The Role of Prisons. To Rehabilitate or Punish?

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INTRODUCTION

A crime is any act that is labelled as such by those in authority, is prohibited by law, and is punishable by the government (Thomas, 1995). Prisons therefore, are places used for confinement of these convicted criminals who pose a potential threat to society. They serve the purpose of punishing criminals, as well as rehabilitating inmates to help them to reassimilate back into society after their release. Whether prisons successfully reform criminals and if so, how, intrigued and interested me, steering me towards the development of my topic—‘To rehabilitate or punish? The role of prisons.’

Primarily, the role of prisons in Australia appears to be to deter any member of society from committing an offence. Furthermore, prisons are a vital institution in modern societies that use systematic approaches to punish or rehabilitate inmates to deter further criminal activity. From this, I became surprisingly captivated and inspired to consult with family and friends who work within the Criminal Justice System. This engaging and insightful investigation will greatly advance my knowledge and open options as I intend to pursue a career within the Criminal Justice System. I propose to examine the perception of the success of prisons as a deterrent of crime, with particular emphasis on gender-related crimes allowing me to intertwine a cross cultural comparison.

In order to gain detailed and relevant data for analysis, I used two forms of methodologies. I distributed questionnaires to individuals, aged 16 and older, allowing me to effectively investigate the role age and gender plays in people’s perceptions of prisons. Questionnaires not only permitted me to retrieve diverse opinions and perspectives but also their value and significance, thus ensuring that I will gain insightful indications into how the micro community feels about prisons and their purpose in society. Here, a cross-cultural perspective will be provided, as the varying age groups and gender responses influence their perceptions. Through conducting interviews with an array of individuals representing the Criminal Justice System, I was able to acquire first-hand knowledge and personal insight allowing me to obtain the viewpoints and opinions of professionals. Furthermore, this method also allowed me to ask follow-up questions, which was particularly useful in clarifying further enquiries. Here, I am also able to attain the fundamental views and values society has on prisons, thus indicating what actions should be taken by authorities, to make prison a successful deterrent of crime.
Primarily, my topic relates to Society and Culture as prisons are an important institution in modern societies. This topic will expand my knowledge far beyond my micro world, as I will gain greater insight into the connection between gender and crime, and society’s views towards released prisoners. Concepts such as power, authority and social class also contribute directly to a better understanding of Society and Culture. All societies and cultures are different, and this particular topic will allow me to explore the variations and similarities, ultimately improving my social and cultural literacy.
LOG ENTRIES

OCTOBER:
After a few days of sieving through past pips and consulting numerous teachers regarding appropriate ideas and areas of study that are relevant to today’s society and culture, I narrowed down to the chosen area of prisons and criminals. On Thursday the 18th, I submitted my first compulsory submission which delineated my area of focus.

NOVEMBER:
From my initial proposal in the first submission, I was still quite unsure as to what section I wanted to approach regarding gender and crime, the role of prisons in society or youth and crime. I primarily sieved through many articles and varying sources, as well as consultations with various teachers, to allow me to narrow my central idea down to one particular focus. As a result of finding valuable articles and coming into contact with professionals within the Criminal Justice System, I narrowed my topic to the role of prisons in society.

DECEMBER:
In early December, I printed and highlighted related articles, particularly rehabilitative processes and the effect of punishment on criminals. Through this continuous research, I chose to primarily focus on whether the role of prisons is to rehabilitate or punish. From this, numerous sources became available, which allowed me to progress with my pip. With ongoing consultations and assistance from my teacher, I prepared my questionnaires and interview questions to complete over the upcoming school holidays.

JANUARY:
For the duration of the January I managed to conduct 3 of the 6 interviews with diverse members with whom work within the Criminal Justice System. These enabled me to access first-hand knowledge and advance my understanding of the role of prisons in society. Furthermore, I had to consider ethical considerations during this period of my research, and account for contradicting opinions and privacy. As I continued with my research I established a brief annotation of 10 resources.

FEBRUARY:
In February, I saw a huge progress in my personal interest project. I attended school on two non-curriculum Wednesdays to finalise my questionnaire before distributing it. From this, I managed to hand out and retrieve 50 responses from varying age groups, allowing me to
analyse and process society’s views on prisons. Interestingly, responses amplified my research and led me to advance on with my PIP, learning that people hold diverse opinions. On Monday the 25th I handed in my second submission.

MARCH/APRIL:
I conducted my remaining three interviews, and gradually drafted my introduction. I attended school on one non-curriculum Wednesday, where I progressed further into defining my three chapters. I began critically analysing responses from both questionnaires and my interviews, which both broadened and directed me to further insights and knowledge.

MAY/JUNE:
By the end of May, I had my chapter ‘Punishment’ completed, and fell close to concluding the ‘Rehabilitation’ chapter. In the month of June, I roughly drafted all three chapters and progressed on to my conclusion. As my research and knowledge advanced, I grew to learn the prominence of prisons in society as correctional institutions.

JULY:
I researched for more recent articles to incorporate into my project, and finalised all three chapters. I consulted numerous teachers on many occasions, submitting drafts and finalising all sections of my work.
CHAPTER ONE – PUNISHMENT

Punishment is the infliction or imposition of a penalty as retribution for an offence. It is a conventional device for the expression of attitudes of resentment and indignation, and of judgements of disapproval and reprobation (The Purpose of Criminal Punishment, 2004). The act of punishing an individual is generally due to unlawful behaviour which is against the norms of society. Although a punishing approach is not pivotal in all prisons as it traditionally was, changes have occurred and led to a closer focus of rehabilitation, however to attain maximal reformation reprimand is often endorsed. In this case, punishment is inflicted upon inmates to deter them from re-committing and, as society and the Criminal Justice System views it, to penalise and punish the criminal for disobeying the norms of that particular society’s or culture’s incentives, laws and regulations.

Punishment is the primary purpose of correctional systems, as those convicted and sentenced to gaol time may present a danger to society. It is through my secondary findings and methodology results, that I propose that punishment may be necessary for correction. This is also apparent to my first interviewee, Policeman Dave Hanna (48 years), who indicated:

‘The role of a prison is first and foremost to punish. I say this because the court has so many sentencing options to use other than prison.’

Dave Hanna, a serving general police officer for twenty three years, asserts a biased judgement towards the role of correctional systems. Furthermore, the reason for this could be due to former experiences or a developed opinion from first-hand involvement, thus evolving this predisposed view. Hanna’s outlook on these modern institutions in society corresponds with NPR (2013), as it concludes that punishment, primarily solitary confinement, brings about a beneficial outcome. This approach uses sensory deprivation to reform inmates. However, amid growing evidence that solitary confinement is inhumane and torturous, an estimated eighty thousand American prisoners still spend twenty-three hours daily, closed in isolation units for 10, 20 or even more than 30 days. Therefore, the success of punishment is questioned, as living in solitary confinement may lead to more self-harm and risk to society, as opposed to favourable outcomes. This foregrounds a change within the reprimand measures employed by correctional systems, as they have slowly veered from the continuity of endorsing punishment first and foremost.
Prisons remain a vital institution in modern societies as certain citizens have diverse values and concerns, which often do not conform to the norms followed by the majority (Giddens, 2001). As these individuals disobey the customs of society, prisons are used to deter potential offenders and ‘punish’ them for their immorality or wrong-doing. This view is again supported by my interviewee Dave Hanna, who advised that:

‘Without this punishment there is nothing to deter any member of society from committing any offence.’

Although to punish and torture is callous, there is considered to be no ‘quick fix’ or any proposal to dissuade further felonious acts. Conversely, how far is too far? Prisons serve the purpose of deterrence; however, correctional systems have the legal right to determine their own means of discipline:

‘Prison management can decide to lock down whole units of a prison. This means prisoners are confined to their cells for up to 20 or more hours a day.’ (Barns, 2012)

Furthermore, Giddens asserts that crime remains a gender phenomenon:

‘Male crimes remain ‘male’ because of differences in socialisation…nowadays ‘womanly’ qualities are seen as largely socially generated, in common with the traits of ‘masculinity’. Many women are socialised to value the different qualities in social life from those valued by males.’ (Giddens, 2001)

This proposes the notion that an individual’s sex determines the type and extent of crimes that will be committed. Among other accusations, such as the presence of partial views when it comes to sentencing possibilities between the contrasting sexes, lies the claim that excessive punishment could potentially be detrimental. There are many ways to destroy a person, but the simplest and most devastating might be solitary confinement. Deprived of meaningful human contact, otherwise healthy prisoners often become unhinged (Guenther, 2012). This New York Times article focuses on the ‘living death’ of solitary confinement. Anthony Graves, a man who spent 18 years on death row in Texas, most of which was in solitary confinement, for a crime he did not commit, resonates his experience in the ‘grey box’. He describes his punishment as ‘emotional torture’, as he was secluded further from society and his usual environment, as opposed to being reformed. Living in such conditions tends to drive a wedge between prison inmates and the outside society, rather than adjust their behaviour to the norms of that society (Giddens 2001).
To further explore the role of gender in the Criminal Justice System, I proposed a question to all my interviewees, each of whom has professional experience related to the Justice System.

‘Do female prisoners get treated differently to male prisons?’

Interestingly, only one respondent claimed that females are treated differently to male criminals. John Booth, Public Defender, stated that they have greater access to a more benign regime of custody, and in prison they are kept in ‘pods’, which are more like homes on the prison grounds. He also asserted that this is not present in male prisons, as:

‘It would not work, nor be beneficial’.

However, a Senior Solicitor for the Hunter Drug Court, whom would prefer to remain anonymous due to personal and confidential reasoning’s, presented a contradictory view:

‘As far as treatment in custody and correctional centres, my observation is that they are treated the same.’

According to the current Bureau of Statistics data (2013), women prisoners are increasing at a faster rate than men. However, female prisoners comprise only 7% of all prisoners in Australia. This enormous imbalance in the ratio of men to women in prison is evident in industrialised countries around the world. Furthermore, there appears to be no gender specific crimes, as there once were.

Crime is one of the most tangible indications of a breakdown in the relationship between the individual and society (Helm & Doward 2012). All prisoners are merely ‘volunteers’ – this term was coined in the comments of this article, which agreed that lengthening and harshening the prison sentences could lead to advantageous outcomes. Furthermore, the comments indicated that many citizens in society encourage the infliction of punishment rather than rehabilitation:
'If the aim of the criminal justice system was to rehabilitate criminals, then prison is the worst place you could put them...prisons should not have any luxuries at all and prisoners should live and work on the states clock, not the other way around.'
(Helm and Doward, 2012)

While this method may reduce non-violent crimes such as burglary or fraud, it presents nothing for high risk offenders or reforming these lawbreakers. Rather, prison does not challenge an individual's behaviour nor does it highlight the damage caused to victims and communities, and it can make matters worse by normalising criminal behaviour and severely affecting an individual's mental and physical health (McDowell, 2012).

To further develop my research in the macro world, and to retrieve the opinions of the public, I included a question in my questionnaire that asked respondents to identify the primary role of prisons. Interestingly, there were variations between the female and male respondents.

Of the 26 female respondents, 50% stated that rehabilitation is the primary role of correctional institutions in today’s society. This may indicate that more females in society view prison as a place of rehabilitation and reformation, rather than inhumane punishment and reprimand. In contrast, the 24 male recipients primarily chose ‘both’, specifying that gaol should incorporate both penalty and restoration. These different indications between the sexes may contribute to varying societies, cultures and behavioural norms, resulting in alternative beliefs concerning the role of correctional systems.
Interestingly, through my qualitative research and secondary sources I have noted that punishment is most commonly advertised as the primary role for prisons in Australia. As I aspire to work within the Criminal Justice System in the near future, the first-hand knowledge gained through my research has not only broadened my outlook towards these correctional institutions, but also familiarised me with the continuing significance of prisons.

Moreover, the continuity in employing punishment in prisons across Australia indicates that it remains a vital method of reforming a deviant male or female. Although it is a torturous measure of treating people who choose to conform against the norms of society, it is proven to be effective.
CHAPTER TWO – REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation can be defined as the restoration of someone to a useful place in society. During the nineteenth century, prisons emerged as places in which to reform criminals so that they could return to society as law-abiding citizens (Thomas W. LaVerne, 1995). Rehabilitative methods seek to reform not only individual convicts, but also the social conditions contributing to criminal culture. Furthermore, while rehabilitation may be the most humane and progressive form of punishment, it is also recognised by the society and the Criminal Justice System as the most challenging.

In order for a released criminal to adjust back into society and follow the customs and norms of that particular culture, rehabilitative measures are obligatory. It is challenging, however, to measure the success of rehabilitative approaches, and recidivism rates have done little to convince those who doubt the effectiveness of rehabilitative techniques. Those incarcerated who undergo treatment also have considerable incentive to feign reform in order to expedite their release. Therefore, this maximises the challenge placed on correctional systems to provide the rigorous restoration required to produce a reformed criminal. Aston (2010) refers to the state’s action of ‘locking away the worst of the worst’. The article focuses on extending rehabilitative measures:

‘Prisoners refusing rehabilitation programs or judged not to have taken responsibility for their crimes will be detained indefinitely under new powers. The plan will build on the Crimes Act, which provides for the extended detention…’

This proposal aims to keep those who resist reformation, and refuse to take responsibility for their actions, in prison.

While the role of prisons is questionable, rehabilitation is prerequisite in any correctional or detention centre. There are many programs in place to reform criminals, however, none that are mandatory. Drug and alcohol courses, anger management programs and the intensive programs run by the Drug Court, are all strategies put forth to promote change in a criminal’s nature. Furthermore, these programs will not be effective unless the underlying issues are addressed. To attain first-hand knowledge, question three of my interview schedule referred to the effectiveness of rehabilitative measures:
‘Have you seen any programs put in place which attempt to reform criminals? Have they worked?’

Remarkably, every interviewee answered ‘yes’, however, each noted that unless the underlying subject was restored, programs cannot be entirely productive. Mick Keys, former Detective Inspector of Police, District Officer, referred me to further secondary sources to investigate a program which was conducted at a few Correctional Centres in Queensland, known as the ‘Sycamore Tree Project’. It was an intensive 5-8 week in-prison program that brings groups of crime victims into prison to meet with unrelated offenders. The project challenged prisoners to confront the debauched and immoral actions they had exhibited, ultimately accelerating their reformation and rehabilitation process. The results of this program presented beneficial outcomes and implemented a means of rehabilitative measures for prisoners.

My primary research responses coincided with Patty (2012), as it draws attention to the prerequisite need for change in how to approach and encourage inmates to partake in rehabilitative measures, as hardening the penalty is not beneficial. This is also apparent to my interviewee Julie Booth, who agreed:

‘The person must want to participate for any kind of program to work. I don’t think compulsory enforcement is beneficial.’

Making prisons thoroughly unpleasant places probably helps deter potential offenders in society; however, it makes the rehabilitating goals of prisons extremely difficult to achieve (Giddens, 2001). Therefore, the influential environment that governs criminals results in the continuity of breaking the law and committing crimes, rather than the achievement of rehabilitation.

The persisting problems with parole concerning high risk offender’s accounts for the low degree of rehabilitation, as unreformed criminals return to their previous environment and continue to defy the social norms and behaviours. The offender’s macro world introduces and influences conflict and aberrant behaviour, further rehabilitative measures should be undertaken, rather than them being returned to society with minimal treatment. This contentious issue is raised in the Newcastle Herald article – ‘Can you rehabilitate a rapist?’ (Misлом, 2013), as researchers draw on the need for change in correcting and reforming
aberrant criminals. The abhorrent crimes committed by sex offenders are ongoing, and as this article notes, attention needs to be focused on treatment and convalescent processes:

‘rather than expecting the perpetrators to be permanently locked up – other than a minority who can’t be rehabilitated – focus has to shift to treatment...I think we’d all feel a lot safer, we’d be a lot safer, if they received treatment...’

Mislom explores the difficulties with modifying a criminal’s nature, as their behaviour and attitudes are something that is often long embedded into their normality and lawless nature. Moreover, the struggle for success concerning rehabilitative measure coincides further with an article in the Crime Files of the Newcastle Herald, which raises great concern towards parolees – a term in the rabidly nasty criminal vocabulary that represents a profanity (Ryan & Proudman, 2013). Parole is the conditional release of a prisoner after serving part of their sentence in a prison. While on parole, the offender is supervised in the community until the end of their sentence (The Parole System, 2012). Typically, a prisoner should show signs of reformation and change before a parole period. However, Mislom refers to the case of convicted murderer Mark Terrence Woods, who succeeded in getting released on parole:

‘...despite concerns when his sentence was redetermined that he was ‘at risk or high risk of reoffending’ and that he had continued his sexually-depraved nature behind bars...one of the reasons promoting his release was that he could not receive any more treatment while inside.’

Correctional institutions have the role of deterring crime and ensuring that people in society are not faced with felons who have the capability of harming others. The above statement concerning the conditional release of high risk criminals accords with my interviewee, retired Judge Chris Geraghty’s comment:

‘...some offenders are very hard to rehabilitate and go on to become serious full time offenders. These people have to be kept away from the community for as long as possible.’

Not only is society faced with hardened detainees, correctional systems are releasing these perilous types of offenders back into society with no rehabilitation. Moreover, these criminals, such as sex offenders, are being released without adequate interventions to reduce the risk that they will reoffend (Travis, 2012).
The need for rehabilitative measures is primarily to reform, and cease criminal activity, however, this interweaves closely with the safety and welfare of people in society. People in different societies and cultures deserve to feel content in their normal environment, therefore, inmates returning into the society need to follow the norms expected. In the opinion of Public Defender John Booth, offenders should partake in rehabilitation programs prior to parole, therefore, if conditionally released, citizens gain some sense of comfort and ease. My final questions of my questionnaire, not only gained opinions from my macro world, but thoughts as to how people feel towards released prisoners, not necessarily just on parole, living nearby.

‘Would you be concerned if a released criminal who committed a serious offence, moved into your city/town?’

‘Would you be concerned if the released criminal moved into your neighbourhood?’
‘Would you be concerned if the released criminal moved into your street?’

Notable in the results, remarkable changes from ‘yes’ to ‘no’ indicated the feelings and attitudes of my respondents changed greatly as the deviants were hypothetically brought closer into their environment. Firstly, there were more ‘no’ responses noted in the first question, however, as the offender was to become closer, the rise of ‘yes’ indicated that individuals tends to feel cautious and considerably uncomfortable with ex-prisoners living nearby. Although few respondents ticked ‘unsure’, the majority of the results indicated that rehabilitation measures may not do enough to ensure that former prisoners are fully reformed. However, some respondents still answered the question with ‘no’, for the reason that these institutions may be effective and deter crime. To amplify further the changed and varying attitudes among people, I have included two contradicting outlooks:

‘I would feel unsafe and at risk. It is a natural response to be concerned – if they have committed a crime once, what is to say they won’t do it again.’ (Female, 30 – 39 years)

‘Do not judge on past experiences.’ (Male, 16 – 19 years)

The idea of reforming and rehabilitating an aberrant and lawless natured individual back into society is what first drew my attention to this topic. Conducting further secondary research and developing my knowledge and understanding of prisons as institutions and environments which may contribute to helping others has heightened my aspiration of working within the Criminal Justice System. It is articles such as ‘Prisons in Latin America’ (Economist, 2012)
which capture the requisite need for more people working to rehabilitate and reform criminals:

‘Not only are prisoners frequently subjected to brutal treatment in conditions of mass overcrowding and extraordinary squalor, but many jails are also themselves run by gangs.’

Furthermore, as these ‘incubators of crime’ (Economist, 2012) release unreformed criminals back into society who have been harshly punished, rehabilitation becomes a top priority. Rehabilitative measures, as opposed to punishment, can transform the nature of deviants and assimilate reformed citizens back into the norms of their society and culture.

In concluding, a change from the prominence of punishment to restoration is notable from my research. As correctional systems across Australia establish rehabilitation programs for all offenders – anywhere from fraud to homicide, prisons play an integral role in reorienting these prisoners back into society, rehabilitated and revitalised.
CHAPTER THREE – RECIDIVISM

Criminal recidivism refers to inmates who have repeatedly offended. Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in the rearrest, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner's release (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013). Primarily, recidivism is an important feature when considering the core criminal justice topics of incapacitation, specific deterrence and rehabilitation. As discussed in my other two chapters – ‘Punishment’ and ‘Rehabilitation’ – the approaches and methods measured by these institutions can often indicate the rate or likelihood of a prisoner reoffending.

In Australia, the current statistics for prisoners in correctional systems in mid June 2012, peaked just short of 30 000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). While this figure is high, the rates for recidivism recorded reached over 50%. These measurements provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics are seemingly significant; however, three of my six interviewees commented that the figures were surprisingly low:

‘I am surprised it is so low. I would have thought that the recidivism rate was significantly higher.’

Chris Geraghty - former Judge for the District Court of NSW.

‘I would have thought that the rate of recidivism is greater than this and the basic reason is that the problems and situations that the prisoner returns to are the same as when they were arrested.’

Senior Solicitor for the Hunter Drug Court

‘I imagine the rate of recidivism is actually much higher for certain kinds of offenders.’

Julie Booth – Senior Solicitor that works for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

This suggests that more than half of all convicted criminals reoffend within three years after being released. This disturbingly high figure coincides with Giddens (2001), who refers to prisons as ‘universities of crime’. Furthermore, Giddens defines the state when a recidivist criminal has risen to a permanent state of non-offending as desistance. Although deterring criminal activity is a top priority for prisons, according to Thomas (1995), correctional
systems serve four basic functions – retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation and social protection. Conversely, these high rates of recidivism indicate that corrections and the methods of punishment and/or rehabilitation are not always effective or beneficial.

My final question of the interviews sought the thoughts of professionals on why these rates are so high. Primarily, their responses associated closely with General Police Officer, Dave Hanna, who stated:

‘My experience of recidivist offenders is that they typically start offending at a young age. Growing up in a low socio-economic area, poor role models or a drug and alcohol addiction is almost always evident.’

This is also apparent through the replies presented from varying age groups in my questionnaire:

‘Statistics show that 50% of criminals reoffend after released from prison. Why do you think criminals reoffend?’

Aged 16-19

Unable to readjust to society
Inadequate rehabilitation programs
Maintain contact with criminals
Other

3
3
1
3

Aged 50 +

Unable to readjust to society
Inadequate rehabilitation programs
Maintain contact with criminals
Other reason/s

1
3
2
4

4
3
1
2
4
Whilst the results for the group aged 16-19 showed a relatively even spread of responses, the 50+ group steered more towards an inability to readjust to society and alleged that maintaining connections with inmates also contributed to their social behaviour. Evidently, age plays a contributing factor to how one perceives the role of prisons in society, and to what extent their knowledge accedes. These results may suggest that the elder generation of society present views based on a more advanced or educated social and cultural literacy.

Gender and age can, in some circumstances, determine the extent and nature of the crime, and whether or not the prisoner will be a recidivist offender. In Holmes (2012), numerous graphs enhanced my research, as it displayed stark differences between the number of males convicted in 1994 (65,888) and females (12,699), and those of which who had reoffended within the following 15 years – males (41,055) and females (6028). These seemingly high recidivist rates peaked at 62% for males and 47% for females. Furthermore, these results indicate that previously males were more likely to be reconvicted as opposed to females. This could further signify that rehabilitation programs and punishment measures need to account for different sexes.

Although the media often portrays ex-prisoners in a negative light, not all criminals are recidivist offenders. As Okonkwo (2012) claims certainty that “prison does not make good citizens”, my interviewee John Booth (Public Defender), would, in some cases, disagree:

‘I am sure that some criminals also do reform whilst in prison and come to the conclusion that crime doesn’t pay, therefore they change their life around. Other people are generally frightened by the prospect of returning to gaol and that is enough to ensure no further reoffending.’

However, failure to provide adequate treatment to deter further criminal activity and reform or rehabilitate an inmate appears to be a significant factor contributing to substantially high recidivism rates.

‘If the prisoner is released with a continuing drug habit or still has the desire to continue using he will eventually reoffend to support that habit. Those who have something to go to after prison, for example, family, government support for housing, work etc, often do not reoffend.’ Dave Hanna (policeman)
This response indicates that socialisation and the surroundings or culture in which a person is brought up, and into which they return, greatly determines whether or not the offender will re-offend.

My interviewee, Chris Geraghty, former Judge in the District Court of NSW for 5 years, and prior to that, a serving Judge for 10 years in the Compensation Court of NSW displayed extensive and conversant knowledge in the area of recidivist offenders. However, at times I had to restrict from asking personal or confidential questions. Furthermore, he claims that many factors contribute to people defying the laws and norms of a society, which in turn led to deviancy:

‘The environments from which many prisoners evolve from generally foresee limited education, serious psychological and psychiatric problems, dysfunctional families and when they are tipped out of the prison they tend to gravitate towards their old friends.’

Here, my interviewee suggests that modifying the nature of a criminal so that he or she never re-offends, is more than just punishing or rehabilitating them whilst in prison, as:

‘Criminal activity has deep roots in a person’s social milieu.’

My interviewee Julie Booth (Senior Solicitor) would argue differently, however, as she presents a contradiction judgement and rather regards these institutions as places of authority and power, which can undermine and possibly reform a criminal. Therefore, these rudimentary programs to support offenders leaving the prison system would be classified as irrelevant. If, however, an offender continually re-offends and displays criminal behaviour as their norm, my interviewee Mick Keys, Police Officer, strongly asserts that generally, deviant behaviour phases out.

‘From my observation, there comes a time in their life when they grow sick of being in prison, of being tied up with the law, with courts and the police, when they want to settle down and be with their family. This comes about when the father of the family or the partner is about 35 or so. At this stage, many crooks give up their offending behaviour and settle down.’
The considerably high recidivist rates in Australia can change and affect how people in society view their personal welfare and safety. As results proved, males are more commonly reconvicted post release, due to contributing factors such as socioeconomic status, limited access to rehabilitative programs or counselling, family, work, education, friends and living arrangements. Therefore, the environment in which they live plays a fundamental role in subjecting ex-prisoners to the norms of a society or culture.
CONCLUSION

Any society which recognises that human beings have diverse values and concerns must find space for individuals or groups whose activities do not conform to the norms followed by the majority (Thomas W. LaVerne, 1995). It is through my primary research that I developed different outlooks and changed views toward these deviants present in society. The enthralling yet alarming information formulated through all of my findings and interview respondents had made for a remarkable journey processing my Personal Interest Project. I have grown to understand my place in society by studying the people in our environment that choose not to conform to the customs and behaviours, which are recognised as the norm in a particular society or culture.

This topic has greatly contributed to my social and cultural literacy as it has heightened my understanding and led me to comprehend the possible motives for why some people in society choose to challenge and contravene the law. Consulting different professionals within the Justice System evidently amplified my research and contributed to the development of my macro world, as well as making me more self-aware of the prominence of prisons in society.

Researching a task needs to be effective and thorough. To ensure that I gained something out of generating this body of work, I chose this particular topic. I not only aspire to study law or criminology next year, but wish to foresee and contribute changes to the Criminal Justice System. Furthermore, the qualitative and quantitative research that I have undergone over this period of investigation has changed me as a person, allowing me to grow and be influenced by those in my macro world. The accumulating number of prisoners in Australia and the astoundingly high rates for recidivism were phenomena I was unaware of prior to my research. I was shocked by the measures of punishment and rehabilitation employed against prisoners in Australia and other countries across the world. Furthermore, the analysis and synthesis of primary and secondary research enabled me to gather intriguing information and develop a deeper understanding of society’s views towards the role of these correctional institutions.

When conducting my interviews and employing questionnaires, I had to remain unbiased and take into account ethical considerations as prison and criminal activity can be a profound, confidential or personal subject. Although all of my interviewees were fairly open to discussion and expanding on my open-ended questions, I still had to be aware of my limits regarding intrusive queries on private matters. Therefore, to remain objective while
conducting my methodologies I proposed rudimentary yet fundamental questions that would enhance and enable me to advance and amplify my project.

By investigating the perception of the public and professionals, I was able to integrate a cross-cultural perspective of age and gender into my Personal Interest Project. From this project, I have grown to understand the impact that deviant activity has on society, which is why I have developed more enlightened views regarding whether prisons should rehabilitate or punish offenders.
RESOURCE LIST

Books

Giddens’ sociology text explores the areas of crime and deviance but in particular, the benefits and faults of prisons. This book contributes to my Personal Interest Project by directly addressing the question of whether prisons are the answer to crime, and their effectiveness. The view of prisons as a powerful deterrent to crime and whether they accomplish their intended role of reforming and rehabilitating is examined. Giddens suggests that prisons do not succeed in rehabilitating criminals, but rather deter people from committing crimes. This judgement alone will broaden my topic’s focus and allow me to gain greater insight into prisons and their role in society.

Thomas W. LaVerne (1995) Sociology. 5th ed. USA: Addison-Wesley
While this sociology text proposed justifications similar to Giddens, it amplified further the particular use of prisons and the role they play in society. These institutions are recognised in this source as environments which encourage aberrant prisoners to reform and develop the social and cultural norms of the society into which they are returning. Therefore, the ideas and arguments proposed in this secondary source allowed me to amplify and expand on all three chapters.

Electronic Articles

This article from the Sydney Morning Herald explores the radical plan put forth by the NSW Government, which targets prisoners who resist any form of rehabilitation. The article focuses on extending ‘the worst of the worst’ prisoners’ sentences, locking them behind bars and declining their release. This article will assist in my research of the public’s opinions regarding rehabilitation, as it includes a bar graph indicating that 63% of people who
participated in the poll agree with the plan to extend sentence periods for those who reject reformation.


The statistics provided on this website became valuable data that was used in my chapter on punishment. I used these statistics to illustrate and make evident the imbalanced ratio between female and male prisoners in Australia.


This resource focused primarily on the treatment of inmates and refers to criminals as ‘dehumanised’. The article provides useful points that will assist in my chapter on ‘Recidivism’, as it discusses the benefits in European and Scandinavian countries, which have a low recidivism rate due to their approach to ‘punishment’. An intriguing point which can be quoted in my recidivism chapter, ‘prisons in these countries are designed like university campuses, staff eat with inmates... ’ recognises a different perspective and approach to punishment and rehabilitation.

**Bureau of Justice Statistics [online]. (2013). Available from:**


The Bureau of Justice Statistics became a reliable and useful source throughout all three chapters in my Personal Interest Project – providing current statistics regarding recidivist rates, prisoners in Australia, and particular rates of crimes and gender related offences.

**Doward J. & Helm T. (2012) 'Longer Prison terms really do cut crime, study shows'. The Observer. 7th July.**

This article published in early July 2012, argues that longer sentences do decrease levels of crimes. It does not focus particularly on rehabilitation processes but rather increasing the level and duration of time served by the criminals to enforce harder punishment for serious offenders. The article incorporates statistics and a range of comments, which also support the idea of extending sentences, which are useful to my study. The comments were significant, as both positives and negatives of extended time were explored, also touching on the fact that prisoners are not in there long enough to benefit. The central argument is that a longer
sentence means a longer period of time for rehabilitation, which is evidently an aspect of relevance for my PIP.

Solitary confinement – deprived of all meaningful human contact. This article examines the horrific results of solitary confinement as a form of intense punishment. Useful quotes including ‘emotional torture’ and ‘living in a black hole’ will assist me in my central material for both chapters of ‘Punishment’ and ‘Rehabilitation’ as they confront the feelings of inmates who struggle to reform due to the level of punishment. Depriving a prisoner of both support and contact with others is strangely recognised as a way to reform prisoners, however, this article argues otherwise.

This source enabled me to view the reconviction rates of contrasting genders and ages through graphs. I used this information in the form of percentages and statistics, to incorporate a study on the differences of recidivist rates between the opposing genders.

I was directed to this website by my interviewee, former Policeman Mick Keys. The site enabled me to gain an insightful view into an approach used by some Queensland prisons as a means of rehabilitating their prisoners. Whilst it primarily assisted me within my chapter on rehabilitation, it also contributed relevant information regarding measures taken to prevent and reduce recidivist offenders – as seen in my third chapter.

This article interestingly explores the view that longer sentences do not cut crime, stating that prisons are not the correct place for criminals to gain rehabilitation. McDowell argues that
simply extending a prisoner’s sentence will only delay their next offence, rather than rehabilitating them and ensure no repeat offences. McDowell’s main focus highlights that prison does not challenge an individual’s behaviour and that it can make matters worse by normalising criminal behaviour. This article focuses on enforcing prison programs to ensure effective rehabilitation, which is a central concern in my research.

This secondary source was important for my third chapter ('Recidivism') as the article focused on the need for implemented rehabilitation measures or treatment to ground some sort of success. While Mislom predominantly argued for the requisite treatment of all serious offenders, statistics and further points proposed by Attorney General Greg Smith amplified my research regarding recidivism and the process of reformattting and releasing prisoners back into society.

This resource questions the success of solitary confinement and the role punishment plays in the correction of a criminal, with regards to reasimilating back into society’s norms and customs. This article heightened my argument regarding punishment and prisons, whilst providing an insight into a diverse culture – America. Primarily, it proposed that isolation and captivity show no success of rehabilitation; rather, it is detrimental to an individual’s behaviour, largely influencing my argument on both rehabilitation and punishment.

This source provided me with background knowledge of the treatment and rehabilitation methods provided to youth prisoners. I directly quoted the title of this article to contradict an argument proposed by one of my interviewees and instigate a contrasting view whether or not correctional institutions can provide the rigorous rehabilitation needed to change deviant people.

This article examines the results of harsher punishment versus increasing the risk of arrest and imprisonment. Interestingly, it argues that - ‘governments should be focusing more on strategies to increase the risk of arrest and less on increasing the severity of punishments’. In comparison to other articles and resources, this judgement will allow me to expand on my chapter on punishment as many oppose the idea of harsher punishment and rather support increasing the risk of arrest in society.


This article allowed me to develop my rehabilitation chapter by introducing the problems concerning parole in today’s society. This source promoted the need for rehabilitation within prisons and correctional systems as it provided a first-hand account where parolee, Adrian Bayley, was released from prison with no treatment or attempt at reformation. Therefore, this provided insightful and useful ideas which greatly assisted in my research and finalisation of my second chapter – ‘Rehabilitation’.


Ralston’s article examines the proposal of a law which suggests violent criminals who show no signs of rehabilitation should be kept in longer or remain under high levels of surveillance upon release. Ralston argues for prolonging the imprisonment of harmful offenders who have not undertaken or gained anything from rehabilitation programs. This article focuses on enforcing stricter rules of rehabilitation as well as punishment for those who reoffend, although this could jeopardise particular parts of the justice system and challenge rules. Therefore, this source contributes significant opinions regarding the challenges of offering rehabilitation in prisons.

‘A Journey into Hell’ explores prisons in Latin America, which show no signs of rehabilitation or deterring crimes. The article reveals the functioning of particular prisons in the Latin American culture, where criminals are kept in prisons run by gangs. The subheading, ‘Far from being secure places for rehabilitation, too many of the region’s jails are violent incubators of crime’, demonstrates the article’s focus and will effectively assist in exploring the approaches to rehabilitation or punishment in a different society and culture. The article also allows me to incorporate a cross-cultural perspective between the role of prisons in the Hispanic culture and our culture.


I used this source to define the term ‘parole’. It was important to address the meaning of this word, as I repeatedly referred to it in my chapter on rehabilitation.


This source enabled me to accurately define the word ‘punishment’. It provided me with a cogent and easily understood definition that opened my chapter. The chapter also delivered an insightful and comprehensive overview of the effectiveness and employment of punishment in correctional systems.


This article focuses on the struggle for the implementation of rehabilitation programs in overcrowded prisons. While it will primarily contribute valuable arguments for my chapter of rehabilitation, it also explores the wanton and inhumane standard of living for these prisoners in the UK. This will also incorporate a cross-cultural element as their society differs from ours, and the values they place upon reforming offenders, also shows variations.
**Primary Research**

**Interview**

After conducting several interviews with various representatives of the Criminal Justice System, I gained first-hand knowledge and insight into the world of correctional centres. This methodology was extremely useful as it led me to attain worthwhile information and progress with my Personal Interest Project, evidently expanding my understanding of both my micro and macro worlds.

1. Hanna, Dave (2013). *Interview with The researcher*. 13th January 2013. Maitland General Duties Police Officer - presented the most knowledgeable and useful information for my project. He developed on each question I asked, enabling me to fully understand his role in the correctional system, and his view of prisons in society.

2. anon. (2013). *Interview with The researcher*. 20th January 2013. Newcastle. Senior Solicitor for the Hunter Drug Court – this interviewee directed me to further sources regarding programs implemented in prisons to assist in the rehabilitation of criminals. She enhanced my research by providing me with first-hand accounts and personal assertions which led me to effectively evaluate all three of my chapters.

3. Booth, Julie (2013). *Interview with The researcher*. 7th February 2013. Maitland. Senior Solicitor (works for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions) – this interviewee provided strong and useful comments regarding the high levels of recidivism. Therefore, her insights and justifications contributed to my chapter on recidivism.

4. Booth, John (2013). *Interview with The researcher*. 17th February 2013. Maitland. Public Defender – inspired my research into a cross-cultural component – whether females are treated differently to males in the Criminal Justice System. As he spoke of his direct experiences of been in prisons throughout his career, I was able to develop my comparison between the sexes, using comments presented by him.

5. Geraghty, Chris (2013). *Interview with The researcher*. 22nd February. Email. Former Judge in the District Court of NSW and in the Compensation Court of NSW – contributed greatly to my entire study, as he recollected past cases and offered personal insight into all aspects of the Criminal Justice System.

Police Officer – became an interviewee, with whom I frequently associated to gain further insight into his views and experiences. To assist my research further, he directed me to a range of sources which I used throughout all stages of my PIP.

**Questionnaire**

Surveying a large group (50) of various ages, enabled me to attain a variety of perspectives and opinions of the role of prisons in society. Through this primary research, I have discovered that most of my participants view prisons purpose as to both punish and rehabilitate. Interestingly, I also noticed that majority ticked ‘yes’, in response to making rehabilitation programs compulsory. This greatly assisted me in my argument within my chapter of rehabilitation. The anonymity of the questionnaire allowed me to gain honest views and insights into the role of prisons in our society.