Education and incarceration: an interpretive study of prisoners’ narratives

Tasman Anthony Bedford MBus BEd BSc

School of Education and Professional Studies, Faculty of Education, Griffith University

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2007
Abstract
The study had two aims. The first aim was to develop and present an understanding of the lived experience of selected individual prisoners relating to their formal education and vocational training. The second aim was to identify points of potential heuristic interest relating to ostensible needs for social action to reduce the incidence of juvenile and continuing engagement by individuals in criminal activities, and to address education and vocational training issues relating to the integration or reintegration of incarcerated offenders into the wider Australian society after their release from custody. A constructivist conceptual framework was adopted to guide the selection of the methodology of the study and the interpretation of the data obtained through implementation of the methodology. The methodology involved analysis of written transcripts of audio-recorded self-narratives of selected prisoners to generate the data used in the study. Prisoners from three Queensland correctional centres for adult males were selected for participation in the study primarily on the basis of their personal history of juvenile and continuing engagement in criminal offending principally associated with obtaining financial income, and their willingness to voluntarily participate. Participants’ self-narratives, relating principally to their lived experience of formal education and vocational training, were audio-recorded in individual, relatively unstructured interview sessions with the researcher. Written transcripts of the audio-recordings of interview sessions with a total of 15 participants were selected for analysis on the basis of their apparent relevance to the aims of the study. Two general types of narrative analysis methods were used to analyse the transcripts. The first of these was simple inspection of each transcript, which was used to identify categories of background information about the participants, including selected inferred general characteristics of such prisoners, and to identify instances of the content of these categories in individual cases. Inferred characteristics of prisoners were constructed from a review of literature relating to prisoners in Australia, and were selected for inclusion in the study on the basis of claimed relationships between people’s experience of disadvantage during their juvenile years and their engagement in a criminal career which they began in their juvenile years. The second general type of narrative analysis which was used in the study was interpretive narrative analysis. Two forms of interpretive narrative analysis were used to construct concepts from the individual transcripts. Three types of concepts, labelled ‘specific topics’, personal meanings’, and ‘social meanings’, were constructed. An understanding of the lived experience of each individual participant was constructed as an interpretive synthesis of inferred
background information about the participant, and specific topics, personal meanings, and social meanings which were constructed from the transcript of his narrative. Apparent relationships within and between sets of data constructed in the study were examined with reference to outcomes of a review of literature relating to topics of social disadvantage of people in Australia and of prisoners in Australia. These apparent relationships were examined in order to identify points of potential heuristic interest relating to ostensible needs for taking social action. Apparent relationships between specific topics, personal meanings, and social meanings, within each type of concept and between each type of concept, in the whole set of data constructed in the study were examined first with reference to the literature. Following this examination, apparent relationships amongst inferred characteristics of the participants, and between inferred characteristics and specific topics, personal meanings, and social meanings in the whole set of constructed data, were examined with reference to the literature. From the outcomes of these examinations, speculative suggestions were made regarding the need to take social actions aimed at reducing the incidence of engagement in a criminal career beginning in the juvenile years, and at reducing the incidence of recidivism by ex-prisoners who have a personal history of engagement in a criminal career which began in their juvenile years.

The researcher’s constructed understandings of the lived experiences of the participants, relating to their basic formal education and vocational training, demonstrated a highly individualised nature of meanings by which participants seemed to have conceptualised their experience. There appeared to be considerable diversity of these meanings amongst the participants. However, several common themes appeared to have emerged. Of the approximately 67 per cent of participants who had a personal history of juvenile and continuing engagement in criminal activities, 90 per cent appeared to have experienced social disadvantage, including some form of educational disadvantage, during their childhood. Seventy per cent appeared to have conceptualised their experience in terms of a specific meaning of disadvantage or of a specific meaning of lost opportunity. Eighty per cent appeared to have conceptualised their experience in terms of a general meaning of conformity to norms of conventional Australian society. Seventy per cent had voluntarily participated in at least one formal education or vocational training program during their incarceration.

The findings of the study seemed to indicate a need for social actions aimed at reducing the incidence of continuing engagement in criminal activities beginning in the juvenile years, and at facilitating the successful integration into society of offenders
who have a personal history of continuing engagement in criminal activities which began in their juvenile years. These types of actions would appear to include identification of incidences of individuals’ childhood experience of social disadvantage, and interventions at the family and school levels to address such disadvantage, and a comprehensive, individualised, holistic, approach to prisoner education which is designed to facilitate prisoners’ achievement of legitimate, personal satisfying careers after their release from custody.
Statement of originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Tasman Anthony Bedford
GUID 1651609

04/02/2008
# Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter One: An introduction to the study</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The aims of the study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The origins of the study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The philosophical orientation and methodological approach</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The research procedures of the study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The types and uses of data involved in the study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of the contents of each chapter</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Two</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Seven</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Eight</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Nine</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Ten</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Eleven</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Twelve</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Thirteen</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Two: Literature review</th>
<th>13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposes of the review</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for undertaking the review</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The scope and structure of the review</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational disadvantage</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developments in Australian public policy, 1970s-2000</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major concepts and issues</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian public policy interpretations</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty and educational disadvantage in Australia</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty, crime and incarceration</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational disadvantage and incarceration</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian prisoners: social background characteristics</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and training for prisoners in Australia</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of main points</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for research</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Three: The conceptual framework and methodology of the study</th>
<th>65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General justification for the methodology of the study</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist understandings of knowledge</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processes in the construction of knowledge</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bases of constructed knowledge</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and meaning</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge, meaning and interpretive self-narrative analysis</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal meaning and self-narrative analysis</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: Research procedures of the study</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nature, form and sources of the data</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of the interview-session participants</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The primary data-gathering procedures</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of analysis of the sets of interview transcripts</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic analysis of the content of spoken self-narrative</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic analysis of the form of spoken self-narrative</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of transcripts for inclusion in the study</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Five: Evaluation considerations</th>
<th>115</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality and objectivity in research: philosophical orientations</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative criteria</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity and objectivity</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalisability</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The contemporary situation: a convergence of interpretations?</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of the research community in the evaluation of research</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The evaluation of knowledge claims</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The representation of phenomena in the study</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria for evaluation of the study</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Six: General information constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives</th>
<th>143</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General information relating to the participants</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenny</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lionel</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigel</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Conclusion

Summary of general information 160
Inferred general characteristics of participants 162

### Chapter Seven: Specific topics constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives

**Introduction** 167

Specific topics constructed from individual transcripts 171

- Aaron 171
- Barry 172
- Bill 173
- Brian 174
- David 176
- George 178
- Jim 181
- Lenny 184
- Lionel 185
- Nigel 186
- Noel 190
- Patrick 192
- Sean 194
- Shane 196
- Stephen 198

Conclusion 200

### Chapter Eight: Personal meanings constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives

**Introduction** 204

Personal meanings constructed from individual transcripts 206

- Aaron 206
- Barry 207
- Bill 208
- Brian 208
- David 209
- George 211
- Jim 213
- Lenny 215
- Lionel 216
- Nigel 217
- Noel 219
- Patrick 220
- Sean 221
- Shane 223
- Stephen 223

Conclusion 225

### Chapter Nine: Social meanings constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives

**Introduction** 230

Social meanings constructed from individual transcripts 232

- Aaron 232
- Barry 233
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenny</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lionel</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigel</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion** ................................................................................................................ 247

Chapter 10: An understanding of the lived experience of individual participants 249  
Introduction ................................................................................................................ 249

**The researcher’s understanding of participants’ lived experience** ....................... 251

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenny</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lionel</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigel</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion** ................................................................................................................ 265

Chapter Eleven: An examination of apparent relationships between social meanings, personal meanings, and specific topics constructed in the study 272  
Introduction .............................................................................................................. 272

**Apparent relationships among and between concepts** ........................................... 273

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inferred relationships among social meanings</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferred relationships between social meanings and personal meanings</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferred relationships between social meanings and specific topics</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferred relationships involving infrequently-occurring social meanings</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferred relationships between the three types of constructed concepts</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions** .............................................................................................................. 283

Chapter Twelve: An examination of apparent relationships between inferred characteristics of participants and concepts constructed in the study 288  
Introduction .............................................................................................................. 288

**Inferred characteristics of the participants** ............................................................ 290

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coincidences of inferred characteristics</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons between the conceptual content of subsets of transcripts</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions ......................................................................................................................... 326

Chapter Thirteen: A summary and discussion of the study 335
Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 335
Summary .......................................................................................................................... 335
Aims of the study 335
Methodological aspects of the study 336
Data used in the study, and how the data were used 337
The main findings ......................................................................................................... 338
Conclusion: Apparent needs for social action ............................................................... 345

References 352

List of tables
Table 1 .............................................................................................................................. Appendix B
Table 2 ............................................................................................................................ 163
Table 3 ............................................................................................................................ 164
Table 4 ............................................................................................................................ 202
Table 5 ............................................................................................................................ 228
Table 6 ............................................................................................................................ 229
Table 7 ............................................................................................................................ 248
Table 8 ............................................................................................................................ 268
Table 9 ............................................................................................................................ 284
Table 10 ............................................................................................................................ 285
Table 11 ............................................................................................................................ 286
Table 12 ............................................................................................................................ 290
Table 13 ............................................................................................................................ 292

List of illustrations
Figure 1: Main relationships between categories of constructed data, and major interventions indicated ......................................................................................................................... 334

List of appendices
Appendix A: Example of the interpretive analyses of the transcripts of participants’ narrative
Appendix B: Table of outcomes of the holistic-content analysis of the transcript of Nigel’s narrative – special foci of interest grouped under conceptually-related broad categories of subject-matter content
Chapter One

An introduction to the study

Introduction

This chapter presents an introduction to the study by way of a brief outline of the following components:

- a statement of the aims,
- an account of the origins,
- the philosophical orientation of the study,
- the methodology used and the reasons for the choice of the methodology,
- the research procedures used in the study,
- general criteria and standards by which the study could be evaluated,
- the types of data involved in the study and how these data were obtained,
- how the data were used in the study to achieve the aims of the study, and
- the contents of the remaining chapters of this document.

The aims of the study

The study had the following two aims:

1. To develop and present an understanding of the lived experience of selected individual prisoners relating to their formal education and vocational training.

2. To identify points of potential heuristic interest relating to ostensible needs for social action to reduce the incidence of juvenile and continuing engagement by individuals in criminal activities, and to address education and vocational training issues relating to the integration or reintegration of incarcerated offenders into the wider Australian society after their release from custody.

With reference to aim One, the prisoners of interest in the study were males who had a personal history of engagement in criminal activities as juveniles and repeated engagement in criminal activities, primarily as a source of financial income, throughout their post-juvenile years, and were located in a Queensland correctional centre.

An account of the general relationships between the aims and origins of the study is now presented here.

The origins of the study

The researcher’s personal interest in the study stemmed from his experience in the
provision of education services to prisoners in Australian corrective facilities, principally in Queensland correctional centres, in the form of a pre-tertiary bridging program. As the program was developed as an equity and access program to provide a pathway by which adults whose experience of educational disadvantage had effectively precluded them from opportunity to access higher education via traditional pathways, most prisoners who enrolled in the program demonstrated evidence of experience of educational disadvantage at the basic formal education level.

In an attempt to gain information about the nature and extent of educational disadvantage which had been experienced by prisoners in Australian jurisdictions, as input to the ongoing evaluation and development of the bridging program, the researcher searched the available literature. He found that the only information available which related to the education experiences of prisoners in Australia was in the form of aggregated data collected prior to 1992, and of opinions expressed in some investigative reports (for example: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1992; Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1996; Walker et. al., 1991). Examination of the available aggregated data showed that, compared to the general Australian adult population, adult prisoners in Australia generally had significantly lower levels of educational attainment in terms of completed years of formal education, and had experienced significantly longer periods of unemployment. The aggregated data showed that a high percentage of prisoners in Australia had personal histories of repeated involvement in criminal activities beginning in their juvenile years. Opinions based, in part, on the experience of educators working in corrective facilities, indicated that relatively large proportions of prisoners in Australia had extremely low levels of literacy and numeracy skills. Although the available information clearly indicated to the researcher that a relatively high percentage of prisoners in Australia appeared to have experienced educational disadvantage and life events such as unemployment and repeat offending which were purported, in some investigative reports, to be related to such experience, none of this information provided the researcher with an understanding of personal life history factors which were associated with the experience, and which may have affected prisoners’ responses to opportunity to participate in the bridging program. On the basis of these tentative findings from the literature, and of a need, as a provider of educational services to prisoners, to gain a more detailed understanding of the educational backgrounds of prisoners who had a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activities, the researcher decided to undertake a study which would provide him with a greater understanding of the lived experience of at least some
such prisoners relating to their formal education, and with some possible insights regarding social actions, including education interventions, which may assist such prisoners to undertake a more socially acceptable career pathway than the pathway which, ostensibly, had led to their repeated incarcerations. A full account of the literature reviewed in the study is presented in Chapter Two. Before choosing a methodological approach by which the aims of the study could be achieved, the researcher chose a conceptual framework for the design of the study from a consideration of the general philosophical orientation which appeared to have been assumed by him in the development of the concept of the study from its origins.

A brief outline of the philosophical orientation and corresponding conceptual framework of the study is now presented here.

**The philosophical orientation and methodological approach**

Early in his career as an adult educator, the researcher adopted a constructivist perspective on adult education, incorporating the fundamental assumptions that adults construct their conceptualisations of their lived experience from various input sources which impinge on that experience, that such conceptualisations are at least in some major ways peculiar to the individual, and that individuals tend to act on the basis of their own conceptualisations (for example: Noddings, 1995; Phillips, 2000a). In relation to adults’ responses to formal education activities, or to any structured program involving personal change, the researcher assumes that, at least initially, an adult person tends to respond to the prospect of engaging in structured activities in terms of how he or she has previously conceptualised such activities, and that her or his subsequent responses are strongly influenced by his or her preconceptions relating to such activities. Adoption of these assumptions strongly influenced the researcher’s choice of a constructivist philosophical framework for the design and implementation of the study. The researcher assumed that the development of an understanding, albeit the researcher’s constructed understanding, of individual prisoners’ conceptualisations relating to their lived experience of formal education was a necessary starting point for anticipating the likely response of individual prisoners to opportunities to participate in a formal education program, and thus, for attempting to design and implement a program with which the prisoner was likely to engage initially and to continue to engage. The researcher assumed that these assumptions apply to any structured intervention which is intended to encourage and assist an adult person to change in some way. The application of these assumptions to the design and implementation of
such interventions appears to necessitate the development, on the part of the designers and implementers, of an understanding of the conceptualisations of the intended recipients of the intervention of aspects of the intervention which appear salient to the recipients. Considering these assumptions, the researcher sought means by which he could access information which would enable him to develop an understanding which represented, as directly as possible, the conceptualisations of the selected prisoners of their lived experiences relating to their formal education. A full account of the philosophical orientation of the study is presented in Chapter Three. After identifying the general philosophical orientation of the study, and developing a corresponding conceptual framework for the design of the study, the researcher chose a methodological approach which appeared to be consistent with the conceptual framework.

A brief outline of the methodology of the study, and of the researcher’s reasons for choosing this methodological approach, is now presented here.

**The research procedures of the study**

After reviewing a range of literature dealing broadly with how researchers have attempted to develop understandings of how another person conceptualises aspects of that person’s lived experience, the researcher chose interpretive analysis of self-narrative as the basic methodology for the study by which such understanding could be constructed by the researcher (for example: Lieblich et. al., 1998, Mishler, 1986a). On the basis of scholarly opinion expressed in the literature (for example: Mishler, 1996a; Weiss, 1994), the researcher assumed that spoken self-narratives of a prisoner, relating to his formal education and vocational training, could be obtained through conducting a relatively unstructured interview session with him, provided that the prisoner’s participation in such a session was entirely on a voluntary basis and that he understood that the purpose of the session was for the researcher to listen to, and audio-record, whatever the prisoner chose to say about his lived experience relating to his formal education and vocational training. The implementation of the methodology involved the audio-recording of spoken self-narratives of selected prisoners, relating to their experiences of formal education, and the interpretive analysis of the verbal content of the audio-recordings. Implementation of the methodology required obtaining the necessary approvals and making arrangements to conduct and audio-record interview sessions with selected prisoners. Audio-recorded trial interview sessions were conducted with three prisoners who volunteered to participate in a trial session, and
evaluative feedback about the conduct of the sessions was obtained from the three prisoners and their Education Officer, for the purpose of assessing the appropriateness of the researcher’s planned method for conducting the interview sessions. A total of 24 prisoners were selected as voluntary participants in individual interview sessions with the researcher. The audio-recordings of interview sessions with 15 participants were selected for inclusion in the study, on the bases of the apparent narrative nature of the participant’s speech during the interview session and of the conformity of the participant’s characteristics to the characteristics chosen for the selection of participants in the study. A full account of the research procedures used in the study is presented in Chapter Four.

Prior to fully implementing the methodology of the study the researcher identified criteria and standards which appeared to be appropriate for the evaluation of the study, in an attempt to ensure that the study conformed to appropriate methodological criteria and standards. The researcher identified criteria and standards for the evaluation of the study by a critical examination of literature on the topic of the evaluation of research studies (for example: Delanty, 1997; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hammersley, 1992; Mishler, 1990). The researcher determined that appropriate general criteria for the evaluation of the study were concepts of plausibility and trustworthiness, and that an appropriate general standard for the application of the criteria was the judgement of a relevant community of scholars. A full account of the researcher’s consideration regarding the evaluation of the study in relation to the methodology chosen for the study is presented in Chapter Five. Implementation of the methodology generated various types of data.

The general typology of the data used in the study will now be briefly outlined here.

**The types and uses of data involved in the study**

After obtaining the audio-recordings of the interview sessions, the researcher made a written transcription of each audio-recording. He interpretively analysed the content of each transcript, using several methods of analysis including two methods of interpretive analysis of spoken self-narrative as described in the literature. He assumed that the study involved the use of two general categories of data, viz., primary data and constructed data. The primary data consisted of the audio-recorded utterances of the participants, which were assumed by the researcher to constitute at least one self-narrative spoken by the participant. The constructed data consisted of the written
transcripts of the audio-recordings and of constructions made by the researcher from the contents of the transcripts by processes of analysis. Constructions made by the researcher from the contents of the transcripts constituted two sub-categories of data, viz. general information about each individual participant, including inferred general characteristics of the participant, and concepts constructed by the researcher. General information about each participant, including inferred general characteristics, is presented in Chapter Six.

Concepts constructed by the researcher from the contents of the transcripts constituted three sub-sub-categories (here termed ‘micro-categories’) of data, which the researcher labelled ‘specific topics’, ‘personal meanings’, and ‘social meanings’. These concepts correspond closely to concepts described by Lieblich et al. (1998), as explicated in Chapter Four. The general nature of each of these types of concepts, and the reasons why the researcher gave them special labels, are explicated in the same chapter. The researcher assumed that specific topics constitute the most specific, least conceptually inclusive concepts constructed in the study, and that social meanings constitute the broadest, most conceptually inclusive concepts. Each type of concept is presented in this thesis document in the order of the assumed specificity and conceptual inclusiveness of the type of concept, from most specific and least conceptually inclusive to least specific and most conceptually inclusive. The order of presentation of each of the three types of concepts is: specific topics, then personal meanings, then social meanings. Specific topics constructed from the transcript of the narrative of individual participants, and a demonstration of the grounding of the researcher’s construction of specific topics in the contents of the transcripts, are presented in Chapter Seven. Personal meanings constructed from the transcript of the narrative of individual participants, and a demonstration of the grounding of the researcher’s construction of personal meanings in the contents of the transcripts, are presented in Chapter Eight. Social meanings constructed from the transcript of the narrative of individual participants, and a demonstration of the grounding of the researcher’s construction of social meanings in the contents of the transcripts, are presented in Chapter Nine.

To achieve the first stated aim of the study, the researcher constructed a synthesis of constructed data relating to individual participants as presented in Chapters Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine. The synthesis of constructed data constitutes the researcher’s constructed understanding of the lived experience of the individual participants, relating to the participant’s formal education and vocational training. The researcher’s completed constructed understanding of the lived experience of each
individual participant, relating to the participant’s experience of formal education and vocational training, is presented in Chapter Ten.

To achieve the second stated aim of the study, the researcher identified apparent relationships between concepts within sub-categories of constructed data, and between concepts across the sub-categories, and identified ostensible relationships between the identified apparent relationships and information derived from the review of literature presented in Chapter Two. The identification of apparent relationships between concepts within the micro-categories of social meanings, personal meanings, and specific topics, and their ostensible relationship to information obtained from the literature, is presented in Chapter Eleven. The identification of apparent relationships within the micro-category of inferred general characteristics of participants, of apparent relationships between concepts across inferred general characteristics of participants, of ostensible relationships between these apparent relationships and information obtained from the literature, and of points of possible heuristic interest relating to the formal education and vocational training of prisoners, is presented in Chapter Twelve. A discussion of the study as a whole, including the researcher’s speculations regarding possible indications of needs for social action relating to the formal education and vocational training experiences of prisoners, which appear to emerge from the findings of the study, are presented in Chapter Thirteen, which is the final chapter of this thesis document.

An introductory account of the aims, origins, philosophical orientation, methodology, research procedures, and data of the study has been presented here. A brief outline of the contents of the remaining chapters of this thesis document will now be presented here, showing where details of each component of the document are presented.

**Outline of the contents of each chapter**

**Chapter Two**

Chapter Two presents a review of literature, beginning with literature which, in part, gave rise to the origins of the study. Major issues arising from an initial examination of literature associated with the origins of the study, particularly the issues of the various conceptualisations of educational disadvantage in Australian public policy and of their ostensible relationships to the lived experience of prisoners in Australia, during periods of time of particular relevance to the study, are examined. Policy and practices relating to the provision of formal education and vocational training to prisoners in Australia are
Chapter Three
Chapter Three presents an account of the general methodological approach taken in the study, in terms of the constructivist philosophical orientation of the study as a whole and of the corresponding conceptual framework adopted for its design and implementation, in relation to the aims and origins of the study. An examination is made, with reference to the literature, of constructivist theory relating to the nature of human knowledge and its relationships to human experience, to meanings that people associate with their lived experience, and to the understanding of lived experience. From this examination, constructivist criteria for the evaluation of knowledge claims and constructivist assumptions regarding knowledge, meaning and understanding are identified. Relationships between knowledge, meaning and the interpretation of self-narrative are examined, with reference to the literature. From this examination, concepts labelled by the researcher as ‘specific topics’, ‘personal meanings’, and ‘social meanings’ related to concepts described in the literature of interpretive narrative analysis are identified, and the researcher’s reasons for the labelling of these concepts are explained. Specific methods of interpretive analysis of spoken self-narrative, to be used in the study, are identified from the literature, and their relationship to the conceptual framework adopted for the study is discussed.

Chapter Four
Chapter Four presents a detailed account of the research procedures used in the study, in relation to the general methodological approach adopted for the study. The types of data to be obtained through the use of specific research procedures are identified. Details of the data-gathering procedures, including the selection of participants for the study and the conduct of the data-gathering individual interview sessions, are provided. An account is given of the conduct and evaluation of trial interview sessions, which preceded the implementation of the data-gathering interview sessions. Procedures used for the interpretive analyses of the written transcripts of the narratives of the participants are described in detail, with explication and illustration of how specific topics, personal meanings, and social meanings were constructed from the transcripts by the researcher.

Chapter Five
Chapter Five presents an examination, with reference to the literature, of criteria and standards for the evaluation of research studies, and offers conclusions regarding
appropriate criteria and standards for the evaluation of the study. From examination of the literature, the conceptualisation of reality is identified as a major issue in relation to the evaluation of research studies. Traditional realist and traditional constructivist interpretations of the meaning of reality, and their applications to the identification of criteria and standards for the evaluation of research studies, are compared and contrasted. Within the context of traditional realist and traditional constructivist concepts of reality and their applications, a variety of criteria for the evaluation of naturalistic and interpretive studies are critically examined. From this critical examination, general criteria and standards ostensibly appropriate for the evaluation of interpretive studies of spoken self-narrative are identified. The application of these general criteria and standards to the particular case of the study is discussed.

**Chapter Six**

Chapters Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine present constructed data of the study. Chapter Six presents general background information about each participant, including each participant’s general characteristics inferred from the transcript of his narrative. Inferred general information about the participants constitutes a sub-category of the constructed data of the study. The other sub-category of constructed data presented in this thesis document consists of concepts constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives, which are presented in subsequent chapters of this document. The researcher’s identification of inferred general characteristics from the literature and from inspection of the set of transcripts, is explicated in this chapter. Inferred general information about each participant is presented to provide a contextual background to the researcher’s construction of concepts from the transcripts, and his interpretation of these concepts, in subsequent chapters of this thesis document. The contents of Chapter Six represent the initial stage of the researcher’s development of a constructed understanding of each individual participant’s lived experience relating to his formal education and vocational training.

**Chapter Seven**

Chapter Seven presents specific topics constructed from the individual transcripts of the participants’ narratives, and demonstrates the grounding of the researcher’s constructions in the verbal content of the transcripts. Specific topics constitute one of the three micro-categories of concepts within the sub-category of concepts which constitute part of the constructed data of the study. The other two micro-categories are personal meanings and social meanings. As specific topics are assumed by the
researcher to be the most specific and least conceptually inclusive of the subject-matter content of the transcripts, they are presented in this document before the other micro-categories of constructed concepts. The meaning attributed in the study to specific topics, their relationship to concepts described in the literature of interpretive self-narrative analysis, their general relationship to concepts in the other two micro-categories of constructed concepts in the study, and the general procedure used by the researcher to construct them, is explicated in Chapter Four. The contents of Chapter Seven represent the first part of a second stage in the researcher’s development of a constructed understanding of each individual participant’s lived experience relating to his formal education and vocational training. The first stage of this development is represented in the contents of Chapter Six.

Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight presents personal meanings constructed from the individual transcripts of the participants’ narratives, and demonstrates the grounding of the researcher’s constructions in the verbal content of the transcripts. Personal meanings constitute one of the three micro-categories of concepts within the sub-category of concepts which constitute part of the constructed data of the study. The other two micro-categories are specific topics and social meanings. As personal meanings are assumed by the researcher to be more general and more inclusive of the subject-matter content of the transcripts, and less general in conceptual content than social meanings, they are presented after specific topics and before social meanings in this document. The meaning attributed in the study to personal meanings, their relationship to concepts described in the literature of interpretive self-narrative analysis, their general relationship to concepts in the other two micro-categories of constructed concepts in the study, and the general procedure used by the researcher to construct them, is explicated in Chapter Four. The contents of Chapter Eight represent the second part of a second stage in the researcher’s development of a constructed understanding of each individual participant’s lived experience relating to his formal education and vocational training. The first stage of this development is represented in the contents of Chapter Six, while the first part of the second stage is represented in the contents of Chapter Seven.

Chapter Nine

Chapter Nine presents social meanings constructed from the individual transcripts of the participants’ narratives, and demonstrates the grounding of the researcher’s constructions in the content of the transcripts. Social meanings constitute one of the
three micro-categories of concepts within the sub-category of concepts which constitute part of the constructed data of the study. The other two micro-categories are specific topics and personal meanings. As social meanings are assumed by the researcher to be more general in conceptual content of the transcripts than personal meanings, they are presented after personal meanings in this document. The meaning attributed in the study to social meanings, their relationship to concepts described in the literature of interpretive self-narrative analysis, their general relationship to concepts in the other two micro-categories of constructed concepts in the study, and the general procedure used by the researcher to construct them, is explicated in Chapter Four. The contents of Chapter Nine represent a third stage in the researcher’s development of a constructed understanding of each individual participant’s lived experience relating to the participant’s formal education and vocational training. The first stage of this development is represented in the contents of Chapter Six, while the second stage is represented in the contents of Chapters Seven and Eight.

**Chapter Ten**

Chapter Ten presents the researcher’s completed constructed understanding of the lived experience of each individual participant relating to the participant’s formal education and vocational training. Each constructed understanding is a synthesis of data constructed by the researcher from the transcript of the participant’s narrative, as presented in Chapters Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine. The contents of Chapter Ten represent the fourth, and final, stage of the researcher’s development of his constructed understanding of the lived experience of each individual participant relating to his formal education and vocational training. The first three stages in this development are represented in the contents of Chapters Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine, respectively.

**Chapter Eleven**

Chapter Eleven presents an account of the researcher’s interpretive identification of apparent relationships within and between concepts within the sub-category of constructed data consisting of social meanings, personal meanings, and specific topics, across the whole set of transcripts. The contents of Chapter Eleven represent the first stage in the identification of apparent relationships between constructed data within and between the sub-categories and micro-categories of constructed data in the study. The researcher’s purpose in identifying inferred relationships within and between the sets of constructed data in the study was to identify points of possible heuristic interest which seem to emerge from the study, in relation to achieving the second stated aim of the
study. In Chapter Eleven, inferred relationships between constructed concepts within and between the micro-categories of social meanings, personal meanings, and specific topics are identified. The first set of inferred relationships presented in this chapter are those between social meanings, between personal meanings, and between specific topics. The second set of inferred relationships presented in this chapter are those between social meanings and personal meanings, between social meanings and specific topics, and between personal meanings and specific topics.

Chapter Twelve

Chapter Twelve presents an account of the researcher’s interpretive identification of apparent relationships between inferred general characteristics of the participants, and between constructed concepts within and between subsets of constructed data based on inferred characteristics of the participants. The contents of Chapter Twelve represent the second, and final, stage in the identification of apparent relationships within and between subsets of the constructed data of the study. The researcher’s purpose in identifying inferred relationships within and between subsets of the constructed data in the study was to identify points of possible heuristic interest which seem to emerge from the study, in relation to achieving the second stated aim of the study. The first set of apparent relationships between subsets of constructed data, presented in Chapter Twelve, consists of apparent relationships between inferred characteristics of the participants. Following the identification of these apparent relationships, speculative comparisons are made between subsets of the constructed conceptual content of the transcripts. In relation to achieving the second stated aim of the study, the identification of points of possible heuristic interest focussed on comparisons of the constructed conceptual content associated with participants who had a personal history of early and repeated involvement in criminal activity, and that associated with participants who did not have this type of personal history.

Chapter Thirteen

Chapter Thirteen presents a discussion of the study as a whole, initially in the context of an overview of the main features of the study, and finally in the context of the researcher’s speculations regarding implications of the findings of the study relating to identification of apparent needs for social actions which may contribute to the reduction of the incidence of juvenile engagement in criminal activities followed by repeated criminal offending throughout life, and of recidivism by ex-prisoners who have a personal history of juvenile and repeated engagement in criminal activities.
Chapter Two

Literature review

Introduction

Purposes of the review

This review has two main purposes. The first purpose is to identify and evaluate indications in the literature of currently unmet needs for research-based information about the education experience of Australian prisoners prior to, and during, incarceration. The second purpose is to identify research questions regarding the need for research-based information about the education experience of currently incarcerated Australian people prior to and/or during their incarceration. Achievement of the second purpose of this review is contingent on the outcomes of achievement of the first purpose. The specific reasons for undertaking this particular review will now be outlined here.

Rationale for undertaking the review

Initial justification for undertaking the review, in relation to its stated main purposes, was indicated by claims made in some Australian literature, including some statistical evidence in reports on the characteristics of the Australian prisoner population (for example: Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996; Walker et al., 1991). This literature indicated that, in the period from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the education experience of Australian prisoners collectively, prior to their initial incarceration, was in some ways characteristically different from that of the Australian population in general. Reported measures of various factors, including formal educational achievement (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001;1992; Walker et al., 1991), that have been purported to be associated with social disadvantage (for example: Alexiadou, 2005; European Commission, 1994; Tett, 2002) invariably showed that, as a group, prisoners who were in Australian correctional facilities during the approximate period 1990-1992 had experienced greater social disadvantages during their lives than those that had been experienced by the Australian population in general.

Claims that relationships have been found between education and incarceration have been made in terms of various forms of social disadvantage, including educational disadvantage, purported to have been generally experienced by Australian people who
become incarcerated (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Training and Advisory Council, 1998; Fox, 1997; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996; Vocational Education and Employment Commission, 1993: White and Perrone, 1997). Educational disadvantage was generally regarded, in the literature, as a particular form of social disadvantage (Sturman, 1997).

In order to critically examine claims made about the educational disadvantage of prisoners in Australia, an initial examination of the concept of educational disadvantage, within the wider context of the concept of social disadvantage, was necessary because of the diversity of interpretations of social disadvantage that were evident in the literature. There was considerable debate in the literature about the nature of social disadvantage, including the nature and effects of educational disadvantage (for example: Fraser, 1995; Hayek, 1982; 1979; Reiman, 1998; Richardson, 1995; Rizvi, 1998; Sturman, 1997; Theophanous, 1993; Troyner and Vincent, 1995; White and Perrone, 1997; Young, 1990). The diversity of viewpoints that were evident in the literature from the 1970s to the mid-1990s was reflected, to some extent, in changes in Australian public policy relating to social disadvantage, including educational disadvantage, during the same period (for example, Sturman, 1997). Critical examination of claims made about the educational disadvantage of prisoners in Australia, require, in addition to clarification of the meanings publicly attributed to the term ‘educational disadvantage’, an examination of the evidence on which such claims have been made.

Initial examination of the literature cited here indicated that such evidence as had been presented to support the claims made regarding the pre-incarceration education experience of Australian prisoners was based predominantly on published statistical reports of the general characteristics of Australian prisoners (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Training and Advisory Council, 1998; Fox, 1997; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996; White and Perrone, 1997;). Two publications reported minor research projects within corrective services institutions (Wolfgang, 1979; Young, 1989;). In a report by the Vocational Education and Employment Commission, no evidence was presented to support claims which were made about the pre-incarceration education experience of Australian prisoners (Vocational Education and Employment Commission, 1993). None of the publications cited here referred to evidence based on prisoners’ direct accounts of their pre-incarceration education experience.

There was some evidence and informed opinion in the literature which, in general terms, appeared to support a conclusion that Australian prisoners had
experienced disadvantage with regard to education, relative to the Australian population as a whole, during their incarceration (Byrne, 1990, pp.66-67; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996, p.8; Tiltmann, 1999, p.24; Wolfgang, 1979; Young, 1989). With the exception of Tiltmann’s (1999) minor article, evidence cited in support of claims made in the literature referred to here did not include evidence derived from prisoners’ accounts of their education experiences during their incarceration.

The initial examination of the literature presented here revealed several ostensible issues relating to the general topic of the education experience of prisoners in Australia, including the issue of the meaning(s) attributed to the term ‘educational disadvantage’, and the issue of whether prisoners in Australia have experienced educational disadvantage. As a first step towards critically examining each of these issues, the researcher decided on the scope and general structure of a detailed review of the literature to be carried out.

**The scope and structure of the review**

The scope of the review was determined from a consideration of issues that arose from an initial examination of the literature in relation to the general topic of interest, viz., the education experience of people currently incarcerated in Australia. Ostensibly related issues, identified from an initial examination of the literature, included the meaning of the term ‘educational disadvantage’, the extent to which Australian prisoners had experienced pre-incarceration educational disadvantage, and the extent to which Australian prisoners had experienced educational disadvantage during incarceration.

The review focussed on two periods of time which were anticipated by the researcher to have been of particular importance in relation to the formal education and training experienced by candidate participants in the study. The first period of time on which the review focussed was the period during which, the researcher assumed, there would have been a high probability that candidate participants in the study would have experienced their first 10 years of formal schooling. The researcher assumed that, if a person had experienced educational disadvantage during the period of his basic formal education, there would have been a high probability that circumstances of disadvantage would have been evident during the period of his formal schooling from year one to year 10. The male pronoun is used when referring to candidate participants in the study because all candidate participants in the study were incarcerated in correctional centres for male prisoners. The researcher identified the period 1975 to 1995 as the approximate
period of time during which most of the candidate participants probably would have experienced their first 10 years of formal schooling. The researcher’s identification of this time period was based on statistical information obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), and on the planned time of the data-gathering phase of the study. The data-gathering phase of the study was planned to occur in 2003. According to ABS statistics, the mean age of adult prisoners in Australian corrective detention facilities in 2003 was 33.8 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). In 2003, the age group with the highest imprisonment rate was 25-29 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). On the basis of the ABS (2003) statistics, the researcher had anticipated that the majority of candidate participants in the study would have been between 25-35 years of age. On the basis of an assumption that candidate participants would have commenced year one of school at the age of six years, the researcher estimated that most candidate participants probably would have experienced their first 10 years of formal schooling during a period of time approximately between 1975 and 1995.

The second period of time on which the review focussed was the period during which, the researcher assumed, there would have been a high probability that candidate participants had experienced at least one period of incarceration amounting to a total of at least five years. The researcher selected this period of time arbitrarily on the basis of an assumption that, during a total time of incarceration of at least five years, there would be a high probability that candidate participants would have had an opportunity to have experienced the arrangements for the provision of formal education and/or training programs in the correctional centre(s) in which they had been incarcerated. The researcher assumed that, if a candidate participant had experienced educational disadvantage during incarceration, circumstances of the disadvantage would have been evident during a total period of incarceration of at least five years. The researcher identified the period 1985-2000 as the approximate period of time during which most of the candidate participants most probably would have experienced at least five years of incarceration. The researcher’s estimate of this time period was based on an assumption that each candidate participant would have become incarcerated in an adult correctional facility at some time after his eighteenth birthday.

The review is structured to facilitate achievement of its stated main purposes, within the time periods chosen by the researcher. The meaning of the term ‘educational disadvantage’, as debated in the literature in the period approximately from the mid-1970s to the year 2000, is critically examined here in some detail and is then applied to
a critical examination of the literature with regard to the issues of the education experiences of Australian prisoners prior to, and during, incarceration in the period approximately from the mid-1970s to the year 2000. In the final sections of this chapter the main points drawn from the review and inferences made regarding needs for further research are summarised, and research questions arising from the review are stated. The meaning of the term ‘educational disadvantage’, as debated in the literature, will now be examined here.

**Educational disadvantage**

As an initial step in the identification of educational disadvantage experienced by prisoners, the meaning to be attributed in the study to the term ‘educational disadvantage’ was determined through an examination of the literature on the general topic of educational disadvantage. From an examination of the literature, the researcher concluded that the meaning of the term derived primarily from a socio-political framework of concepts, values and beliefs incorporating general theory of justice that provides a basis for evaluating the justice of social phenomena (Bagnall, 1995; Clarke et al., 1997, p.15; Fraser, 1995, pp.68-69; Hayek, 1979, pp.5-6; Nagel, 1991, p.7; Reiman, 1990; Rizvi, 1998, p.48; Troyner and Vincent, 1995; Young, 1990, p.9). During the period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, changes occurred in the Australian socio-political framework that influenced public policy interpretation of social disadvantage in general, and of educational disadvantage in particular (Bessant, 1997, p.1; Clarke, 1997; Seddon, 1990, cited by Sturman, 1997, pp.17-18; Sturman, 1997, p.16; Yeatman, 1993, p.3). These changes will now be considered here in the time order in which they occurred.

**Developments in Australian public policy, 1970s-2000**

In Australian society, during the approximate period from 1970 to 2000, the two prevailing socio-political frameworks within which the justice of social phenomena was evaluated, and which strongly influenced education public policy, were identified as ‘social-democratic’ and ‘individual-liberalistic’ approaches to social justice (Rizvi, 1998, p.48; Sturman, 1997, pp.22-24). During the period from approximately the mid-1970s to the early 1990s the dominant framework was social-democratic, whereas the liberal-individualistic framework was dominant during the 1990s (Clarke, 1997; Rizvi, 1998, p.48; Seddon, 1990, cited by Sturman, 1997, pp.17-18; Sturman, 1997, p.16). From the mid-1980s onwards, Australian society was increasingly influenced by a
political hegemony of economic determinism (Bagnall, 1995), that resulted in a re-
interpretation of public education policy within each of the two socio-political
orientations which had been prevalent during that period (Sturman 1997, p.16;
Yeatman, 1993, p.3). Each of the socio-political orientations, and a political hegemony
of economic determinism, influenced Australian education public policy interpretation
of educational disadvantage from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. Major points of
difference between the two orientations will now be explored in terms of concepts and
issues associated with each orientation.

**Major concepts and issues**

Major points of difference between the two dominant socio-political orientations in the
formulation and implementation of education public policy in Australia during the
period under discussion included the interpretations that were made of the concepts of
equality and impartiality, and the issue of distribution of social benefits such as
education services (Sturman, 1997, pp.7-12). Of these points of difference,
interpretation of the concept of equality appeared to have the greatest impact on policy,
and to have been most influenced by the hegemony of economic determinism. The
concept of equality within each of the orientations is discussed in the following sub-
section of this chapter.

**The social-democratic interpretation**

The concept of equality within the social-democratic orientation was interpreted
primarily as equality of opportunity (Isaac, 1993, citing McInnes, 1991; Sturman, 1997,
pp.7-12). Within the social-democratic tradition, the concept of equal opportunity
incorporated the concept of need in the sense of providing people with opportunity to
meet their unmet needs (Sturman, 1997, pp.7-12). For policy implementation purposes,
some measure that could be used to determine inequalities in the educational
opportunity of people was required. Proportional representation in participation in
formal education programs was adopted as the basic measure of educational opportunity
in the post-compulsory education sector (Australian National Training Authority, 1997;
Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1990). The use of this measure
enabled the identification and selection of groups of people to whom the term ‘equity
groups’ (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1990) or the term ‘equity
target groups’ (Australian National Training Authority, 1997, p.11) was applied.
Identification of these groups provided the basis for evaluation of the effectiveness of
policy implementation in the form of equity indicators (Martin 1994). The issue of the distribution of educational opportunity in the post-compulsory sector was dealt with in terms of proportional representation of selected groups in formal education and training programs. One potential difficulty with the use of selected groups to remedy inequalities in the distribution of educational opportunity, within a social-democratic policy interpretation, was the inferential leap involved in identifying membership of a general group with individuals’ unmet educational needs. In effect, equating disadvantage with a limited number of pre-determined categories of characteristics of people had potential to militate against the adoption of equal opportunity practices that were based on a social-democratic interpretation of disadvantage, in that it tended to ignore the needs of disadvantaged individuals, particularly individuals whose characteristics did not fit them into any of the pre-determined categories. A realisation of this difficulty in practice was the basis for some criticisms that were made of the implementation of the equal educational opportunity public policy developed in Australia during the late 1980s (for example: Clarke, 1997, p.12; Cologon, 1995, pp.1-3; Dobson, 1995, p.3). In particular, a criticism was made that the use of discrete categories of people as a basis for implementing public policy relating to educational disadvantage had the effect of obfuscating the nature and causal conditions of educational disadvantage (Clarke, 1997, p. 12; Dobson, 1995, p. 3; Rizvi, 1995, cited by Sturman, 1997, p.46). The major alternative to a social-democratic socio-political framework for interpreting educational disadvantage, during the period under discussion in Australia, was a framework of liberal-individualism (Rizvi, 1998, p.48; Sturman, 1997, pp.22-24).

An examination will now be made of the concept of equality within the framework of liberal-individualism.

**The liberal-individualistic interpretation**

Within the liberal-individualistic orientation, ‘equality’ was interpreted primarily as a concept of equity, that is, as equal treatment under the prevailing laws, rules and regulations pertaining to access to education services (Sturman, 1997, pp.7-12). The concept of equity within the liberal-individualistic tradition did not include a concept of individual need (Sturman, 1997, pp.7-12). Within the liberal-individualistic interpretation, achievement of equity in education did not imply that people’s unmet education needs had been addressed. Despite the shift in socio-political orientation of public policy during the 1990s (Braithwaite, 2000), and the corresponding change in the interpretation of the concept of equality in relation to education, proportional
representation in participation in formal education programs was retained as the basic measure of equality with regard to education in the post-compulsory sector (Australian National Training Authority, 2001b; Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs Higher Education Division, 1999). Proportional representation of selected groups remained the basis of redistribution of formal education and training services in the post-compulsory education sector during the 1990s. However, from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s there was a shift in policy with regard to the nature of the services to be redistributed. Under the influence of the rhetoric of economic determinism, publicly funded post-compulsory education services had become increasingly oriented to the achievement of specifically employment-related outcomes (Australian National Training Authority, 2001a; Bagnall, 2000; Sturman, 1997, pp.2, 13-33; Yeatman, 1993, p.3). In 1996 the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), for example, had adopted five policy principles regarding access and equity in the VET sector, three of which had been framed in terms of ‘training outcomes’ generally interpreted as employment outcomes for individual ‘clients’ (Australian National Training Authority, 1997, p.9). The increasing focus on employment-related outcomes had effectively redefined educational disadvantage as employment disadvantage. The redefinition of educational disadvantage was associated with a shift in emphasis in public education policy. The shift that occurred was a movement away from the provision of education and training services based on consideration of the nature and causes of educational disadvantage, per se, which had been primarily an individual needs-based orientation, towards the provision of vocational education and training as a solution to the effects of educational disadvantage (Bessant, 1997).

The shift in the nature of the provision of publicly-funded education and training services, that had occurred in Australian public education policy during the period from the mid-1980s to the mid 1990s, was accompanied by increasing privatisation of the provision of the services, particularly in the vocational education and training component of the post-compulsory education sector (Australian National Training Authority, 2001a; Bessant, 1997, p.2; White and Perrone, 1997, p.245). The movement towards the privatisation of services in the VET sector was accompanied by an apparent lack of public accountability by private providers of vocational education and training programs, with regard to public policy equity provisions, up to 1997. The apparent lack of accountability was indicated by the absence of any evaluative reports of privately-provided VET programs in a stocktake of equity reports in vocational education and training compiled by ANTA (Australian National Training Authority, 1997). In 1998,
ANTA, in partnership with the Australian Government and each Australian State and Territory government, had developed a national strategy for vocational education and training in Australia which included the identification of five ‘equity groups’ for which specific strategies were to be developed to enable members of the groups to achieve equitable outcomes in vocational education and training (Australian National Training Authority, 1998). These equity groups were people with a disability, Indigenous Australians, people of low socioeconomic status, people resident in rural or remote locations, and prisoners. By 2001, ANTA had developed five-year strategies ‘for achieving equitable outcomes in vocational education and training (VET)’ for three of its five ‘designated target groups’, including prisoners (Australian National Training Authority, 2000; 2001b). From the 1970s onwards, Australian public policy formulation with regard to educational disadvantages, whether framed from within a social-democratic or a liberal-individualist socio-political orientation, appeared to have focussed on the compensatory redistribution of educational resources on a group basis rather than on underlying contributing causes of educational disadvantage. An increasing emphasis on dealing with the economic effects of educational disadvantage in terms of employment outcomes of education and training, from the mid-1980s onwards, interpreted since the mid-1990s particularly in terms of neo-liberal principles of market competition, privatisation of institutions, and decentralised forms of state regulation, appeared to have militated against the adoption of public policy approaches to educational disadvantage focussed on identifying and dealing with its ostensible underlying causes.

Two alternative approaches to the formulation of public policy intended to address inequalities relating to educational disadvantage will now be outlined, with commentary on the apparent influence of each in shaping Australian public policy.

**Australian public policy interpretations**

**Compensatory and structural approaches**

In an analysis of relationships between inequalities in various socioeconomic indicators and social justice, in relation to people’s experience of education, Sturman (1997, pp.73-76), citing Connell (1993; 1994), had identified two major types of approaches to dealing with identified inequalities in people’s educational experience. The two major types of approaches that had been identified by Sturman (1997) were a compensatory approach and a structural approach.

Compensatory approaches, as described by Sturman (1997) and by Richardson
(1995, p.51) had corresponded to redistributive remedies (Nagel, 1991, p.102). Reiman (1990, p.3), commenting on Rawls’s (1972) derivation of basic principles of justice, had characterised redistributive remedies for social injustices as being concerned with modifying existent patterns of distribution of social goods rather than with addressing the underlying causes of the patterns. Structural approaches to educational inequality, as outlined by Sturman (1997, pp.75-76), citing Connell (1988), and by Smith (1991), had a focus on addressing structural and institutional aspects of society that had contributed to inequalities in people’s educational experience. Disadvantage of individuals and groups resulting from the ways in which a society had been structured had been identified by numerous authors, including Reiman (1998), Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), and Young (1990). According to Sturman (1997, p.74), citing Connell (1993; 1994), a compensatory approach had been the basis of public policy in Australia aimed at redressing inequalities in people’s educational experience during the period from about 1970 to 1995.

In light of debate about the two major approaches in the formulation of public policy for dealing with identified inequalities in people’s educational experience, as identified by Sturman (1997), Australian public policy regarding educational disadvantage of children will now be examined.

**Australian public policy regarding educational disadvantage of children**

In relation to attempts by Federal and State governments to address the issue of educational disadvantage at the school level of formal education, Sturman (1997) had concluded that, by the middle of the twentieth century, the apparent failure in Australia of a policy of equal educational opportunity in its original liberal-individualist-influenced conception had lead to a modification of policy to include compensatory programs for the socially disadvantaged (Sturman, 1997, p.14). In the formulation of equality of educational opportunity policy that had included the provision of compensatory programs, until the 1970s in Australia, social disadvantage was generally equated with socioeconomic disadvantage (Sturman, 1997, p.55). Sturman reviewed a range of Australian national and state government policy initiatives regarding school-based compensatory programs in the second half of the twentieth century, and commented on variations in ostensible interpretation and application of social justice concepts in each case, in particular the variation in individual or group focus between different programs (Sturman, 1997, pp.34-54). Sturman’s (1997) analysis indicated that
these policy initiatives had been generally consistent with a distributive approach to social justice, as they had been concerned primarily with redistribution of educational resources and generally had not attempted to identify or address structural causes of the observed educational inequalities. He had noted that, during the 1980s, the scope of public policy debate relating to equality in education in Australia had widened from a previous focus primarily on socioeconomically disadvantaged people to include some other groups identified ostensibly on the basis of their disproportionately low participation and/or achievements in formal education, compared to the whole of society (Sturman, 1997, p.55). The identification of the broad groups to be targeted in the redistribution of educational resources had involved, to some extent, a pluralistic process of political influence (Sturman, 1997, p.102). A national response to perceived needs for policy re-definition of educational disadvantage at the school level of formal education, and for the application of new standards of accountability to the implementation of such policy, appeared to have been embodied in a strategy adopted by the Australian Government in 1994.

In 1994 a comprehensive, Australia-wide strategy, viz., *The National Strategy for Equity in Schooling (NSES)* (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1994), endorsed by the Commonwealth and all State and Territory Ministers for Education, had been adopted as a major policy initiative for addressing inequalities in the educational experience of various categories of Australian school-age children. The strategy was based on the identification of six general categories of disadvantage into which children might be grouped, viz., special needs including disability and/or learning/emotional/behavioural disorder, low socioeconomic background and/or poverty, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identified ethnicity, non-English-speaking background, geographic isolation, and at risk of discontinuing schooling (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1994). With regard to the identification of categories of disadvantage the strategy did not identify female gender, which had been a category included in previous Australian Federal Government policy documents including the National Policy for the Education of Girls (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1987) and the National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-1997 (Australian Education Council, 1993). The stated goals of the strategy included process and outcome aspects of educational experience of children, viz., improvement of access to and quality of participation in schooling, and achievement by children in each category of disadvantage of the same range of outcomes as that achieved by the school population in general. This new national strategy, ostensibly
based on a group-based, redistributive, social-democratic response to educational disadvantage at the school level, was adopted during a period in Australia when a political hegemony of economic determinism had begun to exert considerable influence on the shaping of Australian public policy (Bessant, 1997; Sturman, 1997).

Sturman (1997, pp.60-99) reviewed literature on the influence of the hegemony of economic rationalism on Australian national education policy during the period from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, in relation to school children classified according to various categories of social disadvantage. He claimed that an orientation to economic rationalism in public policy formulation had been adopted by the Australian national government from the mid-1980s onwards (Sturman, 1997, pp.32-33), and that its influence on Australian public policy relating to education had resulted in strong emphasis being placed on accountability in terms of efficiency and cost-effective outcomes (Sturman, 1997, pp.16-19). The term ‘economic rationalism’ appeared to have had a basically similar connotation to that of the term ‘economic determinism’, as used, for example, by Bagnall (1995; 2000) and by Braithwaite (2000). Sturman (1997) referred particularly to differences of opinion in the literature regarding the appropriateness of the accountability measures that had been adopted for publicly funded mainstream education programs for education programs of special assistance to children in the various ‘disadvantaged categories’ (Sturman, 1997, pp.60-99). The debate to which Sturman (1997, pp.60-99) referred illustrated the more general ‘redistribution-recognition dilemma’ described by Fraser (1995, p.74), whereby the targeting of identified groups for redistribution of resources had tended to prompt demands for accountability in accordance with the existing socio-political hegemony, which had the effect of de-differentiating the groups. However, counter-demands for group recognition had tended to support the differentiation of the groups. The new emphasis placed on accountability and efficiency in the implementation of policy aimed at addressing educational disadvantage at the school level of formal education, from the mid-1980s onwards, presumably had been intended to overcome perceived deficiencies in previous policies. Its effectiveness in overcoming the perceived deficiencies was evaluated in a critical review by Sturman (1997). Major points arising from Sturman’s (1997) review are discussed in the next sub-section of this chapter.

**Effects of post-1980 policy changes at the school-level.**

Much of the criticism of the national policy direction in school-level education, which had been taken in Australia from about the mid-1980s onwards, was aimed at its
perceived ineffectiveness in addressing the needs of the children within the various pre-determined categories of disadvantage. The perceived ineffectiveness of the policy was attributed primarily to the adoption of an excessively narrow focus on ill-conceived measures of efficiency (Sturman, 1997, pp.60-99). Sturman (1997) reviewed studies of the educational experience of children who had been classified into the various equity groups identified under The National Strategy for Equity in Schooling in 1994 (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1994). Sturman’s (1997) review indicated some of the difficulties inherent in attempting to use a limited number of categories to encompass and address educational disadvantage in the formulation and implementation of public policy. Some effects of broad group-based redistributive remedies for educational disadvantage were illustrated by Sturman’s (1997) accounts of the educational experience of female children and of children from rural and isolated locations during a period of implementation of these types of remedies throughout Australia.

Sturman (1997, pp.83-85) reviewed literature relating to the educational experience of Australian children within the period from the early 1970s to the mid 1990s, with particular regard to evidence of gender-group-based educational disadvantage. In relation to gender inequalities in the educational experience of Australian adults, Sturman (1997, pp. 83-85) cited evidence supporting a conclusion that female students generally achieved higher outcomes and had higher participation rates than male students at the school and undergraduate levels of education. Sturman also drew attention to reported general differences between Australian male and female students with regard to choice of school subjects and academic disciplines, and to statistical evidence that, generally, in Australia, men had higher employment rates and average weekly earnings than women (Sturman, 1997, pp.83-85).

In discussing relationships between the educational experiences of male and female people, in terms of outcomes and processes, Sturman (1997, pp.85-93) focussed on the concepts of equal opportunity and affirmative action as central components of gender-and-education public policy, and the emergence of debate about the nature and politics of difference, in this context, during the period under discussion. Sturman (1997) noted a recent influence of the political hegemony of economic rationalism on gender equity policy debate, whereby equity policy tended to be shaped by, and rationalised in terms of, the economically efficient use of human resources.

Sturman (1997) reviewed literature relating to location and school-level educational experience of people in rural and isolated locations in Australia during the
period from about 1980 to 1996, with particular reference to evidence of location-
group-based evidence of educational disadvantage. The weight of the evidence to which
Sturman (1997, pp.94-97) referred indicated that, in general, rural and isolated school-
age and adult students had experienced relatively lower outcomes from, and
participation in, formal education than other comparable students. He attributed these
findings to generalised differences between levels of quality-of-education-provision
factors and psycho-social support factors between students in rural and isolated
locations and students in other locations (Sturman, 1997, pp.94-95). With regard to the
apparent influence of psycho-social support factors, the findings to which Sturman
(1997, p.94) referred paralleled those to which he referred as having had accounted, to
some extent, for differences in the reported outcome and process aspects of the
generalised educational experience of Australian people of low socioeconomic status
and the general Australian population (Sturman, 1997, pp.70-71). He suggested that the
occurrence of low socioeconomic status in a significant proportion of families in rural
and isolated locations may have contributed to the apparent parallelism of these findings
(Sturman, 1997, pp. 94-95). Sturman (1997, p.97) qualified his interpretation of the
evidence provided by the reported studies that he had reviewed by pointing out
inconsistencies between studies in the ways in which rurality and isolation had been
defined and measured. In commenting on social justice aspects of reported differences
between the educational experience of Australian rural and isolated people and other
Australian people in general, Sturman (1997, p.98) drew attention to possible
differences in qualitative aspects that had not been detected by the reported studies, and
which might have called into question the comparability of the quality of the
educational experience of the two general categories of people and the relevance of the
criteria that had been used to evaluate the justice of reported differences.

Sturman’s (1997) critical review of the implementation of the Australian
national group-based, redistributive approach to addressing the perceived educational
disadvantage of female children and of children in rural locations, during the period
from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s, illustrated some of the difficulties inherent in
attempting to use a limited number of categories to encompass and address educational
disadvantage in the formulation and implementation of public policy. In particular, his
review drew attention to problems inherent in identifying disadvantage with group
membership on the basis of general group characteristics, such as gender or
geographical location, rather than identifying disadvantage in terms of individuals’ lived
experiences and life circumstances.
Federal Government policy relating to educational disadvantage of children, from the approximate period from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, had focussed primarily on a group-based, redistributive approach that had attempted to address educational disadvantage by providing additional educational resources for education intervention programs for members of a limited number of pre-determined groups of children. During the approximate period from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, narrowly conceived measures of effectiveness, primarily in terms of participation rates of specified groups of children, had been increasingly used to evaluate the programs. The resourcing of group-based interventions, combined with narrowly-conceived measures of the effectiveness of the interventions, had militated against the identification of, and effective response to, the experience of educational disadvantage at the level of the individual child. In particular, the stringent use of membership of a pre-determined group on the basis of a narrow range of pre-determined characteristics, as a basis for identifying and responding to educational disadvantage, had failed to take account of underlying contributory causes of individuals’ educational disadvantage or of the cumulative effects on individuals of multiple contributory causes (Clarke, 1997, p. 12; Dobson, 1995, p. 3; Rizvi, 1995, cited by Sturman, 1997, p.46).

Aspects of educational disadvantage experienced by school-age children, which do not appear to have been effectively addressed by Australian public policy up to the mid 1990s, ostensibly include disadvantage resulting from various forms of abuse and disadvantage resulting from an inability to relate positively to traditional school environments. With regard to the issue of disadvantage experienced by school-age children as a result of abuse, there have been changes to public policy in some Australian jurisdictions since the mid-1990s. The Queensland Government, for example, legislated to mandate the reporting by school staff of suspected cases of child abuse, and the investigation of such reports by the Queensland Department of Child Safety (Queensland Government, 2004; 2006). With regard to attempting to deal with the issue of disadvantage resulting from a child’s inability to relate positively to a traditional school environment, initiatives have been taken by governments in some Australian jurisdictions, and by government-sponsored agencies, community groups, and private providers of education services, since the mid-1990s. The Queensland Government, for example, has provided school-pupil counselling by school guidance officers since at least 2002 (Queensland Government, 2002). A variety of education services, available to post-primary-school-age children through environments alternative to traditional school environments, have been established (for example,
Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2006; Christa McAuliffe Academy, 2006; TheCadamy, 2006; University of Southern Queensland, 2003). The Toowoomba Flexi School is an example of a regional initiative in Queensland to provide a structured learning environment for post-primary-school-age children who refuse to attend a traditional secondary school (University of Southern Queensland, 2003).

During the period under discussion in the study, concomitant with changes in Australian public policy in relation to educational disadvantage at the school level, changes had occurred in policy relating to educational disadvantage at the post-compulsory level of education and training. These changes will now be overviewed.

**Australian public policy at the post-compulsory levels**

From the mid-1980s onwards, Australian public policy relating to post-compulsory formal education and training was based primarily on a narrow interpretation of educational disadvantage in terms of the proportional representation of particular groups in formal education or training programs (Clarke, 1997; Dobson, 1995; Rizvi, 1995). Educational disadvantage, in terms of Australian public policy relating to the post-compulsory sector since the mid-1980s, was interpreted predominantly in terms of membership of selected groups and of participation rates of each groups’ members in formal education and training programs. This interpretation was criticised on the grounds that it ignored causal conditions that had resulted in lived education experience of people that could justifiably be regarded as educational disadvantage, and that it had been based on a crude measure that had not enabled identification of the educational disadvantage of individuals within the groups relative to each other or to the rest of the population (Clarke, 1997; Dobson, 1995; Rizvi, 1995). The measure, on which implementation of the policy was based, was subjected to criticism on the grounds that it did not take into account the occurrence, in individual cases, of multiple causes of disadvantage, or of the cumulative effects of multiple causes of disadvantage, or of mediating factors that enabled some individuals to overcome their past educational disadvantage (Clarke, 1997, p.12; Cologon, 1995, pp.1-3; Dobson, 1995, p.3).

Identification of educational disadvantage solely in terms of the measured participation rates of selected groups in formal programs instrumentally limited the interpretation of the term ‘educational disadvantage’ to one of relative access. Relative access is one general process aspect of educational experience (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1994; Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1990; Richardson, 1995, p.56). Although an arguably fundamental
measure of equality in the distribution of formal education services, relative access in itself provided no direct evidence of outcome aspects of individuals’ lived education experience, such as the acquisition of various types of human capital and social capital (Clarke, 1997; Field et al., 2000), material rewards resulting from employment (Australian National Training Authority, 1997, p.9; Clarke et al., 1997, p.8; Richardson, 1995, p.56), and personal rewards of satisfaction and enhanced self esteem (Richardson, 1995, p.56).

Increasingly, from the late 1980s onwards, a socio-political hegemony of economic determinism had influenced the shaping of Australian public policy on social issues, including the provision of publicly funded education services (Bagnall, 1995; Sturman 1997). This influence had apparently resulted in the application of narrowly conceived measures of the efficiency of policy-related interventions in terms of group participation (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1994; Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1990; Richardson, 1995, p.56). By the mid-1990s, adoption by the Federal Government of neo-liberal principles of market competition, privatisation of institutions, and decentralised forms of state regulation had begun to impact on Australian public policy formulation, including policy relating to the provision of publicly funded education and training programs (Bessant, 1997; Braithwaite, 2000). According to Bessant (1997), key policy changes that had been implemented by the Australian Government since 1996, in relation to education and training, had involved sharpening of the focus on meeting the skills needs of employers, and the devolution of control over publicly funded vocational education and training to employer groups. One apparent consequence of the post-1980s Australian public policy interpretations of, and responses to, the phenomenon of education disadvantage was that published evaluations of the education experience of people identified as educationally disadvantaged tended to be based primarily on general measures of access in terms of participation in publicly funded formal education and training programs (Australian National Training Authority, 1997; Cook and Semmens, 1994; Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs Higher Education Division, 1999; Lamb et al., 1998; Sturman, 1997, pp. 60-99). Generally, the available evaluation reports of intervention programs adopted for the implementation of the policy provided little insight into the nature or causes of educational disadvantage or the outcome effects of the programs in relation to addressing the educational disadvantage purported to have been experienced by the program participants. Difficulties in interpreting the meaning of the results of evaluations of educational disadvantage interventions at the post-
compulsory levels of formal education and training, based on apparent access by members of pre-determined groups, were illustrated by evaluative studies of access by people classified as having been of low socioeconomic status or as having had a rural or isolated geographical location.

In each sector of post-compulsory formal education and training, reported evaluative studies of the available data indicated that people of low socioeconomic status and people from rural or isolated locations, as defined by Martin (1994), had been proportionately under-represented with regard to their access to all forms of post-compulsory formal education and training (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 1999; Lamb et al., 1998; National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1996) The validity of the conclusions contained in the reports of these studies had appeared to be questionable because of logical problems inherent in the use of the identified equity groups and in how membership of these groups was operationalised (Clarke, 1997; Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 1999; Dobson, 1995; Rizvi, 1995).

In relation to purported underlying contributing causes of educational disadvantage at the post-compulsory levels of education, Preece (1999) examined relationships between social structure and the effective exclusion of people from participation in the higher education system in England. She referred particularly to the purported educationally disadvantageous effects of internalisation, by individuals, of socially constructed negative stereotypes. Structural approaches to dealing with of educational disadvantage at the post-compulsory levels of education ostensibly continued to be ignored in the formulation of Australian national policy during the 1990s, in favour of group-based compensatory approaches. In 1998, ANTA had developed a national strategy for vocational education and training in Australia for the period 1998-2003 in which five equity groups had been identified. Specific strategies designed to enable members of each equity group to gain equitable access to vocational education and training were to have been developed (Australian National Training Authority, 1998). In 1998, when outlining the Australian Federal Government’s future policy direction regarding equity in higher education, Gallagher (1998, p.5) stated that, although the reasons for the continuing low participation of people from low socioeconomic status backgrounds and from rural locations had not been identified, ‘for 1999 emphasis has been placed on those groups’. He acknowledged that the social system in Australia had been a generator of educational disadvantage (Gallagher, 1998, pp.6-7). A similar view had been expressed by the National Board of Employment,
While apparently continuing to ignore purported structural aspects of educational disadvantage amongst groups such as people of low socioeconomic status and people in rural or remote locations, at the post-compulsory levels of formal education and training, public policy in Australia during the 1990s and beyond apparently focussed on particular groups for economic reasons. People of low socioeconomic status appeared to have become particularly targeted in public policy administration from the mid-1990s onwards, ostensibly for perceived national economic reasons.

Apparent relationships between low socioeconomic status, educational disadvantage, and employment, as evinced in Australian literature, will now be examined.

**Poverty and educational disadvantage in Australia**

Justification for the increasing focus of Australian public education policy, during the 1990s, on economic outcomes (Australian National Training Authority, 1997, p.9; Johnson, 1995, p.32; Sturman, 1997, p.121) had been framed primarily in terms of the material benefits of enhanced employment opportunities for individuals, which had been purported to result from education and training (Clarke et al., 1997, p.8; Richardson, 1995). The converse of the purported positive relationships between education and training and enhanced employment opportunities and individual material benefits appeared to have been that individuals who had been educationally disadvantaged had been more likely to have experienced poverty than individuals who had not experienced educational disadvantage. Lamb et al. (1998), for example, had found that young people who had been least likely to have undertaken formal education or training programs beyond schooling had been predominantly from low socioeconomic status backgrounds. These people also had made up the bulk of school students who had taken predominantly vocational education and training school subjects (‘vet’ subjects), and who had experienced the relatively highest unemployment and lowest paid employment rates (Lamb et al., 1998, p.14).

Reference was made, in various Australian literature sources, to evidence of the experience of educational disadvantage by people who were relatively financially poor (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 1999; Lamb et al., 1998; National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1996). The relationships between individuals’ experiences of educational disadvantage and their unemployment and their relative financial poverty appeared to have been complex (Sturman, 1997,
The complexity of the relationships was illustrated by a conclusion drawn by Lamb et al. (1998, p.111), that the educational disadvantages experienced by some groups of young people had tended to have been cumulative and to have emanated from multiple sources. The National Board of Employment, Education and Training had concluded that the education-related inequalities noted in their 1996 report had resulted from ‘multiple social, educational and economic factors’ (National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1996, p.95). The Board reported, on the basis of evidence gathered since 1990, that children of parents without post-secondary-school qualifications and/or of low socioeconomic status had a disproportionately low participation rate in higher education (National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1996, pp.22-23).

In relation to educational disadvantage at the school level and at the post-compulsory levels of formal education and training, Australian public policy from the 1970s onwards, whether conceived from within a social-democratic or a liberal-individualistic socio-political orientation, was framed primarily in terms of compensatory, group-based approaches. These approaches appeared to have lacked a capacity to deal effectively with educational disadvantage experienced by individuals either at the school level or the post-compulsory levels, particularly in cases where the disadvantage had resulted from cumulative, multiple causes. In general, the issue of underlying causes of educational disadvantage, including structural causes, was ignored in the formulation of Australian public policy on formal education and training. From the mid-1990s onwards, an increasing emphasis on interpreting educational disadvantage in terms of employability, together with the application of narrowly-conceived economic accountability measures to intervention programs, appeared to have militated against the adoption of approaches to the issue of educational disadvantage, either at the school level or the post-compulsory levels, that had capacity to deal with disadvantage at the level of the individual or to address underlying causes of disadvantage.

Prior to the 1970s, educational disadvantage in relation to Australian public policy ostensibly was generally thought to be related primarily to low socioeconomic status (Sturman, 1997). During the approximate period from the mid 1970s to the mid 1990s, a variety of group characteristics were associated, in public policy formulation, with educational disadvantage at the school level and the post-compulsory levels. Since the mid-1990s, public policy conceptualisation of educational disadvantage tended to focus on the perceived effects of educational disadvantage on employability, primarily
as a national economic consideration. This focus appeared to have produced a re-emphasis, in public policy regarding educational disadvantage at each level of formal education and training, on people of low socioeconomic status. Relationships between socioeconomic status and educational disadvantage appear to be complex (Sturman, 1997, p.72). Similarly complex relationships between socioeconomic status, educational disadvantage, employment, involvement in crime, and incarceration seem to be apparent from the literature. These apparent relationships, as discussed in the literature, will now be examined.

**Poverty, crime and incarceration**

Complex links between unemployment, poverty and crime were evident from the results of numerous reported studies (Fox, 1997; Hagan, 1993). Recent Australian statistics provide some indirect evidence of relationships between poverty and crime. Carcach and Grant (1999) reported that, between 1982 and 1998, the Australian prison population increased by over one hundred per cent. During the period of the study by Carcach and Grant (1999), Saunders (1996) reported a significant rise in the rate of poverty in Australia. Reiman (1998), and the Australian Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996), concluded that individuals’ experiences of unemployment, poverty and educational disadvantage were linked to the individuals’ involvement in crime and their consequent incarceration. Reiman (1998, p.182) cited evidence supporting a conclusion that, in the United States of America, there was a high correlation between low socioeconomic status and rate of imprisonment. Hagan (1993) explored the concept of ‘the social embeddedness’ of unemployment and crime He suggested that social connection with crime early in life increased the probability of unemployment by providing a means of access to illegal earnings as an alternative to legal forms of employment. Shannon et al. (1988, p.226) concluded that some juveniles who engaged in delinquent behaviour, as a result of particular social and economic conditions in their immediate environments, became alienated from the wider society, rather than integrated into it, and that people who continued their juvenile illegal behaviour patterns into adult life were usually alienated people. Examination of the literature cited here seems to indicate that there are complex relationships between poverty, crime, and incarceration, and between poverty, unemployment, and educational disadvantage during the juvenile years. Apparent relationships between juvenile experience of educational disadvantage, involvement in crime, and incarceration, as
discussed in the literature, will now be examined.

**Educational disadvantage and incarceration**

Complex relationships between the experiences of educational disadvantage, unemployment and low socioeconomic status were identified from the literature (for example: Bessant, 1997; Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 1999; Lamb et al., 1998; National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1996; Rizvi, 1998; Sturman, 1997, pp.68-73). Evidence was presented to the Australian Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee (1996, p.8) that ‘most of the people who have come into prison’ were unemployed prior to incarceration and were classified as ‘long-term unemployed’ people. In 1991, the unemployment rate amongst Australian prisoners, prior to their incarceration, was more than double that of the general Australian population in 1992 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001; Walker et al., 1991). A review of the provision of education and training in Victorian prisons, commissioned by the Victorian Office of the Corrective Services Commissioner, and conducted in 2003, reported that –

Prisoner’s needs are such that they tend to be significantly more disadvantaged – educationally, vocationally, socially – than the general community, and in addition they tend to have additional complex needs that impact on their capacity to participate successfully in education. (Department of Justice, 2003a, p.3)

From the evidence of links between unemployment, poverty and educational disadvantage, as presented in the literature, an inference could be drawn that, in general, Australian prisoners probably had lived experience of multiple social disadvantages, including educational disadvantage. The validity of the inference could be tested, to some extent, by an examination of the available data. Such an examination will now be undertaken here.

**Australian prisoners: social background characteristics**

ANTA (1997), cited by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training and Advisory Council (ATSIPTAC) (1998, p.8) identified the following general characteristics of the Australian prison population in 1997: in the 20-30 years age group, male, predominantly re-offenders, generally with poor education and employment achievements, generally socially unsuccessful in conventional terms, and generally with a low level of employment-related skills. From a study of the profiles of offenders in Australia in the period 1989-96, James and Carach (1997, p.33) described
the ‘typical offender’ as ‘male, aged between 18 and 26, never married, not working, and Caucasian’. ATSIPAC (1998, pp.13-14) identified ATSI people, the long-term unemployed, substance abusers, people from non-English speaking background, people with a psychiatric disability, and people with a background experience of significant emotional problems, as sub-groups in the general Australian population who were proportionally over-represented in the prison population.

More recent studies than those on which the ATSIPAC (1998) findings were based have indicated that personal histories of drug use and drug addiction were probably frequently-occurring characteristics of prisoners in Australia during the late 1990s and early 2000s. A 2002 study by Collins & Lapsley, cited by Makkai & Payne (2003), found that between 37 per cent and 52 per cent of prisoners in Australia had personal histories of drug use and/or drug addiction. Relatively recent studies have reported purportedly strong links between drug use and involvement in criminal behaviour in Australia (Makkai & Payne, 2003). Prichard and Payne (2005a) reported, from a study carried out with youths in juvenile detention centres in Australia, that ‘these young people have extensive offending and drug use histories’ (Prichard & Payne, 2005a, p.1). They found that the majority of young people who became involved in criminal behaviour ‘started drug use and offending at an early age’ and had begun their involvement in crime at approximately the same age as they had begun to use drugs (Prichard & Payne, 2005a, p.1). In reporting results of a part of major study of the personal histories of drug use of prisoners and juvenile detainees in Australia, Prichard and Payne (2005b) stated that –

The juveniles in this study reported committing a variety of offences at very high frequency. The majority reported chronic, persistent and multiple drug use. (Prichard & Payne, 2005b, p.1)

The findings reported by Prichard and Payne (2005a; 2005b) appear to indicate that chronic drug use was a frequently-occurring characteristics of juvenile offenders in the early 2000s in Australia. From a study of transition of offenders from juvenile offending to adult criminal careers, Chen et al. (2005, p.1) reported that ‘we find a high proportion of juveniles making their first appearance in a Children’s Court continue their offending into adulthood’. The findings reported by Prichard and Payne (2005b) and by Chen et al. (2005), when considered together, appear to support a conclusion that chronic drug use as a juvenile is likely to have been a frequently-occurring characteristic of adult prisoners in Australia during the period from the late 1990s to the early 2000s.

Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) men, particularly young
men, were proportionally greatly over-represented in the Australian prison population during the period 1988-1998 (Carurch and Grant, 1999, p.6). ATSIPTAC reported that ATSI men were 18 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-ATSI men, and that 30 per cent of ATSI prisoners were less than 20 years old (ATSIPTAC, 1998, pp.8;21). Carach and Grant (1999, p.6) reported that, in 1998, ATSI people of imprisonable age constituted approximately two per cent of the Australian population of imprisonable age, and constituted approximately 19 per cent of the Australian prison population. By June 2003, 21 per cent of the Australian prison population were ATSI people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). In 1996 the Australian Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996, p.43), in referring to the proportional over-representation of ATSI people in prison, cited opinion that ‘an incomplete and inadequate education is a major factor among Aborigines committing repeat offences’.

Descriptions of general characteristics of prisoners, given in the literature cited here, were based on aggregated data and gave little indication of the diversity of the characteristics between individuals within the general prison population. A more detailed examination of literature relating to the range of individual characteristics evident in Australian prison populations will now be made here.

**Diversity of characteristics**

The Australian Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996, p.8) noted that ‘offenders are a diverse population, whose education and training needs reflect that diversity’. Airton (1994), in a study of a stratified sample of 15 prisoners in a Queensland correctional centre, found some patterns of prisoner characteristics which illustrated the diversity of individual characteristics amongst the prisoner population. Three distinct sub-groups were identified within the sample, with regard to the prisoners’ profiles of individual criminal history, length of sentence, risk-taking propensity, and propensity to consider the consequences of their actions (Airton, 1994).

Prison census aggregated data, such as that gathered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (1992), indicated that there was great diversity amongst the Australian prison population with regard to a wide range of characteristics. General relationships between prisoners’ characteristics could not readily be identified from the aggregated data because of various factors. These factors included the ways in which the data were aggregated, the lack of data about prisoners’ background life experiences, and variations
between jurisdictions in the types of data available for collection (Walker et al., 1991). Individual characteristics of prisoners in Australia, ostensibly related to their experience of education in their juvenile years, are of particular interest to the purposes of the study undertaken here. Available literature which provides some information about such characteristics will now be reviewed here.

**Education-related pre-incarceration characteristics**

Neuendoff (1980) and Bates and Nunn (1987) carried out studies that identified some pre-incarceration education-related characteristics of small samples of prisoners in Queensland correctional institutions. Neuendoff identified some pre-incarceration environmental influences on prisoners’ participation in education programs in Queensland correctional institutions. He noted, particularly, a predominance of manual occupation backgrounds of the prisoners in the study sample (Neuendorff, 1980, pp.51–54). In 1987, Bates and Nunn reported the results of a survey of a sample of 42 prisoners at the Woodford correctional centre in Queensland, in which they had gathered data about prisoners’ educational backgrounds, employment history and current involvement in education or training programs (Bates and Nunn, 1987).

Although the sample size was too small to enable generalisations to other groups of prisoners to be made from the data, the findings regarding participation in schooling and in employment were consistent with data from a study by Walker et al. (1991) of the Australian prison population in 1991. Bates and Nunn reported that a majority of the prisoners whom they surveyed had self-reported ‘behavioural disturbances’, such as disruptive or aggressive behaviour or truancy, during their school years, and that approximately 20 per cent had been expelled from school (Bates and Nunn, 1987).

From the results of a national study of the drug-use personal histories of offenders in Australia, which included a study of juveniles in corrective detention, Prichard and Payne (2005b) reported that 60 per cent of the juveniles included in the study had been expelled from school. The study revealed apparent statistically strong linkages between experience of abuse and neglect in childhood, juvenile involvement in offending and in alcohol and drug use, and low school achievement (Prichard & Payne, 2005b). According to Prichard and Payne (2005b), 75 per cent of the juvenile detainees included in the study had discontinued their formal education after experiencing less than 10 years of basic formal education. Prichard and Payne (2005a, p.1) noted that ‘many of the detainees had troubled home backgrounds and poor school results’.

The past educational disadvantage experience of prisoners in Australian
corrective detention facilities had been indicated by evidence of their disproportionately low participation in secondary schooling, disproportionately low participation in post-compulsory education and training, and relatively poor employment outcomes (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996; Walker et al., 1991). The most recent available national data on the educational backgrounds of Australian prisoners came from the National Prison Census of 1992 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1992). Australian prisoner census data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics since 1992 has not included data about prisoners’ educational backgrounds.

The available data had indicated that, generally, the formal educational attainment levels of Australian prisoners in 1991 were considerably lower than those of the general Australian population in 1992, the nearest year to 1991 for which comparable data were available. In 1992, approximately 55 per cent of the general population in the age group 15 years to 69 years had completed secondary school, 42 per cent had completed a recognised post-compulsory education or training qualification, 32 per cent had a trade or other vocational qualification, and 9.5 per cent had a degree or higher qualification (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1993, p.324). In 1991 approximately 13 per cent of prisoners in Australian correctional facilities were reported to have completed secondary school, approximately three per cent had a post-compulsory education or trade qualification, and 35 per cent were reported to had not completed secondary schooling (Walker et al., 1991). Data collected in 1992 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicated that approximately seven per cent of Australian prisoners had completed secondary schooling (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1992), a figure that was inconsistent with the data that was reported by Walker et al. (1991). The data that were reported by Walker et al. (1991) were not directly comparable with the data that were reported by the ABS (1992) because the highest formal educational attainment of 49 per cent of prisoners in 1991 had been reported in the Walker et al. (1991) study to have been unknown (Walker et al., 1991). ATSIPTAC (1998, p.19) reported that approximately four per cent of ATSI prisoners in Australia had completed secondary schooling.

The ostensible educational disadvantage experienced disproportionately by children from about the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, who had subsequently become incarcerated, seems unlikely to have been either detected or to have been adequately dealt with under the provisions of Australian public policy on educational disadvantage at the school level that prevailed during the relevant period. Australian public policy relating to educational disadvantage at the school level of formal education, during the
approximate period of the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, appeared to lack a capacity to identify and/or deal appropriately with the occurrence of educational disadvantage at the level of the individual child, especially in cases where the disadvantage had stemmed from cumulative, multiple causes such as effects of poverty, dysfunctional family circumstances, frequent family relocation, learning difficulties, and/or cross-cultural obstacles to fully effective participation in the available schooling. Effects of prisoners’ perceptions of their lived experience of schooling, on their attitudes towards formal education and training during their incarceration, were not identified in this review of the literature. No published reports which presented representations of prisoners’ ostensible perceptions of their lived experience during the periods of their basic schooling and/or basic vocational training were evident in the available English-language literature. The apparent disproportional incidence of educational disadvantage experienced in childhood by people who had subsequently become incarcerated seemed to be reflected in a similarly disproportionate incidence of disadvantage regarding vocational education and training amongst the same general group of people.

The Queensland Vocational Educational and Employment Commission listed prisoners as one of nine categories of people identified as ‘historically under-represented and disadvantaged’ in access to and participation in vocational education and training programs in Australia (Vocational Education and Employment Commission, 1993, p.7). The Commission referred to reportedly high correlations between low levels of literacy and of basic education, and incarceration rates (Vocational Education and Employment Commission, 1993, p.33). Given the significantly proportionately lower participation rates at the secondary school level, of people who had subsequently became incarcerated in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1992; Walker et al, 1991), compared to the rates for the general Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1993), it is not surprising to find that the participation and completion rates of Australian prisoners, generally, in post-compulsory formal education and training programs were significantly lower than the rates for the general Australian population (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996).

The available information indicated that, generally, prisoners in Australian corrective detention facilities had pre-incarceration experiences of educational disadvantage, with regard to education processes and outcomes. In terms of the general education process criterion of access, as measured by participation, the available evidence showed that, at all levels of the formal education system, Australian prisoners
generally had lived experience of educational disadvantage. The available evidence indicated that Australian prisoners had experienced educational disadvantage in terms of the general education outcome criterion of employment (Richardson, 1995). The information available from the literature provided little insight into the nature and contributory causes of the evident educational disadvantage of Australian prisoners. The ostensible educational disadvantage at the post-compulsory levels of formal education and training, from the mid-1970s onwards, experienced disproportionately by people who had subsequently become incarcerated, seemed unlikely to have been either detected or to have been adequately dealt with under the provisions of Australian public policy on educational disadvantage at the post-compulsory levels during the relevant time period. Australian public policy relating to educational disadvantage in the post-compulsory sector of formal education and training, from the mid-1970s onwards, appeared to have lacked a capacity to have dealt effectively with the experience of educational disadvantage at the level of the individual, particularly in cases where the disadvantage had stemmed from cumulative, multiple causes, including causes that had resulted in an experience of educational disadvantage during the period of compulsory schooling.

In Australian public policy since the late 1980s, proportional access designated groups had been the principal criterion used in the determination of educational disadvantage in the post-compulsory sector (Australian National Training Authority, 1997, p.9; Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1999). Ostensibly, this criterion of relative proportion of access had not been applied in addressing the evident educational disadvantage that had been experienced by prisoners in Australian corrective detention. Prisoners had never been an identified equity group in Australian education public policy prior to 1998 (Australian National Training Authority, 1997, p.9; 1998; Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1999). As no specific strategy to address educational disadvantages that had been experienced by prisoners, based on the identification of prisoners as an equity group, had been included in Australian public policy prior to 2000 (Australian National Training Authority, 2000), an examination of the available literature on educational programs within correctional institutions is necessary in order to ascertain how the evident education disadvantage of prisoners has been dealt with in these institutions. This examination will be undertaken in the next sub-section of this chapter.
Education and training for prisoners in Australia

There was some evidence from the literature that, prior to the late 1990s, attempts in Australian correctional institutions to address the past educational disadvantage experienced by prisoners had generally not been effective. Murphy (1988) commented on the general ineffectiveness of rehabilitation programs in Australian correctional institutions. Evidence presented to the Australian Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee indicated that the majority of prisoners in Australia had not benefited from the range of available social programs (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996, p.8). Byrne (1990), in a detailed review of prisoner education in Queensland prior to 1990, with reference to the provision of education and training programs to prisoners, drew attention to what she had concluded to be the –

incoherent, inconsistent and pragmatic set of discrete and unrelated policies which currently operate in Queensland’s correctional system. (Byrne, 1990, p.65)

She found serious inadequacies, in the provision by the Queensland Education Department and by Queensland TAFE, of educational services to prisoners in Queensland correctional institutions. She had noted that ‘current TAFE policy’, particularly regarding the ongoing commitment of funds to educational programs, was a hindrance to progress in achieving an adequate provision of education and training for prisoners (Byrne, 1990, pp.66-67). In the general debate about the effectiveness of in-prison education and training in Australia and elsewhere, a major focus on a purported relationship between in-prison education and training, and recidivism, appeared to have emerged during the 1990s.

ANTA (1997), cited by ATSIPTAC (1998, p.8), referred to the predominance of repeat offenders in the Australian prisoner population. Walker et al. (1991, p.35) reported that, in 1991, approximately 57 per cent of the Australian prisoner population at the time of census in 1991 had previously been imprisoned. The recidivism rate in 1991, reported by Walker et al. (1991), had apparently not changed significantly by 2002. In 2002, the recidivism rate of offenders who have been incarcerated in Australian correctional facilities was of the order of 60 per cent for males, 50 per cent for females, and 75 per cent for ATSI people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). Claims made in reports of some studies in The United States of America appear to support a conclusion that the provision of appropriate education and training programs for prisoners could result in reduced rates of recidivism. Such published claims appeared to have begun to influence Australian public policy relating to the provision of
prisoner education and training, during the 1990s.

From a 1997-98 study of the relationships between correctional education and recidivism in three North American States, Steurer et al. (2001, p.49) concluded that ‘correctional education significantly reduced long-term recidivism for inmates released in late 1997 and early 1998’. The Texas Criminal Justice Policy Council reported, in relation to prisoners’ educational achievement while incarcerated, that ‘higher educational achievement scores are associated with lower recidivism rates’ (Fabelo, 2000, p. 33). Fabelo (2000) concluded that ‘Educational achievement is associated with higher post-release employment rates and higher wages’ and that ‘The most significant reductions in recidivism are associated with increasing educational achievement scores for high risk offenders (young property offenders)’ (original parentheses) (Fabelo, 2000, p. 33). These findings, which were echoed in some reports of other studies (for example in studies cited by Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE) (2002), Eggleston (2003), Fortin (2003), Gehring (2003) and Kirby et al. (2000)) appeared to have had some impact on the development of Australian public policy during the 1990s.

The rhetoric that impacted on governments’ responses to the evident educational disadvantage that had been experienced by prisoners in Australia, had ostensibly undergone a change in emphasis since the 1980s (Australian National Training Authority, 1997, p.9). However, published evidence of the effectiveness of implementing new policy relating to the provision of education and training to prisoners, as developed during the 1990s, was equivocal and fragmentary. Policy and practices relating to the provision of education and training for inmates of corrective detention facilities varied between Australian States, as each State government had jurisdiction regarding corrective detention facilities in that particular State. Most of the available literature which described the in-prison educational experiences of people who were incarcerated in Australian prisons during the 1990s was in the form of accounts of specific programs undertaken in particular institutions in the various States. Most of these accounts were provided in the form of conference papers written and presented by education officers or other educators working in correctional centres. These papers were included in the proceedings of the International Forum on Education in Corrections Settings (IFECSA), 1994, the IFECSA 2nd. Biennial Conference, 1995, the IFECSA 3rd. Biennial Conference, 1997, the IFECSA 4th. Biennial Conference, 1999, the IFECSA 5th. Biennial Conference, 2001, and the IFECSA 6th. Biennial Conference, 2003. In general, the focus of these accounts was on outcomes-based evaluations or descriptive accounts of specific, institution-based programs.
The accounts given in the available literature on formal education and training for prisoners in Australian corrective detention facilities, up to 2003, provided very little information about the educational characteristics of the participants or the process aspects of the programs involved. In totality, this literature had portrayed a generally ad hoc and fragmented provision of education and training programs in Australian correctional institutions during the approximate period 1990 to 2000. In 1990, Byrne (1990, p.65) concluded that the provision of formal education and training for prisoners in Queensland correctional institutions was unsystematic and very inadequate with regard to identifying or meeting prisoners’ needs in relation to their rehabilitation and reintegration into the wider society. Walsh (2004, pp.142-143) seemed to imply that the provision of education services to prisoners had been a relatively low priority of the Queensland Department of Corrective Services (DCS). She reported that the educational needs of prisoners who were serving sentences of less than 12 months had not been assessed at all. She advised that the DCS education policy would ‘have to be significantly altered’ if it were to meet ‘international best practice’ in encouraging and enabling prisoners to access general and tertiary level education (Walsh, 2004, p. 142). Callan & Gardner (2005) found that the provision of vocational education and training to Queensland prisoners had generally been unsystematic and uncoordinated, and that it had not been based on clearly identified needs of prisoners. Inadequacies in the provision of education and training, with regard to meeting the demand for appropriate education and training programs in some Victorian prisons, were indicated in a report by Kirby et al. (2000). They had found that, in privately managed prisons in Victoria, in the period 1994-2000, the rate of increase in the funding of education and training for prisoners had been well below the rate of increase in the demand for education and training services for prisoners. They concluded that the quality, quantity and range of TAFE-provided training available to prisoners significantly decreased during the period 1994-2000, and that inmates of Victoria’s private prisons were ‘a very disadvantaged group’ with regard to opportunity to participate in higher education (Kirby et al., 2000). Their recommendation regarding prisoners’ access to higher education was that prisoners be made eligible for Federal Government educational equity funding (Kirby et al., 2000, p. 66). Kirby et al., (2000, p. 66) recommended that the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee (AVCC) consult with the Federal Government Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) to develop ‘a consistent policy of higher education provision for adult prisoners’ including ‘the development of standardised pathways to enhance opportunities for prisoners to access higher
education’.

Apparent inadequacies in the provision of formal education and vocational training for prisoners in relation to facilitating the eventual integration or reintegration of incarcerated offenders into the wider society, as evident in at least two Australian jurisdictions, seem to have been exacerbated by the existence of various barriers to prisoner access to the programs that were available, and/or to difficulties that prisoners experienced when they did obtain access. These barriers and difficulties, as evident from the available literature, will now be discussed here.

**Barriers to and difficulties of education and training in prison**

Numerous potential difficulties associated with, and barriers to, addressing the educational disadvantages experienced by prisoners in their past lived experience and in their current incarceration were identified in the relatively few published national studies and other investigations that have been conducted regarding prisoner education and training in Australia (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996). General perceptions of prisoners regarding their lived experiences of post-compulsory formal education and training, including their perceptions of education and training during their incarceration, have not been identified in this review of the literature. With the exception of Tiltmann’s (1999) article, no publications which presented representations of prisoners’ ostensible perceptions of their lived experience of formal education and/or training during the period(s) of their incarceration were evident in the available English-language literature. The diverse nature of the Australian prisoner population, with regard to education and training needs and length of available time to undertake education and training programs, is indicative of some of the difficulties regarding the design and implementation of appropriate curricula for prisoner education and training (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996).

The Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee (1996, pp.8-9) had referred to ‘particular disadvantages’ that short-term prisoners experience in accessing educational programs, due to the combination of the brevity of their periods of imprisonment and the unsettling effects, on personal goal-setting and motivation, of becoming incarcerated. In 2003, approximately 48 per cent of adult prisoners in Australian corrective detention facilities were serving custodial sentences of no more than two years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). The Australian Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee noted that long delays
frequently occurred between the start of a period of incarceration and the prisoner’s access to advice from prison education officers as to the availability of educational programs and their suitability to the needs of the individual prisoner (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996, p.12).

Reported deficiencies in material resources for education and training, including basic educational infrastructure within the correctional institutions, and finance to undertake externally-provided programs, exemplify the occurrence of formal education and vocational training resource difficulties and barriers faced by prisoners, and by the correctional institution education staff in their attempts to assist prisoners to undertake education and training (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996; Tiltmann, 1999). Kirby et al. (2000) reported that the financial resourcing of vocational education and training for prisoners in privately managed prisons in Victoria had been inadequate with regard to meeting the needs of the prisons’ populations during the period 1994-2000.

Lack of access to electronic information obtainable only from the Internet appears to be an emerging barrier to participation in some forms of accredited education and training for most prisoners in most Australian jurisdictions during the early 2000s. In the current decade, prisoners who have wanted to participate in advanced accredited vocational training programs or in university accredited education programs would, in most cases, have encountered the barrier of lack of access to essential course information, including course content, in electronic form which was available only through the Internet (Bedford et al., 2005). Bedford et al. (2005) suggested strategies by which this barrier might be overcome without exposing the correctional facilities to additional security risks. However, they acknowledged that the high-security-related institutional cultures of most facilities most probably would militate against the uptake of such suggestions in the near future. Correctional institution cultural environments, including some related to custodial practices and to peer influences on prisoners, may present some difficulties, or even barriers, to prisoner access to and/or participation in education and training programs (Wolfgang, 1979, p.4; Young, 1989;). Institutional factors, such as a lack of suitable education and training programs, long delays in new prisoner access, inadequate teaching and physical resources, and negative cultural environments, seem likely to have negative effects on the motivation of prisoners to engage in education and training. Such negative effects may be reinforced by the experience of personal problems associated with being incarcerated.

At the individual prisoner level, personal problems affecting motivation to
participate effectively in education and training programs may emanate from trauma associated with incarceration and/or with past socialisation into a subculture in which education and training were not valued as realistic means to the achievement of worthwhile personal goals (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996; Tiltmann, 1999).

According to the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee (1996), prisoners, upon release, were not immediately eligible for Australian national government social welfare benefits, and were not qualified to receive benefits within the category of ‘long-term’ unemployed regardless of the length of the sentence that they had served. Financial hardship experienced immediately after release may seriously disrupt ex-prisoner’s continuation of an education or training program that they had been commenced but not completed while incarcerated (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996).

Since the late 1990s some changes in policy and practices regarding the provision of formal education and vocational training for prisoners have occurred in several Australian jurisdictions. These changes will now be discussed here.

Policies and practices in in-prison education and training since the late 1990s

From within a liberal-individualistic socio-political orientation, increasingly influenced by an hegemony of economic determinism since the mid-1990s (Bagnall, 2000; Braithwaite, 2000), educational disadvantage at the post-compulsory sector of formal education and training in Australia was addressed primarily by a policy of material resource redistribution to support access to vocational education and training programs by members of pre-determined equity groups, principally through the VET component of the post-compulsory education sector (Australian National Training Authority, 2001b). Since the mid-1990s, this national policy apparently was applied to prisoners in some Australian jurisdictions, as well as to the general adult Australian population. The implementation of national public policy, including the extent to which it related to prisoner education, was within the framework of a national vocational education and training strategy developed within the general ANTA framework and adopted nationally in 1995 (Australian National Training Authority, 1997, p.9). By 1998, ANTA had identified prisoners as one of five equity groups for whom specific strategies were to be developed (Australian National Training Authority, 1998). In 2000, ANTA published a specific strategy for the vocational education and training of adult prisoners (Australian
National Training Authority, 2000). This strategy specified that education and training for prisoners was to be provided within the terms of the broader national strategy (Australian National Training Authority, 1998). These terms included focal areas of client access, participation and attainment, employment and lifelong learning, and accountability of the relevant authorities for the implementation of the strategy. Integration of vocational education and training into the offender management plans of corrective facilities, recognition of the diversity of characteristics of offenders, and the provision to prisoners of pathways to personal development and employment opportunities were included as statements of principle within the strategy. The strategy specified that the funding of vocational education and training for prisoners within each particular jurisdiction was to be shared between the Australian Government and the relevant State or Territory government, and that each State or Territory government was to be responsible for the implementation of the strategy within its jurisdiction.

Responsibility for the implementation of the 2000 national vocational education and training strategy for prisoners (Australian National Training Authority, 2000) within correctional institutions rested with individual state/territory jurisdictions. Queensland and Victoria had already begun the undertaking of a systematic approach to the implementation of the 1995 national strategy for vocational education and training in some of their adult corrective facilities by 1997 (Australian National Training Authority, 2001b; Australian National Training Authority, 1997). In 2000, in a ministerial portfolio budget statement by the Queensland Minister for Police and Corrective Services, reference was made to the provision of opportunities for the rehabilitation of prisoners through ‘participation in education, work, vocational training, and programs designed to address offending behaviour’ (Queensland Government, 2001, p.5).

By 1996 Queensland and Victoria had included prisoners as an identified group within their State-based implementations of the National Vocational Education and Training Strategy, which had been adopted by the Australian national government and each state and territory government in 1995 (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996). The Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee (1996, p.28), in endorsing initiatives taken in Queensland and Victoria, recommended that ‘education and training pathways’ be developed for prisoners in each State and Territory, in order to reduce the effects of various barriers and difficulties that prisoners had experienced in attempting to undertake education and training programs, particularly with regard to maintaining the
continuity of their study programs. The training pathways approach focussed on the identified education and training needs of the individual prisoner rather than on group-based assessments of need. The broad strategy of the training pathways approach to responding to the educational disadvantage of prisoners appeared to be similar to a general strategy, based on the identification of individual needs, advocated by Sturman (1997, pp.113-114) for addressing educational disadvantage experienced by school children.

Wilson and Penaluna (1995) reported on the early stages of implementation of a four-phase ‘training pathways model’ which had been adopted on a trial basis in some correctional centres in Victoria. The model involved identification of individual prisoners’ education and training needs, education and training goal-setting by each participant prisoner, the provision and monitoring of each participant’s formal education and/or vocational training program during incarceration, and transition back into the general community after release (Wilson and Penaluna, 1995). Apparently, implementation of the model in Victoria did not proceed beyond the trial phase, as no further report of its implementation was published in the period from 1996-2006. Various other initiatives from within the general framework of the national vocational education and training strategy for the period 1998-2003 (Australian National Training Authority, 1998) had been undertaken in prisons in some Australian State jurisdictions, including Victoria, since 1995.

Since the late 1990s, there appeared to have been some significant policy developments in Australia with regard to the provision of education and training to inmates of Australian corrective detention facilities. The Australian Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, in endorsing ‘the principle of an overarching commitment to prisoner rehabilitation’ (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996, p.65), recommended, in 1996, that ANTA develop a national vocational educational and training strategy for prisoners (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996, p.23). This strategy had been developed by 2000 (Australian National Training Authority, 2000). The policy developments associated with the 2000 ANTA national strategy appeared to have been, at least in part, a response to claims that the provision of appropriate education and training to prisoners was instrumental in reducing recidivism rates, as evinced in some of the literature published since 1990.

A variety of reports from Australia, The United States of America, and Britain, had concluded that, where prisoners had developed capacities for achieving social
inclusion through education and training programs, the level of recidivism had been reduced (for example: Callan & Gardner, 2005; Eggleston, 2003; Fabelo, 2000; Fortin, 2003; Gehring, 2003; Kirby et al., 2000; Steurer et al, 2001). In a report of an investigation into the management of private prisons in Victoria, Kirby et al. (2000) noted that –

For the past 20 years, international research has demonstrated that education and training can have positive effects on rehabilitation of prisoners and recidivism rates. (Kirby et al., 2000, p. 64)

Some researchers drew particular attention to the importance of the relevance of in-prison education and training to identified needs of the prisoners. For example, in relation to the findings of a 1997-98 study of the relationships between correctional education and recidivism in three North American States, Steurer et al. (2001, p.46) had commented that –

Given the erratic and unstable employment history of the participants, closer attention to vocational education/training is needed for incarcerated offenders to assist them to make a smooth and successful transition back into the workplace after release. (Steurer et al., 2001, p. 46)

Policy initiatives, ostensibly aimed specifically at reducing recidivism through the provision of vocationally-related education and training to prisoners, were evident in literature relating to policy which was adopted in some Australian jurisdictions since the late 1990s. Gilmour et al. (2003, p.1), for example, reported that, after 1997, the Western Australian Department of Justice had ‘greatly expanded the scope of the education and vocational training area of the Western Australian custodial environment’. According to Gilmour et al. (2003, p. 1), the changes to which they referred had stemmed from ‘a greater understanding of the effectiveness of education/skills development in reducing re-offending’ on the part of the Department. They identified the provision of opportunities for prisoners to access accredited vocational training as a major priority of the Department’s policy since 1997 (Gilmour et al., 2003, p.1). In a vein similar to that of the Western Australian Department of Justice, in 2002 the Queensland Department of Corrective Services reported that the Department’s strategies to reduce recidivism included the provision of special programs to address offending behaviours, and programs of general education and of vocational education and training (Department of Corrective Services, 2002). Callan & Gardner (2005) found that the provision of vocational education and training in Queensland
prisons was generally unsystematic. They recommended adoption of a comprehensive approach to prisoner vocational education and training, based on identified needs of particular groups of prisoners. A major review of education and training provisions in Victorian prisons in 2003, commissioned by the Victorian Government, made numerous recommendations regarding reform of the provision of education and training services for prisoners in Victoria. Key findings of the review included identification of the primary purpose of education and training in prisons as assisting prisoners to gain employment on release from custody, and a conclusion that prisoner education and training was a key element in the rehabilitation of offenders (Department of Justice, 2003a).

In 2004, Australian Government policy acknowledgement of a claim that the provision of appropriate education and training for prisoners was instrumental in reducing the general rate of recidivism was exemplified by the adoption, by the Australian Government and by all Australian State and Territory government ministers with portfolio responsibility for corrective services, of a document titled *The Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia Revised 2004*. The guidelines contained in this document are closely related to guidelines which had been adopted by the United Nations and the Council of Europe (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2004, p. 3), which stated that –

Prisoners should be provided with access to programs and services, including education and vocational training (including employment), that enable them to develop appropriate skills and abilities to lead law abiding lives when they return to the community. (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2005, p. 24)

General policy initiatives regarding the provision of education and training for prisoners, as supported by Australian State governments since the late 1990s, emphasising the role of accredited vocational training, appeared to reflect an interpretation of educational disadvantage as being essentially an employment disadvantage, and to have adopted a response to such perceived disadvantage largely conceived in terms of the values underlying a neo-liberal philosophy of economic determinism. This response appeared to focus primarily on attempts to eliminate perceived deficits in prisoners’ employment-related skills. In a 2003 review of the education and training of prisoners in Victoria, the authors had proposed that –

The primary purpose for education and training must be to assist prisoners to gain employment, and thereby reduce the likelihood of re-offending. (Department of Justice, 2003a, p.11)
Ostensibly, the general policy response of Australian corrective services authorities, since the late 1990s, to the evident general educational disadvantage of prisoners, has been based on an assumption that, on release from custodial detention, prisoners suitably skilled to work in an industry would be able and willing to make a positive, skills-based contribution to legal forms of productivity in the wider society. However, an examination of available information in the public domain indicated that approaches to prisoner education and training, which were more broadly needs-based than an approach based solely on a neo-liberalist interpretation of educational disadvantage, had been adopted in at least some Australian corrective services jurisdictions. Prisoner education and training policy, in jurisdictions which published information about their policy, appeared to support the provision of basic education programs, including literacy and numeracy programs, for prisoners. The policy ostensibly implemented in New South Wales, for example, includes provision of general education programs for prisoners, as evinced in the following public statement by the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services in 2006 –

The basic education curriculum in New South Wales corrections, the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA), provides education at Australian Quality Framework (AQF) Certificate levels 1 to 3 in the four main genres of reading and writing, the three main genres of oracy, and the seven basic mathematical processes. (New South Wales Department of Corrective Services, 2006, p.8)

The Western Australian Department of Corrective Services (2006) stated that prisoners in Western Australian corrective facilities could study a wide range of educational programs including programs of basic adult education, secondary education, and higher education. A 2003 review of the education and training of prisoners in Victoria recommended that ‘all prisons include enrolment and completion targets in adult basic education’ (Department of Justice, 2003a, p.36).

In addition to the provision of general education programs, such as basic adult education, secondary education, and higher education, some Australian jurisdictions appear to have policy provisions for the inclusion of special programs designed to address specific prisoner behaviour patterns associated with particular types of offences. These special programs included drug rehabilitation, cognitive skills, and anger management programs, as well as special behaviour modification programs for prisoners convicted of paedophilic, sexual assault, or domestic violence offences (for example: New South Wales Department of Corrective Services, 2006, pp.16-19; Western Australian Department of Corrective Services, 2005).
Since the late 1990s there has been published evidence of attempts to implement government policy initiatives regarding the provision of credentialed vocational education and training to prisoners, by corrective services authorities in some Australian States. In Victoria, for example, Kirby et al. (2000) noted that, in Victoria’s private prisoners –

Education programs for prisoners focus primarily on acquiring labour-market skills that are linked as far as possible to the industry’s availability at the prison. (Kirby et al., 2000, p. 64)

They had reported that the Victorian Corrections Industries Training Board was undertaking initiatives to identify traineeship opportunities which were linked to industries within prisons. Initiatives, similar to those reported to have occurred in Victoria, were apparently undertaken in the jurisdictions of Western Australia and of New South Wales. According to the Western Australian Department of Corrective Services (2006) –

In WA prisons, all prisoners serving sentences of six months or more undergo literacy screening. The Education and Vocational Training Unit manages programs aimed at securing employment for offenders upon release. (Western Australian Department of Corrective Services, 2006)

and –

Courses in prison are accredited by TAFE and recognised as industry standard. This means that qualifications and certificates earned will be recognised anywhere – increasing job prospects. Courses started in prison can be continued on the outside. (Western Australian Department of Corrective Services, 2006)

In 2006, the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services reported that –

Educational provision is also aimed at vocational training and employment. (New South Wales Department of Corrective Services, 2006, p.9)

and that –

All the vocational curricula taught in NSW correctional centres, such as Information Technology, Building Construction, and Vocational Preparation courses, are also nationally recognised curricula. (New South Wales Department of Corrective Services, p.9)

Initiatives at the national and state level in Australia since the late 1990s, with regard to the provision of formal education and training for prisoners, appear to be generally consistent with public policy developed in Britain since 2000. In a report of
the British Government’s plans for changing the management of offenders, Blunkett (2004) stated that –

Very often offenders have missed out on much of their education. This normally means that they have little or no prospect of a job. We have put in place measures to improve offenders’ educational attainment and improve their chances of securing work. (Blunkett, 2004, p. 4)

The measures to which Blunkett (2004, pp. 4-5) referred included requirements that all offenders under 16 years of age spend 25 hours per week receiving education, the establishment of a priority in prison and probation services for the provision of opportunity for adult offenders to gain skills qualifications, the offering to all prisoners of access to the Open University, and the provision of a variety of post-release employment-related support services.

Since the early 2000s, the issue of the post-release treatment of people who had become incarcerated was given increasing attention in Australia (for example: Department of Justice, 2001a; 2003b; Graffam et al., 2005). Interest in the issue, by a wide range of stakeholders, was demonstrated at national conferences in 2005 and 2006, viz., The Reintegration Puzzle Conference 2005 and The Reintegration Puzzle Conference 2006. Some of the attention which was focussed on the reintegration of prisoners into the wider Australian society, since the early 2000s, appeared to have been conceptually linked to initiatives undertaken since the late 1990s in some Australian jurisdictions to improve prisoners’ access to, and participation rates in, vocationally-related education and training. These initiatives were generally supported by the adoption, nationally, of a strategy to address the education and training needs of prisoners in Australia (Australian National Training Authority, 2000). This strategy focussed primarily on the adequate provision of industry-accredited vocational education and training. An apparent recent focus on the integration or reintegration of offenders into the wider society, in relation to the provision of formal education and vocational training for prisoners in Australia, seems to be indicative of likely future developments in Australian prisoner education.

**Possible future development in Australian prisoner education**

The primary conceptual linkage between integration or reintegration of prisoners into the wider society and the provision of accredited vocational education and training for prisoners appears to be the purported opportunities for prisoners to achieve social inclusion through engagement in personally rewarding, ongoing legitimate employment
after their release from custody (Bedford et al., 2005). A partial synthesis of post 1990 conceptualisations of the provision of adequate prisoner education and training, appropriate to identified individual needs, and of the provision of adequate and appropriate forms of support addressing the issue of the integration or reintegration of offenders into the wider society, has been expressed as a conceptualisation of the career management of prisoners on an individual basis (Bedford et al., 2005). Toch (1996), writing in the context of corrective institutions in The United States of America, proposed a ‘career model’ approach to offender management, involving components of individual case management, career planning with prisoners on an individual basis, the development and implementation of individualised education and training plans appropriate to individual prisoner’s identified needs, recognition of individual prisoner’s achievements, and the provision of programs of support for prisoners who are approaching their time for release from custody. An individualised career management approach to the provision of education and training for prisoners appears to have the potential to impact positively on individual prisoner’s willingness to participate in formal education. Holland (1997) claimed that professionally assisted career planning, involving professionally guided self-assessment and personal goal setting, was a powerful tool for developing an individual’s internal motivation to achieve personally and socially desired goals. Some components of a career management approach to offender management seem to have been incorporated in initiatives undertaken in some Australian jurisdictions since 2000. Henry (2005), for example, reported on a trial in an adult correctional facility in New South Wales, of a procedure known as the Education Profile Interview (EPI), which was designed to assist prison education staff to identify education and training needs of individual prisoners in relation to the prisoner’s post-release employment preferences and aspirations. From the results of the trial, Henry (2005) concluded that –

The EPI has become an integral part of education delivery in New South Wales’ correctional centres. It not only forms a strong basis for educational case planning for individual offenders, highlighting their individual needs; it also guides them towards educational achievements in preparation for release back into the community.
(Henry, 2005, p.7)

A concept of an individualised, integrated, holistic approach to facilitating the integration or reintegration of offenders into the wider society, after their release from custody, has been advocated in some countries since the mid-1990s. Andrews and Bonta (1998), for example, advocated a ‘risk-need’ approach to offender rehabilitation,
which involves the development of individualised, holistic programs to address the non-criminogenic needs of individual offenders as well as addressing the criminogenic needs and the risk factors involved. The individualised, holistic nature of the type of program advocated by Andrews and Bonta (1998) is characterised by its aim to address psychological and learning characteristics of the individual relating to participation in the rehabilitative program, including the individual’s motivation to participate and potential internal barriers to the individual’s willingness and ability to participate. Ward and Stewart (2003) proposed the adoption of a ‘good lives’ model of offender rehabilitation, which places emphasis on increasing the individual offender’s capabilities to improve the quality of his or her life. In relation to the development of policy within the jurisdiction of Victoria, Birgden and McLachlan (2004, p.1) advocated the adoption of ‘a multidisciplinary and multi-agency systemic approach’ to the rehabilitation of offenders.

Concomitant with the advocacy of integrated, holistic approaches to offender rehabilitation, there has been increasing advocacy of a need to provide prisoners with various forms of support at the pre-release and post-release stages in order to facilitate their successful integration or re-integration into the wider society (for example: Department of Justice, 2003b; Olgilvie, 2001; Petersilia, 2000). In the context of the Queensland jurisdiction, for example, Eugene (2006) described a program which was offered to eligible prisoners to assist them in their transition from incarceration to life in the wider community. One factor which appeared to be of high importance in the successful transition of prisoners from incarceration to life in the wider community was the ex-prisoner’s ability to find ongoing, personally-rewarding employment (for example, Cox, 2006). Cox (2006) described a program, undertaken in all Queensland correctional centres, to assist eligible prisoners to prepare for, and obtain, employment in the skilled trades after their release from custody.

In relation to increasing the extent and effectiveness of prisoners’ participation in formal education and vocational training programs, the practices of career counselling staff and education staff working in prison environments would seem to be enhanced if they were informed by an understanding of the lived experience of individual prisoners relating to the prisoner’s education, training and employment. According to Tiryakian (1973, p.201), the development and implementation of effective interventions in relation to social phenomena requires an understanding of the phenomena, especially in terms of the meanings that the people for whom the interventions were intended give to their lived experience of the phenomena. The extent
to which attempts to implement post-2000 prisoner education and training policy in
Australian jurisdictions have been, or are likely to be, informed by research-based
understandings of the lived experience of individual prisoners could not be ascertained
from the available literature. Undoubtedly, individual professional staff who have
worked with prisoners in educational and/or counselling roles over a long period of time
have considerable personal understanding of the lived experiences of numerous
prisoners, and personal knowledge of how individual prisoner’s perceptions of their
lived experience affect their participation in formal education and vocational training
interventions within correctional centres. However, the extent to which this personal
understanding and knowledge impacts on policy and practice in the provision of formal
education and vocational training in correctional facilities would seem to be limited by
its individual and personal nature. The development of research-based understandings
of prisoners’ lived experienced, as informed by prisoners, would seem to require the use
of an appropriate research methodology. Such a methodology would appear to
necessarily involve investigation at the level of the individual prisoner, and to
incorporate opportunities for individual prisoners to express their recollections and
perceptions of their lived experiences. A proposed research methodology to achieve
research-based understandings of prisoners’ lived experienced, as informed by
prisoners, will now be outlined here.

**A methodology for developing understandings of prisoners’ lived experiences**

Conclusions by sociologists and criminologists about relationships between social
factors and the occurrence of crime have been based predominantly on aggregated data
from numerous studies, most of which used statistical data gained from surveys (Fox,
1997). While indicative of possible causal patterns of circumstances, the data have not
provided insights into how people who had experienced these patterns had
conceptualised and made sense of their experience, or into the values and belief systems
by which they had evaluated their experience. The active, creative conceptualisation of
lived experience by people, individually and collectively, has been identified by various
constructivist scholars and researchers as the meaning that people give to their lived
experience (for example: Kelly, 1955, cited by Cohen et al, 2000, pp. 337-338; Mishler,
1986a; Reissman, 1993; Tagg, 1985). A psychological theory of the personal
construction by individuals of the meaning of their lived experience was articulated by
Kelly in his 1955 publication (Cohen et al., 2000, pp.337-338; Viney, 1988, p.191). In
relation to the role of values and belief systems in the personal construction of meaning, Gergen (1985, p.267) drew attention to the historical and cultural bases of the ways in which individuals constructed or understood their worlds. The meaning that has been attributed here to the term ‘meaning’, in relation to people’s lived experiences, corresponds to the general constructivist proposition that meaning is constructed by people from their lived experience (Cohen et al., 2000, pp.337-338; Spivey, 1996, p.3; Viney, 1988, p.191). Two types of meaning have been identified from an examination of the constructivist literature, viz., personal meanings as primarily an individual’s constructions, as studied, for example, by Tagg (1985), and social meanings as shared group constructions, as studied, for example, by Gergen (1985). The constructivist interpretation of meaning has particular relevance with regard to the selection of types of data that are to be used to inform decision-making about interventions that are intended to result in behavioural change by individuals (Cohen et al., 2000, p.337; Viney, 1988, p.191). Understandings of the meanings that individuals associate with their lived experience, and of how the meanings developed and had become integrated into the total context of individual’s lives, as informed by the individuals, are essential knowledge inputs for the development and implementation of effective interventions that are intended to result in change in the individual’s behaviour patterns (Tiryakian, 1973, p.202). This type of knowledge appears to be highly relevant to the development and implementation of social policy to address the phenomenon of long-term repeat offending by people who become incarcerated.

Interpretive analysis of interview narratives has potential to provide the types of detailed information about the lived experience of individual Australian prisoners which is relevant to decision-making about educational interventions which are intended to address the educational disadvantage of prisoners by facilitating the development of their formal knowledge and skills, including their life-skills and their vocational skills. Survey methodology, the predominant source of data which has been used in studies of relationships between social factors and crime (Fox, 1997), is unlikely to produce sufficiently rich data about the meaning that individuals give to their lived experience, for the purpose of developing an informed understanding of the experience from the individuals’ points of view (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.9). Interview narrative analysis (Mishler, 1986a) is a methodology, initially developed in psychological and ethnographic research, which allows and encourages people to give a storied account of their lived experiences and which can provide rich data from which meanings constructed by people from their lived experience can be interpretively identified
Interview narrative analysis has been used in research in education, sociology, ethnography and psychology to focus on particular topics or aspects of lived experience of special interest to the researcher (for example, Cortazzi, 1993; Ezzy, 1998; Labov, 1982; Lieblich et al., 1995; Hammersley, 1992; Mishler, 1986a). Lieblich et al. (1995), for example, used interpretive analysis of interview narratives to develop understandings of the individual lived experiences of schooling of Israelis during a particular period of time which was of social and historical interest to the researchers. No reports of studies in which interpretive analysis of interview narratives was used to develop understandings of prisoners’ lived experiences relating to the period(s) of their education and training were evident in the available literature. The methodology of interpretive interview narrative analysis could be used to obtain information about the meaning that prisoners had constructed from their lived experiences of formal education and training, prior to and during their incarceration.

In the development of research-based understandings of prisoners’ lived experiences relating to their formal education and training, through the use of interpretive narrative analysis methodology, there is an apparent need to focus on groups of prisoners who share similar general characteristics. Given the diversity of social, personal and criminological characteristics of the Australian prisoner population during the period of particular relevance to the study (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001, 1992; Walker et al., 1991), random sampling of individual lived experience of prisoners would seem likely to produce a very diverse range of understandings which probably would have limited usefulness as knowledge input to the design of educational interventions which are intended to address individual prisoner’s needs. Research into the lived experience of particular groups of prisoners who have similar general characteristics appears to be more likely to yield information that enables some focus to be taken on particular patterns of experience than information which is obtained through random sampling.

Pattern of offending is one type of general characteristic of Australian prisoners which appears to be particularly relevant to their lived experience of formal education and training. A pattern of engagement in criminal activity as a juvenile person, followed by repeated engagement in criminal activities throughout youth and adulthood, for example, has a temporal relationship to lived experience of basic formal education. Speculative conclusions by some sociological and criminological analysts, about the
apparent existence of complex causal relationships between people’s experiences of social disadvantage, socialisation patterns, and patterns of recurring involvement in crime and subsequent incarcerations (Hagan, 1993; Reiman, 1998; Fox, 1997; White & Perrone, 1997), are of particular interest in the investigation of prisoners’ lived experience of educational disadvantage. For example, some analysts have suggested that, under some patterns of circumstance, people learn from a relatively early age to engage in criminal activity as a preferred alternative to legitimate means of acquiring financial income (Hagan, 1993). Socialisation which results in negative valuing of formal education, and some forms of social disadvantage, experienced relatively early in life, appear to be part of the patterns of circumstances that have been associated with early and repetitive involvement in crime resulting in repeated incarcerations (White & Perrone, 1997). The occurrence of these patterns of circumstances, if evident, seems to have implications for social policy, including education policy, particularly with regard to the early detection of circumstances ostensibly conducive to the development of a criminal career by juvenile people, to interventions which may help to prevent such development and to the integration of offenders into the wider society.

Conclusions

In overview, then, the meaning of the term ‘educational disadvantage’, as debated in the literature in the period approximately from the mid-1970s to the year 2000, has been critically examined here in some detail and has been applied to a critical examination of the literature with regard to the issues of the education experiences of Australian prisoners prior to, and during, incarceration in the period approximately from the mid-1970s to the year 2000. Conclusions drawn from the review and inferences made regarding needs for further research are summarised in the next section of this chapter, and research questions arising from the review are stated. A summary of the main points drawn from the literature reviewed is presented here first.

Summary of main points

Educational disadvantage and incarceration

Identification of the educational disadvantage of prisoners, in terms of Australian public policy, has been limited by a narrow interpretation of educational disadvantage in terms of the criterion of proportional participation in formal education or training programs and by the crudity of the measures which have been applied to determine whether individuals met the criterion. However, within these limitations the available evidence
clearly indicates that, collectively, prisoners in Australia had pre-incarceration lived experience of educational disadvantage in terms of processes and of outcomes. In relation to process aspects of educational disadvantage, prisoners in Australia apparently had generally experienced basic formal education that was of relatively shorter duration and lower quality than that experienced by the general Australian population. In general, juvenile involvement in crime and in drug use appeared to have occurred more frequently during the period of basic formal education of offenders than that of the general Australian population. With regard to purported outcomes of education, the disproportionately low school achievement and disproportionately high pre-incarceration unemployment rates which were characteristic of prisoners in Australia seemed to indicate that many of these prisoners had probably experienced educational disadvantage during the periods of their childhood and/or youth.

Available evidence of the pre-incarceration education experience of Australian prisoners, and of prisoner characteristics, in the form of statistical reports based on general surveys of prisoner populations, revealed little information about the nature or contributory causes of prisoners’ evident lived experience of educational disadvantage, or of the occurrence of interventions to address the educational disadvantage in individual cases. Australian public policy regarding educational disadvantage at the school level of education, during the period 1975-1995, which was the period of particular relevance to the study, ostensibly had little capacity to enable an interventional response to be made to individual cases of educational disadvantage. This apparent incapacity of the policy had, ostensibly, been exacerbated in cases where the disadvantage had resulted from cumulative, multiple causes that, in total, had been peculiar to the lived experiences of the individual, and which had not met the eligibility criteria for inclusion of the individual in one of the pre-determined equity groups of the policy. The prisoner population appeared to be very diverse with regard to social and personal background characteristics, as well as criminological characteristics such as type of offence, previous convictions, length of sentence, and security requirements. The diversity of the prisoner population militated against the drawing of meaningful conclusions about background causal factors associated with incarceration. Although numerous studies, to which reference is made in the literature, proposed that there were linkages between a range of social disadvantages that, collectively, had been characteristic of the lived experience of Australian prisoners, as revealed by published statistical data, the purported linkages were described as being extremely complex. The social disadvantages included poverty, unemployment, and educational disadvantage.
Some sociological and criminological analysts concluded that social disadvantages, and some patterns of socialisation, form a constellation of factors associated with criminality involving early and repetitive offending which is adopted throughout the individual’s life as an alternative to engaging in legitimate means of earning income, such as steady employment. The available published evidence and informed opinion supported a conclusion that a relatively high proportion of people who had become incarcerated in adult prisons in Australia had probably experienced some form of educational disadvantage during the periods of their childhood and youth. This conclusion appears to have had major implications for the provision of education and training opportunities for people during their incarceration.

Available evaluative reports of education and training programs conducted within Australian correctional institutions provided very little information about the education-related characteristics of the participants. The very few published studies that provide any information about education-related characteristics of prisoners in Australian correctional institutions are limited with regard to sample size and detail of information. There was evidence in the literature that the educational disadvantage of Australian prisoners has not been effectively addressed during incarceration. Up until the late 1990s the relatively small amount of published literature on the effectiveness of prisoner education and training provisions in Australian correctional institutions was generally very critical of the processes and outcomes of the provisions. In the literature, reference was made to various barriers and difficulties, many of which had been resource-related, which had been experienced by Australian prisoners in their efforts to undertake education and training programs. The financial poverty of the majority of prisoners, and the lack of material educational resources within the correctional institutions, were tangible sources of barriers and difficulties that, presumably, could be readily overcome by appropriate material resource allocations. Reviews of the provision of vocational education and training in some jurisdictions indicated that vocational education and training for prisoners was under-resourced. The overall approach to the management of the provision of education and training programs and resources was identified in the literature as a major source of impediments in addressing the education and training needs of prisoners, at least up until the late 1990s. In particular, the provision of vocational education and training for prisoners in some jurisdictions prior to the early 2000s was found to have been unsystematic and uncoordinated, and to have not been based on clearly identified needs of the prisons’ populations. Prior to 2000, prisoners were not included as an equity group in any Australian public policy relating
to educational disadvantage. Prisoner students who had enrolled in a university undergraduate program were unable to access benefits available to other students enrolled in university undergraduate programs under Australian higher education equity policy provisions. Since the late 1990s, there was evidence that, in some jurisdictions, initiatives had been taken to develop a systematic and comprehensive approach to prisoner education and training, which appeared to have capacity to identify and attempt to address prisoners’ education and training needs on an individual basis. The main points relating to these changes will now be outlined here.

**Changes in the general approach to prisoner education and training in Australia**

Since 1995 a national strategy for vocational education and training has been adopted in Australia. In 2000, a specific strategy for the vocational education and training of prisoners was developed at the national level, within the terms of the general national strategy, and adopted, at least in principle, by each Australian jurisdiction. The specific strategy for prisoners established a systematic framework for the provision of vocational education and training, based on clearly identified needs of the prisoner population in each particular prison. Implementation of the specific strategy was the responsibility of each jurisdiction, with partial funding support from the Australian Government. There was evidence in the available literature that implementation of the strategy for prisoners had begun in several jurisdictions, including Queensland, in the early 2000s. In at least one jurisdiction there was evidence of the adoption of an individualised career planning approach to prisoner education and training. The extent to which policy and educational practices relating to the implementation of the 2000 national strategy has been informed by research-based understandings of the lived experiences of prisoners relating to formal education and training was not evident in the literature. Understandings of these experiences would appear to have the potential to enhance the quality of decision-making relating to the provision of effective education and training programs for prisoners, especially at the level of the individual prisoner.

Interpretive analysis of interview narratives, from a constructivist perspective, appears to be an appropriate methodology for the development of research-based understandings of the lived experiences of prisoners relating to their formal education and training. There seems to be a dearth of publicly-available knowledge from research studies of prisoners’ perceptions of their experiences of schooling and initial vocational education and training, informed by prisoners. Ostensibly, understandings of prisoners’
lived experiences of education and training, in the form of research-based representations of prisoners’ perceptions of their past experiences of formal education and training, and knowledge of apparent effects of these perceptions on the prisoners’ attitudes towards participation in formal education and training programs, would inform the development of policy and practices relating to the provision of effective formal education and vocational training for prisoners. Apparent needs for research, arising from the considerations summarised here, are presented in the next sub-section of this chapter.

Implications for research

There emerged an apparent need to develop research-based understandings of the pre-incarceration lived experience of Australian prisoners, and of their lived experience during incarceration, in relation their formal education and training, in terms of the perceptions of the prisoners. An apparent need for this type of information stems from its potential usefulness in the development of policy and practices to effectively address the formal education and training needs of prisoners, particularly the needs of prisoners who have experienced educational disadvantage. A need to effectively address the formal education and training needs of prisoners derives primarily from the social and economic desirability, perceived by Federal and State Governments, of reducing recidivism rates in Australia through the effective integration or reintegration of offenders into the wider Australian society. Prisoners who are of particular interest to the study are those who became involved in criminal activities from a relatively early age, and who apparently adopted a lifestyle involving repetitive involvement in crime as a means of obtaining income. These prisoners had apparently, from a relatively early age, adopted a lifestyle that was antithetical to Australian public policy regarding preparation during childhood and youth for legitimate productive participation in adult society, and the achievement of social inclusion primarily through productive participation in the national economy as adults. There was an apparent dearth of information, in the published literature, about the meanings that Australian prisoners had associated with their lived experiences of formal education and vocational training in terms of how they perceived their experiences relating to the period(s) of their basic formal education and their initial vocational training, and about the effects of these perceptions on the prisoners’ capacities and attitudes, during their period(s) of incarceration, in relation to participating in formal education and training.

Research-based knowledge of educational disadvantage which had been
experienced by prisoners prior to, and/or during, their incarceration, as informed by prisoners who had experienced such disadvantage, seems to be relevant to the further development and implementation of Australian public policy relating to the formal education and training of children and youth, and to the education and training of prisoners. The development of research-based understandings of the lived experience of prisoners relating to their formal education and training during their childhood and youth was seen as having the potential to contribute to an enhanced understanding of the ostensibly complex relationships between lived experience and subsequent incarceration. Acquisition of research-based knowledge and understandings which interpretively represent aspects of the lived experiences of prisoners, through having been informed by prisoners, requires the implementation of methodologies which enable and encourage the prisoners to inform the researcher. Interpretive analysis of prisoners’ self-narratives, based on a constructivist interpretive framework, appeared to be an appropriate general methodology for the development of research-based understandings of prisoners’ lived experiences. Research questions which, if answered, could contribute to the types of research-based knowledge which have been discussed here, and to which answers could be sought through implementation of a methodology of interpretive analysis of prisoners’ self-narratives, are stated in the next sub-section of this chapter.

**Research questions**

The following two specific research questions, arising from conclusions drawn from this review of the literature, were posed in relation to prisoners whose life history is characterised by relatively early and repeated offences primarily as a means of obtaining financial income:

1. What meanings do prisoners associate with their lived experiences of basic schooling and initial vocational education and training?
2. What meanings do prisoners associate with their lived experiences of formal education and vocational training during the period(s) of their incarceration?
Chapter Three

The conceptual framework and methodology of the study

Introduction

This chapter presents an account of the conceptual framework which was adopted in the design of the study, and discusses relationships between the purpose of the study, the conceptual framework, and the methodological approach which was chosen for the study.

The first of two related general purposes which the study aims to achieve is the construction, by the researcher, of understandings of the lived experiences of a selected group of prisoners, relating particularly to their formal education and vocational training. In the remainder of this chapter the prisoners involved in the study are referred to as participants. As explained in Chapter Two, the researcher decided to construct an understanding of the lived experience of participants principally in terms of specific topics, personal meanings, and social meanings to be constructed by him from the participants’ spoken self-narratives. The second general purpose which the study aims to achieve is the identification of points of potential heuristic interest, which emerge from the researcher’s constructed understandings of aspects of the lived experiences of the participants, and which may be indicative of needs for social action aimed at reducing the incidence of adoption by juveniles of an ongoing criminal lifestyle, and the incidence of recidivism by people who have a history of early and repeated criminal offences.

In this chapter a general justification of the methodology of the study is presented first in order to identify the philosophical orientation which guided the researcher’s selection of the methodology of the study as constructivist, and to indicate the broad relationships which are assumed, in the study, to exist between the purposes of the study, the constructivist philosophical orientation adopted, and the methodology chosen to implement the study. The general justification is followed by an examination of constructivist conceptualisations of the nature and generation of knowledge and of how these conceptualisations relate to the concept of human experience at the individual and group levels. Following this examination, assumptions made in the study about relationships between knowledge and meaning, and between meaning and self-narrative, are examined in relation to interpretive methods of narrative analysis. General
conclusions and definitions of terms based on the literature reviewed are presented in the final two sections of this chapter.

**General justification for the methodology of the study**

The general methodology proposed for the study is the interpretive analyses of transcripts of self-narratives obtained from prisoners in individual interview settings. This methodology is proposed to be used in order to construct concepts which are referred to in Chapter Two as specific topics, personal meanings, and social meanings of the prisoners’ lived experience relating to education.

Justification for the methodology of the study derives from a synthesis of a conceptual framework of constructivism and theory of narrative analysis, which incorporates the following three major assumptions:

1. Individuals’ knowledge is constructed from their lived experience (Burbules, 2000, pp. 311-312; Noddings, 1995, p. 115; Phillips, 2000, p. 7).

2. Self-narratives contain some of the narrator’s knowledge (Chase, 1996; Ezzy, 1998; Josselson, 1995; Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 7; Mishler, 1986a, 1986b; Riessman, 1993).

3. Interpretive analysis of a self-narrative enables some of the narrator’s knowledge to be interpreted as his or her constructed meanings of his or her lived experience (Chase, 1995, p. 1; Ezzy, 2000, p. 605; Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 7; Mishler, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988, pp. 29-30; Riessman, 1993, pp. 9-11; Robinson and Hawpes, 1986, p. 114).

The term ‘self-narrative’ is used here to refer to a narrative spoken by a person about the person or about the person’s lived experience. Labov and Waletzky, cited by Reissman (1993, p. 69), referred to spoken self-narrative as ‘natural narrative’. This is the general sense in which numerous scholars of narrative analysis have referred to narrative or, alternatively, to ‘life story’ (for example, Alasuutari, 1997; Chase, 1995; Josselson, 1995; Lieblich et al., 1998; Mishler, 1986a; Riessman, 1993; Sarbin, 1986; Tagg, 1985).

Acceptance of the assumption that individuals’ knowledge is constructed from their lived experience characterises the general philosophical orientation of the study as ‘constructivist’. A basic proposition of constructivism is that all knowledge is actively constructed by people. This proposition is distinct from an alternative proposition that knowledge is a product of passive reception of data and/or information by people (Noddings, 1995, p. 115; Phillips, 2000, p. 7). Burbules (2000, pp. 311-312) claimed...
that the conclusion that ‘all human knowledge is (in some sense at least) constructed by sentient actors situated in concrete circumstances’ is ‘inescapable’. According to Noddings (1990, p. 14) adoption of ‘methodological constructivism’ in research is a logically necessary consequence of acceptance of the premise that all knowledge is constructed. Noddings (1990) argued that methodological constructivism in research necessarily –

means that we have to investigate our subjects’ perceptions, purposes, premises and ways of working things out if we are to understand their behaviour. (Noddings, 1990, pp. 14-15)

Conceptual correspondence between a constructivist view of knowledge and the idea of meaning in self narrative is illustrated by juxtaposition of Noddings’s (1990) constructivist interpretation of knowledge and the opinions of Riessman (1993) and Mishler (1986a) regarding the identification of meaning in self-narrative. Noddings (1990, pp. 14-15) referred to an individual’s knowledge, in a constructivist sense, as the individual’s ‘perceptions, purposes, premises and ways of working things out’.

Riessman (1993, p. 19) equated meaning in self-narrative with ‘how individuals understand the actions and events related in the narrative’. Riessman (1993, p. 19) claimed that interpretive analysis of self-narratives can reveal the meaning of the narrator’s lived experience by identifying how the narrator understood events and actions recollected from the experience. Mishler (1986a, pp. 75-105) explicated a theory of relationships between language and meaning in interview narratives, based on the concepts of textual, ideational and interpersonal meanings of utterances in discourse.

The assumption that self-narratives contain some of the narrator’s knowledge is implicit in claims, made by some scholars of self-narrative analysis, about the content of self-narratives (for example: Chase, 1995; Cortazzi, 1993; Lieblich et al., 1998; Mishler, 1986a; Polkinghorne, 1998; Riessman, 1993.) Cortazzi (1993, pp. 1-2), Polkinghorne (1998, p. 183), and Riessman (1993, p. 19), for example, claimed that self-narration is used to describe, represent, and/or explain aspects of the narrator’s lived experience. Chase (1995, p. 5) suggested that a narrator’s purpose in self-narrative is to make a point, that is, to communicate some personal interpretation, or meaning, that the narrator had constructed from her or his lived experience.

An assumption adopted in the study, that interpretive analysis of a person’s self-narratives can yield a representation of her or his constructed meanings of her or his lived experience, is based on claims to this effect which have been made by some scholars of self-narrative analysis (for example: Cortazzi, 1993; Chase, 1996; Ezzy,
Cortazzi (1993, pp. 1-2), and Riessman (1993, p. 19), for example, posited that interpretive analysis of self-narratives can reveal meaning constructed by the narrator from the narrator’s lived experience. The term ‘meaning’ has been deliberately used here to provide a semantic and conceptual link between a constructivist interpretation of a narrator’s knowledge and researchers’ published conclusions about information which can be obtained through interpretive analyses of self-narratives.

Some critical writers on constructivist theory refer to the term ‘meaning’ in discussing constructivist understandings of knowledge (for example: Bentley, 1998, p. 237; Howe and Berv, 2000, p. 29; Larachelle and Bednarz, 1998, p. 6; Phillips, 2000, pp. 6-11). In the literature on interpretive analysis of self-narrative, the term ‘meaning’ is frequently used to refer to the narrator’s interpretation of his or her lived experience (for example: Chase, 1995, p. 1; Ezzy, 2000, p. 605; Mishler, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988, pp. 29-30; Riessman, 1993, pp. 9-11; Robinson and Hawpes, 1986, p. 114). A critical examination of constructivist understandings of knowledge, and of claims made by researchers about the types of information that can be obtained through the use of particular methods of narrative analysis, is necessary before the terms ‘specific topics’, ‘personal meanings’ and ‘social meanings’, as used in the study, can be operationally defined. Constructivist interpretation of knowledge is critically examined first, so that its purported relationship to interpretive analysis of self-narrative, and to the operational definitions of terms used in the study, can be explicated.

Constructivist understandings of knowledge

In relation to a constructivist philosophical orientation, Noddings (1990, p. 7) referred to the general constructivist proposition, that knowledge is actively constructed by people, as ‘a cognitive position’. She claimed that, as a cognitive position, constructivism assumes that the construction of knowledge by an individual involves the operation of processes internal to the individual, which relate to the individual’s experience (Noddings, 1990, p. 7). Burbules (2000, p. 321) argued, in effect, that the use of the expression ‘construction of knowledge by the individual’, or of any of its semantic equivalents, necessarily implies an assumption that the individual carries out some set of knowledge-constructing processes, to which he referred as ‘mental processes’. He further argued, in effect, that acceptance of a concept of intersubjectivity in constructivist theory necessarily implies an assumption that the processes of construction of knowledge are, at least to some extent, common to two or more
individuals (Burbules, 2000, p. 321). The general concept of intersubjectivity is not universally accepted by constructivist theorists. Von Glasersfeld (1998, pp. 25, 272), for example, specifically rejected the inclusion of a concept of intersubjectivity in his account of radical constructivism. McCarty and Schwand (2000, p. 48) concluded that ‘radical constructivism is a form of philosophical solipsism’ because, they claimed, in rejecting a concept of intersubjectivity, radical constructivism in effect postulates that the only state of being that ‘exists substantially’ is the individual mind. The general issue of intersubjectivity in constructivist theory is related to the issues of the bases of constructed knowledge and of the processes by which knowledge is constructed, as expressed, for example, in the questions ‘Is there intersubjectively shared knowledge that provides a basis for individually constructed knowledge, and, if so, by what processes does the individual construct knowledge from this basis?’ These questions will now be explored here, with reference to the literature.

**Processes in the construction of knowledge**

Consistent with conclusions of Noddings (1990) and of Burbules (2000), Bentley (1998, p. 237) posited that ‘the idea that we build or construct our meanings’ is central to a constructivist perspective on the nature of knowing, that is, on the processes by which individuals acquire knowledge, in a constructivist sense. There has been considerable debate, in the literature relating to constructivism, about processes that are purported to be involved in the construction of knowledge, and about that from which people are purported to construct knowledge. This debate refers to various conceptions of what is meant by the term ‘experience’ (for example: Bentley, 1998, pp. 238-239; Bettencourt, 1993, pp. 40-46; Bredo, 2000, p. 137; Gergen, 1982, p. 58; Howe and Berv, 2000, p. 29; Phillips, 2000, p. 6; von Glasersfeld 1998, p. 24). For simplicity, the expression ‘bases of constructed knowledge’ will be used instead of the inelegant expression ‘that from which people are purported to construct knowledge’ in the remainder of this chapter. In discussing general constructivist ideas relating to relationships between the processes and the bases of constructed knowledge, Burbules (2000, p. 321) argued that adoption of the general constructivist concept of construction of knowledge necessarily implies acceptance of the proposition that ‘a construction is constructed out of something’. Burbules’s (2000) conclusions are interpreted here to represent an opinion that acceptance of the proposition that knowledge is constructed necessarily implies acceptance of the proposition that knowledge is constructed by some process or processes, from inputs to which Burbules (2000, p. 321) referred as ‘something’.
Within the broad constructivist perspective, processes by which various scholars claim that knowledge is constructed are frequently associated, in the literature, with the term ‘learning’ (for example: Gunstone, 2000, p. 263; Larochelle and Bednarz, 1998, p. 8; Noddings, 1995, p. 115; Phillips, 2000, p. 7; Tobin, 2000, p. 233). Concomitant with extensive and diverse theorising by constructivist scholars about the processes by which people are purported to construct knowledge, or learn, there has been considerable controversy in the literature about the nature of the hypothesised processes (Larochelle and Bednarz, 1998; Noddings, 1995; Phillips, 2000). As the study focuses on interpretation of aspects of what is purported to be the participants’ knowledge, in a constructivist sense, the general issue of how people construct, or learn, their knowledge is of interest here only insofar as it has implications for assumptions that are made about the nature of the participants’ knowledge. Assumptions about the nature of the participants’ knowledge have implications for the interpretation of that which is purported to be contained in the participants’ self-narratives (Ezzy, 1998, p. 173; Josselson, 1998, pp. 31-35; Riessman, 1993, pp. 2-4). The contentious issue of the bases of constructed knowledge is an aspect of hypothesised knowledge-constructing processes which has implications for assumptions that are made about the nature of the participants’ knowledge (Larochelle and Bednarz, 1998, pp. 4-7; Phillips, 2000; pp. 7-8). The relevance, for the study, of assumptions about the nature of the participants’ knowledge stems from assumptions that are embedded in the self-narrative interpretive analysis methods which have been chosen for gathering and interpreting data in the study. Some of the embedded assumptions about the nature of the self-narrator’s knowledge relate to assumptions about the bases of constructed knowledge (Ezzy, 1998, p. 173; Lieblich et al., 1998, pp. 12-18; Tagg, 1983, pp. 177-185). These assumptions are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

**The bases of constructed knowledge**

**Constructivism vis-à-vis ontology and epistemology**

Much of the controversy in the literature about the bases of constructed knowledge stems from constructivism’s potential to problematise hegemonic modernist ontological and epistemological positions (Ezzy, 1998, p.170; Bredo, 2000, pp.136-140; Burbules, 2000, p.312). Burbules (2000, pp.312-318) dismissed the contemporary debate between proponents and critics of constructivism, about epistemological and ontological questions, as being ‘misguided’ and ‘irresolvable’. He advised proponents of constructivism to be ‘silent or agnostic’ in response to questions raised about
constructivism from ‘conventional philosophical views’. He argued, in effect, that such questions are irrelevant to the adoption of constructivist perspectives on the nature of knowledge and its relationship to human experience (Burbules, 2000, pp.311-312). Bredo (2000, pp.138-140) argued that taking polarised ontological or epistemological positions in relation to constructivist interpretations of knowledge results in conclusions that are either internally inconsistent or implausible. Noddings (1990, p.18) concluded that ‘Constructivism is, logically, a post-epistemological position.’ She argued that, from a constructivist perspective, asking ‘the standard questions of epistemology’ is illogical (Noddings, 1990, p.18). Consistent with conclusions reached by Bredo (2000), Burbules (2000), and Noddings (1990), consideration of the nature of the participants’ knowledge will be framed, for the purposes of the study, in essentially constructivist terms rather than in terms of modernist ontological and/or epistemological issues. This rejection of an epistemological position on the nature of knowledge prompts the question as to how knowledge claims are to be evaluated from within a constructivist theoretical framework (Burbules, 2000, p. 312).

Constructivist evaluation of knowledge claims

Noddings (1990, pp.11-12) examined the logical relationship between the claim that all knowledge is constructed and claims about the status of such knowledge. In effect, she posed the question ‘how does the claim of constructivism enable claims of the status of knowledge to be evaluated?’ She concluded that the claim that knowledge is constructed is not relevant to judging whether knowledge, in the constructivist sense, is ‘true’ or can be ‘justified’ in an epistemological sense (Noddings, 1990, pp.11-12). With regard to the issue of the basis on which a decision can be made as to whether an individual ‘knows’, Noddings (1990, pp.12-13) argued that, if it is assumed that all cognition by an individual is constructive, then, axiomatically, the individual ‘knows’ that which the individual has constructed. She concluded that there is no truth independent of the individual, in constructivist terms, against which the belief of the individual can be tested.

According to Bredo (2000, pp.137-138), two controversies of importance, that relate to the evaluation of knowledge claims, are found in debate amongst proponents of constructivism. The two controversies centre around the general topic of relationships between ‘knower’ and ‘knowable’. One of the controversies concerns the roles of the individual and of society in the construction of knowledge, while the other is about the relative influence of material constraints and of ideological constraints on the
construction of knowledge. Burbules (2000, p.312) identified the essence of the controversies, to which Bredo (2000, pp.137-138) referred, as the issue of whether criteria for evaluating knowledge claims can be established that are not socio-culturally situated. He concluded that the issue, in an essentially polarised form, could not be resolved. He advocated shifting the focus of the issue to the question of who establishes the criteria for evaluating particular knowledge claims, and to pragmatic resolution of this question through socio-political processes involving the protagonists in debate about the answer to the question, and the larger society (Burbules, 2000, p. 313). In effect, Burbules (2000) concluded that competing claims about the nature of constructed knowledge can only be resolved through socio-political processes by which each of the protagonists attempts to convince the wider society that a particular claim should be accepted.

Within the community of constructivist scholars, competing claims about what constitutes knowledge are related to differing opinions about the bases of constructed knowledge, in particular to whether an individual’s knowledge is constructed from intersubjective sources or from the individual’s sensory sources, or from both of these sources (Bredo, 2000, pp.136-140; McCarty and Schwandt, 2000, pp.43-63; Phillips, 2000, pp.6-7).

The question ‘from what do people construct their knowledge?’ has implications for the operational definition of the term ‘meaning’ in the study, as ‘meaning’ is purported here to be conceptually related to a constructivist interpretation of knowledge. The purported relationship relies on specific assumptions that are made about the nature of the participants’ knowledge. These assumptions, in turn, are related to assumptions that are made about the bases of constructed knowledge. The assumptions made here are drawn from critical analyses presented in the literature on constructivist theory, relating to the general constructivist claim that knowledge is constructed from experience (Noddings, 1995, p.115). The bases of this claim in the literature will now be examined here.

**Constructivist interpretations of experience**

There are numerous references in constructivist literature to the individual’s construction of knowledge from the individual’s experience (for example: Bettencourt, 1993, pp.40-46; Burbules, 2000, pp.317-318; Larachelle and Bednarz, 1998, p.7; McCarty and Schwandt, 2000, pp.45-46; von Glasersfeld, 1998, pp.24-25). However, few authors provide an explicit account of what they mean by experience. Implied
meaning of the term ‘experience’, in the literature, often appears to be strongly
influenced by the author’s conceptualisation of the relationship between knower and
knowledge (Larochelle and Bednarz, 1998, p.5). In some accounts knowledge is treated
essentially as a characteristic of an individual person (for example: Bettencourt, 1993;
Morf, 1998, pp.29-31; von Glasersfeld, 1995), while in other accounts it is claimed to
be essentially a social or socio-cultural characteristic shared by a group of people (for
example: Gergen, 1982; Vygotsky, cited by Cole and Scribner, 1974, p.58;
Wittgenstein, cited by Howe and Berv, 2000, pp.22-26). Within a psychological
constructivist theoretical framework (Phillips, 2000, p.7), the concept of experience, as
that from which individuals construct their knowledge, incorporates various
psychological constructs including concepts of consciousness (for example: von
Glasersfeld, 1998, pp.24-25), of sensory input (for example: Lorsbach and Tobin, 1992,
cited by Matthews, 2000, p.171; McCarty and Schwandt, 2000, p.65; von Glasersfeld,
1998, p.25), and of cognitive process (for example: Fleury, 1998, p. 158; McCarty and
attempting to explain what he meant by an individual’s experience, from a radical
constructivist viewpoint, claimed that the concept of an individual’s experience
necessarily incorporates a concept of consciousness, and that currently there is no
‘viable model’ of consciousness (Von Glasersfeld, 1998, pp.24-25). Riessman’s (1993,
pp.8-9) account of the representation of the narrator’s experience in self-narrative
interpretive analysis includes some concept of consciousness. She described an aspect
of the individual’s experience in terms of ‘the stream of consciousness’ of the individual
(Riessman, 1993, p.9). She nominated non-linguistic sensory components, such as
sensations, linguistic components, and personal interpretations, such as perceptions, in
her example of what she meant by the stream of consciousness. She used the terms
‘attend to’ and ‘make meaningful’ in her account of relationship between components of
the individual’s stream of consciousness and the individual’s experience. Von
Glasersfeld proposed, as ‘a working hypothesis’ that a person’s ‘experience’ could be
defined in terms of ‘sensations and the empirical and reflective abstractions’ of which
the person is aware (von Glasersfeld, 1998, pp.24-25). Von Glaserfeld’s tentative
definition accords with aspects of recent dictionary definitions of experience, including
the following two definitions –

The observing, encountering or undergoing of things generally as they occur in the
course of time. (Delbridge & Bernard, 1998, p.743)

The totality of the cognitions given by perception; all that is perceived, understood
These definitions contain a tacit assumption that some processing of sensory and/or other types of inputs by individuals is an essential component of experience. Von Glasersfeld (1990, pp.22-23) nominated cognition as the general process by which an individual organises her or his experience. Noddings (1990, p.7) claimed that, as a cognitive position, constructivism assumes that the process of the construction of knowledge by individuals involves the use of ‘cognitive structures’, whether these structures are regarded as innate or as products of ongoing construction by the individual. Tobin and Tippins (1993, p.6) referred to the individual construction of knowledge by ‘cognising beings’. According to Fleury (1998, p.157), a ‘philosophical principle’ characterising constructivism is that ‘Knowledge is actively built by a cognising subject’.

McCarty and Schwandt (2000) provided an example of constructivist theorising about the processes used by a cognising subject to build knowledge from experience. Referring to Jean Piaget’s work (references not specified), McCarty and Schwandt (2000, p.46) outlined hypothesised cognitive processes termed ‘assimilation’ and ‘accommodation’. Phillips (2000, p.8) identified Jean Piaget as one of the ‘ancestors of modern psychological constructivism’. According to McCarty and Schwandt (2000, p.46), Piaget proposed that the initial construction of a concept by an individual occurs through assimilation, which is the hypothesised cognitive process of abstracting the similar features of several instances of experience to form a ‘cognitive scheme’, and subsequently modifying new instances of experience to fit the cognitive scheme. Accommodation, according to McCarty and Schwandt (2000, p.46), is an hypothesised cognitive process involving a disturbance in the individual’s experience, followed by an adaptive response by the individual that achieves an ‘equilibrium’, or ‘neutralising’ of the outcomes of the assimilation process that resulted in the construction of the cognitive scheme involved in the disturbance. Regardless of the particular psychological processes that are hypothesised by constructivist scholars to be involved in the individual’s construction of knowledge, psychological constructivist references to experience, in this context, incorporate the general notions of a conscious, aware, cognising subject, of cognising processes carried out by the subject, and of inputs to the subject’s cognising processes. The individualistic nature of experience, being axiomatic in psychological constructivist theory (Phillips, 2000, p.7), is rarely discussed explicitly in psychological constructivist discourse. Von Glasersfeld (1998, p.24), from a radical psychological constructivist perspective, referred to ‘the lived, tangible reality of our
experience, from which we derive all that we call “knowledge”.

Some narrative researchers have referred to interpretation, from an individual’s self-narratives, of the ‘lived experience’ of the individual (for example: Ezzy, 1998; Josselson, 1995). The concept of lived experience, as proposed in some of the literature, will now be discussed here.

**Lived experience**

Riessman’s (1993) description of the nature of the individual’s experience, with its reference to a concept which she described as the individual’s ‘stream of consciousness’, incorporates a temporal contextual connotation to which Josselson (1995) referred to as ‘lived experience’. Josselson (1995, p.32), citing Bruner (1986), used the expression ‘lived experience’ in relation to her claim that narrative research methodology has a capacity to enable researchers to ‘approach the understanding of lives in context’. Riessman (1993, pp.8-9), in discussing relationships between self-narrative and the narrator’s experience, used the expression ‘the lived world of immediate everyday experience’. Ezzy (1998, p.171) used the term ‘lived experience’ in his analysis of several theoretical positions on the relationship between self-narrative and ‘the actual facts of a person’s life’. Citing Ricoeur (1991), and from a hermeneutical perspective, Ezzy (1998, pp.172) argued that lived experience has ‘a pre-narrative quality’ such that an individual’s lived experience can be understood ‘in the same way as the plot of a story’. The term ‘lived experience’ is used here to convey a sense of the purported individualistic and contextualised nature of the individual’s experience, particularly with regard to inputs to the individual’s cognising processes and, hence, to the individual’s constructed knowledge.

The term ‘lived experience’, as used here, incorporates the general psychological constructivist concepts of a conscious, cognising subject, of cognising processes by the subject, and of inputs to the subject’s cognising processes. However, the issue of what constitutes input to the cognising subject’s knowledge-constructing processes is problematic within constructivist theory (Bredo, 2000; McCarty and Schwand, 2000). The nature of these inputs, as discussed in the constructivist literature, will now be explored here.

**Inputs from lived experience**

Divergent views about the nature of knowledge, as expressed in constructivist literature, relate in part to differences of opinion about the bases of constructed knowledge,
particularly regarding the sources and nature of inputs to purported individual processes of knowledge construction. Latour (1992), cited by Phillips (2000, p.10), identified a range of constructivist positions on the issue, along a dimension of social relations—nature. He posited that the extreme positions along the dimension are occupied, respectively, by constructivists who claim that knowledge is entirely constructed ‘out of social relations’, and those who claim that knowledge is entirely constructed ‘out of nature’. Phillips (2000) did not specify how he interpreted Latour’s terms ‘social relations’ and ‘nature’. An assumption made here is that the term ‘social relations’, as used by Latour, has the same general meaning as the term ‘intersubjectivity’, or its semantic equivalents, as discussed in the literature in relation to constructivist theory, for example by McCarty and Schwandt (2000, pp.47-49). Similarly, an assumption is made here that the term ‘nature’, as used by Latour, has the same general meaning as the term ‘sensory data’, or its semantic equivalents, as discussed, for example, by McCarty and Schwandt (2000, pp.45-46). The two general sources that Latour identified will be referred to hereafter as intersubjective inputs and sensory data inputs. According to Latour (1992), cited by Phillips (2000, p.10), the middle ground along the social relations—nature dimension is occupied by a range of positions that are all characterised by a claim that people construct knowledge from intersubjective inputs and from sensory data inputs. Positions within the middle ground are distinguishable from each other only by the relative importance that is imputed to each source of inputs.

In vein similar to Latour’s (1992) categorisation of the bases of knowledge construction, Bentley (1998, pp.238-239) identified two ostensibly different orientations within constructivism, viz., a ‘personal orientation’ and a ‘contextual orientation’, the latter including a ‘social’ orientation. The two orientations identified by Bentley (1998) correspond to two general senses in which the term ‘constructivism’ has been used in the literature (Phillips, 2000). Phillips (2000, pp.7-8) nominated ‘social constructivism’ and ‘psychological constructivism’ as labels for the two senses of ‘constructivism’ to which he referred. According to Phillips, ‘psychological constructivism’ focuses on the construction of knowledge by individuals, whereas ‘social constructivism’ is primarily concerned with how ‘public bodies of information’, such as ‘the disciplines’, have historically developed through various intersubjective processes (Phillips, 2000, pp.6-8). Consistent with Phillips’ account of social constructivism, knowledge purported to be constructed through the operation of the intersubjective processes that he outlined, is referred to here as socially constructed knowledge, to distinguish it, in terms of differing constructivist orientations, from the purported individually constructed knowledge that
is the primary focus of a psychological constructivist perspective (Phillips, 2000, p.6).

Bredo (2000, pp.132-136), in discussing various interpretations of social constructivism, used the term ‘socially constructed’ with reference to social constructivist interpretations of knowledge. Hammersley (1992, p.44) characterised ‘the constructivist position’ on knowledge as the view that people ‘construct the social world’ by interpreting their lived experience and by acting on the basis of their interpretations. Phillips (2000, p.9) claimed that there was ‘no dispute’ amongst contemporary scholars about the view that ‘social worlds’ are ‘socially constructed’.

Using Phillips’s (2000) terminology, the methodology of the study was framed primarily within a psychological constructivist perspective, as it focused primarily on the assumption that individuals construct their knowledge. As Bredo (2000, pp.132-133) pointed out, adoption of a psychological constructivist perspective does not necessarily require denial of the proposition that socially constructed knowledge does, in some way, included in the individual’s construction of knowledge. In terms of Latour’s (1992) categorisation of constructivist positions, as cited by Phillips (2000, p.10), a middle position is adopted in the study with regard to assumptions about the bases of knowledge construction. The assumption is made here that individuals construct their knowledge from sensory data sources and from intersubjective sources. Adoption of this assumption has implications for the operational definitions of the terms ‘personal meanings’ and ‘social meanings’ in the study, as it is argued here that, depending on the particular method of narrative analysis that is employed, the information obtained by interpretive analysis of self-narratives can be interpreted to be socially constructed knowledge derived from intersubjective sources, or to be knowledge that is peculiar to the individual in the sense that it is assumed to have been constructed by the individual primarily from sensory data sources which were, at least in some respects, peculiar to the individual’s lived experience. The framing of the study primarily in a psychological constructivist perspective has implications regarding the knowledge purported to be represented in the study. The knowledge which is represented in the study is assumed here to be the researcher’s constructions from the researcher’s lived experience, including the researcher’s participation in the study. Inferred influences on the researcher’s construction of knowledge in the study will now be examined here.

**The researcher’s construction of knowledge from lived experience**

A premise that derives logically from adoption by the researcher of a constructivist philosophical orientation to the study is that the researcher’s knowledge is constructed
from the researcher’s lived experience. An assumption made here is that all knowledge represented in the study has been constructed by the researcher. Terms used in the study, including ‘knowledge’, ‘lived experience’, ‘specific topics’, ‘personal meanings’, and ‘social meanings’, are assumed to be labels for concepts constructed by the researcher. The evident main basis of the researcher’s construction of these concepts is socially constructed knowledge sourced intersubjectively from the literature. The researcher’s knowledge of the lived experience of the participants is assumed here to have been constructed by the researcher. The bases of this knowledge are assumed here to include knowledge sourced by the researcher from the literature, and from the researcher’s lived experience of interviewing the participants.

Some narrative analysis scholars have claimed that aspects of an individual researcher’s prior knowledge profoundly influence the researcher’s interpretive processes (for example: Ezzy, 2002; Lieblich et al., 1998). In constructivist terms, acceptance of this claim implies that the researcher’s constructions represented in a research report are profoundly influenced by the researcher’s prior knowledge. Some constructivist scholars refer to a cognitive psychological concept of ‘cognitive structure’ to describe a person’s knowledge (for example: Bettencourt 1993; von Glasersfeld, 1984). Bettencourt (1993, pp.40-46) described that which the ‘knower’ constructs from the ‘knower’s’ experience as a set of cognitive structures, including concepts, models, and patterns of action. Noddings (1990, p.7) claimed that, as a cognitive position, constructivism assumes that the process of the construction of knowledge by individuals involves the use of cognitive structures, whether these structures are regarded as innate or as products of ongoing construction by the individual.

According to Phillips (2000, pp.7, 10-11), scholarly debate about psychological constructivism has centred on the processes and mechanisms by which cognising subjects are purported to construct knowledge, and in particular on the roles played by social interaction and by pre-existing cognitive structure. This debate has been of particular interest to psychologists and educationalists (Phillips, 2000, p.7). The extent to which, in the acquisition of knowledge, a person is a ‘constituting subject’ or a ‘constituted subject’ is an issue with constructivism that has been taken up by some postmodernist critics of constructivism (Noddings, 1995, p.118). The concept of a constituted subject recognises the influence of personal history, culture, experience and social interactions on that which knowers know. In psychological constructivist terms, Ezzy’s (2002, p.10) reference to the researcher’s ‘interpretive framework’, and reference by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.171) to the researcher’s ‘interpretive viewpoint’, as
an integral part of the researcher’s interpretive processes, identify the researcher’s prior knowledge as a source of inputs to all of the researcher’s constructions. From a phenomenological perspective Tiryakian (1973) expressed the idea that a person’s intersubjective experience is strongly influenced by aspects of the person’s prior knowledge, in the following words –

Our perception of social objects is not an immediate experience of them but rather a mediated experience. We experience what is external to us, including others, in a multi-layered medium of meanings constituting an “assumptive frame of reference”. (Tiryakian, 1973, p.199)

According to Noddings (1990, p.14), adoption of a constructivist understanding of knowledge logically necessitates adoption of a constructivist methodological perspective in research. Noddings (1990, pp.14-15,18) argued that a constructivist methodological orientation to research necessitates investigation of the ‘purposive interaction’ of people with their environments, including people’s ‘perceptions, purposes, premises and ways of working things out’. Application of Noddings’s (1990) argument to the situation of the researcher supports a conclusion that investigation of aspects of the researcher’s prior knowledge, or interpretive framework (Ezzy, 2002), such as the researcher’s purposes, premises, concepts, models, and patterns of action, should be an integral part of an interpretive research project. The propositions that the researcher applies an interpretive framework (Ezzy, 2002) in constructing knowledge from the research project, and that the researcher’s interpretive framework has been, to a large extent, constructed by the researcher prior to undertaking the research, are consistent with the idea that the researcher attributes personally constructed meanings to the inputs that the researcher receives in undertaking the research project. This idea has been expressed by some scholars of qualitative research, for example, Cohen et al., (2000), Polkinghorne, (1988), and Riessman, (1993). Cohen et al. (2000, pp.137-140), citing Lincoln and Guba (1985) and LeCompte and Preissle (1993), posited the idea that qualitative naturalistic research generates meanings and understandings.

Relationships between the concepts of meaning and of knowledge, as they appear to be relevant to discussion of the philosophical orientation of the study, are explored in the next sub-section of this chapter.

**Knowledge and meaning**

The term ‘meaning’, as used here in relation to products of narrative analysis, is assumed to correspond to particular constructions of the individual’s knowledge, made

A distinction was made in the study between personal meaning and social meaning, as knowledge products of the interpretive analysis of spoken self-narrative. This distinction was made on a methodological basis rather than on an epistemological basis. This means that personal meaning and social meaning are distinguished here from each other in terms of the different interpretive methodologies by which each is purported to be identified in self-narratives, rather than on a claim that each represents a distinctively different type of the narrator’s constructed knowledge.

The relevance of the interpretive methodologies chosen for the study to achievement of an understanding of meanings communicated in participants’ self-narratives will now be discussed here.

**Knowledge, meaning and interpretive self-narrative analysis**

The expression ‘personal meaning and social meaning’ provides explicit conceptual and semantic links between information regarding meaning which some scholars of narrative analysis claim are contained in self-narratives, and a constructivist interpretation of relationships between the individual’s lived experience and the individual’s knowledge. Adoption of the terminology ‘personal meaning’ and ‘social meaning’ is consistent with the endeavour to achieve one of the purposes of the study, as stated in Chapter One, viz., to construct an understanding of the lived experience of each participant as a representation, by the researcher, of meanings which the participant constructed from his lived experience of formal education. The general method chosen to obtain the type of information required for the purpose of the study is the gathering and interpretive analysis of prisoner’s self-narratives relating to their education experiences.

Some justification for the selection of the methodology of the study has been

Methodological constructivism in research develops methods of study consonant with the assumption of cognitive constructivism. (Noddings, 1990, p.10)

She claimed that adoption of the constructivist methodological perspective implied that particular types of methods, including ethnographic and clinical interviews, should be used in studies of human knowing and behaviour (Noddings, 1990, p.10).

Relationships between self-narratives and the meanings that people associate with their lived experience have been described by numerous scholars, including Lieblich et al. (1998), Polkinghorne (1998), Chase (1995), Cortazzi (1993), Riessman (1993), and Mishler (1986a). Scholarly opinion generally supports a conclusion that analysis of self-narratives can provide a representation of what has been referred to here as personal meanings and social meanings which an individual has constructed from his or her lived experience. Polkinghorne (1998, p.183) claimed that that narrative is ‘one of the most important forms for creating meaning in human existence’. Chase (1995) stated that ‘most scholars’ of the social sciences –

Concur that all forms of narrative share the fundamental interest in making sense of experience, the interest in constructing and communicating meaning. (Chase, 1995, p.1)

The proposition that a representation of that which has been referred to in the study as personal meaning can be obtained by interpretive analysis of self-narrative, is discussed in the next sub-section of this chapter.

**Personal meaning and self-narrative**

With regard to personal meaning that is purported here to be contained in self-narratives, reference by some scholars of self-narrative analysis to cognitive processes and structures indicates that conceptual links exist between the meaning content of self-narratives, as described by self-narrative analysts (for example: Polkinghorne, 1998; Robinson and Hawpes, 1986), and psychological constructivist interpretations of knowledge, as described by critical analysts of constructivism (for example: Bettencourt, 1993, pp.40-46; Noddings, 1995, p.115; Phillips, 2000, pp.6-11). Citing Magoon (1977), Noddings asserted that –

Constructivism assumes that human beings are knowing subjects, that human behaviour is mainly purposive, and that present-day human organisms have a highly
developed capacity for organizing knowledge. (Noddings, 1990, p.7)

Lieblich et al. (1998, p.7) posited that narrative accounts of personal lived experience provide a major means by which researchers can learn about ‘the inner world’ of individuals. Polkinghorne (1998, p.16) claimed that personal narratives communicate an individual’s personal construction of the individual’s lived experience. According to Polkinghorne’s (1998) account, narrative is one of the organising cognitive schemes whereby –

Human actions are linked together according to their effect on the attainment of human desires and goals. (Polkinghorne, 1998, p.16)

Robinson and Hawpes (1986, p.111) proposed that self-narratives are generated from the operation of an individual’s ‘cognitive schema’ on the individual’s experience. In relation to the idea that individuals construct their knowledge by some form of cognitive processing of their experiences, Bettencourt (1993) presented a Piagetian structuralist interpretation of constructivism that is consistent with Phillips’s (2000, pp.6-7) characterisation of ‘psychological constructivism’. According to Bettencourt (1993, pp.40-46), that which the knower constructs from his or her experience is a set of cognitive structures, including concepts, models, and patterns of action. Fleury claimed that one of the ‘philosophical principles’ characterising constructivism is that ‘the function of cognition is to organize one’s experiential world, not to discover an ontological reality’ (Fleury, 1998, p.158). Fleury’s (1998) claim is consistent with views expressed by some scholars of self-narrative analysis, including Polkinghorne (1998), Weiss (1994), Cortazzi (1993), Riessman (1993), and Sarbin (1986), regarding information relating to the individual’s organization and interpretation of the individual’s lived experience, which they purport to be obtainable from analysis of self-narrative. Riessman (1993, p.19) posited that interpretive analysis of self-narratives can reveal the personal meaning of the narrator’s lived experience by identifying how the narrator understood events and actions recollected from the experience. Cortazzi (1993, pp.1-2), citing a variety of scholarly opinions about the nature of narrative, concluded that the study of spoken accounts of personal experiences enables the inquirer to examine the speakers’ explanations and representations of the speakers’ lived experience. Consistent with Cortazzi’s (1993) conclusion, Polkinghorne stated that –

Narrative explanations are genuinely explanatory, for they can answer the question of why something has happened. (Polkinghorne, 1998, p.171)

According to Sarbin (1986, p.9), the narrative form accommodates inclusion of
the narrator’s reasons for the actions, and the narrator’s beliefs about the causes of the happenings, that are described in the self-narrative. Weiss (1994, p.1) claimed that, through interviewing, it is possible to ‘learn what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions’, and to ‘learn about settings that would otherwise be closed to us’.

The term ‘personal meaning’, as used in the study, refers to a component of an individual’s self-narrative that is purported here to be interpretable from transcripts of spoken self-narratives by using a form of interpretive analysis to which Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.62-87) referred as ‘holistic-content’ analysis. The central assumptions of this type of analysis are that the content of a self-narrative is meaningful as a whole, and that the narrative is told for the narrative’s purpose of making a point, that is, of communicating an overall message which is the narrator’s personal construction of the overall meaning of the events and circumstances to which reference is made in the narrative (Chase, 1995, p.5; Lieblich et al., 1998, p.8; Polkinghorne, 1988, p.183). The implied proposition by Lieblich et al. (1988), that the narrator has personally constructed the meaning of her or his lived experience, is consistent with a psychological constructivist interpretation of an individual’s knowledge, wherein an assumption is made that the individual has constructed cognitive content from the individual’s lived experience (Bettencourt, 1993, pp.40-46; Phillips, 2000, pp.6-11; Polkinghorne, 1998, p.16; Robinson and Hawpes, 1986, p.111). The idea that individuals construct cognitive content is central to cognitive psychological theory, as is evident in the seminal work of Kelly (1955), cited by Cohen et al. (2000, pp.337-338) and by Viney (1988, p.191). Conceptual links between a contemporary constructivist interpretation of knowledge, categorised by Phillips (2000, p.7) as belonging to psychological constructivism, and cognitive psychology, were identified by Noddings (1990, pp.7-8). Cognitive content has been described by various critical analysts of constructivist theory in terms of cognitive structures and processes, including categorical and relational concepts, cognitive schemata, mental models, and abstract patterns of action (for example: Bentley, 1998, p.237; Bettencourt, 1993, pp.40-46; McCarty and Schwandt, 2000, p.45; Phillips, 2000, pp.7, 10-11; von Glasersfeld, 1998, p.25). For the purposes of the study the term ‘personal meanings’ was operationally defined as meanings that are inferred by the researcher, from holistic-content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp.62-87) of an individual’s self-narratives, to be cognitive content of an individual’s knowledge, which the individual uses in self-narration to describe, represent, and/or explain the individual’s lived experience (Cortazzi, 1993,
The proposition that a representation of ‘personal meaning’, as the term was used in the study, can be obtained by interpretive analysis of self-narrative has been discussed here. A similar proposition regarding ‘social meaning’, as the term was used in the study, is discussed in the next sub-section of this chapter.

**Social meaning and self-narrative**

The term ‘social meaning’ is used here to refer to that which is interpreted by the researcher to be primarily socially constructed knowledge communicated in a self-narrative. In relation to the proposition that social meanings can be interpreted in self-narrative, Robinson and Hawpes (1986) drew a general conclusion about the relationship between the content of self-narratives and socially constructed knowledge. They stated that narratives ‘enable us to understand generalizations about the social order because they exemplify that order in a contextualised account’ (Robinson & Hawpes, 1986, p.124). In discussing narratives relating to racial prejudice, van Dijk (1993, pp.140-141) used the term ‘social cognitions’, including values, norms and beliefs, to describe conceptual components of narratives that, he claimed, ‘are shared by different groups of people’. Chase (1995, p.20) concluded that general social processes relating to the lived experience of individuals can be identified through the analysis of self-narratives. She claimed that narrative analysis has made a major contribution to the study of ‘general social phenomena’ that are embodied in individuals’ life stories (Chase, 1995, p.2). Riessman’s (1993, p.5) opinion that ‘studying narratives is additionally useful for what they reveal about social life’ is consistent with Chase’s (1995) claim. Corey (1996, p.4) discussed the concept of ‘labelling’ in relation to the analysis of self-narratives of prisoners. He argued that ‘labels’ can be identified in self-narratives, and that these labels are socially constructed by dominant groups in the socio-cultural milieu of the narrator. He suggested that the self-labelling used by self-narrators may be central to the narrator’s ‘self-definition and identity construction’ (Corey, 1996, p.4). Corey’s (1996) account of self-labelling in self-narratives illustrates the idea that self-narratives contain socially constructed knowledge which is used by the self-narrator to communicate social meanings of her or his lived experience.

Mishler described a form of self-narrative analysis that, he claimed, enabled the analyst to identify ‘plots’ or ‘themes’ which contain socially constructed knowledge used by the narrator to characterise his or her self-identity and the role attributed by him or her to that self-identity in explaining aspects of his or her lived experience (Mishler,
1986a, pp.242-244). The knowledge to which Mishler referred includes values, beliefs and explanatory models of social interaction that he interpreted as being socio-culturally constructed (Mishler, 1986a, p.243). Tagg (1985, p.173) posited that the form and content of self-narratives are strongly influenced by the narrator’s ‘construct system’, including the narrator’s value systems and life themes. Riessman’s (1993, p.5) comment that ‘culture “speaks itself”' through an individual’s story’ echoes Mishler’s (1986a) conclusion. A general relationship between social meanings and socially constructed knowledge is expressed in Tiryakian’s (1973, p.197) claim, from a phenomenological perspective, that the meanings of objects, including social objects, commonly held by the social groups of which a person is a member, are internalised by the person through socialisation processes, thus reducing the heterogeneity of the meanings that a person gives to objects. Tiryakian (1973, p.211) claimed that ‘The embodied consciousness of subjectivity, or selfhood, exists in a sociohistorical milieu’. Goffman’s (1981) description of self-identity, cited by Cortazzi (1993, pp.37-38), is consistent with that of Tiryakian (1973, p.211). Goffman described the person’s ‘self’ ‘as a socialised entity created in and through social interaction’. Tiryakian (1973) claimed that social processes were inevitably involved in the construction of self-identity. He described these processes in general terms as ‘a collective set of feelings and representations, of commonly lived experiences’ of ‘a cohort of subjects who have experienced and perceived a series of events and situations in a similar way’ (Tiryakian, 1973, p. 211). Tiryakian’s (1973) accounts of the nature and social construction of self-identity provide an explanatory link between Mishler’s (1986a) concept of self-identity and the concept of socially constructed knowledge. According to Mishler (1986a, p.243) self-identity, as revealed in self-narrative, ‘represents cultural themes and values.’ Goffman’s interpretation of narrative as a form of self-expression which involves ‘the management of information about the self’ (Goffman, 1981, cited by Cortazzi, 1993, pp.37-38) is consistent with Mishler’s (1986a) claim regarding the representation of self-identity in self-narrative. Phillips (2000, p.6), Rosenthal (1997), Bruner (1991), and Gergen and Gergen (1987) posited that there is a close correspondence between a person’s self-identity and the content of the person’s self-narratives.

Reissman (1993, p. 22), citing Langallier (1989) and Veroff et al. (1993), referred to a conclusion, drawn by some interview-narrative researchers, that self-narratives incorporate the narrators’ ideologies. Mishler (1986a, p.244) concluded that the narrator identifies herself or himself with a ‘cultural ideal’. Mishler’s (1996a) general claim about the revelation of self-identity in self-narrative, and the relevance of
his claim to the concept of social meanings in self-narrative, are exemplified by 
Alasuutari’s (1997, p.7) reference to the function of ‘life-story narration’ in the 
construction of personal identity in terms of the self-concept of individuality. Alasuutari 
claimed that individuality is a concept of the self that is strongly characteristic of 
contemporary Western societies, and is one of the ‘cultural premises’ implicit in 
discourse in a Western cultural context (Alasuutari, 1997, pp.4,7). Mishler (1986a, 
p.242), citing work of Agar and Hobbs (1982), provided an example of how, he 
claimed, structural analysis of self-narrative could be used ‘to extend the analysis to 
questions of cultural values and personal identity’, by identifying utterances that express 
general cultural themes or values, and identifying parts of the narrative that relate to 
general cultural values that are thematic in the narrative.

The general form of the structural method of self-narrative analysis to which 
Mishler (1986a, pp.241-242), citing Labov (1982), referred corresponds closely to the 
holistic-form method of self-narrative analysis as described by Lieblich et al. (1998, 
pp.88-111). According to Lieblich et al. (1998, p.88), the central assumption of holistic-
form analysis is that analysis of the structure of a self-narrative can reveal how the 
narrator has constructed the narrator’s life experiences in terms of the self-identity, 
perceptions and values of the narrator. The term ‘social meaning’ is operationally 
defined here on the bases of claims by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.7), Rosenthal (1997), 
Bruner (1991), Polkinghorne (1988, p.165), Gergen and Gergen (1987), and Mishler 
(1986a) that a person’s self-identity can be inferred from structural analysis of the 
person’s self-narratives, and the claims made by Mishler (1986a), Goffman, 1981 (cited 
by Cortazzi, 1993), and Tiryakian (1973) regarding the socio-cultural content of self-
identity. Social meaning in self-narrative is operationally defined here as that which is 
inferrred by the researcher, from holistic-form analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp.88-111) 
of an individual’s self-narratives, to be socially-derived cognitive content of an 
individual’s knowledge which functions in self-narration to ‘express, confirm and 
validate’ (Mishler, 1986a, p.243) the narrator’s self-identity. This operational definition of 
social meanings is based on the following set of assumptions: in self-narration the 
narrator presents information about his or her self-identity, in which he or she has 
includeed socially constructed knowledge, such as cultural values and beliefs, derived 
from intersubjective sources in the socio-cultural milieu which he or she has 
experienced.

Representation of personal meaning and of social meaning in self-narratives has 
been discussed in this chapter. Assumptions have been made in the study regarding the
specific methodology by which representations of personal meanings and social meanings may be constructed by the researcher from spoken self-narratives. The bases of these assumptions will now be explicated here, together with an outline of the methodology to be used in the study.

**Methodology relating to identifying meanings in self-narrative**

The distinction made here between personal meanings and social meanings in self-narrative relates to information purported to be obtainable by the use of two distinct forms of interpretive analysis of self-narrative, viz. holistic-content and holistic-form interpretive analyses (Lieblich et al., 1998). In terms of Mishler’s (1995) typology of narrative analysis, holistic-content analysis corresponds to one of the ‘narrative strategies’ that focus on the interpretive identification of ‘textual coherence and structure’ (Mishler, 1995, pp.90,102-107). This general form of narrative analysis, when applied to spoken self-narrative, interpretively identifies meanings in terms of conceptual themes of content that the narrator uses to describe and explain aspects of the narrator’s lived experience (Mishler, 1995, pp.105-107).

Holistic-form analysis, in Mishler’s (1995) terms, corresponds to a narrative strategy that focuses on interpretive identification of ‘contexts and consequences’ (Mishler, 1995, pp.90,107-116). According to Mishler (1995, pp.108-109;1986a, pp.241-244) this general form of analysis enables interpretive identification of cultural characteristics and social processes in the narrator’s account of her or his lived experience. The descriptions of holistic-content and holistic-form methods of narrative analysis, given by Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.12-16, pp.62-63, pp.88-89), indicate that holistic-form analysis yields information that is purported to be more general and abstract than the information yielded by holistic-content analysis. These two forms of analysis are described in greater detail in the next two sub-sections of this chapter.

**Holistic-content analysis**

According to Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.12-13) holistic-content analysis focuses on the specific conceptual content of the narrative, the meaning of which is interpreted in relation to the narrative as a whole. Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.62-87) provided a detailed account of a method of holistic-content analysis of transcripts of spoken self-narratives. Riessman’s (1993) description of self-narrative analysis corresponds closely to the holistic-content approach described by Lieblich et al. (1998). The holistic-content approach to narrative analysis is exemplified by Mishler’s (1986a) outline of self-
narrative analysis that uses the Agar and Hobbs (1982) concept of global coherence. Global coherence, according to Mishler (1986a, p.241), is a characteristic of self-narrative by which particular utterances ‘exemplify or move forward the overall intent or point of the story’. An account of events that occurred, and of various personal meanings that a narrator attributes to events, can be obtained through holistic-content analysis of the narrative (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp.12-13). Holistic-content analysis focuses on interpretive identification of the narrator’s individualistic interpretations of her or his lived experience, in the form of personal themes in the content of the narrative (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.63), that have been operationally defined in the study as personal meanings.

**Holistic-form analysis**

According to Lieblich et al. (1998, p.13) holistic-form analysis of self-narrative can provide information about the ‘deeper layers of the narrator’s identity’. Mishler (1986a) proposed that self-narratives express socially constructed knowledge, such as values, beliefs, cultural themes, and explanatory models of social interaction, which are derived from socio-cultural milieux experienced by the narrator, and which are incorporated into the narrator’s construction of the meaning of her or his lived experience. Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.88-111) provided a detailed account of a method of holistic-form analysis of transcripts of spoken self-narratives. Holistic-form analysis focuses on interpretive identification of general and abstract components of the narrator’s knowledge, in the form of general structures, or ‘plots’, of the narrative (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp.88-89), which are purported to have originated as socially constructed inputs from the narrator’s socio-cultural milieux and to have influenced her or his construction of the meaning of her or his lived experience (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.104). These components have been operationally defined in the study as social meanings. The method of self-narrative used by Ezzy (2000) to interpret general forms, or structures, the approach to self narrative ‘plot’ analysis described by Polkinghorne,1988, pp.167-168), citing the work of Gergen and Gergen (1986), and Mishler’s (1986a, pp.242-244) account of the identification of ‘themal coherence’ in self-narrative, based on the work of Agar and Hobbs (1982), correspond closely to the general description of holistic-form analysis given by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.13). Weiss (1994, pp.43-44) described a method of ‘synchronic’ analysis of interview transcripts, for the identification of socially constructed knowledge in extended responses in interviews, which appears to closely correspond to holistic-form analysis.
On the basis of accounts by Mishler (1996a) and Weiss (1994) of the narrative nature of extended responses in interview settings, the researcher decided to use an interview setting to generate and audio-record participants’ self-narratives relating to their lived experience of formal education. The researcher proposed to analyse transcripts of the participants’ audio-recorded self-narratives though the use of holistic-content and holistic-form methods of analysis as described by Lieblich et al. (1998). Scholarly opinion regarding the narrative nature of responses in interview settings will now be briefly canvassed here.

**Self-narratives in interview settings**

The occurrence of self-narratives in interview settings has been described by various researchers (for example, Chase, 1995, pp.1-3; Lieblich et al., 1998, pp.24-25; Mishler, 1986a, pp.66-75; Reissman 1993, pp.3,26-30; Tagg, 1985, p.163; Weiss, 1994). Mishler (1986a, p.106) claimed that narratives often occur in relatively unstructured interviews in which open-ended questions are posed by the interviewer, and in which extended responses by the respondent are encouraged. According to Riessman (1993, p.3), respondents are likely to make extended utterances, including narration, when the responses are not constrained by the interviewer’s use of a set of standardised questions. Weiss (1994, pp.61-83), Riessman (1993, pp.54-56), and Mishler (1986a, pp.99-105) provided guidelines for the design and conduct of interviews that are intended to ‘encourage narrativisation’ (Riessman, 1993, p.54). The researcher considered the implications of these guidelines for the design of interview sessions with the participants in the study.

**Conclusions**

The philosophical orientation of the study was identified as constructivist. A general justification for the methodology of the study was outlined in terms of the purpose of the study in relation to constructivist assumptions about the nature and generation of knowledge and meaning, and to theory of interpretive analysis of self-narrative as expounded by various scholars, principally Lieblich et al. (1998) and Mishler (1986a). An examination was made of apparent convergences of constructivist assumptions about the nature and generation of knowledge, and assumptions derived from theory of interpretive analysis of self-narrative.

Examination of constructivist assumptions about the nature and generation of knowledge revealed two broad sets of assumptions, viz., that knowledge is constructed
by individuals from sensory inputs which they uniquely experience, and that knowledge is socially constructed. These two sets of assumptions appear to correspond to psychological constructivist interpretations of knowledge, labelled psychological constructivism, and sociological constructivist interpretations of knowledge, labelled social constructivism, respectively (Phillips, 2000). Both of these interpretations were adopted in the study in relation to identifying knowledge and meaning components of self-narratives through the use of interpretive methods of narrative analysis.

The concept of meaning in self-narrative was examined in the context of two methods of interpretive analysis of self narrative, viz., holistic-content analysis and holistic-form analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998), with particular reference to constructivist interpretations of relationships between knowledge and meaning and to a constructivist conceptualisation of human experience. A conclusion drawn from these examinations was that meanings labelled by the researcher as personal meaning and social meanings could be constructed from self-narrative through the use of the methods of holistic-content analysis and holistic form analysis, respectively. The methods of holistic-content analysis and holistic-form analysis were described in relation to the interpretive construction of personal meanings and social meanings from self-narratives. As the researcher proposed to obtain recordings of self-narratives through interview session with participants, scholarly opinion on the occurrence and facilitation of self-narrative in interview settings was briefly canvassed.

Definitions of several terms which are used in the remainder of this thesis document, and which have been derived from the literature reviewed in this chapter were drawn from the literature review. Justification for the methodology of the study was based on assumptions which are contained in two propositions derived from the literatures of constructivism and of narrative analysis. The first of these propositions is that self-narratives contain knowledge that the narrator has constructed from his or her lived experience. The second proposition is that an interpretive construction of some of the knowledge referred to in the first proposition can be made through narrative analysis, in the forms of personal meanings and of social meanings of the narrator’s lived experience. The following definitions of terms which are either contained in the two propositions stated here, and/or which are used here in relation to the propositions, have been adopted in the study through reference to the literature:

Knowledge: Cognitive content constructed by people from various sources, including sensory data inputs, such as bodily sensations, and intersubjective inputs provided by linguistic and other symbolic sources. Knowledge is assumed here to be individually
constructed and socially constructed.

*Cognitive content*: Components of knowledge including categorical and relational concepts, cognitive schema, mental models, abstract patterns of action, symbolised meanings, cultural ideals, values, beliefs and explanatory models of social interaction.

*Experience*: Everything that is encountered by a conscious, cognising subject, including all inputs to the subject’s cognising processes.

*Lived experience*: The individualistic and contextualised experience of the individual cognising subject.

*Interpretive analysis of self-narrative*: A process of construction of meanings from data obtained by analysing self-narrative.

*Self-narrative*: Narrative by a person about the person or about her or his lived experience.

*Personal meanings*: Meanings which are inferred from self-narratives through the processes of holistic-content method of interpretive analysis of self-narrative.

*Social meanings*: Meanings which are inferred through the processes of holistic-form method of interpretive analysis of self-narrative.
Chapter Four

Research procedures of the study

Introduction

This chapter presents an account of the methodology of the study, including the methods used for the collection of the data used in the study and the methods used for the analysis of the data. The account begins with a description of the methods used for the collection of data, including the nature, form, and sources of the data, the selection of participants who were to be the primary sources of the data, and the procedures used to gather data from the participants. This description is followed by an account of the methods of data analysis used in the study, including a description and illustration of how the methods were applied to analysis of the data. The methodology of the study was implemented in accordance with all conditions specified in the approval to conduct the study given by the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee and the Queensland Department of Corrective Services.

The nature, form and sources of the data

As stated in Chapter One, an assumption made in the study was that two basic categories of data were to be obtained from the implementation of the study, viz., primary data and constructed data. The primary data of the study are assumed to be audio-recorded utterances made by participants in individual interview sessions with the researcher. Constructed data are assumed to be data constructed by the researcher, and to consist of: written transcripts, transcribed by the researcher, of audio-recordings of the utterances made by participants; general information about each participant inferred by the researcher from the transcripts; and concepts constructed by the researcher from the transcripts. The way in which participants were selected as the primary data sources is described in the next sub-section of this chapter.

Selection of the interview-session participants

The participants were prisoners located in any one of three participant Queensland correctional centres, who had voluntarily given their consent to participate in at least one individual interview session with the researcher, and who subsequently attended the interview session which was scheduled for them. The three participant correctional centres were chosen by the researcher on the bases of advice from education officers
employed at the centres, and of approval given by the correctional centre authorities to conduct the individual interview sessions with specified prisoners at the centres. The advice sought by the researcher from the education officers was whether potential candidate participant prisoners were located at the centre, and whether an education officer at the centre was willing and able to participate in the research project by assisting the researcher to identify, and to obtain access to, the prisoners. Participating education officers were briefed on the research project by the researcher, and were asked to identify candidate participant prisoners. The participating education officers were requested by the researcher to select potential candidate participant prisoners by checking individual prisoner records available to them against each of the following three general criteria:

1. A personal record of repeated criminal offences committed primarily to obtain income.
2. Frequent involvement in committing offences prior to attaining the age of 18 years.
3. Initial expression of potential interest in participating in the research project.

The procedures used to collect the primary data from participants are described in the next sub-section of this chapter.

**The primary data-gathering procedures**

**Pre-interview-session briefing of candidate participants**

A copy of the approved consent package for the research project, and an invitation to attend a group information session about the research project, was distributed by the participating education officers to each identified candidate participant prisoner. At the request of the researcher, each participating education officer arranged for a group information session to be attended, on a voluntary basis, by the identified candidate participant prisoners at the centre at which the prisoners were located. Each group information session was conducted by the researcher in the presence of the participating education officer. The information presented by the researcher at each group information session included a written and spoken description of the research project, and an explanation of the purpose and nature of the proposed interview session. A copy of a consent package for the research project participants, including a consent form, was provided to each candidate participant at the group session. Candidate participants were invited to question the researcher about any aspect of the research
project. All candidate participants’ questions were answered by the researcher during the group session.

Candidate participants were advised that signing of the consent form was entirely voluntary, and that it did not oblige them to participate in an interview session. They were requested to return a signed consent form to the education officer within one week after the group information session if they chose, without obligation, to participate in an individual interview session with the researcher. Candidate participants were not offered any reward for participation, and no threat of reprisal for non-participation was communicated to them. After reviewing the signed consent forms returned by the candidate participants, in consultation with the relevant education officer, the researcher selected a total of 24 participants, and requested the education officers to make arrangements for each participant to be offered opportunity to participate in at least one individual interview session with the researcher.

The selection of the 24 participants from the set of candidate participants was based on the recommendation of the individual candidate participant’s education officer. The recommendations of the education officers were provided at the researcher’s request that they recommend the selection of participants who met the first two general criteria. The assessment as to the extent to which a candidate participant met these criteria could be made by the education officer, who had access to each prisoner’s personal records. The researcher could not make this assessment because he was not permitted access to the records. In making their recommendations, the education officers may have considered factors such as the relative security risk involved in interviewing particular candidate participants, and the availability of particular candidates for interview. However, the education officers did not reveal to the researcher whether they had taken these considerations into account in making their recommendations.

With the assistance of the participating education officer at the centre, arrangements were made for prisoners who had returned a signed consent form to the officer to attend an initial individual interview session with the researcher for a nominated period of up to 45 minutes. The procedures involved in the conduct of the interview sessions between the researcher and the participants are described in the next sub-section of this chapter.

**The interview sessions**

Each interview session was conducted individually in a private room at the correctional
centre in which the participant was located. The researcher and the participant were the only people present in the room during the interview sessions. Prior to the commencement of each session, the researcher arranged the furniture in the room so that the arrangement suited the conduct of an informal conversation between the researcher and the participant. The arrangement made by the researcher did not, for example, indicate a presumed difference in status between the researcher and the participant, such as the placement a table or desk between the researcher and the participant when both were seated.

In each case, the researcher ushered the participant into the room and invited the participant to sit wherever he chose. When the participant was seated, the researcher seated himself in a position appropriate to engaging in an informal conversation rather than in an interrogation. For example, the researcher ensured that he was facing the participant at an angle, in order to allow some neutral direction of gaze space between the participant’s field of vision and that of the researcher. Each session was initiated by the researcher, who introduced himself to the participant, and then briefly summarised the information with which the participant had previously been provided in the group information session. This information included a written and spoken description of the research project, an outline of the specific purpose and intended general form of the interview session, and statements regarding the participant’s control over the conduct and recording of the interview session, as contained in the consent package. A copy of the consent package for the research project participants was provided to each candidate at the beginning of each interview session. The researcher reminded the participant that the researcher intended to audio-record all speech uttered during the interview session. He showed the participant the micro-tape audio recorder to be used for this purpose, and reminded the participant of the conditions of consent to the interview session. These conditions included the participants’ right to have any of the recorded speech deleted from the recording before the recording was removed from his presence. After providing this information to the participant, the researcher asked the participant if he had any questions or concerns about his participation in the research project. The researcher responded to all matters raised by the participant, and then asked him if he was willing to proceed with the interview session, including the audio-recording of all speech uttered during the session. In each case when an affirmative answer was given by the participant, the researcher proposed to proceed with the interview session.

No participant declined to proceed with an interview session. Before commencing each interview, the researcher placed the audio-recording device in an
unobtrusive position, and asked the participant to nominate a code number by which the researcher could identify the audio-recording of his session(s), and which the researcher could record in a notebook beside the participant’s name. The researcher gave the participant an assurance that all information recorded would remain confidential to the researcher and the participant, would be kept secure by the researcher, and would be destroyed on completion of the research project. In writing the report of the research project, the researcher substituted a unique pseudonym for the code number of the participant. No pseudonym which was substituted for a code number by the researcher was the actual name of any participant.

The researcher began the interview by inviting the participant to talk about anything connected with his experiences of formal education, including his experience of elementary and secondary schooling, and any education or training in which he had participated since leaving school. The term ‘schooling’ is used throughout this thesis document to refer to the processes by which the formal educational program of a school for juvenile people is implemented. The researcher invited the participant to talk in an informal, conversational way, and then suggested that he might begin with anything that he recalled, and to talk about his experiences without any particular regard to the time sequence of his recollections. The researcher assured the participant that the participant had full control over whatever he chose to say, and over whatever remained recorded on the audiotape by the completion of the interview session.

Throughout the interview the researcher attempted to maintain the role of an interested and attentive listener, adopting a conversational style of interaction with the participant while avoiding insertion of the researcher’s accounts of his own experiences or his evaluations into the conversation. The researcher predominantly used two forms of response to the participant’s speech, viz., verbal and non-verbal acknowledgement gestures, and prompting statements. The researcher used acknowledgement gestures to indicate to the participant that he had heard and comprehended what the participant had said. Prompting statements were used by the researcher to elicit elaboration or clarification of statements made by the participant. Each of these forms of response is exemplified in the following extracts from the transcript of the researcher’s utterances and of the participant’s utterances speech recorded in an interview session with a participant to whom the researcher assigned the pseudonym ‘Nigel’ –

*Examples of verbal acknowledgement gestures made by the researcher during the interview session*
Nigel

Nah. It just that – I don’t like being made fun of you know – in front of other people and they’re laughing at you I don’t like to be laughed at.

Researcher

Mm

Nigel

No one likes to be laughed at.

Researcher

Mm

Examples of prompting statements made by the researcher during the interview session

Nigel

I liked it. I liked that better because you know I could do what I want.

Researcher

What sort of stuff?

Nigel

You know because I couldn’t do that at home I couldn’t be myself.

Researcher

Oh, why was that?

Each interview session terminated when either the available time for the session was close to expiry or the participant indicated that he did not want to continue with the session. Prior to the termination of each session, the researcher invited the participant to raise any question or matter of concern about the session. The researcher responded to all matters raised by the participant, and asked him if he wished to either edit or withdraw the audiotape recording of the session. No participant indicated that he wanted to either edit or withdraw the audiotape recording of his interview session. The researcher offered the participant an option to participate in a further interview session no sooner than two weeks after the session, and offered to make the necessary arrangements with the education officer if the participant chose the option.

Prior to conducting the interview session in which the primary data for the study were collected, the researcher conducted three trial interview sessions with male prisoners. The purpose of conducting the trial sessions was to trial the planned
implementation of the interview sessions to determine whether modification of the planned procedures was required. The trial sessions were arranged by an education officer at a correctional centre under the terms of the approvals given for the conduct of the study at the correctional centre. The procedures used to implement the trial interview sessions are described in the next sub-section of this chapter.

**Trial interview sessions**

A trial interview session was conducted with each of three participants, prior to the full implementation of the general data-gathering procedures. These participants are referred to here as trial participants. The three members of the group of trial participants were selected from the list of participants identified at one of the participating correctional centres, on the basis of being broadly representative, as a group, of the range of ages, literacy levels and ethnic variations found amongst the complete list of participants. Selection of the three trial participants was carried out in consultation with the participating education officer at the correctional centre, who had professional knowledge of the relevant characteristics of the participants at the centre, and access to their individual personal records.

The data-gathering procedures conducted with the three trial participants varied from the general data-gathering procedures described here. The variations from the general procedure are outlined in the remainder of this paragraph. By arrangement with the participating education officer, the researcher conducted an additional briefing session with the trial participants prior to the initial individual interview session. Each participant was requested to give an audio-recorded evaluation of the initial evaluation session, together with any recommendations he wanted to offer regarding improvement of the interview session processes, to the researcher after the session. Each participant was asked to anonymously provide the education officer with his evaluation of the conduct of the session, together with any recommendations that he wanted to offer, within three days after the trial interview session.

At the additional briefing session the three trial participants were invited to voluntarily participate in the first three individual interview sessions on a trial basis. The trial individual interview sessions were carried out as described for the general data-gathering procedures, except that, after the termination of the interview session, the participant was requested by the researcher to provide a spoken evaluation of the session, and to make any recommendations that he wished to make regarding ways of improving the individual interview session process. The researcher initiated the
evaluation by asking the participant an open question about the session, such as ‘Well, how was the session for you?’ With the consent of the participant, his responses were audio-recorded. Initially, the researcher invited responses to his request without providing the trial participant with any particular structure for the responses. After the trial participant had finished making his initial responses, the researcher asked him to respond to any of the following three general points, if they had not already been addressed in the participant’s initial responses:

1. Whether the interview session was carried out as the participant had anticipated prior to the session.
2. Whether there was anything about the way in which the session was conducted that resulted in the participant experiencing any form of discomfort, distress, or confusion.
3. Whether the participant would have preferred the session to have been conducted differently from the way it was conducted.

The researcher requested the trial participant to provide the education officer with his anonymous evaluation and recommendations within three days after the trial session. An assurance was given by the researcher and education officer to each trial participant that his comments would be reported anonymously to the researcher by the education officer.

The researcher evaluated each of the trial interviews with the intent of identifying all problems encountered by the researcher and the participants, and of modifying the procedures, if necessary, to overcome any apparent ethical problems and any other problems, apparent in the trial interview sessions, that seemed likely to be seriously deleterious to the quality of the data obtained from the remaining participants, or to breach any condition of approvals given to undertake the study. The researcher began evaluation of the trial interview sessions by overviewing the content of each trial participant’s speech, as recorded during the interview session on audiotape, to determine whether the speech provided data that could be used in the research study. The researcher listened to the recording of each trial interview session, noting ostensibly plausible information categories that emerged from the content, and the extent to which structural aspects of the speech, such as the progression of categorical themes over time, could plausibly be interpreted as constituting one or more substantial narratives.

In each case, the researcher concluded that the speech either constituted, or contained, at least one substantial narrative that could be interpretively analysed for the purposes of the study. The researcher then reviewed his recorded utterances in each trial
session, to assess the extent to which his speech appeared to facilitate or enhance the
generation and flow of the participant’s speech in relation to the intended central topic
of the session. The researcher considered his assessment of the effects of his speech
during the trial interview sessions in light of the evaluative comments and
recommendations made by the trial participants directly to the researcher, and,
anonymously, to the education officer. The researcher concluded that no ethical
problems were perceived by any of the trial participants.

Taking into consideration that none of the trial participants recommended
changes to the processes used in the trial sessions, and that the researcher’s assessment
of the effects of his speech interventions during the sessions were that the interventions
appeared generally to function as he intended them to function in the interview session,
the researcher concluded that no modifications were needed to enhance the
effectiveness of the data-gathering processes planned for the individual interview
sessions.

The procedures for gathering the primary data for the study have been described
here. The primary data are assumed in the study to be the audio-recordings of utterances
made by the participants during the interview sessions. Primary data are assumed to be
data in one of two general categories of data used in the study. The second general
category of data is taken to be data which were constructed by the researcher from the
primary data. An account will now be given of the methods used to generate the
constructed data used in the study. These methods consist predominantly of forms of
interpretive analysis of representations of the primary data in the form of written
transcripts of the audio-recorded utterances of the participants.

Methods of analysis of the sets of interview transcripts
Written transcripts of all audio-recorded utterances made by participants and by the
researcher in the interview sessions were constructed by the researcher by direct written
transcription from the audio-recordings. The written transcripts were assumed in the
study to be relatively direct written representations of the audio-recorded utterances.
Each transcript of the speech of individual participants, as audio-recorded during the
interview sessions, was analysed by two methods, viz., the method of holistic-content
analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp.63-87), and the method of holistic-form analysis
(Lieblich et al., 1998, pp.88-111). A description of these methods is presented in the
next two sub-sections of this chapter, beginning with a description of the method of
holistic-content analysis.
Holistic analysis of the content of spoken self-narrative

Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.13, 15, 63-87) described an approach to the analysis of spoken self-narrative, which they labelled ‘holistic-content’ analysis. In the current study holistic-content analysis is assumed to yield personal meanings which are, in some sense, contained in a spoken self-narrative. The concept of personal meanings and its derivation, by the researcher, from the literature are explicated in Chapter Three. Lieblich et al. (1998) characterised ‘holistic-content’ analysis of spoken self-narrative as progressive interpretation and reinterpretation by the narrative analyst of specific parts of the content of the narrative in relation to the content of the narrative as a whole.

According to Lieblich et al. (1998, p.13), holistic-content analysis involves iterative processes by which meaning attributed, by the narrative analyst, to specific parts of the content is concomitantly emergent with the overall meaning attributed to the content of the narrative as a whole entity. The meaning of the term ‘meaning’, as used here, is explicated in Chapter Three in relation to constructivist and narrative analysis literatures. Meaning attributed to any particular part of the content may change as the researcher progressively develops an interpretation of the emerging meaning of the content of the narrative as a whole (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.13).

The term ‘meaning’ is used here in the general constructivist sense of being an individual’s explanatory construction of the individual’s experience (Chase, 1995, p.1; Cortazzi, 1993, pp.1-2; Ezzy, 2000, p.605; Mishler, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1998, pp.29-30, 183; Riessman, 1993, pp.9-11; Robinson and Hawpes, 1986, p.114, Sarbin, 1986, p.9). The term ‘explanatory construction’ is used here to refer to a concept that, ostensibly, provides a meaningful context for particular content of the individual’s narration of his or her experience, often in the form of an implicit or explicit general category of content. For example, a person who perceives that she or he had experienced various imposed hardships and deprivations might conceptualise her or his experience, at least in part, as one of disadvantage. In this case, according to assumptions made in the study, the person has conceptualised her or his lived experience, at least in part, as disadvantage. An inference drawn from the hypothetical case used here is that the person’s experience, at least in part, meant disadvantage to the person.

In the context of the study, general meanings of the content of each narrative, and particular meanings of specific parts of the content, were constructed by the researcher, primarily from the researcher’s experiences of listening to the spoken narrative and interpretively analysing a written transcript of the narrative through the
use of the procedures of holistic-content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998). Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62) identified two intended primary products of holistic-content analysis of a spoken self-narrative, to which they gave the terms ‘global impression’, and ‘special foci of content’. As the first major step in the holistic-content method of analysis, Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62) advocated the practice of reading through the entire transcript several times, and then writing an initial global impression of the narrative as a whole. They did not explain their reasoning as to why they advocated initial achievement by the narrative analyst of a global impression. Leiblich et al. (1998) provided examples of a global impression and of special foci of content in their account of holistic-content analysis of spoken self-narrative. However, they did not offer a clear operational definition of either of these terms. The researcher inferred, from the account of the procedures recommended by Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.62-63), that the immediate purpose of carrying out the procedures is to provide the researcher with an overall meaning of the narrative in terms of the main explanatory content themes that the researcher infers to have emerged in the researcher’s development of an understanding of the narrative as a whole.

From the general descriptions and the examples provided by Leiblich et al. (1998, pp.62-63), the researcher inferred that a global impression consists of a set of tentative general conclusions drawn by the narrative analyst, regarding the main explanatory content themes in the narrative. The term ‘main explanatory content themes’ is used here to refer to broad categorical concepts which are inferred by the analyst to be, collectively, the main categories which provide an overall explanation of the specific content of the narrative. The terms ‘explanation’ and ‘explanatory’ are used throughout this thesis document, in relation to concepts constructed from the transcripts of participants’ narratives, to refer to concepts that were inferred by the researcher to provide a meaningful context for particular content of the narrative, usually in the form of an implicit or explicit general category of content. For example, a major explanatory theme of disadvantage might be inferred by the researcher to be an implicit general content category within the narrative as a whole which functioned to contextualise narrated specific instances or exemplars of disadvantage. Major explanatory themes were assumed, in the study, to be personal meanings constructed by the researcher from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives, which indirectly represent meanings constructed by the narrators. These themes were assumed in the study to be the researcher’s constructions of constructions assumed to have been made by participants and, thus, to indirectly represent constructions that the participants were assumed to
have made from their lived experiences. The researcher interpreted global impressions, as described by Lieblich et al. (1998), as consisting of major explanatory themes of content constructed from a spoken self-narrative, and which are referred to as personal meanings in this thesis document.

For brevity of expression, unless stated otherwise, the term ‘content’ is used throughout this thesis document to refer to the subject matter content of a narrative as distinct from its structural content. Structural content of a narrative was generally conceptualised in the study as the structure or structural aspects of the narrative. The following five assumptions were made about the categorical concepts referred to here as global impressions and special foci of interest:

1. Categorical concepts are expressed in some way(s) in spoken self-narrative.
2. Categorical concepts expressed in a self-narrative are part of the narrator’s individual knowledge.
3. The narrator constructed categorical concepts expressed in a self-narrative from his/her lived experience.
4. Categorical concepts expressed in a self-narrative represent meanings that the narrator has, in the context of the narration, given to his or her lived experience.
5. Meanings which are represented by categorical concepts expressed in self-narrative are essentially personal meanings in that they represent constructions which are, at least in some ways, unique to the narrator and to his or her lived experience.

These assumptions are consistent with a constructivist interpretation of the nature and origin of an individual’s knowledge, and of the relationship between an individual’s knowledge and the meaning that the individual attributes to his or her lived experience (for example: Noddings, 1995, p.115; Phillips, 2000, p.7).

The researcher inferred that Lieblich et al. (1998) assumed that a global impression of a spoken self-narrative provided the narrative analyst with overall meanings of the narrative which indirectly represent personal meanings constructed by the narrator from her/his lived experience related to the content of the narrative. On the basis of this inference, global impressions constructed by the researcher from transcripts of the self-narratives of participants in the study are referred to, where appropriate throughout the remainder of this thesis document, by the term ‘personal meanings’. The term ‘personal meanings’ is regarded by the researcher as being a more appropriately descriptive term, within the context of the study, than the term ‘global impressions’. A distinction drawn between the use of the terms ‘global impression’ and ‘personal
meaning’ in this thesis document is that the term ‘global impression’ refers to a general concept described by Lieblich et al. (1998), whereas the term ‘personal meaning’ refers to a concept which is assumed, in the study, to be a particular case of a global impression which was constructed by the researcher from the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the study. Personal meanings constructed from individual transcripts of the narratives of the participants in the study are presented in Chapter Eight, together with a demonstration of the grounding of each personal meaning in the relevant transcript(s).

Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62) suggested that, in arriving at a global impression of a narrative, the narrative analyst should take particular notice of apparent exceptions in the narrative to the analyst’s overall impressions, and to unusual features of the narrative such as contradictions, unfinished descriptions, disharmonies, and emotionally charged utterances (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.62). The researcher read through the entire transcript of each narrative three times, paying particular attention to occurrences of the unusual features suggested by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62), and then recorded candidate personal meanings constructed from the content of the narrative. The set of candidate personal meanings were assumed by the researcher to constitute the researcher’s initial global impressions of the content of the narrative. Illustrative examples of the researcher’s application of the procedures for obtaining a global impression of a narrative, to transcripts of the narratives of two of the participants, are provided in Appendix A.

As shown in Appendix A, the researcher drew the following three inferences from the transcript of participant Nigel’s narrative:

1. Disadvantage was a broad conceptual category of content which was implicit in the narrative, and which functioned to contextualise some specific events and circumstances related in the narrative.
2. A categorical concept of disadvantage was part of the Nigel’s individual knowledge which he had constructed from his lived experience.
3. A concept of disadvantage represented a personal meaning of disadvantage which Nigel attributed to aspects of his lived experience to which he referred in his narrative.

Construction of a global impression of a narrative was described by Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.62-63) as a process that is carried out in conjunction with the construction of special foci of content, in accordance with the procedures of holistic-content analysis. Special foci of content were interpreted by the researcher, from the account...
given by Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.62-63), to be specific categorical concepts, inferred by the narrative analyst to have functioned in the narrative as categorical concepts that encompassed particular types of specific events and circumstances referred to in the narrative. Interpreted in this way, special foci of content are regarded here to be more specific categorical concepts than personal meanings as defined in this thesis document. Consistent with the constructivist theoretical orientation of the study (Noddings, 1990, pp.14-15), the researcher assumed that categorical concepts explicitly or implicitly embedded in a self-narrative are constructed by the narrator from the narrator’s lived experience. The following two general assumptions were made about the conceptual content of self-narratives:

1. The narrator constructs concepts as categories of information derived from the narrator’s lived experience.
2. At least some of the categorical concepts constructed by the narrator function to contextualise narrated events and circumstances.

These assumptions are consistent with the general proposition that, in self-narrative, the narrator organises, summarises and explains the events and circumstances which are narrated, through the use of particular conceptual structures which are embedded, in some form or forms, in the text of the narrative. This general proposition has been expounded in various accounts of the analysis of self-narrative, for example, by Cortazzi (1993, pp.1-2), Polkinghorne (1998, p.171), and Sarbin (1986, p.9).

The researcher made an assumption about the role of personal meanings in the identification of special foci of content in the narrative. This assumption is that the candidate personal meanings provide the narrative analyst with broad cognitive structures that can guide the analyst in the identification of candidate special foci of content in the narrative. This assumption is consistent with general cognitive-psychological theories of learning, which posit the development, through learning processes, of an individual’s cognitive structures, and hypothesise the role of these structures in shaping the individual’s subsequent learning processes and outcomes (for example, Ausubel, 1963). Noddings’s (1990, pp.7-8) account of conceptual linkage between a constructivist understanding of human learning, and cognitive-psychological theory, in which she referred to constructivism as a ‘cognitive position’, supports a conclusion that the assumption made here about the role of candidate personal meanings in the researcher’s identification of special foci of content in a narrative, is compatible with a constructivist understanding of how the researcher developed his personal knowledge of the narrative. This assumption derives support from claims by Ezzy
(2002) and by Lieblich et al. (1998) regarding the role of the researcher’s cognition in constructing knowledge. Ezzy (2002) claimed that the researcher constructs knowledge from the research data via an ‘interpretive framework’, which is itself constructed by the researcher. Lieblich et al. (1998) referred to the influence of the researcher’s ‘interpretive viewpoint’ in the construction of knowledge from research data. Views similar to those of Ezzy (2002) and of Lieblich et al. (1998), regarding the influence of the researcher’s cognition on the construction of knowledge from research data, have been expressed by Cohen et al. (2000), Polkinghorne (1988), and Riessman (1993).

The researcher identified candidate-special foci of content of the participants’ narratives by grouping parts of the subject-matter content of the transcript of each narrative into specific topics within each of the candidate main explanatory content themes which formed the researcher’s initial global impressions of the narrative as a whole. The researcher paid particular attention to each of the following four features of content that Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62) suggested as being indicative of possible special foci of content:

1. Frequency of reference to a candidate-specific topic.
2. Amount of detail provided about the topic.
3. Opening remarks relating to the topic.
4. Evaluations relating to the topic.

From the account given by Lieblich et al. (1998), the researcher conceptualised a special focus of interest in a self-narrative as a specific topic to which the narrator referred on several occasions during her or his narration. The researcher assumed that a general concept of a special focus of interest in a spoken self-narrative was essentially similar to a general concept of a specific topic which was introduced into a conversation by one of the conversationalists. On the basis of this assumption, the term ‘specific topic’ is used throughout the remainder of this thesis document as a synonym for ‘special focus of interest in a spoken self-narrative’. The term ‘specific topic’ is regarded by the researcher as a more appropriately descriptive term, in the context of the study, than the term ‘special focus of interest’. A distinction drawn between the use of the terms ‘special focus of interest’ and ‘specific topic’ in this thesis document is that the term ‘special focus of interest’ refers to a general concept described by Lieblich et al. (1998), whereas the term ‘specific topic’ refers to a concept which is assumed, in the study, to be a particular case of a special focus of interest which was constructed by the researcher from the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the study.

Illustrative examples of the application, in the study, of the features identified by
Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62) to the identification of candidate specific topics are shown in Table 1, which is located in Appendix B. Specific topics were inferred by the researcher through inspection of the transcripts of each individual participant’s narratives, during which the researcher identified specific categories of information into which particular utterances by the narrator, ostensibly related to a personal meaning, could logically be grouped. Each category was interpreted to be a specific topic conceptually related to a personal meaning with regard to its subject-matter content. The criterion used by the researcher to identify a candidate-specific topic was that there were at least two utterances which were inferred by the researcher to refer to a specific concept which was related to the content of a personal meaning. The term ‘utterance’ was used by Lieblich et al. (1998). However, they did not provide an operational definition of the term. The researcher inferred, from examples given in their text, that they used the term to refer to discrete statements in the narrator’s speech (Lieblich et al., pp.63-86). The statement ‘It was a feeling of togetherness’ (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.66) is an example of a statement from a spoken narrative transcript, to which they referred as an utterance. The term ‘utterance’ is used here to refer to discrete statements in the narrator’s speech, as recorded in the transcript of the speech. The statement ‘I’ve got a short attention span’ is an example of utterance, as the term is used here. This statement was part of the transcript of participant Nigel’s narrative.

The researcher assigned a descriptive topic name to each identified specific category of utterances, which are otherwise referred to here as specific topics. Examples of the researcher’s application of the procedures for identifying specific topics, in relation to personal meanings, to transcripts of the narratives of two of the participants, are provided in Appendix A. Specific topics constructed from the individual transcripts of the narratives of participants in the study are presented in Chapter Seven, together with a demonstration of the grounding of each specific topic in the transcripts. For example, from the transcript of participant Nigel’s narrative, the researcher inferred that 36 of Nigel’s utterances ostensibly relating to a personal meaning of disadvantage could be grouped into a particular specific category, on the basis that each referred in some way to a specific concept of Nigel’s apparent perceived ability to achieve the formal expectations made of him at school. The researcher assigned the specific topic name ‘school achievement’ to this specific category. The researcher inferred that the specific category named ‘school achievement’ represented a specific topic within the transcript of Nigel’s narrative, which corresponded to a specific concept of school achievement. Examples of utterances, transcribed from Nigel’s audio-recorded narration, which the
researcher grouped under the specific topic name ‘school achievement’, include ‘I
didn’t want to if I couldn’t catch on’ and ‘Wasn’t good at studying’. The researcher
electronically coded each utterance which was identified as an instance of a specific
topic. The coding enabled the researcher to electronically retrieve all utterances which
were given the same electronic code and, thus, which were interpreted to be specific
instances of the same topic. In the analysis of the transcript of participant Nigel’s
narrative, for example, the researcher searched the transcript for utterances about
particular consequences of events and circumstances which, the researcher inferred,
were conceptually related, with regard to content, to a candidate personal meaning of
disadvantage.

The researcher grouped utterances into categories that constituted relatively
specific categorical concepts, and which were inferred to have functioned to
contextualise specific instances of narrated events and circumstances in relation to a
personal meaning. One such category, constructed by the researcher from the transcript
of participant Nigel’s narrative, was labelled ‘school achievement’ by the researcher.
The researcher constructed this category by inferring that the narrative contained a set
of utterances, each of which referred to a particular perceived consequence of Nigel’s
ostensible lived experience of disadvantage, viz., Nigel’s apparent perceived inability to
achieve at school. With regard to the researcher’s purpose of identifying personal
meanings in the narratives, through holistic-content analysis, the researcher drew an
inference that one group of personal meanings embodied in Nigel’s narrative in relation
to his lived experience of basic formal education, for example, was that he could not
achieve at school because of the disadvantage that he experienced throughout his
childhood. In other words, the researcher inferred that one part of the personal meaning
which Nigel associated with his lived experience of basic formal education was that he
could not achieve at school, that another part of the personal meaning was that he had
experienced disadvantage, and that a third part of the personal meaning was that he
could not achieve at school because of his experience of disadvantage.

In practice, the processes used by the researcher in constructing personal
meanings and specific topics were to some extent concomitant and were essentially
iterative. The researcher first identified initial global impressions as candidate personal
meanings, and then identified candidate special foci of interest as candidate specific
topics which appeared to be conceptually related, with regard to content, to particular
candidate personal meanings. The researcher then reviewed each of the candidate
personal meanings and the candidate specific topics, having regard for the interpreted
content of the transcript as a whole and for the interpreted content of each of the
categorical concepts. This review involved iterative processes by which the candidate
personal meanings and the candidate specific topics were progressively redefined,
where appropriate, in terms of their conceptual content and their assumed inter-
relationships.

In order to identify the apparent major personal meanings in the transcripts of
participants’ narratives the researcher selected personal meanings on the basis of the
total number of inferred references to each personal meaning in the transcript. The
personal meaning to which the greatest number of inferred references was made was
selected first. The personal meaning to which the next greatest number of inferred
references was made was then selected. This process of selection was continued until 75
per cent of all inferred references to identified personal meanings were accounted for.
The selection by the researcher of 75 per cent as a cut-off percentage was made
arbitrarily as a way of limiting the number of personal meanings to be identified in the
narrative. The practice of identifying candidate categories of conceptual content,
referred to here as personal meanings, on the basis of the frequency of occurrence of
inferred references to them is generally consistent with advice provided by Lieblich et
al. (1998, p.62) regarding the identification of candidate categories of conceptual
content in a self-narrative. As shown in Appendix A, for example, a total of three
candidate personal meanings were identified in the transcript of Nigel’s narrative. The
researcher labelled these inferred personal meanings ‘disadvantage’, ‘self-
determination’, and ‘social alienation’. The researcher identified personal meanings of
disadvantage and of self-determination as the major personal meanings in the transcript,
on the basis that they accounted for at least 75 per cent of all inferred references to
personal meanings inferred from the transcript.

A description of one of the two methods of interpretive analysis of spoken self-
narrative used in the study, viz., holistic-content analysis, has been given here. A
description of the second method used, viz., holistic-form analysis, is presented in the
next sub-section of this chapter.

**Holistic analysis of the form of spoken self-narrative**

Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.13, 16, 88-111) described an approach to the analysis of spoken
self-narrative which they labelled ‘holistic-form analysis’ (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.13).
In the current study the proposition has been made that holistic-form analysis of a
spoken narrative yields social meanings which are, in some sense, contained in the
From the account given by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.88-91), the researcher interpreted holistic-form analysis to be an interpretive analysis of the thematic structure of the narrative in relation to the structure of the narrative as a whole. The analysis of the thematic structure of the narrative, as briefly described by Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.89-91) appears to be similar to the analysis of a narrative on the basis of its themal coherence, as described by Agar and Hobbs, cited by Polkinghorne (1988, p.165), and by Mishler, (1986b). Themal coherence refers to the way in which the structural content of a narrative is organised into themes which provide dimensions of structure to the narrative (Mishler, 1986b, p.89).

According to Lieblich et al. (1998, pp. 88-91), the process of holistic-form analysis begins with identification of ‘thematic foci’ of the narrative. A thematic focus has been interpreted here to mean a general category of structural content which provides part of the overall dimensional structure of the narrative. The term ‘structural content’ is used here to mean content ostensibly relating to the structure of a narrative, such as an apparent themal dimension of the narrative (Mishler, 1986a), as distinct from subject-matter content which ostensibly relates to one or more categorical concepts embedded in the narrative. As illustrated in Appendix A, in the transcript of participant Nigel’s narrative, for example, the researcher identified a thematic focus of indifference to social expectations of conformity to perceived norms of conventional Australian society. The adjective ‘perceived’ is used here to indicate that the researcher assumed that the norms referred to here are norms which Nigel apparently had perceived to be those of conventional Australian society. A thematic focus of indifference to perceived norms of conventional Australian society was constructed by the researcher as a major category of structural content to which Nigel appeared to have alluded, in various ways, relatively frequently during his narrative. This thematic focus was interpreted by the researcher to constitute a structural dimension in Nigel’s narrative, in that it appeared to provide one of the means by which the narrator achieved and maintained coherence between various ostensible subject-matter themes in the narrative. In accordance with advice provided by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.89) regarding the process of holistic-form analysis, the researcher gave primary attention to the way in which each identified thematic focus developed in the narrative, and in how it appeared to function to maintain coherence of the subject-matter themes of the narrative within the narrative as a whole.

The researcher began the process of holistic form analysis of each narrative by
tentatively identifying candidate thematic foci of the narrative. The researcher examined the apparent development of each candidate thematic focus throughout the narrative by attempting to apply each of the following three strategies suggested by Lieblich et al. (1998, pp. 88-89):

1. Comparison of the apparent development of the thematic focus with the basic structure of each of four ‘principal narrative types’, viz., romance, comedy, tragedy, and satire (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp. 88-89).
2. Identification of the progressive development of the thematic focus, using the analytical framework provided by Gergen and Gergen (1986).
3. Examination of the cohesiveness of the thematic focus within the narrative as a whole, using the model of narrative cohesiveness proposed by Bruner (1991).

An illustrative example of the researcher’s application of the three general strategies suggested by Lieblich et al. (1998, pp. 88-89) to the identification of thematic foci from the transcript of a spoken self-narrative is provided in Appendix A. In applying each of the three strategies, the researcher paid particular attention to the occurrence of each of the following three forms of speech, which Lieblich et al. (1998, p. 91) regarded as possibly indicative of dynamic aspects of the structure of a narrative:

1. Evaluative reflections by the narrator on specific times in the narrator’s life, such as ‘I didn’t like reading’, ‘I couldn’t bear it when I was younger’, and ‘I’ve grown up a lot since I’ve been in jail’.
2. Responses to prompts encouraging the narrator to continue or elaborate on an apparently ended part of the narrative, such as ‘What did I do when I left school? Breakin in places. I got into trouble’.
3. Use of expressions that appeared to be indicative of a change in the direction of the narrative, such as ‘I just gave up after that’, ‘It was different after I left home’, and ‘I’m used to being in jail - doesn’t really phase me - doesn’t really, doesn’t really affect me’.

From the outcomes of applying each of the three strategies suggested by Lieblich et al. (1998, pp. 88-89) to a tentatively-identified thematic focus, the researcher made a decision as to whether the thematic focus was useful in describing the structure of the narrative to the extent that it enabled the researcher to make one or more inferences about social meanings ostensibly contained in, or communicated by, the narrative.

In the transcript of the narrative of participant Nigel, for example, as shown in Appendix A, the researcher examined the development of an apparent thematic focus of
Nigel’s indifference to perceived norms of conventional Australian society. The development of this thematic focus was interpreted by the researcher to have the general form of a romance, as the narration depicted Nigel’s struggle, from relatively early in his childhood, to resist all attempts to socialise him in ways that conformed to his apparent perceptions of the expectations and norms of the wider society, and his triumph, in adulthood, in perceiving himself to be successfully alienated from these expectations and norms. Examples of statements that the researcher interpreted as possibly indicative of dynamic aspects of a focal theme of indifference to perceived norms of conventional Australian society, in Nigel’s narrative, are shown in the following extracts from the transcript –

“When I first started goin’ to school I was playin’ up, always playin’ up. and –

“If I couldn’t learn it I’d say what am I sittin here for you know, then I just wouldn’t care.
and –

“I was a pretty pretty bad boy at school.

and –

“I don’t really care ‘cos when I do come to jail I’m sort of, like, I’m sort of institutionalised here.

The development of a thematic focus of indifference to perceived norms of conventional Australian society was interpreted by the researcher to be progressive, as the narrative described a progression from Nigel’s participation in some of the socialising processes of schooling, in childhood, to increasing participation in anti-social forms of behaviour throughout adolescence and early adulthood. Within the narrative as a whole, the thematic focus was interpreted to be weakly coherent in that there appeared to be no obvious purpose for the inclusion of this component in relation to the development of an identifiable plot, although a series of events depicting its development was described, and causal relationships between some of these events and the outcome of indifference appeared to have been implied. The researcher concluded that a candidate thematic focus of indifference to the norms of conventional Australian society, in Nigel’s narrative, was potentially useful in enabling the researcher to infer social meaning in the narrative. In this particular case, the researcher inferred that agents of the wider society, such as teachers and police, attempted to socialise Nigel to conform to expectations, values, and norms of conventional society. However, these
expectations, values, and norms ostensibly were assumed by the researcher to have been contrary to those communicated to Nigel in the immediate social environment of family and peers into which he apparently had been socialised from an early age. On the basis of the assumption made here that a social meaning can be inferred from a themal focus which has been constructed from a spoken self-narrative, themal foci constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of the participants in the study will be referred to by the more descriptive term ‘social meanings’ throughout the remainder of this thesis document. The distinction drawn between themal foci and social meanings in this thesis document is that the term ‘themal focus’ refers to a general concept described by Lieblich et al. (1998), whereas the term ‘social meaning’ refers to a concept which is assumed, in the study, to be a particular case of a themal focus which was constructed by the researcher from the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the study. Social meanings constructed from the individual transcripts of the narratives of participants in the study are presented in Chapter Nine, together with a demonstration of the grounding of each social meaning in the transcript.

Selection of transcripts for inclusion in the study

The researcher selected the transcripts of the narratives of 15 of the participants for further analysis in the study. The 15 transcripts were chosen from the complete set of transcripts of the interview sessions with the original 24 participants. The researcher eliminated the transcripts of interview sessions with nine of the original participants. These were transcripts which, after initial holistic-content analysis (Lieblich et. al, 1998, p.62), were interpreted by the researcher to either contain very little content ostensibly relating to the participant’s experience of education or vocational training, or to not have a general narrative form. Transcripts which the researcher interpreted as not having a general narrative form were interpreted as consisting almost entirely of very short responses by the participant to questions and prompts from the researcher-interviewer, with little elaboration by the participant and no apparent continuity of thought from one response to any other response. In effect, these transcripts had the form of records of interrogations of the participants by the researcher.

Conclusions

An account of the methods used for the collection of data, including the nature, form and source of the data, the method of selection of participant prisoners who were the source of the data, and the procedures used to gather data from the participant informants, has been provided in this chapter. The primary data used in the study were
the audio-recordings of utterances made by participant prisoners during individual interview sessions with the researcher. Candidate participant prisoners were identified by participating education officers in a total of three correctional centres, using selection criteria supplied by the researcher. Twenty-four participants were selected from the initial list of candidate participants. Audio-recorded individual interview sessions between each participant and the researcher were carried out in accordance with the conditions set out in the written briefing and consent form supplied to, and discussed with, all participants prior to the conduct of the sessions.

A written transcript was made of the audio-recording of each interview session. The set of transcripts was assumed to be a relatively direct representation of the primary data of the study. Holistic-content analysis of the transcripts, as described by Lieblich et al. (1998), was used to construct global impressions and special foci of interest from each participant’s narrative(s). On the bases of assumptions stated in this chapter, the researcher renamed global impressions and special foci of interest constructed from transcripts of participants’ narratives as ‘personal meanings’ and ‘specific topics’, respectively. Holistic-form analysis of the transcripts (Lieblich et al., 1998), incorporating a concept of themal coherence (Mishler, 1986b), was used to construct at least one themal focus from each participant’s narrative(s). On the basis of assumptions stated in this chapter, the researcher re-named themal foci constructed from transcripts of participants’ narratives as ‘social meanings’.
Chapter Five

Evaluation considerations

Introduction

In this chapter the general issue of the evaluation of research studies is examined, with a view to identifying appropriate criteria for evaluating the study reported here. For brevity, in the remainder of this chapter the term ‘the study’ is used instead of ‘the study reported here’ except where specific reference is made to some other study.

The concept of reality in relation to research is examined here before an attempt is made to identify criteria that appear to be relevant to the evaluation of research studies. The interpretation given to the term ‘reality’ is arguably fundamental in the selection of criteria for evaluating research (for example: Cohen et al., 2000, pp.22-23; Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.108; Hammersley; 1992, pp.44-45; Tiryakian, 1973, p.206). In relation to the evaluation of research, the ontological issue of reality appears to have strong implications for the epistemological issue of the meaning of the term ‘knowledge’, in particular for the evaluation of the knowledge status of research findings (for example: Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Scott, 2000). Interpretations of reality, and evaluative criteria corresponding to these interpretations, including criteria for evaluating the knowledge status of research findings, are examined here, initially from the broad perspective of major philosophical and methodological approaches to research. This broadly based examination is followed by an examination of the particular philosophical and methodological approaches taken in the study, with a view to identifying an appropriate interpretation of reality for the study, and appropriate criteria for the evaluation of the study.

Reality and objectivity in research: philosophical orientations

The influence of philosophical orientation in relation to the general issue of the interpretation of reality in research has been widely discussed in the literature (for example: Cohen et al., 2000, pp.22-23; Delanty, 1997, p.8; Hammersley, 1992, p.69). Hammersley’s (1992, p.50) claim that any representation is always a representation from a particular view point appears to echo Nagel’s (1986) conclusion that it is logically impossible for an interpretation of phenomena to be made from no viewpoint at all. This claim illustrates the general point that interpretation of the reality of a
research account is strongly influenced by the philosophical orientation of the interpreter.

Constructivist philosophical and methodological orientations (Noddings, 1990, p. 14) to the study were adopted by the researcher, as explicated in Chapters Three and Four. As indicated by the title of the study, the researcher identified the study as an interpretive one (for example, Cohen et al., 2000, p.22). The general ‘interpretive perspective’ in social sciences research, according to Cohen et al. (2000), is primarily concerned with individuals, and serves the general purpose of providing an understanding of human experience (Cohen et al., 2000, p.22). The characterisation by Cohen et al. (2000, p.22) of the ‘interpretive paradigm’ in social sciences research appears to correspond closely to Delanty’s (1997, pp.40-41) characterisation of the ‘hermeneutical approach’ to social sciences research. The hermeneutical approach, according to Delanty (1997, p. 40) ‘stands for the subordination of explanation and description to interpretation’, and ‘implies an intersubjective relationship between science and its object’. Delanty (1997, p.39) alluded to a conceptual relationship between hermeneutical approaches to social sciences research and constructivism, when he stated that ‘a discourse of constructivism runs through the hermeneutical tradition’. In the hermeneutical tradition generally, according to Delanty (1997, p.39) ‘social reality is seen as a meaningful construction and not as an objective reality’. In some hermeneutical theorizing, however, an assumption is made that an ‘objective understanding’ of human experience is possible through hermeneutical inquiry (Delanty, 1997, p.51). The issue of objectivity, stemming from differences in the conceptualization of reality between alternative research paradigms, appears to be central in debate about the evaluation of research in the social sciences and human sciences (for example: Levy, 1981; Lieblich et al.; 1998, p.171; Tagg, 1985, p.188). In relation to the researcher’s identification of the study as having constructivist and interpretive methodological orientations, interpretations of reality in social sciences research will be examined here in an attempt to identify an appropriate interpretation of the reality of the study.

The notion of reality, in relation to research in the social sciences, including research in education, has been the subject of extensive debate in the literature (for example: Delanty, 1997; Denzin, 1997; Hammersley, 1992; Polkinghorne, 1988; Potter, 1999; Scott, 2000; Rorty, 1991). The ostensibly relative nature of the notion of reality was indicated by Delanty’s (2002, p.283) comment, in the context of research, that ‘Reality is always negotiated by social actors’. Much of the discussion of constructivist
interpretations of reality in relation to research has focused on perceived differences between constructivist interpretations and realist interpretations (for example: Cohen et al., 2000; Delanty, 1997; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In discussing conceptualizations of reality in research in the social sciences, Cohen et al. (2000, p.22) drew a distinction between ‘interpretive’ and ‘normative’ research paradigms in the social sciences. They posited that ‘the normative paradigm’ in social sciences research is based on two major assumptions, viz., the assumption that ‘human behaviour is essentially rule bound’, and the assumption that human behaviour ‘should be investigated by the methods of natural science’ (Cohen et al., 2000, p.22). In relation to the characterization of interpretive research, Cohen et al. (2000) stated that –

The central endeavor in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. (Cohen et al., 2000, p.22)

A distinction has been drawn between hermeneutical research and normative research in the social sciences on the basis of the perceived purpose of the research (for example: Cohen et al., 2000, p.22). The broad purposes of research within the traditional normative framework have been identified as explanation of phenomena in terms of cause and effect, prediction of phenomena, and/or control over phenomena (for example: Cohen et al., 2000, pp.22-23; Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.112; Polkinghorne, 1988, p.6). In contrast to the conventional general purposes of normative scientific research, the broad purposes of hermeneutical research were identified as the generation of meaning and understanding (for example: Cohen et al., 2000, pp.137-140; Delanty, 1997, p.40; Riessman, 1993, p.70). A basic difference between studies conducted within a normative paradigm and studies conducted within an interpretive paradigm, according to Cohen et al. (2000, p.22), is that ‘normative studies are positivist’, and interpretive studies are ‘anti-positivist’. The term ‘anti-positivist’, as used by Cohen et al. (2000), appears to correspond closely in meaning to the term ‘postpositivist’ as commonly used in the literature. According to Scheurich (1996, p.58), ‘postpositivist’ refers to conceptualisations of social science research that are opposed to the ‘unproblematic application’ of the traditional research paradigms and methods of the natural sciences to inquiry in the social sciences. Scheurich (1996, p.58) claimed that postpositivist conceptualisations of research characterised interpretivist, constructivist, feminist, and critical theorist approaches to social sciences research.

Delanty (1997, p.11) described positivism broadly as ‘a philosophy that argues for the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the social sciences’, thus presupposing a unity of the natural and social sciences. He identified ‘the naturalistic
notion that science is the study of an objectively existing reality that lies outside the
discourse of science’ as fundamental to the philosophical position of positivism. The
interpretations of Cohen et al. (2000, p.22) and of Delanty (1997, p.11), when
combined, seem to support a conclusion that researchers working within an interpretive
paradigm reject the propositions that the methods of the natural sciences should
necessarily be applied in social sciences research, and that research in the social
sciences necessarily involves the study of an objective reality that is independent of
human experience. Tiryakian (1973, p.205) characterised the general positivist view of
reality as one that assumes a ‘factual world that has a being out there’; that is, a world
that can be known and measured, and which is ‘objectively grounded in nature’.
Hammond et al. (1991, p.3) proposed that the view of reality to which Tiryakian (1973,
p.205) referred ‘can roughly be called “scientific realism”’. The characterization of
‘scientific realism’ by Hammond et al. (1991, p.3) appears to be essentially similar to
the characterizations of ‘naïve realism’ by Delanty (1997, p. 133) and by Scott (2000,

Naïve realism is underpinned by a social theory known as positivism and a
philosophical theory known as empiricism. (Scott, 2000, p.11)

A synthesis of the opinions of Tiryakian (1973, p.205), Hammond et al. (1991, p.3),
Hammersley (1993, p.17), and Scott (2000, p.11), regarding positivism and realism,
appears to support an interpretation that, from the viewpoint of naïve realism, the truth
of an account is appropriately evaluated by the extent to which the phenomena
represented in the account are judged to correspond to an assumed objective reality,
and, thus, are assumed to be independent of human experience. Under this
interpretation, the claim of Cohen et al. (2000, p.22) that interpretive studies are anti-
positivistic appears to support a conclusion that, from the perspective of an interpretive
research paradigm, application of the truth criterion of naïve realism to the evaluation of
accounts of interpretive studies is inappropriate.

According to Hammersley (1992, pp.44-45), the naïve realist position with
regard to reality in research is that a ‘knowable’ and ‘exactly reproducible’ reality exists
independently of the inquirer. Hammersley (1992) concluded that naïve realism was not
an appropriate conceptual framework for the interpretation of reality in social sciences
research. He based his conclusion on several propositions, including the proposition that
‘the aim of social science is to represent reality’ rather than to reproduce reality, and the
propoposition that people do not have ‘independent, immediate and utterly reliable access
to reality’ (Hammersley, 1992, p.69). He proposed that a concept of realism, to which
he referred as ‘subtle realism’, was appropriate for interpreting the meaning of reality in social sciences research. Hammersley’s (1992) concept of subtle realism incorporates the following four propositions:

1. There are ‘independent, knowable phenomena’ (Hammersley, 1992, p.51) that can be investigated through research.

2. The outcomes of social sciences research can represent the reality of ‘independent, knowable phenomena’ (Hammersley, 1992, p.51).

3. All knowledge, including the outcomes of research, is constructed by people and is, therefore, framed in terms of human purposes and particular cultural assumptions (Hammersley, 1992, p.51).

4. ‘Knowledge’ consists of beliefs, the validity of which ‘the research community’ is ‘reasonably confident’ (Hammersley, 1992, p.131).

Hammersley’s (1992) use of the term ‘knowledge’, in the context cited here, appears to refer to the information or findings provided by accounts of research in the social sciences (Hammersley, 1992, p.69). Hammersley (1992) proposed his concept of subtle realism as a basis for interpreting the meaning of the term ‘reality’ in relation to social sciences research. He put forward his proposal in response to inadequacies that he perceived in naïve realism and in relativistic interpretations of reality as interpretive bases in the context of the evaluation of social science research. Hammersley (1992, p.49) argued against the adoption of a relativist position on the interpretation of reality in social sciences research. He claimed that adoption of a relativist interpretation of reality in research logically necessitated reaching the conclusion that knowledge which resulted from such research is of little practical value because, at best, it is only ‘true knowledge’ in is own terms; that is, it does not apply outside of its particular cultural context. He concluded that, in relation to the evaluation of knowledge claims of social sciences research, relativism is self-refuting because it is founded on the assumption that all knowledge is culturally relative. According to Hammersley (1992, p.49), a consequence of adopting this assumption is that a research account could be regarded as true from one particular cultural perspective and as false from another cultural perspective. Hammersley (1992, p.49) claimed that the assumption that all knowledge is culturally relative is, itself, culturally relative, and that, consequently, attempts to apply the assumption in the evaluation of the truth of a research account are self-refuting. Hammersley (1992, p.49) concluded, from his analysis of relativism vis-à-vis his concept of subtle reality, that an assumption that knowledge is socially constructed does not necessarily imply the adoption of a relativist interpretation of knowledge.
Hammersley’s (1992, p.51) proposition that knowledge is ‘framed in terms of human purposes and particular cultural assumptions’ appears to accord with a conclusion by Delanty (1997), citing Mannheim, that –

Knowledge is produced from a specific social and historical standpoint, reflecting the interests and culture of the groups in question. (Delanty, 1997, p.113)

In relation to realist and relativist conceptions of reality in hermeneutical research, Delanty (1997, p.41) characterised one ‘strand’ within the hermeneutical tradition as relativist, and a second ‘strand’ as objectivist. The objectivist strand in hermeneutics, according to Delanty (1997, p.41) is characterised by the view that ‘the scientific study of human meaning can aspire to objectivity’. Citing Ricouer, Delanty (1997, p.57) referred to a conceptualisation of ‘critical hermeneutics’ which acknowledged that ‘the text is open to a plurality of interpretations’. Within the conceptual framework of critical hermeneutics, according to Delanty (1997, p.57), a conclusion that ‘the truth of a text is the world that it discloses’ is possible because ‘interpretation contains a critical moment that allows the interpreter to transcend the text’. The general interpretation of reality in critical hermeneutics, as represented in Delanty’s (1997) account of hermeneutics, appears to incorporate an element of realism with regard to assumption of the objectivity of the text under interpretation, and an element of constructivism with regard to the nature of the interpretive process.

The influence of constructivist philosophical orientations on the representation of reality in research studies in the social sciences has been widely discussed in the literature (for example: Burbules, 2000; Delanty, 1997; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hammersley, 1992; Larochelle & Bednarz, 1998; Noddings, 1990; Phillips, 2000). With reference to the issue of what is meant by ‘reality’ in social sciences research, Delanty (1997, p.112) concluded that, from the perspective of the general constructivist philosophical framework, ‘reality can only be known by our cognitive structures’. A central premise of ‘psychological constructivism’ (Phillips, 2000, pp. 6-8) is that people construct their cognitive structures from their lived experience. In relation to implications of the adoption of a constructivist perspective in research, Noddings, (1990, p. 14) concluded that adoption of a constructivist orientation to the methodology of a research study logically necessitates assumption of the premise that all knowledge is constructed by people. An interpretation of Delanty’s (1997, p.112) conclusion, regarding the general constructivist perspective on reality in research, appears to support a conclusion that, from a psychological constructivist perspective (Phillips, 2000, pp.6-8), the reality of an account of a research study can only be known through human
cognitive construction. The constructivist interpretation that reality in research is knowable only as human constructions contrasts with the traditional realist interpretation that reality in research is knowable in terms of an objective reality that is independent of human experience. Differences in the interpretation of reality between the traditional realist research paradigms and the general constructivist research paradigm have major implications for the selection of criteria by which a research study can be logically evaluated within the philosophical frameworks of these paradigms. The issue of which criteria can be logically applied to the evaluation of research studies is examined in the next section of this chapter.

**Evaluative criteria**

Conventional criteria applied in the evaluation of research within a traditional realist research paradigm appear primarily to be conceptualisations, variously named, of validity, reliability and generalisability (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) and of objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The description by Campbell and Stanley (1963) of ‘external validity’ seems to be essentially similar to the concept of generalisability. In their initial conceptualisation within the positivist research paradigm, validity, reliability, generalisability and objectivity appear to have been applied as criteria for evaluating quantitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In response to perceived difficulties in applying these traditional realist quantitative studies evaluative criteria to qualitative studies, various attempts have been made to construct analogues of the criteria that were thought to be applicable to the evaluation of qualitative studies (for example: Guba; 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Schwandt, 1997). An examination will now be made here of attempts to find analogues of the concepts of validity and objectivity for the purpose of evaluating qualitative research studies.

**Validity and objectivity**

In general the concept termed ‘validity’, in relation to empirical research, appears to refer to the extent to which a research account represents that which it purports to represent (Hammersley, 1992, p.69). This conceptualisation of validity seems to correspond closely to the concept of internal validity as propounded by Campbell & Stanley (1963) (Patton, 2002, p.544). From a perspective of subtle realism, Hammersley (1992) equated the concept of internal validity with truth. According to his interpretation, a research account is regarded as a true account if it represents that which
it purports to represent. This concept of validity appears to have generally been interpreted within the traditional realist research paradigm as the extent to which observations directly represent, in the sense of being isomorphic with, an external reality independent of human experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 218; Scheurich, 1996, p.50). The traditional realist concept of objectivity refers to impartiality of the researcher, particularly in the making of observations and drawing of conclusions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.114), and, thus, appears to be implicit in the traditional realist concept of validity. The criterion of validity, as conceived within the traditional realist research paradigm, cannot be logically applied to the evaluation of research within a constructivist paradigm because it implies the necessity for objectivity in the study. Reality, from a constructivist perspective, refers to a human construction rather than to a world that is independent of human interpretation. From a postpositivist perspective, Riessman (1993, p.65) argued that the concept of truth assumes an objective reality that is inadequate as a basis for explaining social phenomena. Guba (1981) proposed a concept of ‘confirmability’ as a naturalistic research analogue to the traditional realist research evaluative criterion of objectivity. In practice, application of Guba’s (1981) concept of confirmability to the evaluation of naturalistic research appears to involve assessment of the extent to which the phenomena under study represent the lived experience of the informants to the research rather than the preconceptions and biases of the researcher. Guba (1981) advocated explication of the philosophical assumptions underpinning the choice of methodology, of the methodology itself, and of how the methodology was used to arrive at the data and the finding of the study, as means by which the confirmability of a study could be assessed. He suggested the use of ‘audit trails’ to enable a person other than the researcher to assess the extent to which the methodology and decision-making involved in the study were consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of the study. In general, Guba’s (1981) concept of confirmability appears to be logically applicable, within a constructivist research paradigm, to the evaluation of interpretive studies of spoken self-narrative. However, the reporting requirements for an audit trail of the processes of observation in such studies seem to be inconsistent with some of the methodological procedures involved in collecting data as spoken self-narrative (for example, Weiss, 1994, pp.65-66). The initial conceptualisation of validity, in relation to positivist research, appears to apply primarily to purported outcomes of research processes, such as observations and findings. However, the concept of validity apparently has been subsequently interpreted by some scholars primarily in terms of research processes per se (for example: Guba,
1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1995; Mishler, 1990, p.419). Conceptualisations of validity in terms of process appear to regard validity as a primary criterion for evaluating the ‘trustworthiness’ of a research account (for example: Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.112; Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p.170; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mishler, 1990, p. 419; Riessman, 1993, p.65). In relation to the evaluation of qualitative research in the human sciences and the social sciences, a concept of trustworthiness has been regarded in some of the literature as being synonymous with a concept of rigor (for example: Shenton, 2004, p.63; Tuckett, 2005, p.30). The general concept of the trustworthiness of research studies is examined in the next sub-section of this chapter.

**Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.218) concluded that the trustworthiness of research has been evaluated in conventional realist paradigms in terms of ‘internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity’ . They argued that conventional realist interpretations of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity could not be logically applied to the evaluation of ‘naturalistic’ research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp.218-219). According to Cohen et al. (2000, pp.19-20) naturalistic approaches to research are approaches which preserve the ‘integrity of the situation where they are employed’, and which are characterised by rejection of the view that human behaviour is governed by general, universal laws. Interpretive self-narrative methodologies of the type used in the study, as described by Lieblich et al. (1998), Mishler (1986a, 1986b) and Riessman (1993), appear to be consistent with the characterization by Cohen et al. (2000) of naturalistic research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed interpretations of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity which they regarded as being appropriate for the evaluation of naturalistic research, as alternatives to conventional realist interpretations of these criteria. The interpretations of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for the evaluation of naturalistic research, seem to be applicable primarily to processes of research rather than to research findings (for example, Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 310, 316, 318-319). Guba (1981) proposed a concept which he termed ‘credibility’ as a naturalistic research analogue of the traditional realist concept of internal validity. Several specific process criteria were proposed within Guba’s (1981) concept of credibility as a general criterion for the evaluation of naturalistic studies. These specific criteria include the credibility of the research methodology in terms of its establishment within the research paradigm adopted in the study, the extent and duration.
of engagement between the investigator and the participants within their own cultural milieu, random sampling of the informants in the study, and triangulation of data through the use of several methods of data gathering. The specific criteria included in Guba’s (1981) general criterion of credibility do not appear to be relevant to the evaluation of constructivist interpretive studies of spoken self-narrative, as undertaken in the study. Spoken self-narrative and its interpretation within a constructivist paradigm are assumed to be specifically contextually situated in time and environment, including the social environment of the individual narrator and the researcher as the narrator’s audience (Chase, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1988, p.176; Riessman, 1993, p.65; Tagg, 1985, p.190).

Riessman (1993, p.65) proposed that a concept of trustworthiness ‘located in social reality’ was more appropriate than a realist concept of truth for the evaluation of accounts of interpretive studies of narrative. Mishler (1990) concluded that the trustworthiness of an interpretive research account was a matter for evaluation by a ‘community of researchers’. In apparent general accordance with Mishler’s (1990) conclusion, Lincoln (1995) posited that agreement about the validity of knowledge in interpretive research arises from the relationships between members of groups of stakeholders in such research. According to Mishler’s (1990, p.419) view, the trustworthiness of an interpretive research study is ‘the degree to which we can rely on the concepts, methods and inferences’ of the study ‘as the basis for our own theorizing and research’. Mishler’s (1990) reference to ‘we’ and ‘our’ was made in the context of his notion of a community of scholars engaged in research and theorising within a particular paradigm such as an interpretive narrative inquiry paradigm. A concept of ‘consensual validation’, advanced by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.173) as a basis for evaluating interpretive studies of narrative, appears to be similar to Mishler’s (1990) concept of trustworthiness. Consensual validation of a research study, according to Lieblich et al. (1998, p.173), involves the study ‘making sense’ to the ‘community of researchers and interested, informed individuals’. A traditional realist conceptualization of validity was generally judged by scholars of interpretive research to be an inappropriate criterion for the evaluation of interpretive research.

A traditional realist concept of validity and its purported analogues in relation to qualitative research studies have been examined here. A concept of reliability is another traditional realist criterion for evaluating research, of which various analogues for naturalistic and qualitative studies have been proposed (for example: Guba, 1981; Zyzanski et al., 1999, p.234). This concept and its purported analogues are examined in
Reliability

A concept of reliability is associated with the basic conceptualisation of validity within the general traditional realist research paradigm (Cohen et al., 2000, p.105; Mishler, 1986a, p.108; Rosenwald, 1986, pp.260-261). In traditional realist terms, reliability generally refers to the extent to which observations remain constant over repeated instances of the same conditions of observation. Reliability, as conceptualized with the traditional realist research paradigm, is a precondition for validity. A research account cannot not be assessed as valid, according to the traditional realist interpretation of validity, if the observations reported in it are not reliable, since such observations cannot be regarded as being directly representative of an objective reality which is assumed to remain constant under the conditions of observation. Within the general interpretive research paradigm, a traditional realist interpretation of reliability cannot be logically applied to the evaluation of interpretive studies of self-narrative, since self-narratives are assumed to be contextually situated in time and in environmental conditions, and, thus, are assumed to be subject to change over repeated instances (Chase, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1988, p.176; Riessman, 1993, p.65; Tagg, 1985, p.190).

From a constructivist viewpoint, the traditional concept of reliability cannot logically be applied to the evaluation of the interpretations reported in a constructivist interpretive research account because such interpretations are assumed to be constructions made by the interpreter (Mishler, 1986b, p.238; Sarbin, 1986, p.12) and, as such, are themselves contextually situated and subject to change across instances. Guba (1981) proposed a concept which he termed ‘dependability’ as a naturalistic inquiry analogue of the traditional realist criterion of reliability. His concept of dependability appears to refer primarily to the repeatability of the research study by other investigators, in terms of the explication of the research design and methodology, how the methodology was applied in gathering the data, and aspects of reflexivity in the research account. A need for reflexivity in naturalistic inquiry, according to Brody (1999, p.179), is based on a characterisation of the researcher as the ’research instrument’, and is achieved by ‘open disclosure of preconceptions and assumptions that may have influenced data gathering and processing’ as ‘an inherent part of the conduct of the inquiry’. From a constructivist perspective on interpretive spoken self-narrative research, Guba’s (1981) concept of dependability appears to be limited in its relevance as an evaluative criterion to the aspect of reflexivity, as the notion of repeatability seems to be inconsistent with the
assumptions that spoken self-narrative and its constructive interpretation are context-specific.

In addition to concepts of validity and reliability, a concept of generalisability has traditionally been applied to the evaluation of research studies within the general realist research paradigm. This concept, in relation to interpretive research studies, is discussed in the next sub-section of this chapter.

**Generalisability**

Campbell and Stanley (1963) referred to the general realist concept of generalisability in research as the ‘external validity’ of research findings. In general, the traditional realist concept of generalisability is the extent to which the findings of a research study apply, in a predictive sense, to contexts other than the specific context in which the research study was carried out (Hammersley, 1992, p.66). Typically, a criterion of generalisability has been applied in the evaluation of realist empirical research to assess the extent to which the findings from a study of a limited sample of data cases are characteristic of the population of the data cases. Generalisability, as a traditional realist criterion for evaluating research findings, has conventionally been applied by testing the ‘predictive validity’ of the findings (Hammersley, 1992, p.66). In general the predictive validity of research findings has been interpreted, within the traditional realist research paradigm, as the extent to which, in a statistical sense, the findings can be used to predict data in a sample or a population of data cases other than the sample from which the research data were obtained. The traditional realist concept of generalisability cannot be logically applied from within the general interpretive research paradigm (Cohen et al., 2000, p.22) to the evaluation of an interpretive study of human experience, as such application would be inconsistent with the purpose of an interpretive study (Cohen et al., 2000, p.22). The general purpose of an interpretive study of human experience is the gaining of an understanding of the experience (Cohen et al., 2000, p.22; Lieblich et al., 1998, p.168) rather than the explanation of the experience in a predictive or generalized sense as is the general purpose of traditional realist empirical research (Cohen et al., 2000, p.7; Delanty, 1997, p.39). From the general constructivist perspective, a person’s account of his or her lived experience is interpreted as a construction by the person that is, in at least some major ways, unique to the person (Tagg, 1985, p.194), and, therefore, is not directly generalisable to other people’s constructions of their lived experiences.

Guba (1981) proposed a concept which he termed ‘transferability’ as a
naturalistic research analogue of the traditional realist research criterion of generalisability. In general, Guba’s (1981) concept of transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a particular research study are comparable to the findings of other research studies, on the basis of the similarity between the contexts of the initial and subsequent studies. In order for comparisons to be made between studies on the basis of the similarity between the contexts of the initial and subsequent studies, a detailed account of the contextual aspects of the initial study and of the phenomena under investigation is required. Application of Guba’s (1981) general concept of ‘transferability’ to the evaluation of the study is logically consistent with the assumptions of a constructivist interpretive study of spoken self-narrative. However, since such studies are highly contextualized, it seems unlikely that close contextual similarities would be found across different studies.

From the particular perspective of the study as an interpretive study of self-narratives, conceptualised from within a constructivist research paradigm, a person’s construction of her or his lived experience is assumed to be contextualized and, therefore, to be subject to change across time and environment (Robinson and Hawpes, 1986, p.114). Application of the criteria of validity, reliability and generalisability, as conceived within the general traditional realist research paradigm, to the evaluation of social sciences research, is inconsistent with the assumptive frameworks of constructivist interpretive research paradigms. Riessman (1993, pp.21-22) rejected a positivistic ‘posture of descriptive realism or external criteria’ as inappropriate for the evaluation of the ‘truth’ of interpretive studies of self-narrative, because of the complexities of ‘representation’ that she claimed to be inherent in interview-narrative research.

The criteria for evaluating naturalistic research, as proposed by Guba (1981) and by Lincoln and Guba (1985), are ostensibly not generally applicable to the evaluation of interpretive studies of spoken self-narratives. These criteria involve methodological processes such as ‘prolonged engagement’, ‘triangulation’, ‘member sampling’, and ‘persistent observation’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.310), and various types of auditing of the processes of observation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp.318-319). Implementation of these processes has considerable potential to seriously distort essential aspects of the methodology of interpretive studies of spoken self-narrative as described, for example, by Leiblich et al. (1998). In any case, application of most of the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to the evaluation of interpretive studies of spoken self-narrative seems to be impractical because of particular contextual aspects of the data.
gathering processes that are necessarily involved in such studies (for example, Weiss, 1994, pp.65-66). The criteria proposed by Guba (1981), and subsequently further developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) are, in general, analogues of traditional realist research criteria. Their conceptual relatedness to realism appears to limit their applicability to the evaluation of some types of constructivist interpretive studies, including the study reported here.

Conceptualizations of the reality of research and of correspondingly appropriate criteria for evaluating research studies conceptualized from within the general traditional realist research paradigm and those conceptualized from within the general constructivist and interpretive research paradigms seem to be irreconcilable. However, some social science theorists have suggested that contemporary conceptualizations of reality within the realist and constructivist paradigms are converging. The idea that the general constructivist and interpretive research paradigms appear to be converging, and the implications of this idea for the evaluation of research studies conducted from within a constructivist perspective, are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The contemporary situation: a convergence of interpretations?

Delanty (1997) claimed that adoption of the general constructivist view of reality, viz., that reality can only be known as human cognitive constructions, did not necessarily imply rejection of the concept of a reality external to human experience. In this context he concluded that, in general, constructivism –

Does not deny the existence of an external reality itself but simply holds that the empirical world of reality is known through the structures of science. (Delanty, 1997, p.112)

In exploring relationships between constructivist and realist interpretations of reality, in relation to social sciences research, Delanty (1997) discussed the possibility of a convergence of interpretations. Citing Beck, and in a vein somewhat similar to that of Hammersley (1992, p.51), Delanty (1997, pp.133-134) suggested that a project of ‘reflexive realism’ could result in the adoption of a ‘constructivist realism’ by which, he claimed, an interpretation of reality in social sciences research could accord with the major claims of contemporary constructivism and of contemporary realism regarding reality in research. Reflexive realism, according to Delanty (1997, p.133), involves an examination of ‘how reality is constructed by social actors who define what is to count as knowledge’, and thus has potential move beyond the perceived impasse between naïve constructivism and naïve realism. This perceived impasse, according to Delanty
(1997, p.133), had resulted from rejection by naïve constructivism of the possibility of objective realities underlying the constructions of social actors, and rejection by naïve realism of an essential role for social actors in the construction of realities as personal and social phenomena. Delanty (1997, pp.129-130) identified the ‘most central characteristic’ of constructivism as the view that ‘all knowledge, both everyday and scientific, is a construction shaped by its context’, and that of realism as its defense of the possibility of causal explanation. Commenting on relationships between realism, constructivism and hermeneutics, Delanty (1997, p.130) noted that ‘the hermeneutical approach does not address causal mechanisms and accepts the construction of social actors’.

With regard to the ‘contemporary situation of social science’, Delanty (1997, p.135) claimed that contemporary debate relating to interpretations of reality had moved on from a polarized issue of understanding versus explanation to debate about relationships between contemporary interpretations of reality in constructivism and in realism. Within this debate, in the context of contemporary research in the social sciences, Delanty (1997, p.135) claimed that generally, for constructivists and for realists, ‘reality is no longer seen as an object but is itself constituted by scientific disclosures’. This general view of reality in relation to the outputs of research appears to be consistent with Hammersley’s (1992, p.131) proposition, as part of his concept of subtle realism, that knowledge, as research output, consists of beliefs about the validity of which ‘the research community’ is ‘reasonably confident’. The general concept of research community and its relationship to the evaluation of research studies will now be discussed here.

The role of the research community in the evaluation of research

Hammersley’s (1992, p.131) proposition, that a ‘community’ had necessarily to be involved in the evaluation of knowledge claims in social sciences research, seems to be broadly consistent with the concept of ‘consensual validation’ in social sciences research as described by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.173), and with Mishler’s (2000) concept of ‘validation’ in social sciences research. A general assumption that knowledge is socially constructed, as advanced, for example, by Mishler (1990, p.422), appears to underlie a general contemporary view of reality in social sciences research, as characterised by Delanty (1997, p.135), Hammersley (1992, p.51) and Lieblich et al (1998, p.173). Hammersley (1992, p.51) asserted that his concept of subtle realism,
which he proposed as an alternative interpretation to naïve realism and to relativism in the evaluation of social sciences research, incorporates an assumption that all knowledge is constructed by people and is, therefore, framed in terms of human purposes and particular cultural assumptions. Ostensibly, Riessman (1993, p.16) assumed that knowledge in interpretive narrative research is socially constructed, when she posited that the outcomes of such research invariably are representations which are constructed in terms of the language, cultures and political orientations of the people involved in the research project. Acceptance of the general assumption that knowledge is socially constructed appears to have significant implications for a critical examination of the issue of by what criteria the outputs of particular research studies are to be judged as to whether or not they constitute knowledge, and for the related issue of by whom these criteria are to be set and applied (Burbules, 2000, p. 312). Burbules (2000, p. 313) suggested that the question of by whom the criteria for evaluating particular knowledge claims are to be set and applied could be resolved, from a constructivist viewpoint, through socio-political processes involving the protagonists in the debate about the question, and the larger society. Burbules (2000), from a constructivist perspective, and Hammersley (1992), from the perspective of subtle realism, seem to have shared an opinion that, in general terms, evaluation of the outputs of research studies in the social sciences, with regard to the status of such outputs as knowledge, should involve some community of scholars. Hammersley’s (1992, p.131) characterization of the role of a research community in the evaluation of social sciences research appears to be logically consistent with Delanty’s (1997, p.139) concept of discursive practice in the social sciences, with Mishler’s (1990, p.419) concept of validation in social sciences research, and with the concept of consensual validation advanced by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.173). A research community has a central role in each of these conceptualisations of the evaluation of research in the social sciences. Ostensibly, the views of Burbules (2000), Delanty (1997), Hammersley (1992), Mishler (1990) and Lieblich et al. (1998), regarding the necessity for social sciences research to be situated within a critical discourse, lend support to a conclusion that evaluation of the knowledge status of social science research outputs is strongly influenced by the interpretation of reality assumed by the evaluators (Cohen et al., 2000, pp.22-23; Delanty, 1997, p.8; Hammersley, 1992, p.69). In relation to this source of influence, Delanty (1997, p.135) appears to have concluded, in effect, that, in social sciences research, differences between the interpretations of reality in contemporary realism and those in contemporary constructivism are not problematic in the evaluation of the knowledge status of research
outputs. In effect, Delanty (1997) seemed to have concluded, in a similar vein to Burbules (2000) and to Hammersley (1992), that, given a common assumption in contemporary realism and contemporary constructivism that knowledge is socially constructed, the question of whether or not claimed knowledge represents an objective reality which is independent of human experience is not central to the evaluation of the knowledge status of the findings of research studies in the social sciences.

After consideration of a range of interpretations of the representation of reality in social sciences research, as discussed in the literature cited earlier in this chapter, and in consideration of the assumed conceptual framework and methodology of the study reported here, as explicated in Chapters Three and Four, the researcher concluded that an appropriate interpretation of reality for the study is that reality in the study is constructed by various ‘social actors’ (Delanty, 2002, p.283). The researcher assumed that his constructions, as a social actor participating in a particular discourse of the social sciences, were informed by constructions from two principal sources in addition to his lived experience. One of these sources is the published work of social sciences theorists and researchers, as social actors within the discourse of interpretive narrative analysis. This published work was selected by the researcher on the basis of its apparent relevance to the purpose and aim of the study as stated in Chapter One, and to the philosophical and methodological orientations of the study as explicated in Chapters Three and Four. In particular, the researcher assumed that his constructions were informed by the published work of Lieblich et al. (1998), Mishler (1996a; 1996b), and Riessman (1993) on the theory and practice of the interpretive analysis of spoken self-narrative, as explicated in Chapters Three and Four. The researcher assumed that the second principal source of his constructions was a set of constructions made by the participants as social actors in social interaction with him.

The researcher’s interpretation of reality in the study is based on the assumption that outputs of the research study, as potential knowledge, were constructed by him and were informed by a discourse of interpretive narrative analysis theory and practice represented primarily by the work of Lieblich et al. (1998). Issues relating to the study, which arose from the researcher’s interpretation of reality in the study, include the question of the status of the outcomes of the study with regard to knowledge claims, and the related question of the criteria that are appropriate for evaluating the study. The issue of the evaluation of knowledge claims from the study is discussed in the next section of this chapter.
The evaluation of knowledge claims

The term ‘knowledge’ has been used in a wide variety of different contexts in the constructivist literature (Phillips, 2000). Phillips (2000, p.6) identified two broad contexts in which constructivist concepts of knowledge developed, viz., a context of the individual person and a social context. He used the label ‘psychological constructivism’ to refer to a context of the individual’s construction of knowledge. The label ‘social constructivism’ (Phillips, 2000, p.8), refers to a context of the social construction of knowledge by which ‘public bodies of knowledge’, such as the ‘disciplines’, are socially constructed in the sense that their development, and, consequently, their content, is determined by social processes such as critical discourses, and by constructs such as intersubjectively understood values, ideologies, and political, religious and economic interests. A relationship between psychological constructivist conceptions of knowledge and those of social constructivism seems to be implicit in a characterisation by Lincoln and Guba (2000, p.170) of the general ‘nature of knowledge’ in constructivism as ‘individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus’. With reference to knowledge claims in relation to the outcomes of the study reported here, the term ‘knowledge’ is used primarily in the social constructivism sense.

The general meaning of the term ‘knowledge’, in the social constructivism sense, appears to be similar to the general meaning attributed to the term, in relation to the outputs of social sciences research, by Burbules (2000) and by Hammersley (1992), in that each of these meanings has a connotation of the social construction of knowledge. Burbules (2000, pp.317-318) concluded that the general constructivist approach to the resolution of issues of the knowledge status of particular research claims necessarily involves socio-political processes such as consensus. In the context of social science research, Hammersley (1992, p.50) defined knowledge as beliefs, the validity of which ‘the research community’ is ‘reasonably confident’. In relation to the evaluation of the study, acceptance of Hammersley’s (1992) definition of knowledge, or of Burbules’s (2000) conclusion regarding the evaluation of knowledge claims within a constructivist philosophical framework, seems to necessitate evaluation of knowledge claims of the study from within a critical discourse, involving the interpretive narrative inquiry research community, before the knowledge status of the outcomes could be established.

Within the critical discourses of social sciences research, as represented in the literature, there have been numerous attempts to establish criteria by which the knowledge claims of research outputs could be evaluated (for example: Guba, 1981;
Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Hammersley, 1992, pp.69-78; Mishler 1990). The most ubiquitous criterion advocated in the literature appears to be some concept of validity (Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Hammersley, 1992; Maxwell, 1992; Scheurich, 1996). Scheurich’s (1996) attempted deconstruction of the concept of validity as a ‘research criterion’ (Scheurich, 1996, p.50) in the social sciences appeared to support a conclusion that postpositivist interpretations of validity, other than those that lead to the adoption of a seemingly specious solipsistic relativism, are essentially similar to positivist interpretations. His central objection to most pospositivist concepts of validity appeared to stem from his view that such concepts are imperialistic in the sense that their application excludes research that does not conform to ideologies that are dominant within the community of social sciences scholars. ‘Validity boundaries’, according to Scheurich (1996, p.53), ‘always create insiders and outsiders’. In apparent contrast to the conclusions of Scheurich (1996), Hammersley (1992, p.49) rejected relativism as a philosophical basis for evaluating the validity of a research account, and advocated a central role for a research community in such evaluations. In the context of the critical evaluation of research accounts, Hammersley (1992, p.69) seemed to have regarded truth and validity as being synonymous. He used both terms to refer to the extent that a research account ‘represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise.’

In relation to the phenomena represented in the account of the study, the researcher concluded that all such phenomena are human constructions, and that they are primarily constructions made by the researcher. This conclusion appears to be consistent with the constructivist philosophical framework adopted for the study by the researcher, as explicated in Chapter Three. The researcher’s interpretation of the reality of the phenomena represented in the account of the study is essentially a psychological constructivist (Phillips, 2000, p.6) interpretation, in that the researcher has assumed that the construction of the phenomena was essentially peculiar to him as an individual person. In relation to the evaluation of interpretations made by individual researchers in studies of spoken self-narrative, Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.171-172), Mishler (1986a, 1986b), and Tagg (1985, p.188) proposed that the interpretive processes employed by the researcher be evaluated with regard to their plausibility. The term ‘plausibility’, in the context to which reference is made here, generally refers to the extent to which logically defensive interpretative procedures were applied in logically defensible ways in arriving at the interpretations presented in an account of a study. According to Tagg (1985, p.188), judgment of the plausibility of interpretations presented in a research
account may require critical comparison, by the researcher, of possible alternative
interpretations, in addition to explication of the interpretive procedures employed by the
researcher. The general evaluative criterion of plausibility, as advocated by Lieblich et
al. (1998, pp.171-172), Mishler (1986a, 1986b), and Tagg (1985, p.188), seems to be
relevant primarily to the evaluation of a psychological constructivist interpretation of
the phenomena represented in interpretive studies of spoken self-narrative, including the
study reported here.

In accordance with Burbules’s (2000, p.321) analysis of the nature of human
constructions, from a constructivist perspective, the researcher’s interpretation of the
nature of the phenomena represented in the account of the study logically necessitates a
conclusion that the researcher’s constructions were constructed from one or more
sources, some of which may have been human constructions. The researcher assumed
that the group of participants in the study constituted a major source of his perceptions
from which he constructed the phenomena, and that a major component of his
perceptions consisted of constructions made by the participants. From psychological
constructivist accounts of the processes of conceptual constructions by individual
persons (for example: Bettencourt, 1993, pp.40-46; McCarty and Schwandt, 2000,
pp.45-46; Phillips, 2000, p.8), the researcher concluded that there was some diversity of
types of phenomena represented in the account of the study as a result of the diversity of
processes of transformation involved in the perceptions and constructions of the
researcher. In order to further examine the phenomena represented in the study, in
relation to evaluation of the study, the researcher attempted to characterise the various
types of phenomena according to the transformations ostensibly involved in his
constructions of the phenomena. The researcher attempted this characterisation by
applying Riessman’s (1993) typology of levels of representation in interpretive
narrative inquiry to each of the general types of phenomena that he tentatively identified
in the study. The topic of representation of the phenomena involved in the study is
discussed in the next section of this chapter, with particular reference to the work of

The representation of phenomena in the study

Riessman (1993, p.11) described five ‘levels or kinds of representation’ that she
inferred to be involved in the gathering of spoken self-narratives in an interview
situation, and in the analysis and interpretation of such narratives. The five levels of
representation in this type of narrative inquiry, as identified and labeled by Riessman
are as follows:

1. Attending to experience (Riessman, 1993, p.9).
2. Telling about experience (Riessman, 1993, pp.9-11).
3. Transcribing experience (Riessman, 1993, pp.11-13).

The general issue of representation of phenomena in social sciences research was discussed by Hammersley (1992), ostensibly from a viewpoint of contemporary critical realism (Delanty, 1997, p.132), to which Hammersley (1992, p.50) referred as subtle realism. Hammersley (1992, pp.52, 54) argued that research accounts provided ‘selective representation’ of reality as ‘independent, knowable phenomena’. According to his argument, in order for the truth of such accounts to be established it is imperative that the accounts are explicit about the basis on which the representations in the accounts is made. Hammerlsey’s (1992, p.52) interpretation regarding the ‘selective representation’ of reality as ‘independent, knowable phenomena’ in a research account was framed from within his perspective of subtle realism (Hammersley, 1992, p.69). Hammerlsey’s (1992, p.51) conclusion that ‘independent, knowable phenomena’ could be represented in a research account appears to be inconsistent with a perspective of naïve constructivism, which Delanty (1997, p.133), citing Beck, claimed to not accept the idea of the direct representation of an objective reality in research findings.

Hammersley’s (1992) position of subtle realism was problematised by Smith and Deemer (2000, p.880) for its ‘neorealist acceptance of epistemological constructivism’ while maintaining a realist ontological assumption. Burbules (2000, 315-321) advocated that an ‘agnostic stance’ on the issue of objective reality be adopted by proponents of constructivism. He concluded that ignoring the question of whether there is a reality that is external to human experience resulted in no important consequences for an constructivist interpretive perspective on human experience (Burbules, 2000, pp.312, 316).

In relation to the issue of the representation of objective reality in interpretive narrative research, Josselson (1995, p33) claimed that self-narratives ‘are not records of facts, of how things actually were’. She posited that self-narratives were a ‘meaning-making system’ used by a person to make sense out of the chaos of the person’s recollections and perceptions of his or her lived experience. Josselson’s (1995) claims provide support to a conclusion that interpretive analysis of self-narrative is concerned with some level of representation of the narrator’s constructions of the narrator’s lived
experience, rather than with representation of the ‘objective facts’ of that experience. In the study, the researcher assumed that all representations of the participants’ constructions of their lived experience were constructions made by him. The researcher makes no ‘correspondence theory of truth’ (Delanty, 1997, p.132; Hammersley, 1993, p.17) claim in the research account regarding representation of an objective reality of the participants’ lived experience.

The phenomena represented in the study, which ostensibly are most immediately accessible to readers of the report of the study, are the outputs from researcher’s interpretive analysis of the transcripts of the participants’ utterances, represented as constructions by the researcher of specific topics, personal meanings, and social meanings of the participants’ lived experiences of education and training, as explicated in Chapter Four. The level of representation of these phenomena seems to correspond to the analyzing experience level as described by Riessman (1993, pp.13-14). Other phenomena represented in some way in the study include the participants’ narratives represented as transcribed text, corresponding to the transcribing experience level of representation (Riessman, 1993, pp.11-13), the narrations of the participants represented by the sound-recordings of their utterances made during the interview sessions, corresponding to the telling about experience level (Riessman, 1993, pp.9-11), and the lived experience of the participants represented in the participants’ utterances, corresponding to the attending to experience level (Riessman, 1993, p.9). The only phenomena represented the study that are in any way directly accessible to the reader of the report of the study are the outcomes of the researcher’s interpretive analysis of the transcripts of the participants’ utterances, and parts of the participants’ utterances represented by transcribed text selected by the researcher to demonstrate the grounding of his interpretive analysis in the participants’ utterances. The researcher concluded that all of the phenomena represented in the study are interpretive constructions made by him, and that these constructions have involved a variety of constructive transformations of sensory inputs perceived by him from several sources, of which the primary and major source was the group of participants in the study.

In relation to the general concept of human constructions of concepts, Burbules (2000, p.321) argued that, logically, constructivist theory necessarily has to accommodate an assumption that there is a component of human experience that is not constructed in the constructivist sense. He argued that a construction necessarily is constructed from ‘something’. He suggested that the ‘something’ to which he referred consists of ‘potentially shared experiences’ that, potentially, constitute a basis for
agreement or disagreement about individual constructions, either through socio-political processes such as consensus, or through recognition by two or more cognising beings that their constructions refer to ‘the same thing’, or through both of these types of processes (Burbules, 2000, p.321). In adopting Burbules’s (2000) views regarding the general nature of human constructions of concepts, the researcher identified three sources of the ‘something’ from which he constructed the phenomena represented in the study. These three sources are participants, the community of scholars of interpretive narrative research as represented by selected publications, and the researcher’s lived experience. The researcher concluded that the participants constituted the primary and major source of the researcher’s perceptions from which he constructed the phenomena represented in the study, and that the main categories of these phenomena were as follows:

Category One: Lived experience of the participant.

Category Two: Constructions made by the participant from his lived experience.

Category Three: Self-narrative of the participant representing constructions made by the participant from his lived experience.

Category Four: Meanings of the participant’s lived experience.

The researcher reached the following conclusions regarding his construction of each of the phenomena represented in the study:

Category One phenomena: The researcher constructed the concept that the participant attended, through perceptual processes, to that which the participant experienced. The concepts of experience and of perception, implicit in the researcher’s construction of category one phenomena, were constructed by him from various sources.

Category Two phenomena: The researcher constructed the concept that the participant had constructed concepts from the participant’s perceptions arising from his attention to that which he experienced. The concepts of concept and of construction, implicit in the researcher’s construction of category two phenomena, were constructed by him from various sources.

Category Three phenomena: The researcher constructed the concept that the participant constructed narrative, spoken by the participant to the researcher, which represented constructions made by the participant from the participant’s perceptions arising from his attention to that which he experienced. The concepts of narrative and
of representation, implicit in the researcher’s construction of category three phenomena, were constructed by him from various sources.

Category Four phenomena: The researcher constructed the concept that concepts represented in the participant’s narrative represented meanings that the participant associated with his lived experience. The concept of meaning, implicit in the researcher’s construction of category four phenomena, was constructed by him from various sources.

In addition to assuming that the participants constituted the primary and major source of the researcher’s construction of the phenomena, the researcher assumed that the construction was influenced by his perceptions which were derived from two other main sources, viz., the community of scholars of interpretive narrative research as represented in the literature analysed by the researcher, and other aspects of the researcher’s lived experience. The researcher’s construction of concepts of experience, perception, concept, and construction, for example, was assumed by the researcher to have been strongly influenced by his formal study of psychological construct theory which was an aspect of his lived experience. The researcher assumed that his construction of concepts of narrative, representation, and meaning was strongly influenced by published works of scholars of interpretive narrative research, particularly the works of Lieblich et al. (1998), Mishler (1996a, 1996b), and Riessman (1993). In Chapter Two, the researcher identified specific influences of the literature on his constructions of the phenomena. However, generally he was unable to identify specific influences of the other aspects of his lived experience on his constructions of the phenomena. From consideration of Riessman’s (1993, p.11) opinion that the processes of transformation involved in the interpretive analysis of spoken self-narrative are inevitably ‘incomplete, partial and selective’, and of the unknown influence of many unidentified aspects of the researcher’s lived experience on his construction of the phenomena, the researcher concluded that the representation of the phenomena in the report of the study was incomplete, partial and selective. This conclusion appears to have significant implications for the issue of the selection of criteria for evaluation of the study, which will now be examined here.

Criteria for evaluation of the study

With regard to the concept of truth as a general evaluative criterion commonly applied to accounts of social sciences research, Hammersley (1992) concluded that the social sciences research community had a central role in judging the extent to which a research
account was a true account. With regard to the role of research communities in the evaluation of research studies, the meaning that Hammersley (1992, p.69) gave to the truth of a research account appeared to correspond broadly to the meaning of ‘trustworthiness’ as the term was used by Mishler (1990, p.419) and by Reissman (1993, pp.68-69). Hammersly (1992, p.69) seemed to regard the terms ‘truth’ and ‘validity’ as being synonymous in the context of the evaluation of accounts of research in the social sciences. In a somewhat similar vein to that of Hammersley (1992), Mishler (2000), Reissman (1993), and Altheide and Johnson (1998, p.488) concluded that judgments about the validity of knowledge claimed through interpretive inquiry in the social sciences varied according to the ‘interpretive communities’ (Altheide and Johnson (1998, p.488) which made such judgments. In effect, Altheide and Johnson (1998, p.488) concluded that multiple interpretations of the validity of findings were likely to arise from any research study in the social sciences. The proposition that multiple interpretations of the data may arise from any research study seems to be consistent with the general constructivist research paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Smith and Deemer, 2000). In apparent contrast to Hammersley’s (1992) concept of validity, the interpretation of validity by Altheide and Johnson (1998 p.488) implied that judgments of validity are necessarily relative to the particular interpretive communities which make such judgments. Altheide and Johnson (1998) concluded that the validity of the knowledge generated by an inquiry varies between interpretive communities, thus identifying their concept of validity as essential relativist. A relativist position on the evaluation of knowledge claims was advocated by Rorty (1995, p.6). From his conclusion that the human pursuit of knowledge was based on ethics rather than on epistemology or metaphysics, he posited that the criteria for evaluating knowledge claims should be a challengeable list of features that stakeholders in the claims generally regarded as characterizing ‘good’ or ‘bad’ inquiry (Rorty, 1995, p.6). In relation to the evaluation of the knowledge claims of the study, on the bases of the conclusions reached by Altheide and Johnson (1998, p.488) regarding the role of interpretive communities, and of conclusions reached by Hammersley (1992), Lieblich et al (1998), Mishler (1990) and Riessman (1993) regarding the role of a community of scholars, the researcher identified the research community most immediately involved in a critical discourse of interpretive studies of spoken self-narrative as the most appropriate of interpretive community to judge the truth of the knowledge claims of the study. In the preparation of the account of the study, the researcher had access only to part of this research community as represented by the publications of some of its
members. He selected published works of Lieblich et al. (1998); Mishler (1996a, 1996b, 1990) and Reissman (1993) as representative of the works of the relevant research community from which he sought guidance on the evaluation of the knowledge claims of the study.

Reissman (1993, pp.68-69), citing Cronon, claimed that there were no methodological ‘canons’ by which the validity of interpretive research studies could be universally evaluated, as there were no validation procedures that were appropriate for all such studies. She advised that particular validation procedures had to be chosen for their appropriateness to the particular study. Riessman’s (1993, pp.68-69) conclusions regarding the evaluation of interpretive research seem to accord with conclusions reached by Clifford (1986, p.7) and by Gergen (1985, p.273). Riessman (1993) described validation as the general process by which the trustworthiness of interpretations of data was established in narrative research. She proposed that a concept of trustworthiness, rather than a traditional concept of truth, was an appropriate concept for identifying specific criteria for the evaluation of narrative studies. She argued that the general concept of trustworthiness ‘is located in social reality’ (Reissman, 1993, p.69). Mishler (1990) concluded that the trustworthiness of a research account is a matter for evaluation by the community of researchers. He described validation as the processes by which the trustworthiness of the findings of a study was evaluated (Mishler, 1990, p.419). He posited that the ‘essential criterion’ for evaluating the trustworthiness of a research study was the degree to which ‘a community of scientists’ judged that they ‘could rely on the concepts, methods and inferences of a study, or a tradition of inquiry, as a basis for our own theorizing and empirical research’ (Mishler, 1990, p.422). In similar vein to that of Mishler (1990), with specific reference to the issue of evaluation of the trustworthiness of interpretive studies of spoken self-narrative, Lieblich et al. (1998, p.2) referred to the need for researchers to provide a ‘systematic and coherent rationale for their choice of methods’ through explication of the theoretical framework of the study and its relationship to the methods of analysis used in the study, and to give a clear expository account of the processes by which the results of the research were produced, including a specification of the rules adopted for carrying out the analysis of data.

According to Riessman (1993, p.8), the trustworthiness of a research account is enhanced by the inclusion of an explanation of how the representations made at each stage of the research process were achieved. Riessman’s (1993) opinion regarding the need to explain the processes of representation used in a research study seems to be
supported by an opinion expressed by Altheide and Johnson (1998, p.485). They advocated that the evaluation of the claimed findings of research studies based on ‘interpretive methodologies’ (Altheide and Johnson, 1998, p.485) required explication of how the knowledge generated by such studies ‘is acquired, organised and interpreted’. With specific reference to the issue of representation in interpretive studies of self-narratives, Lieblich et al. (1998, p.173) proposed that a major criterion for evaluating such studies is the extent to which the data collected in the study are represented in the interpretations presented in the account of the study. In interpretive studies of spoken self-narrative, the criterion proposed by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.173) appears to refer to the extent to which the interpretations made by the researcher are grounded in the utterances of the narrators.

**Conclusion**

The remainder of this chapter presents the researcher’s main conclusions regarding the appropriate interpretation of reality in relation to the evaluation of the study and the selection of appropriate criteria for the evaluation of the study. The general concept of reality which seems to be appropriate in the evaluation of the study is that reality is a human construction. There are two basic perspectives on reality as a human construction that seem to be particularly relevant to the evaluation of the study. These two perspectives are a psychological constructivist perspective (Phillips, 2000, p.6), and a social constructivist viewpoint (Phillips, 2000, p.8). From a psychological constructivist viewpoint (Phillips, 2000, p.6), reality is interpreted here as a personal construction by the researcher as a social actor interacting, via the literature, with members of the interpretive narrative analysis research community, and with the participants in their role as narrators and the researcher in his role as each participant’s audience. A concept of plausibility (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.171-172; Mishler, 1986a, p.112; Tagg, 1985, p.188) appears to be an appropriate general criterion for the evaluation of the study. From a psychological constructivist perspective on reality, plausibility is broadly interpreted here as the extent to which the researcher’s interpretive constructions, as reported in the account of the study, are demonstrably based on logically defensible interpretive processes, and are logically derived through the use of such processes. From a social constructivist viewpoint (Phillips, 2000, p.8), reality is interpreted here as a social construction shared intersubjectively between people. An appropriate general criterion for evaluating the study from a social constructivist perspective is a concept of the trustworthiness of the account of the study.
(Mishler, 2000, p.419; Riessman, 1993, p.65). Application of this criterion ultimately requires inclusion of the account of the study in a critical discourse within the community of scholars of constructivist interpretive narrative analysis.

Judgments about the plausibility and the trustworthiness of the study are applicable to aspects of the processes and outcomes of the study. Process aspects include the selection of the methodology, the implementation of the methodology, and the extent to which the researcher’s constructions as outputs of the study are grounded in the data (Cohen et al. 2000, p.282; Lieblich et al., 1998, p.2; Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.323; Mishler, 2000, p.419; Polkinghorne, 1988, p.175; Tagg, 1985, p.188). With particular reference to evaluation of the study as an interpretive study of spoken self narrative, appropriate judgments about the trustworthiness of the study include judgments of the extent to which the account provides a logically coherent and defensible rationale for the selection of the methodology (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.2; Mishler, 2000, p.419), and of the extent to which the processes of representation used in the study are made explicit (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.2; Riessman, 1993, p.8), in particular the extent to which the researcher’s interpretive constructions are shown to have been grounded in the utterances of the participants (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.173; Polkinghorne, 1988, p.175. The aspect of the outcomes of the study, about which judgments regarding the plausibility and trustworthiness of the study can be appropriately made, is the extent to which the study provides an understanding, as a construction by the researcher, of aspects of the lived experience of the participants in relation to their education and training. This general criterion for evaluation of the findings as outputs of the study is derived from the general purpose of interpretive studies, viz., the achievement of an understanding of human experience (Cohen et al., 2000, p.22; Delanty, 1997, p.51).
Chapter Six

General information constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives

Introduction

This chapter presents the researcher’s interpretive summary of general information relating to each of the 15 participants in the study, including general characteristics of participants as inferred by the researcher. The main body of the chapter represents the first stage in the development of the researcher’s understanding of the lived experience of the individual participants in relation to their formal education and vocational training, as explained in Chapter One.

The general information presented in this chapter consists of constructions made by the researcher from written transcripts of spoken self-narratives of the participants. As explicated in Chapter Four, the narratives were spoken by participants during individual interview sessions with the researcher. An audio-recording was made of all utterances of the participant and the researcher during the interview sessions. The researcher constructed written transcripts from the audio-recordings. The information presented in this chapter was constructed by repeated simple inspections of the transcripts by the researcher, during which he constructed a typology of information. His selection of types of information was influenced by conclusions drawn from the review of literature in Chapter Two, and by his perceptions of the content of the transcripts.

The main types of conclusions, drawn from the literature, which influenced the researcher’s selection of types of information about the participants were conclusions about factors ostensibly related to prisoners’ experience of disadvantage, and conclusions relating to the provision of formal education and vocational training services to prisoners. Factors ostensibly related in some way to experience of disadvantage by prisoners during their childhood and/or youth, as indicated in the literature, included aspects of family environment and general social environment and lifestyle experienced during childhood and youth, such as poverty, domestic violence, abuse, drug use, juvenile offending, length and quality of basic formal education, chronic unemployment, offending and incarceration during adulthood, and participation in formal education and vocational training while incarcerated.
Apparent general characteristics of participants which seem to be indicative of conditions that are likely to contribute to childhood experience of disadvantage, were assumed by the researcher, on the basis of evidence and opinion available in the literature, to be experience of non-nurturing environments throughout childhood, and experience of educational disadvantage during childhood. Experience of disadvantage during childhood was generally regarded in the literature as being related to engagement in criminal activity during youth and adulthood, albeit in complex ways (for example: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Training and Advisory Council, 1998; Department of Justice, 2003a, p.3; Fox, 1997; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996; White and Perrone, 1997). Experience of general disadvantage throughout childhood was assumed by the researcher to have been indicated by experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout most of childhood, as inferred from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives.

The apparent occurrence of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood was inferred, by the researcher, from the content of transcripts in which reference was made by the participant to frequent occurrence of domestic violence, lack of provision of necessities of life, and lack of adult supervision and guidance during most of the participant’s childhood. Experience of educational disadvantage during childhood was assumed by the researcher to have been indicated by experience of a relatively short total period of schooling and/or relatively early discontinuation of schooling. These two inferred indicators of experience of educational disadvantage during childhood were identified from the literature reviewed in Chapter Two (for example, Sturman, 1997). Two specific characteristics of participants which were assumed by the researcher to be probable indicators of experience of educational disadvantage during childhood, and which were inferred from information constructed from the transcripts of participants’ narratives, were experience of a total of fewer than 10 years of basic formal education, and experience of extreme disruption of basic formal education. The researcher’s choice of experience of fewer than 10 years of basic formal education as a probable indicator of experience of educational disadvantage was essentially arbitrary. However, this choice was influenced by a finding by Prichard and Payne (2005b), as noted in the review of literature in Chapter Two, that 75 per cent of a sample of 371 juveniles in corrective detention in Australia in 2003-2004 had discontinued their schooling before completing a total of 10 years of formal education. The apparent occurrence of extreme disruption of basic formal education was inferred, by the researcher, from the content of transcripts in which reference was made by the
participant to frequent occurrence of experience of personal trauma associated with changing schools throughout most of the participant’s formal schooling up to year 10.

Characteristics which were assumed by the researcher, on the basis of findings from the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, to have been frequently-occurring consequences of experience of disadvantage during childhood were illegal drug use as juveniles, experience of chronic unemployment after discontinuation of schooling, and repeated engagement in criminal activity which had begun during childhood (for example: Department of Justice, 2003a; Prichard & Payne, 2005a, 2005b; Vocational Education and Employment Commission, 1993). For simplicity of expression in the remainder of this chapter, repeated engagement in criminal activity which had begun during childhood is referred to as early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. As concluded from the review of the literature in Chapter Two, illegal drug use as juveniles appeared to have been consequentially associated with experience of various forms of disadvantage, including educational disadvantage, during childhood, and with juvenile involvement in crime (Prichard & Payne, 2005a). Juvenile involvement in crime appeared to have been associated with repeated offending and incarceration in adult life (Prichard & Payne, 2005b). The available evidence cited in Chapter Two appeared to indicate that experience of chronic unemployment after discontinuation of schooling was an apparently frequently-occurring consequence of experience of educational disadvantage during childhood, for prisoners in Australia. The evidence indicated that prisoners in Australia had, collectively, during the approximate period from the early 1980s to the early 2000s, experienced a disproportionately high pre-incarceration unemployment rate compared to the unemployment rate for the general Australian population, and disproportionately low rates of completion of basic formal education and vocational training (for example: Senate Employment, Employment and Training References Committee, 1996; Walker et al., 1991).

Opportunity to participate in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated was identified in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two as being a potentially important factor in reducing criminal recidivism. The provision of formal education or vocational training opportunities for prisoners was regarded as being particularly necessary for the integration or reintegration into society of prisoners who had experienced a lack of educational opportunity resulting from their experience of educational disadvantage during their childhood and youth (for example: Callan & Gardner, 2005; Kirby et al., 2000).

On the bases of conclusions drawn from the literature and the content of the
transcripts, the researcher grouped information about each participant, constructed by him from the transcripts, into the following types and sub-types:

- Approximate birth date.
- Country of birth.
- First language.
- Family environment during childhood and youth.
- History of basic formal education and initial vocational education.
- General lifestyle history.
  - Employment history.
  - Involvement with illegal drugs.
  - Involvement in criminal activity.
- Participation in formal education or vocational training during incarceration.

The following general characteristics of the participants were inferred by the researcher from the information which was constructed from the content of the transcripts of the participants’ narratives:

- Experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood.
- Experience of less than 10 years of basic formal education.
- Experience of extreme disruption of basic formal education.
- Frequent use of illegal drugs as a juvenile.
- Chronic unemployment following discontinuation of basic formal education.
- Early, repeated engagement in criminal activities.
- Participation in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration.

A summary of inferred general characteristics of each participant is shown in Table Two, and a summary of inferred general characteristics of the participants as a whole group is shown in Table Three. Tables Two and Three are located within the concluding section of this chapter. Inferred general characteristics of participants constitute one of the four general sub-categories of concepts that were constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives. The other three sub-categories are specific topics, personal meanings, and social meanings.

Consistent with the constructivist philosophical orientation of the study, as explicated in Chapter Three, all statements made in this chapter in relation to
participants are presented as constructions made by the researcher from written transcripts of audio-recordings of spoken narratives of the participants, as recorded during interview sessions between individual participants and the researcher. No meaning other than a meaning attributable to an interpretive construction by the researcher is intended to be communicated here with regard to statements in which reference is made to participants, participants’ lived experience, utterances made by participants, and/or recollections, opinions, or conceptualizations associated with participants. No direct attribution by the researcher, to any participant, of any characteristic or of any thought processes or outcome, such as perceptions, concepts, recollections from memory, or opinions, is intended to be communicated here. However, in order to avoid tediously repetitious use of qualifying phrases to the effect that statements relating to the phenomena are presented in this thesis document as constructions or inferences made by the researcher, and are not intended to be interpreted as direct attributions to participants, such phrases have been omitted from most of the text in the remainder of this chapter and in the remaining chapters of this document. For example, the statement ‘Aaron’s age at the time of the interview session was between 20 and 30 years’, is made here instead of the qualified statement ‘The researcher inferred that Aaron’s age at the time of the interview session was between 20 and 30 years’. The statement ‘Barry had become involved in illegal drug use and drug trafficking at the age of 13 years’, for example, is made here instead of the qualified statement ‘The researcher interpretively constructed an inference, from statements recorded in the transcript of Barry’s narrative, that Barry had become involved in illegal drug use and drug trafficking by the age of 13 years’.

The sets of general information and concepts are presented here in the alphabetical order of the participants’ pseudonyms.

**General information relating to the participants**

**Aaron**

Aaron’s age at the time of the interview session was between 20 and 30 years. His first language was English. He had lived all his life in Australia. He was born in Victoria and lived there until some time during his youth or early adulthood.

Aaron lived with his parents and at least one sibling during his childhood, at least up to his mid-teenage years. His account of his family environment indicated that his parents provided adequate physical care, and that his father was a stern and harsh disciplinarian. He stated that he was encouraged by his parents to achieve well at
school, mainly, he believed, to compensate them for their disappointment with the behaviour of his sister. He claimed that his sister, who was older than he, gravely disappointed her parents because her behaviour was seriously delinquent from the time of her early teenage years. Aaron described several incidents involving his sister, which depicted her as being generally violent and cruel towards him.

Aaron claimed that he enjoyed his primary schooling, and that he liked schoolwork and his teachers. However, he felt that he did not fit comfortably into his secondary school environments. He was encouraged by school authorities to change secondary schools when he was in year eight, because of his disruptive and delinquent behaviour patterns. He stated that he began to use alcohol and illegal drugs on a regular, frequent basis during year eight of his schooling, and that he became addicted to heroin in his mid-teenage years. His school achievement in secondary school was of a generally low standard. However, he claimed that he had the capacity to achieve very highly at any task to which he committed himself. He voluntarily left school before completing year 10, to take up an offer of full-time employment. He changed his employment several times during his youth. He began a trade apprenticeship, which he abandoned in the second year. During his late youth and early adulthood he was usually unemployed, addicted to heroin, and served several periods of corrective detention. He had been incarcerated for various periods of time since his mid-teenage years, for drug- and property-related offences. Aaron apparently had not undertaken any formal education or vocational training during his periods of incarceration.

Barry

Barry’s age at the time of the interview session was between 25 and 30 years. His first language was English. He had lived all his life in Australia. He spent his childhood from birth up to the age of approximately 16 years in Queensland, after which he lived interstate for several years before moving back to live with his family in Queensland. He lived with his family until he moved interstate. His family relocated from a remote pastoral property to a regional city when he was approximately 11 years old. His formal education up to the time his family moved to the regional city was through the Queensland School of the Air, under the supervision of his mother. At the age of 11 years he began attending a boys’ private school.

The few references that Barry made to his family were indicative of a conventional, generally supportive family unit of at least moderate financial means. He completed year 10 of schooling after which he moved interstate and attempted, but did
not complete, year 11. During his schooling up to completion of year 10 he carried out farm labourer work on his parents’ farms, and acquired various trade- and farming-related skills including welding and metalwork skills. He liked schoolwork and achieved results in academic work that were to his teachers’ satisfaction, with minimum effort. His behaviour at school was apparently quite acceptable to the school authorities, and he did not experience serious trouble at school. His account of his life at the boys’ school was bland and unremarkable. His involvement in illegal drug use and trafficking during his school years was not detected by his parents or teachers, or by the police or other authorities. After returning from interstate, where he unsuccessfully attempted to break his drug addiction and to complete his schooling, he lived with his family and undertook casual employment work, mainly in welding and metalwork. He did not have any credentialed trade qualifications at the time of the interview session. He indicated that he was involved in some metalwork trade training during his current period of corrective detention.

Barry had became involved in illegal drug use and drug trafficking at the age of 13 years, initially through the influence of older team-mates in a football club. He had become increasingly involved in illegal drug use and trafficking during his adolescence and youth, and into his adult years, which involvement had resulted in numerous convictions and, eventually, in a series of incarcerations. At the time of the interview session he was serving a long sentence for a homicidal crime committed in relation to his drug trafficking activities.

Bill

Bill’s age was between 35 and 40 years at the time of the interview session. His first language was English. He had lived all his life in Queensland. Bill lived with his parents throughout the entire period of his childhood and youth. His account of his family relationships and environment was consistently positive. He described his family background as middle class.

Bill successfully completed 12 years of schooling and gained entry to a university undergraduate program which he discontinued after four months to take up full-time employment as a bank teller. His account of his schooling, including his relationships with teachers and peers, was consistently positive. His school achievement was consistently of a high standard. He particularly enjoyed the social aspects of school life, especially participation in team sports. After several years of employment as a bank teller, Bill enrolled in a university business undergraduate program on a part-time basis.
He successfully completed the program while remaining in full-time employment.

Bill did not provide any direct information about his offending or incarceration. The researcher inferred from Bill’s narrative that Bill was at least 28 years old before his first period of incarceration, which was probably his period of incarceration at the time of the interview session. He stated that he had no history of offending during his childhood or youth. Bill gave no indication of involvement in any formal studies or training during the period of his corrective detention.

**Brian**

Brian’s age at the time of the interview session was between 30 and 35 years. His first language was English. He was born in an English-speaking overseas country, and had lived in Australia since mid-childhood. Brian’s account of his childhood, up to the time that he left his family home at about the age of 18 years, depicted a stable and caring, if perhaps somewhat laissez-faire, family environment. He experienced several perceived discontinuities in his experience of schooling and vocational education. His apparent perception of the final two years of his primary schooling was very positive, in contrast to his generally negative perception of his secondary school experience. At an early stage of his secondary schooling, Brian began regular, frequent use of marijuana, which he continued throughout the remainder of his schooling to an extent that he perceived to have adversely affected his school achievement and his desire to achieve, to a serious degree. Despite these perceived adverse effects, Brian’s secondary school achievements had been sufficient to satisfy his parents and teachers that he was making acceptable educational progress.

Brian voluntarily discontinued schooling midway through year 12, and, after successfully completing a prevocational training program, obtained full-time employment in the electronics industry. He enrolled in a vocational education award course in electronics on a part-time basis. However, he discontinued this program after one year and never returned to formal education until his incarceration many years later. Brian associated his discontinuation of his vocational education with his habitual use of heroin, which he began during the first year of his employment.

Brian had been in steady employment for most of his adult life up to the time of his incarceration. At the time of the interview session, He was undergoing his first period of corrective detention. He had been engaged in criminal activities associated with the use of illicit drugs during his youth and adulthood. However, until the events leading to his current incarceration he apparently had not been apprehended for these
activities.

Since his incarceration, which was preceded by a drug rehabilitation program, Brian had successfully completed a pre-tertiary study program. At the time of the interview session he was enrolled in a social work undergraduate program.

**David**

David’s age at the time of the interview session was between 25 and 30 years. His first language was English. He had lived all his life in Queensland, and had been incarcerated for most of his adult life. David appeared to have interpreted his experience of schooling as having been entirely negative. His school achievement had been consistently of a very low standard. He discontinued his schooling before completing year 10, when the first opportunity arose for him to obtain paid employment. He had undertaken a trade apprenticeship for approximately three years, abandoning it because of perceived intolerable workplace conditions. Later, while incarcerated, he had completed this apprenticeship. After originally discontinuing his trade apprenticeship, David had been employed for several years in a skilled occupation without obtaining a credentialed trade qualification.

From early in his adolescence David had used alcohol on a regular basis and had occasionally experimented with the use of illegal drugs, principally marijuana. After the breakdown of a personal relationship early in his adult years he had become an habitual user of illicit amphetamines, to which he apparently attributed his increasing involvement in criminal offences and, ultimately, his incarceration. At the time of the interview session he was serving a custodial sentence for a serious criminal offence.

At the time of the interview session David was employed within the correctional centre in the trade in which he completed his apprenticeship. He was attempting to complete years 11 and 12 of schooling by distance education, with a view to undertaking tertiary studies leading to professional credentials which would enable him to obtain satisfying employment after his release from custodial detention.

**George**

George’s age at the time of the interview session was between 25 and 30 years. His first language was English. He had lived all his life in Australia. George’s family environment during his entire childhood was one of physical violence fuelled by excessive use of alcohol and illegal drugs. George’s parents separated when he was less than 3 years old. George had remained with his mother throughout his childhood and early youth. His mother had changed partners frequently. Most of his mother’s partners...
behaved violently towards his mother and other family members. His contact with his biological father and male members of his wider family had been infrequent and generally emotionally stressful. He had received little material or other support from his biological father, male members of his wider family, or his mother’s partners. Apparently he had received little support in any form from any source other than his mother during his entire childhood. Apparently as a result of frequent family relocations, George had no opportunity to establish ongoing relationships with his teachers or peers during his primary school years.

George had attended government primary schools. He had not acquired the basic skills associated with primary schooling to the generally accepted minimum standards. He attributed his lack of school achievement to his frequent relocations throughout the period of his primary schooling. His behaviour at secondary school had frequently been unacceptable to the school authorities, resulting in several changes of school and, ultimately, in the discontinuation of his formal schooling during year 10. George’s behaviour at secondary school appeared to have been strongly influenced by his frequent use of marijuana and alcohol, and by his association with delinquent peers who functioned as his social reference group. During his time at secondary school George had been involved in minor property crimes, ostensibly to obtain money and alcohol.

George’s lifestyle from the period since leaving school up to his incarceration had been one of chronic unemployment, frequent heavy use of drugs, primarily marijuana and alcohol, and involvement in crime as a means of obtaining income. During this period he had no formal or employment-related education or training, or work experience. He had obtained casual employment as a manual labourer on several occasions. On each occasion he quit within a few days. He apparently had attributed this behaviour pattern to his heavy use of drugs and his lack of material support, including transport.

At the time of the interview session, George was undergoing his first period of corrective detention. He had been involved in criminal activities, including property offences to obtain money, associated with his use of illicit drugs, since early adolescence.

During the 18 months of his incarceration prior to the first interview session, George had had approximately three months of work experience, and had completed some employment-related training, including first-aid and welding. He had engaged in some study by distance education of year 10 English and mathematics. During his interview sessions, George had frequently referred to his wish to undertake as many
training programs as possible, and to complete his year 10 studies, while incarcerated. He spoke of limited opportunities available to him to undertake accredited training while incarcerated, and had referred to long waiting times to obtain the necessary approvals, the shortage of available places, the limited range of available courses, and the relatively low levels of accreditation available.

Jim

Jim’s age at the time of the interview session was between 35 and 40 years. His first language was English. He had lived all his life in Australia. Jim’s family environment during childhood and youth had been stable and generally nurturing, with normally positive relationships with his parents and siblings. He had demonstrated a capacity for high achievement at school. However, he became disaffected with schooling after year 10, from which time onwards the standard of his school achievements had fluctuated according to his interests and his relationships with his teachers. He had voluntarily ceased his schooling at the age of 15 years to take up an apprenticeship in the automotive industry. He had become dissatisfied with the apprenticeship after two years, and had quit to work as a welder in his uncle’s business firm.

By early adulthood, Jim had criminal convictions resulting in a jail sentence which he appeared to attribute primarily to peer-group influence. He had served several periods of corrective detention of various durations since early adulthood, mainly for convictions for property crimes. For approximately 10 years he had been involved in property crime to obtain cash income during periods of unemployment, and to supplement his earnings during periods of paid employment, to support his heroin addiction. During his first period of incarceration he had become addicted to heroin. In recent years Jim apparently had overcome his heroin addiction. During the period of incarceration in which the interview session was held, Jim had undertaken all the vocational training and work experience that had been made available for him. Most of Jim’s vocational training and work experience had been in metal-work. At the time of the interview session, Jim’s stated purpose in undertaking vocational training while incarcerated was to acquire accredited skills that would enhance his prospects of steady paid employment when he was released from custody.

Lenny

Lenny’s age at the time of the interview session was between 35 and 40 years. His first language was English. He had lived all his life in Australia. Lenny had been raised by his grandmother, in association with several aunts and uncles on his mother’s side of the
family. He did not know his biological parents. His grandmother had provided adequately for his material needs. However, she had exercised little control over his behaviour and had provided him with minimum parental guidance in his personal and social development. His schooling and social relationships had been disrupted by frequent family relocations. Lenny had found little interest in schoolwork, experienced boredom during his school years, and had responded to boredom by ongoing engagement in delinquent and offending behaviours with members of his peer group. He had spent various periods of time in youth detention centres during the later years of his schooling. He had left school as soon as possible, and had obtained full-time employment in an occupation in which credentialed trade qualifications were available. He had showed no apparent interest in obtaining trade qualifications. After six months of post-school employment, Lenny had been convicted of various property offences and placed in detention.

Following his release from the first period of detention, Lenny had obtained short periods of temporary, casual paid employment interspersed with further periods of detention. Early in his adult life he had received a substantial detention sentence, during which he had become addicted to heroin. On release from this sentence, during the relatively few periods of time when he was not incarcerated, Lenny had supported himself for the next ten years mainly through theft and robbery. During this time he had remained addicted to heroin. He had a history of numerous convictions, from early in his youth up to his late 20s, predominantly for theft and robbery. He spent most of his adult life up to his late 20s in detention. At the time of the interview session he was serving a long jail sentence after being convicted of a serious offence unrelated to property crime.

Since the commencement of his current period of incarceration, Lenny had completed a pre-tertiary study program. At the time of the interview session Lenny was enrolled in a university undergraduate program with a view to eventually practising in the legal profession. He apparently had successfully undergone drug rehabilitation program to overcome his heroin addiction.

**Lionel**

Lionel’s age at the time of the interview session was between 20 and 25 years. At that time he was undergoing his first experience of incarceration. His first language was English. He had lived all his life in Australia. Lionel’s family and general social environments appeared to have been stable and basically nurturing throughout his
primary and secondary school years. His immediate family consisted of his mother, step-father, and several siblings. He made no reference to his biological father. He described the parenting of his mother and step-father as relatively consistent, strict and fair. Lionel did not make reference to any perceptions of having experienced family-related disadvantage during his childhood. Although perceived by Lionel to be basically nurturing, Lionel’s family members showed little active interest in his formal education. Lionel had made acceptable progress through his primary and secondary school years up to mid-way through year 12 when he had voluntarily discontinued his formal education and obtained unskilled employment with a motor vehicle repairer.

During his secondary schooling Lionel had associated with a rebellious and somewhat delinquent peer group, had engaged in disruptive behaviour at school, and had been a relatively minor user of marijuana. He consistently referred to apparent perceptions of dissatisfaction with the quality of his schooling, and with the vocational training available to him in association with his employment. Within approximately one year after leaving school, Lionel had discontinued his employment and had engaged in a lifestyle of indolence, increasingly heavy use of illicit drugs, including amphetamines, and criminal activities associated with obtaining the supply of illicit drugs. Since his mid-teenage years he had been involved in various criminal activities associated with obtaining and using illicit drugs. He had continued this lifestyle up to the start of the period of incarceration that he was undergoing at the time of his interview session with the researcher.

Nigel

Nigel’s age at the time of the interview session was between 25 and 30 years. His first language was English. He had lived all his life in Australia. Nigel’s account of his entire childhood depicted a home environment characterised by inadequate and inappropriate parenting, lack of appropriate adult supervision and guidance, physical violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect, deprivation of basic material necessities, ongoing experiences of separation from family members, detention in juvenile offender facilities, and recourse to a delinquent peer group in order to try to meet his social and emotional needs. His account of his school experiences depicted an extremely low level of achievement in formal learning of the basic skills and understandings of English language and of mathematics, an extreme lack of interest in formal learning, constant conflict with school authority, frequent punishment for unacceptable behaviour, and habitual truancy and delinquency.
Nigel had been a homeless delinquent engaging in serious criminal behaviour in order to survive for the first few of his adolescent years. He had never been legitimately employed in earning income during his youth and early adult years, and had derived his income solely from social welfare payments and property crime. His involvement in property crime had resulted in his frequent corrective detention. Nigel had never received employment-related education or training during his youth, or during his adult life up to the time of the interview session. Since his mid-teens years Nigel had spent the majority of his life in detention, having been incarcerated on numerous occasions. He had been consistently involved in criminal offences, primarily property offences to obtain money, since early adolescence.

Noel

Noel’s age at the time of the interview session was between 45 and 50 years. His first language was English. He was born in Australia. However, up until his early teenage years his family had frequently been relocated overseas because of the requirements of his father’s employment. His family had finally settled in a location in Australia when he was 13 or 14 years of age.

Noel’s experience of primary schooling had been extremely fragmented, with regard to the time he spent at any particular school and the nation within which he attended school. As a consequence of the frequent relocation of his family Noel’s primary school achievement had been fragmentary and of a generally very poor standard, and he had been unable to form ongoing relationships with his peers or teachers. His experience of secondary schooling had been characterised by an inability to form rewarding relationships with his peers or his teachers, constant bullying from his peers, extremely low academic achievement, and very frequent truancy. He had discontinued his schooling after year 10. He had been unable to find ongoing employment or employment that might provide him with opportunity to gain credentialed trade training.

From the age of 13 or 14 years, Noel had been involved in delinquent and offending behaviour beginning with petty burglary during his frequent truant absences from school. He had spent most of his adult life serving a sequence of penitentiary sentences. However, he did not reveal the particular nature of the offences for which he had been incarcerated.

During his recent years of incarceration Noel had constantly made attempts to further his formal education and credentialed vocational training. However, he had
encountered numerous barriers and difficulties that he seemed to have attributed to the lack of commitment to prisoner education in Queensland correctional facilities and the lack of resources to support prisoners who want to undertake credentialed vocationally-oriented education and training. At the time of the interview session he was attempting to undertake study for a diploma of engineering with a view to becoming self-employed on his release from incarceration.

**Patrick**

Patrick’s age at the time of the interview session was between 25 and 30 years. His first language was English. He had lived all his life in Australia.

Patrick’s experience of schooling had been characterised by frequent disruptions resulting from continual relocation of his family, associated with his father’s itinerant employment. His school achievements had been generally marginal, as a consequence of the disruptions that he experienced. However, he perceived that he had consistently achieved well in English language and mathematics. During much of his primary schooling he had experienced bullying which he attributed to his non-Caucasian physical appearance. He appeared to have perceived that his parents had been indifferent to the learning and emotional difficulties that he had experienced throughout his childhood.

Patrick had been a frequent truant during his secondary schooling. From about the age of 12 years he had imbibed alcohol frequently and to excess. He had left school in year 10 without completing the year. He had obtained an apprenticeship with a metal fabrication business, which he had discontinued after several months. He had left his family home soon after discontinuing his apprenticeship, had lived in a youth hostel, and had attended school for about 12 months.

Patrick had first been incarcerated at the age of 17 years, and had spent most of his life since that time serving a series of prison sentences. He had been incarcerated on three occasions since reaching adulthood, for convictions relating to property offences involving violence towards people.

Patrick had completed a chef’s apprenticeship during his time in prison. At the time of the interview session he was serving a relatively long sentence, after conviction for a serious, violent crime, and was studying year 11 English and mathematics by distance education with a view to undertaking studies to obtain a tertiary qualification.

**Sean**

Sean’s age at the time of the interview session was between 35 and 40 years. His first
language was English. He had lived all his life in Queensland. Sean described his family environment as generally supportive and caring, with particular parental concern for the future security of employment of the children. All of his siblings were employed in relatively secure professional or paraprofessional positions. He had completed 12 years of schooling. However, his school achievement in year 12 was of a very low standard. On completion of his schooling he had obtained employment in a public service organisation, a position from which he had resigned in a relatively short time. Apart from work experience training programs of very short duration, which he had undertaken in order to qualify for social welfare payments, he had experienced no formal education or training in the period since leaving school to the time of the interview session.

Sean’s age at which he had experienced his first period of incarceration was not revealed in his narrative. However, he made no reference to being incarcerated during the period of time to which his narrative ostensibly applied. The period of his narrative spanned the years from early in his primary schooling up to early in his adulthood. During his narrative, Sean gave no indication of the nature of the offence or offences for which he had been incarcerated. However, his reference to his heavy use of illicit drugs during his youth appeared to indicate that his offending may have been drug-related. Sean made no mention of participation in any formal education or vocational training provided by the correctional centre in which he was incarcerated.

**Shane**

Shane’s age at the time of the interview session was between 25 and 30 years. His first language was English. He had lived all his life in Queensland. His main carer throughout his childhood had been his mother. His parents had separated when he was very young. Although his father had maintained some contact with him, and had attempted to provide parental care for a period of time during his early adolescence, Shane perceived that he had not established a close or satisfying relationship with his father. He seemed to have attributed his generally poor performance at school to the effects of a combination of a lack of adequate parental control and negative peer group influences.

Shane had discontinued his formal education at the end of year 10, when he had obtained full-time employment in his uncle’s landscaping business for four years until the business failed. Shane had not obtained a trade qualification until he had become incarcerated.
He had been incarcerated on several occasions for various periods of time since early in his adulthood. He did not reveal the nature of the offences of which he had been convicted. However, his mentions of illicit drug use and of periods of unemployment seemed to indicate that his offences may have been related to obtaining money and drugs.

During his current period of incarceration he had obtained trade certificates in welding and metalwork. At the time of the interview session he was employed as a leading hand in the correctional centre metal trades workshop.

Stephen

Stephen’s age at the time of the interview session was between 30 and 35 years. His first language was English. He had lived all his life in Australia. He had spent his childhood and youth in Queensland, and had lived in Queensland and in other Australian States or Territories during his adult life.

Stephen had lived with his mother and two older brothers during his childhood and youth. His parents had divorced when he was four years of age, and he had met his father infrequently up to the time of his early adulthood. He had completed year 11 of his schooling and entered into a trade apprenticeship which he completed in minimum time. His school achievements, academically and in sports and social events, had been consistently high. Stephen’s accounts of his family life, schooling, apprenticeship, and social environment during his childhood and youth, were generally very positive. He made no reference to major negative aspects or incidents associated with his experience of childhood.

After successfully completing his trade apprenticeship, during which he had established his own commercial business operation, Stephen had remained employed by his original employer for a relatively short time and then had become self-employed as the manager/operator of his own business firm. He had remained in full-time self-employment up to the beginning of the period of incarceration during which the interview session was held.

Apparently, Stephen had not been involved in offending until the age of approximately 30 years. He had been convicted of an offence on only one occasion, for which conviction he was serving his sentence at the time of the interview session. The offence of which he had been convicted appeared to have been a fraud-related offence.
Conclusion

The remainder of this chapter consists of summaries of general information about the participants, and of inferred general characteristics of the participants. The general information and inferred general characteristics summarised here were interpretively constructed by the researcher from the content of transcripts of the participants’ narratives. No claim is made in the study that the general information and general characteristics summarised here directly represent the participants or the characteristics of the participants. A summary of inferred general information about each participant is presented here first.

Summary of general information

Approximate birth date

Of the 15 participants, 10 were born during the period 1970-1979, four were born in the period 1960-1969, and one was born during the period 1950-1959. More precise birthdates of the participants were generally not available from the transcripts of their narratives. Only one of the participants was born outside Australia. Twelve participants had spent all their life in Australia, one had migrated to Australia in mid-childhood, and one had returned to Australia in his mid-adolescent years after spending most of his earlier life overseas with his family.

Country of birth

All participants except Brian were born in Australia.

First language

The first language of all of the participants was English.

Family environment during childhood and youth

Seven participants (Aaron, Barry, Bill, Brian, Jim, Lionel, and Sean) indicated that they had experienced a generally stable and caring family environment during their childhood and adolescence, and had not experienced any prolonged disruption of their schooling. The researcher inferred that four participants (George, Lenny, Nigel, and Shane) had experienced a highly dysfunctional family environment during most of their childhood and youth. The researcher inferred that, in six cases (Brian, George Lenny, Nigel, Noel, and Patrick), participants had experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education.
History of school education and initial vocational education

Six of the participants (Aaron, David, George, Lenny, Nigel, and Patrick) had completed fewer than 10 years of formal education. One participant had completed year 12 of school, three had completed year 11 only, four year 10 only, five year nine only, one year eight only, and one had not completed primary schooling. One participant had completed a university undergraduate degree prior to his first period of incarceration, and one had completed formal trade apprenticeship training prior to his first period of incarceration.

General lifestyle history

Employment history

Nine participants (Aaron, Barry, George, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel, Noel, Patrick, and Sean) had a history of chronic unemployment up to the period of their incarceration during which the interview session was held. Six participants (Bill, Brian, David, Jim, Shane, and Stephen) apparently had engaged in legitimate employment for most of the period between leaving school and the period of their incarceration during which the interview session was held.

Involvement with illegal drugs

Six participants (Aaron, Barry, Brian, George, Lionel, and Sean) indicated that they had been frequent users of illegal drugs during their childhood or adolescence. Nine participants (Aaron, Barry, Brian, David, George, Jim, Lionel, Sean, and Shane) indicated that they had been habitual users of illegal drugs during their adult years.

Involvement in criminal activity

Ten participants (Aaron, Barry, Brian, David, George, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel, Noel, and Shane) appeared to have been involved in criminal activity as juveniles, and to have repeatedly engaged in criminal activities during their youth and adulthood. Four participants (Bill, Jim, Patrick, and Stephen) apparently had not been involved in criminal activity as juveniles. Seven participants (David, George, Jim, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel, and Noel) indicated that they had been repeatedly incarcerated as a result of convictions for property offences committed in order to obtain financial income. Twelve participants (Aaron, Barry, Brian, David, George, Jim, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel, Noel, Patrick, and Shane) appeared to have had a history of repeated incarceration. Two participants (Bill and Stephen) apparently had not been incarcerated prior to the period
of their incarceration during which they participated in the study. One participant did not provide any information relating to his involvement in offending.

**Participation in formal education/training during incarceration**

Nine participants (Barry, Brian, David, George, Jim, Lenny, Noel, Patrick, and Shane) apparently had participated in at least one formal education or vocational training program, other than courses mandated by the criminal justice system, while incarcerated. Barry, George, and Noel had undertaken some vocational training courses that were not part of an accredited vocational training program. David, George and Patrick were enrolled in school subjects in a distance education mode. Jim and Shane had completed several accredited trade training courses. David and Patrick had completed trade apprenticeships. Noel was enrolled in a TAFE diploma program. Brian and Lenny had completed higher education bridging programs and were enrolled in a university undergraduate program.

**Inferred general characteristics of participants**

Table Two presents a summary of inferred general characteristics of individual participants. Table Three presents a summary of inferred general characteristics of the participants as a whole group.
Table 2: Individual participants’ inferred general characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Inferred characteristics of the participant</th>
<th>(Refer to the legend below the table.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenny</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lionel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigel</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following legend applies to the capital letters used in the headings of the columns and rows in Table Two:

- A dysfunctional family circumstances
- B fewer than 10 years of basic formal education
- C extreme disruption of basic formal education
- D frequent use of illegal drugs as a juvenile
- E chronic unemployment
- F early repeated engagement in criminal activities
- G participation in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration

Bolded letters in the headings indicate characteristics which were assumed to be either frequently occurring contributory causes of childhood disadvantage or frequently-occurring consequences of childhood disadvantage. A tick (✓) in a cell of the table indicates that the characteristic was inferred for the participant.
Table 3: Summary of inferred characteristics of the participants as a whole group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inferred characteristic</th>
<th>Number of participants for whom the characteristic was inferred</th>
<th>Percentage of participants for whom the characteristic was inferred</th>
<th>Participants for whom the characteristic was inferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dysfunctional family circumstances</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>George, Lenny, Nigel, Shane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 10 years of basic formal education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Aaron, David, George, Lenny, Nigel, Patrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme disruption of basic formal education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Brian, George Lenny, Nigel, Noel, Patrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*&gt;1 *‘cause’ characteristic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>George, Lenny, Nigel, Patrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent use of illegal drugs as a juvenile</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Aaron, Barry, Brian, George, Lionel, Sean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic unemployment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Aaron, Barry, George, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel, Noel, Patrick, Sean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early, repeated engagement in criminal activities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>Aaron, Barry, Brian, David, George, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel, Noel, Shane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*&gt;1 *‘consequence’ characteristic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>Aaron, Barry, Brian, George, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel, Noel, Shane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in formal education/training while incarcerated</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Barry, Brian, David, George, Jim, Lenny, Noel, Patrick, Shane</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*>>-1 ‘cause’ characteristic means that more than one characteristic that was assumed in the study to have been a frequently-occurring contributory cause of childhood disadvantage of prisoners in Australia was inferred for each participant.

*>>-1 *‘consequence’ characteristic means that more than one characteristic that was assumed in the study to have been a frequently-occurring consequence of childhood disadvantage experienced by prisoners in Australia was inferred for each participant.

As can be seen from Table Three, the only characteristics that were inferred for more than 50 per cent of the participants were early, repeated engagement in criminal activities, chronic unemployment, and participation in formal education or training while incarcerated. Early, repeated engagement in criminal activities and chronic unemployment were assumed in the study, on the basis of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, to have been frequently-occurring consequences of childhood disadvantage experienced by prisoners in Australia (for example: Fox, 1997; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996). As shown in Table Three, the percentage of participants for whom more than one assumed frequently-occurring consequence of childhood disadvantage was inferred was 53 per cent. These
findings appear to be consistent with conclusions expressed in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two regarding purported relationships between experience of educational disadvantage and early, repeated engagement in criminal activities and chronic unemployment (for example: Fox, 1997; Hagan, 1993; Reiman, 1998). Participation in formal education or training while incarcerated was assumed to be associated with successful integration or reintegration into society after release from custody of prisoners who had experienced a lack of educational opportunity as a result of experience of educational disadvantage during their childhood (for example: Eggleston, 2003; Gehring, 2003; Kirby et al., 2000). As seen in Table Three, 60 per cent of the participants had participated in some formal education or vocational training experiences during their incarceration.

Frequent use of illegal drugs as a juvenile, which was taken as being a consequence of childhood disadvantage, was inferred for 40 per cent of the participants, a lower percentage than might be predicted from the results of studies cited in Chapter Two (for example: Makkai & Payne, 2003; Prichard & Payne, 2005a). However, the findings of these studies may not be characteristic of the populations from which the participants were drawn, as the studies were conducted with juvenile offenders at least 10 years later than the time during which most of the participants were juveniles.

Characteristics of fewer than 10 years of basic formal education and extreme disruption of basic formal education were each inferred for 40 per cent of the participants. These characteristics, together with a characteristic of experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood, were assumed, on the basis of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, to have been frequently-occurring contributory causes of childhood disadvantage of prisoners in Australia (for example: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training and Advisory Council, 1998; Department of Justice, 2003a). A characteristic of childhood experience of dysfunctional family circumstances was inferred for approximately 27 per cent of the participants. As shown in Table Three, the percentage of participants for whom more than one assumed frequently-occurring contributory cause of childhood disadvantage was inferred was 27 per cent. Inspection of Table Three reveals that more than one assumed frequently-occurring consequence of childhood disadvantage for prisoners in Australia was inferred in the cases of three of the four participants who constituted the 27 per cent of participants for whom more than one assumed frequently-occurring contributory causes of childhood disadvantage was inferred.

The percentages reported here for participants’ inferred characteristics, which
were assumed to have been frequently-occurring contributory causes of childhood disadvantage, appear to be lower than percentages which could be predicted from conclusions, expressed in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, regarding the strength of observed statistical relationships between ostensible indicators of individuals’ experience of childhood disadvantage and their subsequent incarceration during adulthood (for example, Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996).
Chapter Seven

Specific topics constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives

Introduction

This chapter presents specific topics constructed from the individual transcripts of the participants’ narratives. The main body of the chapter represents one of two aspects of the second stage of the development of the researcher’s understanding of the lived experience of the individual participants, relating to their formal education and vocational training, as explained in Chapter One. The other aspect is represented by the main body of Chapter Eight, in which personal meanings constructed from the individual transcripts of the participants’ narratives are presented. Representation of the first stage of the development of the researcher’s understanding was presented in Chapter Six. The grounding of the researcher’s constructions of specific topics, in the content of the transcripts, is demonstrated in this chapter. A summary of specific topics interpretively associated with individual participant’s narratives is provided in Table Four, which is located after the concluding section of the chapter.

Specific topics constitute one of the four general sub-categories of concepts that were constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives, in the study. The other three sub-categories are inferred general characteristics of participants, personal meanings, and social meanings. As explicated in Chapter Four, specific topics, personal meanings, and social meanings were constructed through the use of narrative analysis procedures described by Lieblich et al. (1998). As stated in Chapter Four, specific topics are assumed, in the study, to be the least inclusive of the concepts constructed through the use of interpretive narrative analysis procedures, whereas personal meanings are assumed to be broader concepts than specific topics, and social meanings are assumed to be the broadest concepts. Inferred general characteristics of participants are presented in Chapter Six. Personal meanings are presented in Chapter Eight. Social meanings are presented in Chapter Nine.

The meaning of the term ‘specific topic’, as used here, was explicated in Chapter Four. The specific topics presented in this chapter were constructed through use of the procedures of holistic-content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp. 62-87) of the transcripts of the participants’ narratives, and are assumed in the study to generally
correspond to concepts to which Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62) referred as ‘special foci of content’. Holistic-content analysis, as explicated in Chapter Four, involves iterative interpretive processes by which special foci of content (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.62) and global impressions (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.62) are constructed from the transcript of a spoken self-narrative. Special foci of content and global impressions are assumed, in the study, to be conceptual categories. From the account given by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62), special foci of content are assumed to be more specific concepts than global impressions. As explicated in Chapter Four, special foci of content are interpreted as conceptual categories that contextualise specific events and circumstances to which reference is made in the narrative, whereas global impressions are interpreted as major conceptual themes of the content of a spoken self-narrative as a whole. The general relationship between special foci of content and global impressions, which was assumed in the study, was described in Chapter Four.

Specific topics, corresponding generally to special foci of interest (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.62), were constructed from groupings of inferred specific content of the narrative, primarily from the grouping of utterances made in the narrative which were interpreted as having communicated basically similar specific content, in accordance with an application of a method of holistic-content analysis of spoken self narrative as described by Lieblich et al. (1998). The general concept of specific topics is assumed here to be basically similar to the general concept of a specific topic in a conversation or a self-narrative. For brevity of expression, the term ‘topic’ is used instead of the more descriptive term ‘specific topic’ in most of the remainder of this chapter.

In accordance with procedures described by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62), and as stated in Chapter Four, in carrying out the processes of interpretive construction of special foci of content through holistic-content analysis of the transcripts, particular attention was paid to specified features of the content of the transcript. The use of features specified by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62), in the construction of topics from a transcript of a participant’s narrative, is demonstrated in Appendix A. One of the features specified by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62) is the apparent occurrence of evaluative statements that seem, to the narrative analyst, to be conceptually related to candidate topics. Evaluative statements in the transcripts, which were interpreted as being conceptually related to a particular topic, formed the bases of inferences, drawn by the researcher, regarding the general evaluation of the topic within the transcript as a whole. The constructed general evaluation of a topic is assumed here to add meaning to the topic by contextualising the topic within the transcript with regard to the general
evaluation which was interpretively associated with it. Evaluative statements were identified in parts of the transcript from which the content of the topic was constructed. A general evaluative connotation of the topic was interpretively constructed from the set of inferred evaluative statements that was inferred to have been associated with it. Each inferred evaluative statement was interpreted as having either a positive connotation or a negative connotation within the part of the transcript from which it was inferred. Where the researcher was unable to inferentially identify evaluative content in a part of a transcript from which a topic was constructed, the general evaluative connotation of the part of the transcript was assumed to be neutral. A general evaluative connotation was constructed in relation to each topic, from the set of particular general evaluations which were inferentially identified in the parts of the transcript from which the topic was constructed. The general evaluative connotation constructed in relation to a topic was either positive or negative or neutral, or some combination of these general values, such as both positive and negative. The general evaluative connotation, which was inferred in relation to a topic constructed from a particular transcript, is stated together with the categorisation of the content of the topic as a topic label such as ‘school environment’, in each case in the remainder of this chapter. The grounding of the construction of the content of topics, and of the grounding of the inferred general evaluations of the topics, in the transcripts of the participants’ narratives, is demonstrated in the main body of this chapter. For brevity of expression, general evaluative connotations inferred for topics are referred to as general evaluations in most of the remainder of this chapter.

Extracts from the transcripts of participant’s narratives are included in the text of this chapter to illustrate the grounding of the researcher’s interpretive constructions of the specific topics in the content of the transcripts of participants’ narratives. The participants’ narratives are indirectly represented by the written transcriptions of the audio-recordings of the narratives. The extracts from the transcripts are referenced to the participants and to the transcripts in the form (participant’s pseudonym, line n), where ‘line n’ refers to the numeral assigned to the line of the transcript that contained the transcribed utterance. For example, the reference (Nigel, line 1395) refers to line 1395 of the transcript of Nigel’s narrative. Italicised text enclosed within italicised square brackets within extracts from transcripts of participants’ narratives is text that has been substituted by the researcher for original text in the narrative that may have enabled identification of the participant. For example, in the transcript extract ‘I actually finished me apprenticeship at [correctional centre 1]’, the participant named the actual correctional centre. However, the researcher replaced the correctional centre name with
the anonymous label ‘correctional centre 1’. Text in normal font enclosed within square brackets in normal font is explanatory text which was added by the researcher, or text that is intended to make an incomplete statement more comprehensible to the reader without changing the substantive meaning of the original statement. For example, in the transcript extract ‘I think that it was just through my own fault that I ended up behind [bars]’, the researcher added the word ‘bars’ in order to complete the meaning of the statement, as communicated to the researcher in the context of the interview session, for the reader.

Consistent with the constructivist philosophical orientation of the study, as explicated in Chapter Three, all statements made in this chapter in relation to participants are presented as constructions made by the researcher from written transcripts of audio-recordings of spoken narratives of the participants, as recorded during interview sessions between individual participants and the researcher. No meaning, other than a meaning attributable to an interpretive construction by the researcher, is intended to be communicated here with regard to statements in which reference is made to participants, participants’ lived experience, utterances made by participants, and/or recollections, opinions, or conceptualizations associated, in the text, with participants. No direct attribution by the researcher, to any participant, of any characteristic or any thought processes or outcome, such as perceptions, concepts, recollections from memory, or opinions, is intended to be communicated here. However, in order to avoid tediously repetitious use of qualifying phrases to the effect that statements relating to the phenomena are presented here as constructions or inferences made by the researcher, and are not intended to be interpreted as direct attributions to participants, such phrases have been omitted from most of the text in the remainder of this chapter. For example, expressions such as ‘was constructed’, ‘was interpreted’, ‘was inferred’, ‘was assumed’, ‘apparent’, ‘appeared to have been’, and ‘seemed to’ are used instead of qualified expressions such as ‘was constructed by the researcher’, ‘was interpreted by the researcher’, ‘was inferred by the researcher’, ‘was assumed by the researcher’, ‘apparent to the researcher’, ‘appeared to the researcher to have been’, and ‘seemed to the researcher to’. The partly qualified expression ‘Aaron appeared to perceive’, for example, is used instead of the fully qualified expression ‘The researcher inferred that Aaron appeared to have perceived’.

In each case, the topics constructed from the transcript of a participant’s narrative, and a demonstration of the grounding, in the content of the transcript, of the construction of the topics and of the general evaluations interpretively associated with
them, are presented here under the participant’s pseudonym.

**Specific topics constructed from individual transcripts**

**Aaron**
Topics of school environment, drug use, and capacity to achieve were constructed from the content of the transcript of Aaron’s narrative. In relation to a topic of school environment, there seemed to be sharp contrast between Aaron’s references to his primary school environment and his references to his secondary school environment. This contrast was evident from the following set of statements that Aaron made –

*Primary school was great it was perfect primary school.* (Aaron, line 333)

*I wasn’t comfortable in high school.* (Aaron, line 243)

With reference to his experience of secondary school, Aaron said –

*Well I think it was all downhill for me. I found it hard to fit in I think.* (Aaron, line 337)

In relation to a topic of school environment, a positive general evaluation of Aaron’s experience of primary schooling, and a negative general evaluation of his experience of secondary schooling, was inferred from the transcript.

Illegal drug use was a second topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. Aaron spoke of his apparent involvement in using drugs with some of his peers at school, in the following words –

*We all got caught with drugs and alcohol. They stole alcohol and I got caught drinkin on me own.* (Aaron, line 118)

His apparent continuing involvement with illicit drugs during his school days was indicated when he said, of his time at school –

*I was into drugs.* (Aaron, line 128)

and –

*I got into heroin voluntarily. I already had been doin it and I was on that for 5 years.*

(Aaron, line 300)

Aaron appeared to perceive that his experience of discomfort in the secondary school environment was related, to some extent, to his involvement with illicit drugs. This apparent perception seemed evident in the following comments that Aaron made in references to his relationship with his general peer group at secondary school –

*People started doing drugs and I thought if I was the biggest drug dealer at school*
I’d be the most liked you know but what it came to was that I was the most hated. (Aaron, line 338)

and –

People said no he’s a drug addict rah rah he’s no good. (Aaron, line 346)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of drug use was inferred from the transcript.

Capacity to achieve was a third topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. Aaron appeared to refer to a topic of his personal capacity to have achieved at school, when he said –

Always did the work alright. (Aaron, line 50)

and –

I was good at everything except for things I wasn’t interested in. (Aaron, line 272)

and –

The teacher says to me mum there goes a little genius. (Aaron, line 271)

His apparent general belief in his personal capacity to achieve seemed to have been expressed when he said –

Everything I do I’m good at - yearh without doubt. (Aaron, line 183)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of capacity to achieve was inferred from the transcript.

Barry
Topics of illegal drug use and of offending were constructed from the content of the transcript of Barry’s narrative. Barry’s apparent references to his progressive involvement in the use of illicit drugs from an early age were exemplified by the following set of statements that he made –

Got into offending at about 13. Just started you know sellin drugs and stuff takin drugs playin up. (Barry, line 17)

Played football for a football club and some of the blokes in that football club were using amphetamines and pot and stuff and again just fell in with the wrong crowd. (Barry, line 95)

The drug use became a really big issue after I left school and I tried to dry out a coupla times. (Barry, line 100)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of drug use was inferred from the transcript.

Offending was a second topic that was constructed from the content of the
transcript. Barry described his apparent progressive involvement in offending in relation to illicit drug-dealing in the following set of statements that he made –

*I got caught for it and ended up goin on community service for a coupla other things* (Barry, line 27)

*I really made quite a substantial amount of money outa sellin drugs and [indistinct utterance] people and doin all sorts of stupid stuff.* (Barry, line 29)

*Ended up getting into serious crime. Ended up stabbing a bloke.* (Barry, line 34)

*Just don’t interest me any more that scene. More interested in just life.* (Barry, line 131)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of offending was inferred from the transcript.

**Bill**

Topics of family environment, school environment, and readiness to learn were constructed from the content of the transcript of Bill’s narrative. Bill’s apparent references to a topic of his family life during his childhood and youth were exemplified in the following statements that he made –

*I guess that I was pretty fortunate. I sought of came from a middle class background* (Bill, line 7)

*My home life was pretty good.* (Bill, line 223)

*We always had Friday night dinners together and Dad always had treats and, you know, it was a pretty good family atmosphere.* (Bill, line 229)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of family environment was inferred from the transcript.

A topic of school environment was constructed from the content of the transcript. Bill made relatively frequent references to a topic of the general environments of the schools he attended. These references were exemplified when he said –

*I remember at primary school and my whole life was pretty good.* (Bill, line 520)

and –

*Primary school was pretty good because of friends. Never got in trouble.* (Bill, line 131)

and –

*Went down to [school camp 1] one year in high school. I remember having a great*
time there like really enjoying that trip. You know the teachers sort of organised a lot of activities that were a lot of fun. (Bill, line 9)

and –

Right through high school you know I had a good time. You know once we got to grade 11 started to go to a few more parties and that sort of thing and the group that I was with was generally the same some guys could go to parties and still do very well at school. (Bill, line 331)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of school environment was inferred from the transcript.

Readiness to learn was a third topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. Bill’s references to his apparent perception that he had a casual attitude towards learning when he attended school seemed to be related to a topic of his readiness to attend to the requirements of formal learning at school. His apparent perception of his causal attitude towards learning at school seemed to have been evinced in the following set of statements that he made in relation to his experience of life at school -

I look back on it now. I was more into the social side of it. I was more into the social side of school. (Bill, line 375)

and –

I got to that stage where I thought you know unless I start taking this more seriously I’m not going to pass this course. (Bill, line 387)

and –

I remember with assignments, and this was even in primary school, like I was one of those guys you know who would leave it to the last weekend. (Bill, line 548)

Bill seemed to link a perception of his casual attitude to learning while at school to a topic of a lack of readiness to engage in formal learning, when he said –

Kids like me have got no idea what they want to do. Have you thought about what you want to do arhm. You know you’re not mature enough to think I’ve got to do this because I’m not going to achieve. (Bill, line 528)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of readiness to learn was inferred from the transcript.

Brian

Topics of disruptions, intimacy, and drug use were constructed from the content of the
transcript of Brian’s narrative. Brian appeared to have referred to his perceived inability to recall details of his early primary schooling because of disruptions which he had experienced as a result of his family’s several relocations, when he said –

My parents migrated to Australia when I was 10 from [oversea nation1]. (Brian, line 6)

and –

My schools before I came to Australia I can hardly remember. (Brian, line 6)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of disruptions was inferred from the transcript.

Intimacy was a second topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. Statements made by Barry seemed to indicate that he perceived that he had a strong need to achieve intimacy in relationships with people with whom he frequently interacted. Ostensibly in relation to a topic of intimacy, Brian said, when referring to his family –

You felt really comfortable with them at home and you could basically say anything. (Brian, line 156)

Brian’s apparent references to a topic of intimacy in relation to his interactions with his teachers were exemplified by the following statements that he made when referring to some of his Australian primary school teachers –

I had the same 2 teachers for grade 6 and 7 ah and they were both very good ah because it was over 2 years I got to know them both very well. (Brian, line 139)

and –

...they almost treated you umn not like their own children but they really felt something for you. (Brian, line 151)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of intimacy was inferred from the transcript.

Drug use was a third topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. Brian seemed to introduce a topic of drug use in relation to his involvement with illicit drugs in early adolescence, when he said –

I suppose I started smoking pot when I was in grade late grade 8. What’s that about 13 or something 13? (Brian, line 526)

He seemed to continue to refer to a topic of drug use in the following statement which he made about his apparent perception of the influence of older family members and friends on his behaviour at school –

Arhm and I think it was because arhm at that stage a lot of my brothers’ friends were
smoking pot I felt it was cool they got into it. I’ve got two older brothers. I think it was because the older ones were doing it I thought it was cool. (Brian, line 528)

A topic of drug use was inferred when Brian spoke of his progression from the use of marijuana in early adolescence to the use of heroin in early adulthood, in these words –

It [use of marijuana] did lead to other things I was told to [indistinct utterances] yearh hmm and more things that I thought were coo. Oh yearh, yearh, I got into the wrong group of people. (Brian, line 535)

and –

When I was working in the first job I had and doing night school I liked using a bit of heroin. (Brian, line 545)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of drug use was inferred from the transcript.

David

Topics of family environment, learning difficulty, school environment, employment and learning in jail were constructed from the content of the transcript of David’s narrative. David’s apparent references to a negatively valued topic of family environment were exemplified by the following statements that he made –

My mother doesn’t know how to be a mother. (David, line 310)

and –

When I was livin with my mother she was hard. She had a new boyfriend. He used to get stuck into me. I used to cop a lot of the violence things. Beat me up. I always vowed [indistinct utterance] you bastards so I’m gunna get you. (David, line 298)

When speaking about the behaviour of one of his mother’s partners, David said, with apparent reference to a topic of family environment –

He’d hit me with a closed fist on the back of the head and this was a pretty big man. (David, line 329)

David seemed to sum up a topic of family environment when he said, with reference to his apparent overall perception of his treatment by his family in his childhood –

That’s the way I was perceived by everyone. As a problem. (David, line 75)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of family environment was inferred from the transcript.

Learning difficulty was a second topic that was constructed from parts of the content of the transcript. David made several apparent references to this topic, as
exemplified by the following statements that he made –

_I always had a problem. I could be taught something and grasp it. I’d walk away and come back and I couldn’t remember how to do it._ (David, line 18)

_When it come to that test I had to perform something and that just stops me and that was the main problem with my school work._ (David, line 42)

_That was a big problem and due to that problem I felt bad about myself and I just started rebelling and give myself [indistinct utterance] and to try to take the heat away from me. I’d play up._ (David, line 58)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of learning difficulty was inferred from the transcript.

School environment was a third topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. The following statement by David seemed to introduce a topic of school environment into his narrative –

_I hated school. I never liked school. It wasn’t that I didn’t like the work. It was the pressures on me._ (David, line 68)

Ostensibly, David continued to refer to a topic of school environment when he spoke of his apparent perceptions of difficulties he had encountered at school, and of the cumulative effects those difficulties had on his attitude towards schooling. David’s apparent continuing references to the topic were exemplified in the following set of statements that he made –

_I come from a pretty poor family and ah textbooks were a problem._ (David, line 6)

_I didn’t have the textbooks. I’d be singled out in the class as if I’d rebelled and I’d give them a hard time or some-one else a hard time because they had and I didn’t, and I really give a lot of people a hard time._ (David, line 93)

_In the end when I left I just despised school._ (David, line 214)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of school environment was inferred from the transcript.

A topic of employment was a fourth topic constructed from the narrative. The following set of statements made by David illustrated his apparent references to the topic –

_I didn’t pursue it as a career or anything or get a trade out of it. I was just – I was just taught by my fellow workers as I went along._ (David, line 132)

_I had a daughter at 19 and ah I used to work long hours through the night. Start at 9_
until 9 o’clock 10.30 in the morning and when I got home I was very tired and I had to get ready for the next night of work, and it was too hard. (David, line 147)

I stopped working about 5 or 6 months prior to being imprisoned. Just ah - I struck this path I didn’t care about anything. (David, line 245)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of employment was inferred from the transcript.

A fifth topic constructed from the narrative was learning in jail. This topic was constructed from David’s apparent references to the educational opportunities that had been available to during his periods of incarceration, as exemplified by the following set of statements that he made –

After I come to jail I went to [distance education provider] and successfully completed my junior. (David, line 37)

I think I set the bar too high when I first started it and I realised that after about 6 months. (David, line 169)

I went to ah [correctional centre 2] and but I had no-one there. They don’t even have an education officer. (David, line 53)

Education here that could be something they could pursue in time because education here is really stretched to the limit. (David, line 142)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of learning in jail was inferred from the transcript.

George
Topics of family environment, school environment, drug use, and employment were constructed from the content of the transcript of George’s narrative. George seemed to introduce a topic of family environment into his narrative, primarily through references to the frequent occurrence of domestic violence within his family. The following statements that George made, with reference to behaviour patterns of his mother’s partners, were assumed to be specific instances of reference to a topic of family environment –

I dunno but he was on the grog a lot used to drink and run amok and you know get stuck into mum and you know he just booted her in the guts a few times and when she was pregnant and all that. (George, line 150)

He used to hit us all the time. (George, line 892)
George appeared to pursue a topic of family environment when he spoke of his treatment, as a child, by an uncle and an older brother. With reference to his uncle, he said –

*I went and stay with me uncle and he was a real hard bastard eh like you know like he used ta flog us a bit and flog us every day.* (George, line 380)

George said, referring to his older brother –

*I’m still thinkin I don’t want nothing to do with him you know because of all the harm he done me.* (George, line 886)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of family environment was inferred from the transcript.

School environment was a second topic that was constructed from the transcript. George made few references to his primary schooling. He claimed to have been unable to remember details of the period of his primary schooling because of the frequent relocation of his family and of the effects of his use of drugs later on in his life. This claim appeared to have been expressed in the following two statements that George made –

*When I was young used to move around a lot like um I was fairly all right in the school like arh like learning to read that was a bit of a problem arh.* (George, line 24)

*Cos my teacher she was umn I don’t know how I remember all that with all the drugs and alcohol.* (George, line 28)

All of George’s references to his secondary school teachers appeared to be negative. For example, in referring to incidents that he claimed to have occurred during his time at secondary school, he said –

*I was sittin there talking to someone and umn we weren’t that loud but ar the teacher got vicious. He just closed the sliding door and had me up by the throat against the wall yearh and he was goin off at me you know.* (George, line 101)

and –

*One of the science teachers he was a bit of an arsehole. Arh um a few of us had a bit of trouble with him.* (George, line 96)

In relation to a topic of school environment, George appeared to perceive that he had developed xenophobia as a result of his frequent changes of school, including his eventual attendance, through a special funding grant, at a large, prestigious boarding
school. This apparent perception seemed to be expressed in the following set of statements that George made in relation to his time at boarding school –

*I didn’t really like it cos we lived in arh like boarding type accommodation and arh like there was a few fellas that woulda arh come from my background but the rest were just rich snobs and that sorta thing and arh I felt I felt totally uncomfortable.* (George, line 71)

*Was very distrustful of them like you know been in a bit of trouble you know like you know scums just come up and you know and stand over you and shit like that at school.* (George, line 545)

*Arh you know like arhm when I like you know when I been in a room in a classroom full of people you know strangers. That’s why I didn’t [succeed at boarding school].* (George, line 771)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of school environment was inferred from the transcript.

Illegal drug use was a third topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. George appeared to introduce this topic into his narrative in the following two statements he made about his involvement in the use of illicit drugs at a primary school in association with one of his relatives –

*Anyway yearh he got some and we stared smoking it and arh like I was goin to school and like in me lunch breaks or in between goin to classes duck into the toilet and have a coupla cones and then pretty much just dropped out of school altogether you know.* (George, line 124)

*Then – yes - dropped out of school altogether ar basically ar now I think about it ar he was the one that got me onto it. [indistinct utterance] You know he influenced it.* (George, line 129)

George seemed to continue referring to a topic of drug use throughout his narrative, in relation to his apparent perception that his heavy use of alcohol and other drugs throughout adolescence, youth and early adulthood had resulted in his poor record of employment and in his poverty. In this context, George’s apparent references to a topic of drug use were exemplified by following set of statement that he made –

*I’ve been on the alcohol ever since I was 15, 15 arhm that can be related to arhm to family background you know.* (George, line 141)

*I’ve been on the drugs and alcohol when I was outside just wastin me money on the
dole arhm sellin drugs just to get more for free. (George, line 689)

Sometimes I didn’t shown my appreciative and that and sometimes I didn’t feel like it
either cos on the drugs and alcohol and so I stopped working so I didn’t cause those
problems you know. (George, line 175)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of drug use was inferred from the transcript.

Employment was a fourth topic that was constructed from the content of the
transcript. George seemed to relate a topic of employment to a topic of drug use through
his references to his apparent perception that his habitual heavy use of drugs during
childhood and youth, his criminal record, and his lack of trade credentials had resulted
in to his lack of opportunities to gain ongoing, personally rewarding employment. This
perception was inferred from the following set of statements that George made –

Gives you the shits half the time you know because when you’re on the dole and you
got to look for work and you’re looking through the jobs and just go and pick out a
few ones but when you go and see something you really like you can’t do it because
you need a trade qualification. (George, line 265)

Same with the alcohol cos I was on it for a few years and uh just havin jobs here
and there you know like ah looking for excuses basically like you know like ah I
didn’t have any work clothes or boots or you know, or me own transportation.
(George, line 176)

You’ve been in jail you’ve got a criminal record it’s gunna be that much harder to
get a job. (George, line 713)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of employment was inferred from the
transcript.

Jim
Topics of dissatisfaction, offending, work ethic, learning in jail, and capacity to change
were constructed from the content of the transcript of Jim’s narrative. Jim seemed to
allude to a topic of dissatisfaction in the following three statements he made about his
progressive lack of interest in school work –

I stopped tryin for a while you know. I still managed to progress on to grade 6 and
yearh arhm still doin reasonably well. After that I’d lost the interest in it ah
schooling. (Jim, line 21)

I played hookey from school arhm with mates and that we just couldn’t be bothered
so dad just ended up well you can go to work rather than cos you see he probably
wanted to solve the problem with me waggin school. (Jim, line 51)

I just sorta found you know that sorta like I thought if I could work it doesn’t matter about school. (Jim, line 139)

Jim seemed to perceive that his dissatisfaction with school had been associated with his desire to gain employment. Ostensibly, this apparent perception was expressed in the following two extracts from the transcript of Jim’s narrative –

I was getting close to 15 you know where you were able to leave school and sorta done me own thing in grade 9 and grade 10. I just couldn’t wait to get out of school, go to work you know (Jim, line 48)

As soon as I turned 15 basically um I started work and then um working at the [capital city] goods yard for a while with my dad. (Jim, line 53)

Jim’s apparent perception of his dissatisfaction with the employment he obtained after leaving school seemed to be evinced when he said –

I was 2 years 4 months into me apprenticeship and I just started losin interest in it. (Jim, line 64)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of dissatisfaction was inferred from the transcript.

Offending was a second topic that was constructed from the transcript. Jim seemed to refer to a topic of offending when he described his progressive involvement, with acquaintances, in criminal activities, in the following words –

A coupla times there were we got spaced and that and got a fair bit of money and buy hotted up cars and havin a good time. (Jim, line 236)

and –

We opened a car detailing business but what is was we’re ended up buyin hot cars and re-sellin them. (Jim, line 255)

Jim seemed to causally link a topic of offending to his use of drugs, as was inferred from the following set of statements that he made –

I got introduced to drugs in me early 20’s and that’s when events really started takin a turn. (Jim, line 241)

Started doin stick ups and that cos you know you got drug habit and then you start hanging out and the last thing you want to do is tryin to wield a poker at a place. Easier to just tool up and knock over a bank or something. (Jim, line 252)
I spent a lot of time in jail in the 1980s. I spent most of the 1980s locked up. (Jim, line 261)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of offending was inferred from the transcript.

A topic of work ethic was a third topic that was constructed from the transcript. Jim made numerous references to an apparent personal belief in a strong work ethic, as exemplified by the following statement that he made –

I’ve always had pretty good work ethic I try and make somethin of me days rather than sit around and do nothing. Ever since I’ve been here back in here arhm I’ve just worked in the one shop where I’m leadin hand. (Jim, line 85)

Jim seemed to perceive his future plans in terms of a topic of work ethic, when he said –

Basically I’ll just keep doin what I’m doin and um get out and go back to work. (Jim, line 101)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of work ethic was inferred from the transcript.

Learning in jail was a fourth topic that was constructed from the transcript. Jim appeared to refer to this topic in terms of his strong determination to engage in as much formal learning as he could access during his period of incarceration. In ostensible expression of this determination, Jim said –

You see education [the Education staff at the correctional centre] and um ah they will tell pretty well if you’re enthusiastic with them and I just put me name down and drive them mad you know. (Jim, line 96)

and –

While I’ve been in jail specially here in this prison it’s ah it’s good with courses like you know I’ve done every engineering course that’s been available here. (Jim, line 79)

and –

I’ve done every education course they’ve offered me yearh [laughed] and I’ve got me certificate 1 while I was here and I’m sort of part into certificate 2 and um yearh I’ve just been goin on with that. (Jim, line 83)

and –

I’ve learnt little bits and pieces while I’ve been here working like you know I’ve never worked on a lot of stainless steel on the outside and I’ve done it this year and little bits and pieces this year – learned different types of work. (Jim, line 91)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of learning in jail was inferred from the
A fifth topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript was capacity to change. Jim seemed to refer to this topic when he spoke of his apparent desire to change his lifestyle from one of involvement in crime to one of law-abiding citizenship. He seemed to have expressed this desire when he said –

*When I get out like I’ve got no intention like when I got out of jail on parole for the old armed robbery I was just arh quite content and stayin out of trouble and I worked up until the day I got arrested you know and umn nothing to do with crime or the people involved in it. I just- you know - just sort meself out.* (Jim, line 80)

Jim appeared to have perceived a link between his efforts to learn while incarcerated and his capacity for lifestyle change. This apparent perception seemed to have been expressed in the following set of statements that Jim made –

*In later years I’ve always been enthusiastic with me education. All the courses I’ve got here. I’ve got brilliant exit reports all of them.* (Jim, line 169)

*Now I just keep tryin always give it my best effort.* (Jim, line 180)

*I’m doin the courses and when I get out and that at least when I went for a job I had ah I had the paper work to say I’ve done these things and that as most companies you go into especially in the weldin boiler makin game they like to see what you can do and with all the certificates it helps.* (Jim, line 87)

*The thing is for me I wanna try. I wanna get better and um I don’t wanna keep comin to jail.* (Jim, line 176)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of capacity to change was inferred from the transcript.

**Lenny**

Topics of capacity to learn and of offending were constructed from the content of the transcript of Lenny’s narrative. Lenny seemed to introduce a topic of capacity to learn into his narrative when he spoke of his lack of motivation to learn at school, in the following words –

*I was one of those that really didn’t wanna learn.* (Lenny, line 87)

and –

*Basically it boiled down that I was never really interested in an education.* (Lenny, line 96)

Lenny expressed some apparent ambiguity in the following two statements that he made
in ostensible relation to a topic of capacity to learn, when speaking of his academic achievements at school –

*I was never really um good at anything at school education-wise.* (Lenny, line 69)

*I always got high marks for English and music because I liked music, and English just - just felt natural to me.* (Lenny, line 60)

He seemed to refer to a topic of capacity to learn in terms of his apparent perception that he was relatively immature during the years of his formal schooling. Ostensibly, this apparent perception was expressed when he said –

*If I would’ve started a year later I would’ve had a more understanding of what I needed to learn at school and been a little bit more mature about it.* (Lenny, line 193)

and –

*I was too young to understand then at the time.* (Lenny, line 68)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of capacity to learn was inferred from the transcript.

Offending was a second topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. Lenny appeared to refer to a topic of offending in the following statements he made about his involvement in criminal activities as a means of obtaining money during his youth and early adulthood –

*Just boiled down to boredom. Used to knock off cars and go and look for some place to break into, whether it be grog or money, either one was basically supporting our own desires I suppose.* (Lenny, line 359)

*Not for somethin that we needed. It was just, it became a habit and routine you know to go out and break into some place every weekend to have enough money to buy grog and get drunk all weekend.* (Lenny, line 360)

*I’ve always had a desire to have a lot of money and I’ve got a pretty lengthy criminal record which only consists of ah dishonesty and stealing and that stuff.* (Lenny, line 345)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of offending was inferred from the transcript.

**Lionel**

Topics of misfit and of vocational training were constructed from the content of the transcript of Lionel’s narrative. Lionel seemed to refer to a topic of misfit in terms of his apparent perception that, as a child, he had not fitted into the school environment. He
appeared to introduce the topic into his narrative when he said –

*There’s always goin to be someone in class that not goin to want to do somethin –
maybe because it’s hard or maybe because it’s too easy.* (Lionel, line 154)

Other apparent references that Lionel made to a topic of misfit were exemplified by the following statements that he made, ostensibly in relation to his recollections of his understanding of his teachers’ expectations of him and their perceived attitudes towards him –

*and they get you to write a sentence and then write this and write that so I just decided not to do it.* (Lionel, line 130)

*They just look at you like you know they don’t show that heart, like my maths teacher would show heart.* (Lionel, line 496)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of misfit was inferred from the transcript.

Vocational training was a second topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. This topic seemed to have been included in Lionel’s narrative in the form of an apparent belief by Lionel that expectations that were made of him as a trade apprentice were incompatible with his pre-apprenticeship levels of trade skills and interests in performing the work of the trade. This apparent belief seemed to have been expressed in the following statements that Lionel made with reference to his experiences as a trade apprentice –

*When I was working [indistinct] I coulda done an apprenticeship but the stuff that they could do I could already do.* (Lionel, line 339)

*It’s sort of straightforward you know. I don’t see how it can take 3 years to learn.* (Lionel, line 361)

*I just didn’t like wanna do that shit-kickin for 3 years just to know how to do that.* (Lionel, line 379)

*They just want me to do the shit work you know they shouldn’t do that.* (Lionel, line 396)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of vocational training was inferred from the transcript.

**Nigel**

Topics of family environment, unsupported childhood, personal abuse, ability at school, socially unacceptable behaviour, and rebellious self-direction were constructed from the content of the transcript of Nigel’s narrative. Nigel made numerous references to his
apparent perception of his family life during his childhood as having been characterised by physical violence. Ostensibly, this apparent perception was expressed when Nigel said, with reference to his experience of family life –

_Oh just violent family you know. Just violent, livin' with violence._ (Nigel, line 286)

Nigel seemed to speak about a topic of family environment in terms of an uncaring family, as evinced by the following comments that he made when talking about his childhood –

*My parents didn’t really care.* (Nigel, line 1175)

*No-one really cared at home so I got no attention whatsoever.* (Nigel, line 1383)

_Cos no-one looks up to you at home you know [indistinct] they flog you straight away so that’s the answer you get a hidin if you don’t learn and you never learn. I never learned._ (Nigel, line 1404)

*My parents couldn’t control me so they, they just let me do what I liked when I was thirteen._ (Nigel, line 2063)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of family environment was inferred from the transcript.

Unsupported childhood was a second topic that was constructed from the transcript. Ostensibly, Nigel referred to this topic in terms of his apparent perception that his family and his school had provided no support in relation to his basic formal education. The following statements that he made seemed to express this apparent perception –

_That group didn’t know whether you went to school or not._ (Nigel, line 325)

_Our parents just give up. The teachers give up on us, yeah they gave up, gave up on reading anyway [indistinct utterances]. They didn’t think I could._ (Nigel, line 963)

_They didn’t care whether you learn. When you’re young they think you’re going to learn everything when you get to school you know but you need a little bit of help before you get there. They don’t do that._ (Nigel, line 1210)

*If I’d learned the little stuff before I went to school – like my parents didn’t really care._ (Nigel, line 1173)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of unsupported childhood was inferred from the transcript.

Personal abuse was the third topic that was constructed from the content of the
transcript. Nigel’s references to instances of personal physical abuse by members of his family seemed to constitute much of the content of this topic in his narrative, as exemplified by the following statements that he made –

I told lies every day. My father couldn’t stand lies. He flogged me every day. (Nigel, line 1413)

My brother burned me and all my leg down. He burnt me you know. I can’t remember my fuckin [indistinct utterance]. I can’t remember too much after that. He’s schizophrenic. Call it an accident [indistinct utterance]. He’s schizophrenic. Didn’t know what he was doing. (Nigel, line 805)

In addition to content about physical abuse by family members, Nigel’s apparent references to a topic of personal abuse seemed to extend to his treatment by some of his school teachers and by some police. With reference to some of his teachers, Nigel said –

Then they’d send me to the office to get the cane and that just about every day. (Nigel, line 1303)

With reference to police behaviour, when speaking of his interactions, and those of his peer group, with some police during his childhood, Nigel said –

They were arseholes. They couldn’t stand us. They were real fuck. Fuck, we was only kids you know - tried to scare us. (Nigel, line 1818)

and –

Throw you around, push you around. (Nigel, line 1843)

Nigel apparently perceived that he had experienced psychological and emotional abuse by some adults during his childhood. His expression of this apparent perception was exemplified when he said, with reference to the behaviour of a particular teacher –

He was makin’ fun of me so I got up and threw a chair at him. I got expelled from that school. (Nigel, line 387)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of personal abuse was inferred from the transcript.

Ability at school was a fourth topic constructed from the transcript. Nigel seemed to introduce this topic into his narrative in terms of his apparent perception that he had lacked ability to achieve at school work. His expression of this apparent perception was exemplified by the following set of statements that he made when speaking of his recollections of his experiences at school –

I only went to school to grade seven. Didn’t really want to learn. (Nigel, line 26)
I couldn’t do maths. I still can’t do maths. (Nigel, line 70)

Wasn’t good at studying. (Nigel, line 327)

In relation to a topic of ability of school, Nigel seemed to express an opinion that he could have achieved well in at least some aspects of formal learning if the curriculum and the methods of teaching had been better matched to his personal characteristics. He seemed to have expressed this opinion in the following set of statements that he made in relation to his time at school –

If I couldn’t learn it I’d say what am I sittin here for you know then I just wouldn’t care. (Nigel, line 997)

I didn’t really want to learn unless I loved it. (Nigel, line 47)

I had to comprehend to it. (Nigel, line 54)

I liked spellin and I was pretty good at it. (Nigel, line 1105)

I could’ve been [indistinct utterance] a pretty cluey person. (Nigel, line 666)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of ability at school was inferred from the transcript.

A fifth topic constructed from the content of the transcript was socially unacceptable behaviour. Nigel seemed to introduce this topic when he spoke of his engagement in defiantly unacceptable behaviour patterns at school, in the following words –

At school you know I just played up. I just keep bein bad. They just got sick of it – stealin other people’s lunches, flushin their hats down toilets, ah standin over them, anything really, anything that I could get in trouble for I’d probably go and do it. (Nigel, line 1527)

Nigel seemed to continue making references to a topic of socially unacceptable behaviour when he spoke of his progressive involvement in criminal activities during adolescence and youth, which had resulted in frequent placement in corrective detention. These references were exemplified in the following statements that Nigel made –

What did I do when I left school? Breakin in places [indistinct utterances]. I got into trouble. (Nigel, line 2059)

Ah well the police picked me up doin some robbery and violences, yearh they picked me up. I was on the run. (Nigel, line 2127)
Got in trouble everywhere [Nigel laughed]. I was always in trouble. Still get in trouble. (Nigel, line 1640)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of socially unacceptable behaviour was inferred from the transcript.

Rebellious self-direction was a sixth topic constructed from the content of the transcript. Nigel seemed to introduce this topic into his narrative when he said, with reference to his frequent truancy from school –

I wanted to go out shoot shanghais you know ’cos it was a country town. I was always wantin to go swimming, shoot shanghais. Just wanted a bit of fun stuff. (Nigel, line 1600)

His frequent references to his progressive involvement in crime as a means of obtaining income, starting with his juvenile misbehaviour at school and ending with his habitual engagement in theft during youth and adulthood, appeared to relate to a topic of rebellious self-direction, as ostensibly evinced when he said –

Just can’t help myself. Just bein broke. Just go and just take it, take money. (Nigel, line 2241)

and –

Can’t just sit there with nothin’ you know. Got to get up and get it. That’s the only way I know. (Nigel, line 2398)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of rebellious self-direction was inferred from the transcript.

Noel

Topics of school environment, employment and offending were constructed from the content of the transcript of Noel’s narrative. Noel seemed to have introduced a topic of school environment into his narrative when he spoke of bullying he had experienced at school, in the following words –

I also became part of the bullying sort of thing so I couldn’t wait to get out of school. Mainly just name calling and whatnot because I was always on me own so they’d pick out names and then everybody else jumps on the bandwagon sort of thing so I wagged school just to get away from it rather than have to put up with it at school. (Noel, line 84)

Noel appeared to continue to refer to a topic of school environment when he spoke of his truancy, and ostensibly related his truancy to the bullying he had experienced and to
his lack of interest in school work. These apparent references were exemplified by the following statements that Noel made –

*Most of the time I spent at the Olympic pool or the bowling alley just to be away from school.* (Noel, line 117)

*There were too many that were below standard so just shove them aside give them some bodgie work to do. So I lost all interest in school.* (Noel, line 142)

*I had no interest, no interest in school* (Noel, line 110)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of school environment was inferred from the transcript.

Employment was a second topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. Noel seemed to make references to this topic when he spoke of his apparent perception that his parents’ insistence that he remain at school had severely diminished his employment opportunities during his youth. This apparent perception seemed to have been expressed when Noel said –

*My mum and dad forced me to stay in school until year 10 to get a school certificate. It wasn’t worth the paper it was written on in the end and by that time the job market had changed around and I just couldn’t get a job.* (Noel, line 112)

Noel appeared to continue to refer to a topic of employment when he mentioned his unsuccessful attempt to join the army, in the following words –

*I couldn’t get a job because I wasn’t schooled enough and um the only thing I could’ve got into was the army but by then of course I had a criminal record so I couldn’t get into the army.* (Noel, line 133)

He spoke of his apparent eventual disillusionment regarding the prospects of obtaining satisfying, ongoing employment, in the following statements that he made –

*I spent the better part of my life then doing odd jobs here and there sort of thing.* (Noel, line 11)

*In the end you get so disillusioned you say no, nuh. I’d make up some excuse to stop looking for jobs because if you go for an apprenticeship you know you’re not going to get anywhere.* (Noel, line 131)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of employment was inferred from the transcript.

A third topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript was offending. Noel seemed to introduce a topic of offending when he mentioned how he
obtained money in order to go to a public swimming pool instead of attending school, in
the following words –

You might do a few burgs [burglaries] or whatnot. I was into that by then, just to get
a bit of cash, go to the pool all day. (Noel, line 117)

His ostensible references to a topic of offending seemed to extend to his explanation of
how he avoided serving corrective detention sentences during the period of his youth,
despite his repeated convictions for property offences. This explanation appeared to
have been expressed in the following statement that Noel made –

I was lucky to get help from the old man’s solicitors’ office. I stayed on probation
and after 3 days wagging I’d get nicked again and by the time they’d put it through
court. I’d get another probation and another probation and another probation, so by
the time I was 18 I’d never been in jail. (Noel, line 125)

Noel seemed to link a topic of offending to topics of school environment and of
employment when he said –

I’ve spent aw the last 23 years in and out of jail. I put it down basically to a lack of
schooling. I couldn’t get jobs. (Noel, line 126)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of offending was inferred from the transcript..

Patrick
Topics of disruptions, school environment, capacity to achieve, learning in jail, and
future plans were constructed from the content of the transcript of Patrick’s narrative.
Patrick appeared to introduce a topic of disruptions in relation to his schooling into his
narrative, when he said –

Primary school was pretty stuffed cos I was always movin around. In the 6 years of
primary school I done 14 different schools. (Patrick, line 13)

He seemed to expand the topic to include his apparent perception that his lack of
achievement at school and his lack of interest in school work had resulted from
disruptions to his schooling. This apparent perception seemed to have been evinced by
the following statements that Patrick made about his schooling –

It was difficult cos I’d be doin one thing at one school and startin to get really good
at that and I’d change schools. (Patrick, line 56)

I changed schools again from [suburb 2 school] to [suburb 3] tech cos [suburb 2
school] closed down arhm so I had to transfer school again arhm an that’s sorta
when I went downhill with school. (Patrick, line 138)
I found it not interesting and that coulda been I was changing schools all the time and I could never get in. I mean I could get into a routine, next thing I’m changing schools. (Patrick, line 351)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of disruptions was inferred from the transcript.

School environment was a second topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. The topic appeared to have been introduced into the narrative in relation to Patrick’s ostensible experience of being bullied at school because of his non-Caucasian physical appearance. With reference to this apparent experience, he said –

I was typically one of the kids that got picked on at school. (Patrick, line 34)

and –

I was the ooh ethnic kid that arhm had the afro hair style and got called the golliwog. (Patrick, line 42)

Patrick appeared to expand on the topic of school environment in his narrative to include references to his physically violent responses to being bullied at school, and to the consequences he experienced as a result of his responses. This apparent expansion of the topic seemed evident in the following two statements that Patrick made about how he had responded to being bullied at school –

Next thing you know room’s erupted and I put a coupla good hits on him. Sent to the Principal’s office and I was expelled. (Patrick, line 118)

I’d get a wallopin, go for two days and then I’d go back into it. (Patrick, line 341)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of school environment was inferred from the transcript.

Capacity to achieve was a third topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. This topic seemed to have been introduced into Patrick’s narrative when he spoke, with apparent pride, of his perceived progress with his formal study of year 11 English language, in the following words –

At the moment arhm I’m averaging a B plus. All me marks bar one have been B pluses and I’ve had an A minus. (Patrick, line 206)

Patrick appeared to extend a topic of capacity to achieve, in his narrative, to references to his ostensible perception of his ability to succeed. This apparent perception was assumed to have been expressed in the following set of statements that Patrick made –

There was two subjects I always excelled in – there was me maths and me English. (Patrick, line 61)
I’m good at architecture with me drawing and scaling down. (Patrick, line 276)

I’m actually a published author now. (Patrick, line 242)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of capacity to achieve was inferred from the transcript.

A topic of learning in jail was a fourth topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. This topic seemed to be related, in Patrick’s narrative, to a topic of capacity to achieve and to Patrick’s apparent perception that his periods of incarceration provided him with opportunities to achieve learning outcomes which he valued. The following two statements that he made seemed to have expressed this perception and an apparent relationship between the two topics, within the narrative –

Did a lot of creative writing course here. Just ah honin, been writin poetry since I come to prison the first time. (Patrick, line 233)

I actually finished me apprenticeship at [correctional centre 1] arhm which is good. (Patrick, line 294)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of learning in jail was inferred from the transcript.

A topic of future plans was a fifth topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. Patrick made several ostensible references to his plans to achieve legitimate employment after his release from custody, as evinced in the following two statements which he made –

I’m hopin to finish my year 11 and 12 and finally get that certificate and hopefully move on to [university] and get a degree or diploma. (Patrick, line 247)

I’ve gotta look at arhm future aspects for employment with having a criminal record and not being in a proper workforce for aw a minimum of 12 years. arhm It’s gunna be hard to get a job even with the right diploma. (Patrick, line 284)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of future plans was inferred from the transcript.

Sean

Topics of school environment, relevance of school work, drug use, and school achievement were constructed from the content of the transcript of Sean’s narrative. Sean seemed to introduce a topic of school environment into his narrative from the perspective of his apparent perception that his behaviour at school had been misunderstood by his teachers. This perception seemed to have been expressed when he said, with reference to ostensible recollections of his interactions with his teachers –
I liked to have a laugh and that and quite often I wasn’t tryin to disrupt the class. (Sean, line 56)

and –

The ones without a sense of humour – their reaction would be this isn’t a joke, you’re treating like a joke. (Sean, line 76)

and –

Seems to me that creativity was never really encouraged, so if you stepped outside the little box you got trodden on quickly. (Sean, line 494)

Sean seemed to associate his apparent general perceptions of his teachers with a topic of school environment. His apparent perceptions that his teachers had been punitive in their approach to his behaviour at school, that he had developed a passive defiance of his teachers, and that his teachers’ behaviours were irrational, seemed to have been expressed in the following two statements he made about his teachers –

They were pretty heavy with the cane when I was goin to school, but that didn’t worry me. It was just like you tried to get the cane every day. (Sean, line 112)

They were a bunch of nuts really. (Sean, line 140)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of school environment was inferred from the transcript.

A topic of relevance of schoolwork was a second topic that was constructed from the transcript. Ostensibly, Sean introduced this topic into his narrative to explain his lack of interest in school work in the senior grades of school. Sean’s apparent introduction of the topic into his narrative, and his ostensible explanatory allusion to it, seemed to have been evident from the following set of statements that he made in relation to his experiences in the senior years of secondary school –

Didn’t like commerce or economics much. I was sort of pushed into that by my mother. (Sean, line 307)

Only time I ever got interested really was ancient history cos it’s just like a big story book. (Sean, line 387)

At that stage I was just in full-on party mode – year 11 and 12. (Sean, line 332)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of relevance of schoolwork was inferred from the transcript.

Drug use was a third topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. This topic seemed to be related, in Sean’s narrative, to topics of school
environment and of relevance of schoolwork, in that it appeared to have been introduced to describe Sean’s response to his apparent negative perceptions of the senior years of his formal schooling. The apparent introduction of a topic of drug use into Sean’s narrative, and its inferred relationship to negative perceptions of school and schoolwork, seemed to be evinced in the following set of statements that Sean made about his behaviour, and that of some of his peers, during his final year at school –

Smoke a lot of dope school. Was just a big social thing to me. (Sean, line 336)

Yearh well by the time I was in year 12 there would be a bit of a panic if we didn’t have any pot [Sean laughed]. (Sean, line 359)

Just laughin. You get past lunch time and that and you’re sittin there lookin across the room at your mate and you’re both just laughin your head off, gigglin and muckin round. (Sean, line 353)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of drug use was inferred from the transcript.

School achievement was a fourth topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript of Sean’s narrative. The topic appeared to have been introduced into Sean’s narrative to complement topics of relevance of schoolwork, school environment, and drug use, by adding an extra explanatory element to Sean’s account of his apparent generally negative perceptions of his lived experience of schooling, and of his responses at school to those apparent perceptions. Ostensibly, Sean introduced a topic of school achievement to point out that he had made little effort to meet his teachers’ expectations that he apply himself to his studies at school. The introduction of this topic, and its apparent explanatory contribution to Sean’s general account of his ostensibly negative perceptions of his experience of schooling, seemed evident in the following set of statements that he made about his efforts to achieve that which was expected of him at school –

I did well at school until it came up to a point where it required some sort of effort. (Sean, line 157)

I didn’t do well in year 12. (Sean, line 324)

I just didn’t do any work. (Sean, line 328)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic of school achievement was inferred from the transcript.

**Shane**

Topics of peer influence, readiness to learn, and learning in jail were constructed from
the content of the transcript of Shane’s narrative. A topic of peer influence was inferred from Shane’s apparent references to his change of attitude towards schooling as a result of peer influence, as exemplified in the following set of statements that he made –

*Through primary school I done everything well. I was never in any trouble.* (Shane, line 18)

*About grade 10 I started to get in with the ratbags at school – you know started waggin school.* (Shane, line 23)

*I think that’s where I went wrong you know truancy or whatever they call it at school – waggin it.* (Shane, line 249)

A negative general evaluation of a topic of peer influence was inferred from the transcript.

A second topic constructed from the content of the transcript was readiness to learn. This topic seemed to emerge, in Shane’s narrative, in statements which he made in relation to his apparent perception that, as a child, he had lacked interest in, and engagement with, school work. These statements were exemplified when Shane said, ostensibly in recollections of his lived experience of schooling –

*I just think I wasn’t ready to learn. I wanted to be with me friends.* (Shane, line 37)

and –

*I think I wasn’t interested in learning at that age.* (Shane, line 174)

and –

*I had a motor bike. That wasn’t a good a good thing you know. I’d get up in the morning and I’d just want to go and ride it all day instead of goin to school.* (Shane, line 198)

and –

*I didn’t get very good grades when I left school. I failed maths and English.* (Shane, line 51)

A neutral general evaluation of a topic readiness to learn was inferred from the transcript.

Learning in jail was a third topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. This topic seemed to have been introduced into Shane’s narrative when he spoke of his apparent perception that he should avail himself of the education and training opportunities available to him during his period of incarceration could be used to overcome a loss of benefits which had resulted from opportunities foregone during
the school years. This apparent perception seemed to have been evinced when Shane spoke, with ostensible enthusiasm, about his opportunities for acquiring educational and vocational training credentials while in jail, in the following words –

*Whilst I’ve been in jail I’ve kept studying. I sorta felt I could do it on me own so I completed my junior maths and got very high achievement for it. Done that all on me own.* (Shane, line 68)

and –

*I done like other courses in here like computer courses and ah small business courses engineering courses and um I always I always get good marks because I’m a quick learner.* (Shane, line 76)

and –

*It’s pretty good here. They help us here. They give us, they try to help us get some qualifications before we get out.* (Shane, line 118)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of learning in jail was inferred from the transcript.

**Stephen**

Topics of family environment, school environment, and capacity to achieve were constructed from the content of the transcript of Stephen’s narrative. Stephen made numerous references to his apparent perception that he had experienced a high level of support from his family throughout his childhood and youth. These references were exemplified when Stephen said, in ostensible recollection of his family members during his childhood –

*They were very supportive and arhm ah my mother too and her sister and uncle were very good to me. They supported me in everything I did.* (Stephen, line 147)

Stephen seemed to expand the content of a topic of family environment to his apparent perception that his progress in secondary school had been positively influenced by his older siblings, when he said, with reference to the influence of his brothers on his schooling –

*Good, because my brothers were there and ah a lot of mates who’d sort of gone across there as well so I didn’t mind that ah so sort of got back into getting my school levels up again and got right into sport again.* (Stephen, line 69)

Stephen’s reference to the support given to the family by his father, who had lived apart from Stephen’s mother during most of his childhood and youth, appeared to add content
to a topic of family environment. Stephen said, when referring to his father’s role in the family –

*Never checked up on school work or anything like that but anything major in the family or anything that happened he’s either come up or there’d be a phone call.*

(Stephen, line 173)

Stephen’s perception that he had received support from his wider family seemed to have been expressed when he said –

*My uncle and auntie had a lot of influence on me and ah they were very supportive of me. My uncle was like a father to me.* (Stephen, line 176)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of family environment was inferred from the transcript.

As second topic that was constructed from the transcript was school environment. The following extracts from the transcript exemplify statements made by Stephen, ostensibly in recollection of his secondary schools’ environments –

*It was good because of a lot of sport and they taught the subjects you wanted to do.*

(Stephen, line 63)

*[Religious organisation school 3] was very good. There were a lot of teachers there and yeah they were very supportive and arhm ah my mother too and her sister and uncle were very good to me.* (Stephen, line 147)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of school environment was inferred from the transcript.

Capacity to achieve was the third topic that was constructed from the content of the transcript. Stephen’s narrative contained many statements expressing his apparent perception that he had considerable capacity to achieve. A topic of capacity to achieve seemed to have been introduced into the narrative in relation to Stephen’ apparent recollections of his achievements during his childhood, some of which were expressed in the following statements that he made –

*I could ah basically do anything with electronics. I used to pull radios apart put them back together or mum wanted another power point in the house. I’d do it no worries*

(Stephen, line 64)

*I built a couple of PA systems for [religious organisation 1 school] and for [hospital 1] and donated em.* (Stephen, line 80)

*The principal of [religious organisation 1 school ] he actually nominated me for*
Stephen seemed to have expanded on a topic of capacity to achieve when he spoke of his attainments in formal studies and in his career. The following set of statements that he made exemplify his references to his ostensible recollections of his attainments –

*While doing an apprenticeship you gotta do TAFE college. Yes, well came away with distinctions, honours with all the subjects there.* (Stephen, line 10)

*I completed year 11 as I said and I’ve done post and run a business for 14 years and I’ve done all the practical aspects of civil engineer.* (Stephen, line 41)

*So you know first year I was on the job I was foreman of the job. By the time I ended first year apprenticed second year I was in the office doin estimating. Third year I was project manager for em and fourth year they transferred me to [Australian Territory] and ah I was two I C of [indistinct utterance].* (Stephen, line 7)

*I’ve built houses for myself. I’ve sat down and designed and drafted them all up to scale and then just taken them to a draftsman put them on CAD and put them into Council, get them signed up.* (Stephen, line 49)

A positive general evaluation of a topic of capacity to achieve was inferred from the transcript.

**Conclusion**

This concluding section of the chapter presents a summary of specific topics constructed from the transcripts. A total of 26 specific topics were constructed from the 15 transcripts of the participants’ narratives. Table Four displays a list of the topics in order of the number of the transcripts from which each topic was constructed, the pseudonyms of the participants whose narratives were interpretively associated with each topic, the inferred general evaluative connotation of the topic within the participant’s narrative, and the frequency of each of the inferred general evaluative connotation for each topic. Table Four is located in this chapter after this concluding section.

As shown in Table Four, school environment was the topic that was most frequently constructed from the transcripts. This topic was constructed from eight transcripts, constituting approximately 53 per cent of the total number of 15 transcripts. A negative general evaluative connotation was inferred for a topic of school environment in five of the transcripts from which the topic was constructed, constituting approximately 63 per cent of these transcripts and 33 per cent of the total number of
transcripts. Of the remaining topics, drug use, family environment, learning in jail, and offending were the only topics that were constructed from more than 25 per cent of the total number of transcripts. None of these topics was constructed from more than 33 per cent of the total number of transcripts. The distributions of general evaluative connotations inferred for these topics varied considerably between topics. An inferred general evaluative connotation for a topic of family environment was approximately evenly distributed between positive and negative values. A predominantly neutral general value connotation was inferred for topics of drug use and of offending, and a predominantly positive general evaluative connotation was inferred for a topic of learning in jail.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific topic</th>
<th>Total number of transcripts from which the specific topic was constructed</th>
<th>Participants’ (inferred general evaluative connotation)*</th>
<th>Total number of inferred positive general evaluative connotations</th>
<th>Total number of inferred neutral general evaluative connotations</th>
<th>Total number of inferred negative general evaluative connotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School environment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Aaron (+,-) Bill (+) David (-) George (-) Noel (-) Patrick (-) Sean (-) Stephen (+)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug use</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Aaron (0) Barry (0) Brian (0) George (-) Sean (+)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family environment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bill (+) David (-) George (-) Nigel (-) Stephen (+)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning in jail</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>David (-) Jim (+) Patrick (+) Shane (+)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offending</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Barry (-) Jim (0) Lenny (0) Noel (0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity to achieve</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Aaron (+) Patrick (+) Stephen (+)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>David (-) George (-) Noel (-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruptions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brian (0) Patrick (-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness to learn</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bill (0) Shane (0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability at school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nigel (0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity to change</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jim (+)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity to learn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lenny (0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jim (0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future plans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Patrick (0)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brian (+)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific topic</th>
<th>Total number of transcripts from which the specific topic was constructed</th>
<th>Participants’ (inferred general evaluative connotation)*</th>
<th>Total number of inferred positive general evaluative connotations</th>
<th>Total number of inferred neutral general evaluative connotations</th>
<th>Total number of inferred negative general evaluative connotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning difficulty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>David (-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misfit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lionel (0)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer influence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shane (-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal abuse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nigel (-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebellious self-direction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nigel (0)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sean (-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School achievement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sean (0)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially unacceptable behaviour</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nigel (0)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupported childhood</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nigel (-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lionel (-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work ethic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jim (+)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The following meanings were assigned to the symbols in parentheses in the ‘Participants’ column:
- + positive
- 0 neutral
- - negative
Chapter Eight

Personal meanings constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives

Introduction

This chapter presents the researcher’s constructions of personal meanings of individual participant’s lived experience relating to the period(s) of the participant’s formal education and training, and of inferred relationships between particular personal meanings and particular specific topics. The main body of the chapter represents the second of two aspects of the second stage of the researcher’s development of an understanding of the lived experience of individual participants in relation to their formal education and vocational training, as explained in Chapter One. Another aspect of the second stage was presented in Chapter Seven. Representation of the first stage was presented in Chapter Six. The grounding of the researcher’s constructions of personal meanings, in the content of the transcripts, is demonstrated in this chapter. A summary of personal meanings interpretively associated with individual participant’s narratives is provided in Table Five, which is located after the concluding section of the chapter.

Personal meanings are assumed to be broad concepts constructed by the researcher, and to indirectly represent broad concepts constructed by individual participants from their lived experiences. Personal meanings constitute one of the four general sub-categories of concepts that were constructed, in the study, from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives. The other three sub-categories are inferred general characteristics of participants, specific topics, and social meanings. As explicated in Chapter Four, specific topics, personal meanings, and social meanings were constructed through the use of interpretive narrative analysis procedures described by Lieblich et al. (1998). Inferred general characteristics of participants are presented in Chapter Six. Specific topics are presented in Chapter Seven. Social meanings are presented in Chapter Nine.

The construction of personal meanings from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives is part of the generation of the constructed data used in the study. As explained in Chapter One, constructed data, interpretively derived from the transcripts of the narratives of the participants, is used to achieve the two main purposes of the
study. The grounding of personal meanings in the content of the transcripts of the participants’ narratives is demonstrated in this chapter.

As explicated in Chapter Four, personal meanings are interpreted in the study as constructions made by the researcher through the processes of holistic-content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp.62-87) of written transcripts of audio-recordings of the participants’ spoken self-narratives. The procedures by which the processes of holistic-content analysis were applied in the study are described in Chapter Four. The term ‘personal meanings’ is assumed here to have the same general meaning as the term ‘global impressions’ as used by Lieblich et al. (1998). An explanation as to why the researcher chose to use the term ‘personal meanings’ in the report of the study, instead of the term ‘global impressions’, is provided in Chapter Four. In brief, the researcher’s choice of the term ‘personal meanings’ stemmed from a set of central assumptions relating to the holistic-content analysis of spoken self-narrative. These assumptions are that the content of a self-narrative is meaningful as a whole, and that the narrative is told for the narrator’s purpose of making a point, that is, of communicating an overall message which is the narrator’s personal construction of the overall meaning of the events and circumstances to which reference is made in the narrative (Chase, 1995, p.5; Lieblich et al, 1998, p.8; Polkinghorne, 1988, p.183).

According to Lieblich et al. (1998), holistic-content analysis involves iterative processes by which global impressions and special foci of content (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.62) are constructed from the transcript of a spoken self-narrative. From the general description and the examples of holistic-content analysis provided by Leiblich et al. (1998, pp.62-63), the researcher concluded that a global impression was conceptualised by Lieblich et al. (1998) as a major explanatory theme which was inferred from the narrative by the narrative analyst. As explicated in Chapter Four, personal meanings are interpreted in the study as major conceptual themes of the subject-matter content of a written transcript of a spoken self-narrative. These themes are assumed by the researcher to represent, at some level of representation, constructions of the narrator which are based on the narrator’s lived experience. A major conceptual theme is interpreted here as a broad concept that is thematic in a text. Personal meanings are interpreted here as being thematic in a spoken self-narrative in that they are inferred by the researcher to have an overall meaning-giving function, such as an explanatory function, in the narrative. In the study, particular personal meanings are assumed to be conceptually related to particular special foci of content, in accordance with the conclusion by Lieblich et al. (1998) that the content of a global impression is
conceptually related to the content of particular special foci of content. The researcher’s construction of special foci of content from each transcript is explicated in Chapter Seven. For simplicity of expression, the term ‘specific topic’ is used in Chapter Seven and in this chapter instead of the relatively unfamiliar term ‘special focus of content’.

Some conceptual components of each specific topic constructed from a particular transcript are assumed to have been included in particular personal meanings constructed from the transcript, through the iterative processes used in the holistic-content analysis of the content of the transcript, as described by Lieblich et al. (1998, pp.62-63). A conceptual component is assumed here to mean a component that was interpreted as having conceptual content. An example of inferred common conceptual content of a specific topic and a personal meaning is a concept of denial of some benefit interpretively associated with a specific topic of family environment and with a personal meaning of disadvantage. A summary of the personal meanings, specific topics interpretively associated with particular personal meanings, and of the pseudonyms of the participants whose narratives were represented by the transcripts from which particular personal meanings and specific topics were constructed, is provided in Table Five (located after the concluding section of this chapter).

The iterative processes used in the holistic-content analysis of the transcripts in the study involved initial constructions of candidate personal meanings and candidate specific topics. The initial constructions were followed by iterative reinterpretations of candidate specific topics with particular regard to inferred personal meanings of the content of the transcript as a whole text, and reinterpretations of candidate personal meanings with particular regard to the inferred content and general evaluative connotations, and the actual location in the text, of candidate specific topics. As the personal meanings presented here are assumed here to be general concepts, for simplicity of expression the term ‘concept’ is used in the main body of this chapter instead of the term ‘personal meaning’.

**Personal meanings constructed from individual transcripts**

**Aaron**

A concept of lost opportunity was constructed from the content of the transcript of the narrative of Aaron. This concept was interpreted, generally, as a conceptualisation of foregone opportunities to have benefited from resources that were available on past occasions. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of school environment, drug use and capacity to achieve, presented in
Chapter Seven. Aaron appeared to have expressed a perception that he had lost an opportunity to achieve benefits in adult life as a result of his failure to achieve at school, when he said –

*I kinda let them [parents] down I suppose but you know I’ve let myself down more than anything.* (Aaron, line 281)

Apparently, Aaron perceived that his failure to achieve at school, despite having a capacity to achieve, was attributable to his negative experience of the school environment, and his involvement in drug use. This apparent perception was evident in the following set of statements that he made when referring to his experience of school -

*I was good at everything except for things I wasn’t interested in.* (Aaron, line 272)

*I wasn’t comfortable in high school.* (Aaron, line 243)

*People started doing drugs and I thought if I was the biggest drug dealer at school I’d be the most liked you know but what it came to was that I was the most hated.*

(Aaron, line 338)

*At school if I had’ve pulled my head in I would have been alright.* (Aaron, line 345)

Inferred relationships between concepts referred to here are that Aaron apparently had associated a concept of opportunities foregone with his failure to have achieved meritoriously at school, and that he had associated this failure with his negative perception of his school environment, and with his involvement with illicit drugs at school.

**Barry**

A concept of immaturity was constructed from the content of the transcript of Barry’s narrative. This concept was interpreted, generally, as a conceptualisation of a lack of appropriate personal development at a particular time or phase in life. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of drug use and offending, presented in Chapter Seven. Barry expressed an apparent personal belief that his early addiction to drugs, and subsequent ongoing involvement in crime had resulted from his inappropriately immature behaviour at secondary school. This apparent belief was evinced by the following statements that Barry made in relation to his involvement with illegal drugs and offending –

*[I] got into offending at about 13 just started you know sellin drugs and stuff takin drugs playin up.* (Barry, line 17)

*Ended up getting into serious crime. Ended up stabbing a bloke.* (Barry, line 34)
It’s probably only since I turned 24 that I actually started to grow up and it’s been 3 years now [without using drugs]. (Barry, line 151)

Inferred relationships between concepts referred to here are that Barry apparently had associated a concept of immaturity with his involvement, at a young age, in drug use and in offending associated with his drug use.

Bill
A concept of supportive environment was constructed from the content of the transcript of Bill’s narrative. This concept was interpreted, generally, as a conceptualisation of a nurturing and generally supportive personal environment. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of family environment, school environment, and readiness to learn, presented in Chapter Seven. The following statements that Bill made seemed to evince his perceptions of a supportive environment during childhood and of a lack of readiness to accept responsibility for learning at school –

I guess that I was pretty fortunate. I sought of came from a middle class background. (Bill, line 7)

My home life was pretty good. (Bill, line 223)

We always had Friday night dinners together and Dad always had treats and you know it was a pretty good family atmosphere. (Bill, line 229)

I remember at primary school and my whole life was pretty good. (Bill, line 520)

I look back on it now. I was more into the social side of it. I was more into the social side of school. (Bill, line 375)

Inferred relationships between concepts referred to here are that Bill apparently had associated a concept of supportive family and school environments during the period of his basic formal education with a failure on his part to fully develop a sense of personal responsibility, particularly with regard to making adequate efforts to learn from the formal school curriculum.

Brian
A concept of social status was constructed from the content of the transcript of Brian’s narrative. This concept was interpreted, generally, as a conceptualisation of an imperative need to be regarded in high esteem by a peer group. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of disruptions,
intimacy, and drug use, presented in Chapter Seven. Brian made a set of statements which seemed to express a belief that there had been causal relationships between his engagement in socially unacceptable behaviour at school, including the use of illegal drugs, and his perceived need to gain social status amongst peers, the disruptions to schooling that he had experienced, and his perceived need for intimacy in relationships with people with whom he associated. Brian made apparent references to his perceptions of disruptions to his schooling and of a childhood experience of a need to establish an intimate relationship with his teachers, when he said –

My schools before I came to Australia I can hardly remember. (Brian, line 6)

and –

Just how [indistinct utterance] they almost treated you umn not like their own children but they really felt something for you. (Brian, line 151)

Brian’s apparent perceptions of his need to establish intimacy in his relationships with people at school and of his need to achieve acceptance by a school peer group, and of a causal relationship between these perceived needs and his engagement in socially unacceptable behaviour at school, seemed to have been expressed in the following set of statements that he made –

Arhm and I think it was because arhm at that stage a lot of my brothers’ friends were smoking pot. I felt it was cool. They got into it. I’ve got two older brothers. I think it was because the older ones were doing it I thought it was cool. (Brian, line 528)

I was a bit of a fool when I was at high school. (Brian, line 204)

I suppose my biggest problem was that I was always trying to impress someone and it wasn’t always the right people. (Brian, line 776)

Inferred relationships between concepts referred to here are that Brian apparently had associated a concept of social status with his experience of disruptions of schooling, with his perceived personal need for achieving intimacy in relationships with people, and with his initial involvement in the use of illegal drugs.

**David**

A concept of disadvantage was constructed from the content of David’s narrative. This concept was interpreted, generally, as a conceptualisation of deprivation of favourable personal circumstances or personal benefits. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of family environment and learning difficulty, presented in Chapter Seven. David seemed to have perceived that he had experienced a
disadvantaged childhood primarily in terms of neglect. He spoke of his apparent perception of a lack of support from his family during his childhood, in the following words –

*My mother doesn’t know how to be a mother.* (David, line 310)

and –

*In the end everybody just gave up including me family.* (David, line 258)

and –

*The added pressure of not having books cos I came from a very poor family. There was 5 children.* (David, line 70)

David mentioned that he had experienced a learning difficulty, the effects of which he apparently perceived to have been exacerbated by a lack of support from his parents and teachers. In relation to his apparent perception of having experienced a learning difficulty during his schooling, David said –

*I always had a problem. I could be taught something and grasp it, I’d walk away and come back and I couldn’t remember how to do it.* (David, line 18)

A concept of discontent was a second concept that was constructed from the content of the transcript of David’s narrative. This concept was interpreted, generally, as a conceptualisation of personal discontent with the personal environment(s). It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of school environment, employment and learning in jail, presented in Chapter Seven. David appeared to have perceived that he had a dislike of the general environments that he had experienced at each of the various schools which he had attended, and that he had been discontented with his experiences of employment and of attempting to participate in formal education during his incarceration. These apparent perceptions were exemplified by the following statements that David made, with references to his experiences of schooling, of employment, and of his attempts to undertake formal education during his periods of incarceration –

*I hated school. I never liked school.* (David, line 68)

*I always thought of school as a place where I was ah held like it was a prison.*

(David, line 372)

*I had a daughter at 19 and ah I used to work long hours through the night. S tart at 9 until 9 o ’clock 10.30 in the morning and when I got home I was very tired and I had to get ready for the next night of work and it was too hard.* (David, line 147)
I went to ah [correctional centre 2] and but I had no-one there. They don’t even have an education officer. (David, line 53)

Three sets of relationships between concepts referred to here were inferred from the transcript. David apparently had associated a concept of disadvantage with his family environment and with his experience of a learning difficulty during his schooling. He apparently had associated a concept of discontent with his experience of school environments, employment, and his attempts to undertake formal education during his period(s) of incarceration. Considering the whole set of extracts from the transcript, a concept of disadvantage seemed to be related to a concept of discontent, in that effects of David’s apparent experience of childhood disadvantage appeared to have some causal relationship with his apparent experience of discontent with his school environment which, in turn, may have been related to his discontent with the employment that he obtained.

George

A concept of disadvantage was constructed from the content of the transcript of George’s narrative. This concept was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of family environment and school environment, presented in Chapter Seven. George made frequent references to apparent perceptions of having personally experienced disadvantage during his childhood, which he appeared to attribute to various factors in his family life, and to an unsupportive school environment. George spoke of his recollections of the violent behaviour of one of his mother’s partners, in the following words –

I dunno but he was on the grog a lot used to drink and run amok and you know get stuck into mum and you know he just booted her in the guts a few times and when she was pregnant and all that. (George, line 150)

and –

He used to hit us all the time. (George, line 892)

George’s apparent perception that he had experienced disadvantage in relation to his schooling, stemming from frequent relocation of his family, was exemplified when he said –

I now know why I couldn’t you know learn properly at school and you know cos we were movin around a lot all the social dramas cos no-one showed me the way and probably quite a few other things too. (George, line 789)
The following statements that George made exemplified his recollections of an unsupportive secondary school environment –

*I was sittin there talking to someone and umn we weren’t that loud but ar the teacher got vicious. He just closed the sliding door and had me up by the throat against the wall yearh and he was goin off at me you know.* (George, line 101)

*Was very distrustful of them like you know been in a bit of trouble you know like you know scums just come up and you know and stand over you and shit like that at school.* (George, line 545)

A concept of lost opportunity was a second concept that was constructed from the content of the transcript of George’s narrative. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of drug use and employment, presented in Chapter Seven. Some of George’s statements were interpreted as having been indicative of a belief that he had lost opportunities to have acquired employment-related qualifications and, consequently, to have gained satisfactory employment because of his use of illegal drugs while attending school and his subsequent addiction to drugs, including alcohol. George spoke of his early involvement with drugs, and of effects that he perceived this involvement to have had on his educational achievement.

With reference to his involvement with drugs during his school days, George said –

*Anyway yearh he got some and we started smoking it and ah like I was goin to school and like in me lunch breaks or in between goin to classes, duck into the toilet and have a coupla cones, and then pretty much just dropped out of school altogether you know.* (George, line 124)

The following statement that George made seemed to be indicative of an apparent belief that his ongoing use of drugs had resulted in his loss of educational opportunity after he had left school –

*I dunno started tryin to get me to do a uni course and that but arh I dunno I was too concerned with drugs and that.* (George, line 51)

George’s apparent belief that effects of his drug addictions had negatively affected his prospects of obtaining satisfactory employment, seemed to have been evinced when he said –

*Same with the alcohol cos I was on it for a few years and uh just havin jobs here and there you know like ah looking for excuses basically like you know like ah I didn’t have any work clothes or boots or you know or me own transportation.* (George, line 176)
Three sets of relationships between concepts referred to here were inferred from
the transcript. George apparently had associated a concept of disadvantage with his
family environment and his secondary school environment. He apparently had
associated a concept of lost opportunity with perceived effects of his habitual use of
drugs from a relatively young age, particularly his lack of educational opportunity after
he had discontinued his basic formal education, and his inability to obtain satisfactory
employment. Considering the whole set of extracts from the transcript, a concept of
disadvantage seemed to be related to a concept of lost opportunity, in that effects of
George’s experience of childhood disadvantage appeared to have some causal
relationship with his experience of a lack of opportunity to obtain satisfactory
employment.

Jim
A concept of learning was constructed from the content of the transcript of Jim’s
narrative. A general concept of learning was interpreted as a conceptualisation of the
instrumental value of learning. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred
evaluations of specific topics of work ethic, learning in jail, and capacity to change,
presented in Chapter Seven. The following statements made by Jim seemed to express a
personal willingness to learn that which Jim perceived to be of some personal benefit –
Some classes where I had no interest in they’d get no interest out of me. (Jim, line
190)

Basically I ended up doin me grade 10 by correspondence and um I got through OK.
I got passes reasonably well you know cos I was probably motivated by somethin I
wanted to do. (Jim, line 57)

Jim appeared to explain his willingness to continue formal learning while
incarcerated in terms a personal perception of future personal benefits, when he said –
I’m doin the courses and when I get out and that at least when I went for a job I had
ah I had the paper work to say I’ve done these things and that as most companies
you go into especially in the weldin boiler makin game they like to see what you can
do. (Jim’, line 87)

and –

In later years I’ve always been enthusiastic with me education. All the courses I’ve
got here. (Jim, line 169)

Jim’s apparent willingness to engage in instrumental learning during his period
of incarceration seemed to be related to a personal value of work ethic. This relationship appeared to be evident in the following statement that Jim made –

*I’ve always had pretty good work ethic. I try and make somethin of me days rather than sit around and do nothing. Ever since I’ve been here back in here arhm I’ve just worked in the one shop where I’m leadin hand.* (Jim, line 85)

Jim seemed to have expressed a belief in his capacity to change his lifestyle because of his perceived personal value of work ethic when he said –

*When I get out like I’ve got no intention like when I got out of jail on parole for the old armed robbery I was just arh quite content and stayin out of trouble and I worked up until the day I got arrested you know and umn nothing to do with crime or the people involved in it I just you know just sort meself out.* (Jim, line 80)

A concept of lost opportunity was a second concept that was constructed from the content of the transcript of Jim’s narrative. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of dissatisfaction and offending, presented in Chapter Seven. Jim’s apparent perception that, during his youth, he had foregone opportunities to prepare to achieve that which he desired later in his life, seemed to have been expressed when he said –

*I wish I woulda done it earlier – all those things that I didn’t have the tolerance for when I was younger.* (Jim, line 179)

and –

*I’m just sorry I never saw a. I think probably I wasn’t mature enough in meself you know um to just stick it out and do these things right earlier on in life than I was later in life.* (Jim, line 126)

The following comment that Jim made when speaking about his recollection of not completing his trade apprenticeship seemed to express his regret for having foregone opportunities during his youth –

*Looking back on it now I really think I should. I used to think to meself ‘Jesus I shoulda took it up as a full time apprenticeship’.* (Jim, line 70)

Jim seemed to perceive the dissatisfaction that he had experienced with his schooling and his vocational training as having been associated with his loss of opportunities to prepare for a personally beneficial future through school achievement and vocational training in his childhood and youth. This perception seemed to be evinced when he said –

*I was getting close to 15 you know where you were able to leave school and sorta
done me own thing in grade 9 and grade 10. I just couldn’t wait to get out of school go to work you know. (Jim, line 48)

and –

I was 2 years 4 months into me apprenticeship and I just started losin interest in it. (Jim, line 64)

The following statements made by Jim appeared to exemplify an explanation of his involvement in offending as a means of obtaining income, in terms of his lost opportunities during his childhood and youth to have obtained rewarding legitimate employment in adult life –

A coupla times there were we got spaced and that and got a fair bit of money and buy hotted up cars and havin a good time. (Jim, line 236)

We opened a car detailing business but what is was we’re ended up buyin hot cars and re-sellin them. (Jim, line 255)

Two sets of relationships between concepts referred to here were inferred from the transcript. Jim apparently had associated a concept of learning with a positive personal valuing of work ethic, and with opportunity to engage in instrumental learning while incarcerated and a personal capacity to change his lifestyle. He apparently had associated a concept of lost opportunity with dissatisfactions he had experienced with his basic formal education and his initial vocational training, and with his subsequent involvement in crime as a means of obtaining financial income.

**Lenny**

A concept of lost opportunity was constructed from the content of the transcript of Lenny’s narrative. A concept of lost opportunity was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of capacity to learn and of offending, presented in Chapter Seven. Lenny appeared to perceive that his personal lack of interest in formal education as a child had resulted in his subsequent lack of legitimate employment opportunities. This perception was evinced in the following three statements that he made –

I was one of those that really didn’t wanna learn. (Lenny, line 87)

During my school days I never had much interest in an education. (Lenny, line 9)

And that was probably had a lot of effect on me today – up to today for employment situations like that. (Lenny, line 13)
Lenny seemed to have perceived that opportunities that he had foregone during his schooling, to acquire credentials needed to obtain personally rewarding legitimate employment, were related to his subsequent involvement in crime as a means of achieving a level of income that he had desired. This perception seemed to have been expressed when Lenny said –

*Just boiled down to boredom. Used to knock off cars and go and look for some place to break into, whether it be grog or money. Either one was basically supporting our own desires I suppose.* (Lenny, line 359)

and –

*I’ve always had a desire to have a lot of money and I’ve got a pretty lengthy criminal record which only consists of ah dishonesty and stealing and that stuff.* (Lenny, line 345)

Inferred relationships between concepts referred to here are that Lenny apparently had associated a concept of lost opportunity with his low level of motivation to learn while at school, and his inability to obtain personally rewarding legitimate employment after the discontinuation of his basic formal education.

**Lionel**

A concept of lost opportunity was constructed from the content of the transcript of the Lionel’s narrative. A concept of lost opportunity was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of misfit and of vocational training, presented in Chapter Seven. Lionel appeared to have expressed an hypothesis that he could have achieved satisfactory standards in school work under suitable conditions of schooling. The expression of this hypothesis was exemplified when Lionel said –

*High school just by myself. High school just by myself. Little class just arhm my own teacher whatever I probably would’ve done my stuff.* (Lionel, line 235)

Lionel apparently perceived that personal loss of opportunities had resulted from his non-conformist attitudes and behaviour patterns during the periods of his schooling and vocational training. With reference to his attitude and behaviour pattern at school he said –

*There’s always goin to be someone in class that not goin to want to do somethin – maybe because it’s hard or maybe because it’s too easy.* (Lionel, line 154)

and –

*I think if I wanted to pass a subject I could’ve.* (Lionel, line 622)
and –

_I coulda completed year 12 but I was takin drugs and stuff so I didn’t end up completin it._ (Lionel, line 268)

When speaking of the discontinuation of his trade apprenticeship, Lionel said –

_I just didn’t like wanna do that shit-kickin for 3 years just to know how to do that._

(Lionel, line 379)

Lionel’s apparent perception of a causal relationship between his non-conformist attitude and behaviours during his schooling and vocational training and his loss of opportunity to have achieved a personally rewarding lifestyle, seemed to have been evinced when he said –

_I think where you can look back and say yearth I couda done that stuff but I never and now I’m payin for it._ (Lionel, line 239)

Inferred relationships between concepts referred to here are that Lionel apparently had associated a concept of lost opportunity with a perception of his being a misfit between his attitudes and behaviour patterns and those expected of him at school and in his vocational training, and with his inability to obtain personally rewarding legitimate employment after the discontinuation of his basic formal education and vocational training.

**Nigel**

A concept of disadvantage was constructed from the content of the transcript of Nigel’s narrative. A concept of disadvantage was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of family environment, unsupported childhood, personal abuse, and ability at school, presented in Chapter Seven. The transcript of Nigel’s narrative contained frequent references to apparent instances of personal experience of disadvantage including disruption to family life and schooling, constant physical violence within the family environment, personal physical and emotional abuse, and abuse and alienation in the school and general environments. Nigel expressed a perception of having experienced disadvantage as a result of a violent and generally uncaring family environment during his childhood, when he said –

_No-one really cared at home so I got no attention whatsoever._ (Nigel, line 1375)

and –

_Just violent family you know .Jjust violent, livin with violence._ (Nigel, line 286)

He spoke of having experienced personal abuse at school and in his general
Recalling interactions between his peer social group and the local police, Nigel said, of
the police –

They were arseholes. They couldn’t stand us. They were real fuck. Fuck, we was only
kids you know. Tried to scare us. (Nigel, line 1818)

Nigel seemed to explain his engagement in disruptive behaviour at school and in
the general environment in terms of effects of disadvantage that he experienced, when
he said –

Cos I couldn’t do it at home so I played up at school. (Nigel, line 38)

and –

Can’t be expressive with people at home so do it somewhere else. (Nigel, line 289)

A concept of self-determination was a second concept that was constructed from
the content of the transcript of Nigel’s narrative. This concept was interpreted as a
general conceptualisation of the volitional making and implementing of decisions that
affect the self. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of
specific topics of socially unacceptable behaviour and of rebellious self-direction,
presented in Chapter Seven. The transcript of Nigel’s narrative contained frequent
references to his apparent perceptions of a very strong personal sense of self-
determination, and of consequences associated with engagement in socially
unacceptable self-determined behaviours. The following extracts from the transcript of
Nigel’s narrative seemed to evince these apparent perceptions –

Getting into trouble just that you had to go home and get flogged but I didn’t really
care about that. (Nigel, line 1942)

Can’t sit around with nothin’ do nothin’ you know. I’ve got to get up and move
around. Can’t just sit there with nothin’ you know. Got to get up and get it – that’s
the only way I know so just go and take somebody else’s. (Nigel, line 2398)

I’ve been doin it [offending] over and over again I don’t really care. (Nigel, line
2445)

But I know the consequences just don’t really care you know got nothin to lose
really. (Nigel, line 2508)

Three sets of relationships between concepts referred to here were inferred from
the transcript. Nigel apparently had associated a concept of disadvantage with perceptions of his family environment, his general lack of support during his childhood, personal abuse which he experienced as a child, and his lack of ability to achieve at school. He apparently had associated a concept of self-determination with perceptions of his engagement in illegal and other socially-unacceptable behaviours, and of his predisposition to be rebelliously self-directing. Considering the content of the transcripts as a whole, concepts of disadvantage and of self-determination seemed to be related in that Nigel’s development of a concept of self-direction appeared to have stemmed from his experience of disadvantage throughout his childhood, in particular from the violence, abuse, and apparent complete lack of nurturing which, ostensibly, had characterised his lived experience of childhood.

**Noel**

A concept of alienation was constructed from the content of the transcript of Noel’s narrative. This concept was interpreted as a general conceptualisation of personal rejection by a peer group. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of school environment, employment, and offending, presented in Chapter Seven. Noel seemed to use a personal concept of alienation to explain his frequent truancy from school. The apparent use of this concept is exemplified in the following statement that Noel made, ostensibly in relation to his treatment by his peers during his secondary schooling –

*Mainly just name calling and whatnot because I was always on me own so they’d pick out names and then everybody else jumps on the bandwagon sort of thing – so I wagged school just to get away from it rather than have to put up with it at school.*

(Noel, line 84)

Noel seemed to explain his juvenile involvement in offending in terms of his ostensibly negative perception of his school environment. In relation to these two aspects of his lived experience, Noel said –

*Most of the time I spent at the Olympic pool or the bowling alley just to be away from school.*

(Noel, line 117)

and –

*You might do a few burgs [burglaries] or whatnot. I was into that by then just to get a bit of cash go to the pool all day.*

(Noel, line 117)

Noel’s apparent perception of relationships between his experience of a negative
school environment, his involvement in criminal activities, and his lack of opportunity to obtain ongoing, satisfactory employment seemed to be expressed when he said –

*I couldn’t get a job because I wasn’t schooled enough and um the only thing I could’ve got into was the army but by then of course I had a criminal record so I couldn’t get into the army.* (Noel, line 133)

Inferred relationships between concepts referred to here are that Noel apparently had associated a concept of alienation with his negative perception of his school environment, his inability to obtain personally rewarding legitimate employment, and his involvement in crime.

**Patrick**

A concept of disadvantage was constructed from the content of the transcript of Patrick’s narrative. A concept of disadvantage was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of disruptions and of school environment, presented in Chapter Seven. Patrick apparently perceived that he had experienced disadvantages during his schooling as a result of discontinuities stemming from the frequent relocation of his family. This apparent perception was evinced when Patrick said –

*Primary school was pretty stuffed cos I was always movin around in the 6 years of primary school. I done 14 different schools.* (Patrick, line 13)

and –

*It was difficult cos I’d be doin one thing at one school and startin to get really good at that and I’d change schools.* (Patrick, line 56)

Patrick apparently had experienced numerous changes of school continued during his secondary schooling, as evident from the following statement that he made –

*I changed schools again from [suburb 2 school] to [suburb 3] tech cos [suburb 2 school] closed down arhm so I had to transfer school again arhm an that’s sorta when I went downhill with school.* (Patrick, line 138)

He seemed to have expressed a perception that he had experienced disadvantage in the secondary school environment, in the form of bullying, in the following words –

*I was typically one of the kids that got picked on at school.* (Patrick, line 34)

and –

*I was the ooh ethnic kid that arhm had the afro hair style and got called the golliwog.* (Patrick, line 42)
A concept of self-efficacy was a second concept that was constructed from the content of the transcript of Patrick’s narrative. This concept was interpreted as a general conceptualisation of an innate capacity to exercise self control over aspects of life. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of capacity to achieve, learning in jail, and future plans, presented in Chapter Seven. Apparent beliefs by Patrick, that he had capacity to achieve and that he could use this capacity to benefit from formal education and training during his incarceration, are evidenced in the following statements that he made –

_There was two subjects I always excelled in. There was me maths and me English._
(Patrick’, line 61)

_I’m good at architecture with me drawing and scaling down._ (Patrick’, line 276)

_I actually finished me apprenticeship at [correctional centre 1] arhm which is good._
(Patrick’, line 294)

Patrick appeared to have expressed a belief that he had a capacity to achieve desired future goals. He seemed to explain his plans for future achievement in terms of a personal belief in his capacity to achieve, which was based on his past achievements, when he said –

_The electronics was good because it was ah build things and that and it was when you finished making something you were quite proud because you built it from nothing._ (Patrick, line 131)

and –

_I’m hopin to finish my year 11 and 12 and finally get that certificate and hopefully move on to [university 1] and get a degree or diploma._ (Patrick, line 247)

Two sets of relationships between concepts referred to here were inferred from the transcript. Patrick apparently had associated a concept of disadvantage with perceptions of discontinuities in his basic formal education and with his school environment. He apparently had associated a concept of self-efficacy with perceptions of his capacity to achieve, his successful participation in formal education and vocational training during his period(s) of incarceration, and his plans for the future.

**Sean**

A concept of misfit was constructed from the content of the transcript of Sean’s narrative. This concept was interpreted as a general conceptualisation of rejection of the social expectations held of a person by other people within the person’s dominant social
milieux. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of school environment, relevance of school work, school achievement, and drug use, presented in Chapter Seven. Sean appeared to express perceptions that, in various ways, he had not fitted comfortably into his schools’ environments, and that his use of drugs at school had been a response to his discomfort in the school environment. An apparent perception by Sean that his behaviour had been misunderstood by his teachers because his expectations and their expectations were incongruous was exemplified by the following statements that he made in relation to his experience of schooling –

*I liked to have a laugh and that and quite often I wasn’t tryin to disrupt the class.*

(Sean, line 56)

*Seems to me that creativity was never really encouraged so if you stepped outside the little box you got trodden on quickly.* (Sean, line 494)

In reference to his teachers, Sean said –

*The ones without a sense of humour – their reaction would be ‘this isn’t a joke you’re treating like a joke’.* (Sean, line 56)

Ostensibly, Sean perceived that that schoolwork had been largely irrelevant to his interests, and that he had not fitted in with his teachers’ expectations of his participation in teaching-learning processes. These apparent perceptions were evinced in the following two statements that Sean made –

*Only time I ever got interested really was ancient history cos it’s just like a big story book.* (Sean, line 387)

*I did well at school until it came up to a point where it required some sort of effort.*

(Sean, line 157)

Sean perceived that his use of drugs at school had been a response to his dissatisfaction with his school environment, in the form of the active rejection the ostensible main purpose of schooling, viz., to acquire the knowledge and skills that were included in the formal curriculum. He seemed to have summarised these apparent perceptions when he said –

*Smoke a lot of dope school was just a big social thing to me.* (Sean, line 336)

Inferred relationships between concepts referred to here are that Sean apparently had associated a concept of misfit with his perceptions of his school environment, the irrelevance of school work to his personal interests, his low standard of school achievement, and his use of drugs at school.
Shane

A concept of lost opportunity was constructed from the content of the transcript of the Shane’s narrative. This concept was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of peer influence and of readiness to learn, presented in Chapter Seven. Some of the statements in the transcript of Shane’s narrative seemed to be indicative of apparent perceptions that his lost opportunity to achieve a socially acceptable adult lifestyle had resulted from his frequent truancy during schooling, and that his truancy had been closely related to the influence of a peer group and to his lack of readiness to learn at school. These perceptions were inferred from the following set of statements that Shane made –

*I think that’s where I went wrong you know truancy or whatever they call it at school – waggin it.* (Shane, line 249),

*If I had changed the group that I was hangin around with it may have all been different.* (Shane, line 250)

*I just think I wasn’t ready to learn. I wanted to be with me friends.* (Shane, line 37)

*I was given a fair chance at everything.*

*I think that it was just through my own fault that I ended up behind* [bars]. (Shane, line 90)

Inferred relationships between concepts referred to here are that Shane apparently had associated a concept of lost opportunity with his perceptions of the influence of some of his peers, and with his lack of readiness to learn from formal schoolwork.

Stephen

A concept of supportive environment was constructed from the content of the transcript of the Stephen’s narrative. This concept was interpreted as a general conceptualisation of a nurturing and generally supportive personal environment. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topics of family environment and of school environment, presented in Chapter Seven. Stephen apparently perceived that he had experienced a generally supportive personal environment at least up to the time of his attainment of adulthood. He made several references to support he received from his wider family, of which the following statement is an example –

*So yearh my uncle and auntie had a lot of influence on me and ah they were very supportive of me.* (Stephen, line 176)
Stephen stated that his father had been generally supportive of the family throughout Stephen’s childhood and youth, despite the separation of his parents when he was very young and the subsequent situation in which he and his siblings had remained with their mother. With reference to his apparent perceptions of his father’s ongoing support of the family, Stephen said –

*Anything major in the family or anything that happened, he’s either come up or there’d be a phone call.* (Stephen, line 173)

Stephen apparently perceived that his family environment and his school environments had provided him with very adequate support. This apparent perception was evinced when he said –

*[Religious organisation school 3] was very good. There were a lot of teachers there and yearh they were very supportive and arhm ah my mother too and her sister and uncle were very good to me.* (Stephen, line 147)

and –

*My older brother he was the school captain arhm in the second year I was there he was school captain so ah yearh it was pretty good.* (Stephen, line 69)

and –

*Yearh so I’ve still got a lot of support.* (Stephen, line 177)

A concept of self-efficacy was a second concept that was constructed from the content of the transcript of Stephen’s narrative. It was constructed, in part, from the content and inferred evaluations of specific topic of capacity to achieve, is presented in Chapter Seven. Stephen appeared to make numerous references to his belief in his capacity to exercise control over aspects of his life, a capacity that he seemed to attribute to his general capacity for self-directed achievement. These references were exemplified by the following set of statements that he made –

*The principal of [religious organisation 1 school 3], he actually nominated me for young achiever of the year.* (Stephen, line 98)

*So you know first year I was on the job I was foreman of the job by the time I ended first year apprenticed. Second year I was in the office doin estimating. Third year I was project manager.* (Stephen, line 7)

*A lot of self-taught, haven’t done haven’t done any EPA studies or anything but um but as far as doing abiding by EPA standards all self-taught and every project that I’ve ever done has met all the standards.* (Stephen, line 130)
Three sets of relationships between concepts referred to here were inferred from the transcript. Stephen apparently had associated a concept of supportive environment with perceptions of his family environment and of his school environments. He apparently had associated a concept of self-efficacy with a perception of his capacity to achieve. Considering the content of the transcript as a whole, concepts of supportive environment and of self-efficacy seemed to be related in that Stephen’s development of a concept of self-efficacy appeared to have stemmed, at least in part, from the support he received throughout his childhood from his family and his schools.

**Conclusion**

Concepts labelled by the researcher as ‘personal meanings’ have been presented in this chapter. Inferred relationships between these concepts and specific topics presented in Chapter Seven have been discussed. Personal meanings were presented as interpretive constructions made by the researcher from the content of the transcripts of the participants’ narratives. In each case, an illustration of the grounding of the constructions in the transcripts of the participants’ narratives was presented. The construction of personal meanings from the content and inferred general evaluations of specific topics constructed from the transcript, and from other parts of the transcript that were interpreted as having contextualised the personal meaning in the transcript as a whole, was demonstrated.

Eleven personal meanings were identified through the processes of holistic-content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp.62-87) of the transcripts of the spoken self-narratives of the participants. The following 12 personal meanings were constructed and labelled by the researcher:

- Alienation: a conceptual theme of rejection of a person by the person’s peers.
- Disadvantage: a conceptual theme of deprivation of circumstances favourable in some way to a person.
- Discontent: a conceptual theme of a person’s discontent with the person’s environment.
- Immaturity: a conceptual theme of a lack of appropriate personal development at a particular time or phase in a person’s life.
- Learning: a conceptual theme of the value placed by a person on instrumental learning by a person.
- Lost opportunity: a conceptual theme of opportunities foregone to benefit from
resources that were available to the person at some time in the past life of the person. 

Misfit: a conceptual theme of a person’s rejection of the general expectations made of the person by other people within the person’s dominant social milieux.

Self-efficacy: a conceptual theme of a person’s innate capacity to exercise control over aspects of his life.

Self-determination: a conceptual theme of a person’s volitional personal independence with regard to personal decision-making and taking action.

Social status: a conceptual theme of an imperative need experienced by a person for high esteem of the person by his peers.

Supportive environment: a conceptual theme of a nurturing and protective environment experienced by a person.

The researcher concluded that some of the concepts were common to the transcripts of the narratives of two or more participants, and that some were peculiar to the transcript of the narrative of an individual participant. A summary of the personal meanings, specific topics interpretively associated with particular personal meanings, and of the pseudonyms of the participants whose narratives were represented by the transcripts from which particular personal meanings and specific topics were constructed, is provided in Table Five (located after this concluding section of this chapter).

As shown in Table Five, lost opportunity was the personal meaning most frequently constructed from the transcripts. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was interpretively associated with each of six transcripts of the total number of 15 transcripts included in the study, constituting 40 per cent of the total number of transcripts. Disadvantage was a personal meaning that was interpretively associated with each of four transcripts, constituting approximately 27 per cent of the total number of transcripts. The only other personal meanings which were interpretively associated with more than one transcript were self-efficacy and supportive environment, each of which was associated with each of two transcripts, each constituting approximately 13 per cent of the total number of transcripts.

As stated in the introductory section of this chapter, the content of a specific topic was assumed, in the study, to be conceptually related to the content of a particular personal meaning. This assumption stems from a consideration of the processes of interpretive narrative analysis by which personal meanings and specific topics were
constructed from the transcripts. These processes are described in Chapter Four. If the assumption that the content of a specific topic is conceptually related to the content of a particular personal meaning is correct, coincidences of a specific topic with a personal meaning constructed from more than one transcript are expected to occur. Specific topics interpretively associated with more than one personal meaning are shown in Table Six (located after Table Five in this concluding section of this chapter). The highest instances of coincidence between a particular personal meaning and a particular specific topic were as follows:

- Disadvantage – family environment: three coincidences.
- Disadvantage – school environment: two coincidences.
- Lost opportunity – employment: two coincidences.
- Lost opportunity – offending: two coincidences.
- Self-efficacy – capacity to achieve: two coincidences.
- Supportive environment – family environment: two coincidences.
- Supportive environment – school environment: two coincidences.

These findings appear to lend some support to the assumption that the content of a specific topic is conceptually related to the content of a particular personal meaning.
Table 5: Personal meanings and specific topics interpretively associated with individual participant’s narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal meaning</th>
<th>Specific topics interpretively associated with a particular personal meaning*</th>
<th>Participants with whose narrative a particular personal meaning was interpretively associated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alienation</td>
<td>employment, offending, school environment</td>
<td>Noel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantage</td>
<td>ability at school, disruptions, family environment (3), learning difficulty, personal abuse, school environment (2), unsupported childhood</td>
<td>David, George, Nigel, Patrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontent</td>
<td>employment, learning in jail, school environment</td>
<td>David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immaturity</td>
<td>drug use, offending</td>
<td>Barry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>capacity to change, learning in jail, work ethic</td>
<td>Jim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost opportunity</td>
<td>capacity to achieve, capacity to learn, dissatisfaction, drug use, employment (2), misfit, offending (2), peer influence, readiness to learn, school environment, vocational training</td>
<td>Aaron, George, Jim, Lenny, Lionel, Shane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misfit</td>
<td>drug use, relevance of school work, school achievement, school environment</td>
<td>Sean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>capacity to achieve (2), learning in jail, future plans</td>
<td>Patrick, Stephen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td>rebellious self-direction, socially unacceptable behaviour</td>
<td>Nigel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social status</td>
<td>disruptions, drug use, intimacy</td>
<td>Brian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive environment</td>
<td>family environment (2), readiness to learn, school environment (2)</td>
<td>Bill, Stephen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Numerals in parentheses in the ‘Specific topics . . .’ column indicate the frequency of occurrence of a specific topic that was interpretively associated with a particular personal meaning.
Table 6: Specific topics interpretively associated with more than one personal meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific topic</th>
<th>Personal meaning</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Alienation</td>
<td>Noel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discontent</td>
<td>David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lost opportunity</td>
<td>George</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offending</td>
<td>Alienation</td>
<td>Noel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immaturity</td>
<td>Barry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lost opportunity</td>
<td>Jim, Lenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School environment</td>
<td>Alienation</td>
<td>Noel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disadvantage</td>
<td>George</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive environment</td>
<td>Bill, Stephen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discontent</td>
<td>David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family environment</td>
<td>Disadvantage</td>
<td>David, George, Nigel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive environment</td>
<td>Bill, Stephen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning in jail</td>
<td>Discontent</td>
<td>David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Jim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>Patrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity to achieve</td>
<td>Lost opportunity</td>
<td>Aaron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>Patrick, Stephen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug use</td>
<td>Immaturity</td>
<td>Barry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lost opportunity</td>
<td>Aaron, George</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social status</td>
<td>Brian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Misfit</td>
<td>Sean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness to learn</td>
<td>Supportive environment</td>
<td>Bill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lost opportunity</td>
<td>Shane</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Nine

Social meanings constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives

Introduction

This chapter presents the researcher’s constructions of concepts that have been labeled ‘social meanings’ in the study. The main body of the chapter represents the third stage of the researcher’s development of an understanding of the lived experience of individual participants in relation to their formal education and vocational training, as explained in Chapter One. Representation of the first stage was presented in Chapter Six. Representation of the second stage was presented in Chapters Seven and Eight. The grounding of the researcher’s constructions of social meanings, in the content of the transcripts, is demonstrated in this chapter. A summary of social meanings interpretively associated with individual participant’s narratives is provided in Table Seven, which is located after the concluding section of the chapter.

Social meanings are assumed to be the broadest concepts constructed in the study, and to represent general conceptualisations of socially-derived beliefs, values and/or attitudes. Social meanings constitute one of the four general sub-categories of concepts that were constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives, in the study. The other three sub-categories are inferred general characteristics of participants, specific topics, and personal meanings. As explicated in Chapter Four, specific topics, personal meanings, and social meanings were constructed through the use of interpretive narrative analysis procedures described by Lieblich et al. (1998). Inferred general characteristics of participants are presented in Chapter Six. Specific topics are presented in Chapter Seven. Personal meanings are presented in Chapter Eight.

The construction of social meanings from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives is part of the generation of the constructed data used in the study. As explained in Chapter One, constructed data, interpretively derived from the transcripts of the narratives of the participants, are used to achieve the two main purposes of the study.

As explicated in Chapter Four, social meanings are interpreted in the study to be constructions made by the researcher through the processes of holistic-form analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998, pp.88-111) of written transcripts of audio-recordings of the
participants’ spoken self-narratives. Holistic-form analysis focuses on the construction of structural aspects, or plots, of the narrative as a whole entity (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.88). According to Lieblich et al. (1998, p.88), formal aspects of the structure of a life-narrative can provide information about the personal identity, perceptions, and values of the narrator, much of which are influenced by inputs from a person’s social environment(s) (Mishler, 1986b; Tagg, 1985). The procedures by which the processes of holistic-form analysis were applied in the study are described in Chapter Four. In brief, an analytical framework based on a concept of themal coherence in self-narrative (Mishler, 1986a) was applied in the holistic-form analysis of the transcripts of the participants’ self-narratives. According to Mishler (1986a, p.8), a concept of themal coherence is a concept of relationships between parts of a narrative and the general assumptions, beliefs, and goals of the narrator. The researcher’s choice of a concept of themal coherence was based on an assumption that social influences on aspects of the participants’ narratives, in terms of socially communicated values, beliefs, and attitudes, could be inferred from major structural themes that were constructed through the application of a concept of themal coherence in the analysis of the transcripts of the narratives. This assumption was derived from conclusions reached by Mishler (1986a, p.8; 1986b, p.243) regarding the interpretation of themal coherence in spoken self-narrative. Social meanings were constructed from inferred major structural dimensions of the narratives, in general accordance with Mishler’s (1986b) account of the identification of themal coherence in spoken self-narrative. Major structural themes constructed from the transcripts of a participants’ narrative are assumed here to be broad concepts which provide an interpretation of a narrative as a whole in terms of its inferred overall structure.

The term ‘social meanings’ was adopted in the study as a general descriptive label for major structural themes constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives through the application of a concept of themal coherence (Mishler, 1986a) in the holistic-form analysis (Lieblich et al, 1998) of the transcripts. Social meanings are assumed here to be socially-derived, broad conceptual themes, and are assumed to constitute the broadest concepts constructed, in the study, from the transcripts. The term ‘socially-derived’ is used in the study to mean that an assumption has been made that the concepts to which the term refers were constructed primarily from social sources within the environments experienced by the participants. Social meanings are assumed in the study to indirectly and incompletely represent socially-derived concepts constructed by participants primarily from social sources within the environments they
experienced during the periods of time about which they spoke in their narratives. These periods of time were assumed by the researcher principally to be the periods of time during which the individual participants’ experienced their basic formal education and initial vocational training. For simplicity of expression, the term ‘concepts’ is used in the main body of this chapter instead of the terms ‘major structural themes’ and ‘social meanings’

**Social meanings constructed from individual transcripts**

**Aaron**

A concept of barriers was constructed from the transcript of Aaron’s narrative. This concept was assumed to represent a socially-derived general concept of impediments that are perceived by a person to have severely limited the person’s opportunities for participation in socially-acceptable ways in the wider society.

A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated allusions to a perception that socially-derived emotional impediments had prevented Aaron from achieving comfortable participation in social life. Aaron appeared to have perceived that his emotional impediments had arisen initially as a result of his experience of emotionally traumatic social experiences during the early stages of his schooling. The basis of this apparent perception was exemplified when Aaron spoke of his treatment, as a young child, by a particular teacher. According to Aaron, the teacher –

*Stood me up on a table and made me piss my pants and cry.* (Aaron, line 25)

Aaron recalled emotionally traumatic incidents which had occurred in his family life during childhood. He described one of these incidents in the following words –

*Me sister bent me over the stove and stick me head over it and turned the gas on and burnt all me hair.* (Aaron, line 85)

Aaron’s apparent allusions to an explanatory, socially-derived theme of barriers throughout the transcript were exemplified by the following statements that Aaron made, in recollections of his time at high school –

*I wasn’t comfortable in high school.* (Aaron, line 243)

*Well, I think it was all downhill for me. I found it hard to fit in I think.* (Aaron, line 337)

*People said ‘no he’s a drug addict rah rah he’s no good’.* (Aaron, line 346)
Aaron’s apparent perception of his inability to participate in social life in socially acceptable ways during the school years was exemplified by statements that he made in recollections of his relationships with his parents and with his peers during his school years. An apparent perception by him that his childhood relationship with his parents had been somewhat dysfunctional was inferred when he said –

*That’s what my parents didn’t want me to do so I did it.* (Aaron, line 259)

An apparent perception of a negative emotional relationship with school peers was inferred when he said –

*People started doing drugs and I thought if I was the biggest drug dealer at school I’d be the most liked you know but what it came to was that I was the most hated.*

(Aaron, line 338)

The extracts from the transcript of Aaron’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of barriers, primarily in the form of a conceptualization of socially-derived personal emotional impediments to participation in socially acceptable ways in the wider society. This theme was interpreted as having provided thematic coherence to Aaron’s narrative as a whole.

**Barry**

A concept of inclusion was constructed from the transcript of Barry’s narrative. This concept was assumed to represent a socially-derived general concept of strong desire by a person to gain or regain full participation in the wider society by legitimate means, and to include a generally positive evaluation of conformity to the personally perceived norms of conventional Australian society. The term ‘personally perceived’ is used to indicate that the researcher assumed that the norms to which reference is made are those which the participant perceived to be the norms of conventional Australian society.

A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided thematic coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent references to a perception of a personal need to achieve social inclusion. These apparent references were exemplified when Barry spoke of his apparent perceptions of plans for his post-release future, in the following words –

*I knew what I had to learn to make myself happy like goals that I set myself and I’ve based all my courses around that like I done small business so that I’d have something to fall back.* (Barry, line 136)
and –

*I’m determined to do the right thing.* (Barry, line 102)

Barry’s positive valuing of employment-related skills as a means of achieving social inclusion was assumed to have been evinced when he said –

*They are um running the most beneficial courses here because they ah give us trade skills and what not. The trade skills it’s been pretty good.* (Barry, line 56)

The extracts from the transcript of Barry’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of inclusion, primarily in the form of a conceptualisation of a personal desire to achieve participation in socially acceptable ways in the wider society. A concept of inclusion, as constructed from the transcript of Barry’s narrative, incorporated a positive general valuing of values, beliefs and attitudes apparently perceived by Barry to have been upheld in the wider society, particularly with regard to legitimate employment and its presumed associated benefits to the individual. An inferred socially-derived theme of inclusion was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to Barry’s narrative as a whole.

**Bill**

A concept of indifference was constructed from the transcript of Bill’s narrative. This concept was assumed to represent a socially-derived general concept of indifference to values, beliefs, and/or attitudes personally perceived to have been generally upheld within dominant socio-cultural milieux, and to include a generally neutral evaluation of conformity to the personally perceived norms of conventional Australian society.

A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent references to a perception of indifference. Bill’s apparent indifference to norms regarding the value of school achievement, ostensibly upheld by his parents and teachers, was evinced when, in speaking of his general attitude to school achievement as a child, he said –

*If I had no interest in it I could read it get to the end and say ‘Look I’ve just read it, couldn’t recognise ’t.* (Bill, line 315)

and –

*I look back on it now I was more into the social side of it. I was more into the social side of school.* (Bill, line 375)

and –
I wasn’t mature enough back then to say I need to finish this course and get it done and then I can move on and work. (Bill, line 389)

Bill’s apparent attitude of indifference to the value of being employed was exemplified in following statement that Bill in reference to his recollections of being employed –

Wouldn’t say I was overly enjoying it. I didn’t hate it, didn’t love it, was just something I found easy and get paid. (Bill, line 357)

The extracts from the transcript of Bill’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of indifference, primarily in the form of an apparent conceptualisation of indifference to values, beliefs and attitudes regarding schooling and employment which were interpreted as having been perceived by Bill as having been generally upheld within his dominant socio-cultural milieus. This theme was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to Bill’s narrative as a whole.

**Brian**

A concept of inclusion was constructed from the transcript of Brian’s narrative. A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent references to a perception of a need to achieve social inclusion. Brian appeared to have alluded to a change in his attitude towards social inclusion, in references he made to recollections of his behaviour during his school years and early adulthood. The following two statements that Brian made exemplified his apparent change of attitude –

*At school I was just doing it because I had to.* (Brian, line 349)

and –

*You don’t realise that you’re going to have to go out there and earn money* [indistinct utterance] *and the more you know sometimes the further you’ll get.* (Brian, line 349)

Brian appeared to have made an explanatory use of a concept of inclusion in his narrative when referring to his determination to overcome perceived negative effects of his past drug addiction, when he said –

*And with the drugs don’t give you much motivation to - to continue your education, so from there I just [indistinct] didn’t take up any sort of education again until I came to jail.* (Brian, line 506)
Brian’s apparent allusions to a concept of inclusion were exemplified by the following set of statements that he made, with reference to his aspirations to study and to find legitimate employment on his release from custody –

*And when I got in here I thought I’m clean and it’s the perfect place to study you know.* (Brian, line 693)

*I’ve applied for social work because I get on well with people.* (Brian, line 758)

*That background of drugs hopefully I’ll be able to use to my benefit and also not only will I be able to help other people but I’ll be able to help myself stay away from it.* (Brian, line 763)

*Like maybe working in the field and giving something back I suppose and making a career for myself.* (Brian, line 768)

The extracts from the transcript of Bill’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of inclusion, primarily in the form of an apparent conceptualisation of a personal desire to achieve participation in socially acceptable ways in the wider society. This theme was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to Brian’s narrative as a whole.

**David**

A concept of rebellion was constructed from the transcript of David’s narrative. This concept was assumed to represent a socially-derived general concept of the active rejection by a person of particular values, beliefs, and/or attitudes that were perceived by him to be generally upheld within the dominant socio-cultural milieux in which he had been immersed, and to include a generally negative evaluation of conformity to the personally perceived norms of conventional Australian society.

A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent references to a perception of personal rebellion. David appeared to use a concept of rebellion to explain his apparent perceptions of behavioural and emotional responses to situations that he had experienced at school. His apparent explanatory use of the concept was exemplified when he said, in relation to his experiences at school –

*I didn’t have the textbooks. I’d be singled out in the class as if I’d rebelled and I’d give them a hard time or some-one else a hard time.* (David, line 93)

and –
At that time it was more ‘well you hate me, well I’m goin to hate you’. (David, line 198)

and –

That was a big problem and due to that problem I felt bad about myself and I just started rebelling and give myself [indistinct utterance] and to try to take the heat away from me I’d play up. (David, line 58)

David appeared to use a concept of rebellion to explain some of his behaviours as an adult when he spoke of personal circumstances which preceded his convictions for criminal offences, in the following words –

I stopped working about 5 or 6 months prior to being imprisoned. Just ah I struck this path I didn’t care about anything. (David, line 245)

and –

At that point I didn’t care who I hurt or what happened. I just didn’t care. (David, line 252)

The extracts from the transcript of David’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of rebellion, primarily in the form of an apparent conceptualization of active rejection of values, beliefs and attitudes regarding schooling and employment which, ostensibly, David perceived to have been generally upheld within the wider society. A concept of rebellion, as inferred from the transcript of David’s narrative, was interpreted as having been actualized in disruptive and sometime violent behaviour at school, and involvement in violent crime in youth and early adulthood. A socially-derived of rebellion was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to David’s narrative as a whole.

**George**

A concept of inclusion was constructed from the transcript of George’s narrative. A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent references to a perception of a need to experience inclusion. George appeared to have expressed a commitment to personally achieving aspects of social inclusion when he said –

I wanna have somethin. I wanna own me own house and ar own my own car.

(George, line 250)

and –
It was a bit of experience and I really enjoyed it and hopefully I can get a job and get my back up and arh a bit of practice too and go straight into a job on the outside.

(George, line 493)

George’s apparent recurrent use of a theme of social inclusion throughout his narrative seemed to be evident when he spoke of rejecting his past criminal lifestyle, in the following words –

*I got no intention of getting back on the aunties or the grog. The grog, that’s goin to be a day to day thing but ah as long as I’ve got a job you know I’ll just go to work come home and cos I’ve got hobbies and that sort of thing.* (George, line 350)

*I don’t want to leave leave jail like arhm like ar typical stereotype sort of thing like a hardened criminal ar like he’s goin to do this and that when he gets out.* (George, line 308)

The extracts from the transcript of George’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of inclusion primarily in the form of an apparent conceptualization of a personal desire to achieve participation in socially acceptable ways in the wider society. A concept of inclusion constructed from the transcript of George’s narrative included positive valuing of values, beliefs and attitudes apparently perceived by George to have been upheld in the wider society, particularly with regard to legitimate employment and material benefits that, ostensibly, George assumed would ensue from obtaining ongoing legitimate employment. An inferred socially-derived theme of inclusion was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to George’s narrative as a whole.

**Jim**

A concept of rebellion was constructed from the transcript of Jim’s narrative. A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent allusions to a concept of rebellion. Jim appeared to have used a concept of rebellion to explain various narrated events and circumstances throughout much of his narrative. A concept of rebellion was inferred to have been associated initially by Jim with his dislike of the ways in which his school teachers exercised their authority, as exemplified by the following statements he made about some of his teachers –

*The worst for me was that grade 5 teacher rather than um sort of helping the*
students along or things like that he just sort of humiliated them. (Jim, line 167)

They didn’t really care. They just wrote on the report. It was like a production line. (Jim, line 162)

Jim appeared to allude to a concept of rebellion in his account of his progression from truancy at school to incarceration, and his subsequent his use of, and eventual addiction to, drugs. His apparent allusion to a concept of rebellion in this context was evinced in the following set of statements that he made –

I played hookey from school arhm with mates and that. We just couldn’t be bothered so dad just ended up well you can go to work rather than cos you see he probably wanted to solve the problem with me waggin school. (Jim, line 51)

By the time I was in me late teens and early twenties I was also getting into a bit of trouble and that and I ended up goin to jail. (Jim, line 71)

I actually got introduced to drugs in [correctional centre]. (Jim, line 243)

Started doin stick ups and that cos you know you got drug habit and then you start hanging out and the last thing you want to do is tryin to wield a poker at a place. Easier to just tool up and knock over a bank or something. (Jim, line 252)

The extracts from the transcript of Jim’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of rebellion, primarily in the form of an apparent conceptualization of active rejection of values, beliefs and attitudes regarding schooling, drug use and observance of the law which, ostensibly, were perceived by Jim to have generally been upheld within the wider society. A concept of rebellion, as inferred from the transcript of Jim’s narrative, was interpreted as having generally taken the form of involvement in drug use and in violent crime in youth and early adulthood. A socially-derived theme of rebellion was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to Jim’s narrative as a whole.

**Lenny**

A concept of indifference was constructed from the transcript of Lenny’s narrative. A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent references to a perception of indifference. Lenny made references to his apparent general attitude of indifference towards the value of education during the period of his basic formal education. The following extracts from the transcript of Lenny’s narrative exemplify his apparent
perception that, during his school days, he had been indifferent to the expectations of the wider society regarding educational achievement at school –

During my school days I never had much interest in an education. (Lenny, line 9)

I was one of those that really didn’t wanna learn. (Lenny, line 87)

Basically it boiled down that I was never really interested in an education. (Lenny, line 96)

The only thing that I’m really disappointed about is that I never got one [an education] and if I could turn back the hands of time and understand then what I know now back then I would have really put me head down you know. (Lenny, line 392)

Lenny appeared to make explanatory use of a concept of indifference when talking about his recollections of his involvement in minor criminal offences in his post-school years. He expressed his apparent indifference to conventional social norms regarding criminal behaviour, during his post-school years, in the following statements –

Just boiled down to boredom. Used to knock off cars and go and look for some place to break into whether it be grog or money, either one was basically supporting our own desires I suppose. (Lenny, line 359)

Not for somethin that we needed. It was just it became a habit and routine you know to go out and break into some place every weekend to have enough money to buy grog and get drunk all weekend. (Lenny, line 360)

The extracts from the transcript of Lenny’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of indifference, primarily in the form of an apparent conceptualization of personal indifference to the values, beliefs and attitudes regarding schooling and observance of the law which, ostensibly, were perceived by Lenny to have generally been upheld within his dominant socio-cultural milieux. A socially-derived theme of indifference was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to Lenny’s narrative as a whole.

Lionel

A concept of indifference was constructed from the transcript of Lionel’s narrative. A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent references to a perception of
indifference. Lionel’s apparent indifference, as a school child, to the expectations of his teachers was expressed in parts of the transcript of his narrative, as exemplified by the following two extracts from the transcript–

“You play around in class because it’s not really worth learning you think.” (Lionel, line 251)

“And they get you to write a sentence and then write this and write that, so I just decided not to do it.” (Lionel, line 130)

Lionel appeared to use a concept of indifference to social expectations to explain personally perceived negative aspects of his experiences of employment, as exemplified in the following statements that he made regarding his perceptions of his employers’ expectations of his work performance during his apprenticeship–

“They just want me to do the shit work you know. They shouldn’t do that.” (Lionel, line 396)

and–

“I just didn’t like wanna do that shit-kickin for 3 years just to know how to do that.”

(Lionel, line 379)

The extracts from the transcript of Lenny’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of indifference to the values, beliefs and attitudes regarding schooling and vocational training which, ostensibly, were perceived by Lionel to have generally been upheld within the wider society. A socially-derived of indifference was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to Lionel’s narrative as a whole.

Nigel

A concept of indifference was constructed from the transcript of Nigel’s narrative. A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent references to a concept of indifference. The following remarks made by Nigel, when he spoke of his apparent perception of an attitude that he and his peer associates had formed during childhood, exemplify his ostensible references to a concept of indifference–

“We didn’t care in those days. We had nothing to lose anyway. Nothing to lose so we had fun.” (Nigel, line 1915)

His apparent indifference to expectations made of him by his teachers was
evident when he said, with reference to memories of his time at school –

_Didn’t really want to learn. Just wanted to_ [indistinct word/words]. _Just wanted to do other things._ (Nigel, line 28)

Nigel’s apparent explanatory use of a concept of indifference throughout his narrative was evinced in his references to his involvement in criminal activities throughout his adult life, as exemplified by the following statement that he made about his proclivity to engage in theft –

_Can’t just sit there with nothin’ you know. Got to get up and get it. That’s the only way I know, so just go and take somebody else’s._ (Nigel, line 2398)

The extracts from the transcript of Nigel’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of indifference, primarily in the form of a conceptualization of indifference to values, beliefs and attitudes regarding the value of formal learning at school and of observance of the law, which, ostensibly, were perceived by Nigel to have generally been upheld within the wider society. This theme of indifference was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to Nigel’s narrative as a whole.

**Noel**

A concept of injustice was constructed from the transcript of Noel’s narrative. This concept was interpreted as being a socially-derived concept of unfair treatment of the self by others in positions of power or influence.

A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent allusions to a perception of injustice. Noel appeared to allude to a concept of injustice to explain or otherwise contextualise many of the events and circumstances to which he referred in his narrative. His apparent personal development of a concept of injustice seemed to relate initially to some of his experiences at school, as exemplified by the following statements that he made about his recollections of his school life –

_I also became part of the bullying sort of thing so I couldn’t wait to get out of school._

(Noel, line 9)

and –

_There were too many that were below standard so just shove them aside give them some bodgie work to do so I lost interest in all school._ (Noel, line 142)
Noel appeared to have perceived his unsuccessful attempts to gain satisfactory employment after leaving school, and to undertake credentialed vocational training while incarcerated, in terms of a concept of injustice. The following statements that Noel made in relation to his memories of his employment career exemplify his apparent perception of having been treated unjustly –

*It made it hard for me because I spent the better part of my life then doing odd jobs here and there.* (Noel, line 11)

and –

*In the end you get so disillusioned you say no nuh. I’d make up some excuse to stop looking for jobs because if you go for an apprenticeship you know you’re not going to get anywhere.* (Noel, line 131)

Noel’s apparent pervasive explanatory use, throughout his narrative, of a concept of injustice seemed to extend to his perceptions of his attempts to participate in formal education and training during his incarceration, as evidenced when he said, with reference to his attempts –

*They do everything to stop you. They will put every possible hurdle in your way to make it hard for you to get your education.* (Noel, line 12)

and –

*There’s no [indistinct utterance] to help with education. There’s a lot of guys their attitude seems to be well you want to do it you do it on your own we’re not goin to help you one little bit.* (Noel, line 55)

The extracts from the transcript of Noel’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of injustice, primarily in the form of an apparent conceptualization of unfair treatment of the self. This theme was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to Noel’s narrative as a whole.

**Patrick**

A concept of rebellion was constructed from the transcript of Patrick’s narrative. A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent references to a concept of rebellion. Patrick’s apparent attitude of rejection of perceived conventional social values associated with school education, during his school days, was evident in the following statements that he made of his recollections of his experience of school –
Don’t remember much about primary school except that I hated school. (Patrick, line 21)

I always found the rest of school boring that’s why I didn’t go. (Patrick, line 312)

I never finished me year 11 again. I started getting in trouble with coppers. (Patrick, line 191)

Patrick’s account of his habitual truancy from school seemed to exemplify an explanatory use of a concept of rebellion, as evidenced when he said –

When I had to go to school I didn’t go to school. (Patrick, line 347)

The extracts from the transcript of Patrick’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of rebellion, primarily in the form of an apparent conceptualization of active rejection of values, beliefs and attitudes regarding school-level education and conformity to the law which, ostensibly, were perceived by Patrick to have generally been upheld within the wider society. A concept of rebellion, as constructed from the transcript of Patrick’s narrative, was interpreted as having been actualized as truancy from school and involvement in offending behaviours during youth. An inferred socially-derived theme of rebellion was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to Patrick’s narrative as a whole.

Sean

A concept of rebellion was constructed from the transcript of Sean’s narrative. A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent references to a concept of rebellion. Sean appeared to communicate a concept of rebellion when he spoke of his engagement in socially-disapproved behaviour at school. The following extracts from the transcript of Sean’s narrative exemplify his apparent perception that his behaviour at school was rebellious –

Smoke a lot of dope school. Was just a big social thing to me. (Sean, line 336)

They were pretty heavy with the cane when I was goin to school but that didn’t worry me. It was just like you tried to get the cane every day. (Sean, line 112)

Sean appeared to explain the circumstances under which he discontinued his basic formal education in terms of a theme of rebellion that seemed pervade his account of his experience of schooling, when he said –

I got to a point where I started not coming and stuff and it got to a point where they
it was sorta like yearh I was given the choice to resign so I did. Wasn’t much of a decision. (Sean, line 481)

The extracts from the transcript of Sean’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of rebellion, primarily in the form of an apparent conceptualisation of active rejection of values, beliefs and attitudes regarding schooling which, ostensibly, were perceived by Sean to have generally been upheld within the wider society. A concept of rebellion, as inferred from the transcript of Sean’s narrative, was interpreted as having generally taken the form of truancy from school, use of marijuana at school, and deliberate provocation of school staff. A socially-derived theme of rebellion was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to Sean’s narrative as a whole.

Shane

A concept of inclusion was constructed from the transcript of Shane’s narrative. A set of statements in the transcript was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent references to a concept of inclusion. An intention to achieve social inclusion appeared to have been expressed throughout the transcript of Shane’s narrative. The following statements made by Shane, with reference to his participation in vocational training programs during his incarceration, exemplified his apparent expression of an intention to achieve social inclusion –

*Always in and out of jail, so just want to prepare meself before I get another chance.*

(Shane, line 145)

and –

*I don’t get myself down about it. I just keep looking forward to the future days.*

(Shane, line 97)

Shane appeared to explain his attempts to disengage himself from the illegal use of drugs in terms of a concept of social inclusion, when he said –

*Did a course on my own volition. I um had a dirty year with the cannabis so I came back to do the relapse prevention course again just just to address that for myself and I had the relapse ah and wanted to straighten out before I went home.* (Shane, line 57)

The extracts from the transcript of Shane’s narrative, presented here, exemplify
the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of inclusion primarily in the form of an apparent conceptualisation of a personal desire to achieve participation in socially acceptable ways in the wider society. A concept of inclusion, constructed from the transcript of Shane’s narrative, included positive valuing of values, beliefs and attitudes apparently perceived by Shane to have been upheld in the wider society, particularly with regard to the illegal use of drugs. A socially-derived theme of inclusion was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to Shane’s narrative as a whole.

**Stephen**

A concept of work ethic was constructed from the transcript of Stephen’s narrative. A concept of work ethic was constructed as a socially-derived concept of the value of productive work, including an attitudinal predisposition to strive to achieve progressively greater success through engagement in socially-valued productive work.

A set of statements in the transcript were interpreted as having provided themal coherence to the narrative as a whole in the form of repeated apparent references to a concept of work ethic. Stephen’s apparent development of this concept seemed to be related to his perception of achievement at school. He made several statements which seemed to express a perception that his achievements at school had been socially acknowledged. The following statement that Stephen made exemplifies his apparent expression of this perception –

*The principal of [religious organisation 1 school 3] he actually nominated me for young achiever of the year.* (Stephen, line 98)

Stephen’s apparent personal positive valuing of productive work, as a major value component of a concept of work ethic, seemed to have been expressed in his recollections of his experiences of work-related education and training when he said –

*By the time halfway through the first year I’d actually gone and bought a brand new ute.* (Stephen, line 109)

and –

*Along the way I learnt sort of how to run a business you know with [building firm 1]. I learnt estimating as well as management and also self-taught sort of thing accountancy.* (Stephen, line 9)

Stephen’s apparent use of a pervasive explanatory theme of a socially-derived concept of work ethic in relation to his personal achievement, throughout his narrative,
was exemplified by the following set of statements that he made about the development of his career in the building industry –

*I used to do jobs on weekends pergolas – and anything you know, fences for friends and things like that, so and my weekend business was getting bigger than my work you know.* (Stephen, line 109)

*When my indentures come through I ah just went out on my own as a builder up in [Australian Territory 1] and ah took on big projects. Basically commercial stuff arhm and then arhm I went into earth moving and transport as well.* (Stephen, line 8)

*I’ve built houses for myself. I’ve sat down and designed and drafted them all up to scale and then just taken them to a draftsman put them on CAD and put them into Council get them signed up.* (Stephen, line 49)

The extracts from the transcript of Shane’s narrative, presented here, exemplify the basis of the researcher’s interpretation of the narrative as being characterised by a pervasive, socially-derived theme of work ethic primarily in the form of an apparent conceptualisation of a personal positive valuing of productive work. This theme was interpreted as having provided themal coherence to Stephen’s narrative as a whole.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, social meanings relating to the individual lived experience of each of the 15 individual participants during the period(s) of their formal education and training were presented. The social meanings were presented as interpretive constructions made by the researcher from structural aspects of the participants’ narratives, inferred in the written transcripts of the narratives. In each case, the grounding of the construction in the transcript of the participant’s narrative was demonstrated. Each social meaning was given a descriptive label.

The following six social meanings were constructed and labelled by the researcher:

*Barriers*: A socially-derived conceptual theme of impediments perceived to have severely limited opportunities for participation in socially-acceptable ways in the wider society.

*Inclusion*: A socially-derived conceptual theme of an apparent desire to gain or regain full participation in the wider society by legitimate means. This constructed concept was assumed by the researcher to imply a generally positive evaluation of conformity to the personally perceived norms of conventional Australian society. *Indifference*: A socially-derived conceptual theme of indifference to particular values, beliefs, and/or attitudes perceived to have been generally upheld within dominant socio-cultural milieux. This concept was assumed by the researcher to imply a generally neutral evaluation of conformity to the personally perceived norms of conventional Australian society.
Injustice: A socially-derived conceptual theme of unfair treatment of the self by others in positions of power or influence.
Rebellion: A socially-derived conceptual theme of the active rejection of particular values, beliefs, and/or attitudes perceived to have been generally upheld within dominant socio-cultural milieus. This constructed concept was assumed by the researcher to imply a generally negative evaluation of conformity to the personally perceived norms of conventional Australian society.
Work ethic: A socially-derived conceptual theme of the value of productive work, including an attitudinal predisposition to strive to achieve progressively greater success through engagement in socially-valued productive work.

Some of the social meanings were common to the transcripts of the narratives of two or more participants, and that some were peculiar to the transcript of the narrative of an individual participant. A summary of the social meanings, and of the pseudonyms of the participants whose narratives were represented by the transcripts from which social meanings were constructed, is provided in Table Seven.

As shown in Table Seven, inclusion, indifference and rebellion were the social meanings most frequently constructed from the transcripts. In each case, social meanings of inclusion, indifference and rebellion were interpretively associated with each of four transcripts, constituting approximately 27 per cent of the total number of 15 transcripts. None of the other three remaining social meanings, viz., barriers, injustice and work ethic, was constructed from more than one transcript.

**Table 7: Social meanings associated with participants’ narratives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social meaning</th>
<th>Participants with whose narrative a particular social meaning was interpretively associated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>Aaron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Barry, Brian, George, Shane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifference</td>
<td>Bill, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injustice</td>
<td>Noel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>David, Jim, Patrick, Sean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work ethic</td>
<td>Stephen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 10

An understanding of the lived experience of individual participants

Introduction

This chapter presents the researcher’s understanding of aspects of the lived experience of each individual participant. The main body of the chapter represents the fourth, and final, stage in the development of the researcher’s understanding of the lived experience of individual participants, relating to their formal education and vocational training, as explicated in Chapter One.

The researcher constructed an understanding of aspects of each participant’s lived experience in order to achieve the first of the two main aims of the study of the study, as outlined in Chapter One, viz., to develop an understanding of the lived experience of each participant relating to the participant’s basic formal education and vocational training. For each participant, the researcher’s interpretively constructed understanding of aspects of the participant’s lived experience is presented in the form an interpretive synthesis of general information about the participant, concepts constructed from the transcript of the participant’s narrative, and inferred relationships between these concepts.

As discussed in Chapter Three, some scholars of narrative research have proposed that narrative research methodology has a capacity to enable researchers to develop an understanding of the lived experience of individuals (for example: Ezzy, 1998; Josselson, 1995). From the constructivist perspective of the study, as explicated in Chapter Three, any understanding of human experience, whether a person’s understanding of his or her own lived experience or a person’s understanding of another person’s lived experience, is regarded as necessarily being a contextualized human construction. The term ‘contextualized’ is used here to mean that the construction is made within a particular context which includes contextual factors such as time, place, personal knowledge, and perceived social relationships, and to imply its uniqueness to the particular context in which it was constructed. In the study, the researcher’s understanding of the lived experience of a participant was assumed to be the researcher’s contextualized construction of the participant’s contextualized construction of aspects of his lived experience to which he made reference in his narrative. As
discussed in Chapter Three, some scholars of narrative research have concluded that self-narratives communicate meanings which constitute aspects of the narrator’s understanding of her or his lived experience (for example: Chase, 1995; Cortazzi, 1993; Lieblich et al., 1998; Mishler, 1986a; Polkinghorne, 1998; Riessman, 1993). It was assumed in the study that, in a spoken self-narrative, meanings of the lived experience of the narrator, constructed by the narrator, are communicated as aspects of the narrator’s understanding of his or her lived experience. As explicated in Chapter Four, the researcher assumed that two general categories of meanings were communicated in the spoken self-narratives of the participants in the study, viz., personal meanings and social meanings, and that meanings within each of these categories could be constructed by the researcher through processes of interpretive analysis of written transcripts of the narratives. The researcher’s understanding of aspects of the lived experience of the participants, relating particularly to the periods of their basic formal education and vocational training, as presented in this chapter, is based in part on the researcher’s construction of personal meanings and social meanings from transcripts of the participants’ spoken narratives. In accordance with Riessman’s (1993) conclusion regarding the representation of phenomena in interview narrative research, the researcher’s representations of understandings of the lived experience of the participants are assumed to be ‘incomplete, partial and selective’ (Riessman, 1993, p.11).

General information about individual participants, presented in this chapter, was sourced from constructed concepts and other information which are presented in Chapter Six. Concepts constructed through holistic-content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998) of the transcripts of individual participants’ narratives, discussed in this chapter, were sourced from concepts presented in Chapters Seven and Eight. Concepts constructed through holistic-form analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998) of the transcripts were sourced from Chapter Nine. The constructed concepts have been classified, in the study, into four general categories which the researcher labelled ‘inferred general characteristics of participants’, ‘social meanings’, ‘personal meanings’, and ‘specific topics’.

For each transcript, a synoptic overview of general information about the participant is followed by identification of each of the concepts which were constructed from the transcript, and by a discussion of inferred relationships between the concepts. The researcher’s general understanding of aspects of each participant’s lived experience is presented here in the alphabetical order of the pseudonyms assigned to the participants.
The researcher’s understanding of participants’ lived experience

Aaron

The estimated period during which Aaron experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1985 to 1995. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. Aaron discontinued his school education at some time during year 10. His formal learning achievement in secondary school had been of a generally low standard. He had been encouraged by school authorities to change secondary schools when he was in year eight, because of his disruptive and delinquent behaviour. He perceived that his parents had provided him with adequate physical care during his childhood, and that his father had been a stern and harsh disciplinarian. After leaving school he obtained full-time employment in a trade, involving undertaking a trade apprenticeship which he discontinued in the second year. He began to use alcohol and other drugs on a regular, frequent basis during year eight of his schooling, and he had become addicted to heroin by his mid-teenage years. During his late youth and early adulthood he had usually been unemployed, and had remained addicted to using heroin. By early adulthood, he had served several periods of corrective detention for offences ostensibly related to his involvement with illicit drugs. Aaron had not undertaken any formal education or vocational training during his periods of incarceration.

A social meaning of barriers, a personal meaning of lost opportunity, and specific topics of school environment, drug use and capacity to achieve were constructed from the transcript of Aaron’s narrative. Aaron had experienced extreme discontent at school, ostensibly stemming from a perceived inability to engage in normal social interaction because of perceived socially-derived impediments to his engagement. Aaron’s discontent ostensibly was associated with his low level of school achievement, his use of drugs leading to an eventual addiction relatively early in life, and his desire to leave school, with a consequent loss of opportunities to have benefited, through obtaining rewarding, ongoing legitimate employment, from having attained a meritorious level of achievement at school. Aaron’s non-participation in formal education or vocational training during the period of his incarceration may have been indicative of some lack of commitment on his part to attempt to take available opportunities to enhance his prospects of obtaining suitable legitimate employment after his release from custody.
Barry

The estimated period during which Barry experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1980 to 1990. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. Barry had attempted year 11 of school, without completing it. Up to the age of 11 years, because of the remote location of his family, Barry’s schooling had been entirely through a School of the Air, under his mother’s supervision. He perceived that, during his childhood and youth, his family had been conventional, of at least moderate financial means, and generally supportive of him. He became involved in illegal drug use and drug trafficking at the age of 13 years while attending a private school, ostensibly through the influence of older team-mates in a football club. He became increasingly involved in illegal drug use and trafficking during his adolescence and youth, and into his adult years, which involvement had resulted in numerous convictions and, eventually, in periods of corrective detention. During the times that Barry had not been in corrective detention during his adult years he had lived with his family and had undertaken casual employment work, mainly in welding and metalwork. At the time of the interview session, Barry did not have any credentialed trade qualifications. However, he indicated that he had been involved in some metalwork trade training in the period of his incarceration during which the interview session was held.

A social meaning of inclusion, a personal meaning of immaturity, and specific topics of drug use and of offending were constructed from the transcript of Barry’s narrative. At the time of the interview session, Barry perceived that he experienced a strong desire to achieve inclusion in conventional society. Ostensibly, during the period of his schooling he had perceived that he had not achieved social inclusion. Barry perceived that, in association with his relative immaturity during his school years, he had failed to exercise an appropriate degree of personal responsibility, and, consequently, had become involved in the use of illegal drugs and in criminal activities associated with their use. He had engaged in some vocational training during the period of his incarceration, perhaps with an intention of enhancing his chances of achieving social inclusion after his release from custody.

Bill

The estimated period during which Bill experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1975 to 1985. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. Bill had successfully completed 12 years of schooling. His
references to his family relationships and environment during his childhood and youth, and of his schooling, including his relationships with his teachers and peers, were consistently positive. On leaving school, Bill gained entry to a university undergraduate program, which he discontinued after four months to take up full-time employment as a bank teller. After several years of employment as a bank teller, he enrolled in a university undergraduate business program on a part-time basis, which he completed while remaining in full-time employment. During the time of his employment, he had become addicted to heroin, which addiction appeared to have been associated with his eventual conviction for an indictable offence. The researcher inferred from Bill’s utterances that he was at least 28 years old before his first period of incarceration, and that the period of his incarceration during which the interview session was held was his first. He gave no indication, in his narrative, of personal involvement in any formal studies or training during the period of his corrective detention.

A social meaning of indifference, a personal meaning of supportive environment, and specific topics of family environment, school environment, and readiness to learn were constructed from the transcript of Bill’s narrative. Bill had developed an indifference to ostensibly conventional social expectations that he should try to attain meritorious achievements at school. Bill’s indifference appeared to have been associated with a situation in which few demands were made of him in his ostensibly very comfortable home and school environments, and with his apparent failure, during his school years, to have fully developed a sense of personal responsibility. Bill’s non-participation in formal education or vocational training during the period of his incarceration may have been indicative of a belief that he perceived that he had already acquired adequate employment-related credentials to enable him to obtain suitable employment on his release from custody.

Brian

The estimated period during which Brian experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1975 to 1985. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. Brian had discontinued his schooling part-way through year 12. He experienced several periods of discontinuity during his primary schooling, as a result of his family’s relocations in several overseas countries. He began attending school in Australia in year five of primary school. On leaving school, he completed a pre-vocational training program and obtained full-time employment. He enrolled in an accredited vocational education program related to his employment. However, he
discontinued the program after one year and did not undertake any further formal education or training. He perceived that, during his childhood and youth, his family was conventional, and had been caring and supportive towards him. He began to use illicit drugs at an early stage of his adolescence, and became addicted to heroin during his youth. He became involved in criminal activities, apparently to support his heroin addiction. Brian had been in steady employment for most of his adult life. At the time of his interview session with the researcher he was serving his first custodial detention sentence. Ostensibly, the sentence had been imposed for his involvement in an offence related to dealing in heroin. During the period of his incarceration, he had successfully completed a pre-tertiary bridging study program. At the time of the interview session he was enrolled in a social work undergraduate program.

A social meaning of inclusion, a personal meaning of social status, and specific topics of discontinuity, intimacy, and drug use were constructed from the transcript of Brian’s narrative. At the time of the interview session, Brian perceived that he had experienced a strong desire to achieve inclusion in conventional society. Ostensibly, during his school years, the desire had manifested itself as an experience of a strong need to achieve high social status in his peer group, and had led to his involvement with, and eventual addiction to, illegal drugs, and his involvement in offences associated with his addiction. Brian’s engagement in employment-related higher education studies during the period of his incarceration may have been indicative of an intention to enhance his chances of regaining social inclusion after his release from custody.

David

The estimated period during which David experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1980 to 1990. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. David discontinued his schooling before completing year 10. He perceived his experience of schooling to have been entirely negative. His school achievement was of consistently very low standard. From early in his adolescence he had used alcohol and illicit drugs on a regular basis. Early in his adult years he became a habitual illegal user of amphetamines. He attributed his increasing involvement in criminal offences and, ultimately, his incarceration to this habit. He completed his trade apprenticeship during his periods of custodial detention. At the time of the interview session, he was attempting to complete years 11 and 12 of formal schooling by distance education, with a view to undertaking tertiary studies leading to professional
credentials, ostensibly to enhance his prospects of obtaining satisfying employment after his release from custodial detention.

A social meaning of rebellion, personal meanings of disadvantage and of discontent, and specific topics of family environment, learning difficulty, school environment, employment, and learning in jail were constructed from the transcript of David’s narrative. He had developed a rebellious attitude towards socially conventional legitimate authority, perhaps arising from discontents stemming from his ostensible experience of disadvantage during his childhood. His inability to relate comfortably to his general environments at school and in his trade apprenticeship, together with his ostensible early habitual heavy use of drugs and eventual involvement in criminal activities associated with the use of drugs, appeared to have been associated with discontents he had experienced in his school and vocational training environments. David’s participation in a formal education program during the period of his incarceration may have been indicative of some commitment on his part to attempt to overcome perceived effects of past disadvantages and discontents with his prospects of obtaining satisfactory legitimate employment on his release from custody.

**George**

The estimated period during which George experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1980 to 1990. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. George discontinued his formal education during year 10 of schooling. By that time, he apparently had not acquired the basic skills generally taught in Australian primary schools to the generally accepted minimum Australian standards. He attributed his lack of school achievement to his frequent relocations throughout the period of his primary schooling. His behaviour at secondary school had frequently been unacceptable to the school authorities, and had resulted in several changes of school; ultimately, in the discontinuation of his formal schooling. His behaviour apparently had been strongly influenced by his very frequent use of marijuana and alcohol. George’s parents had separated when he was less than three years old. He remained with his mother throughout his childhood and early youth. His contact with his biological father and male members of his wider family, during his childhood and youth, was infrequent and generally emotionally stressful. George’s family environment during his entire childhood ostensibly had been one of physical violence fuelled by excessive use of alcohol and other drugs. George’s lifestyle from the period since leaving school through to his incarceration had ostensibly been one of chronic unemployment, frequent heavy
use of drugs, principally marijuana and alcohol, and involvement in crime as a means of obtaining income. During this period he had experienced no formal or employment-related education or training, or work experience. At the time of his interview session with the researcher, George was undergoing his first occasion of incarceration. While incarcerated, he had completed some employment-related training, including first-aid and welding, and had engaged in some study of year 10 English and mathematics by distance education. George made frequent references to an apparent wish to undertake as many training programs as possible, and to complete his year 10 school studies while incarcerated.

A social meaning of inclusion, a personal meaning of disadvantage, and specific topics of lost opportunity, family environment, school environment, drug use, and employment were constructed from the transcript of George’s narrative. At the time of the interview session, George expressed a strong desire to achieve inclusion in conventional society. However, he perceived that, during his childhood and youth, disadvantages that he had experienced had led to circumstances, including his low level of school achievement and his involvement in drug use, which had resulted in his loss of opportunities achieve inclusion in conventional adult society through obtaining ongoing, adequately rewarding legitimate employment. George’s participation in vocational training during the period of his incarceration may have been indicative of an intention on his part to enhance his prospects of achieving social inclusion by obtaining satisfactory legitimate employment after his release from custody.

Jim

The estimated period during which Jim experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1970 to 1980. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. Jim discontinued his schooling at some time during year 11. Prior to discontinuing his schooling, he apparently had demonstrated that he had a capacity to achieve at a high standard at school. His family environment during his childhood and youth apparently had been stable and nurturing. His references to his relationships with his parents and siblings were invariably positive. On leaving school, he had taken up an apprenticeship in the automotive industry. He became dissatisfied with the apprenticeship after two years, and had left it to work as a welder in his uncle’s business. Early in his adulthood, Jim was convicted of criminal offences for which he had received a custodial sentence. He attributed his involvement in criminal activities to peer-group influence during his early adult years. During his first period of
incarceration he became addicted to heroin. During the period of his incarceration in which the interview session was held, Jim apparently had undertaken all the vocational training and work experience that was available to him. He stated that his purpose in undertaking vocational training while incarcerated was to acquire accredited skills in order to enhance his prospects of steady, paid employment when he was released from custody.

A social meaning of rebellion, personal meanings of lost opportunity, of learning, and of dissatisfaction, and specific topics of offending, work ethic, learning in jail, and capacity to change were constructed from the transcript of Jim’s narrative. During his childhood and youth, he had developed a rebellious attitude towards attempts to impose on him conventional social expectations relating to school achievement and vocational training, and conformity to the law. Development of a rebellious attitude appeared to have been associated with his ostensible dissatisfaction with his school and vocational training environments. He perceived, at the time of the interview session, that he had missed opportunities (as a result of his responses to his dissatisfactions) to have benefited from meritorious school achievement and accredited vocational training. However, he perceived that, while incarcerated, he had opportunity to prepare himself to realize his strong work ethic, and to change his lifestyle, on release from custody, through taking advantage of the formal education and vocational training programs available to him at the correctional centre in which he was incarcerated.

Lenny

The estimated period during which Lenny experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1970 to 1980. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. Lenny had completed 10 years of formal schooling. His school achievement had generally been of a mediocre or poor standard. His schooling had been severely disrupted by frequent family relocations. Ostensibly, Lenny had taken little interest in schoolwork, experienced boredom during his school years, and had responded by ongoing engagement in delinquent and offending behaviours with members of his peer group. He had spent various periods of time in youth detention centres during the later years of his schooling. He had left school as soon as possible, and had obtained full-time employment in an occupation in which credentialed trade qualifications had been available. He had shown no interest in obtaining trade qualifications during the period of his employment after leaving school. Lenny had been raised by his grandmother, in association with several aunts and uncles on his mother’s
side of the family. He had not known his parents. His grandmother had provided adequately for his material needs. However, apparently she had exercised little control over his behaviour and had provided him with minimum parental guidance in his personal and social development. He became addicted to heroin early in his adult life, and had spent the first 10 years of his adulthood either engaged in criminal activities to support his addiction or incarcerated for his offences. Since the commencement of a long custodial sentence following his conviction for a serious, non-property offence, Lenny had completed a pre-tertiary study program. At the time of the interview session He was enrolled in a university undergraduate program, ostensibly with a view to eventually practicing in the legal profession.

A social meaning of indifference, a personal meaning of lost opportunity, and specific topics of capacity to learn, and of offending were constructed from the transcript of Lenny’s narrative. During the period of his schooling, he had developed an indifference to conventional social expectations regarding the making of an effort to learn at school. During his youth and early adulthood, he had become indifferent to social expectations regarding compliance with the law. At the time of the interview session, he perceived that he had missed opportunities, during his childhood and youth, to have prepared himself to have benefited, by way of ongoing, adequately rewarding legitimate employment in his adulthood, from meritorious educational achievement, and that he had consequently had engaged in a criminal career in order to obtain financial income. His participation in a higher education undergraduate program during the period of his incarceration may have been indicative of a determination on his part to take advantage of an available opportunity to prepare himself for a legitimate professional career after his release from custody

Lionel

The estimated period during which Lionel experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1985 to 1995. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. Lionel had apparently made normal progress through his primary and secondary school years up to mid-way through year 12 when he voluntarily discontinued his formal education and obtained employment with a motor vehicle repairer. He perceived that his family life during his childhood and youth was conventional and without experience of significant disadvantage in his family environment. He consistently referred to his perceptions of dissatisfaction with the quality of his schooling, and with the vocational training available to him in association
with his employment. During his secondary schooling Lionel had associated with a rebellious and somewhat delinquent peer group, had engaged in disruptive behaviour at school, and had been a relatively minor user of marijuana. Within approximately one year after leaving school, Lionel had discontinued his employment, and had, ostensibly, engaged in a lifestyle of indolence, increasingly heavy use of illicit drugs, including amphetamines, and in criminal activities associated with obtaining a supply of illicit drugs. At the time of his interview session with the researcher, Lionel had been serving his first custodial sentence. He did not mention any personal involvement in formal education or vocational training programs in the correctional centre.

A social meaning of indifference, a personal meaning of lost opportunity, and specific topics of misfit, and of vocational training were constructed from the transcript of Lionel’s narrative. During the period of his schooling, Lionel had developed an indifference to conventional social expectations regarding pupils’ behaviour at school, and, during his trade apprenticeship, he had responded indifferently to his employer’s expectations of him as an apprentice. He perceived, at the time of the interview session, that, during his childhood and youth, he had not fitted into the conventional social system of his school, and that his responses to ostensible incongruities between his expectations and the expectations of his teachers and of his apprenticeship supervisors had resulted in his loss of opportunities to have benefited from meritorious school achievement and the completion of his trade apprenticeship. He perceived that these circumstances had led him to adopt a lifestyle of indolence and drug use during the later part of his youth and the early years of his adulthood. His non-participation in formal education or vocational training during the period of his incarceration may have been indicative of a lack of commitment on his part to taking advantage of available opportunities to gain employment-related credentials.

**Nigel**

The estimated period during which Nigel experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1980 to 1990. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. Nigel did not complete his primary school education. His account of his school experiences depicted an extremely low of achievement in formal learning of the basic skills and understandings of English language and of mathematics, an extreme lack of interest in formal learning, constant conflict with school authority, frequent punishment for unacceptable behaviour, and habitual truancy and delinquency. Nigel’s description of his childhood depicted a home environment which was
characterised by inadequate and inappropriate parenting, lack of appropriate adult supervision and guidance, physical violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect, deprivation of basic material necessities, and on-going experiences of separation from family members, detention in juvenile offender facilities, and recourse to a delinquent peer group in order to try to meet his social and emotional needs. Nigel had been a homeless delinquent engaging in serious criminal behaviour in order to survive during his early adolescent years. He had never been legitimately employed in earning income during his youth and early adult years, and had derived his income solely from social welfare payments and property crime which had resulted in his frequent corrective detention. Ostensibly, he had spent the majority of his life, from about the age of 15 years to the time of his interview with the researcher, in corrective detention. He stated that he had not participated in any formal education or vocational training programs during any of his periods of corrective detention.

A social meaning of indifference, personal meanings of disadvantage and of self-determination, and specific topics of family environment, unsupported childhood, personal abuse, ability at school, socially unacceptable behaviour, and rebellious self-direction were constructed from the transcript of Nigel’s narrative. During the period of his schooling, Nigel had developed an indifference to expectations that he comply with the social norms of the wider society, which indifference, ostensibly, had persisted throughout his youth and adult life. At the time of the interview session, Nigel perceived that his indifference to expectations that he conform behaviourally to the norms of conventional society had developed as a result of his experience of severe disadvantages throughout his childhood and youth. He apparently had developed a generalized response, to conventional social expectations, of willful self-determination whereby his decisions to act ostensibly were unaffected by such expectations, including expectations that he conform behaviourally to the law. Nigel’s non-participation in formal education or vocational training programs during the periods of his incarceration may have been indicative of a lack of commitment on his part to achieving employment-related credentials.

Noel

The estimated period during which Noel experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1960 to 1970. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. Noel had discontinued his formal schooling after year 10. Up until the time of his early teenage years his family had been frequently relocated
overseas. His primary schooling had been extremely fragmented, with regard to the time he spent at any particular school and to the nation within which he attended school. His secondary schooling apparently had been characterised by an inability to form rewarding relationships with his peers or his teachers, constant bullying from his peers, extremely low academic achievement, and very frequent truancy. He had provided very little information about his family or his relationship with them. However he had made no negative comments about this aspect of his lived experience. On leaving school, Noel had been unable to find ongoing employment or employment that provided him with an opportunity to gain credentialed trade training. During his years of incarceration, until the time of his interview session with the researcher, he stated that he had made frequent, often unsuccessful, attempts to further his formal education and to receive credentialed vocational training.

A social meaning of injustice, a personal meaning of alienation, and specific topics of school environment, employment, and of offending were constructed from the transcript of Noel’s narrative. During the period of his formal schooling, He had developed a sense of personal injustice, ostensibly based on perceptions that he had been treated unfairly by his teachers and his peers. He perceived that he had become socially alienated at school, and had, consequently, discontinued his schooling at the earliest possible opportunity. At the time of the interview session, Noel perceived that, as a result of the non-completion of his basic formal education and of continuing unfair treatment by people in positions of influence over him, he had been unable to obtain ongoing, adequately rewarding legitimate employment, and that he had, consequently, turned to a life of crime as a means of obtaining material income. His frequent attempts to access formal education or vocational training programs while incarcerated may have been indicative of a determination on his part to acquire employment-related credentials.

Patrick

The estimated period during which Patrick experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1980 to 1990. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. Patrick had discontinued his formal schooling in year 10 without completing the year. He apparently had experienced frequent disruptions of his schooling as a result of frequent relocation of his family. He perceived his parents as having been indifferent to learning difficulties and emotional difficulties that he experienced throughout his childhood. Patrick’s school achievements had been
generally marginal. However, he perceived that he had consistently achieved well in English language and mathematics. During much of his primary schooling he had experienced bullying, which he had attributed to his non-Caucasian physical appearance. He had been a frequent truant during his secondary schooling. From about the age of 12 years he apparently had imbibed alcohol frequently and in large amounts. After leaving school he obtained an apprenticeship with a metal fabrication business, which he had discontinued after several months. Patrick had first been incarcerated at the age of 17 years, and had spent most of his life since that time serving a series of prison sentences. He had completed an apprenticeship as a chef during his incarceration. At the time of his interview session, he was studying year 11 English and mathematics by distance education with a view to undertaking studies to obtain a tertiary qualification.

A social meaning of rebellion, personal meanings of disadvantage and of self-efficacy, and specific topics of discontinuity, capacity to achieve, learning in jail, and future plans were constructed from the transcript of Patrick’s narrative. During his secondary schooling, he apparently had developed an attitude of rebellious rejection of conventional social values associated with schooling, ostensibly associated with educational disadvantages which he had experienced during his childhood. A rebellious attitude towards particular conventional social values, which, ostensibly, he had developed during his secondary schooling, seemed to have become generalized, during his youth and adulthood, to a rebellious attitude towards expectations that he conform behaviourally to the law, and to a corresponding engagement by Patrick in criminal activities. However, at the time of the interview session, Patrick perceived that his capacity to control aspects of his life, through exercising an ostensible capacity to achieve goals that he set for himself, could be deployed to achieve legitimate future goals by undertaking a formal learning pathway during his period of incarceration.

Sean

The estimated period during which Sean experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1970 to 1980. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. He had completed 12 years of schooling. His school achievement in year 12 apparently had been of a very low standard. Sean described his family environment as generally supportive and caring, with particular parental concern for the future security of employment of the children. After leaving school he obtained employment in a public service organisation, from which he had resigned after a
relatively short time. Apart from work experience training programs of very short duration, which he had undertaken in order to qualify for social welfare payments, he had not participated in formal education or training from the period since leaving school to the time of the interview session. He had provided no information to the researcher about his involvement in criminal offenses or his record of incarceration. He made no mention of participation in any formal education or vocational training provided by the correctional centre in which he was incarcerated.

A social meaning of rebellion, a personal meaning of misfit, and specific topics of school environment, relevance of school work, school achievement, and drug use were constructed from the transcript of Sean’s narrative. During the period of his basic schooling, he apparently had developed a rebellious attitude towards his teachers’ expectations of him as a pupil, an attitude which had eventually been expressed in misbehaviour aimed at bringing about the discontinuation of his formal schooling. At the time of the interview session, he perceived that he had been a social misfit at school in that he had actively rejected conventional social expectations made of him as a school pupil, and that his active rejection of such expectations had included his frequent use of marijuana at school. His apparent lack of interest in continuing employment and in formal education and training during his early adulthood may have been associated with perceptions of being a social misfit in environments in which expectations were made by authorities exercising legitimate control. His non-participation in formal education or vocational training programs during his incarceration may have been indicative of a lack of commitment on his part to achieving employment-related credentials.

Shane

The estimated period during which Shane experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1980 to 1990. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. He had discontinued his formal education at the end of year 10. His school achievement had been generally of a low standard. He perceived that he had not established a close or satisfying relationship with his father, who had separated from his mother when he was very young. Shane attributed his generally poor performance at school to a lack of adequate parental control and to negative peer group influences. He had started using illicit drugs early in his adulthood. However, he gave no ostensible indication that he had perceived a relationship between his use of drugs and his involvement in criminal activities. During his period of incarceration in which the interview session was held, Shane had obtained trade certificates in welding and
metalwork.

A social meaning of inclusion, a personal meaning of lost opportunity, and specific topics of peer influence and of readiness to learn were constructed from the transcript of Shane’s narrative. At the time of the interview session, he expressed a strong desire to achieve inclusion in conventional society, which he had been unable to achieve in the past, ostensibly because of a lack of opportunities to obtain ongoing, adequately rewarding legitimate employment. He attributed his lack of opportunities to a low standard of school achievement, and to his addiction to drugs. He perceived that his low standard of school achievement had resulted from a lack of motivational capacity, while at school, to have applied himself to formal learning, and to a negative influence of some members of his school peer group. At the time of the interview session, he perceived that his disengagement from addiction to drugs was an initial step towards his eventual achievement of social inclusion. His participation in trade-skills training during the period of his incarceration may have been indicative of a commitment on his part to acquire employment-related skills, perhaps with a view to achieving social inclusion through obtaining satisfactory legitimate employment after his release from custody.

Stephen

The estimated period during which Stephen experienced his basic formal schooling was from 1975 to 1985. His first language, and the language of instruction at the schools he attended, was English. He had successfully completed year 11 of his schooling. On leaving school he entered into a trade apprenticeship which he completed in minimum time. His references to his family life, schooling, apprenticeship, and to his social environment during his childhood and youth, were generally very positive. Stephen’s achievements at school, academically and in sports and organized social activities, were of a consistently high standard. He remained employed by his original employer for a relatively short time after he had completed his trade apprenticeship, after which he became self-employed as the manager/operator of his own business firm. He had remained in full-time self-employment up to the beginning of the period of incarceration during which the interview session was held. Ostensibly, he had not been involved in offending until the age of approximately 30 years. He had been convicted on only one occasion, for which conviction he had been serving his sentence at the time of the interview session. He made no mention of participation in formal education or vocational training at the correctional centre in which he was incarcerated.
A social meaning of work ethic, a personal meaning of supportive environment, and specific topics of self-efficacy, family environment, school environment, and capacity to achieve were constructed from the transcript of Stephen’s narrative. He expressed a belief that his successful achievements at school and in his initial accredited vocational training had been strongly influenced by his active commitment, during his childhood and youth, to a positive personal valuing of productive work. This commitment ostensibly had included an attitudinal predisposition to strive to achieve progressively greater success through engagement in socially-valued productive work. He expressed a belief that he had an innate capacity to control aspects of his life by exercising his perceived capacity to achieve goals that he set for himself through effective self-directed learning. His non-participation in formal education or vocational training programs during his incarceration may have been indicative of a personal perception that he did not require further trade credentials in order to have a high probability of obtaining satisfactory legitimate employment after his release from custody.

**Conclusion**

The remainder of this chapter presents a summary of the components of the researcher’s constructed general understandings of the lived experiences of the participants relating to the period(s) of their involvement in formal education and training. Variability of the components across cases is illustrated with reference to selected subsets of cases. As explicated in Chapter Five, the researcher assumed that his constructions of understandings of aspects of the participants’ lived experiences were indirect, incomplete, highly interpretive representations of the participants’ understandings of their lived experiences.

Components of the researcher’s understandings included his constructions, from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives, of general information about them, inferred general characteristics of them, social meanings, personal meanings, specific topics relating to particular personal meanings, and general evaluative connotations of specific topics. These components are summarised in Table Eight, at the end of this chapter.

As can be seen in Table Eight, there is considerable variation between participant cases with regard to the inferred general characteristics component and the conceptual components of the researcher’s understanding of the participants’ lived experience. The variation is illustrated here by a consideration of the researcher’s
general understanding of the lived experience of participants in several selected subsets of participants.

One subset of participants in the study consisted of 10 participants who apparently had begun a pattern of repeated involvement in illegal activity during their childhood or early youth: Aaron, David, Nigel, Shane, Barry, Lenny, Noel, Lionel, George, and Brian. Of these 10 participants, seven had experienced several periods of corrective detention prior to the period during which they participated in the study: Aaron, David, Nigel, Shane, Barry, Lenny, and Noel.

None of the seven participants who had experienced several periods of corrective detention had completed more than 10 years of basic formal education. There was considerable variation amongst these participants in the historical period during which they had experienced their basic formal education. Barry, David, Nigel and Shane had experienced their basic formal education between 1980 and 1990, whereas Aaron’s experience of formal education was between 1985 and 1995, Lenny’s between 1970 and 1980, and Noel’s between 1960 and 1970.

A second subset of participants consisted of those who apparently had experienced dysfunctional family life during most of their childhood: David, Nigel and Lenny. A social meaning of indifference and a personal meaning of disadvantage were interpretively associated with the lived experiences of David and of Nigel, relating to their basic formal education, whereas a social meaning of rebellion and a personal meaning of lost opportunity were associated with Lenny’s lived experience.

A third subset of participants, selected for illustrative purposes, consisted of Aaron, Barry, Noel and Shane. These four participants apparently had experienced generally functional family environments during their childhood. A social meaning of inclusion and a personal meaning of immaturity were interpretively associated with Barry’s lived experience, whereas, a social meaning of barriers and a personal meaning of lost opportunity were associated with Aaron’s lived experience, a social meaning of injustice and a personal meaning of alienation with Noel’s, and a social meaning of inclusion and a personal meaning of lost opportunity with Shane’s lived experience.

A fourth selected subset of participants (Brian, George, and Lionel ) consisted of those who apparently had become frequently involved in criminal activities from a relatively early age and had not served more than one custodial sentence. Brian and Lionel had each experienced at least 11 years of basic formal education, whereas George had experienced 10 years. George apparently had experienced a dysfunctional family life as a child, whereas Brian and Lionel ostensibly had experienced generally
functional family environments. A social meaning of inclusion and a personal meaning of lost opportunity were interpretively associated with the lived experiences of Brian and of George, whereas a social meaning of indifference and a personal meaning of social status were associated with Lionel’s lived experience.
Table 8: Components of the researcher’s understandings of the lived experience of individual participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Period of basic formal education.</th>
<th>Total years of schooling</th>
<th>Inferred family circumstances throughout childhood</th>
<th>Social meanings.</th>
<th>Personal meanings &amp; specific topics(with value* in italics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>1985-95</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Normal’</td>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>Lost opportunity School environment(-) Drugs(-) Capacity to achieve(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>1980-90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Immaturity Drugs(-) Offending(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>1980-90</td>
<td>&lt;10</td>
<td>Dysfunctional</td>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>Disadvantage Family environment(-) Learning difficulties(-) Discontent Employment(-) Learning in jail(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenny</td>
<td>1970-80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Dysfunctional</td>
<td>Indifference</td>
<td>Lost opportunity Capacity to learn(-) Socially unacceptable behaviour(0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.

*‘value’ was the researcher’s interpretation of the direction of the inferred general evaluative connotation of the specific topic within the transcript as a whole (ref. Ch. 7), as follows: (+) positive; (-) negative; & (0) neutral or none evident
Table 8: Components of the researcher’s understandings of the lived experience of individual participants (contd.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Period of basic formal education.</th>
<th>Total years of schooling</th>
<th>Inferred family circumstances throughout childhood</th>
<th>Social meanings.</th>
<th>Personal meanings &amp; specific topics(with value* in italics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigel</td>
<td>1980-90</td>
<td>&lt;6</td>
<td>Dysfunctional</td>
<td>Indifference</td>
<td>Disadvantage Ability at school(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family environment(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal abuse(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unsupported childhood(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel</td>
<td>1960-70</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Injustice</td>
<td>Alienation School environment(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Employment(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Offending(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>1980-90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Lost opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer influence(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ready to learn(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning in jail(+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>1975-85</td>
<td>11 ½</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Social status Disruptions(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship intimacy(+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drugs(0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
Table 8: Components of the researcher’s understandings of the lived experience of individual participants (contd.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Period of basic formal education.</th>
<th>Total years of schooling</th>
<th>Inferred family circumstances throughout childhood</th>
<th>Social meanings.</th>
<th>Personal meanings &amp; specific topics (with value* in italics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lionel</td>
<td>1985-95</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Indifference Non-conformity</td>
<td>Lost opportunity Misfit(0) Vocational training(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>1980-90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Dysfunctional</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Disadvantage Family environment(-) School environment(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lost opportunity Drugs(-) Employment(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>1970-80</td>
<td>10 ½</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>Learning Learning in jail(+) Capacity to change(+) Work ethic(+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lost opportunities Dissatisfaction(-) Offending(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>1980-90</td>
<td>9 ½</td>
<td>Dysfunctional</td>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>Self-efficacy Learning in jail(+) Future plans(+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disadvantage Disruptions(-) School environment(-)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
Table 8: Components of the researcher’s understandings of the lived experience of individual participants (contd.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Period of basic formal education.</th>
<th>Total years of schooling</th>
<th>Inferred family circumstances throughout childhood</th>
<th>Social meanings.</th>
<th>Personal meanings &amp; specific topics (with value* in italics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants with no early involvement in crime and only one period of detention</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>1975-85</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Indifference</td>
<td>Supportive environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family environment(+), School environment(+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Readiness to learn(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>1975-85</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Work ethic</td>
<td>Supportive environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family environment(+), Capacity to achieve(+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants who gave no personal information about involvement in crime or detention</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
<td>1970-80</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>Misfit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship with teachers(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relevance of schoolwork(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School achievement(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drugs(+)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Eleven

An examination of apparent relationships between social meanings, personal meanings, and specific topics constructed in the study

Introduction

This chapter presents an examination of relationships, inferred by the researcher, amongst concepts within the conceptual micro-categories of social meanings, personal meanings, and specific topics constructed in the study from the whole set of transcripts of the narratives of the participants, and between concepts across the conceptual micro-categories. The meaning of the term ‘micro-category’ in the study is explained in Chapter One. Briefly, the term is used here instead of the inelegant term ‘sub-sub-category’. This examination represents the first stage in the researcher’s identification of apparent relationships between constructed data within and between subsets of constructed data in the study. The researcher’s purpose in identifying inferred relationships within and between various subsets of constructed data in the study was to enable him to achieve the second stated aim of the study, as outlined in Chapter One: to discover points of heuristic interest, emerging from the study, which seem to be indicative of needs for social action to reduce the incidence of juvenile and continuing engagement by individuals in criminal activities, and to address education and vocational training issues relating to the integration or reintegration of incarcerated offenders into the wider Australian society after their release from custody.

The researcher examined the complete set of inferred relationships between concepts, which were identified in the study. The examination was carried out to explore the extent to which the concepts appeared to be inter-related, and the nature of the apparent relationships between them.

The first sets of relationships examined here from across the whole set of transcripts are inferred relationships amongst social meanings. This examination is followed by an examination of inferred relationships between social meanings and concepts in each of the other two micro-categories of concepts: personal meanings and specific topics. For illustrative purposes in making speculative comparisons of proportions of concepts constructed from two or more subsets of transcripts, the relative proportions of transcripts from which particular concepts were constructed are stated as
percentages of the total number of transcripts in the set of transcripts to which reference is made. The term ‘speculative comparisons’ is used here to indicate that outcomes of comparisons of the relative proportions of transcripts from which particular concepts were constructed are assumed to be outcomes of conjecture by the researcher rather than outcomes of logically defensible procedures of inferential statistical analysis. No statistical analysis of the findings is intended to be implied by stating percentages, as the number of cases is too small for the logical application of statistical reasoning to the making of comparisons between sets of transcripts. As the analysis carried out here is concerned with examination of sets of transcripts as whole entities, rather than primarily with examination of individual transcripts, the concepts examined here are generally limited to those that were constructed from more than one transcript in the particular set or subset of transcripts under consideration.

All statements made in this chapter in relation to participants are presented as constructions made by the researcher from transcripts of the spoken narratives of the participants, as audio-recorded during the interview sessions. No meaning, other than a meaning attributable to an interpretive construction by the researcher, is intended to be communicated here with regard to statements in which reference is made to participants, participants’ lived experience, utterances made by participants, and/or recollections, opinions, or conceptualizations associated, in the text, with participants.

An examination of inferred relationships amongst and between concepts constructed in the study is presented here now, beginning with an examination of inferred relationships amongst social meanings.

**Apparent relationships among and between concepts**

**Inferred relationships among social meanings**

As shown in Table Seven (Ch. 9), inclusion, indifference, and rebellion were the social meanings which were most frequently constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives, having a frequency of occurrence of four in each case. A frequency of four is approximately 27 per cent of the total number of the 15 transcripts included in the study. In total, the number of transcripts from which a social meaning of inclusion, indifference, or rebellion was constructed was 12, constituting 80 per cent of the total number of transcripts in the study. Table Seven (Ch. 9) shows that a social meaning of inclusion was interpretively associated with the transcripts of the narratives of participants Barry, Brian, George, and Shane, a social meaning of indifference was interpretively associated with those of participants Bill, Lenny, Lionel, and Nigel, and a
social meaning of rebellion was interpretively associated with those of participants David, Jim, Patrick, and Sean. The following general interpretations of social meanings, to which reference is made here, were presented in Chapter Nine:

Inclusion: A socially-derived conceptual theme of an apparent desire to gain or regain full legitimate participation in the wider society.

Indifference: A socially-derived conceptual theme of indifference to particular values, beliefs, and/or attitudes perceived to have been generally upheld within dominant socio-cultural milieux.

Rebellion: A socially-derived conceptual theme of the active rejection of particular values, beliefs, and/or attitudes perceived to have been generally upheld within dominant socio-cultural milieux.

On the basis of the interpretations made of the social meanings, as presented in Chapter Nine, concepts of inclusion, indifference, and rebellion were assumed here to be conceptually inter-related. Rebellion and inclusion were assumed to be conceptually located at opposite polarities along a dimension of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society, while indifference was assumed to be conceptually located midway between the opposite polarities.

Inferred relationships among the most frequently-occurring social meanings constructed from the transcripts of the participants’ narratives have been examined here. An examination will now be made of apparent relationships between social meanings and personal meanings constructed from the whole set of transcripts.

**Inferred relationships between social meanings and personal meanings**

As shown in Table Seven (Ch. 9), personal meanings of disadvantage and of lost opportunity each coincided with social meanings of inclusion, indifference and rebellion. Conceptual coincidences referred to here appear to support a conclusion that apparent perceptions of having experienced lost opportunities or disadvantage during the period of basic formal education were not interpretively associated with the general adoption by the participants, at the time of the interview session, of any particular one of three assumed values of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society, viz., inclusion, indifference, and rebellion. The plausibility of this conclusion will now be evaluated by a detailed examination of the inferred conceptual content of transcripts in which a personal meaning of disadvantage or a personal meaning of lost opportunity was interpreted as having coincided with a social meaning of inclusion, indifference, or
rebellion.

A social meaning of inclusion was constructed from each of the transcripts of the narratives of participants Barry, Brian, George, and Shane, as shown in Table Seven (Ch. 9). The only one of these transcripts from which a personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed was that of George’s narrative, and the only transcript from which a personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed was that of Shane’s narrative, as shown in Table Eight (Ch. 10). A personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from the transcript of George’s narrative partly from constructions of specific topics of family environment and school environment, both of which were inferred to have had a generally negative value connotation within the narrative. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from the transcript of Shane’s narrative partly from constructions of a specific topic of peer influence, which was inferred to have had a generally negative value connotation, and of a specific topic of readiness to learn, which was inferred to have had a generally value neutral connotation. A conclusion drawn here, from an examination of the concepts constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of Barry, Brian, George, and Shane, is that personal meanings of disadvantage and of lost opportunity were not generally interpretively associated, in the set of transcripts, with a social meaning of inclusion.

A social meaning of indifference was constructed from each of the transcripts of the narratives of participants Bill, Lenny, Lionel, and Nigel, as shown in Table Seven (Ch. 9). The only one of these transcripts from which a personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed was that of Nigel’s narrative, and the only transcripts from which a personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed were those of Lenny’s and Lionel’s narratives, as shown in Table Eight (Ch. 10). A personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from the transcript of Nigel’s narrative partly from constructions of specific topics of family environment, unsupported childhood, and personal abuse, all of which were inferred to have had a generally negative value connotation within the narrative, and ability at school, which was inferred to have had a generally neutral value connotation. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from the transcript of Lenny’s narrative partly from constructions of specific topics of capacity to learn and of offending, both of which were inferred to have had a generally neutral value connotation within the narrative. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from the transcript of Lionel’s narrative partly from constructions of a specific topic of misfit, which was inferred to have had a generally neutral value connotation within the narrative as a whole, and of vocational training,
which was inferred to have had a generally negative connotation. A conclusion drawn here from an examination of the concepts constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of Bill, Lenny, Lionel, and Nigel is that personal meanings of disadvantage and of lost opportunity were not generally interpretively associated, in the set of transcripts, with a social meaning of indifference.

A social meaning of rebellion was constructed from each of the transcripts of the narratives of participants David, Jim, Patrick, and Sean, as shown in Table Seven (Ch. 9). Transcripts from which a personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed were those of David’s narrative and Patrick’s narrative, as shown in Table Eight (Ch. 10). A personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from the transcript of David’s narrative partly from constructions of specific topics of family environment and learning difficulty, both of which were inferred to have had a generally negative value connotation within the narrative as a whole. A personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from the transcript of Patrick’s narrative partly from constructions of specific topics of disruptions and of school environment, both of which were inferred to have had a generally negative value connotation within the narrative. The only transcript from which a personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed was that of Jim’s narrative. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from the transcript of Jim’s narrative partly from constructions of a specific topic of dissatisfaction and offending, both of which were inferred to have had a generally neutral value connotation within the narrative as a whole. A conclusion drawn here from an examination of the concepts constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of David, Jim, Patrick, and Sean is that personal meanings of disadvantage and of lost opportunity were not generally interpretively associated, in the set of transcripts, with a social meaning of rebellion.

Inferred relationships between the most frequently coinciding social meanings and personal meanings in the transcripts, interpreted as the two broadest micro-categories of concepts constructed in the study, have been examined in detail here. One conclusion drawn from the detailed examination of concepts constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of Barry, Bill, Brian, David, George, Jim, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel, Patrick, Sean, and Shane is that personal meanings of lost opportunity and of disadvantage were generally interpretively associated with a general concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society. A second conclusion is that neither of these personal meanings was generally interpretively associated with any particular one of three assumed values of a general concept of conformity to the norms.
of conventional Australian society, viz., inclusion, indifference, and rebellion. As the general conceptual content of personal meanings was assumed, in the study, to contain specific conceptual content of specific topics, the interpretive analysis of relationships between social meanings and the other micro-categories of concepts identified in the study was extended to an examination of inferred relationships between the most frequently constructed social meanings, and specific topics that coincided with these social meanings in the interpretive analysis of individual transcripts as follows.

**Inferred relationships between social meanings and specific topics**

Specific topics of family environment, school environment, and offending each coincided with the most frequently constructed social meanings, viz., inclusion, indifference, and rebellion, as shown in Table Nine (at the end of this chapter). These social meanings were assumed in the study to represent particular values of a broad concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society. Conceptual coincidences referred to here appear to support a conclusion that constructed specific concepts of family environment, social environment, and of offending, interpreted as having been associated with particular participants’ lived experience during the period of their basic formal education, were not generally interpretively associated with the apparent adoption by the participants, at the time of the interview session, of any one particular value of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society, such as inclusion, indifference, or rebellion. The plausibility of this conclusion will now be evaluated by a detailed examination of the inferred conceptual content of transcripts in which specific topics of family environment, social environment, or offending were interpreted as having coincided with a social meaning of inclusion, indifference, or rebellion.

A social meaning of inclusion was constructed from each of the transcripts of the narratives of participants Barry, Brian, George, and Shane, as shown in Table Seven (Ch. 9). The only one of these transcripts from which a specific topic of family environment or of school environment was constructed was that of George’s narrative, as shown in Table Eight (Ch. 10). Both of these topics were inferred to have had a generally negative value connotation within George’s narrative as a whole. Of the transcripts of the narratives of Barry, Brian, George, and Shane, the only transcript from which a specific topic of offending was constructed was that of Barry’s narrative. This specific topic was inferred to have had a generally positive value connotation within the narrative as a whole. A conclusion drawn here from an examination of the concepts
constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of Barry, Brian, George, and Shane is that specific topics of family environment, school environment, and offending were not generally interpretively associated, in the set of transcripts, with a social meaning of inclusion.

A social meaning of indifference was constructed from each of the transcripts of the narratives of participants Bill, Lenny, Lionel, and Nigel, as shown in Table Seven (Ch. 9). Transcripts from which a specific topic of family environment was constructed were those of Bill’s narrative and Nigel’s narrative, as shown in Table Eight (Ch. 10). A specific topic of family environment was inferred to have had a generally positive value connotation in Bill’s narrative as a whole, and a generally negative value connotation in Nigel’s narrative as a whole. Of the transcripts of the narratives of Bill, Lenny, Lionel, and Nigel, the only transcript from which a specific topic of school environment was constructed was that of Bill’s narrative. This specific topic was inferred to have had a generally positive value connotation within Bill’s narrative as a whole. A conclusion drawn here from an examination of the concepts constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of Bill, Lenny, Lionel, and Nigel is that specific topics of family environment, school environment, and offending were not generally interpretively associated, in the set of transcripts, with a social meaning of indifference.

A social meaning of rebellion was constructed from each of the transcripts of the narratives of participants David, Jim, Patrick, and Sean, as shown in Table Seven (Ch. 9). The only one of these transcripts from which a specific topic of family environment was constructed was that of David’s narrative, as shown in Table Eight (Ch. 10). A specific topic of family environment was inferred to have had a generally negative value connotation in David’s narrative as a whole. As shown in Table Four (Ch. 7), transcripts from which a specific topic of school environment was constructed were those of David’s and Patrick’s narratives. A specific topic of school environment was inferred to have had a generally negative value connotation in the two narratives. Of the transcripts of the narratives of David, Jim, Patrick, and Sean, the only transcript from which a specific topic of offending was constructed was that of Jim’s narrative. A specific topic of offending was inferred to have had a generally neutral value connotation in Jim’s narrative as a whole. A conclusion drawn here from an examination of the concepts constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of David, Jim, Patrick, and Sean is that specific topics of family environment, school environment, and of offending were not generally interpretively associated, in the set of transcripts, with a social meaning of rebellion.
Inferred relationships between the social meanings most frequently constructed in the study, viz., inclusion, indifference, and rebellion, and personal meanings and specific topics which coincided with any one of these social meanings, have been examined in detail here. One conclusion drawn from the interpretive analysis of the transcripts of the narratives of Barry, Bill, Brian, David, George, Jim, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel, Patrick, Sean and Shane is that concepts of lost opportunity, disadvantage, family environment, school environment, and offending were generally interpretively associated with a general concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society. A second conclusion was that none of these concepts was generally interpretively associated with any particular one of three assumed values of a general concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society, viz., inclusion, indifference, and rebellion.

The conclusions drawn here were based on inferred relationships between the most frequently occurring social meanings constructed from the set of transcripts as a whole, viz., inclusion, indifference, and rebellion, and the other two micro-categories of concepts identified in the study, viz., personal meanings and specific topics. An examination of inferred relationships between constructed social meanings which have not been previously discussed in this chapter, and constructed personal meanings and specific topics that coincided with these social meanings, is presented in the next section of this chapter.

**Inferred relationships involving infrequently-occurring social meanings**

As shown in Table Seven (Ch. 9), social meanings constructed from the transcripts, other than those already discussed in this chapter, were barriers, injustice, and work ethic. Each of these social meanings was constructed from no more than one transcript. The following general interpretations of the social meanings to which reference is made here were presented in Chapter Nine:

- **Barriers**: a socially-derived conceptual theme of impediments perceived to have severely limited opportunities for participation in socially-acceptable ways in the wider society.

- **Injustice**: a socially-derived conceptual theme of unfair treatment of the self by others in positions of power or influence.

- **Work ethic**: a socially-derived conceptual theme of the value of productive work, including an attitudinal predisposition to strive to achieve progressively greater success through engagement in socially-valued productive work.
A social meaning of work ethic was assumed to be conceptually related to a social meaning of inclusion, in that work ethic was interpreted to represent a particular set of values generally professed within conventional Australian society, active acceptance of which was assumed to be generally regarded in conventional Australian society as a necessary condition for the social inclusion of people who are regarded as being able to engage in lawful, productive work. No common conceptual coincidences between particular personal meanings and the constructed concepts of work ethic and inclusion were evident in the analysed data, as shown in Table Nine (at the end of this chapter). Examination of that table shows that specific topics of family environment and of school environment each coincided with the constructed social meanings of work ethic and of inclusion. Specific topics of family environment and of school environment which coincided with a social meaning of work ethics were each inferred to have had a generally positive value connotation. The coincidence of concepts referred to here may indicate that, in the cases of the transcripts from which constructions of concepts of family environment, school environment, work ethic, and inclusion were made, specific concepts of family environment and of school environment were interpretively associated with a socially-derived concept of work ethic which is conceptually related to a general concept of social inclusion. In addition to a social meaning of work ethic, social meanings of barriers and of injustice were each constructed from one transcript.

Social meanings of barriers and of injustice are assumed here to be conceptually inter-related in that each appears to have a general connotation of treatment by others in ways which are inconsistent with generally professed values of conventional Australian society relating to the treatment of individuals. These two concepts are assumed here to not have any apparent particular conceptual relationship with any other social meanings constructed from the transcripts. No common conceptual coincidence of particular personal meanings and the constructed social meanings of barriers and of injustice was evident in the analysed data. A specific topic of school environment coincided with each of the social meanings of barriers and of injustice. In both cases, a specific topic of school environment was inferred to have had a generally negative value connotation. The coincidence of concepts referred to here may indicate that, in the cases of the transcripts from which constructions of concepts of school environment, barriers and of injustice were made, a specific topic of school environment, with a generally negative value connotation, was interpretively associated with a socially-derived concept of unfair or unreasonable treatment relative to generally professed values of conventional Australian society.
Up to this point in this chapter, inferred relationships between social meanings, personal meanings, and specific topics, across the set of transcripts as a whole, have been examined here from a perspective of an initial focus on social meanings. Inferred relationships between the three micro-categories of concepts, across the set of transcripts as a whole, will be examined from a perspective of an initial focus on personal meanings, in the next section of this chapter.

**Inferred relationships between the three types of constructed concepts**

As shown in Table Five (Ch. 8), personal meanings that were most frequently constructed in the study are lost opportunity, which was constructed from six transcripts, constituting approximately 40 per cent of the total number of 15 transcripts included in the study, and disadvantage, which was constructed from four transcripts, constituting approximately 27 per cent of the total number of transcripts. Examination of Table Nine (at the end of this chapter) shows that a personal meaning of lost opportunity coincided with social meanings of barriers, inclusion, indifference, and rebellion. Social meanings of inclusion, indifference, and rebellion were interpreted as being conceptually inter-related in that each was assumed to represent a particular value of a broad concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society. An inference drawn here is that a personal meaning of lost opportunity was generally interpretively associated with a broad, socially-derived concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society. Specific topics interpreted as having a component of subject-matter content in common with a personal meaning of lost opportunity were capacity to achieve, capacity to learn, dissatisfaction, drug use, employment, misfit, offending, peer influence, readiness to learn, school environment, and vocational training, as shown in Table Eleven (at the end of this chapter). An inference drawn here is that specific topics of capacity to achieve, capacity to learn, dissatisfaction, drug use, employment, misfit, offending, peer influence, readiness to learn, school environment, and vocational training were interpretively associated with a broad concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society. As shown in Table Five (Ch. 8), a personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from each the transcripts of the narratives of participants Aaron, George, Jim, Lenny, Lionel, and Shane. Only two of the specific topics interpretively associated with a personal meaning of lost opportunity were constructed from more than one of the transcripts of the narratives of these six participants. These two specific topics were drug use, which was constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of Aaron and of George, and
offending, which was constructed from those of Jim and of Lenny. The coincidence of specific topics of drug use and offending with a personal meaning of lost opportunity in the interpretive analysis of more than one transcript, and the coincidence of a personal meaning of lost opportunity with social meanings of inclusion, indifference, and rebellion, may indicate that these two specific topics each had an inferred conceptual relationship to a broad concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society. However, examination of Table Nine (at the end of this chapter) shows that no particular assumed value of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society was interpretively associated with a specific topic of drug abuse or of offending in the transcripts of the narratives of the four participants from each of whom a personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed.

As shown in Table Nine (at the end of this chapter), a personal meaning of disadvantage coincided with social meanings of inclusion, indifference, and rebellion. An inference drawn here is that a personal meaning of disadvantage was generally interpretively associated with a broad, socially-derived concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society. Specific topics interpreted as having a component of subject-matter content in common with a personal meaning of disadvantage were ability at school, disruptions, family environment, learning difficulty, personal abuse, school environment, and unsupported childhood. An inference drawn here is that specific topics of ability at school, disruptions, family environment, learning difficulty, personal abuse, school environment, and unsupported childhood were interpretively associated with a broad concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society. As shown in Table Five (Ch. 8), a personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from each the transcripts of the narratives of participants David, George, Nigel, and Patrick. Only two of the specific topics interpretively associated with a personal meaning of disadvantage, viz., family environment and school environment, were constructed from more than one of the transcripts of the narratives of these participants. A specific topic of family environment was constructed from each of the transcripts of the narratives of David, George, and Nigel. A specific topic of school environment was constructed from each of the transcripts of the narratives of George and of Patrick. The coincidence of specific topics of family environment and of school environment with a personal meaning of disadvantage in the interpretive analysis of more than one transcript, and the coincidence of a personal meaning of disadvantage with social meanings of inclusion, indifference, and rebellion, may indicate that these two specific topics each had an inferred conceptual relationship
to a broad concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society. However, examination of Table Eleven (at the end of this chapter) shows that no particular assumed value of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society was interpretively associated with a specific topic of family environment or of school environment in the transcripts of the narratives of the four participants from each of which a personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed.

**Conclusions**

Inferred relationships between the three most frequently constructed social meanings, viz., inclusion, indifference, and rebellion, and personal meanings and specific topics which coincided with at least one of these social meanings, have been examined in detail in this chapter. Social meanings of inclusion, indifference, or rebellion were each constructed from four of the transcripts of the narratives of the whole set of participants. The transcripts from which a social meaning of inclusion, indifference, or rebellion were constructed were those of the narratives of participants Aaron, David, George, Jim, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel, Patrick, and Shane. A conclusion drawn from the interpretive analysis of the transcripts of the narratives of these participants is that specific topics of ability at school, capacity to achieve, capacity to learn, disruptions, dissatisfaction, drug use, employment, family environment, learning difficulty, misfit, offending, peer influence, personal abuse, readiness to learn, school environment, unsupported childhood, and vocational training were interpretively associated with a broad concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society. A second conclusion is that specific topics of drug use and of offending were the only specific topics that coincided with a personal meaning of lost opportunity in the interpretive analysis of more than one transcript. A third conclusion is that specific topics of family environment and school environment were the only specific topics that coincided with a personal meaning of disadvantage in the interpretive analysis of more than one transcript. A fourth conclusion is that specific topics of drug use, family environment, offending, and school environment appeared to have a general inferred conceptual relationship to a broad concept of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society. A fifth conclusion is that no particular assumed value of conformity to the norms of conventional Australian society, viz., inclusion, indifference, and rebellion, was generally interpretively associated with a personal meaning of lost opportunity or of disadvantage, or with a specific topic of drug use, family environment, offending, or school environment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social meaning</th>
<th>Coinciding personal meanings</th>
<th>Coinciding specific topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>barriers</td>
<td>lost opportunity</td>
<td>school environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>drug use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>capacity to achieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inclusion</td>
<td>immaturity</td>
<td>drug use (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>social status</td>
<td>offending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>disruptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lost opportunity (2)</td>
<td>intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>family environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>school environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>peer influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>readiness to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indifference</td>
<td>supportive environment</td>
<td>family environment (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lost opportunity (2)</td>
<td>school environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>readiness to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-determination</td>
<td>capacity to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>offending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>misfit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vocational training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unsupported childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>personal abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ability at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>socially unacceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>injustice</td>
<td>alienation</td>
<td>school environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>offending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rebellion</td>
<td>disadvantage (2)</td>
<td>family environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discontent</td>
<td>learning difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lost opportunity</td>
<td>school environment (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>misfit</td>
<td>employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>learning in jail (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dissatisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>offending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>self-efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>disruptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>capacity to achieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>learning in jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>future plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>relevance of school work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>school achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>drug use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work ethic</td>
<td>supportive environment</td>
<td>family environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-efficacy</td>
<td>school environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>capacity to achieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal meaning</td>
<td>Coinciding social meaning</td>
<td>Coinciding specific topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alienation</td>
<td>injustice</td>
<td>school environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>offending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>rebellion (2)</td>
<td>discontent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inclusion</td>
<td>family environment (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>learning difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>indifference</td>
<td>school environment (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>family environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unsupported childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>personal abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ability at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>disruptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discontent</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
<td>school environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>learning in jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>immaturity</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
<td>drug use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>offending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
<td>work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>learning in jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>capacity to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lost opportunity</td>
<td>barriers</td>
<td>school environment (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>drug use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>capacity to achieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>family environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>drug use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dissatification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>offending (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>capacity to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>misfit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vocational training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>peer influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>readiness to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misfit</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
<td>school environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>relevance of school work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>school achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>drug use</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
Table 10: Personal meanings and coinciding social meanings and specific topics (contd.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal meaning</th>
<th>Coinciding social meaning</th>
<th>Coinciding specific topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>self-determination</td>
<td>indifference</td>
<td>socially unacceptable behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rebellious self-direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-efficacy</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
<td>capacity to achieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>work ethic</td>
<td>learning in jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>future plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social status</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
<td>disruptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>drug use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supportive environment</td>
<td>indifference</td>
<td>family environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>school environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>readiness to learn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Specific topics and coinciding personal meanings and social meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific topic</th>
<th>Coinciding personal meaning</th>
<th>Coinciding social meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ability at school</td>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capacity to achieve</td>
<td>lost opportunity</td>
<td>barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>misfit</td>
<td>rebellion (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>supportive environment</td>
<td>work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capacity to change</td>
<td>learning</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capacity to learn</td>
<td>lost opportunity</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disruptions</td>
<td>social status</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dissatisfaction</td>
<td>lost opportunity</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug use</td>
<td>lost opportunity</td>
<td>barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>immaturity</td>
<td>inclusion (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>social status</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>misfit</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employment</td>
<td>disadvantage (2)</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>alienation</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family environment</td>
<td>supportive environment</td>
<td>indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disadvantage (3)</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>supportive environment</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific topic</th>
<th>Coinciding personal meaning</th>
<th>Coinciding social meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>future plans</td>
<td>self-efficacy</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intimacy</td>
<td>social status</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misfit</td>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning difficulty</td>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning in jail</td>
<td>discontent</td>
<td>rebellion (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>offending</td>
<td>immaturity</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lost opportunity (2)</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>alienation</td>
<td>indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peer influence</td>
<td>lost opportunity</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal abuse</td>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rebellious self-direction</td>
<td>self-determination</td>
<td>indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>readiness to learn</td>
<td>supportive environment</td>
<td>indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lost opportunity</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relevance of school</td>
<td>misfit</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school achievement</td>
<td>misfit</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school environment</td>
<td>lost opportunity</td>
<td>barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>supportive environment</td>
<td>indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disadvantage (2)</td>
<td>rebellion (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>alienation</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>misfit</td>
<td>injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>socially unacceptable</td>
<td>self-determination</td>
<td>work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unsupported childhood</td>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocational training</td>
<td>lost opportunity</td>
<td>indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work ethic</td>
<td>learning</td>
<td>rebellion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Twelve

An examination of apparent relationships between inferred characteristics of participants and concepts constructed in the study

Introduction

This chapter presents an examination of apparent relationships between inferred characteristics of selected subsets of participants, and between inferred characteristics and concepts constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of selected subsets of participants. Examination of apparent relationships between inferred characteristics and concepts consists of making speculative comparisons between constructed conceptual content of the transcripts of the narratives of selected subsets of participants.

Outcomes of the examination of apparent relationships between the concepts are speculatively compared, where appropriate, with ostensibly relevant information from the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The researcher’s purpose in making speculative comparisons here is to enable him to achieve the second stated aim of the study, as outlined in Chapter One: to discover points of heuristic interest, emerging from the study, which seem to be indicative of needs for social action to reduce the incidence of juvenile and continuing engagement by individuals in criminal activities, and to address education and vocational training issues relating to the integration or reintegration of incarcerated offenders into the wider Australian society after their release from custody.

The examination presented in this chapter will involve an exploration of the findings reported in Chapters Two, Six, Seven, Eight and Nine in order to identify points of potential heuristic interest that appear to emerge from the study. The term ‘speculative comparisons’ is used here to indicate that outcomes of comparisons of the relative proportions of transcripts, from which particular concepts were constructed, are assumed to be outcomes of conjecture by the researcher rather than outcomes of logically defensible procedures of inferential statistical analysis.

There are three reasons why comparisons made in this chapter are regarded by the researcher as being necessarily speculative. One reason is that there is an insufficient number of cases in the subsets of data from which statistically defensible conclusions could be drawn. The second reason is that no claim is made in the study that the set of participants or any of its subsets are in any way representative, in a statistical sense, of
any other group of people. The second reason applies only where comparisons are made between findings from the study and information from sources external to the study. Comparisons between findings within the study are assumed here to be essentially non-speculative. The third reason is that all of the data used in making the comparisons are assumed to be constructions made by the researcher and, therefore, do not directly represent any reality other than the reality of the researchers’ constructions.

Participants were divided into subsets for the purpose of making speculative comparisons of content constructed from the transcripts of their narratives. The division of participants into subsets was made on the basis of inferred general characteristics of participants, as reported in Chapter Six. These characteristics were grouped into three general types, viz. characteristics which were generally regarded, in the literature reviewed in the study, as being indicative of conditions which are likely to contribute to individuals’ experience of disadvantage during childhood, characteristics which were generally regarded as being probable consequences of experience of disadvantage during childhood, and a characteristic of participation in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated.

Speculative comparisons of inferred characteristics of participants in selected subsets of participants, and between the conceptual content constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of selected subsets of participants, are presented here in the following order of inferred characteristics of participants as described in Chapter Six:

1. Experience of highly dysfunctional family conditions throughout childhood.
2. Experience of fewer than 10 years of basic formal education.
3. Experience of extreme disruption of basic formal education.
4. Frequent use of illegal drugs as juveniles.
5. Experience of chronic unemployment.
7. Participation in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated.

For illustrative purposes in making speculative comparisons of proportions of concepts constructed from two or more subsets of transcripts, the relative proportions of transcripts from which particular concepts were constructed are stated as percentages of the total number of transcripts in the subset of transcripts to which reference is made. No statistical analysis of the findings is intended to be implied by stating percentages, as the number of cases is too small for the logical application of statistical reasoning to the
making of comparisons between subsets of transcripts.

Reference is made throughout the remainder of this chapter to various sets of data which are presented in preceding chapters. The source of each set of data is summarized in Table Twelve, below this sentence, in order to minimize repetition throughout the text of statements identifying the source of the data to which reference is made.

**Table 12: Summary of sources of data to which reference is made in Chapter Twelve**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of data</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inferred characteristics of participants constructed from the transcripts of participants’ narratives</td>
<td>Table 3 in Chapter Six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific topics constructed from the transcripts of participants’ narratives</td>
<td>Table 4 in Chapter Seven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal meanings constructed from the transcripts of participants’ narratives</td>
<td>Table 5 in Chapter Eight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social meanings constructed from the transcripts of participants’ narratives</td>
<td>Table 7 in Chapter Nine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the analysis carried out here is primarily concerned with examination of subsets of transcripts, rather than primarily concerned with examination of individual transcripts, the concepts examined in this chapter are generally limited to those which were constructed from more than one transcript in the particular subset of transcripts under consideration. Speculative comparisons of inferred characteristics of participants in selected subsets of participants are presented here first, and are followed by speculative comparisons of the other conceptual content constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of selected subsets of participants.

**Inferred characteristics of the participants**

The absolute numbers and relative proportions of participants for whom particular characteristics were inferred are shown in Table Three (Ch. 6). As can be seen in Table Three, a characteristic that was assumed to be a frequently-occurring contributory cause of childhood experience of general disadvantage, viz., experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood, was inferred for 27 per cent of the participants. Characteristics which were assumed, from literature reviewed in Chapter Two, to be frequently-occurring contributory causes of childhood experience of educational disadvantage by prisoners, viz., experience of fewer than 10 years of basic formal education, and experience of extreme disruption of basic formal education, were each inferred for 40 per cent of the participants. Two characteristics which were assumed, on the basis of literature reviewed in Chapter Two, to be frequently-occurring
consequences of childhood experience of disadvantage by prisoners in Australia, viz., chronic unemployment and early, repeated engagement in criminal activities, were both inferred for at least 60 per cent of the participants. A third purported frequently-occurring outcome, viz., frequent use of illegal drugs as juveniles, was inferred for 40 per cent of the participants. A characteristic of participation in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated was inferred for 60 per cent of the participants. This inferred characteristic was regarded, in literature reviewed in Chapter Two, to be related to successful integration or reintegration of prisoners into society after their release from custody, particularly in the cases of prisoners who had experienced educational disadvantage in their childhood and/or youth.

Examination of the inferred characteristics of the participants indicates that the group of participants, as a whole, was heterogeneous with regard to these characteristics. This finding appears to be consistent with a conclusion of The Australian Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee (1996, p.8), viz., that there was great diversity of personal characteristics amongst prisoners in Australia. However, inferred characteristics of experience of chronic unemployment, early, repeated engagement in criminal activity, and participation in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated were each inferred for a majority of the participants. Experience of chronic unemployment, and early, repeated engagement in criminal activity were assumed in the study to be frequently-occurring outcomes of childhood experience of disadvantage by prisoners in Australia. None of the assumed frequently-occurring causes of childhood disadvantage of prisoners in Australia were inferred for a majority of the participants. However, in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, attention was drawn to purported cumulative effects of multiple contributory causes of educational disadvantage during childhood, which were regarded by some authors as having been ignored in research on factors associated with experience of educational disadvantage (for example: Clarke, 1997, p. 12; Dobson, 1995, p. 3; Rizvi cited by Sturman, 1997, p.46). In order to identify apparent experience of multiple contributory causes of educational disadvantage by participants, the results of examination of coincidences of inferred characteristics will now be presented here.

**Coincidences of inferred characteristics**

An examination was made of the coincidences of characteristics inferred for each participant, in an attempt to identify coincidences of purported frequently-occurring contributory causes of childhood educational disadvantage in individual cases, and to
explore the findings for other apparent coincidental relationships between inferred characteristics of the participants. The results of the examination are shown in Table Thirteen, following this paragraph. The absolute number of transcripts of the narratives of individual participants in which coincidences of two inferred characteristics were identified is displayed in the body of Table Thirteen. The absolute number and the percentage of participants for whom a particular characteristic was inferred is shown in column and row headings.

**Table 13: Coincidences of inferred characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A (4, 27%)*</th>
<th>B (6, 40%)</th>
<th>C (6, 40%)</th>
<th>D (6, 40%)</th>
<th>E (9, 60%)</th>
<th>F (10, 67%)</th>
<th>G (9, 60%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (4, 27%)*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (6, 40%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (6, 40%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (6, 40%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E (9, 60%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (10, 67%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G (9, 60%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The numerals in parentheses show the absolute number and percentage of participants for whom the characteristic was inferred.

The following legend applies to the capital letters used in the headings of the columns and rows in Table 13:
- A dysfunctional family
- B fewer than 10 years
- C extreme disruption
- D use of drugs
- E chronic unemployment
- F early repeated engagement in criminal activities
- G Participation in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration

As can be deduced from a combination of the information provided in Table 13 with that provided in Table 3, coincidences of two or more of the characteristics which were purported to be frequently-occurring contributory causes of educational disadvantage were inferred for four of the 15 participants in the study, constituting approximately 27 per cent of the participants. These participants were George, Lenny, Nigel and Patrick. Three participants, viz., George, Lenny, and Nigel, constituting 20 per cent of the participants, apparently had experienced all three of the purported contributory causes of childhood educational disadvantage assumed in the study. For each of these three participants, at least two characteristics assumed in the study to be frequently-occurring consequences of experience of educational disadvantage during
childhood, viz. experience of chronic unemployment and early, repeated engagement in criminal activities, were inferred.

Inspection of Table Thirteen shows that the most frequently-occurring coincidental associations between inferred characteristics of participants were between chronic unemployment and early, repeated engagement in criminal activities, between chronic unemployment and participation in formal education or vocational training during incarceration, and between early, repeated engagement in criminal activities and participation in formal education or vocational training during incarceration. Chronic unemployment coincided with early, repeated involvement in criminal activities in seven of the nine possible cases. This coincidental association of inferred characteristics was apparent in nearly 50 per cent of the total number of cases in the study, and in 70 per cent of the cases of participants who had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. These findings appear to indicate that, among the participants, most of those who had a history of early, repeated involvement in criminal activity had not become regularly engaged in legitimate employment after the discontinuation of their formal education. The findings appear to be generally consistent with a conclusion drawn from the review of literature in Chapter Two, viz., that, for prisoners in Australia, there was a positive correlation between chronic unemployment and incarceration (for example: Department of Justice, 2003a; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996).

Chronic unemployment coincided with participation in formal education/vocational training during incarceration in six of the nine possible cases. This coincidental association of inferred characteristics was apparent in 40 per cent of the total number of cases in the study, and in approximately 67 per cent of the cases of participants who had experienced chronic unemployment. Early, repeated engagement in criminal activity coincided with participation in formal education or vocational training during incarceration in five of the ten possible cases. This coincidental association of inferred characteristics was apparent in approximately 33 per cent of the total number of cases in the study, and in 50 per cent of the cases of participants who had early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. These findings appear to indicate that, among the group of participants, at least 50 per cent of the participants who had experienced chronic unemployment and/or had early, repeated engagement in criminal activity had participated in some formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated. Speculatively, these findings may indicate that at least 50 per cent of participants who had at least one characteristic which was assumed in the study to be a
frequently-occurring consequence of childhood disadvantage of prisoners in Australia, had taken some opportunity during their incarceration to attempt to overcome educational disadvantage which they experienced during childhood. This speculative point, if correct, may indicate that these participants may have enhanced the probability of their successful integration or reintegration into society after release from custody (for example: Eggleston, 2003; Gehring, 2003; Kirby et al., 2000). Coincidences between characteristics which were inferred for more than 50 per cent of the participants, viz. experience of chronic unemployment, early, repeated engagement in criminal activities, and participation in formal education or vocational training during incarceration, have been examined here. An examination will now be made of coincidences of each of these three characteristics with each of the other inferred characteristics of participants, with a view to the exploring the constructed data for points of possible heuristic interest.

Experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood coincided with experience of chronic unemployment in three of the four possible cases, with early, repeated engagement in criminal activities in all four of the four possible cases, and with participation in formal education or vocational training while incarcerated in three of the four possible cases. Experience of fewer than 10 years of basic formal education coincided with experience of chronic unemployment, and with early, repeated engagement in criminal activity in five of the six possible cases, and with participation in formal education or training while incarcerated in four of the six possible cases. Experience of extreme disruption to basic formal education coincided with experience of chronic unemployment in four of the six possible cases, and with early, repeated engagement in criminal activities and with participation in formal education or training while incarcerated in five of the six possible cases. These findings appear to be generally consistent with findings reported in the literature to the effect that positive correlations had been found between childhood experience of disadvantage, chronic unemployment, and early, repeated engagement in criminal activity (for example: Fox, 1997; Hagan, 1993, Reiman, 1998). Speculatively, the findings seem to indicate that a high proportion of prisoners who had experienced educational disadvantage during childhood may be responsive to opportunities to participate in formal education or vocational training during their incarceration.

Frequent use of illegal drugs as juveniles coincided with experience of chronic unemployment, with early, repeated engagement in criminal activities in five of the six possible cases, and with participation in formal education or vocational training while
incarcerated in four of the six possible cases. These findings appear to be consistent with findings reported by Prichard & Payne (2005a, 2005b), that frequent use of illegal drugs as juveniles was highly correlated with juvenile offending. Speculatively, the findings seem to generally accord with opinion, expressed by correctional services educators in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, which advocates the provision of educational opportunities to prisoners as one of the means by which prisoners can be assisted to achieve successful integration or reintegration into the wider society (for example: Fabelo, 2000; Fortin, 2003).

Apparent relationships between inferred general characteristics of participants, inferred from coincidences of these characteristics in the aggregated constructed data of the study, have been discussed. Speculative comparisons will now be made between pairs of subsets of constructed data, in order to explore the data further for points of possible heuristic interest which may emerge from the study. The pairs of subsets were created by dichotomizing data on the basis of whether it was constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of participants for whom a particular characteristic was inferred or from transcripts of the narratives of participants for whom the characteristic was not inferred. In each case here a speculative comparison of the inferred characteristics of the participants is made first, followed by speculative comparisons of the constructed conceptual content of the subsets of transcripts. The constructed conceptual content of transcripts of participants’ narratives considered here consists of social meanings, personal meanings, and specific topics, as presented in Chapters Nine, Eight, and Seven, respectively.

**Comparisons between the conceptual content of subsets of transcripts**

Each set of speculative comparisons between pairs of subsets of constructed data in the study is presented here under a sub-heading corresponding to the inferred general characteristic of participants which was used to define the particular pair of subsets. For each inferred general characteristic, the pairs of subsets consist of the subset of data constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of participants for whom the characteristic was inferred, and the subset of data constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of participants for whom the characteristic was not inferred. The sets of speculative comparisons are presented in the following order of inferred general characteristics of participants:

1. Experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood.
2. Experience of fewer than 10 years of basic formal education.
3. Experience of extreme disruption of basic formal education.
4. Frequent use of illegal drugs as juveniles.
5. Experience of chronic unemployment.
6. Early, repeated engagement in criminal activities.
7. Participation in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration.

**Experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood**

As concluded in Chapter Six, four of the participants in the study had lived in highly dysfunctional family conditions throughout their entire childhood. This subset of participants constituted approximately 27 per cent of the 15 participants in the study. For brevity, the subset will be referred to here as ‘the highly dysfunctional family subset’. The participants who were grouped into this subset were George, Lenny, Nigel, and Shane. Three of these participants, constituting 75 per cent of the subset, had fewer than 10 years experience of basic formal education. Three participants, constituting 75 per cent of the subset, had experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education. One participant, constituting 25 per cent of the subgroup, had been a frequent user of illegal drugs as a juvenile. Three participants, constituting 75 per cent of the subset, had remained chronically unemployed after leaving school. All four participants had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. Three participants, constituting 75 per cent of the subset, had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during their period(s) of incarceration.

Eleven participants in the study had lived in family conditions that were not highly dysfunctional during the period of their childhood. This subset of participants constituted approximately 73 per cent of the 15 participants in the study. For brevity, the subset will be referred to here as ‘the not highly dysfunctional family subset’. The participants who were grouped into this subset were Aaron, Barry, Bill, Brian, David, Jim, Lionel, Noel, Patrick, Sean, and Stephen. Three of these participants, constituting approximately 27 per cent of the subset, had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education. One participant, constituting approximately 9 per cent of the subset, had experienced extreme disruption of his basic formal education. Five participants, constituting approximately 46 per cent of the subset, had been a frequent user of illegal drugs as a juvenile. Five participants, constituting approximately 46 per cent of the subset, remained chronically unemployed after leaving school. Six participants,
constituting approximately 55 per cent of the subset, had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. Seven participants, constituting approximately 64 per cent of the subgroup, had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during their period(s) of incarceration.

Considering the small number of cases in the highly dysfunctional family subset, comparison between inferred characteristics of the participants in this subset and those of participants in the complementary subset are necessarily highly speculative. However, attention is drawn to three points which may be of heuristic interest. The first point is that a higher proportion of participants in the highly dysfunctional family subset than in the complementary subset had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education, chronic unemployment, and early, repeated involvement in crime. The second point is that a lower proportion of participants in the highly dysfunctional family subset than in the complementary subset had been frequent users of illegal drugs as juveniles. The third point is that the proportion of participants in the highly dysfunctional family subset who had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during their periods of incarceration was comparable with the proportion in the complementary subset. Speculative comparisons will now be made of the conceptual content constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the two subsets under consideration here.

Social meanings of inclusion and of indifference were each constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the highly dysfunctional family subset, constituting 50 per cent of this subset of transcripts. No social meaning other than inclusion or indifference was constructed from more than one transcript. A social meaning of rebellion was constructed from four of the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the not highly dysfunctional family subset, constituting approximately 36 per cent of this subset of transcripts. Social meanings of inclusion and of indifference were each constructed from two transcripts, constituting approximately 18 per cent of the transcripts in each case. No social meaning other than inclusion, indifference or rebellion was constructed from more than one transcript. In comparing the social meanings constructed from the two subsets of transcripts under consideration here, a point of heuristic interest may be that a social meaning of rebellion was not constructed from any transcript of the narratives of participants in the highly dysfunctional family subset.

A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from three of the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the highly dysfunctional family subset,
constituting 75 per cent of the transcripts in this subset. A personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting 50 per cent of the transcripts. No personal meaning other than lost opportunity or disadvantage was constructed from more than one transcript. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from three transcripts of the narratives of participants in the not highly dysfunctional family subset, constituting approximately 27 per cent of the transcripts. Personal meanings of disadvantage, self-efficacy, and supportive environment were each constructed from two transcripts, constituting approximately 18 per cent of the transcripts. No personal meaning other than lost opportunity, disadvantage, self efficacy, or supportive environment was constructed from more than one transcript in this subset. In comparing the personal meanings constructed from the two subsets of transcripts under consideration here, a point of heuristic interest may be that higher relative proportions of personal meanings of lost opportunity and of disadvantage were interpretively associated with the highly dysfunctional family subset than with its complementary subset.

A specific topic of family environment was constructed from two transcripts of the narratives of participants in the highly dysfunctional family subset, constituting 50 per cent of the transcripts. A negative general value connotation was inferred in each of the two transcripts. No specific topic other than family environment was constructed from more than one transcript. A specific topic of school environment was constructed from six transcripts of the narratives of participants in the not highly dysfunctional family subset, constituting approximately 55 per cent of this subset of transcripts. A negative general evaluative connotation of a specific topic of school environment was inferred from four of the transcripts, and a positive general connotation was inferred in the other two transcripts. A specific topic of drug use was constructed from four transcripts, constituting approximately 36 per cent of the transcripts, of which a positive general value connotation was inferred in one transcript, a neutral general connotation in two transcripts, and a general negative connotation in the fourth transcript. A specific topic of family environment was constructed from three transcripts, constituting approximately 27 per cent of the subset. In two cases of a specific topic of family environment a positive general value connotation was inferred, and a negative general connotation was inferred from the third case. No specific topic other than school environment, drug use, or family environment was constructed from more than one transcript. In comparing the specific topics constructed from the two subsets of transcripts under consideration here, a point of heuristic interest may be that a relatively
higher proportion of a specific topic of family environment, with an inferred negative general evaluative connotation, was interpretively associated with the highly dysfunctional family subset than with its complementary subset.

Emergent points of potential heuristic interest, arising from comparisons made here between the highly dysfunctional family subset and its complementary subset, were that experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood appeared to have had an interpreted association with relatively high incidences of experience of fewer than 10 years of basic formal education, chronic unemployment, early, repeated involvement in crime, and with participation in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration. An inferred characteristic of experience dysfunctional family circumstances was interpretively associated with a relatively low incidence of a social meaning of rebellion, with relatively high incidences of personal meanings of lost opportunity and of disadvantage, and with a specific topic of family environment with an inferred generally negative value connotation. Attention is drawn here to several highly speculative points of potential heuristic interest regarding experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood. One point is that prisoners who have experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout their childhood may have tended, more than prisoners who did not have this lived experience, to have experienced educational disadvantage and its purported consequences in terms of experience of chronic unemployment and early repeated engagement in criminal activity. A second point is that valuing of social inclusion by prisoners may have been unrelated to whether or not they experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout their childhood. Third and fourth points are that prisoners who experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout their childhood may have tended to perceive their experience of basic formal education in terms of lost opportunity and of disadvantage, and may have tended to want to participate in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration.

**Experience of fewer than 10 years of basic formal education**

As concluded in Chapter Six, six of the participants in the study had fewer than 10 years experience of basic formal education. This subset of participants constituted approximately 40 per cent of the 15 participants in the study. For brevity, the subset will be referred to here as ‘the fewer than 10 years subset’. The participants who were grouped into this subset were Aaron, David, George, Lenny, Nigel, and Patrick. Three of these participants, constituting 50 per cent of the subset, had experienced highly
dysfunctional family conditions throughout their childhood. Four participants, constituting approximately 67 per cent of the subset, had experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education. Two participants, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset, had frequently used illegal drugs as juveniles. Five of the participants in the subset, constituting approximately 83 per cent of the subset, had experienced chronic unemployment. Five of the participants in the subset, constituting approximately 83 per cent of the subset, had a history of early, repeated involvement in criminal activities. Four of the participants, constituting approximately 67 per cent of the subset, had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during their period(s) of incarceration.

Nine of the participants in the study had experienced at least 10 years of formal education. This subset of participants constituted 60 per cent of the total number of 15 participants in the study. For brevity, the subset will be referred to here as ‘the at least 10 years subset’. The participants constituting this subset were Barry, Bill, Brian, Jim, Lionel, Noel, Sean, Shane, and Stephen. One of these participants, constituting approximately 11 per cent of the subset, had experienced highly dysfunctional family conditions throughout his childhood. One participant, constituting approximately 11 per cent of the subset, had experienced extreme disruption of his basic formal education. Four participants, constituting approximately 36 per cent of the subset, had frequently used illegal drugs as a juvenile. Four participants, constituting approximately 36 per cent of the subset, had experienced chronic unemployment. Five participants, constituting 50 per cent of the subset, had been repeatedly involved in criminal activities since early adolescence. Five of the participants, constituting approximately 56 per cent of the sunset, had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration.

Comparisons of inferred characteristics of participants in the fewer than 10 years subset with those of participants in the complementary subset appeared to indicate that a relatively higher proportion of participants in the fewer than 10 years subset, than in the complementary subset, had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood, extreme disruption of their basic formal education, chronic unemployment, and early, repeated involvement in criminal activities. The relative proportions of participants with other inferred characteristics appeared to be comparable for both subsets. A point of potential heuristic interest is that the relative proportion of participants who had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration was similar in both subsets. Speculatively, this finding may indicate that
the relative length of an individual’s experience of basic formal education may not
generally have been associated with the individual’s subsequent participation in formal
education and/or vocational training during the individual’s period(s) of incarceration.

Social meanings of rebellion and of indifference were each constructed from two
of the transcripts of participants in the fewer than 10 years subset, each constituting
approximately 33 per cent of the transcripts in this subset. A social meaning of inclusion
was constructed from one transcript, constituting approximately 17 per cent of the
transcripts. No social meaning other than rebellion or indifference was constructed from
more than one of the transcripts. A social meaning of inclusion was constructed from
three of the transcripts of the narratives participants in the at least 10 years subset,
constituting approximated 33 per cent of this subset of transcripts. Social meanings of
indifference and of rebellion were each constructed from two of the transcripts, each
constituting approximately 22 per cent of the subset. A point of potential heuristic
interest, based on a comparison of the inferred characteristics of the two subgroups
under consideration here, is that there appeared to be little difference between the
subsets in the relative proportions of each social meaning constructed from the
transcripts.

A personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from four of the transcripts
of the narratives of participants in the fewer than 10 years subset, constituting
approximately 67 per cent of this subset of transcripts. A personal meaning of lost
opportunity was constructed from three of the transcripts, constituting 50 per cent of the
transcripts. No personal meaning, other than disadvantage or lost opportunity was
constructed from more than one transcript. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was
constructed from three of the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the at least
10 years subset, constituting approximately 33 per cent of this subset of transcripts. No
personal meaning other than lost opportunity was constructed from more than one of the
transcripts. A personal meaning of disadvantage was not inferred in any of the
transcripts in this subset. A point of potential heuristic interest emerging from
speculative comparison of the personal meanings constructed from each of the subsets
of transcripts under consideration here is that prisoners’ personal experience of fewer
than 10 years of basic formal education may have been generally associated with their
perceptions of personal experience of disadvantage during childhood.

A specific topic of school environment was constructed from four of the
transcripts of participants in the fewer than 10 years subset of participants, constituting
approximately 67 per cent of this subset of transcripts. A negative general value
connotation of school environment was inferred in each of the four transcripts. A specific topic of family environment was constructed from three of the transcripts, constituting 50 per cent of the subset. A negative general value connotation of family environment was inferred in each of the four transcripts. No specific topic, other than school environment or family environment was constructed from more than one of the transcripts. A specific topic of school environment was constructed from three of the transcripts of participants in the at least 10 years subset of participants, constituting approximately 33 per cent of this subset of transcripts. In two cases a positive general value connotation of school environment was inferred, and a negative general value connotation was inferred in the remaining case. A specific topic of drug use was constructed from three of the transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. For the specific topic of drug use, a positive general value connotation, a neutral connotation, and a negative connotation were each inferred in one case. A specific topic of offending was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 22 per cent of the subsets. For the specific topic of offending, a positive general value connotation was inferred in one case, and a neutral connotation was inferred in the other case. A specific topic of family environment was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 22 per cent of the subset. In both cases of a specific topic of family environment, a positive general evaluative connotation was inferred. A point of potential interest which appears to emerge from a comparison of the specific topics constructed from the two subsets under consideration here is that there appeared to be a relatively higher proportion of a specific topic of school environment with an inferred negative general evaluative connotation, and of a specific topic of family environment with a negative general evaluative connotation constructed from the transcripts in the fewer than 10 years subset than in the complementary subset. Speculatively, this finding may indicate that prisoners’ negative personal perceptions of school environment and/or family environment may have tended to be generally associated with a relatively short personal experience of basic formal education.

Several points of potential heuristic interest appear to arise from comparisons made here between the fewer than 10 years subset and its complementary subset. One point is that a relatively higher proportion of participants in the fewer than 10 years subset, than in the complementary subset, apparently had several characteristics ostensibly associated with experience of childhood disadvantage. This speculative finding appears to be consistent with findings, reported in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, regarding the relatively high proportion of prisoners in Australia who
were characterised by apparent experience of multiple forms of childhood disadvantage, including relatively low standards of school achievement (for example: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Training and Advisory Council, 1998; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996; Walker et al., 1991). A second point is that there appeared to have been little difference between the subsets in the relative proportions of each social meaning constructed from the transcripts. This speculative finding may indicate that, for prisoners, the development by individuals of any particular value regarding social inclusion in the wider society may not have been generally associated with the relative length of their experience of basic formal education. A third point is that prisoners’ negative perceptions of their school environment and/or family environment may have tended be generally associated with their relatively early discontinuation of basic formal education.

**Experience of extreme disruption of basic formal education**

As concluded in Chapter Six, six of the participants in the study had experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education. These participants constituted 40 per cent of the 15 participants in the study. For brevity, this subset will be referred to here as ‘the extreme disruption subset’. The participants grouped into this subset were Brian, George Lenny, Nigel, Noel, and Patrick. Three of them, constituting 50 per cent of this subset, had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood. Five of the participants, constituting approximately 83 per cent of the subset, had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education. Five of the participants, constituting approximately 83 per cent of the subset, had experienced chronic unemployment. Five of the participants, constituting approximately 83 per cent of the subset, had early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. Five of the participants, constituting approximately 83 per cent of the subset, had participated in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated.

Nine participants in the study had not experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education. These participants constituted 60 per cent of the 15 participants in the study. For brevity, this subset will be referred to here as ‘not sever disruption subset’. The participants grouped into this subset were Aaron, Barry, Bill, David, Jim, Lionel, Sean, Shane, and Stephen. One of them, constituting approximately 11 per cent of this subset had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout his childhood. One of the participants, constituting approximately 11 per cent of the subset, had completed fewer than 10 years of formal basic education. Four participants,
constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset, had experienced chronic
unemployment. Five participants, constituting approximately 56 per cent of the subset,
had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. Four participants,
constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset, had participated in formal
education and/or vocational training while incarcerated.

Comparisons of the relative proportions of participants with inferred particular
characteristics, between the severe disruption subset and its complementary subset,
indicate that a higher relative proportion of participants in the extreme disruption had
experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood, fewer
than 10 years of basic formal education, and chronic unemployment, and had early,
repeated engagement in criminal activity. These findings appear to be generally
consistent with findings, reported in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, regarding
the relatively high proportion of prisoners in Australia who were characterised by
apparent experience of multiple forms of childhood disadvantage (for example:
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training and Advisory Council, 1998;
Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996; Walker et
al., 1991). A higher proportion of participants in the extreme disruption subset than in
its complementary subset had participated in formal education and/or vocational
training while incarcerated. Speculatively, this finding may indicate that prisoners who
had experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education may have tended to
want to compensate for their childhood educational disadvantage by undertaking formal
education and/or vocational training during their period(s) of incarceration.

Social meanings of inclusion and indifference were each constructed from two
of the transcripts of the narratives of participants who were grouped into the extreme
disruption subset, each constituting approximately 33 per cent of this subset. A social
meaning of rebellion was constructed from one transcript, constituting approximately 17
per cent of the subset of transcripts. No social meaning, other than inclusion or
indifference was constructed from more than one transcript. Social meanings of
inclusion and of rebellion were each constructed from two of the transcripts of the
narratives of participants grouped into the no extreme disruption subset, constituting
approximately 22 per cent of this subset in each case. No social meaning, other than
inclusion or rebellion was constructed from more than one transcript. These findings
appear to be similar for each of the two subsets under consideration here. Speculatively,
the findings may indicate that prisoners’ childhood experience of extreme disruption of
their basic formal education was not associated with any particular personal valuing of
inclusion in the wider society.

A personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from three of the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the extreme disruption subset, constituting 50 per cent of the transcripts in this subset. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the transcripts. No personal meaning other than disadvantage or lost opportunity was constructed from more than one transcript. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from four transcripts of the narratives of participants in the no extreme disruption subset, constituting approximately 44 per cent of this subset. A personal meaning of supportive environment was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 22 per cent of the subset. No personal meaning other than lost opportunity or supportive environment was constructed from more than one transcript. A point of potential heuristic interest arising from these findings is that a relatively higher proportion of a personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from transcripts in the extreme disruption subset than from the transcripts in its complementary subset. Speculatively, this finding may indicate that prisoners who had experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education tended to have a personal perception of having experienced childhood disadvantage.

A specific topic of school environment was constructed from three of the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the extreme disruption subset, constituting 50 per cent of the transcripts in this subset. In all three cases a negative value connotation was inferred for the specific topic. A specific topic of family environment was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. In each case of a specific topic of family environment, a negative general value connotation was inferred. A specific topic of drug use was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. In one case, a neutral general value connotation was inferred for a specific topic of drug use, and a negative general connotation was inferred for the other case. A specific topic of offending was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. In both cases, a neutral general value connotation was inferred for a topic of offending. No specific topic other than school environment, family environment, drug use, or offending was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset. A specific topic of school environment was constructed from five of the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the no extreme disruption subset, constituting approximately 56 per cent of this subset. A general negative evaluation
connotation was inferred in three cases of this specific topic, and a general positive connotation was inferred in the other two cases. A specific topic of family environment was constructed from three transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. A positive general value connotation was inferred in two cases, and a general negative connotation was inferred in the remaining case. A specific topic of drug use was constructed from three transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. A positive general evaluative connotation was inferred in two cases, and a neutral general connotation was inferred in the third case. A specific topic of offending was constructed from two transcripts, constituting approximately 22 per cent of the subset. A positive general evaluative connotation was inferred in one case, and a neutral general connotation was inferred in the other. These findings appear to be generally similar in the two subsets of transcripts under consideration here. Speculatively, the findings may indicate that prisoners who had experienced extreme disruption of the basic formal education generally had similar perceptions relating to their family and school environments, and relating to their engagements in illegal behaviours, to those of other prisoners.

Several points of potential heuristic interest appear to emerge from comparison of data sourced from the extreme disruption subset and its complementary subset. A higher proportion of participants in the extreme disruption subset, than in the complementary subset, appeared to have had several characteristics ostensibly associated with childhood experience of disadvantage. A higher proportion of participants in the extreme disruption subset, than in the complementary subset, had participated in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated. These speculative finding appear to be similar to findings constructed from the comparison made in this chapter between the fewer than 10 years subset and its complementary subset. There appeared to be little difference between the extreme disruption subset and its complementary subset in the social meanings or the personal meanings or the specific topics which were interpretively associated with each subset. Speculatively, these findings may indicate that prisoners’ experience of extreme disruption of their basic formal education may not generally have been associated with any particular personal valuing of social inclusion in conventional society, or with any particular personal perceptions relating to their experiences of basic formal education except, perhaps, with a personal perception of having experienced some form(s) of disadvantage. The findings may also indicate that prisoners’ experience of extreme disruption of their basic formal education was unrelated to any particular personal
perceptions of their engagement in illegal behaviours.

**Frequent use of illegal drugs as juveniles**

As concluded in Chapter Six, six participants in the study had frequently engaged in the use of illegal drugs as juveniles. These participants constituted 40 per cent of the 15 participants in the study. For brevity, this subset of participants will be referred to here as ‘the drug users subset’. The participants grouped into this subset were Aaron, Barry, Brian, George, Lionel, and Sean. One of these participants, constituting approximately 17 per cent of the drug users subset, had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood. Two of the participants, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset, had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education. Two of the participants, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset, had experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education. Five participants, constituting approximately 83 per cent of the subset, had experienced chronic unemployment. Five participants, constituting approximately 83 per cent of the subset, had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. Four participants, constituting approximately 67 per cent of the subset, had participated in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated.

Nine participants in the study had not frequently engaged in the use of illegal drugs as juveniles. These participants comprised 60 per cent of the entire set of 15 participants in the study. For brevity, this subset of participants will be referred to here as ‘the not drug users subset’. The participants who were grouped into this subset were Bill, David, Jim, Lenny, Nigel, Noel, Patrick, Shane, and Stephen. Three of them, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset, had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood. Four participants, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset, had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education. Four participants, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset, had experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education. Four participants, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset, had engaged in early, repeated involvement in crime. Seven of the participants, constituting approximately 78 per cent of the subset, had participated in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated.

Points of potential heuristic interest, drawn from comparisons of the inferred characteristics of participants in the drug users subset with those of participants in the
complementary subset, are that there appeared to be a higher relative proportion of participants who had experienced chronic unemployment and/or had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities in the drug users subset than in its complementary subset, and a relatively lower proportion of participants who had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances in the drug users subset than in its complementary subset. Speculatively, these findings may indicate that prisoners who had frequently used illegal drugs as juveniles generally tended to be chronically unemployed after discontinuing their basic formal education, and to have engaged repeatedly in criminal activities from a relatively early age, perhaps to support their drug-use habit. This speculative finding appears to be consistent with findings reported by Prichard & Payne (2005a) regarding juvenile offenders’ apparently simultaneous involvement in drug use and criminal behaviour. A speculative finding from the study, that participants’ experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood did not appear to be generally associated with their use of drugs as juveniles, appears to be inconsistent with findings reported by Prichard & Payne (2005b) which indicated that there was a definite association between juveniles’ experience of abuse and/or neglect by their families and their use of drugs. The proportions of participants in each subset who had participated in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated were similar. Speculatively, this finding may indicate that a personal history of illegal drug use from a relatively young age did not necessarily affect a prisoner’s participation in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated.

A social meaning of inclusion was constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of three of the participants in the drug users subset, constituting 50 per cent of this subset. No social meaning other than inclusion was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset. A social meaning of inclusion was constructed from the transcripts of three of the participants in the not drug users subset, constituting approximately 33 per cent of this subset. A social meaning of rebellion was constructed from the transcripts of three of the participants, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. No social meaning other than inclusion or rebellion was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset. A point of potential heuristic interest drawn from these findings is that a higher proportion of participants in the drug users subset, than in the complementary subset, appeared to have valued conformity to the values, beliefs and/or attitudes predominant in conventional society, and a lower proportion of them appeared to have actively rejected these values, beliefs, and/or attitudes. Speculatively,
these findings may indicate that prisoners who had a personal history of illegal drug use from a relatively young age may have tended, more than other prisoners, to positively value inclusion in the wider society.

A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from three transcripts of the narratives of the participants in the drug users subset, constituting 50 per cent of this subset. No personal meaning other than lost opportunity was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset. A personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from three of the transcripts of the narratives of the participants in the not drug users subset, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 22 per cent of the subset. A personal meaning of self-efficacy was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 22 per cent of the subset. A personal meaning of supportive environment was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 22 per cent of the subset. No personal meaning other than disadvantage, lost opportunity, self-efficacy, or supportive environment was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset. Points of potential heuristic interest drawn from these findings are that a higher proportion of participants in the drug users subset, than in the not drug users subset, appeared to have perceived their experience of basic formal education as a period of lost opportunity, and a lower proportion of these participants appeared to have perceived this experience in terms of a supportive environment or of a personal sense of self-efficacy. Speculatively, these findings may indicate that prisoners who had a personal history of illegal drug use from a relatively young age may have tended, more than other prisoners, to have perceived their experience of basic formal education as a period of lost opportunity, and to have not perceived their experience of basic formal education in terms of a supportive personal environment.

A specific topic of school environment was constructed from three of the transcripts of the narratives of the participants in the drug users subset, constituting 50 per cent of the subset. A negative general value connotation was inferred in all three cases of a specific topic of school environment. No specific topic other than school environment was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset. A specific topic of family environment was constructed from four of the transcripts of the narratives of the participants in the not drug users subset, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset. A negative general value connotation was inferred in two of the cases of a specific topic of family environment, and a positive general connotation was
inferred in the other two cases. A specific topic of learning in jail was constructed from four of the transcripts, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset. A positive general value connotation was inferred in two of the cases of a specific topic of learning in jail, a neutral general connotation was inferred in one case, and a negative general connotation was inferred in the fourth case. A specific topic of school environment was constructed from four of the transcripts, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset. A negative general value connotation was inferred in three of the cases of a specific topic of school environment, and a positive general connotation was inferred in the fourth case. A specific topic of offending was constructed from three of the transcripts. A neutral general value connotation was inferred in all three cases of a specific topic of offending. No specific topic other than family environment, learning in jail, school environment, or offending was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset.

The relative proportions of a specific topic of school environment and of a negative general evaluative connotation of the topic appeared to be similar for the drug users subset and its complementary subset. Relatively higher proportions of specific topics of family environment and of learning in jail were constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the not drug users subset than from the transcripts in the complementary subset. The finding regarding the relative proportions of a specific topic of family environment seems to be inconsistent with a finding by Prichard & Payne (2005b), that a majority of juvenile offenders had reported that substance abuse was characteristic of their family environments during their childhood. The finding regarding a specific topic of learning in jail appears to be inconsistent with the finding reported elsewhere in this chapter that there appeared to be little difference between the proportions of participants in each subset who had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration.

Several points of potential heuristic interest appear to emerge from comparisons of data sourced from the drug users subset with data sourced from its complementary subset. The proportions of participants in the drug users subset and its complementary subset who appeared to have characteristics that were assumed, in the study, to be related to experience of causal conditions of childhood disadvantage were similar. This speculative finding appears to be inconsistent with a conclusion reported by Prichard & Payne (2005b), that experience of childhood disadvantage appeared to be positively related to juveniles’ use of illegal drugs and their involvement in criminal behaviour. The speculative finding that participants who had frequently used illegal drugs as
juveniles generally tended to be chronically unemployed after discontinuing their basic formal education and to engage repeatedly in criminal activities appears to be consistent with findings by Prichard & Payne (2005a) regarding an apparent positive association between juveniles’ use of illegal drugs and their conviction for criminal offences. A relatively higher proportion of participants in the drug users subset than in the complementary subset had appeared to positively value achieving social inclusion in the wider society, and a relatively lower proportion had appeared to have actively rejected social inclusion. These findings seem to be consistent with findings reported elsewhere in this chapter that a relatively higher proportion of participants in the drug users subset than in the complementary subset appeared to have perceived their experience of basic formal education as a period of lost opportunity. Speculatively, these findings may indicate that prisoners who habitually used drugs from a relatively young age may have experienced an unmet desire for social inclusion, and to have perceived their experience of basic formal education as a period of lost opportunities to have acquired means by which social inclusion could have been achieved.

**Experience of chronic unemployment**

As concluded in Chapter Six, nine of the participants in the study had a history of chronic unemployment up to the period of their incarceration during which the interview session was held. These participants constituted 60 per cent of the total of 15 participants in the study. For brevity, this subset of participants will be referred to here as ‘the chronic unemployment subset’. The participants grouped into this subset were Aaron, Barry, George, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel, Noel, Patrick, and Sean. Three of these participants, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the chronic unemployment subset, had experienced highly dysfunctional family conditions throughout childhood. Five of the participants, constituting approximately 56 per cent of this subset, had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education. Four participants, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset, had experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education. Four participants, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset, had frequently used illegal drugs as juveniles. Seven of the participants, constituting approximately 78 per cent of the subset, had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. Five of the participants, constituting approximately 56 per cent of the subset, had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during their period(s) of incarceration.

Six of the participants in the study had a history of approximately continuous
legitimate employment up to the period of their incarceration during which the interview session was held. These participants constituted 40 per cent of the 15 participants in the study. For brevity, this subset of participants will be referred to here as ‘the continuous employment subset’. The participants who were grouped into this subset were Bill, Brian, David, Jim, Shane, and Stephen. One of these participants, constituting approximately 17 per cent of this subset, had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout his childhood. One of the participants, constituting approximately 17 per cent of the subset, had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education. One of the participants, constituting approximately 17 per cent of the subset, had experienced extreme disruption of his basic formal education. One of the participants, constituting approximately 17 per cent of the subset, had frequently used illegal drugs as a juvenile. Three of the participants, constituting 50 per cent of the participants in this subset, had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. Three of the participants, constituting 50 per cent of the subset, had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration.

Findings from comparisons of data sourced from the chronic unemployment subset with data sourced from the complementary subset are that there were higher proportions of participants in the chronic unemployment subset who had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood, fewer than 10 years of basic formal education, severe disruption of basic formal education, frequent use of illegal drugs as juveniles, and had early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. These findings appear to be generally consistent with conclusions reported in the review of literature in Chapter Two, that pre-incarceration chronic unemployment was a frequently-occurring characteristic of prisoners in Australia, and that this characteristic was positively associated with other characteristics ostensibly related to experience of childhood disadvantage (for example, Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996).

A social meaning of indifference was constructed from three of the transcripts of the narratives of the chronic unemployment subset of participants, constituting approximately 33 per cent of this subset of transcripts. Social meanings of inclusion and of rebellion were each constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 22 per cent of the transcripts in each case. Social meanings of inclusion and of rebellion were each constructed from two of the transcripts of the narratives of the participants in the continuous employment subset, each constituting approximately 33 per cent of the transcripts in this subset in each case. A social meaning of
indifference was constructed from one transcript, constituting approximately 17 per cent of the transcripts. Social meanings of indifference and of rebellion were each assumed in the study to represent a generally negative valuing of social inclusion in the wider society, in contrast to a generally positive valuing of social inclusion which was assumed to be represented in a social meaning of inclusion. The proportions of transcripts in each of the subsets under consideration here, from which a social meaning of either indifference or of rebellion was constructed, appear to be similar. A point of interest here may be that there appeared to have been no particular personal valuing of social inclusion generally associated with participants’ experience of chronic unemployment or with participants’ experience of continuing employment. Speculatively, these findings may indicate that the personal value that individual prisoners place on social inclusion was unrelated to whether or not they experienced chronic unemployment.

A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from four of the transcripts of the narratives of the chronic unemployment subset of participants, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the transcripts in this subset. A personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from three of the transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the transcripts. No personal meaning, other than lost opportunity or disadvantage was constructed from more than one transcript. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed two of the transcripts of the narratives of the continuous employment subset of participants, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the transcripts in the subset. No personal meaning other than lost opportunity was constructed from more than one of the transcripts in this subset. A personal meaning of disadvantage was not interpretively associated with any of the transcripts. A point of potential interest, drawn from these findings, is that a higher proportion of participants in the chronic unemployment subset than in the continuous employment subset apparently had a general perception of their basic formal education as a period during which they experienced disadvantage. This finding appears to be consistent with a conclusion drawn from the review of literature in Chapter Two, that experience of chronic unemployment had a positive association with experience of disadvantage during childhood (for example: Rizvi, 1995; Sturman, 1997).

A specific topic of school environment was constructed from five of the transcripts of the narratives of the chronic unemployment subset of participants, constituting approximately 56 per cent of this subset. A general negative value connotation of school environment was inferred from each of the five transcripts. A
specific topic of drug use was constructed from four of the transcripts, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the transcripts. A general negative value connotation of drug use was inferred from three of the transcripts, and a general positive value connotation was inferred from one of the transcripts. A specific topic of family environment was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 22 per cent of the transcripts. A general negative value connotation of family environment was inferred from each of the two transcripts. No specific topic other than school environment, drug use, and family environment was constructed from more than one transcript.

A specific topic of family environment was constructed from three of the transcripts of the narratives of the continuous employment subset of participants, constituting 50 per cent of this subset. A positive value connotation of family environment was inferred in two of the transcripts with which the specific topic was interpretively associated, and a negative connotation was inferred in the other transcript. A specific topic of school environment was constructed from two transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the transcripts. A positive general value connotation of school environment was inferred from each of the two transcripts with which the specific topic was interpretively associated. No specific topic other than family environment or school environment was constructed from more than one transcript. A specific topic of drug use was constructed from one transcript, constituting approximately 17 per cent of the transcripts. A neutral general value connotation of drug use was inferred from the transcript with which the specific topic was associated.

Two points of potential interest arise from the comparisons made here of specific topics constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the chronic unemployment subset with those sourced from the complementary subset. One point is that a specific topic of school environment with an inferred negative general evaluative connotation was constructed from a higher relative proportion of transcripts in the chronic unemployment subset than in the continuous employment subset. This speculative finding may indicate that prisoners’ experience of chronic unemployment after discontinuation of their schooling may generally have had a positive association with negative personal perceptions of their school environments. A second point is that a higher relative proportion of a specific topic of drug use with an inferred negative general evaluative connotation was constructed from transcripts in the chronic unemployment subset than from transcripts in the complementary subset. This speculative finding may indicate that prisoners with a personal history of habitual drug
use from a relatively early age, and of chronic unemployment, tended to associate their experience of chronic unemployment with their use of illegal drugs, and to have had negative perceptions of their drug use.

Several points of potential heuristic interest appear to arise from comparisons of data sourced from the chronic unemployment subset with that of the complementary subset. Higher proportions of participants in the chronic unemployment subset, than in the complementary subset, had inferred characteristics which were assumed, in the study, to be contributory causal conditions of experience of childhood disadvantage, and to have had early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. These speculative findings appear to be consistent with evidence and opinion in the literature which supports a conclusion that there are positive general associations between individuals’ childhood experience of disadvantage, their experience of chronic unemployment, and their engagement in criminal activities (for example: Fox, 1997; Hagan, 1993; Reiman, 1998). No particular valuing of inclusion in the wider society appeared to have been associated with participants’ experience of chronic unemployment. This speculative finding may indicate that prisoners who had experienced chronic unemployment may have been no more or less desirous of achieving integration or reintegration into the wider society than other prisoners. A higher proportion of participants in the chronic unemployment subset than in the complementary subset appeared to have perceived that they had experienced disadvantage during childhood. This speculative finding appears consistent with conclusions drawn from the literature, that there was a positive association between experience of disadvantage in childhood and subsequent experience of chronic unemployment (for example: National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1996; Rizvi, 1995; Sturman, 1997). There appeared to have been positive associations between participants’ experience of chronic unemployment, participants’ negative perception of their school environment, and participants’ frequent use of drugs as juveniles. These speculative findings appear to be consistent with findings reported in the literature, of general positive associations between individuals’ experience of educational disadvantage and their experience of chronic unemployment (for example: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 1999; Lamb et al., 1998), and between individuals’ experience of childhood disadvantage and their use of drugs as juveniles (for example, Prichard & Payne, 2005a).

**Early, repeated engagement in criminal activities**

As can be seen in Table Three (Ch. 6), ten participants in the study had a history of
early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. This subset of participants constituted approximately 71 per cent of the 14 participants in the study whose inferred personal history of engagement in criminal activity was reported in Chapter Six. For brevity, this subset of participants will be referred to here as ‘the early criminal activity subset’. The participants who were grouped into this subset were Aaron, Barry, Brian, David, George, Lenny, Lionel, Nigel, Noel, and Shane. Four of these participants, constituting 40 per cent of the early criminal activity subset, had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood. Five of the participants, constituting 50 per cent of this subset, had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education. Five of the participants, constituting 50 per cent of the subset, had experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education. Five of the participants, constituting 50 per cent of the subset, had frequently used illegal drugs as juveniles. Seven of the participants, constituting 70 per cent of this subset, had a history of chronic unemployment. Seven of the participants, constituting 70 per cent of this subset, had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration.

Four participants in the study did not have an inferred personal history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. These participants constituted approximately 27 per cent of the 14 participants in the study whose inferred personal history of engagement in criminal activity was reported in Chapter Six. For brevity, this subset of participants will be referred to here as ‘the no early criminal activity subset’. The participants who were grouped in this subset were Bill, Jim, Patrick, and Stephen. None of the participants in the no early criminal activity subset of participants had experienced highly dysfunctional circumstances during their childhood. One of the participants, constituting 25 per cent of the subset, had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education. One of the participants, constituting 25 per cent of the subset, had experienced extreme disruption of his basic formal education. None of the participants in the subset had frequently used illegal drugs as a juvenile. One of the participants, constituting 25 per cent of the subset, had experienced chronic unemployment. Two of the participants, constituting 50 per cent of the subset, had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration.

Considering the small number of cases in the subset of transcripts of the narratives of the no early criminal activity subset of participants an assumption made here was that findings drawn from comparisons between apparent characteristics of the two subsets of participants under consideration here are highly speculative. A point of potential heuristic interest may be that the relative proportions of participants in the
early criminal activity subset who had experienced highly dysfunctional circumstances during their childhood, or fewer than 10 years of basic formal education, or extreme disruption of their basic formal education, or frequent use of drugs as juveniles, or chronic unemployment were consistently higher than in the no early criminal activity subset. This finding appears to be consistent with a general conclusion drawn from the review of literature in Chapter Two, viz., that there are complex relationships between individuals’ experience of various types of disadvantage during childhood, and their engagement in crime, resulting in their incarceration, during youth and adulthood (for example: Fox, 1997; Hagan, 1993; Reiman, 1998; White and Perrone, 1997).

A social meaning of inclusion was constructed from four of the transcripts of the narratives of the early criminal activity subset of participants, constituting 40 per cent of this subset of transcripts. A social meaning of indifference was constructed from three transcripts, constituting 30 per cent of the subset. No social meaning other than inclusion or indifference was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset. A social meaning of rebellion was constructed from two transcripts of the narratives of the no early criminal activity subset of participants, constituting 50 per cent of the transcripts in this subset. No social meaning other than rebellion was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset. A point of potential interest emerging from these findings may be that there was a higher proportion of social meanings of inclusion or of indifference, and a lower proportion of a social meaning of rebellion, constructed from the early criminal activity subset of transcripts than from the complementary subset. This finding appears to be inconsistent with an assumption made in the study regarding a social meaning of rebellion, viz., that a social meaning of rebellion represented an active rejection of the values, beliefs and/or attitudes predominant in conventional society. A personal active rejection of such values by an individual would seem to imply some predisposition of the individual to engage in unlawful behaviour, and to support the prediction that a relatively higher proportion of a social meaning would be associated with transcripts in the early criminal activity subset than in the complementary subset.

A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from five of the transcripts of the narratives of the early criminal activity subset of participants, constituting 50 per cent of the transcripts in this subset. A personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from three transcripts, constituting 30 per cent of the transcripts. No personal meaning other than lost opportunity or disadvantage was constructed from more than one transcript. A personal meaning of supportive
environment was constructed from two of the transcripts of the narratives of the no early
criminal activity subset of participants, constituting 50 per cent of this subset.
Supportive environment was the only personal meaning that was constructed from more
than one transcript in the subset. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was
constructed from one transcript, constituting 25 per cent of the subset. A personal
meaning of disadvantage was constructed from one transcript, constituting 25 per cent
of the subset. The relative proportion of a personal meaning of lost opportunity
constructed from the transcripts was higher for the early criminal activity subset than for
the complementary subset, while the relative proportions of a personal meaning of
disadvantage in the subsets were similar. One point of potential interest arising from
these findings is that personal meanings of lost opportunity and of disadvantage were
constructed from a relatively higher proportion of transcripts from the early criminal
activity subset than from the complementary subset. This finding appears to be
consistent with evidence reported in the literature supporting a conclusion that there was
a positive association between childhood experience of disadvantage and subsequent
incarceration (for example, Walker et al, 1991). A second point of potential interest is
that a personal meaning of supportive environment was constructed from half of the
transcripts in the no early criminal activity subset, and was not constructed from any
transcript in the early criminal activity subset. A highly speculative point may be that
this finding indicates that early, repeated engagement in criminal activity tends to be
less likely for participants who perceived that they had experienced a supportive
personal environment during childhood than for those who perceived that they
experienced an unsupportive childhood environment.

A specific topic of drug use was constructed from four of the transcripts of the
narratives of the early criminal activity subset of participants, constituting 40 per cent of
this subset of transcripts. A neutral general value connotation was inferred in two cases
of a specific topic of drug use, and a negative general connotation was inferred in the
other two cases. A specific topic of school environment was constructed from four of
the transcripts, constituting 40 per cent of the subset. A negative general evaluative
connotation was inferred in all four cases of a specific topic of school environment. A
specific topic of employment was constructed from three of the transcripts, constituting
30 per cent of the subset. A negative general evaluative connotation was inferred in all
three cases of a specific topic of employment. A specific topic of family environment
was constructed from three of the transcripts, constituting 30 per cent of the subset. A
negative general evaluative connotation was inferred in all three cases. A specific topic
of learning in jail was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting 20 per cent of the subset. A negative general evaluative connotation was inferred in both cases of a specific topic of learning in jail. A specific topic of offending was constructed from three of the transcripts, constituting 30 per cent of the subset. A positive general evaluative connotation was inferred in one case of a specific topic of offending, and a neutral general connotation was inferred in the other two cases. No specific topic other than dug use, employment, family environment, learning in jail, offending, or school environment was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset.

A specific topic of school environment was constructed from three of the transcripts of the no early criminal activity subset of participants, constituting 75 per cent of this subset of transcripts. A positive general value connotation was inferred in two of the transcripts, and a negative general value connotation was inferred in the third transcript. A specific topic of family environment was constructed from two of the transcripts of the narratives, constituting 50 per cent of this subset. A positive general value connotation was inferred in both transcripts. No specific topic other than school environment or family environment was constructed from more than one of the transcripts of the narratives of the subset. Points of possible speculative interest that appear to arise from comparison of the specific topic content constructed from the two subsets of transcripts under consideration here are that the relative proportions of inferred negative general evaluative connotations of a specific topic of school environment and of a specific topic of family environment were higher in the early criminal activity subset of transcripts than in the complementary subset. These highly speculative findings may indicate that there may have been a higher tendency for participants who had negative perceptions of school environment and/or family environment during childhood, than for those who had not had such negative perceptions, to have had early, repeated engagement in criminal activity.

Several points of potential heuristic interest appear to emerge from comparison of data sourced from the early criminal activity subset of transcripts with that sourced from its complementary subset. These points are highly speculative because of the relatively small number of participants in the no early criminal activity subset, compared with that of its complementary subset. One point is that the relative proportions of participants in the early criminal activity subset who had experienced highly dysfunctional circumstances during their childhood, or less than 10 years of basic formal education, or extreme disruption of their basic formal education, or frequent use of drugs as juveniles, or chronic unemployment, were consistently higher than in the no
early criminal activity subset. This finding appears to be consistent with evidence and opinion in the literature which appeared to support a conclusion that experience of childhood disadvantage was positively associated with engagement in criminal activity (for example: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1992; Walker et al., 1991). A second point is that early, repeated engagement in criminal activity did not appear to be particularly associated with an inferred negative valuing of inclusion in the wider society. The value that an individual places on personal achievement of social inclusion in conventional society was assumed, in the study, to have been constructed by the individual primarily from social sources in the socio-cultural environments experienced by the individual during childhood and youth. This highly speculative finding may indicate that prisoners who have had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activity may have been no more or less amenable than other prisoners to attempt to achieve integration or reintegration into the wider society if provided with opportunity to do so. A third point is that there appeared to have been some positive association between perceived experience of a supportive environment during childhood and non-engagement in repeated criminal activity as juveniles. This point seems to be related to the finding, reported elsewhere in this study, that participants’ apparent negative perceptions of their school environment and/or family environment appeared to have been positively associated with their early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. These highly speculative findings appear to be consistent with findings, reported in the literature, of a positive association between individuals’ childhood experience of general disadvantage and their commencement of a criminal career at a relatively young age (for example, Prichard & Payne, 2005a).

**Participation in formal education/vocational training during incarceration**

Nine participants in the study had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during their period(s) of incarceration. This subset of participants constituted 60 per cent of the set of 15 participants in the study. For brevity this subset will be referred to here as ‘the participated’ subset. The participants who were grouped into this subset were Barry, Brian, David, George, Jim, Lenny, Noel, Patrick, and Shane. Three of these participants, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the participated subset of participants, had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout their childhood. Four participants, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset, had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education. Four participants,
constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset, had experienced extreme
disruption of their basic formal education. Three participants, constituting
approximately 33 per cent of the subset, had frequently used illegal drugs as juveniles.
Five participants, constituting approximately 56 per cent of the subset, had experienced
chronic unemployment. Seven participants, constituting approximately 78 per cent of
the subset, had early, repeated engagement in criminal activities.

Six participants in the study had not participated in formal education and/or
vocational training during their period(s) of incarceration. For brevity this subset will be
referred to here as ‘the not participated’ subset. The six participants in this subset
constituted 40 per cent of the total of 15 participants in the study. The participants who
were grouped into this subset were Aaron, Bill, Lionel, Nigel, Sean, and Stephen. One
of these participants, constituting approximately 17 per cent of the not participated
subset of participants, had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances
throughout his childhood. Two participants, constituting approximately 33 per cent of
the subset, had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education. One
participant, constituting approximately 17 per cent of the subset, had experienced
extreme disruption to his basic formal education. Three participants, constituting 50 per
cent of the subset, had frequently used illegal drugs as juveniles. Four participants,
constituting approximately 67 per cent of the subset, had experienced chronic
unemployment. Three of the participants, constituting 50 per cent of the subset, had
early, repeated engagement in criminal activities.

Points of potential interest, drawn from comparisons of the proportions of
inferred characteristics of the participants in the participated subset of participants with
those in the complementary subset, appear to be that the relative proportions of
participants who had experienced highly dysfunctional circumstances during their
childhood, and/or extreme disruption of their basic formal education, and/or had early,
repeated engagement in criminal activities were higher for the participated subset than
for the complementary subset. The relative proportions of participants who had
frequently used drugs as juveniles, or experienced chronic unemployment were similar
in the two subsets under consideration here. The relative proportion of participants who
had early, repeated engagement in criminal activity appeared to be higher for the
participated subset than for the complementary subset. These findings seem to indicate
that a relatively higher proportion of participants in the participated subset, than in its
complementary subset, had experienced a range of assumed contributory causes of
educational disadvantage. Speculatively, these findings may indicate that prisoners with
multiple characteristics which were assumed here to be contributory causes of childhood disadvantage may generally have tended, more than prisoners without these characteristics, to have taken opportunities, while incarcerated, to attempt to overcome their perceived childhood educational disadvantage through participation in formal education and/or vocational training. This speculative point appears to accord with opinions expressed in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, that there is a need to provide prisoners, through the provision of formal education and vocational training programs in correctional centres, with opportunities to overcome their educational disadvantage as a means of assisting them to successfully integrate or reintegrate into the wider society (for example: Callan & Gardner, 2005; Kirby et al., 2000). The relative proportions of participants who had inferred characteristics which were assumed in the study to be frequently-occurring consequences of childhood educational disadvantage, except for the characteristic early, repeated engagement in criminal activity, were broadly similar in the two subsets. Speculatively, these findings may indicate that prisoners who have had early, repeated engagement in criminal activity may have tended, more than prisoners who did not have early, repeated engagement in criminal activity, to participate in formal education and training during their incarceration.

A social meaning of inclusion was constructed from four of the transcripts of the narratives of the participants in the participated subset of participants, constituting approximately 44 per cent of this subset. A social meaning of rebellion was constructed from three of the transcripts of the narratives of the subset of these participants, constituting 33 per cent of the subset. A social meaning of indifference was constructed from one transcript, constituting approximately 11 per cent of the subset. No social meaning other than inclusion or rebellion was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset. A social meaning of indifference was constructed from three transcripts of the narratives of participants in the not participated subset, constituting 50 per cent of the subset. A social meaning of rebellion was constructed from one transcript, constituting approximately 17 per cent of the subset. A social meaning of inclusion was not constructed from any of the transcripts in the subset. No social meaning other than indifference was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset.

A point of potential interest arising from the comparison of social meanings constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the participated subset with those in the complementary subset is the apparent difference between the subsets in the proportions of transcripts from which social meanings of indifference and
of inclusion were constructed. The relative proportion of transcripts from which a social meaning of inclusion was constructed was higher in the participated subset than in the complementary subset. The relative proportion of transcripts from which a social meaning of indifference was constructed was lower in the participated subset than in the complementary subset. A speculative point noted here is that these findings may indicate that a higher relative proportion of prisoners who participated in formal education and/or vocational training, than prisoners who do not participate, may have positively valued personal achievement of inclusion in the wider society.

A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from three of the transcripts of the narratives of the participated subset of participants, constituting approximately 33 per cent of these transcripts. A personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from three of the transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. No personal meaning other than lost opportunity or disadvantage was constructed from more than one transcript in this subset. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from two transcripts of the not participated subset of participants, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. A personal meaning of supportive environment was constructed from two transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. A personal meaning of disadvantage was constructed from one transcript, constituting approximately 17 per cent of the subset. No personal meaning other than lost opportunity was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset.

One point of potential heuristic interest arising from comparison of personal meanings constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the participated subset with those in the complementary subset may be that a relatively higher proportion of a personal meaning of supportive environment was constructed from transcripts of the not participated subset than from the complementary subset. This speculative finding may indicate that a personal perception of having experienced a supportive environment during childhood may have been related to participants’ decisions to not participate in formal education and/or vocational training during their period(s) of incarceration. A second point may be that the relative proportion of transcripts from which a personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed was similar in the two subsets under consideration here. A highly speculative inference drawn from this finding is that a personal perception of opportunities lost, in relation to basic formal education, may not have operated as a general motivational factor in prisoners’ decisions regarding their participation or non-participation in formal
education and/or vocational education during their incarceration.

A specific topic of learning in jail was constructed from four of the transcripts of the narratives of the participated subset of participants, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset. A positive general evaluative connotation was inferred in three of the cases of this specific topic, and a negative general connotation was inferred in the fourth case. A specific topic of offending was constructed from four of the transcripts, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset. A neutral general evaluative connotation was inferred in three of the cases of this topic, and a positive general connotation was inferred in the fourth case. A specific topic of school environment was constructed from four of the transcripts, constituting approximately 44 per cent of the subset. A negative general evaluative connotation was inferred in all four cases of this specific topic. A specific topic of drug use was constructed from three of the transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. In all three cases of this specific topic, a negative general evaluative connotation was inferred. A specific topic of employment was constructed from three of the transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. In all three cases of this specific topic, a negative general evaluative connotation was inferred. A specific topic of family environment was constructed from two of the transcripts, constituting approximately 22 per cent of the subset. In both cases of this specific topic, a negative general evaluative connotation was inferred. No specific topic other than learning in jail, offending, school environment, drug use, employment, or family environment was constructed from more than one transcript in this subset.

A specific topic of school environment was constructed from four transcripts of the narratives of the not participated subset of participants, constituting approximately 67 per cent of this subset. A positive general evaluative connotation was inferred in two cases of this specific topic, and a negative general connotation was inferred for the other two cases. A specific topic of family environment was constructed from three transcripts, constituting 50 per cent of the subset. A positive general evaluative connotation was inferred in two cases of this specific topic, and a general negative connotation was inferred in the third case. A specific topic of capacity to achieve was constructed from two transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. In both cases of this specific topic, a positive general connotation was inferred. A specific topic of drug use was constructed from two transcripts, constituting approximately 33 per cent of the subset. A positive general evaluative connotation was inferred in one case of this specific topic, and a neutral general evaluative connotation
was inferred in the other case. No specific topic other than school environment, family environment, capacity to achieve, or drug use was constructed from more than one transcript in the subset.

A point of potential interest, arising from comparison between specific topic content constructed from the participated subset of transcripts of the participated subset and that of the complementary subset, may be that the relative proportions of transcripts from which specific topics of drug use, learning in jail, employment, offending, or school environment were constructed, were higher in the participated subset than in the complementary subset. Predominantly negative general evaluative connotations were inferred for specific topics of drug use, employment, offending, and school environment interpretively associated with the participated subset of transcripts. A predominantly positive general evaluative connotation was inferred for a specific topic of learning in jail interpretively associated with the participated subset. An inference drawn from these findings is that participants in the participated subset appeared generally to have perceived specific topics interpretively associated with their basic formal education and their lived experience after the discontinuation of their schooling, except for learning in jail, in a negative light. This speculative finding may indicate that learning in jail may have been regarded as a positive experience for some prisoners who perceived that aspects of their pre-incarceration lived experience relating to their basic formal education were predominantly negative.

Several points of potential heuristic interest appear to emerge from comparison of data sourced from the participated subset of transcripts and its complementary subset. Findings from this comparison seem to indicate that prisoners who participated in formal education or vocational training during their incarceration may have tended, more than prisoners who did not participate, to have experienced conditions during their childhood which were assumed in the study to be contributory causes of childhood disadvantage, and to have had early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. The findings may also indicate that a higher relative proportion of prisoners who participated in formal education and/or vocational training, than prisoners who did not participate, may have positively valued personal achievement of inclusion in the wider society. A speculative inference, drawn from the findings, is that a personal perception of opportunities lost, in relation to basic formal education, may not have operated as a general motivational factor in prisoners’ decisions regarding their participation or non-participation in formal education and/or vocational training during their incarceration. The findings may indicate that prisoners who participated in formal education and/or
vocational training during their period(s) of incarceration may have tended to have generally negative perceptions of aspects of their lived experience associated with their basic formal education. However, these prisoners may have tended to have a positive perception of opportunities they took to engage in formal learning during their incarceration. Collectively, the findings reported here from comparisons of data sourced from the transcripts of the participated and not participated subsets appeared to generally accord with opinion expressed in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, that the integration or reintegration of prisoners into the wider society would have been likely to have been facilitated by providing opportunities for prisoners to participate in formal education and vocational education programs (for example: Fabelo, 2000; Kirby et al., 2000; Steurer et al., 2001). The findings may indicate that the provision of such programs would have been likely to have had its most beneficial impact on the integration or reintegration of prisoners who have experienced conditions during childhood which were assumed in the study to have been causal conditions of experience of childhood educational disadvantage, and/or of prisoners who had a personal history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activity.

Conclusions

The researcher’s purpose in making comparisons of constructed conceptual content of various subsets of transcripts of the participants’ narratives was to identify points of possible heuristic interest which seemed to emerge from the study. As explained in the introductory section of this chapter, all conclusions drawn from such comparisons are assumed to be necessarily speculative. In particular, conclusions drawn from comparisons involving subsets which constituted less than 30 per cent of the total number of 15 transcripts included in the study are assumed here to be highly conjectural. Subsets which constituted less than 30 per cent of the total number of transcripts included the transcripts of the narratives of participants who had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout their childhood, and the transcripts of the narratives of participants who did not have a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activity.

An examination was made of the relative proportions of participants in the study in subsets which were defined in terms of inferred general characteristics of prisoners in Australia. Chapter Six contains an account of the derivation and the description of these inferred general characteristics. The examination revealed that the whole group of participants was heterogeneous with regard to the characteristics. This finding seemed
to be consistent with a conclusion of the Australian Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee (1996, p.8), that, as a group, prisoners in Australian correctional facilities showed great diversity in their characteristics. Characteristics of chronic unemployment, early repeated engagement in criminal activity, and participation in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration were each inferred for at least 60 per cent of the participants. On the basis of literature reviewed in Chapter Two, chronic unemployment and early, repeated engagement in criminal activity were assumed to be frequently-occurring outcomes of childhood experience of disadvantage, including educational disadvantage, for prisoners (for example: Fox, 1997; Hagan, 1993; Reiman, 1998). Characteristics of experience of fewer than 10 years of basic formal education and of extreme disruption of basic formal education were each inferred for 40 per cent of the participants. These two characteristics were assumed, in the study, to be indicators of probable experience of educational disadvantage during childhood. Frequent use of illegal drugs as a juvenile was inferred for 40 per cent of the participants. This finding appears to be generally consistent with a finding by Prichard and Payne (2005a), that there has been a positive association between habitual drug use during the juvenile years and ongoing engagement in criminal activities.

The apparent heterogeneous nature of the group of participants in the study seems to lend support to a conclusion that an individualised approach, based on identified characteristics of individual prisoners, may need to be taken in designing and implementing educational interventions which are intended to facilitate the integration or reintegration of prisoners into the wider society, if such interventions are to be effective. This general type of approach has been advocated by Toch (1996) and by the Australian National Training Authority (2000), and appears to have been trialed in at least one correctional facility in New South Wales (Henry, 2005) and in Victoria (Wilson and Penaluna, 1995).

As explicated in Chapters One and Four, the study focused primarily on the interpretive analysis of the transcripts of the narratives of participants who had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. Given this focus, the conclusions summarized here are primarily concerned with findings interpretively derived from the transcripts of the narratives of participants who had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. Seventy per cent of these participants had experienced chronic unemployment. This finding seems to be generally consistent with a conclusion reached by James and Carach (1997, p.33), that the ‘typical offender’ in
Australian correctional facilities during the period from 1989 to 1996 was male and had a history of chronic unemployment. Fifty per cent of the participants who had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities had fewer than 10 years of basic formal education, had experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education, and had been frequent users of illegal drugs as juveniles. Forty per cent had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout their childhood. Speculatively, these findings seem to indicate that assumed indicators of probable experience of childhood disadvantage, including educational disadvantage, were not invariantly linked to early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. Seventy per cent of the participants who had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities had participated in some formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated. A social meaning of inclusion was constructed from four of the seven transcripts of the narratives of these participants. Speculatively, these findings may indicate that a large minority of prisoners with a personal history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities, perhaps of the order of 40 per cent, may have desired to achieve inclusion in conventional society, and have been willing to undertake formal education and/or vocational training as one of the means by which this inclusion could be achieved. This speculative point, if correct, appears to be lend support to opinions expressed in the literature, that the provision of accredited formal education and vocational training programs for prisoners can be a major means by which prisoners can be assisted to achieve integration or reintegration into conventional society after their release from prison (for example: Blunkett, 2004; Department of Justice, 2003a; Western Australian Department of Corrective Services, 2006).

A speculative comparison of the relative proportions of participants with a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities and of participants who did not have this characteristic seemed to indicate that a higher relative proportion of participants with a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities had experienced chronic unemployment, frequent use of illegal drugs as juveniles, fewer than 10 years of basic formal education, extreme disruption of their basic formal education, and highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood. This finding is highly speculative because of the relatively low absolute number of participants who did not have a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. However, the finding appears to be generally consistent with data reported in the literature, which indicated that there was a positive association between apparent indicators of experience of childhood disadvantage by individuals and the incidence of

The results of an examination of concepts constructed through interpretive analyses of the transcripts of the narratives of participants who had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities seemed to indicate that, amongst the participants, no particular valuing of conformity to perceived norms of conventional Australian society was associated with early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. Speculatively, this finding may indicate that prisoners who have had a history early, repeated engagement in criminal activity have not invariably adopted a general antisocial attitude. A personal meaning of lost opportunity was constructed from 50 per cent of the transcripts of participants who had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. This finding may be related to the speculative point discussed elsewhere in this section of the chapter, that a large minority of prisoners who had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities may have desired to achieve inclusion in conventional society, and have been willing to undertake formal education and/or vocational training as one of the means by which this inclusion could be achieved. A relationship between these speculative points may be that some prisoners who perceived their experience of basic formal education and/or vocational training in terms of lost opportunity, and who desired to achieve social inclusion, may have been willing to take an opportunity to acquire education/training credentials made available to them by the provision of formal education or vocational training programs in the correctional facility. Among the participants, inferred negative perceptions of family environment and school environment appeared to be associated with early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. These inferred negative perceptions were interpretively associated with a personal meaning of disadvantage in 30 per cent of the cases of the transcripts of the narratives of participants who had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. Speculatively, these findings seem to be consistent with a conclusion that statistical data reported in the literature indicated that there was a positive association between some indicators of experience of disadvantage during childhood and incarceration (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1992; Walker et al., 1991). These findings may indicate that, for prisoners who have a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities, interventions intended to facilitate the prisoners’ integration or reintegration into the wider society may need to be holistic in attempting to address a range of issues such as the effects of individuals’ experiences of disadvantageous circumstances throughout much of their childhood and/or youth,
individuals’ current value systems, motivations and aspirations, and their needs for formal education and/or vocational training with regard to enhancing their prospects of obtaining personally satisfying employment after release from custody.

The interpretation of conceptual content constructed from the transcripts of narratives of participants with an inferred characteristic of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities was of primary interest in achieving the aims of the study, as explained in Chapter One. However, speculative comparisons of conceptual content of transcripts of participants with the other inferred characteristics were made in order to identify points of possible heuristic interest ostensibly related to these inferred characteristics. In each case, findings inferred from a subset of transcripts of the narratives of participants, which are summarized here, are presented as findings relative to findings inferred from the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the complementary subset. In order to avoid constant repetition of expressions to the effect that the findings from a subset of transcripts are presented here as being relative to findings from the complementary subset of transcripts, such expressions have been omitted from most of the text.

Among the participants, experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood appeared to be associated with relatively high incidences of less than 10 years of basic formal education, chronic unemployment, early, repeated engagement in criminal activities, and participation in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration. A relatively low incidence of rebellion against conformity to the norms of conventional society was interpretively associated with participants who had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood. These participants appeared to have perceived their basic formal education in terms of lost opportunity and/or disadvantage, and to have had a generally negative perception of their childhood family environment. In relation to the apparent experience of some participants of multiple causes of educational disadvantage, as noted in the literature review in Chapter Two, public policy which was intended to address educational disadvantage was strongly influenced by a social-democratic needs-based concept of equal opportunity during the approximate time period in which most of the participants experienced their basic formal education. However, the means of implementing the policy by identification of general equity groups was criticized on the basis that it did not take account of individual circumstances including experience of multiple causes of educational disadvantage and of the cumulative effects of such experience (for example: Clarke, 1997, p. 12; Dobson, 1995, p. 3; Rizvi cited by
Participants in the study who had apparently experienced educational disadvantage seemingly had not benefited from the policy, possibly because the implementation of the policy was based on an ineffective means of identifying individual cases of disadvantage in childhood. The findings reported here may indicate that a holistic approach, addressing a wide range of personal developmental issues, may be required for effective interventions to assist prisoners who have experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood to achieve integration or reintegration into the wider society, and that such prisoners may have potential motivation to achieve social inclusion if they perceive that they have a realistic opportunity to do so.

Experience of fewer than 10 years of formal basic education seemed to be associated with relatively high incidences of experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood, extreme disruption of basic formal education, chronic unemployment, and early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. No particular valuing of conformity to the norms of conventional society was interpretively associated with participants who had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education. These participants appeared to have generally perceived their experience of basic formal education in terms of disadvantage, and to have associated generally negative perceptions of their childhood family environment and/or their school environment with this experience. These findings may indicate that a holistic approach, addressing a wide range of personal developmental issues including personal motivational issues, may be required for effective interventions to assist prisoners who have experienced fewer than 10 years of formal basic education to achieve integration or reintegration into the wider society.

Experience of extreme disruption of basic formal education seemed to be associated with a relatively high incidence of participation in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration. No particular valuing of conformity to the norms of conventional society was interpretively associated with participants who had experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education. No general personal perception of experience of basic formal education was interpretively associated with this group of participants. These findings may indicate that prisoners who experienced extreme disruption of their basic formal education may be particularly willing to undertake formal education and/or vocational training during the period(s) of their incarceration, especially if issues relating to their personal motivation to do so are addressed.
Frequent use of illegal drugs as a juvenile seemed to be associated with relatively high incidences of experience of chronic unemployment, early repeated engagement in criminal activities, positive valuing of conformity to perceived norms of conventional society, and perception of personal experience of basic formal education in terms of lost opportunity. These findings may indicate that prisoners who began frequent use of illegal drugs as juveniles may be particularly amenable to participate in interventions which they perceive to be useful to them in achieving social inclusion after their release from custody.

Experience of chronic unemployment appeared to be associated with relatively high incidences of experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood, fewer than 10 years of basic formal education, extreme disruption of basic formal education, frequent use of illegal drugs as a juvenile, and early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. No particular valuing of conformity to the norms of conventional society was interpretively associated with participants who had experienced chronic unemployment. Participants in the chronic unemployment subset apparently tended to have perceived their experience of basic formal education in terms of disadvantage, and to have had a generally negative perception of their school environments. These findings may indicate that a holistic, individualized approach to career management, including the provision of appropriate accredited education/vocational training and of assistance to obtain personally satisfying, legitimate employment on release from custody, may be effective in assisting prisoners who have a history of chronic unemployment to strive for and achieve integration into the wider society after their release from custody.

Participation in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration seemed to be associated with relatively high incidences of experience of highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood, extreme disruption of basic formal education, early, repeated engagement in criminal activities, and positive valuing of conformity to perceived norms of conventional society. Participants who had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during incarceration apparently tended to have positively valued learning in jail, and to have negatively valued offending. These findings may indicate that prisoners who experienced extreme disadvantage, including educational disadvantage, during their childhood may have a propensity, during their incarceration, to undertake formal education and/or vocational training which they perceive to be relevant to their capacities and personal needs in relation to achieving social inclusion after their release from custody.
The main relationships of coincidence between categories of constructed data, and the major interventions indicated by the analyses of the data and the literature included in the study, are shown in Figure One.
Specific topic

Drug use
Offending
Negatively valued school environment
Negatively valued family environment

Personal meaning

Lost opportunity
Disadvantage

Social meaning

Inclusion

Inferred characteristic

Dysfunctional family
Disrupted basic education
Frequent use of drugs as a juvenile
Early and repeated offending

Less than 10 years basic education
Chronic unemployment

Disadvantage
Indifference

Holistic, individualized approach to personal development and career redevelopment

Major interventions indicated

Agency interventions to detect childhood experience of disadvantage, and to mitigate its effects

Figure 1: Main relationships between categories of constructed data, and major interventions indicated
Chapter Thirteen

A summary and discussion of the study

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the aims, philosophical orientation, and methodology of the study, and a discussion of the main findings of the study. The summary is presented first. In the penultimate section of the chapter, the main findings from the study are discussed. Apparent needs for social action emerging from the findings are identified in the concluding section.

Summary

Aims of the study
The study had two main aims. The first aim was to develop and present an understanding of the lived experience of each member of a selected group of prisoners in Queensland correctional centres, relating particularly to their formal education and vocational training. The second aim was to identify points of potential heuristic interest from the data obtained in the study. In particular, the study sought to discover points of heuristic interest which seemed to be indicative of need for social action to reduce the incidence of juvenile and continuing engagement by individuals in criminal activities, and to address education and vocational training issues relating to the integration or reintegration of incarcerated offenders into the wider Australian society after their release from custody.

In relation to its aims, the study focussed on obtaining and interpreting data from male prisoners who had a personal history of juvenile involvement in criminal activity and repeated involvement in criminal activity up to the period of their incarceration during which the primary data-gathering phase of the study was conducted. The focus of the study was developed from its origins in published data on prisoners in Australia, which indicated that relatively high percentages of such prisoners were males, had become involved in criminal activities as juveniles, were repeat offenders, and apparently had experienced various forms of disadvantage, including educational disadvantage, as juveniles (for example: Australian Bureau of Statistics; 1992; Walker et al., 1991).

The first aim of the study was developed from the researcher’s finding, from examination of the literature, that there was an apparent lack of evidence-based
published studies which provided insights into the education-related experiences of prisoners and which were based on prisoner’s accounts of their lived experience relating to their basic formal education and vocational training. There appeared to be a dearth of published studies which provide an understanding, from perspectives of the people involved, of the lived experience, relating to basic formal education and vocational training, of people who had become involved in criminal activities as juveniles and who had continued their involvement in criminal activities throughout their youth and into their adulthood. The development of effective social interventions to address the phenomenon of juvenile engagement in criminal activities, with subsequent repeated engagement, by males, seemed to require evidence-based insights into the education-related experiences of prisoners with this particular type of personal history. The study aimed to provide some insights by way of understandings of the prisoners’ lived experiences relating to their basic formal education and vocational training, and to identify some points which may be relevant to the design and implementation of social interventions by which the phenomenon of juvenile engagement in criminal activities, with subsequent repeated engagement, by males in Australia, could be effectively addressed. In order to achieve the aims of the study, a particular methodology was adopted for the design and implementation of the study, as follows.

Methodological aspects of the study
The study was conceptualised and conducted from within a constructivist philosophical framework. The researcher adopted assumptions that people, including prisoners and the researcher, construct concepts from various types of inputs which constitute their lived experiences (for example: Burbules, 2000, pp. 311-312; Noddings, 1995, p. 115; Phillips, 2000b, p. 7), and that these concepts form the bases of people’s understandings of their lived experience in the form of meanings that they attribute to, or by which they characterise, their lived experience (for example: Chase, 1996; Cortazzi, 1993; Ezzy, 1998; Josselson, 1995; Mishler, 1986a, 1986b; Riessman, 1993).

From a constructivist perspective, the researcher assumed that two general categories of data were used in the study, viz., primary data and constructed data. The primary data used in the study were taken to consist of audio-recorded utterances of prisoners who participated in the study, and to constitute sensory inputs from the participant prisoners to the researcher from which the researcher constructed various types of concepts. The constructed data were assumed to consist of constructions made by the researcher from the primary data, and to include written transcripts of the audio-recordings, general information about the participant prisoners, constructed by the
researcher relatively directly from the transcripts, and concepts which were constructed by the researcher from the transcripts through the use of processes of interpretive analysis.

Utterances of participants were audio-recorded during individual interview sessions between participant prisoners and the researcher. Each interview session focussed on the participant’s account of his lived experience relating particularly to his basic formal education and vocational training. Each participant’s set of recorded utterances was assumed by the researcher to constitute at least one self-narrative by the participant. The researcher based this assumption on published accounts, by various researchers, of the occurrence of self-narratives in interview settings (for example: Chase, 1995, pp.1-3; Lieblich et al., 1998, pp.24-25; Mishler, 1986a, pp.66-75; Reissman 1993, pp.3,26-30; Tagg, 1985, p.163; Weiss, 1994). The construction of concepts from the transcripts was carried out through the use of two forms of interpretive analysis of narrative.

The two forms of interpretive analysis of self-narrative used in the study were holistic-content analysis and holistic-form analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998). The researcher assumed that concepts, in the form of categories of subject-matter content of the transcripts, were constructed through the use of the holistic-content method of analysis. The researcher identified two sub-categories of these concepts, viz., specific topics and personal meanings, as explicated in Chapter Four. It was assumed that concepts, in the form of structural features of the narratives, were constructed through the use of the holistic-form method of analysis. The researcher inferred that these concepts constituted social meanings in the narratives, as explicated in Chapter Four. The data for the study were obtained through implementation of the research procedures which have been discussed here. The nature of the data, and how the data were used in the study, will now be discussed.

Data used in the study, and how the data were used

Construction of the researcher’s understanding of the lived experience of each participant’s lived experience relating to the participant’s basic formal education and vocational training was achieved through creating a synthesis of the data which had been constructed from the transcript of the participant’s narrative. These constructed data consisted of constructed general information relating to the participant, including information relating to his personal history and inferred general characteristics, and specific topics, personal meanings, and social meanings which the researcher had constructed through holistic-content and holistic-form methods of interpretive analysis.
of the transcript. In constructing an understanding of a participant’s lived experience relating to his basic formal education and vocational training, the researcher inferred relationships between the concepts constructed from the transcript of the participant’s narrative. As this procedure was carried out within each individual transcript, the relationships referred to here were inferred relationships amongst concepts within a transcript.

After constructing and writing an understanding of each participant’s lived experience relating to his basic formal education and vocational training, the researcher examined the aggregated data constructed in the study, with the intention of identifying inferred relationships within each sub-category of constructed concepts, and inferred relationships between concepts in different sub-categories. The sub-categories of constructed concepts referred to here are social meanings, personal meanings, specific topics, and inferred general characteristics of participants. Identification of inferred relationships within the data of the study constituted the main findings of the study. These main findings will now be summarised and discussed here.

The main findings

The first set of relationships in the whole set of data constructed in the study, as identified by the researcher, consisted of inferred relationships amongst concepts within the sub-categories of social meanings, personal meanings, and specific topics. Apparent relationships within these sub-categories of constructed concepts were identified as inferred conceptual relationships. The identification of the relationships referred to here was explained in detail in Chapter Eleven.

Within the sub-category of social meanings, meanings of inclusion, indifference, and rebellion were assumed to be conceptually inter-related in that each was assumed to represent a particular value of conformity to personally perceived norms of conventional Australian society, with inclusion representing a generally positive value, indifference representing a generally neutral value, and rebellion representing a generally negative value. Personal meanings of disadvantage and of lost opportunity were assumed to be conceptually inter-related, in that each was assumed to be a particular conceptualisation of unrealised potential personal benefit. Specific topics of school environment and of family environment were assumed to be conceptually related in that each seemed to incorporate some concept of personal support or nurturance during childhood. This concept appeared to have a negative general evaluative connotation in a small majority of the cases involved. In these cases the specific topics
appeared to have been conceptually related to a personal meaning of disadvantage. Specific topics of learning in jail, drug use, and offending appeared to be conceptually related in that each seemed to incorporate some concept of orientation to life, or direction in life, adopted from a relatively early age. This concept appeared to have a positive general evaluative connotation in the majority of cases of a specific topic of learning in jail, and a neutral general connotation in the majority of cases of the other two specific topics.

In each sub-category of constructed concepts there appeared to be complex conceptual relationships between some of the concepts in at least 20 per cent of the cases. Inferences drawn from this finding are that, while some relatively weak patterns of relationships between concepts were evident, no pattern was sufficiently strongly represented in the data to be regarded as definitely characteristic of the lived experiences of the group of participants as a whole in relation to their basic formal educations and training.

The second set of relationships in the whole set of data constructed in the study, as identified by the researcher, consisted of inferred relationships between concepts across the three sub-categories of social meanings, personal meanings, and specific topics. The identification of the relationships referred to here is presented in detail in Chapter Eleven. These relationships were identified by examining coincidences of concepts in pairs of sub-categories. The pairs of sub-categories were social meanings and personal meanings, social meanings and specific topics, and personal meanings and specific topics.

Examination of coincidences of concepts in the social meanings sub-category with concepts in the personal meanings sub-category indicated that a majority of the participants appeared to have associated a generalised personal meaning of unrealised potential personal benefit with a generalised social meaning of conformity to personally perceived norms of conventional Australian society, in relation to their lived experience.

Examinations of coincidences of concepts in the social meanings sub-category with concepts in the specific topics sub-category, and of coincidences of concepts in the personal meanings sub-category with concepts in the specific topics sub-category, indicated that generalised concepts of nurturance and of direction in life appeared to have been expressed in the narratives of at least 25 per cent of the participants, in relation to their lived experience, and appeared to have been associated with a generalised social meaning of conformity to personally perceived norms of conventional Australian society and with a generalised personal meaning of unrealised potential
personal benefit.

There appeared to have been a tendency for participants to have conceptualized their lived experience relating to basic formal education and vocational training broadly in terms of conformity to personally perceived norms of conventional Australian society, unrealised potential personal benefit, nurturance, and direction in life. There appeared to have been considerable variation between participants in particular interpretations within these broad conceptualizations. These speculative conclusions seemed to indicate that no general understanding of the lived experiences of the group could be presented in terms of one or more wholly characteristic patterns of relationship between concepts within the sub-categories constructed in the study. Apparently, an understanding of the lived experience of the participants, in terms of the sub-categories of concepts which were constructed in the study, had necessarily to be constructed on an individual basis.

The third set of relationships in the whole set of data constructed in the study, as identified by the researcher, consisted of inferred relationships amongst inferred general characteristics of the participants. The identification of these relationships was explained in detail in Chapter Twelve.

Relative to other participants, a higher proportion of participants who apparently had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout their childhood had experienced fewer than 10 years of basic formal education, chronic unemployment, and early, repeated involvement in crime. A lower proportion of participants in the highly dysfunctional family subset than in the complementary subset had been frequent users of illegal drugs as juveniles. The proportion of participants in the highly dysfunctional family subset who had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during their periods of incarceration was comparable with the proportion in the complementary subset. These findings are highly speculative because of the relatively small number of participants in the highly dysfunctional family subset. However, the findings appear to indicate that children who experience highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout their childhood may be at a greater risk, than children who do not experience these circumstances, of early and repeated involvement in crime, and that this risk may be associated with experience of educational disadvantage during childhood. The findings may indicate that prisoners who had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout their childhood are no less willing than other prisoners to participate in formal education and/or vocational training during their period(s) of incarceration. The findings may indicate that, for the participants in the
highly dysfunctional family subset, there had been no effective intervention by social agencies to provide a more appropriate quality of life for the participant during his childhood. Recent changes in public policy and practice relating to child protection in Australia ostensibly are intended to increase the probability that the situation of children in highly dysfunctional family circumstances will be detected and that intervention by a government-approved agency will be attempted. The Queensland Government, for example, adopted a policy in 2004 which requires school staff to report suspected cases of child abuse within and external to the school environment (Queensland Government, 2004). The Queensland Government policy in 2006, relating to the responsibilities of the Queensland Department of Child Safety regarding notifications of suspected child abuse, states that ‘The departmental response to all notifications is the completion of an investigation and assessment’ (Queensland Government, 2006).

Relative to other participants, a higher proportion of participants who had fewer than 10 years of basic formal education apparently had experienced highly dysfunctional family circumstances throughout childhood, extreme disruption of their basic formal education, chronic unemployment, and early, repeated involvement in criminal activities. This finding appears to be consistent with findings, reported in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, regarding the relatively high proportion of prisoners in Australia who were characterised by apparent experience of multiple forms of childhood disadvantage, including relatively low standards of school achievement (for example: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training and Advisory Council, 1998; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996; Walker et al., 1991). The proportions of participants in the less than 10 years of basic formal education subset, and in the extreme disruption of basic formal education subset, who had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during their periods of incarceration was at least comparable with the proportion in the complementary subsets. These findings may indicate that prisoners who have experienced educational disadvantage during their childhood were no less willing than other prisoners to participate in formal education and/or vocational training during their period(s) of incarceration.

Relative to other participants, higher proportions of participants who had been frequent users of illegal drugs in their juvenile years had experienced chronic unemployment and had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. This finding appears to be consistent with findings reported by Prichard & Payne (2005a) regarding juvenile offenders’ apparently simultaneous involvement in drug use
and criminal behaviour. The proportions of participants in the drug use subset and its complementary subset, who had participated in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated, were similar. This finding may indicate that a personal history of illegal drug use from a relatively young age did not necessarily affect a prisoner’s willingness to participate in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated.

Relative to other participants, a higher proportion of participants who had experienced chronic unemployment had inferred characteristics which were assumed, in the study, to be contributory causal conditions of experience of childhood disadvantage, and to have had early, repeated engagement in criminal activity. This finding appears to be consistent with evidence and opinion in the literature which supported a conclusion that there were positive general associations between individuals’ childhood experience of disadvantage, their experience of chronic unemployment, and their engagement in criminal activities (for example: Fox, 1997; Hagan, 1993; Reiman, 1998). The proportion of participants in the chronic unemployment subset who had participated in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated was higher than in the complementary subset. This finding may indicate that prisoners who had a personal history of chronic unemployment were generally more willing than other prisoners to participate in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated.

Relative to other participants, a higher proportion of participants with a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activity subset apparently had experienced highly dysfunctional circumstances during their childhood, fewer than 10 years of basic formal education, extreme disruption of their basic formal education, frequent use of drugs as juveniles, and chronic unemployment. These findings are highly speculative because of the relatively small number of participants who did not have a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activity. However, the findings appear to be consistent with a general conclusion drawn from the review of literature in Chapter Two, viz., that there are complex relationships between individuals’ experience of various types of disadvantage during childhood, and their engagement in crime, resulting in their incarceration, during youth and adulthood (for example: Fox, 1997; Hagan, 1993; Reiman, 1998, White and Perrone, 1997).

Relative to other participants, a higher proportion of participants who had participated in formal education and/or vocational training during their period(s) of incarceration apparently had experienced highly dysfunctional circumstances during their childhood, extreme disruption of their basic formal education, and had early,
repeated engagement in criminal activities. This finding may indicate that prisoners who had experienced multiple forms of disadvantage during childhood were relatively willing, compared with other prisoners, to participate in formal education and/or vocational training during their incarceration. Speculatively, this apparent willingness may be related to prisoners’ perceptions of their childhood disadvantage and/or of their opportunity to overcome this disadvantage through participating in formal education and/or vocational training while incarcerated. This speculative point appears to accord with opinions expressed in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, that there is a need to provide prisoners with opportunities to overcome their educational disadvantage as a means of assisting them to successfully integrate or reintegrate into the wider society (for example: Callan & Gardner, 2005; Kirby et al., 2000).

The fourth set of relationships in the whole set of data constructed in the study, as identified by the researcher, consisted of inferred relationships between inferred general characteristics of the participants and other concepts constructed from the transcripts. The other concepts constructed from the transcripts, referred to here, are social meanings, personal meanings, and specific topics, as described in Chapter Four. The identification of the relationships referred to here was explained in detail in Chapter Twelve. Identification of these relationships was achieved by making speculative comparisons between aggregated constructed data in various sub-sets of the data. The sub-sets of aggregated data were created by combining the data constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of sub-sets of participants. The creation of sub-sets of participants was based on inferred general characteristics of the participants. Speculative comparisons were made between the aggregated data from the transcripts of the narratives of participants for whom a particular characteristic had been inferred and the aggregated data from the transcripts of the narratives of participants for whom the particular characteristic had not been inferred. As the study focussed primarily on the interpretive analysis of the transcripts of the narratives of participants who had a history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activities, the findings summarized here are the main findings relating to this particular subset of participants.

Participants who had a personal history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activity did not seem to be characterised by a generally negative valuing of conformity to perceived norms of conventional Australian society. This finding is based on the researcher’s interpretation that a social meaning of rebellion was constructed from only one of the ten transcripts of the narratives of participants in the early, repeated engagement subset, while social meanings either of inclusion or of indifference
were constructed from seven of the transcripts. Speculatively, this finding may indicate that prisoners who had a history early, repeated engagement in criminal activity had not invariably adopted a general antisocial attitude from a relatively early age. Prisoners who had not adopted a general antisocial attitude, particularly those who value social inclusion, may have been amenable to embarking on a career change from a criminal career to a career path which would enhance their chances of achieving social inclusion after their release from custody. Personal meanings which were constructed most frequently from this subset of transcripts were lost opportunity and disadvantage. Speculatively, this finding may indicate that prisoners who had a personal history of early, repeated engagement in criminal activity tended to conceptualise their experience of basic formal education and vocational training, to some extent, in terms of lost opportunity and/or experience of disadvantage. The provision of realistic opportunities for prisoners who had not adopted a general antisocial attitude, and who conceptualised their experience of basic formal education and vocational training in terms of lost opportunity and/or disadvantage, to engage in processes of career change in order to achieve inclusion in conventional society, seemed to be a strategy which was likely to facilitate the successful integration or reintegration of some prisoners into the wider society after their release from custody. The provision of accredited formal education and vocational training programs for prisoners had been advocated by educators associated with prisoner education as a major means by which recidivism rates could be minimized (for example: Fabelo, 2000; Henry, 2005; Steurer et al., 2001; Toch, 1996). Within the group of participants in the study, inferred negative perceptions of family environment and school environment appeared to have some association with early, repeated engagement in criminal activities. Negative perceptions of family environment throughout the period of basic formal education, which were inferred from three of the ten transcripts in this subset, may indicate a need to provide an effective school-based pupil counseling service to assist children to deal with perceived difficulties in coping within the family environment. None of the three participants in the early, repeated engagement subset, for whom a negative perception of family environment throughout childhood was inferred, indicated that a pupil counseling service was available at the schools which they had attended. Since at least 2002, the Queensland Government, through its Department of Education, Training and the Arts, provided pupil counseling on a regional and school basis by school guidance officers whose role includes the requirement to identify: Factors that can be barriers to learning and development, and plan or assist in
planning interventions or programs that can help students achieve positive outcomes. (Queensland Government, 2002)

Negative perceptions of school environment, which were inferred from four of the ten transcripts in this subset, may indicate a need to provide a learning environment more suitable than traditional school environments for children unable to relate positively to a traditional school environment. In some English-speaking countries, a range of learning environments have been designed for post-primary-school age children who do not respond positively to traditional school environments and/or who cannot access traditional schools. In the United Kingdom, for example, the development of learning environments designed to cater for ‘disaffected teenagers’ (TheCademy, 2006) has been sponsored by The United Kingdom Department for Education and Skills since 2001 (TheCademy, 2006). Some Internet websites provide on-line learning environments which offer formal learning programs and/or a collection of learning resources for school-age children (for example: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2006; Christa McAuliffe Academy, 2006). The Toowoomba Flexi School is an example of an attempt to provide an appropriate learning environment for children of post-primary school age who apparently have been unable to relate positively to a traditional school environment, as indicated by the following statements made by the University of Southern Queensland, which was the principle initiator of the Flexi School project:

The Toowoomba Flexi School endeavours to provide opportunities to students who are unable to attend mainstream schooling. The learning environment is a major departure from the traditional approach to education. (University of Southern Queensland, 2003)

The main findings from the study, and points of potential heuristic interest which appear to emerge from these findings, have been discussed here. A brief overview of the main foci of the study in relation to its aims will now be presented, and will be followed by a summary discussion of apparent needs for social action which relate to the achievement of the aims of the study.

**Conclusion: Apparent needs for social action**

The study was primarily concerned with two general periods of time in the lives of ten male prisoners in Queensland correctional centres, each of whom had a personal history of juvenile engagement in criminal activities and of repeated criminal offending up to the period of his incarceration during which the data-gathering stage of the study was carried out. The two general periods of time were the period of the prisoner’s basic
formal education and vocational training, and the period of his incarceration during which he participated as a direct informant to the study.

The study focussed on the general period of the prisoner’s basic formal education and vocational training in order to achieve the first aim of the study, which was to develop and present an understanding of the participant’s lived experience relating to his basic formal education and vocational training. This understanding is presented in Chapter Ten, in the form of an interpretive synthesis of background information about the prisoner and of concepts, all which were constructed by the researcher from a written transcript of the prisoner’s spoken self-narrative relating to his basic formal education and vocational training.

The study focussed on both of the nominated general periods of time in the prisoner’s life in order to achieve the second aim of the study, which was to identify points of possible heuristic interest with regard to indicating apparent needs for social action aimed at reducing the incidence of juvenile engagement in criminal activities leading to repeated engagement throughout life, and of reducing recidivism by ex-prisoners who have a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activities. These points of possible heuristic interest, and apparent needs for social action which seem to arise from the points, are presented in Chapters Eleven and Twelve, and have been briefly summarised in this chapter.

In relation to apparent needs for social action aimed at reducing the incidence of juvenile engagement in criminal activities leading to repeated engagement throughout life, there seemed to be a need for government-sponsored interventions to detect child abuse and to take action aimed at mitigating disadvantage experienced by abused children. Recent policy developments by the Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and the Arts, and by the Queensland Government Department of Child Safety, appear to be a positive attempt to meet this need. There seems to be a need to provide alternative learning environments for children of post-primary-school age who do not respond positively to traditional school environments. The Toowoomba Flexi School is an example of an attempt to provide such an environment in a Queensland regional location.

In relation to social action aimed at reducing the rate of recidivism of ex-prisoners who have a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activities, there seemed to be a need to provide prisoners, with this type of personal history, with individualised, holistic programs, designed to assist them to undergo a process of career change. Elements which seemed to be relevant components of such a
program include ongoing counselling, including career counselling, access to accredited formal education and/or vocational training of direct relevance to individuals’ career goal-setting, and various forms of assistance to individuals to facilitate their achievement of suitable employment and the adoption of a socially-acceptable lifestyle after release from custody. The tentative identification of these elements is based on consideration of the apparent diversity of inferred general characteristics of the participants in the study, and of the meanings interpretively associated with their lived experiences relating to their basic formal education and vocational training, as constructed by the researcher, and on conclusions drawn from the literature (for example, Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Birgden & McLachlan, 2004; Cox, 2006; Eugene, 2006; Henry, 2005; Olgilvie, 2001; Smith & Stewart, 1997; Toch, 1996; Ward & Stewart, 2003).

As can be seen in Table Thirteen (Ch. 12), 70 per cent of participants in the study who had a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activities had experienced chronic unemployment from the time they discontinued their formal education to the time of their incarceration. Fifty per cent of these participants apparently had experienced educational disadvantage during their period of basic formal education. Speculatively, these findings seem to indicate that prisoners who had a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activities were likely to have experienced a relative lack of opportunity to develop a legitimate-employment-based career. This speculative point may be indicative of a need to provide such prisoners with career counselling, involving career goal-setting, and realistic opportunity to acquire employment-related education and training credentials relevant to achieving their new career goals. A concept of career development for prisoners was explicated by Toch (1996). Toch’s (1996) concept incorporated individual case management of prisoners’ career development. Initiatives in providing pathways for prisoners to re-develop their employment careers seem to have been undertaken in several Australian jurisdictions (for example: Cox, 2006; Henry, 2005). Henry (2005) reported on the trialling of a procedure in a correctional centre in New South Wales which was designed to identify education and training needs of individual prisoners in relation to the prisoner’s post-release employment preferences and aspirations. Cox (2006) described an initiative which commenced in Queensland correctional centres in 2002, by which eligible prisoners can undertake industry-accredited vocational education and training programs.

An apparent need for an individualised and holistic approach to the design and
implementation of intervention programs in correctional centres, directed to reducing recidivism by ex-prisoners who have a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activities, seemed to be indicated by the diversity of conceptualisations of meanings of prisoners’ lived experiences of basic formal education and vocational training which the researcher constructed from the transcripts of narratives of participants in the study. The researcher inferred that 40 per cent of participants who had a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activities appeared to positively value personal achievement of social inclusion, while 30 per cent appeared to be indifferent to such achievement. This finding seems to indicate that counselling of prisoners who had a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activities, in relation to encouraging them to set and pursue new career goals, would have needed to be differentiated according to the relative value that they placed on undertaking a career change as part of a pathway to achieving social inclusion after their release from custody. The researcher inferred that 50 per cent of these participants conceptualised their lived experience of basic formal education and vocational training in terms of lost opportunity, while 30 per cent conceptualised it in terms of experience of disadvantage. General negative connotations of concepts of family environment, school environment, and of employment, were interpretively associated, by the researcher, with meanings of the lived experience of basic formal education and vocational training of some of these participants. A concept of drug use, with variable general value connotations, was interpretively associated, by the researcher, with meanings of the lived experience of 40 per cent of these participants. These findings seemed to indicate that ongoing counselling, differentiated according to the apparent meanings by which individuals conceptualised and understand their lived experience, would have needed to be a component of in-prison programs designed to reduce recidivism by ex-prisoners who had a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activities. This speculative point is based on an assumption that some prisoners who had a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activities seem have developed, from their lived experience relating to the period of their basic formal education, a variety of conceptual potential barriers, possibly with related internalised emotional barriers, to the achievement of social inclusion and to participation in formal education and/or vocational training programs. If this was the case, effective intervention programs would seem to have been needed to be tailored according to individual’s characteristics and apparent conceptualisations of personal lived experience, and to have been holistic in attempting to address a range of apparent
needs for conceptual and/or emotional change in order for the individual to successfully undertake a pathway to the achievement of social inclusion after release from custody.

Interpretive analysis of prisoners’ self-narratives relating to their lived experiences of formal education and vocational training, of the types undertaken in the study, thus appears to have some capacity to provide useful inputs to the design and implementation of individualised, holistic intervention programs to assist prisoners with a personal history of early and repeated engagement in criminal activities to undertake a developmental pathway towards achieving successful integration or reintegration into the wider Australian society.

The speculative points discussed here seem to have some relevance to the researcher’s personal professional interest relating to the origins and aims of the study, as described in Chapter One. This interest relates to the researcher’s professional role in the provision of a pre-tertiary bridging program to prisoners in Australian corrective facilities. It centres on outcomes from the study which may be relevant to the ongoing evaluation and development of that program. In this context, the relevance of the program to meeting education needs of prisoners may well be enhanced if the program were included within an individualised and holistic developmental program for prisoners as one of the possible education pathways towards the achievement of career goals for prisoners who had set career goals for themselves involving obtaining higher education qualifications. In relation to the current content of the program, the substantial core component of career management, including career planning, decision-making, and study-management, contained in the program, appears to be highly relevant to meeting education needs of prisoners who are committed to undertaking a personal career change involving their acquisition of higher education qualifications.

In relation to the development and implementation of individualised and holistic intervention programs for prisoners, Birgden and McLachlan (2004, p.1) advocated the adoption of ‘a multidisciplinary and multi-agency systemic approach’ to the rehabilitation of offenders. A ‘risk-need’ approach to offender rehabilitation, as described by Andrews and Bonta (1998), involves the development of individualised, holistic programs to address the non-criminogenic needs of individual offenders as well as addressing the criminogenic needs and the risk factors involved. The individualised, holistic nature of the type of program advocated by Andrews and Bonta (1998) is characterised by its aim to address psychological and learning characteristics of the individual relating to participation in the rehabilitative program, including the individual’s motivation to participate and potential internal barriers to the individual’s
willingness and ability to participate. A ‘good lives’ model of offender rehabilitation advocated by Ward and Stewart (2003) places emphasis on increasing the individual offender’s capabilities to improve the quality of his or her life. In addition to the provision of appropriate intervention programs for prisoners, which are designed to reduce recidivism by ex-prisoners, there appears to be a need to provide various forms of support to prisoners and ex-prisoners in order to reduce the rate of recidivism (Olgilvie, 2001). Initiatives have been undertaken in some Australian jurisdictions to provide pre-release and/or post-release support to offenders who become incarcerated (for example: Cox, 2006; Eugene, 2006). Eugene (2006), in describing pre-release transitional programs for prisoners in Queensland correctional centres, drew attention to personal risks and to disincentives to social inclusion faced by some prisoners immediately after their release from custody, including the experience of homelessness, risks associated with substance abuse, and the risk of suicide. Issues associated with the post-release experience of prisoners were canvassed in detail in a report to the United States of America Department of Justice by Petersilia (2000). These issues included a range of health and social problems commonly experienced by ex-prisoners. A Queensland program for prisoners who have served a custodial sentence of more than 12 months, as described by Eugene (2006), includes elements of addressing emotional and practical issues which such prisoners are likely to encounter on release, and the development of individual transitional plans based on individual needs assessment. A need to provide ongoing support to offenders after their release from custody was acknowledged in a report to the Victorian Department of Justice (Department of Justice, 2003b), in the following words:

In recent years there has been growing recognition of the importance of managing the post-release needs of prisoners as a means of improving their reintegration into the community and reducing subsequent recidivism and other health and social problems. (Department of Justice, 2003b, p.5)

A need to provide assistance to ex-prisoners to obtain employment after their release from custody apparently has been acknowledged and responded to by the Queensland Government. Cox (2006) described a three-stage program which has been implemented in Queensland correctional centres, and which is aimed at assisting prisoners to prepare for and obtain legitimate employment after their release from custody.

Initiatives undertaken in recent years in some Australian jurisdictions, such as those described by Cox (2006), Eugene (2006), and Henry (2005), appear to be first steps towards the provision of effective individualised, holistic approaches to addressing
offender recidivism through supporting prisoners and ex-prisoners to find and pursue pathways to successful integration or reintegration into society. These initiatives appear to be initial responses, at the individual Australian state government level, to national adoption of *The Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia Revised 2004* (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2004, p. 3). However, the extent to which individualised, holistic intervention programs have actually been implemented in Australian jurisdictions cannot be accurately ascertained from information currently available in the public domain. Conclusions drawn here from the information currently available in the public domain are that the development of such programs seems to be at a relatively early stage and to be relatively uncoordinated within and across the jurisdictions in which initiatives to implement *The Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia Revised 2004* (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2004, p. 3) have been commenced.
References

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training and Advisory Council. (1998). *Working together to break the cycle.* Melbourne: Kangan Institute of TAFE.


356


Appendix A

Example of the interpretive analyses of the transcripts of participants’ narratives
Example of the interpretive analyses of the transcripts of participants’ narratives

An illustrative example of the researcher’s use of the procedures of the two models of interpretive analysis of spoken self narrative employed in the study, viz. holistic-content analysis and holistic-form analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998), in analysing the transcripts of the narratives of participants in the study is presented here.

Holistic-content analysis

As explained in Chapter Four, two categories of concepts were constructed from the transcript of each participant’s narrative through the use of the interpretive narrative analysis procedures of holistic-content analysis, as described by Lieblich et al. (1998, p. 62). One of these categories was labelled by the researcher as ‘personal meanings, and the other category was labelled as ‘specific topics’. The concepts in these categories were assumed, in the study, to be particular cases of general concepts referred to by Lieblich et al. (1998) as global impressions and special foci of interest, respectively, in that they were constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of the participants in the study. The procedures used for the construction of personal meanings and specific topics were inter-related and iterative, as explained in Chapter Four, thus the exact order in which the concepts were constructed cannot be represented here by the order of presentation of concepts within each category. Personal meanings are presented here first, as they are assumed in the study to be broader concepts than specific foci of interest, in that they are assumed to be more inclusive, than specific foci of interest, of the conceptual content of the transcript. A descriptive account exemplifying how personal meanings and specific topics were constructed from the transcript of the narrative of participant Nigel is given here. The general procedures exemplified here were used in the construction of personal meanings and specific topics from the transcript of the narrative of each participant.

Extracts from the transcripts of the narratives are used in this Appendix to exemplify how concepts were constructed from the transcripts. These extracts are referenced to the transcripts by the pseudonym of the participant and the line number(s)
The construction of personal meanings from the transcript

The researcher inferred the following three personal meanings from the content of Nigel’s narrative as a whole:

1. A perception of severe, general disadvantage throughout childhood.

For brevity of expression, a personal meaning of a perception of severe, general disadvantage throughout childhood will be referred to from hereon as ‘disadvantage’, and a personal meaning of a strong sense of self-determination will be referred to as ‘self determination’. As explicated in Chapter Four, personal meanings were assumed in the study to be particular cases of global impressions of the narrative, and, thus, to be broad explanatory themes of content in the narrative. The inferred occurrence of each personal meaning from the transcript of Nigel’s narrative is described and exemplified here. A summary of these personal meanings in relation to specific topics which were assumed to constitute part of their content is located in Appendix 2.

A personal meaning of disadvantage

The researcher identified Nigel’s apparent perception of his experience of disadvantage during childhood as a major explanatory theme of content in his narrative. Nigel’s account of his entire childhood depicts a home environment characterised by inadequate and inappropriate parenting, lack of appropriate adult supervision and guidance, physical violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect, and deprivation of basic material necessities, and on-going experiences of separation from family members, detention in juvenile offender facilities, and recourse to a delinquent peer group in order to try to meet his social and emotional needs. In his narrative relating to the adolescent and early adult phases of his life, Nigel appeared to communicate a concept of a personal experience of disadvantage by his frequent references to negative aspects of his childhood experience.

Some of the features of Nigel’s immediate social environment during his childhood are illustrated by the following statements that he made –

*No-one really cared at home so I got no attention whatsoever.* (Nigel, line 1375)
Livin with violence – can’t be expressive with people at home. (Nigel, line 289)

In contrast to Nigel’s description of his family environment as violent and uncaring, he expressed a sense of responsibility towards his family and an affection for his mother, in the following utterances –

I had to go and steal for them to get money to feed my nieces and nephews. (Nigel, line 2295)

My mother. Show her what her son can do. Make her feel happy too. (Nigel, line 546)

The four extracts reproduced here from the transcript of Nigel’s narrative exemplify the occurrence of an apparent anomaly in Nigel’s evaluation of a topic. Nigel’s general evaluation of his family environment was very negative, whereas his references to his family, in the above extracts, are positive. The researcher used statements by Nigel, that were apparently anomalous with his more generally expressed evaluation of a topic, to identify the possible reference by the narrator to a major explanatory theme of content, in this case to the theme of disadvantage experienced in childhood. The use of this interpretive technique in forming an initial overall impression of a narrative was advocated by Lieblich et al. (1998, p. 62).

The researcher inferred that Nigel referred to his perceived severe, general disadvantage during childhood to explain various circumstances and outcomes of the lived experiences that he related in his narrative. In explaining his perceived delinquent behaviour at school, for example, Nigel referred to the perceived lack of positive affirmation in his home environment, in the following words –

Cos I couldn’t do it at home so I played up at school. (Nigel, line 38)

Just violent family you know, just violent. (Nigel, line 286)

Livin with violence can’t be expressive with people at home so do it somewhere else. (Nigel, line 289)

Nigel’s explanation for his generally delinquent behaviour at school, as expressed in the above extract from the transcript of his narrative, exemplifies an incomplete explanation in that his reasons for delinquent behaviour appeared to have been implied, rather than made explicit, in his statement. The researcher used apparent incomplete sets
of utterances about a topic, inferred from Nigel’s narrative, as a means of identifying possible instances of the occurrence of a major explanatory theme of content in the narrative. For example, the tentative identification of a theme of disadvantage experienced in childhood was made on the basis of an apparently incomplete explanation of his delinquent behaviour. The use of this interpretive technique in forming an initial global impression of a narrative was advocated by Lieblich et al. (1998, p. 62).

**A personal meaning of self-determination**

Nigel seemed to express a strong sense of self-determination which appeared to have been related to his experience of disadvantage during childhood and adolescence. An explanatory theme of self-determination appeared to have been expressed in a variety of ways throughout his narrative, including his ostensible references to his indifference to the norms, expectations and controls of the wider society and its agents of authority, and to the value of cash-in-hand in enabling him to take self-directed action. Nigel seemed to repeatedly express his indifference to the expectations and demands made of him by people in positions of authority, and to the punishments and deprivations that he experienced as a consequence of his failure to meet these expectations and demands. Many of his apparent references to his indifference to authority were made in his accounts of his experiences as a dispossessed child and adolescent, for example in his utterance –

*We didn’t care in those days. We had nothing to lose anyway nothing to lose. So we had fun.* (Nigel, line 1916)

In addition to his ostensible use of a theme of disadvantage in childhood to explain his lack of school attainment, Nigel seemed to invoke a theme of self-determination to explain why he did not meet the formal expectations of school. He appeared to have expressed this thematic explanation, for example, in terms of his indifference to school achievement, in stating –

*If I couldn’t learn it I’d say ‘what am I sittin here for?’ you know, then I just wouldn’t care. I’d just think about goin out at lunch time, playin a bit of football or soccer or somethin like that.* (Nigel, line 997)

The above extract from the transcript of Nigel’s narrative was interpreted as an example
of an implicit, and, therefore, incomplete explanation of why he did not achieve at school.

He seemed to explain his delinquent behaviour during childhood partly in terms of his indifference to his family’s expectations of his behaviour and the consequent punishment he received, when he said –

*Getting into trouble – just that you had to go home and get flogged – but I didn’t really care about that.* (Nigel, line 1942)

In describing his frequent incarcerations for offences, Nigel explained that he was indifferent to incarceration as a punishment, in these words –

*You keep goin and goin and goin. Next minute you’re back in jail [indistinct utterance]. I’ve been doin it over and over again. I don’t really care.* (Nigel, line 2445)

And –

*But I know the consequences – just don’t really care you know – got nothin to lose really.* (Nigel, line 2508)

Nigel revealed that, from at least late childhood onwards, he had experienced an irresistible desire to have cash to spend. The researcher interpreted his apparent references to this desire as one manifestation of a major explanatory theme of self-determination in the content of his narrative. His apparent explanatory use of this theme seemed to have been exemplified by his explanation of his repeated incarcerations for property offences, in the following words –

*Longest I was out probably twelve months [indistinct utterance] – its been three months, six months couple of days yearh just can’t help myself just bein broke just go and just take it – take money – ‘cos I get out and that’s it, money’s gone you know I can’t have no money.* (Nigel, line 2242)

In his narrative, Nigel appeared to have linked having money to spend with the ability to be active in a self-directed way. He apparently perceived his need to have money in order to be active as essential to his well-being, as illustrated by the following statements –

*Can’t sit around with nothin ‘do nothin’ you know – I’ve got to get up and move around. Can’t just sit there with nothin’ you know – got to get up and get it. That’s the only way I know, so just go and take somebody else’s.* (Nigel, line 2398)
Nigel’s ostensible invocation of an explanatory theme of his desire to have money to spend seemed to occur in his account of his life after leaving primary school. In this account he revealed that he was a homeless delinquent engaging in serious criminal behaviour in order to survive for part of his early adolescent years, that he was never legitimately employed in earning income during his youth and early adult years, that he derived his income solely from social welfare payments and property crime, that he was frequently in detention, and that he received no employment-related education or training during his youth and early adult life. He seemed to explain his propensity to commit crimes in terms of his apparent perception that he had an irresistible desire to have money to spend, and of his inability to find legitimate alternative adequate sources of income –

*I was only thirteen, yearh I done it for six months, just walkin around bashin people for their clothes, for their shoes, money anything.* (Nigel, line 2095)

Nigel appeared to rationalise his desire to obtain money, to some extent in terms of his family obligation to meet basic material needs of his sisters’ neglected children. This rationalisation seemed evident when he said, with reference to some of his sisters –

*You know because they fuckin gamble all the time, then they got no money, I had to go and steal for them to get money to feed my nieces and nephews.* (Nigel, line 2295)

**The construction of specific topics from the transcript**

Specific topics within the transcript of Nigel’s narrative were selected from an initial list of specific topics constructed by the researcher through procedures of holistic-content analysis of the transcript. The specific topics, initially identified by the researcher as being conceptually related to particular personal meanings of Nigel’s narrative, are shown in Appendix A.

In accordance with advice provided by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62), the researcher paid particular attention to the occurrence of the following three features of the narrative, in identifying special foci of interest in a spoken self-narrative:

1. Possible topic content in the narrator’s opening remarks when the narrator appeared to introduce a new topic into his narrative.
2. Apparent evaluations made in the narration.
3. The amount of detail given by the narrator in relating circumstances and events ostensibly pertaining to a particular topic.

Inferred examples of each of these three features of Nigel’s narrative are shown in Appendix A.

The researcher selected specific topics of Nigel’s narrative, from the list in Table 1, by applying the criterion of the highest frequencies of reference to specific topics, as advocated by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.62). This was achieved by researcher’s use of an arbitrary process of counting down the topics, within a particular theme, from highest to lowest until at least 75 per cent of the total number of references within the theme had been included.

The labels used for the specific topics interpretively associated by the researcher with particular personal meanings are shown in the lists which follow this paragraph. In some cases an explanatory expression is include in parentheses after the label. The inferred general evaluative connotation of the specific topic within the narrative as a whole is show in italic parentheses as either + (positive), or 0 (neutral), or - (negative). The percentage of the total number of utterances identified as being within the theme is shown in plain text parentheses as the last entry for the specific topic.

**Specific topics associated with a personal meaning of disadvantage**

One hundred and twenty one utterances were interpretively associated with a personal meaning of disadvantage:

- School ability (Ability to achieve at school) (0) (30%).
- Home environment (-) (20%).
- Personal abuse (personal abuse or punishment) (-) (16%).
- Unsupported childhood (lack of adult support during childhood) (-) (9%).

**Specific topics associated with a personal meaning of self-determination**

Ninety utterances were interpretively associated with a personal meaning of self-determination:
- Socially unacceptable behaviour (Delinquent or socially-unacceptable behaviour) \( (0) \) (32%).
- Self-direction (Need for personal freedom or self-direction) \( (0) \) (14%).
- Self respect \( (0) \) (12%).
- Ways of learning \( (0) \) (10%).
- Talents \( (+) \) (10%).

**Holistic-form analysis**

As explained in Chapter Four, the term ‘social meanings’ was adopted in the study as a label for a category of concepts which were constructed from the transcript of each participant’s narrative through the use of the interpretive narrative analysis procedures of holistic-form analysis, as described by Lieblich et al. (1998, p. 88-91). The concepts in this category were assumed, in the study, to be particular cases of a general category of concepts referred to by Lieblich et al. (1998) as themal foci, in that they were constructed from the transcripts of the narratives of the participants in the study.

A descriptive account exemplifying how social meanings were constructed from the transcript of the narrative of participant Nigel is given here. The general procedures exemplified here were used in the construction of social meanings from the transcript of the narrative of each participant.

**The construction of social meanings from the transcript**

The researcher concluded that Nigel’s narrative appeared to lack cohesion, in terms of Bruner’s (1991) model of a well-constructed narrative. Nigel’s narrative does not have an obvious story line, or ‘plot’ (Bruner, 1991). The narrator’s purposes in relating events and circumstances had to be inferred by the listener, as they were not made explicit in the narrative. The narrative does, however, have a form of coherence (Agar & Hobbs, 1982) in that it describes several series of ostensibly related events over periods of time, and implies that there were causal relationships between series of events and particular outcomes to which the narrator refers. The researcher interpreted the form of cohesion of Nigel’s narrative to be themal coherence, as described by Agar and Hobbs (1982) (cited by Polkinghorne, 1988, p.165). Themal coherence refers to the way in which the content
of a narrative is organised into themes that provide dimensions of structure to the narrative (Mishler, 1986b, p.89). In the terms used by Lieblich et al. (1998, p.89), with reference to holistic-form analysis of narrative, the themes to which Mishler (1986b, p.89) referred correspond to themal foci of the narrative.

Nigel’s narrative is essentially polyphonic. A polyphonic narrative, according to Lieblich et al. (1998, p.104), has numerous themal dimesions which wind through the narrative, somewhat discontinuously, to the extent that there is difficulty in identifying one or two dominant thematic foci that adequately depict the general structure of the narrative. The polyphonic nature of Nigel’s narrative is illustrated by the numerous inter-related categories of content which were interpretively identified by the researcher in the holistic-content analysis of the narrative, as shown in Appendix A. Many of these categories could be interpreted as dimensions of the structure of Nigel’s narrative, as they exhibit dynamic qualities such as progression and ostensible causal inter-relationships. The specific topic categories ‘delinquency’, ‘indifference’, and ‘self-direction’ for example, each exhibit progression over time in Nigel’s narrative. Each of these specific topic categories is ostensibly related to one or more personal meanings listed in Appendix A, such as ‘disadvantage’ and ‘self-determination’.

Of the various categories of information identified by the researcher in Nigel’s narrative, the researcher inferred that a general concept of indifference to perceived norms of conventional Australian society constituted the most pervasive thematic focus of the narrative. The adjective ‘perceived’ is used here to indicate that the researcher assumed that the norms referred to were those which Nigel apparently perceived to be norms of conventional Australian society. The theme of indifference from the wider society appears to exhibit continuous development from Nigel’s childhood to his adulthood. It provides themal cohesion to much of Nigel’s narrative, in that many of the events and circumstances mentioned in the narrative, particularly Nigel’s accounts of his behaviour, can be sequentially and/or causally related to the theme as it appears to develop over time in his lived experience. In terms of the characteristics of a model of narrative (Bruner, 1991), the theme of indifference in Nigel’s narrative provides an implied plot that links the various topics that emerge in the narrative. A personal meaning of disadvantage, for example, could be interpreted as a major causal influence on the
development of Nigel’s apparent attitude of indifference. Similarly, a personal meaning of Nigel’s developing sense of self-determination could be interpreted as a progressive outcome of his developing attitude of indifference.

The researcher inferred that the main thematic focus of Nigel’s narrative was a theme of indifference. From relatively early in life, Nigel seemed to have adopted a set of social norms different from, and generally in conflict with, those generally in the wider society. Presumably, Nigel’s adoption of a particular set of social norms had its origins in the social environment in which he was immersed in childhood, an environment which, according to his narrative, exhibited values and norms of behaviour that were in conflict with those of conventional Australian society.

Parts of Nigel’s narrative seemed to indicate that attempts, by agents of the wider society such as teachers, institutional custodians and police, to socialise Nigel to conform to the expectations and norms of the wider society were unsuccessful and may have served to reinforce his developing attitude of indifference.

Nigel’s narrative relating to his lived experiences appeared to express a belief that he never ‘fitted into’ mainstream Australian society. This belief seemed to have been expressed, for example, when he said –

Didn’t really want to learn just wanted to[indistinct] just wanted to do other things.
(Nigel, line 28)

The development of a major theme of indifference in Nigel’s narrative was inferred from the many examples of Nigel’s apparent perception of his non-conformity to mainstream social expectations. When speaking of his recollections of an attitude he shared with members of his peer social group to expectations made by their school teachers and other adults with formal authority in his local community, he said –

We didn’t care in those days. We had nothing to lose anyway – nothing to lose so we had fun. (Nigel, line 1915)

Nigel’s frequently expressed apparent indifference to generally accepted social expectations relating to achievement in formal education and employment, and respect for social institutions such as the law, was exemplified when he said, with reference to people with institutional authority over him –

I just keep bein bad. They just got sick of it. (Nigel, line 1552)
Nigel’s apparent indifference to punishment is illustrated by the following statement that he made about his behaviour and treatment as a child –

*Getting into trouble – just that you had to go home and get flogged, but I didn’t really care about that.* (Nigel, line 1942)

Nigel’s account of his school experiences depicted an extremely low level of achievement in formal learning of the basic skills and understandings of English language and mathematics, an extreme lack of interest in formal learning, constant conflict with school authority, frequent punishment for unacceptable behaviour, and habitual truancy and delinquency. He seemed to consistently present a view that his experience of attending school was of little relevance in meeting his felt needs during childhood for caring attention, recognition of his achievements or potential, his desire to achieve, and his need to escape from a violent, uncaring family. His ostensible disaffection with his school experience was exemplified when he said -

*I didn’t want to if I couldn’t catch on.* (Nigel, line 792)

His attitude to formal learning at school seemed to have been encapsulated in the following statements that he made with reference to his experience of school –

*I didn’t really want to learn unless I loved it.* (Nigel, line 47)

*I can’t comprehend to it and I don’t like learning it.* (Nigel, line 62)

Nigel’s apparent perception that his schooling was irrelevant in meeting any of his needs as a child seemed to be consistent with his ostensible adoption of a generally alienated view of his role in the wider society, stemming from his experience of life in childhood. He seemed to perceive that the disadvantages he had experienced throughout childhood had precluded him from the possibility of constructive and rewarding participation in the main stream of the wider society, or of benefiting from its institutions. When speaking of his life as a homeless child and youth, he said that he –

*Got in trouble everywhere.* (Nigel, line 1640)

He seemed to sum up his apparent perception of being alienated from the wider society when he said –

*I’m used to being in jail; doesn’t really phase me; doesn’t really affect me.* (Nigel, line 2549)
Appendix B

Table of outcomes of the holistic-content analysis of the transcript of Nigel’s narrative - special foci of interest grouped under conceptually-related broad categories of subject-matter content
**Table 1: Outcomes of the holistic-content analysis of the transcript of Nigel’s narrative**

(A total of 121 utterances were identified within this theme. This is approximately 50% of the total number of 241 utterances identified with special focus of interests in Table 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special focus of interest</th>
<th>Examples of utterances: (−) negative evaluations (+) positive evaluations (0) neutral</th>
<th>Examples of opening remarks</th>
<th>Number of utterances (% of total for the theme is shown in parentheses)</th>
<th>Number of negative evaluative utterances (−)</th>
<th>Number of positive evaluative utterances (+)</th>
<th>Number of neutral utterances (0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School ability</td>
<td>*145: I wasn’t patient enough to sit down with them (−) 327: Wasn’t good at studyin’ (−) 134: They were good teachers (+) 1105: I liked spellin and I was pretty good at it (+) 666: I could’ve been (indistinct) a pretty cluey person (+) 54: I had to comprehend to it (0)</td>
<td>*26: I only went to school to grade seven didn’t really want to learn 47: I didn’t really want to learn unless I loved it</td>
<td>36 (30%)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special focus of interest</th>
<th>Examples of utterances: (-) negative evaluations (+) positive evaluations (0) neutral</th>
<th>Examples of opening remarks</th>
<th>Number of utterances (% of total for the theme is shown in parentheses)</th>
<th>Number of negative evaluative utterances (-)</th>
<th>Number of positive evaluative utterances (+)</th>
<th>Number of neutral utterances (0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home environment</td>
<td>1383: No-one really cared at home (-) 1384: so I got no attention whatsoever(-) 1175: My parents didn’t really care(0)</td>
<td>286: Oh just violent family you know just violent livin’ with violence</td>
<td>24 (20%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse (Abuse or punishment)</td>
<td>352: Maths teacher makin’ fun of me(-) 1225: Got beltings and that was about it(-) 2229: I’ve been in jail (indistinct) about five times(0)</td>
<td>1405: ‘cos no-one looks up to you at home you know (indistinct) 1408: they flog you straight away so that’s the answer</td>
<td>19 (16%)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special focus of interest</th>
<th>Examples of utterances: (-) negative evaluations (+) positive evaluations (0) neutral</th>
<th>Examples of opening remarks (The numeral at the start of an entry is the line number of the transcript.)</th>
<th>Number of utterances (% of total for the theme is shown in parentheses)</th>
<th>Number of negative evaluative utterances (-)</th>
<th>Number of positive evaluative utterances (+)</th>
<th>Number of neutral utterances (0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult support (Adult support during childhood)</td>
<td>1941: Getting into trouble just that you had to go home and get flogged (-) 963: Our parents just give up the teachers give up on us(-) 1052: I can’t say too much about them they were all good teachers(0)</td>
<td>1210: they didn’t care whether you learn when you’re young they think you’re going to learn everything when you get to school you know but you need a little bit of help before you get there</td>
<td>11 (9%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Special focus of interest | Examples of utterances:  
(-) negative evaluations  
(+ ) positive evaluations  
(0) neutral  
(The numeral at the start of an entry is the line number of the transcript.) | Examples of opening remarks  
(The numeral at the start of an entry is the line number of the transcript.) | Number of utterances  
(% of total for the theme is shown in parentheses) | Number of negative evaluative utterances (-) | Number of positive evaluative utterances (+) | Number of neutral utterances (0) |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| **Family relationships** | 1405: ‘cos no-one looks up to you at home you know (indistinct) they flog you straight away(-)  
545: my mother show her what her son can do make her feel happy too(+)  
2063: My parents couldn’t control me so they they just let me do what I liked when I was thirteen(0)  
2295: I had to go and steal for them to get money to feed my nieces and nephews(0) | 880: My parents were my guardians they obviously didn’t work all that much (indistinct) | 10 (8%) | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| **Influence of peer group** | 1880: We were jut bad eggs (indistinct) couldn’t be told (-)  
1443: From me mates they’ll give you attention if you stay around you know they was mad I was mad(0) | 1432: Attention you know didn’t get it at home | 8 (7%) | 0 | 1 | 7 |

Contd.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special focus of interest</th>
<th>Examples of utterances: (-) negative evaluations (+) positive evaluations (0) neutral (The numeral at the start of an entry is the line number of the transcript.)</th>
<th>Examples of opening remarks (The numeral at the start of an entry is the line number of the transcript.)</th>
<th>Number of utterances (% of total for the theme is shown in parentheses)</th>
<th>Number of negative evaluative utterances (-)</th>
<th>Number of positive evaluative utterances (+)</th>
<th>Number of neutral utterances (0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need for caring attention</td>
<td>545: my mother show her what her son can do(+) 1434: Didn’t get it at home and you couldn’t really catch on to get the attention of the teachers to get the attention of the teachers(0) 1443: From me mates they’ll give you attention if you stay around(0)</td>
<td>1383: No-one really cared at home so I got no attention whatsoever</td>
<td>7 (6%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislocation</td>
<td>926: We were all split up (0) 645: Got thirteen months and another thirteen months got fifteen months and then two years and ten months(0)</td>
<td>175: I went to high school for about two weeks after I got out of boys’ home</td>
<td>6 (5%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
### Theme of content 2: Self-determination

(A total of 90 utterances were identified within this theme. This is approximately 37% of the total number of 241 utterances identified with special focus of interests in Table 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special focus of interest</th>
<th>Examples of utterances: (-) negative evaluations (+) positive evaluations (0) neutral</th>
<th>Examples of opening remarks</th>
<th>Number of utterances (% of total for the theme is shown in parentheses)</th>
<th>Number of negative evaluative utterances (-)</th>
<th>Number of positive evaluative utterances (+)</th>
<th>Number of neutral utterances (0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency (Delinquent or socially-unacceptable behaviour)</td>
<td>1552: I just keep bein bad they just got sick of it(-) 1640: Got in trouble everywhere(0) 2128: Doin some robbery and violences(0)</td>
<td>1527: At school You know I just played up</td>
<td>29 (32%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-direction (Need for personal freedom or self-direction)</td>
<td>2398: Can’t just sit there with nothin’ you know got to get up and get it that’s the only way I know(-) 1521: So I found time when I could really do somethin for myself(+) 1660: I wanted to go out shoot shanghais you know ‘cos it was a country townI was always wantin</td>
<td>792: if I couldn’t catch on well I wouldn’t I didn’t want to if I couldn’t catch on I’d go and do sometin that I liked doin</td>
<td>13 (14%)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to go swimming shoot shanghais</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>just wanted a bit of fun stuff(0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Contd.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special focus of interest</th>
<th>Examples of utterances:</th>
<th>Examples of opening remarks</th>
<th>Number of utterances:</th>
<th>Number of negative evaluative utterances (-)</th>
<th>Number of positive evaluative utterances (+)</th>
<th>Number of neutral utterances (0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self respect</td>
<td>(-) negative evaluations</td>
<td>(The numeral at the start of an entry is the line number of the transcript.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(+) positive evaluations</td>
<td>404: I don’t like being made fun of (-)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0) neutral</td>
<td>1151: I liked it you know ‘cos I was smarter than other kids at something (+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1398: You want to be the best in that crowd you want everyone to look up to you (0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways of learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>407: No one likes to be laughed at</td>
<td>7 (12%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>791: Mainly because if I couldn’t catch on well I wouldn't I didn't want to if I couldn’t catch on I’d go and do somethin that I liked doin (0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>502: I didn’t know how to paint just picked up a paint brush started doing what my cousin was doin</td>
<td>9 (10%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talents</td>
<td>506: Like I’m probably one of the best painters in (indistinct) got my own style (+) 1224: I’ve always like art (indistinct) I’m always creative (0)</td>
<td>506: And I paint now like I’m probably one of the best painters in (indistinct) got my own style</td>
<td>9 (10%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special focus of interest</th>
<th>Examples of utterances: (-) negative evaluations (+) positive evaluations (0) neutral</th>
<th>Examples of opening remarks</th>
<th>Number of utterances (% of total for the theme is shown in parentheses)</th>
<th>Number of negative evaluative utterances (-)</th>
<th>Number of positive evaluative utterances (+)</th>
<th>Number of neutral utterances (0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire for money</td>
<td>1972: Didn’t like stealin cars I just liked to get money(0)</td>
<td>2392: I can’t have no money</td>
<td>7 (8%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to change</td>
<td>2362: Yearh well its habit now(-)</td>
<td>621: Savin my paintins up to start again hopefully I’ll have an exhibition(+)</td>
<td>6 (7%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to achieve</td>
<td>1105: I liked spellin and I was pretty good at it I had to go to a special class(+)</td>
<td>515: I like finishin the paintin</td>
<td>6 (7%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contd.
### Theme of content 3: Social alienation

(A total of 30 utterances were identified within this theme. This is approximately 13% of the total number of 241 utterances identified with special focus of interests in Table 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special focus of interest</th>
<th>Examples of utterances: (-) negative evaluations (+) positive evaluations (0) neutral</th>
<th>Examples of opening remarks</th>
<th>Number of utterances (% of total for the theme is shown in parentheses)</th>
<th>Number of negative evaluative utterances (-)</th>
<th>Number of positive evaluative utterances (+)</th>
<th>Number of neutral utterances (0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of school (Relevance of school to meeting personal needs)</td>
<td>182: I didn’t learn anythin(-) 47: I didn’t really want to learn unless I loved it(0)</td>
<td>28: Didn’t really want to learn just wanted to (indistinct) just wanted to do other things</td>
<td>20 (67%)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifference (Indifference to expectations and demands of agents of society)</td>
<td>1915: We didn’t care in those days we had nothing to lose anyway nothing to lose so we had fun(0)</td>
<td>1512: I didn’t care</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning in jail</td>
<td>485: Just in jail and that talkin to psychologists people like that(0)</td>
<td>1469: Mainly about life things you know (indistinct) ‘cos all the lifers you know they tell you about (indistinct) they’ve been in and out all their life talk to</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the old fellas and that just how to keep good and how to stay calm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>