that the individual will eventually need to emerge from the retreat, and to confront and work through their loss to experience psychological growth (Steiner, 1993). This includes working through their feelings of regret, remorse, and guilt (Steiner, 1993). Steiner outlines that the client needs to tolerate the painful consequences to be able to work through the different stages of his mourning (Steiner, 1993). Steiner's concept on 'retreats' also symbolise for me the idea of the prison structure as a retreat in which the prisoner seeks refuge from society and from experiencing painful emotions. Thus, addressing feelings of grief in rehabilitative services provides an opportunity for prisoners to experience healthy ways of being with and processing grief and building their capacity to tolerate distress, which may lead a more successful reintegration into society.

As I read through the literature it became more apparent how important the role of the practitioner is in the prisoner's grief process during their rehabilitation. Along with the prisoner's social support network, the practitioner plays a key role in allowing the prisoner's grief to exist (Gee et al., 2015) and for the act of simple human connection to occur through the experience of grief (Herman, 1992). Herman (1992) also indicates that the practitioner's acts of validating the client's emotional experiences and recognising the pain they feel are important and valuable for recovery and decreasing feelings of alienation for the client (Herman, 1992). Furthermore, Gee et al. (2015) imply

that the practitioner's display of empathy towards the prisoner during their grief process has a powerful positive impact on the prisoner's wellbeing. Therefore, it seems essential that practitioners are in touch with their own feelings of grief rather than being defended against them so that they can support the prisoner with accessing the depths of their grief. I noticed that as I engaged with the texts during my research process, the grief that emerged for me was overbearing and at times left me in a state of numbness. I noticed how difficult it was for me to emotionally engage with the content and be present. Gee et al. (2015) talk about the importance of being open to grief while working with prisoners. One of the practitioners in the text who worked closely with prisoners expressed the following:

But prisons, by their nature, are distressing places and you have to be able to tolerate an environment where distress is pervasive if you are to be able to function as a therapist. I tried to be open to hearing and acknowledging my clients, to let them know that I could bear their most distressing feelings. I was aware that any unconscious self-protective retreat or diversion on my part might impede their processing, acknowledgment and understanding of themselves. (Fletcher, 2014, p. 28-31).

The statement highlights the prevalence of grief in the prison environment, the practitioner's ability to be self-aware, and their capacity to receive the grief during the therapeutic process. The practitioner indicates the importance of making themselves available to the client by opening their mind and receiving the client's communications with as little interference as possible.

The practitioner's statement reminded me of one of Bion's theories where Bion introduces the concept of 'maternal capacity for reverie' (Bion, 1970). His concept refers to the mother's emotional availability to understand her infant's emotions and to be able to help ease her infant's feelings of distress (Bion, 1970). To support this, he believed that the practitioner needs to have a vacant container, referring to a mind that is not preoccupied with theory but keeps an open space for reveries (Bion, 1970). This is like Winnicott's idea of the 'good enough mother' who is attuned to her infant's emotions and spontaneous gestures. The mother's attunement to her infant's gestures helps facilitate the development of their infant's sense of self (Winnicott, 2018). Thus, the practitioner's capacity for reverie alongside the prisoner could potentially lead to opportunities for self-growth for the prisoner. In my clinical experiences, I recall a common inner conflict of wanting to stay close to the prisoner's experience however feeling pressure within myself to attend to the objectives of the prison interventions. It was difficult to not be moved by their poignant narratives, so I regularly allowed myself to be lost in the experience and connect with my own feelings of grief that emerged in the space. By being authentic to my own feelings and the process, I felt created a deeper and more authentic therapeutic experience and relationship.

While it may be important for practitioners to display empathy and be in touch with their own grief when rehabilitating prisoners, my research findings indicate that providing a sense of hope to prisoners also appears to be effective (Gee et al., 2015). This also links with Winnicott's idea about

antisocial tendencies as signs of the individual's attempts to recover a sense of hope which they lost during their infancy (Winnicott, 1990). In his theory, Winnicott explains that what was lost was initially experienced as something good which was then withdrawn from them (Winnicott, 1990). As mentioned earlier, what was withdrawn is usually a representation of the mother. Thus, it could represent feelings associated with the mother, such as safety and love. Winnicott explains that in therapy the therapist needs to provide the client with new opportunities to experience relatedness, where their early environment failed to support this (Winnicott, 1990). The new experience with the practitioner may help access parts of the individual's underlying feeling of loss, and aid in their recovery and wellbeing, without overlooking or denying their grief. During my research process I frequently felt as though I were stuck in a very dark, infinite place and I found it difficult to see any light. It was through the support of my supervisor and therapist that I was able to experience my feelings of grief and regain a sense of hope.

Making Meaning

Making meaning of life circumstances appears to emerge from my research findings as an effective approach to rehabilitating prisoners. While incarcerated, it is common for prisoners to question their life and place in the world (Leijssen et al., 2018). During this time, they come to terms with their crime and sentence and experience a loss of meaning and hope (Leijssen et al., 2018). This period provides a gateway into exploring the deeper meaning of their internal experiences, both in relation to their crime and their life experiences (Kazemian, 2020). However, many prisoners are often left to make sense of their experiences on their own. This is usually due to a lack of a sound support system and availability of practitioners, and the nature of prison systems which encourages self-reflection in isolation. Sadly, prisoners may not have the stimulation or capacity to make sense of their internal experiences in depth. As a result, I believe their unbearable emotional experiences are sometimes left without meaning.

Volker & Galbraith (2018) highlight that the lack of meaningful activity can lead to the development of severe psychological consequences while prisoners who search for meaning and find new meanings after committing crimes are more likely to experience posttraumatic growth (Leijssen et al., 2018). These individuals are also thought to have higher chances of transitioning towards change (Leijssen et al., 2018). Engaging with a practitioner may therefore provide an avenue for prisoners to search for new meanings and expand past limitations. According to Herman (1992), recovery cannot take place in isolation but takes place only in the context of relationships. I noticed that during my research process when I spent time in isolation, I remained in the feeling of being stuck. I made sense and meaning of my experiences by engaging with others, and each time I engaged it helped expand my limited world view. Similarly, in the prison context prisoners may spend long periods in isolation to self-reflect, however growth and recovery requires the integration of social contact and new information. Herman (1992) advises that recovery is dependent on the empowerment of the individual and the creation of new connections with others. Thus, through the aid of another mind, the prisoner's experiences are made sense of and brought to life.

Stepping into unknown territories or transitioning into new life experiences, can elicit painful emotions. During my research process when I was visiting unknown territories internally, I experienced fear and discomfort. I shared these experiences with my therapist and supervisors and used symbolic images to make meaning and sense of my experiences. For prisoners, transitioning into change or coming close to their release can bring up painful emotions, thus making meaning out of their experiences with someone may provide ease. Having a safe space for prisoners to access, explore, and share their experiences authentically may feel freeing and less lonely. Prisoners may experience loneliness through past trauma as well as when choosing to transition into another way of being separate from crime and criminal associates. Therefore, making sense of their experiences with someone may be effective for improving their wellbeing.

When I think about the act of meaning making, I am reminded of Bion's 'theory of thinking' (Bion, 1970), where he draws on the idea of making meaning out of one's internal experiences. In his theory, Bion focuses on the relationship between mother and infant and the communication that occurs within the relationship, where the infant tries to communicate their incomprehensible feelings, what their underdeveloped mind cannot tolerate, to the mother in the hope they will be provided with relief (Bion, 1970). Bion calls this raw emotional data, which include physiological responses and emotional states, the 'beta-elements', (Bion, 1970). The mother interprets her infant's behaviours as meaningful and supports the infant by helping them process, think, and make sense of their intolerable feelings (Bion, 1970). By thinking and making meaning together, she helps transform the infant's unthinkable material into a form that is more tolerable for the infant to bear (Bion, 1970).

If I relate Bion's theory to the prison context, it highlights the importance of having another mind to support individuals with making meaning out of painful internal experiences. As mentioned previously, the early background of many prisoners may be traumatic and lacking in adequate parenting. During their infancy, it may have been that act of thinking together and making meaning out of their internal experiences with their caregiver was scarce. Therefore, by thinking together with a practitioner as a new experience, the prisoner can be assisted with making meaning out of their internal experiences and bringing these experiences into their awareness. The process offers the prisoner insight into their emotional, relational, thinking, and behavioural patterns in relation to their offending. Doing so may reduce the likelihood of them acting out repressed and unprocessed emotions.

Strengthening skills

One of the key aspects regarding supporting prisoner wellbeing that stood out for me during my research was about strengthening prisoners. From my perspective, strengthening prisoners can take three forms. These are to strengthen the prisoner's sense of identity, their life skills, and their psychological wellbeing.

My attention was first directed towards a section in my literature selection which helped me clarify my research topic: specifically, making sense of what it is that is imprisoned. My research findings indicate that for desistance to occur the individual needs to first develop a 'coherent, prosocial identity' and a positive self-image (Maruna, 2001). Furthermore, it is suggested that offenders can recover their real and 'good' personality, also known as their 'core-self' (Maruna, 2001). This is akin to Winnicott's theory on the 'true and false self'. Both Maruna and Winnicott say that the "core-self" represents the individual's true nature and sense of self. Research findings suggest that prisoners are in fact good people who were led to crime through bad circumstances, and that therefore to make oneself 'good' requires an act of self-reconstruction, as well as the development of an understanding of the reasons behind the commission of the crime (Maruna, 2001). This is a view shared with the GLM.

It seems fundamental to identify, recover, and strengthen the individual's 'core-self' to increase wellbeing. Furthermore, trauma is said to interfere with identity and self-perception for the individuals who experience it (Van Der Kolk, 2014). Therefore, they can easily become detached from their sense of self, including their personal strengths and life purpose (Van Der Kolk, 2014). Highlighting their personality and strengths and building an appreciation for their own skills and 'being good at something' can help develop feelings of self-respect and self-esteem in the prisoner. (Maruna, 2001). Identifying and strengthening the prisoner's 'core-self' may help them develop a sense of self-agency, belonging, identity, and resilience. The individual may experience an increase in life satisfaction and have better chances of reintegrating more successfully into society.

While building on the prisoner's core-self appears to be significant, the literature also highlights the importance of strengthening the life skills and psychological wellbeing of prisoners. Strengthening of interpersonal and life skills can be significant factors in developing their unique strengths and increasing employability and overall psychological wellbeing (Ward & Maruna, 2007). The literature also outlines the difficulties prisoners experience due to mental illnesses which often correlate with dysfunction in interpersonal relationships and work performance (Ward & Maruna, 2007). Psychological problems that prisoners experience is not usually related to the risk of reoffending but are linked with mental health factors such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression (Ward & Maruna, 2007). Therefore, addressing prisoners' mental health needs appear to be a necessity in their rehabilitation journey. Rehabilitative services that support prisoners to develop effective communication skills, assertiveness, emotional recognition and regulation, ability to cope with stress, and problem-solving skills can be effective in increasing prisoners' psychological capacity to face challenges in society when released (Pollock, 1998). Studies reveal that there is a reduction in symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other mental illness for prisoners after receiving support with life and interpersonal skills (Jalali & Hashemi, 2019). Specifically, strengthening creative and critical thinking, emotional regulation, and social skills is thought to reduce feelings of anxiety and loneliness (Jalali & Hashemi, 2019).

It is common for prisoners to be released from prisons without sufficient preparation or resources to manage outside of prison (Morash, 2006). As highlighted in the previous chapter, prisoners often have trouble coping outside after being released. This aspect is outlined by several authors who share this concern. The literature reveals the difficulties prisoners experience in arranging their own care as they feel they do not have enough knowledge about or know how to engage with support services (Pollock, 1998). Specifically, the way in which institutions disrupt the ability for prisoners to cope with life outside and then require them to face discontinuity in support outside was thought to be 'unrealistic and unfair' (Huffman, 2006). Transitioning into the community is a difficult process for prisoners and they require a lot of assistance before and during their transition. There is also little attention given to continuity of care for prisoners who have transitioned into the community (Huffman, 2006). The strengths and goals of prisoners are often left undeveloped (Ward & Maruna, 2007) however they can be useful tools for the prisoner in ensuring their successful reintegration into society. Prison systems and rehabilitative services could offer further skills training and support in areas such as employment, self-esteem, and interpersonal skills, and perhaps more access to practical and emotional support for prisoners outside of prison. Self-esteem, a sense of achievement, and a purpose in society are essential to the wellbeing of individuals. Thus, the development of skills and strengths could be emphasised in rehabilitative programmes for prisoners to reduce recidivism and support their wellbeing. This is where the GLM can be an effective framework for supporting prisoners, due to the attention it pays to strengthening the skills of prisoners.

In my research findings I noticed that concerns are raised around rehabilitative services for prisoners that focus solely on mental health and life skills enhancement. The authors highlight that focusing on these areas alone is ineffective when working with offenders as it may result in the prisoner leaving prison without insight into their risk situations (Kazemian, 2020). Instead, my research findings indicate that it is more effective when mental health and life skills are addressed alongside ways to reduce offending behaviour (Ward & Maruna, 2007). This is also reminiscent of Winnicott's thoughts in his book *Delinquency and deprivation*, where he cautions the practitioner against taking on a 'purely therapeutic' stance to address the crime as he believes that crime is a 'psychological illness' (Winnicott, 1990). Winnicott believed that when addressing the prisoner's crime, the public's unconscious desire for revenge must be considered (Winnicott, 1990). He highlights in his book that the legal punishment that the prisoner receives protects the prisoner against the public's unconscious revenge (Winnicott, 1990).

Supervision and Support for Staff

Due to the emotional challenges and complexities that arise for practitioners working in prisons, practitioners may inadvertently defend against their own feelings. As a result, could lead them to become unavailable and ineffective in their engagement with the prisoner (Fletcher, 2014). To cope through the work, the literature revealed that having clinical supervision and good peer support were essential (Fletcher, 2014). These support systems help practitioners to manage, sustain, and process the complexities of working in the prison setting (Gee et al., 2015). Thus, builds the

practitioner's capacity to be emotionally available to the prisoner (Herman, 1992). Supervision and peer support also acts like another lens for the practitioner, which helps expand past their own limitations (Herman, 1992). Herman (1992) explains that the work of recovery requires a reliable support system for the practitioner, particularly when overcoming their feelings of denial that arises in the trauma of the work. Furthermore, supervision provides the support necessary to ensure safety and ethical practice. In my clinical experiences, receiving supervision and peer support was vital in the work. Particularly in the practice of psychodynamic psychotherapy where a large portion of the work is about understanding transferences and countertransference that emerge in the work (Cabaniss, 2017). My support network helped me understand my countertransferences, make meaning of the work, practice safely, gain new therapeutic tools, and expand past my limited world views.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored psychosocial interventions in prisons used to rehabilitate prisoners. I first investigated common frameworks and models used in prisons, followed by exploring therapeutic techniques used in rehabilitative services. I highlighted frameworks and techniques that were discussed in the literature, and then investigated how they may or may not support prisoner wellbeing.

Chapter Five: Benefits and Limitations of Psychotherapy in Prisons

During my research, I came across varying views about the effectiveness of practicing psychotherapy in prisons. Some authors discuss how essential psychotherapy is, while others observe drawbacks. In this chapter I examine some of my key findings on the benefits and limitations of psychotherapy in prisons. Although my approach is from the perspective of psychodynamic psychotherapy, my research findings in this segment are reflective of the practice of psychotherapy in general in prisons. Thus, these findings can also be applied to other forms of therapy and counselling. In this chapter, the term 'psychotherapy' refers to all forms of therapy and counselling.

Benefits of Psychotherapy in Prisons

Increase in Wellbeing

One of the benefits I came across in my findings was that psychotherapy seems to address the overall wellbeing of individuals. As mentioned earlier, rehabilitative services in prisons are mostly seen through a forensic lens, which focuses on behaviour change. Furthermore, the justice system places more emphasis on reoffending rates and public protection, than on the wellbeing of the individual (Volker & Galbraith, 2018). However, most of the research content that I came across highlights that there are high levels of mental health issues in prisons, suggesting a great need for therapeutic focussed interventions for prisoners (Gee et al., 2015). Thus, it appears that the mental wellbeing of prisoners and their deeper needs on their path towards recovery may often be overlooked by rehabilitative services in prisons. Psychotherapy offers prisoners assistance with both their mental health needs and their reintegration back into society (Brown et al., 2014). Through talking with the practitioner and engaging in the therapeutic process, prisoners are provided with opportunities to reflect, analyse, and learn different ways of reacting to challenging situations (Pollock et al., 2006). Many prisoners do not have access to social support and safe and trusting relationships which allow them to share their thoughts and emotional experiences (Kazemian, 2020). Traumatic backgrounds and mental health difficulties often result in problematic relationships, leading to a lack of support for many prisoners (Pollock, 1998). Mental health difficulties, troubled relationships, identity problems, and the inability to regulate emotions are often factors leading to prisoners committing crimes (Pollock, 1998).

In chapter one I defined the term 'wellbeing' as relating to the spiritual, relational, psychological, physical, and emotional state of the individual. Wellbeing is linked with greater life satisfaction, positive relationships, the ability to better manage distress, and a sense of meaning and purpose. Psychotherapy is said to promote a positive outlook, improve relationships, strengthen the sense of meaning and purpose, increase ability to express emotions, and support prisoners to connect with and understand themselves at a deeper level (Brown et al., 2014). When prisoners are asked how they feel about engaging in psychotherapy their responses are often positive (Pollock, 1998). Psychotherapy equips prisoners for life outside of prison (Pollock et al., 2006), thus leading to improved overall wellbeing.

Expression of Anger

Access to psychotherapy in prisons offers prisoners a safe space to learn about, access, and express emotions such as anger. For prisoners, painful life experiences, the events leading up to their crime, and the act of the crime itself are traumatic experiences (Pollock et al., 2006). Prisoners are often out of touch with their emotions due to not being taught appropriate skills to manage their emotions during their early childhood (Wood, 2019). Their emotions may have been inaccurately mirrored, or neglected, leaving their feelings unlabelled and unsymbolised. This results in difficulties in regulating their emotions in their later life (Van Der Kolk, 2014). Suppressed anger can manifest in harmful ways such as homicide or crime, self-mutilation, and depression (Pollock, 1998). From my research findings it appears that psychotherapy enables prisoners to identify and practise appropriate methods to help regulate their emotions and deescalate feelings of rage (Pollock, 1998). An extract from my selected literature reveals a prisoner's response to engaging in psychotherapy in prison: "Through opening up, through realising that it's not only possible but important to speak about your feelings... You may talk about things that you're finding difficult... If you get stoned, you forget about your problems temporarily, but they don't go away..." (Medlicott, 2001, p. 197). For me, this statement illustrates how the prisoner finds value in the process of psychotherapy, without having to depend on harmful ways to cope with difficult emotions. Psychotherapy provides a therapeutic space for prisoners which allows them to recognise, analyse, process, and learn to control emotions such as anger without the need for violence (Pollock, 1998). For prisoners, learning to manage their feelings of anger can be empowering as it helps them control their external situations by controlling their internal experience (Pollock, 1998).

The therapeutic space allows prisoners to voice and explore uncomfortable thoughts and emotions safely. Winnicott's theory about working therapeutically with the 'destructiveness' found in antisocial individuals says that these individuals need a stable environment to be able to withstand their impulses and have the freedom to express their 'destructiveness' and aggression in constructive ways (Winnicott, 1990). Winnicott says that aggression as an emotion is important for living creatively and authentically, and hence needs space for it to be processed safely (Winnicott, 1990). The therapeutic space therefore helps the individual express their aggression in a safe and authentic way, without losing their sense of creativity and connection to self. In my clinical experiences, prisoners reported that expressing their feelings of anger in the space and feeling heard had a positive impact on them.

Expression of Grief

Along with anger, another emotion that is often suppressed is grief. A large portion of my research findings state that addressing grief is crucial to desistance, healing, and psychological growth processes for prisoners (Kazemian, 2020). Many prisoners grapple with feelings of despair and stress, adjustment to prison life (Leijssen et al., 2018), prolonged isolation, and the loss of family and autonomy during imprisonment (Kazemian, 2020). Such circumstances can make them vulnerable to severe mental health problems and suicidality during incarceration (Gee et al., 2015).

Psychotherapy helps reduce feelings of distress for prisoners during their imprisonment (Gee et al., 2015) and supports prisoners with identifying, processing, expressing, and sitting with their feelings of grief, guilt, and regret (Gee et al., 2015). Psychotherapy is said to play a useful role in the prison system by supporting prisoners to work through psychological difficulties such as depression and hopelessness (Felton et al., 2020). In my clinical experiences, prisoners would report their recent losses, however, they mostly did not have the social support required to process their feelings of grief related to the loss. Therapeutic support during our sessions helped them to process their grief, and this indicated to me that there is a greater need for therapy.

Greater Self-Awareness

A common theme in my selected literature was the importance of strengthening prisoners' understanding of their criminogenic behaviour and the reality of their life experiences. Often trauma can impact identity and self-perception for the individual who experiences it (Van Der Kolk, 2014). They can easily become detached from their thoughts, experiences, feelings, body, relationships, and sense of self and life purpose (Van Der Kolk, 2014). In the article *Posttraumatic growth during incarceration: A case study from an experiential–existential perspective*, Leijssen et al. (2018) present a case study of a prisoner as client (Leijssen et al., 2018). Through the experience of therapy, the prisoner was able to see a reality that was different to their previous experience of their life (Leijssen et al., 2018). The article demonstrates how psychotherapy supported the prisoner to tolerate their reality without avoiding certain parts of themselves (Leijssen et al., 2018). The therapy sessions assisted the prisoner to become more aware of and connected with their inner self; they recognised they no longer felt the need to deny parts of themselves to feel accepted by others (Leijssen et al., 2018). Through therapy the prisoner was supported with processing the pain of loss and was taught new ways to cope with that loss (Leijssen et al., 2018). The prisoner reported that focussing on their pain and surrendering to their emotions facilitated their psychological growth and desistance from crime and helped them to understand the dynamics underlying of their criminogenic behaviour (Leijssen et al., 2018). These research findings explain that through self-awareness the prisoner gets to know themselves and recognise the power they have over their lives, including their responsibility for their crime. Psychotherapy can assist prisoners towards greater wellbeing by supporting them to develop increased self-awareness (Pollock et al., 2006).

Strengthening Relational Skills

Another key benefit of psychotherapy in prisons is that it can promote the strengthening of relational skills for prisoners. Because many prisoners have come from traumatised backgrounds, their experiences have usually damaged their social relationships (Wood, 2019). Relationships can have a powerful influence on the outcome of recovery from trauma (Herman, 1992). The individual's sense of self can be rebuilt through connection with others, including simply being in the presence of a sympathetic person (Herman, 1992). Most prisoners have a desire to connect with and feel supported by others in a safe and meaningful way (Pollock et al., 2006). A quote from a prisoner exemplifies their desire for support: "We all want to feel a little bit better, a little bit more loved, a little

bit more complete, [to have] a little bit more sense of meaning and purpose into our lives” (Medlicott, 2001, p. 159). This quote reveals a sense of the loneliness and disconnection felt by the prisoner. As mentioned previously, many prisoners may have little family or social support, and their need for emotional support is beyond the capabilities of prison staff. Therefore, the presence of a therapist may be a valuable relational experience for prisoners.

As I was reading through my research content, I discovered another quote by a prisoner that demonstrated their experience of trying to make meaning on their own: “Most of the time when I try to read, you just can’t focus on the books, you know what I mean? So, you spend most of the day daydreaming, thinking things, things you shouldn’t think” (Medlicott, 2001, p. 131). The quote reveals a sense of loneliness and longing to interact with someone to ease their suffering. The prisoner’s expression reminds me of my own experiences during the lockdowns where I felt alone in my grief, and it became difficult to write. However, interactions with my therapist, supervisors, and peers helped me gain clarity on my experiences of grief and push past what kept me feeling stuck. Prisoners may benefit from talking with someone to explore and articulate their internal experiences. Psychotherapy acts as an avenue to help prisoners make sense of their grief in meaningful ways and promote growth.

The case study by Leijssen et al., (2018) mentioned earlier, highlights the importance of a supportive therapeutic relationship for strengthening psychological wellbeing and mitigating distress for prisoners. The author demonstrates that providing emotional support to the prisoner can be transformative and lead to psychological growth. The experience of participating in therapy assists prisoners with finding new ways to connect with themselves and with others (Leijssen et al., 2018). The therapeutic relationship acts as a safe and contained space where prisoners can safely explore their inner world with a supportive other (Huffman, 2006). Winnicott (1990) sheds light on the antisocial individual’s need to turn to crime to restore what was lost during their early childhood. As briefly mentioned in an earlier chapter, what was lost is associated with their relational experiences with their primary caregiver during infancy (Winnicott, 1990). Psychotherapy is an avenue that provides a new relational experience and a chance to make meaning out of what was once lost. The experience of support and connection may provide prisoners with a sense of healing and a reduction in feelings of loneliness.

Limitations of Psychotherapy in Prisons

Psychotherapy Culture and the Scarcity of Practitioners and Resources

With the high levels of need for mental health support in prisons, I was curious about the infrequent use of psychotherapy in prisons. During my research it became apparent that generally there is a lack of perceived value for the practice. Research findings criticise psychotherapy for being ‘too ambiguous’ (Gee et al., 2015), ‘a waste of time’, and ‘not practical enough’ (Eftihiades & Fink, 1968), and a ‘soft option’ in the forensic space (Saunders, 2011). However, in my experience, I noted that prisoners were engaged and responsive to therapeutic focussed interventions. Criminogenic

focussed interventions and the regard for public safety generally seem to have prominence over the prisoner's therapeutic needs (Volker & Galbraith, 2018).

My research findings indicate that one of the reasons for the lack of psychotherapy in prisons is due to the shortage of professionals to establish the practice (Eftihiades & Fink, 1968). The shortage of professionals offering psychotherapy in often overpopulated prisons appears as a concern in my research findings, while prisoners usually express willingness to take part in therapy sessions (Pollock, 1992). As mentioned earlier, Winnicott also advises that individuals with antisocial traits require management more than they require psychoanalysis, and it would be too 'time-consuming' and 'expensive' (Winnicott, 1990). Similarly, Saunders (2011) highlights that prisons are not ideal environments for the practice of psychotherapy. According to Saunders, it is unsafe to explore the inner world of prisoners in prisons for a variety of reasons (Saunders, 2011). One of the reasons is the instability of the setting, such as the unpredictability of transfers to other prisons (Saunders, 2011), which could disrupt the prisoner's therapeutic process and leave them in a dangerous state. The author does later add that while prisons are not ideal environments for the practice of psychotherapy, there are pressing needs to treat prisoners and prevent them from re-offending (Saunders, 2011).

While carrying out this research, it was common for me to feel overwhelmed, stuck, and dislocated in time. The excessive information available about prisons and trauma reflected for me how much time is required to be able to consider and attend to significant details. These experiences made me realise that working with trauma and the process of one's recovery and growth, requires a lot of time and patience. One of the main aspects that require time and patience is in developing a strong therapeutic alliance for the prisoner to build enough trust to carry out the work. However, rehabilitative services in prisons are often brief, which means there is little time to build a therapeutic alliance and for prisoners to feel safe enough to open up to the practitioner. To tell a complete story takes more than twelve sessions. Then further sessions are required to build enough trust to challenge the prisoner, develop self-awareness, and attend to emotions in a careful and respectful manner. The prison environment, which is often immensely overcrowded, can make resources such as time very scarce. To work around this dilemma requires further research.

Prisoners' Readiness to Engage in Psychotherapy

Other safety concerns are about prisoners' readiness to explore their internal experiences with a professional. In the article *Inside story: Working in a women's prison* Fletcher (2014) provides an example of how some prisoners may react to receiving therapy:

For some, therapy was barely tolerable. The distress and fear of being in touch with their most disturbing feelings meant they might leave a session after 10 minutes...some would stop coming altogether, sometimes openly telling me that they just couldn't bear their feelings and were not ready for therapy. (Fletcher, 2014, p. 28-31).

This quote illustrates how unbearable the therapeutic process can be for some prisoners. It is likely that many prisoners may not be ready to face uncertainty and deep pain through therapy. For some prisoners, receiving therapy emphasises their feelings of vulnerability and weakness. Prisoners may talk to guards instead of experiencing the shame of receiving therapy (Gee et al., 2015). While some prisoners may appreciate a more educational, less intense, and practical approach. Traumatized individuals are often terrified of feeling anything (Van Der Kolk, 2014). The physical sensations experienced in their own bodies are perceived as a threat to them (Van Der Kolk, 2014). They may not feel ready to access parts of themselves in the prison setting and this can lead them to feel more overwhelmed, distressed, helpless, frustrated, confused, and vulnerable. The fear of being overtaken by uncomfortable emotions freezes their minds and bodies (Van Der Kolk, 2014). While their trauma is an experience from the past, their emotions are producing sensations in their bodies which trigger fear in the present, during treatment (Van Der Kolk, 2014). For prisoners, bearing the intensity of emotions and trying to manage the distress that has been evoked can potentially lead to harm. Facing these emotions during therapy may be a painful experience for prisoners and some individuals may have difficulty self-regulating their emotions after the session or after their treatment has concluded. From observations in my own clinical experiences, prisoners are often left to deal with painful emotions on their own after brief interventions have ended. It can be a frightening or frustrating experience for these individuals who are merely trying to survive in the prison environment and protect their safety. Furthermore, once they have been released from prison, the discontinuity of the therapy they received in prison can make it difficult for prisoners to cope outside (Huffman, 2006). Is psychotherapy therefore best offered to prisoners outside of prison?

Ethical Dilemmas Experienced by Practitioners

Another theme that emerged as a limitation for practicing psychotherapy in prisons is the ethical dilemmas that therapists face. Examples include concerns over lack of confidentiality, room availability, and not having a quiet, private space to carry out the sessions (Fletcher, 2014). My research findings highlight the disadvantageous conditions in which therapy may need to be carried out in prisons, for example, in small windowless rooms and with unpredictable room changes (Leijssen et al., 2018). These circumstances make it difficult for therapists to create, hold, and protect the therapeutic frame. In my own experiences, operational disruptions and inconsistencies meant that prisoners were sometimes unable to fully engage or express their emotions in the space. I felt sad they were unable to get the most out of our interactions, and a sense of loss for something that might have emerged in more favourable circumstances. This instability can disrupt the establishment of a therapeutic frame and limits the potential to create a secure and stable space to explore the prisoner's psychological experience.

The brutal culture of prisons may not align with the nature of most therapists. Staff providing rehabilitative services to prisoners frequently compromise therapeutic values to accommodate penal values (Volker, & Galbraith, 2018). My research findings reveal an example of a practitioner's discomfort on having to compromise therapeutic values:

I became increasingly uncomfortable about introducing therapy in this conditional way. To imply that the aspect of their lives in which I was most interested was their offence just seemed to replicate how they had been viewed by the courts. (Fletcher, 2014, p. 28-31).

The statement reveals the tension that therapists frequently face as they try to protect the therapeutic relationship and the prisoner's vulnerability, while also having to respect the requirements of the institution. I felt connected to the practitioner's statement above as I often questioned if prisoners saw me there just to 'rehabilitate' them, rather than also genuinely wanting to engage deeply with them and their unique stories. During sessions prisoners would express their appreciation for being seen as individuals, and not just "criminals". They expressed particular gratitude for opportunities to engage in exercises that supported them to explore identity, understand their emotions, and relate with others.

Emotional Heaviness

As I read through my research content, I noticed a pattern in the practitioners' experience in prisons, in the complexity and emotional heaviness of the work. These experiences may be seen as a limitation for staff and therapists offering therapeutic services in prisons, as the lack of resources, staff, and time may lead to burn out and unfavourable conditions for therapists to practice (Fletcher, 2014). In one of my research findings, a practitioner states:

I counselled women whose teeth had been punched out; women with bones that had been broken in repeated violent assaults that sometimes caused miscarriage; women who had resorted to drug use to survive, and prostitution or theft to fund it. (Fletcher, 2014, p. 28-31).

This extract highlights the level of intensity that practitioners work with and the overwhelm that they may feel daily from hearing such tragic narratives. Many practitioners find prisons a distressing environment to work in as the feelings of grief are inescapable and overpowering (Fletcher, 2014). Mark Morris, a psychiatrist and psychotherapist who works for a therapeutic based prison in England, shares a similar perspective on practicing psychotherapy in prisons. He states:

Prisons are quite brutal places by and large, whereas psychodynamic psychotherapists are not particularly brutal people, so such institutions are difficult places in which to work. These difficulties might be why prison is a world apart. Therapy in a prison setting is difficult to do. (Saunders, 2001, p. 89– 112).

Morris's statement highlights the distance between therapy and the prison culture, and prisoners from society. It reveals a sense of isolation and the heaviness of the work that therapists and prisoners sit with. Herman explains that addressing trauma in therapy tends to challenge the therapist's emotional balance (Herman, 1992). Therapists may defend themselves against overwhelming feelings by attempting to control them or avoid them, acting impulsively, dissociating, or withdrawing (Herman,

1992). In my research findings I found that although working in prisons is highly rewarding, staff often experience burn out and traumatisation (Volker & Galbraith, 2018). I recall my own experiences working in prison where at the end of the day I would experience intense fatigue and a stomach-churning feeling of grief while at the same time feeling deeply moved by the depth of connection to the work.

Chapter Summary

This chapter is the final section in my research findings and outlines my findings on some of the benefits and limitations of psychotherapy in prisons. First, I discuss my findings on the benefits, which centre around increasing wellbeing, emotional expression, self-awareness, and relational skills. I then discuss some of the limitations of psychotherapy in prisons, which are related to some of the challenges and ethical dilemmas staff experience and the readiness of prisoners to engage in psychotherapy. The next chapter includes my discussion and conclusions.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion

In this research study, I explore ways to support prisoner wellbeing, first by understanding the inner world of the prisoner and what is imprisoned, their early environment, the impacts of incarceration and the prison environment, and their responses to rehabilitative programmes, followed by an investigation of the effectiveness of rehabilitative frameworks, models, and other therapeutic techniques used in prisons. Lastly, I looked at the practice of psychotherapy in prisons and its benefits and the limitations of its practice in this environment. To carry out this research, I used a hermeneutic literature review as the methodology as it looks at the intersubjective interpretations of the researcher and uncovering deeper meanings to understand the research topic. In this chapter I provide a summary of the research topic, my findings and concluding thoughts.

Reflections on My Research Process

My research process helped me gain a better understanding of the internal experiences of prisoners. However, it was also a hugely unsettling process. I often felt stuck and in darkness and suffered self-doubt. I found it difficult to write anything until I began to follow my intuition, connect with others, and use symbols to guide me. Through the intuitive process I was able to uncover and gain a deeper understanding of my topic and areas of investigation related to my research. I found the hermeneutic method a good fit for my research, as I was able to make meaning out of my experiences. Overall, I also experienced this research study to be a healing process which helped me in my own personal growth. These experiences helped me gain further insight into prisoners' experiences as well as my own personal truths.

Emerging from Feeling Imprisoned

Prisoners' experience of trauma and incarceration can cause them to feel detached from themselves, their relationships, and their own needs. Some of the literature portrays prisoners as the 'other' in society (Towl, 2011). I align myself with other research findings in which prisoners are seen as regular members of society, but without the same opportunities, life and relational experiences, and chances to develop skills to cope through challenging life experiences (Ward & Maruna, 2007). Trauma and incarceration leave prisoners feeling lonelier and more alienated from society. Reconnecting in meaningful and safe relationships is an important part in the process to improve prisoner wellbeing (Herman, 1992). A relationship that can become meaningful is the therapeutic relationship with a practitioner who can help validate, support, and make meaning of the prisoner's inner experiences. Relational experiences are what help us develop our sense of self, therefore relationships can also help us recover our 'true self' (Winnicott, 2018). Many prisoners have not had the opportunities to process their emotional, relational, and spiritual experiences safely and give them form. Instead, these experiences are left imprisoned. The concept and experience of prison itself emphasises the imprisoning of individuals, rather than supporting and facilitating their growth.

Prisoners require validation, encouragement, and empowerment to grow as individuals and improve their wellbeing (Kazemian, 2020).

Reflections on Rehabilitative Frameworks

Some of the aspects of my research that stood out for me were some of the responses of prisoners to rehabilitative services. One of these responses included the experience of rehabilitative services in prisons as 'superficial' and inattentive to the in-depth issues relating to their crime (Kazemian, 2020). My findings include recommendations for rehabilitative services to have more depth and for them to be aligned with the needs of prisoners, in order to be more effective (Ward & Maruna, 2007).

As I read and tried to make sense of some of the narratives by prisoners, it became apparent that most prisoners want to be treated and seen as human beings, but feel dehumanised. The emotional needs of prisoners in the prison environment may frequently be disregarded. My findings reveal that rehabilitative services tend to focus more on the criminogenic behaviour of the individual and less on their wellbeing and deeper emotional needs (Kazemian, 2020). The RNR framework, for instance, is used in prisons around the world and is said to be effective in reducing rates of reoffending for prisoners, however it has been criticised for placing little emphasis on broader human needs, such as a sense of identity, greater wellbeing, emotional recovery, attention to grief, and the strength of the therapeutic relationship (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). The RNR framework may be integrated with other therapeutic approaches to increase the effectivity of the treatment.

I was introduced to the GLM framework during my research process. It appears to have a different outlook to the RNR model, in the way it shifts the focus from a criminogenic view of the prisoner to their humanistic needs. A principle of the framework is that prisoners have similar needs to nonoffending members of society but did not acquire the life skills in childhood to meet these needs (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). The framework looks at developing new skills, opportunities, and resources for prisoners to support desistance from further crime and to improve their wellbeing (Zeccola et al., 2021). What also separates this model from the RNR framework is the emphasis on the development of the therapeutic relationship, which in turn can strengthen the prisoner's trust towards the practitioner and to improve their overall relational skills (Zeccola et al., 2021). The GLM focuses on the prisoner's sense of identity and personal strengths that can be utilised practically (Ward, & Maruna, 2007). I personally feel that this framework may be valuable in increasing the prisoner's sense of self, worthiness, and purpose in life. The framework aligns with my research topic and the psychodynamic world view in that it considers the impact of trauma on the individual and looks at ways to reduce their alienation from society. It seems to provide a sense of hope rather than being seen as a list of tick-box factors to address in their treatment. In my opinion, this framework appears to be an ideal model for prisoner rehabilitation, however I do wonder — is this model also effective in reducing reoffending rates?

CBT and MI are a couple of methods that I investigated briefly in my research. A benefit of using CBT is that it addresses changing limited and distorted thinking patterns of individuals (Beck & Beck, 2020). It is common for prisoners to repeat destructive behaviour and negative beliefs about the self and the world, as this thinking provides certainty but keeps them imprisoned in many ways (Wood, 2019). Thus, CBT can provide ways to challenge these patterns and raise self-awareness (Beck & Beck, 2020). MI also aims to strengthen the individual's self-awareness, and furthermore addresses prisoners' levels of motivation towards change (Miller & Rollnick, 2012). However, what may get missed using these methods is the process of grief for the prisoner that is evoked through the therapeutic process (Ward, & Maruna, 2007).

Reflections on Therapeutic Techniques

My views towards some of the frameworks and techniques I have come across have shifted during my research process and I have come to notice and appreciate some of the limitations of some of these techniques. Overall, there are not right or wrong approaches, as most serve a useful purpose in contributing towards the rehabilitative needs of prisoners in some way.

Creating a frame and a strong therapeutic relationship are thought to be effective steps towards developing the prisoner's trust for the practitioner and the therapeutic process (Cabaniss, 2017), and are thought to reduce prisoners' chances of dropping out of rehabilitative services early (Brown et al., 2014). Consistency is thought to be an important element in creating and maintaining a therapeutic space (Cabaniss, 2017), however research findings demonstrate that this can be difficult to achieve in the prison environment, where frequent disruptions occur (Fletcher, 2014). Addressing these issues with the prisoner can be an effective way to strengthen and maintain the therapeutic relationship (Fletcher, 2014).

Warmth and empathy from practitioners towards prisoners are highlighted as fundamental and impactful when relating with and rehabilitating prisoners (Ward & Maruna, 2007). They are thought to increase therapeutic alliance and to encourage deeper reflection by the prisoner (Gee et al., 2015), however, one of the questions is about prisoners' capacity to receive the warmth and empathy directed at them by the practitioner (Fletcher, 2014). I have also come to appreciate the place for taking a firmer stance, based on Winnicott's suggestion that these individuals require management as opposed to psychoanalysis and exploration (Winnicott, 1896). This approach may be used on some occasions, for instance when prisoners do pose a risk of harm to others or themselves. However, taking on a rather cold and managerial approach can potentially disrupt the therapeutic alliance (Brown et al., 2014). Therefore, most literature seems to emphasise the importance of providing warmth.

The importance of empowering prisoners and noticing power dynamics between practitioners and prisoners was another finding in my research study. The literature suggests that practitioners should aim to work towards a therapeutic relationship that minimises power imbalances and instead

looks at empowering prisoners (Fletcher, 2014). Prisoners often feel powerless and lack self-agency (Wood, 2019), thus it seems significant to empower them. Ways to foster the empowerment of prisoners include communication, transparency, and partnership with the prisoner during their rehabilitation process (Fletcher, 2014). Such factors can help strengthen the therapeutic alliance and increase therapeutic progress.

Feeling Heard and Seen

During my research process I sought support from my supervisors and therapist to try and make sense of and express my internal experiences. In these spaces, I often felt received and heard. This was comforting, reassuring, healing, and beneficial towards my self-growth. I learnt to articulate and trust my internal process. Wanting to feel heard was a theme that emerged from the literature and is often expressed by prisoners in my clinical experiences with them. Reik's theory on the 'third ear' (Reik, 1983) also emphasises the importance of the therapist's act of listening to the client and oneself at a deeper level (Reik, 1983). As highlighted by Herman, deeply connecting with, and feeling understood by others can be healing for the individual (Herman, 1992). In Reik's theory, the therapist listens to their own inner experiences and intuition and helps translate the client's experiences (Reik, 1983). Reik highlights the importance of the therapist's ability to be receptive to the client and their painful narrative (Reik, 1983), similarly to Winnicott's 'good enough mother' (Winnicott, 2018). Both Reik and Winnicott emphasise the importance of being attuned to and receiving what the other is communicating at a deeper level than words that is closer to their true experience. In the prison context, it can be very easy for practitioners to become emotionally unavailable due to the other demands of their role (Pollock, 1998), and therefore they may defend themselves from receiving the deeper needs of the prisoner.

My research findings also suggest that prisoners long to be seen as individuals and not only for their crimes. I incorporate the 'third eye' concept to highlight the act of being seen and the therapist's way of noticing the clues to their internal experiences as ways to gain deeper insights. Both Reik's theory and the concept of the 'third eye' emphasise the importance of hearing and seeing what may lie buried inside, beyond what we may see or hear, which may be closer to one's truth. However, sometimes prisoners do not want to be seen. Thus, the practitioner should aim to reduce the prisoners' feelings of exposure, and instead help them feel acknowledged, understood, seen, noticed, and valued in a safe way.

The 'third eye' concept suggests the idea of stretching past one's limited world view (Tejparkhi, 2019). In line with this idea, the practitioner plays a role in supporting the prisoner to stretch past their limitations and grow closer to their authentic self. The practitioner also needs to understand their own limited world views which may act as hindrances to the prisoner's growth. Like the 'good enough mother' (Winnicott, 2018), the practitioner is receptive to the authentic self-expressions of the prisoner, such as emotional expressions that may be suppressed.

The 'third eye' concept is linked with spirituality (Tejparkhi, 2019), which I regard as important as spirituality provides a sense of hope (Beaumont, 2012) and having faith in something that cannot be seen. Spirituality also connects with one's sense of self and life purpose, and is an important dimension of health linked with one's wellbeing (Beaumont, 2012).

Supporting the Expression of Emotions

The practitioner's role in supporting the prisoner through emotional expression is an important finding in my research. Grief can emerge in the therapeutic space when the topics of childhood experiences, losses, and crime are discussed (Gee et al., 2015). Prisoners also experience further losses during their incarceration (DeVeaux, 2013); therefore, it seems essential to support them through loss and grief. My research findings emphasise the significance of staying with the prisoner's pain and making space for these processes during the sessions, instead of focussing mainly on psychoeducation and coping strategies (Gee et al., 2015). The literature also emphasises that grief is a healthy part of responding and adjusting to change and life events, and needs to be normalised when it arises in sessions (Gee et al., 2015). Winnicott outlines in his writings that individuals with antisocial tendencies need to experience their despair to heal (Winnicott, 1896). Steiner also adds that individuals will eventually need to confront their vulnerable feelings such as grief and loss to move past the state of stuck-ness and experience growth (Steiner, 1993). For some individuals, traumatic experiences and mental illness can lead to the inability to regulate emotions (Steiner, 1993). Addressing grief during sessions provides opportunities for the prisoner to experience grief in healthy ways and may assist with increasing their capacity to tolerate distress (Gee et al., 2015). Providing prisoners with a safe space to express their feelings of grief and loss can therefore be valuable towards increasing their wellbeing.

It seems important to support prisoners through their grief and to facilitate the emergence of their 'true selves' (Winnicott, 2018), rather than leaving their thoughts and emotions imprisoned. During my research process I felt a sense of freedom and closer connection with myself when I was able to express myself authentically and to experience my grief and losses. Having a space to express and experience my emotions was valuable towards my wellbeing as I was able to allow these parts to exist outside of my internal experience. As outlined in my research findings, speaking about grief for prisoners can help increase self-awareness and access emotions in relation to their crime (Pollock, 1998). Winnicott believed that the therapeutic experience provides new opportunities for the client to experience relatedness (Winnicott, 1896). The practitioner allows these parts to exist by validating the prisoner's feelings of grief (Gee et al., 2015). Sharing this experience with another individual, may reduce prisoners' feelings of alienation and loneliness in their grief (Herman, 1992).

I also recognise the importance of the practitioner's availability to the prisoner's feelings of grief. This may be demonstrated by their empathy towards the prisoner, which is found to positively impact the prisoner's wellbeing (Gee et al., 2015). The practitioner's ability to be in touch with their own grief is important in the process, to be able to be receptive to and receive the prisoner's grief,

enabling them to access their grief in depth, and to support them through their grief (Pollock et al., 2006). Additionally, the importance of providing a sense of hope to support prisoners through their grief is highlighted in the literature (Gee et al., 2015).

Accessing the prisoner's grief is complex in the prison environment. Not having access to their usual coping strategies or a sense of autonomy, means that the prisoner can be left in a vulnerable position after the session, without support to regulate their emotions (Kazemian, 2020). I wonder if it is better for prisoners to undergo therapy outside of prison, upon their release, to process their grief when they have access to their usual coping strategies. Some suggestions I make are that practitioners should not push the expression of grief but can make themselves available if grief arises in the space, provide some coping strategies to self-regulate after the session, and discuss the grief and make meaning out of it. However, further research needs to be carried out to understand how this can be achieved safely.

Making Meaning During Incarceration

During the experience of incarceration, it is common for prisoners to confront the reality of their crime and their current and past positions and experience a loss of meaning and hope (Leijssen et al., 2018). There may be opportunities during incarceration to make meaning and search for new meanings, which can lead to posttraumatic growth (Leijssen et al., 2018). Making meaning of experience is thought to lead to higher chances of a successful transition towards change (Leijssen et al., 2018).

Working with a practitioner to make meaning out of the prisoner's experiences, their current and past positions, and their crime can provide the prisoner with new insights into their situation and relief from anxiety, and help them to expand past limited thoughts and beliefs about their situation (Leijssen et al., 2018). Herman (1992) states that recovery takes place through social contact and new connections, new information, and through the empowerment of the individual. Therefore, in the therapeutic space, the prisoner's and practitioner's act of thinking and making meaning together can help form new experiences and insights. This process was paralleled in my research process where after engaging with the literature I made meaning out of my thoughts and emotions with the support of my therapist and supervisors, which led to new ways of seeing the world. My self-awareness increased and this resulted in a sense of recovery and growth. Having a safe space, such as the therapeutic space, allows prisoners to explore and express themselves freely and authentically.

Strengthening

Rehabilitative services that support prisoners with strengthening interpersonal and employment skills, emotional recognition and regulation, ability to cope with stress, and problem solving can be effective in enhancing their wellbeing and ability to face life's challenges after release from prison (Pollock, 1998). Through the experience of trauma, many individuals lose a sense of

identity and life purpose (Herman, 1992). Therefore, developing these skills during their rehabilitation, alongside addressing their crime, is essential for prisoners, to enhance their wellbeing and sense of identity and purpose (Ward & Maruna, 2007). Research reveals that symptoms of mental illness are mitigated after prisoners receive support with life and interpersonal skills (Jalali & Hashemi, 2019). Winnicott's theory on the 'true and false self', emphasises the importance of facilitating the growth of the individual's 'true self' and identity for them to live more authentically and as an important process towards healing and transformation (Winnicott, 2018).

Support for Staff

Supervision and peer support was seen to be essential for practitioners providing rehabilitative services in prisons. Supporting practitioners with emotional challenges and complexities that arise in the work, built their capacity to be emotionally available to prisoners. Supervision and peer support was seen to ensure safe practice, helped them to connect with their own emotional experiences, and expand thinking for the practitioner.

Reflections on the Benefits and Limitations of Psychotherapy in Prisons

One of the benefits of psychotherapy in prisons that emerges from my research findings is the aim to address the overall wellbeing of individuals. Mental health problems are prevalent in prisoners, which implies a great need for therapeutic-focussed rehabilitative services for prisoners (Gee et al., 2015). Psychotherapy is also thought to increase relational skills for prisoners who require support in this area, as crime is often linked with relationship difficulties (Pollok et al., 2006). Additionally, the experience of trauma distorts prisoners' experience of their relationships with others (Herman, 1992).

Psychotherapy in prisons provides a safe space for prisoners to learn about, recognise, analyse, express, and regulate their emotions in a safe way: particularly emotions such as anger, which for prisoners can sometimes escalate quickly and create harmful situations (Pollock, 1998). Psychotherapy is also thought to increase self-awareness for prisoners at a deeper level, including awareness in relation to their crime (Gee et al., 2015). The therapeutic experience helps the prisoner to connect with their inner self more authentically without having to heavily defend against their intrapsychic experiences (Leijssen et al., 2018).

Some of the limitations of psychotherapy in prisons include a lack of perceived value for psychotherapy in this environment (Eftihiades & Fink, 1968) and a lack of staffing resources, even though many prisoners express their wishes to receive therapeutic support from a practitioner (Pollock 1998). My research findings also highlight how challenging it can be for practitioners to practice psychotherapy in prisons. Challenges may be due to ethical challenges such as limited time, and the emotional complexity of the work (Fletcher, 2014). Other limitations include the need for ongoing support for prisoners when they are released, as they confront further challenges upon their release (Hopkin et al., 2018). However, prisoners may not have access to therapeutic support outside

of prison. Finally, prisoners may not be ready to receive psychotherapy in the prison setting due to the intensity of emotions which may be evoked.

Limitations and Strengths of My Research Study

One of the challenges I experienced during my research study was the vastness of the research topic. There are so many areas in which further research could be undertaken to deepen my understanding in this field, for instance, gender and cultural influences, prisoners' responses towards receiving psychodynamic psychotherapy, work in different types of prison, and prisons in different geographic settings. There is also potential for researching various other therapeutic frameworks and methods used in prisons to expand my thinking, however due to the brevity of this study I kept my research into the many existing frameworks to a minimum. There is a parallel between my experience and what may occur in prisons, in the brevity of rehabilitative interventions, while there is so much content to be covered and addressed.

My personal experience of working in a men's prison means that perhaps some gender roles may have influenced my thinking processes during my research, particularly around the topic of emotional expression where, depending on their gender, prisoners may approach this area differently. I did however, access literature that focussed on women's prisons to help increase insight.

I also experienced other limitations such as my tendency to feel stuck, which at times led to further reflections. On other occasions I felt limited in the depth of my research. The pandemic meant that at times I could not access resources in a timely manner or be exposed to relational and life experiences which may have led to new insights that remain outside my awareness. I felt that throughout my research process I was frequently influenced by my own biases as a practitioner working closely with prisoners. These biases were linked with feelings of unwarranted anger towards the prison system and sitting with feelings of grief, overwhelm, powerlessness, and helplessness. My biases were both helpful and limiting at the same time.

One of the strengths of my research study is the plethora of resources and information in relation to my research topic. Another strength is the hermeneutic process, which I found particularly useful in my research study, as I was able to make meaning out of my experiences in an authentic way and gain a deep and thorough understanding of prisoners' experiences.

Implications and Further Recommendations

As mentioned earlier, there are many areas in this research that can be explored further. For instance, while my research has provided some information about accessing grief in prisons, further investigation needs to be conducted into how this can be addressed safely. There are likely to be further resources available on this topic, however due to the brevity of this study I was not able to research the topic further. I was also curious to understand more about prisoners' responses to

receiving psychodynamic psychotherapy, as I was initially unable to find specific information in this area. I later concluded that a general response towards rehabilitative services would be more useful to a wider range of practitioners in the rehabilitative domain in prisons.

Lastly, something I feel strongly about is ensuring ongoing therapeutic support is available to prisoners once they are released from prison. I believe this can heavily enhance the therapeutic support that they may already receive in prison. This is a limited study and more can be learnt through direct long-term engagements with prisoners, however the resources that were used in this research were also extremely useful in providing new insights.

Concluding Thoughts

Through my own interest and my experience of working with prisoners, I aim to give a voice to those who do not have the means and opportunities to express themselves. Based on my research it seems paramount to offer more psychodynamic psychotherapy in prisons and for rehabilitative services in prisons to adopt therapeutic strategies. Through psychodynamic psychotherapy, therapists can play a vital role in positively influencing the emotional wellbeing and reducing the chances of reoffending for prisoners, particularly as many prisoners do not have other means of support in prison. A large majority of prisoners have come from traumatic backgrounds and find the experience of incarceration distressing; therefore, it seems imperative that they receive support from a practitioner and have a safe space to express themselves and make meaning in their inner worlds. Psychodynamic psychotherapy can provide support with processing emotions, making meaning, connection, validating, increasing interpersonal skills, expanding past limitations, reducing mental illness and loneliness, and many more positive benefits (Cabaniss, 2017).

Many prisoners respond well to the support of an empathic and caring other who can see and hear what is being expressed in the space (Gee et al., 2015). Therefore, I strongly support an increase in the number of practitioners, and the value of therapeutic culture in this often overcrowded environment to enable more support to be offered to prisoners. I feel the availability of psychotherapy in prisons is lacking and more value needs to be placed on the practice. However, the lack of funding and other resources means that many prisons may not be able to increase their resourcing. I see the importance of investing in these practices to promote more long-term wellbeing for prisoners as well as help reduce reoffending, which can also benefit society.

One of the aspects that stood out prominently for me was the impact of social connection on the prisoner's wellbeing, recovery, and growth, and the meaningful support and safety that psychotherapy can offer prisoners as they explore their inner worlds and engage with the practitioner (Huffman, 2006). The therapeutic relationship is likely to reduce feelings of alienation, hopelessness, helplessness, depression and anxiety, and loneliness (Herman, 1992). The relational experience can increase the prisoner's awareness of themselves and the world (Gee et al., 2015). Most importantly, it may serve as a freeing and deeply connecting experience for prisoners.

Overall, I feel that there is no right and wrong way to rehabilitate prisoners. All methods and frameworks offer something useful to increase prisoner wellbeing, and most are considered 'good enough' (Winnicott, 2018). My research study, however, provides further suggestions for ways in which practitioners can increase the effectiveness of rehabilitative services by incorporating more therapeutic techniques or psychodynamic psychotherapy in prisons. In increasing the availability and use of these approaches, a warm and supportive environment is provided that allows prisoners to feel seen and heard as an individual. Furthermore, therapeutic approaches allow prisoners to connect with themselves and others and express their own emotions in a healthy way. My findings provide strong arguments as to how psychodynamic psychotherapy, or the use of more therapeutic techniques, can support prisoner wellbeing.

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