

Roads less travelled: Narratives of Adult Male
Former Prisoners in Education.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work. I agree to deposit this thesis in the University's open access institutional repository or allow the Library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement.

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Abstract

This study explores the lived experience of adult male former prisoners in the context of prison education through a narrative research approach. The theoretical framework incorporates theories of transformation, recognition, and critical adult education theories. The fieldwork consisted of life-story interviews conducted with male former prisoners in Ireland and in Greece, employing a narrative approach. The overarching aim of the project was to deepen our understanding of their lived experiences of prison education and to explore the subsequent outcomes in later life. The findings of the thesis underscore the significance of education in counteracting the effects of imprisonment and fostering a transformative process for them, helping the participants view themselves through a new lens. Education emerged as a catalyst for building a new identity and establishing meaningful relationships. Ultimately, this research highlights the value of narrative research in shedding light on the experiences of adult male former prisoners and the transformative potential of prison education. This study explores the lived experience of adult male former prisoners in the context of prison education through a narrative research approach. The theoretical framework incorporates theories of transformation, recognition, and critical adult education. The fieldwork consisted of life-story interviews conducted with male former prisoners in Ireland and Greece, utilising a narrative inquiry method. This approach deepened our understanding of their experiences with prison education and examined the subsequent outcomes in their later lives.

Keywords: Narrative inquiry, Life stories, Prison Education, Critical Education, Recognition

Summary

This study employs narrative inquiry to explore the experiences of men who reengaged in education while incarcerated. Drawing upon a theoretical framework that encompasses transformation and recognition, it incorporates Axel Honneth's theory of recognition, as well as theories of identity formation from Charles Taylor and Judith Butler. The study also

heavily relies on Paulo Freire's framework of Critical Adult Education. By considering previous research on prison education and policy, the research aims to gain insights into the educational experiences of former prisoners who went back to education while in prison. More specifically, the primary research question guiding this study is:

What are the experiences of some of the people who participated in prison education as learners, through the lens of recognition and transformation?

The overarching research question can be further explored through three sub-questions:

- a) What motivations and aspirations drive adult prisoners to engage in the educational process while in prison?
- b) How do former prisoners perceive the educational process and their encounters within the prison system?
- c) Is there an enduring change within their lived experience of education in prison?

To address these questions, using a narrative inquiry approach, life-story interviews were conducted in both Ireland and Greece. The fieldwork process, the methodological choices, and the frame of analysis are discussed in detail. Thematic analysis and elements of the *voice relational approach* were employed in the analysis.

The key themes that emerged from the analysis include the significance of moments of recognition within educational encounters, self-transformation with an emphasis on agency and empowerment, and the influential role of significant others throughout the process. Education was identified as a critical factor in counteracting the detrimental effects of imprisonment in the lives of the individuals who participated in the research. The implications for policy call for a focus on the educational relationship and embracing the *educating the whole person* approach.

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It takes a village.

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“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.”

The road not taken
by Robert Frost

Chapter 1

Overview and structure of the thesis

Stepping inside a prison school back in 2016 was my first encounter with the world of prison education, marking the beginning of my journey in Adult and Prison Education. According to the Council of Europe (1990), education in prisons is not only recognised as a fundamental human right, but also acknowledged for its capacity to render the time of people in prison more meaningful and contribute to their social reintegration after release, ultimately reducing recidivism rates. It is within this context that this thesis aims to examine Prison Education in Ireland and Greece, through the lens of the lived experience of those who have participated in education as learners, while incarcerated.

This chapter presents an overview of the thesis and gives an account of what is going to follow.

The thesis begins with Chapter 2, which serves as a foundational exploration of the context of prison education in Ireland and Greece. It delves into the historical background and contextual dimensions of prison education, providing an overview of the policies and philosophies that have shaped its development in both countries over the past decades. The chapter is structured in a way that first introduces the concept of prison education, followed by a deeper examination of its philosophy and how it has undergone a shift towards a more punitive approach. It further addresses the dispelling of stereotypes that hinder educational potential and explores adult education methodology within prison settings. Additionally, the chapter highlights the significance of education in countering the detrimental effects of imprisonment. Overall, Chapter 2 provides valuable insights into the history, policy, philosophy, and contextual dimensions of prison education in Ireland and Greece.

Then, Chapter 3 serves as the theoretical foundation of this study, establishing a framework for analysis and informing the choice of methodology. It delves into theories of recognition, identity formation, and critical adult education, drawing upon the influential works of Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, Judith Butler, and Paulo Freire. By intertwining these theories,

this chapter considers the various aspects of identity formation, along with the relationships that are created within the context of prison education, and their impact in life after release. The theories of recognition and identity formation provide insights into how individuals develop a sense of self and negotiate their identities in the prison education environment. Additionally, critical adult education theories shed light on transformative learning, agency and praxis. In the concluding sections of this chapter, these diverse theories are brought together, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play within the identity formation and relationships that occur during prison education.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the methodology employed in this study, providing a comprehensive account of the steps taken to conduct the fieldwork. The chapter begins by introducing the reasons for researching the specific topic, the rationale behind the narrative inquiry approach and presents the research questions and aims of the study. The research questions that the project is set to explore are the following:

- a) What motivations and aspirations drive adult prisoners to engage in the educational process while in prison?
- b) How do former prisoners perceive the educational process and their encounters within the prison system?
- c) Is there an enduring change within their lived experience of education in prison?

The chapter then delves into the details of narrative inquiry, explaining the "how" and "why" of its implementation. It emphasises the importance of listening to stories and explores the reasons for employing narrative inquiry as a research methodology. The use of life stories as a research tool is also presented and discussed, highlighting its suitability for capturing the rich and complex experiences of the participants. Furthermore, the chapter addresses the practical aspects of the fieldwork, including access, gatekeepers, population, and sample frame. Furthermore, the chapter examines the limitations of the methodology, considering factors such as the nature of narrative research, access to the population, gender imbalance, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the fieldwork. Reliability and validity are discussed, emphasising the importance of ensuring the trustworthiness and credibility of the research. Ethical considerations and the positionality of the researcher are also explored, including reflexivity, challenges related to ethics, design, and access, and the influence of cross-cultural boundaries. The chapter concludes with an overview of the

analysis process, where the steps followed in the analysis are presented and explained, along with the rationale underpinning them. In summary, Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive account of the methodology employed in the study, addressing various components such as the rationale and tools of narrative inquiry, fieldwork, limitations, and ethics.

Then, Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the data generated through the research. This chapter provides insights into the findings and themes that emerged from the data analysis, offering a comprehensive understanding of the participants' lived experiences of prison education. Adopting a “life-story” approach, it begins by exploring the participants' lives before prison, where the key themes that emerged were family dynamics, youth experiences, and previous educational encounters. Within these themes, various forms of misrecognition are identified, including challenges within the family structure, experiences of rejection by formal education, and the involvement in criminal activity as a consequence of societal circumstances. Then the analysis delves into the participants' experiences within the prison environment, focusing on the role of education and pivotal turning events that participants identified. Moments of recognition are highlighted, shedding light on significant experiences that contributed to the participants' sense of self-worth and personal growth. The influence of significant others, such as their teachers, is explored, emphasising their impact on the participants' educational journeys. Moreover, important events and milestones that shaped their prison experiences are examined, providing a nuanced understanding of the transformative nature of prison education. The last section explores the participants' lives after release, offering insights into their post-prison experiences. The concept of the self takes centre stage within this theme, exploring the agency and empowerment that participants developed as they navigated their lives after release. The transformative effects of prison education as the participants shared them are explored, highlighting the ways in which participants experienced viewed themselves through a different lens. Finally the last section comments on the culturally sensitive approach taken throughout the research. It acknowledges the importance of considering cultural contextual differences and nuances when analysing the data, ensuring a reliable methodology, and a respectful presentation and analysis of the participants' experiences.

Moving to Chapter 6, this showcases the culmination of the voice relational approach employed in the study, allowing the participants' voices to take centre stage. It presents four

engaging vignettes, the stories of Ektoras, Oisin, Aris, and Fionn, each aligned with distinct themes and subthemes that emerged during the analysis process. Each vignette provides a narrative, capturing the essence of the participants' lived experiences in prison education. These vignettes serve as captivating narratives, encapsulating the essence of the participants' lived experiences within the realm of prison education. After each vignette, there is a section dedicated to reflections on the story, where the main themes and subthemes present in the narrative are discussed.

Finally, Chapter 7 serves as the discussion and conclusion of the thesis, bringing together the key findings and insights derived from the data analysis. This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the implications of the findings within the context of prison education in Ireland and Greece. Returning to the research questions, the chapter begins by presenting an overview of the key findings, summarising the main themes and significant findings that emerged from the analysis. Furthermore, the discussion delves into the implications of the findings, exploring their significance in relation to existing literature and theories. In addition to the discussion of the findings, Chapter 7 offers suggestions for further research, as it recognises the limitations of the current study and proposes future directions to expand upon the knowledge in the field of prison education in Ireland and Greece.

Finally, the thesis concludes with a comment on the value of narrative research, reflecting upon the value of narrative inquiry in capturing the complexity and depth of the participants' stories and my own learning throughout the process.

The stories told and retold

In the end of this introductory chapter, I wish to take the time to express my appreciation to the people who participated in this project, who met with me and shared their stories with me. I finish this project, and I hope I did the participants' stories justice. In this research journey, there were several layers of “retelling”. From the participants to me, and from me to the writing of this story. I do acknowledge the responsibility of the task, to carry through the lived experience and to make sense of data of such intimate and sensitive nature. Along with the stories, I found myself more and more learning and reflecting on research methodology and research integrity. This is to say, that although I put the participants' words

in an order to tell the story of their stories, the words are forever theirs and I am forever grateful that they chose to share them with me. A final note, on the thesis title: “Roads less travelled: Life Stories of Adult Male Prisoners in Education”. The title is inspired by Robert Frost’s poem The road not taken, a poem which one of the participants, Menelaos¹ shared with me as his “symbol” of his educational and life journey. All the participants shared extraordinary stories of their own journeys, life trajectories, crossroads and the decision on which road to follow, so it felt only fitting that this story of their stories carries this title. I was very careful to handle their stories with respect, care and integrity and I hope that if they wish to read this book, they will feel again secure in their sharing.

This is for them, to say that nothing would be possible without their braveness and generosity.

So,
to Cian,
Fergal,
Fionn,
Liam,
Oisin,
Tadhg,
Alexandros,
Alkis,
Apostolis,
Aris,
Ektoras,
Menelaos,
Nathan,
and
Odysseas

Thank you.

¹ All names used in the thesis are pseudonyms and not the real names of the participants. More is going to be explained on the choice of the pseudonyms in the Methodology chapter, later in the thesis.

Chapter 2

Examining the Foundations: Understanding Prison Education's History, Policy, and Context

2.1. Introduction

In this Chapter, I explore the historical, policy, and contextual aspects of prison education. The aim of this chapter is to provide a foundation for understanding the significance and challenges of prison education within the European context. By explaining how the educational philosophy of the project fits in, the chapter also discusses the importance of adult education methodology in prison education, focusing on principles such as participation and a wide curriculum. By providing an overview of the history, policy, and contextual factors, this chapter sets the stage for a deeper exploration of prison education in subsequent chapters. Education in prisons in the European context, it is referred to as prison education, while in the United States and Canada, it is known as Correctional Education. This chapter will use the term "prison education" consistently, focusing on the European context.

2.2. Exploring Prison Education in the European Context: Ireland and Greece

All prisoners shall have access to education, which is envisaged as consisting of classroom subjects, vocational education and library facilities.

(Council of Europe, 1990, p. 4).

Prison education in Ireland

To understand the prison education landscape in Ireland, I relied heavily on Kevin Warner, who is a key author on the subject of prison education, and also the author of the Council of Europe's Recommendation and memorandum R89(12) "Education in Prison" and served as National Co-ordinator of Prison Education for 30 years, in the Irish Prison Service, which operates within the Department of Justice and Equality in Ireland. His personal work on

education in prisons, as well as the work deriving from his collaboration with another key author, Anne Costelloe, reflect two main ideas: a) concern about the “punitive turn” in many English-speaking countries, including Ireland in the late 1990’s, and b) the growing trend of “managerialism” in education, both concluding in a massive and pernicious curtailment in educational provision in prisons (Costelloe & Warner, 2014; Warner, 2007, 2016).

Both of the ideas mentioned above reflect the importance of the connection between prison education and adult education, as both those ideas are at the core of critical adult education philosophy. Within the Irish context, other than Warner & Costelloe, O’Brien (2018), Behan (2014), and O’Donnell (2013, 2015) are scholars who share the view of the need for education in prison that sees the person first instead of the criminal.

I will first discuss the idea of the punitive turn and its effects on prison education and then turn to the first idea, the importance of prison education to reflect the principles of Adult Education.

A key report for the Irish Prison Education landscape is the Committee of Inquiry into the Penal System report, known as the Whitaker Report, published in 1985. The main finding of significant interest to this project was that the prison system provided very temporary results. Among the many recommendations was to place value on the very much under-resourced education in prisons. As it is stated in the report:

Prisoners are people who have failed. Many will have had a long history of failure at home, at school, at work and at establishing human relationships. It is unrealistic to expect that prison can achieve what better-placed institutions in society have failed to do. Neither are prisons like laundries where what is wrong, personally and socially, can be washed away. What can be done is to provide a range of services which will give the prisoner an opportunity not merely to survive but to return to ordinary life better equipped. [...] However, prisoners must be freely allowed to choose or to reject educational courses, vocational training, psychological counselling, group therapy and other such services. The approach must be facilitative, not coercive.

(Committee of Inquiry into the Penal System, 1985, p. 92)

The Whitaker Report took an important stance on how to improve the prison system and the lives of individuals who are incarcerated while in prison and after release, to benefit

society as a whole. It criticised the lack of educational facilities, the prison conditions, the long sentences, and recommended more open prisons. Yet, almost 20 years later, the Katharine Howard Foundation in partnership with the Irish Penal Reform Trust (2007) published a report titled *The Whitaker Committee Report 20 Years On: Lessons Learned or Lessons Forgotten?* to find that those lessons were sadly forgotten. This report highlights how almost none of the recommendations were implemented; rather, the opposite occurred, as the educational facilities have since reduced in number and some open prisons were closed.

The aforementioned changes in prison education are closely linked to shifts in penal policy, specifically the adoption of the Anglo-American model of penal policy as identified by Warner (2002, 2007). This model, originating from the United States, exhibits notably more punitive characteristics (Costelloe & Warner, 2014; Warner, 1998, 2002). According to Warner, key elements of the Anglo-American model include:

- a) Negative stereotyping of those held in prison
- b) Vengeful attitudes
- c) Massive increases in the use of incarceration

(Warner, 1998, p. 122)

These aspects of the penal policy reflect a harsher approach to imprisonment, with a focus on punishment rather than rehabilitation. As a consequence, the nature and purpose of education in prisons have also evolved to align with this punitive perspective.

In conclusion, the prison education landscape in Ireland has faced significant challenges, influenced by the punitive turn in penal policy and the rise of managerialism in education. Kevin Warner and Anne Costelloe's work, along with other scholars, has highlighted the importance of recognising the person behind the label of "criminal" and the critical role of education in prisons. The Whitaker Report's recommendations, though promising, were unfortunately largely forgotten over time, leading to a reduction in educational resources within prisons.

Prison education in Greece

The available literature on the prison education landscape in Greece is limited, but existing research has pointed out the deficiencies in educational and training opportunities for

inmates. Anagnou, Vergidis & Papaioannou (2019) conducted research to shed light on these issues. Despite the limited literature, it is important to note that both Ireland and Greece have similar policy guidelines based on the Council of Europe Recommendations on Education in Prison (1989). These guidelines emphasise the importance of providing educational opportunities to all incarcerated individuals, recognising education's role in facilitating their reintegration into society and aiming for their holistic development.

In Greece, prison education heavily relies on Second Chance Schools (SCS) within prison facilities, as discussed by Papaioannou & Anagnou (2020) in their systematic review. The study shows that participants in these educational programs benefit significantly from their involvement. However, it also highlights the presence of organisational issues and a lack of resources, which may hinder the effectiveness and efficiency of the education provided.

Introduced in 1995 by the European Commission, Second Chance Schools (SCS) aim to provide education to young people who have not completed compulsory education. Upon completion of the program, SCS offers a certificate of secondary education. Currently, Greece has 58 SCS, including those operating within prisons. Both SCS inside and outside prisons follow similar disciplinary principles, techniques, and mechanisms, but their application differs due to the specific prison context.

Overall, the literature highlights the significance of prison education, its challenges, and the need for further research and improvements in the educational opportunities provided to prisoners in Greece.

2.3. Understanding Early School Leaving

Taking into account that all the participants in both countries were early school leavers, this section aims to discuss the phenomenon of early school leaving from a sociological perspective. Early school leaving is a critical issue with profound implications for individuals' lives and society as a whole (Reay, 2001). In the context of understanding the factors contributing to early school leaving, Bourdieu and Passeron's key theory of cultural capital, as presented in their work "Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture," (1977) sheds light on the powerful influence of social class on academic achievement and educational inequality.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) assert that the educational system tends to favor students from privileged backgrounds who possess the necessary cultural capital. Cultural capital encompasses the cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired through one's family

upbringing and social environment. Students from privileged social classes typically have greater exposure to cultural resources, providing them with a distinct advantage within the educational system.

This advantage perpetuates social inequalities, as students from disadvantaged backgrounds may lack the same level of cultural capital and encounter barriers in accessing quality education. Consequently, the educational system, whether inadvertently or intentionally, reinforces existing social hierarchies and restricts opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, further deepening social class divisions.

Central to Bourdieu and Passeron's analysis is the concept of *habitus*, which significantly shapes individuals' experiences within the educational system. Habitus refers to the ingrained and internalised dispositions, behaviours, and attitudes developed through social experiences and cultural upbringing. These internalised dispositions not only influence how individuals perceive the world and make decisions but also impact their interactions within various social contexts, including the educational setting. Moreover, habitus plays a crucial role in how students approach academic tasks and learning, as well as how they navigate the educational system.

Students whose habitus aligns with the norms and values of the educational institution are more likely to adapt successfully and progress within the system. On the other hand, those whose habitus does not align with the dominant norms may face challenges and experience feelings of marginalisation and rejection within the educational environment. The integration of Bourdieu and Passeron's insights on academic achievement and habitus highlights the complex interplay between social class, cultural capital, and the educational system. Their theory illustrates how educational institutions inadvertently contribute to reinforcing social inequalities and how individuals' upbringing and internalised dispositions significantly influence their educational experiences and progress.

In this project, this theoretical perspective provides critical insights into the mechanisms of social reproduction, exclusion, and inequality within the educational context. This sociological lens is extremely relevant and useful when exploring the previous educational experiences of the participants, providing a comprehensive understanding of the broader socio-cultural dynamics at play in educational settings.

Within the Irish context, some of the key factors that influence early school leaving, according to Tusla – the Child and Family Agency in Ireland, 2007, include:

- Sense of belonging: Students who feel alienated and have decreased levels of participation in school are more likely to drop out. A positive sense of belonging and engagement with the school community can act as a protective factor against early school leaving.
- Attitude toward school: The beliefs and attitudes that students hold toward school can significantly impact their likelihood of dropping out. Factors such as locus of control (feeling in control of one's actions and outcomes) and motivation to achieve are crucial predictors of dropout rates.
- Stressful life events: Increased levels of stress and the presence of stressors, such as financial difficulty, health problems, or early parenthood, can be associated with higher rates of early school leaving. These challenges can negatively impact a student's ability to cope with school demands and may lead to disengagement.

The identified factors of sense of belonging, attitude toward school, and stressful life events play a crucial role in influencing early school leaving, not only in Ireland but also in Greece, as supported by the Strategic Policy Framework for the Reduction of Early School Leaving in Greece (2015). Understanding these factors is of paramount importance, as they were found to be significant in the findings of this study.

2.4. Adult education methodology in prison

As Costelloe and Warner note, it is widely accepted in the European Prison Rules (1987) and several government policies concerning the matter that adult education offered in prison must be of the same standards as the one offered to the community outside of prison (2003). These two documents, the European Prison Rules (1987) as well as the Education in Prison (Council of Europe, 1990), are policy documents that reflect guidelines and include recommendations based on a progressive view of education in prison, or what Warner refers to as the European model of penal policy (Costelloe & Warner, 2014, Warner, 2002, 2007). Returning to the Whitaker Report 20 Years later, the findings of 2007 seem to confirm that educational provision has been affected by this more punitive turn. Furthermore, those changes seem to be associated with a continuously growing culture of control (Garland, 2001).

The European model described in those key documents is based on the following key concepts: respect for human dignity, and consequently viewing the prisoners as citizens and

members of society, focusing on efforts to minimise the harmful effect of imprisonment on individuals and providing opportunities for personal development, such as educational opportunities, with a view to successful resettlement in society (Warner, 1998, p. 120).

According to Warner (2007), viewing prison education as merely about addressing recidivism and facilitating rehabilitation constitutes a narrow concept of what prison education should be or include. The Council of Europe (1990) presents a holistic and inclusive approach that aligns with the European outlook on penal policy, where the functions of prison education include mitigating the damage done by imprisonment and addressing the previous disadvantaged educational backgrounds, as well as encouraging those who wish to resettle in society and lead a life away from crime.

Moreover, Czerniawski (2015) paints a very detailed picture of education and penal policy in England, particularly addressing the gap between educational policy in prisons (the educational provision and the right to participate in that) and everyday reality. He notes: "[...] *that whilst many international organizations promote the right to education as a universal entitlement, this right is, within the context of prison education, contested, far from absolute, and subject to limitation. 'Right' and 'access' are not coterminous.*" (Czerniawski, 2015, pp. 201-202). The right to education and how it can be restricted, or how inflexible prison practices can hinder the participants from taking full advantage of educational opportunities, are also documented in the Greek literature, such as the transfer of prisoners between institutions and staff shortages (Anagnou et al, 2019).

The punitive turn, along with the characteristics of the Anglo-American model that seems to have had a great impact on how educational opportunities are provided in prison, seems to align with a neo-liberal view of education in general. As Costelloe & Warner note, this leads to ignoring critical aspects of education, which puts the development of the whole person into focus. Bureaucratic attitudes, whether in prison systems or in the wider world, can give rise to curtailment by measurement where the focus of education provision is on 'making the measurable important, rather than making the important measurable,' and so, the box-tickers in head-offices devise impractical forms for the practitioners to complete (Costelloe & Warner, 2014, p. 180). This aim of self-development in Prison Education, as well as the importance of viewing the participant in Adult Education in prison as a person first, is going to be discussed in the next section. They can contribute to the rehabilitation of prisoners by encouraging them to engage in meaningful educational experiences that are

not just limited to those associated with 'employability.' The facilitation of this wider curriculum can come from a profession of prison educators resourced, trained, and embraced not just by leading practitioners within the field but also by a wider educational community of teachers, teacher educators, researchers, publishers, and policymakers (Czerniawski, 2015, p. 208).

The main characteristics of prison education that reflect the principles of Adult Education are participation and a wide curriculum. The first of those features, participation, means *"the student is given a significant say in what is studied, how it will be studied, and how it is evaluated. It also means the student is encouraged to bring his or her life experience into the learning"* (Warner, 1998; 2002, p. 33). Furthermore, the student's participation is encouraged by the Council of Europe policy, which portrays learners as people in a process of exploring and discovering both a group and a personal identity and thus, their previous experiences must be respected and provide the base where their knowledge will be built upon (Costelloe & Warner, 2014, p. 176). This notion of viewing the adult learner as a "subject" with previous life experiences, capable of actively participating in his or her learning, rather than an "object" that needs to be guided to reach a body of knowledge that is already decided for him or her sits at the core of radical adult education (Freire, 1970) and is an approach that the Council of Europe embraces (Costelloe & Warner, 2003; Warner, 2007).

The second feature is the wide curriculum, which means a curriculum that takes into account and nourishes the interests of the participants. Costelloe & Warner distinguish three different prison education typologies across Europe:

- a) Education that is based on a broad and mainstream secondary school curriculum but considers the needs of the adult learners
- b) Training programs oriented towards employability.
- c) Courses that address offending behavior and are directly related to the prison context.

The role of education in prisons is often debated, with two main perspectives being highlighted by researchers. As Key & May highlight (2019), prison education literature is often centred around the idea of education as a means of minimising recidivism. Indeed, education offered in prisons is very much connected to the idea of preventing crime once

the students/prisoners are released. The same authors point to a different and less broad lens of viewing prison education: education as resistance. This combination of concepts in adult education points to an ideological framework based on critical adult education theories.

This is where the limitation of educational offerings becomes crucial. As Costelloe & Warner (2014) note, it is crucial for the prisoners' development that the education offered is not limited to vocational training or focused on employability and addressing criminal behavior. In contrast, if education for development and transformation is sought in this context, the capacity for critical reflection is extremely significant. Against this landscape, Warner (1998, p. 126) argues for the need for a wide curriculum in prison:

[...] prisoners must (among other things) challenge and rise beyond the dominant image given by the 'Anglo-American' ideology as to who they are. The wider and the freer the curriculum is, the greater is the chance that they will progress in that direction.

Costelloe & Warner call attention to the curtailment of the educational provision noticed firstly during the late 1990s when the "punitive turn" in penal policy became more evident in the English-speaking countries, and secondly, between the years 2008-2010, due to the financial crisis, which caused a severe cut in the finance for prison education (Costelloe & Warner, 2014). It has become rather evident in recent years that education in prison has been replaced by an instrumental agenda, according to the same authors. Key & May (2019, p. 3) state in a very sharp manner the need to view prison education as something more than the preparation or training for life without engaging in criminal activities:

"In the eyes of policymakers, then, my purpose as a prison educator is to reduce crime, while my students are there to train to become 'productive' citizens upon release. If success is measured by a student being released and not committing crimes, then my student became a failure upon his death. What about the students who will not leave, either through untimely death or because of life sentences? Are they always already failures? Or does prison education mean something more than the prevention of future crimes?"

2.5. Against the stereotypes and how they harm the educational potential

The conception of prison education and its interrelationship with the wider public's perspectives and perceptions of people in prison are deeply intertwined. As Costelloe and Warner (2014) suggest, these aspects are interconnected and cannot be separated. It is crucial to acknowledge the impact of public discourse and the formation of stereotypes that often portray prisoners and prisons as the "other." In light of this, the research conducted by Ahmed, Johnson, Caudill, Diedrich, Mains & Key (2019), a team of prison-educated researchers who obtained their higher education degrees while incarcerated, offers valuable perspectives on this matter:

No one can deny that poverty-stricken neighbourhoods are infested with criminal behavior. The purpose of this conversation is to change the stereotypical perspective of the incarcerated 'other.' Changing people's perspective about incarceration is the primary step for breaking the cycle. The truth of the matter is, before we can have any conversation concerning incarcerating the 'other'; we must first submit to a discussion to understand the realities of prison and the steps necessary to reform it through education.

(Ahmed et al, 2019, p. 69)

Against this landscape, this argument builds on the first of the three characteristics mentioned above of the Anglo-American model, with regards to the way people in prison are viewed by society and policies, and its implication for prison education. The negative labeling and stereotyping of people in custody both in media and in the political discourse are an issue that Warner brings into sharp focus, along with illustrating examples of the Irish reality (Warner, 1998, p. 123), a phenomenon that corresponds clearly with the emergence of the Anglo-American model in English-speaking countries, including Ireland, during the 1990s. This is important regarding education in prisons, for this view distorts and/or impedes the provision of meaningful educational opportunities in prison, as it views the person in prison as a mere criminal without educational potential (Warner, 1998).

Furthermore, it is in stark contrast with the principles of adult education, where the learner is deemed as a whole person, and respect is shown for the learner's previous experiences, as well as their social and cultural background (Costelloe & Warner, 2014). This deficit

view of the person in prison holds sway on how education is perceived, but more precisely, on the way educational objectives and methods are set and employed, as well as on the nature of the prison education programs, namely what is the rationale behind education in prisons. More importantly, as Warner underlines, the perception of prisoners exerts influence on the regimes in prisons and overall, the kinds of prisons that are provided (Warner, 2010, p. 10).

Hence, narrowing what the prisoners' identities encompass can be seen as a narrowing of the education offered to them, or, as Costelloe and Warner call it, a criminogenic curtailment (Costelloe & Warner, 2014, p. 178). Against the Irish background, Warner observes a significant change in the Irish penal policy. As he argues, prisoners were referred to as "valued members of society" in policy documents in 1994, but seven years later, the Mission Statement of the Prison Service mentions that some of the prisoners endeavour to become "members of the society" (Warner, 2010, p. 5). For Warner, this shift is crucial as it represents "a move from an accepting to a less accepting attitude in official policy and illustrates a hardening and negativity that has become common in the English-speaking world" (Warner, 2010, p. 5).

The programs targeted to address offending behaviour must under no circumstances be underestimated. Still, it is imperative to remain critical when education in prison is merely reduced to introducing those programs (Warner, 2007, p. 172). It is worth also mentioning the example of the research conducted by the Canadian Correctional Service where more holistic programs and courses, oriented towards the social sciences and humanities, have been proven to be more effective in reducing recidivism and criminal behaviour than the specific programs targeting that (Costelloe & Warner, 2014).

Another reason why dwelling on the offending or criminal part of someone's identity is of major importance lies in the fact that the criminal action is considered exclusively as the individual's responsibility, thus the social factors of criminogenic behaviour or social exclusion are being concealed and ignored from public discourse. As Warner notes:

By contrast, the over-focus on the offence and the 'offender' is a problem mainly because of what it reduces from view. [...] It also downplays the role of society in contributing to crime via poor social conditions and its capacity to be helpful in

supporting a crime-free and constructive life. The 'societal perspective is neglected when there is too much stress on individual responsibility [...]

(Warner, 2010, p. 4)

2.6. The importance of education to counteract the effects of imprisonment

In various policy documents such as the European Prison Rules and the Education in Prison (EPR) by the Council of Europe (1987, 1990), as well as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules (SMR) for the treatment of prisoners, it is well stated that prison has a detrimental effect on people. In the European Prison Rules, it is clearly stated that prison damages people and should be used as a last resort, as well as that imprisonment is a punishment in itself (Warner, 1998).

A wide curriculum and meaningful participation are key elements of Adult Education and are included in the Recommendation on Education in Prison (1990). As Warner observes, successful prison education is a combination of the “right” objectives, that is meaningful and attainable objectives, and participation (Warner, 2002). He continues by highlighting that inclusion in the curriculum of the life experiences of the students is of major importance and themes that stem from crime and imprisonment “can widen the program further” (Warner, 2002, p. 33). Moreover, the program needs to widen in order to be in line with the official objectives for Education in Prison as described in Irish policy, The management of offenders: A five-year plan, which consists of helping those in prison with the following: a) To cope with their sentences, b) To achieve personal development, c) To prepare for life after release, and d) To establish the appetite and capacity for further education after release (Department of Justice, 1994). Furthermore, in the more recent policy document regarding the educational provision in prisons, it is stated that “The provision of a programme that is quality assured, learner-centred and that facilitates lifelong learning, while helping persons in custody to respond to their sentence through personal development and positive renewal” (Irish Prison Service, 2019, p. 2).

According to Warner (2002), to achieve the objectives of such a provision and to ensure that prison education is meaningful and beneficial, it is crucial to have well-trained teachers and to give them the necessary freedom to take initiative.

As argued above, apart from comprehensive content in courses and programmes, prison education must maintain an adult education orientation and philosophy at its core, in order

to render those programmes successful and meaningful and increase participation. Building on that, the flexibility and support from the prison management are considered as overriding factors (Warner, 2002).

As alluded to earlier, adult education in prison must follow the principles and have the same quality as the one offered outside prison. Yet, there is a difference that must not elude prison educators' minds, methods, and approaches, as Costelloe & Warner stress below:

While the principles must mirror best practice on the outside, the rationale must be appraised within the prison context. [...] it is essential to remember that is one very important aspect prison education is not like adult education on the outside. It lacks that independence. It operates within the shadow of a penal system directed by the whims and caprices of a fickle society and governed by politically decided mandates. It is vulnerable to populist shifts in ideologies, more so than any other adult learning opportunity.

(Costelloe & Warner, 2003, p. 6-7)

Against this background, O'Donnell criticizes the "skills-based" programs in prison at the expense of a well-rounded education and while she uses her own personal experience as a teacher in a prison school, she highlights the therapeutic potential of such an education in prisons (O'Donnell, 2013). Furthermore, an important study by Behan on the motivations for participation in prison education employed 50 semi-structured interviews in one institution in Dublin and showed that participation in education in the prison relies widely on the same motives as participation in adult education in general does. However, there are categories of differentiation, that is to say, in prison motives that relate to the prison context appear, such as isolation, boredom, and a means to escape the institutional routine (Behan, 2014). There is also great value in looking into Behan's conclusions, which indicate that a significant number of interviewees talked about identity transformation through education, pointing to the potential of education as a means of transformation in prison educational settings (Behan, 2014).

Moreover, the educational relationship in prison schools comes into sharp focus in O'Grady's study, where the concept of respect is examined by conducting 26 interviews (13 students and 13 teachers participated) in order to conclude the following three salient

issues, firstly the “socialized nature of the student's relationship with their teachers”, secondly the how beneficial autonomy can be, as well as giving choices to the prisoners with regards to their learning and lastly, the development of self-respect as a natural consequence of an educational relationship based on mutual respect (O’Grady, 2017). This particular study presents a specific interest as it can be examined through the lens of the principles of Adult Education, as they are emphasised in official EU policy documents (Council of Europe, 1990), where mutual respect, respect for the autonomy of the learner and their previous experience, as well as the development of self-respect are continuously stressed.

Against this background, this thesis seeks to explore the experience of prison education through a lens that puts the whole person in focus. The educational philosophical stance that I take aligns with the European model that sees prison and social exclusion as inextricably linked and education in prison as a human right. Access to education and quality education must be protected and ensured. The exploration and examination of the moments of recognition and transformation that the participants identify will be always viewed through this prism throughout the thesis. I finish this chapter with the words of Key & May, who note that prison education has the potential to be a small, yet critical sphere of agency for people in prison:

Prisoners are stripped of their autonomy. They are required to appear when ordered, to demonstrate their complacency and compliance to authority, and even when they seek education, their mere presence is viewed as a threat. Their clothes, their belongings, and even their ability to grow their hair is taken from them. The prison system, then, circulates a discourse that prisoners are threats in need of surveillance and control. There is one thing, however, that cannot be taken from them: their agency, their will to control their own lives (even in small ways).

(Key & May, 2019, p. 6)

This thesis endeavours to explore prison education through a lens that recognises the whole person and aligns with the European model, viewing education as a fundamental human right. As Key & May (2019) aptly put it, despite the constraints of the prison system,

prisoners retain their agency and desire to control their own lives, and it is through meaningful education that they can be empowered to unlock their potential.

2.7. Conclusion

Chapter 2 has provided a comprehensive exploration of prison education within the European context. It has discussed the concept of the punitive turn and its impact on prison education, while highlighting the of the Anglo-American model in penal policy and how negative stereotyping of prisoners have led to a narrowing of educational objectives and curtailment of educational provision within prisons.

Moreover, the chapter emphasised the significance of adopting adult education methodology in prison education. It highlighted the principles of participation and a wide curriculum, which empower prisoners to actively engage in their learning and cater to their diverse interests and needs.

In conclusion, the chapter presents how prison education plays a vital role in countering the detrimental effects of imprisonment it is by emphasising the principles of respect, agency, and a comprehensive curriculum in prison education. It is by upholding these principles that prison education presents transformational potential and can benefit the adult learners in prison, while contributing to a more just and inclusive society.

Chapter 3

Understanding Identity: Theories of Recognition, Transformation and Adult Education

Teaching adults is a process of mutual recognition between teacher and learner. [...] With the current emphasis on functional learning, competency and behavioural outcomes in education, and a neo-liberal inspired valorisation of the market as the ultimate supplier of all needs, these ideas take seriously the contribution of intersubjectivity as important for teaching, learning and transformation and as an antidote to dominant models. [...] This is achieved not just by an emphasis on critical reflection but on the always presupposed imperative of recognition.

(Fleming, 2016 p. 22)

3.1. Introduction: The stories we tell or how the story came to be the unit

In this chapter, I will explore three theories: Axel Honneth's theory of recognition, Charles Taylor's theory of modern identity, and Judith Butler's theory of identity. These theories offer valuable insights into the complexities of identity construction and the role of recognition in shaping individual's relation to self. First, I will examine Axel Honneth's theory of recognition. Honneth emphasises the significance of intersubjectivity and recognition in the development of self-identity and its pivotal role in empowering individuals to challenge social injustices. His theory provides a framework for understanding the transformative potential of recognition within an educational context.

Next, I will delve into Charles Taylor's theory of identity formation. Taylor's perspective highlights the importance agency, radical reflexivity and the affirmation of ordinary life as crucial elements in the construction of one's identity. By examining Taylor's insights, we gain a deeper understanding of the intricate processes involved in identity formation. Following Taylor, I will explore Judith Butler's theory of the self. Butler's perspective emphasises the significance of the relation to the Other in building our identity.

I will then shift the focus to critical adult education, or emancipatory, liberating, radical adult education. These terms are going to be used interchangeably in this chapter to describe educational approaches that aim to empower individuals, challenge oppressive systems, and promote social transformation. By examining the principles and practices of critical adult education, we gain insights into how these theories of recognition and identity formation. Finally, in the end of the chapter, I will explore the interconnections between these theories and adult education. Through the exploration of these theories and their application in adult education, I aim to construct a comprehensive framework that highlights the dynamic relationship between recognition, identity formation, and educational practices.

3.2. Honneth and Recognition

I begin this chapter by focusing on Honneth's theory of recognition, as recognition serves as one of the main pillars of this project. In this study, the exploration of the lived experience of education in prison relies on theories of identity formation as a starting point for analysing the life stories of the participants. By examining the personal, social, and educational experiences of the participants and the meaning they attribute to them, we can significantly contribute to the interpretation of educational processes in prisons and their importance or success for the participants (Fleming, 2015). Against this backdrop, Honneth's theory of recognition provides a framework for understanding the educational process as both personal development and an emancipatory/transformational type of learning. Axel Honneth is considered the critical author of the theory of recognition. Recognition is seen as multi-leveled, consisting of three fundamental levels: self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem (Honneth, 1996). According to Fleming & Finnegan (2010), Honneth's theory aims to examine and reconsider the relationship between agency and structure. This relationship emerges from the perspective of recognition, which acknowledges that different ways of relating to oneself develop in various social contexts.

As mentioned, Honneth identifies three critical elements for developing identity: self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. These elements develop within three different spheres of personal and social life: the family, which contributes to self-confidence; the school and education, which foster self-respect; and the wider society, which shapes self-esteem (Honneth, 1995). In this project, the focus is placed on the latter two spheres - education and the wider society - and their connections to individuals' relation-to-self, as these spheres are highly relevant for prisoners and formerly incarcerated individuals in their

educational journeys and post-prison lives. However, during fieldwork and analysis, the earlier experiences within the personal sphere, such as family and friends, emerged as very important for the participants narratives.

Recognition and intersubjectivity

According to Honneth, one can develop "*a practical relation to self only when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of one's partners in interaction, as their social addressee*" (1996, p. 92). This means that individuals develop a meaningful understanding of themselves and their identity when they are able to see themselves through the eyes of others, specifically in the context of social interactions. It suggests that our sense of self and identity is not solely determined by our own subjective perspective, but also by how others perceive and address us in social relationships. This perspective highlights the importance of social interactions and the role they play in shaping self-perception and identity. Similarly, coming from an educational perspective, Fleming and Finnegan (2010) suggest that for identity to develop, individuals need an intersubjective recognition of their abilities and achievements. The concept of intersubjectivity is central to Honneth's theory of recognition.

The three spheres

Moreover, Honneth's theory, suggests that the struggle for recognition that occurs within the three spheres (private, state, and civil) is seen as the underlying cause of social conflicts across the various spheres (Honneth, 1996; Fleming & Finnegan, 2010; Lysaker, 2017). The formation of identity, or the formation of the "relation to self," is shaped by recognition, respect, or disrespect towards elements of one's identity in these social spheres (Fleming & Finnegan, 2010). The struggle for recognition of marginalised cultural, social, or political identities within the personal sphere drives the demand for recognition in the state and civil spheres, fostering the pursuit of rights and the redistribution of power (Honneth, 2003). Furthermore, Honneth draws a connection between identity development and forms of misrecognition stemming from prejudices related to rights, deeply ingrained within a society's culture. These forms of misrecognition correspond to the spheres of recognition as well. They include denied rights, physical and emotional torture in the personal sphere, violations of rights supported by law or social exclusion codified in law within the state sphere, and cultural norms of injustice within the civic sphere (Honneth, 1996; Fleming,

2016). These forms of misrecognition undermine identity and often give rise to struggles for recognition in the form of social movements. While the development of identity is seen through a social lens, Honneth integrates both the personal and the interpersonal, recognising that human relationships are viewed through the lens of the intersubjective struggle for recognition. For Honneth, recognition is the driving force, as all individuals have expectations of respect, including dignity, honour, and integrity (Honneth, 2012). Disrespect, on the other hand, threatens one's sense of self. Based on the concept of recognition, Honneth differentiates between love, rights, and solidarity.

Recognition and education

Finally, recognition, as conceptualised by Honneth, holds significant relevance in the context of education. In prison education, for instance, participants face the struggle of having their autonomy recognised, meaning to be acknowledged as morally responsible individuals in their prison and post-prison lives. Honneth's theory of recognition encompasses love, rights, and respect, which interestingly aligns with Freire's emphasis on love and human flourishing, as noted by Huttunen and Murphy (2012), to be discussed later in this chapter. Critical pedagogy, rooted in the power of intersubjectivity, aims to create meaningful and lasting transformations in the face of oppression and exploitation. Transformative learning experiences within this framework often result in increased self-confidence, self-respect, and potentially self-esteem. The connection between critical adult education and recognition, particularly in the context of prison, is of utmost importance and has been emphasised in the literature.

Building on viewing prisoners as learners perspective, as discussed in the previous chapter, incorporating the element of recognition in exploring their lived experience adds a significant dimension to exploring identity through education. It sheds light on issues such as access to education, rights, and the interpersonal relationships within an educational setting, particularly in a society where stigma exists. O'Brien (2013) provides valuable insights from the perspectives of adult education and addiction studies, which can be applied effectively in the context of prison education. He notes that it is crucial for adult education to resist being absorbed by the neoliberal discourse of individualism and consumerism. Instead, it should assert its position in reconstructing society and promoting

critical thinking, both within and beyond the prison system. By reframing transformative learning as an intersubjective process of mutual respect and recognition, our understanding of prison education can be enhanced as it brings forth the agency and lived experiences of incarcerated individuals.

3.3. Charles Taylor and Modern Identity

This section focuses on Charles Taylor's theory of modern identity. Differing from Honneth's perspective, Taylor focuses on identity primarily as a connection with the self, rather than as a connection to others or social structures. However, it's important to note that in his work, the self is not completely ignored or disregarded. Taylor emphasises the connection between moral consciousness and ordinary life, highlighting how our understanding of ourselves and our interactions with others shape our sense of identity. He explores the formation of the self, giving importance to moral intuitions and reactions to pain or distress. Taylor's analysis delves into the three main facets of modern identity: inwardness, the affirmation of ordinary life, and the notion of nature as an inner moral source. Inwardness refers to our perception of ourselves as "selves" with inner depths, and Taylor traces its historical development. He introduces the concept of radical reflexivity, where individuals think of themselves in reflexive terms, leading to the disengagement from external influences and the search for self-discovery. The affirmation of ordinary life is another key aspect, involving the understanding of what constitutes a full and meaningful life within societal norms. Taylor explores the moral implications of ordinary life and its connection to self-identity.

The section highlights the importance of education in shaping identity and understanding the meaning of ordinary life, especially for incarcerated individuals. Taylor's theory emphasises the role of recognition in identity construction and the struggle for dignity and respect.

Inwardness or how we understand that we are selves

In order to understand Taylor's approach to the making of the modern identity, it is essential to understand how he defines identity and how he delves into its various facets and historical roots. What serves as a starting point, according to Taylor, is to reflect on how we treat the concept of identity, mostly by asking the question: "Who am I?" He proceeds by

acknowledging that giving a name as a response does not satisfactorily answer the question. Instead, Taylor suggests that, for the purpose of understanding what identity comprises, one has to investigate what is important and what holds value for a person, while giving the following explanation of the concept of modern identity:

Who am I? But this can't necessarily be answered by giving name and genealogy.... To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand.

(Taylor, 1989, p. 27)

This particular approach to the concept of identity indicates a connection between the identity and the notion of good, or more precisely, how moral thinking is shaped and applied to an individual's decisions and actions. As it will be discussed in more detail later in the section on moral consciousness, the concept of "good" keeps coming up in Taylor's analysis, and it is closely associated with the key facets of modern identity (Taylor, 1989).

Taylor considers inwardness to be one of the three most important features of modern identity, and he examines the roots and phases of its development throughout history. Inwardness can refer to a sense of "a family of senses" that are related to people's perception of ourselves as "selves," as subjects with "inner" depths (Taylor, 1989). There is particular interest in investigating this concept of inwardness both historically and linguistically, and how it fits into modern identity. By drawing upon terms such as localisation, disengagement, and radical reflexivity, Taylor achieves an in-depth analysis of the term. An effective starting point to introduce the concept in the discussion is the following statement made by the author:

So we naturally come to think that we have selves the way we have heads or arms, and inner depths the way we have hearts or livers, as a matter of hard, interpretation-free fact. Distinctions of locale, like inside and outside, seem to be discovered like facts about ourselves, and not to be relative to the particular way, among other possible ways, we construe ourselves. [...] Something in the nature of

our experience of ourselves seems to make the current localisation almost irresistible, beyond challenge.

(Taylor, 1989, p.112)

That dichotomy of the "inside-outside" serves as Taylor explains perceiving ourselves as selves, which means the way we perceive ourselves as beings with inner depths. This refers to the complexity and richness of our inner experiences, thoughts, emotions, and subjective states. It encompasses the various aspects that constitute our individuality, inner life and identity. By exploring this inner depth, we gain a deeper understanding of our personal identity and the unique qualities that shape who we are. Inwardness is considered to be of crucial importance in the construction of the modern identity, because it is the basis of how we experience the dichotomy of the outside-inside when formulating our own notion of identity. Meaning that by experiencing the dichotomy of outside-inside is the foundation for how we perceive the distinction between the external world (outside/perceptions of others) and our internal subjective realm (inside/our own perceptions). It influences how we formulate our own understanding and concept of identity, as it involves reflecting on our personal experiences, values, and sense of self (Taylor, 1989).

Agency and self-discovery

Taylor highlights the concept of "internalisation," wherein the moral source is situated within individuals rather than external sources or authorities. This internalisation involves a shift from the dominance of reason to a more accessible form of understanding that is actively constructed by individuals themselves (Taylor, 1989, p. 124). This means moving away from a reliance on external sources of authority, such as societal norms or religious institutions, and actively constructing an understanding of morality and reason that is accessible to the individual's mind. As a result, individuals are driven to seek moral guidance and reason from within, leading to the development of interiority and the disengagement from external cosmic orders. This transformation gives rise to what Taylor terms "disengaged reason" (Taylor, 1989).

Disengaged reason involves individuals engaging with their own thoughts, values, and beliefs to make sense of their identity and moral framework and prompts us to disengage from the external world and critically reflect upon the cultural practices, traditions, and

habits that they have internalised. Rather than accepting them unquestioningly, individuals subject these aspects to scrutiny and re-evaluation (Taylor, 1989, p. 175).

This new way of living together in society is characterised by modern individualism, wherein individuals are seen as thinkers with full responsibility for their decisions and bearers of individual rights (Taylor, 1989, p. 106). The notion of self-discovery emerges, recognising that human nature is not universally defined but unique to each individual. Consequently, identity can no longer be universally defined, and human agency becomes a personal matter (Taylor, 1989, p. 184). This out the emphasis on the autonomy and agency of individuals within society.

Taylor emphasises that self-discovery and personal responsibility for this journey are integral aspects of the modern identity and recurring themes in modern culture. Self-discovery refers to the process of exploring and understanding one's own identity, values, and beliefs, while personal responsibility emphasises the individual's active role in shaping and navigating their own life path. Furthermore, Taylor identifies self-acceptance as an important theme that can be traced back to historical figures like Montaigne. Self-acceptance involves embracing one's true self, including recognising and understanding one's limitations and boundaries (Taylor, 1989, p. 179).

Throughout his analysis of the making of modern identity, Taylor connects the concept of inwardness with radical reflexivity. Radical reflexivity, on the other hand, pertains to the ability to think about oneself in a reflective and introspective manner. It involves critically examining one's thoughts, actions, and habits, and objectifying them for deeper understanding. Taylor suggests that modern disengagement encourages individuals to detach themselves from their habitual patterns of thinking and behaviour. It is this detachment that enables critical introspection and objectification of one's thoughts and actions, allowing individuals to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their motivations.

Ultimately, the interplay between inwardness, the placement of the moral source within individuals, and radical reflexivity is vital for individuals to develop a sense of self-awareness and perceive themselves as distinct individuals with their own unique identities.

In summary, Taylor emphasises the importance of self-discovery, personal responsibility, self-acceptance, inwardness, and radical reflexivity in understanding and constructing the modern identity.

The affirmation of ordinary life

The affirmation of ordinary life is the second aspect of modern identity explored by Taylor (1989, p. 211). It involves understanding and valuing the aspects of human life related to production, reproduction, labor, sexuality, marriage, and family (Taylor, 1989, p. 211). Ordinary life refers to the societal concept of what constitutes a "full" or "normal" life, emphasising the everyday activities and commitments that are considered essential in our culture. Over the next pages, I am going to highlight the main ideas related to the affirmation of ordinary life and its importance for the modern subject. Taylor begins his analysis by giving a broad definition in order to conceive the extent and the limits of what he calls ordinary life:

Ordinary life' is a term of art I introduce to designate those aspects of human life concerned with production and reproduction, that is, labour, the making of the things needed for life, and our life as sexual beings, including marriage and the family.

(Taylor, 1989, p. 211)

As it becomes evident, the concept of "ordinary life" pertains to our modern culture and refers to what we consider as a "full" life or a "normal" and good life within our society. It is essential to note that Taylor labels it as "ordinary," emphasising its association with the idea of the "norm." This implies that a fulfilling or good life is not unconventional or extraordinary in any way. Taylor stresses that the term "ordinary" implies conformity to societal norms and expectations. The affirmation of ordinary life has become a prominent idea in modern Western society, often associated with prioritising commitments such as marriage, raising children, and maintaining steady work (Taylor, 1989).

Two key questions arise in relation to the construction of our framework. First, how do individuals shape their understanding of a fulfilling life, and how is this understanding shared within society? Second, what are the consequences for individuals when they fail to meet the demands of ordinary life, and how do they develop mechanisms to cope with these challenges? In both cases, education is believed to play a significant role.

Taylor emphasises the connection between morality and the concept of ordinary life. He argues that individuals recognise the possibility of making wrong choices and failing to lead a fulfilling life by solely pursuing their immediate wishes and desires. To understand our moral world, we must examine the underlying ideas and beliefs that shape our respect for others and our notions of a fulfilling life. Taylor asserts that these ideas are closely intertwined, particularly in relation to the affirmation of ordinary life:

[...] the people who ask these questions have no doubt that one can, following one's immediate wishes and desires, take a wrong turn and hence fail to lead a full life. To understand our moral world we have to see not only what ideas and pictures underlie our sense of respect for others but also those which underpin our notions of a full life. And as we shall see, these are not two quite separate orders of ideas. [...] This is particularly the case for what I called above the affirmation of ordinary life.

(pp. 14-15)

The significance of the concept of ordinary life and its impact on the narrative and identity development of individuals who strive for a fulfilling life provides valuable insights when examining the experiences of incarcerated individuals engaged in education. It prompts us to question the meaning they assign to the idea of ordinary life and how it influences their perception of self while in prison and upon their release.

This exploration allows us to delve into their personal narratives and examine the connections between their experiences, the concept of ordinary life, and their sense of identity. It raises important considerations about the role of education in shaping their understanding of a fulfilling life and the potential impact it has on their reintegration into society post-release.

Moral thinking and the demand for recognition in Taylor's work

Moral consciousness and its formation are central concerns for Taylor and are closely connected to the discussion of ordinary life. Questions arise, such as: *What gives meaning to our lives? What influences our respect for others?*

According to Taylor, moral intuitions and responses to pain and suffering are intertwined. In understanding the development of one's identity, Taylor emphasises the fundamental connection between the self and moral intuitions. Specifically, what contributes to making our lives meaningful and shaping our sense of dignity? These inquiries prompt consideration of what Taylor refers to as "strong evaluations." In essence, strong evaluations involve making judgments about what is right or wrong, better or worse, higher or lower, independent of our personal desires, inclinations, or choices. These evaluations serve as standards by which we assess the significance and value of our lives and shape our understanding of personal identity.

It is not just that the commitments and identifications by which we in fact define our identity involve such strong evaluations ... More fundamentally, we can see that it only plays the role of orienting us, of providing the frame within which things have meaning for us, by virtue of the qualitative distinctions it incorporates. Our identity is what allows us to define what is important to us and what is not.

(Taylor, 1989, pp. 29-30)

According to Taylor, the process of discovering what holds importance to us and finding meaning in life involves "articulating" our thoughts and beliefs (Taylor, 1989, p. 18). How we conceptualise and give meaning to these ideas, as well as our ability to express them, play a crucial role in shaping our identity. Language serves as a fundamental tool in this process. This perspective aligns with the core principles of adult and critical pedagogy underlined by Paulo Freire. Education plays a vital role in providing individuals with the necessary tools to understand the world and their position within it. Language, as a means of communication and expression, becomes instrumental in shaping our understanding of the world and ourselves (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Examining education in the context of prisons through this lens allows us to explore whether the process of engaging in education within the prison system contributes to the development of a meaningful relationship with

oneself. Moreover, it is important to consider how our moral intuitions intersect, if at all, with the realm of education.

Moving to the discussion of recognition, Taylor's work intertwines identity and recognition, as he argues that our identity is shaped by how society reflects and perceives the group to which we belong (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). This connection extends to our sense of morality, as previously demonstrated. As Taylor states, "*Morality has, in a sense, a voice within*" (Taylor, 1994, p. 28). By locating the source of morality within individuals, Taylor emphasises that each of us possesses the ability to discern right from wrong and to act accordingly, thereby making morality a crucial aspect of our identity as moral beings. The source of morality varies among individuals, just as our identities do, and it becomes our personal mission to discover it. Recognition, according to Taylor, plays a vital role in constructing our identity. He asserts, "*Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need*" (Taylor, 1994, p. 26). When recognition of our humanity is absent in our daily interactions, it inflicts harm and profoundly affects our way of being.

Taylor also discusses the fact that as human beings with the need to be recognised, we have to fight for it; hence, he talks about the struggle for recognition. This struggle can take many forms and is always intertwined with the others around us: "*We define our identity in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us*" (Taylor, 1994, p. 33). To illustrate the notion of our moral thinking, Taylor adds a third element, dignity, or how we command attitudinal respect, which is closely linked to our notion of self-worth and ordinary life. This concept of dignity is of crucial importance to the struggle for recognition and to our analysis of the lived experience of former prisoners in an educational setting.

3.4. Judith Butler: The transformation of difference into identity

In this section, I will explore the main points of Judith Butler's theory regarding the process of identity formation and the significant role played by "the Other" in this process. Judith Butler is widely known for her contributions to various fields, including gender studies, feminist theory, and queer theory. She introduced her Theory of Performativity in her book "*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*." In this theory, Butler challenges the notion of gender as an inherent and fixed characteristic, arguing instead that

it is a social construct that is performed and repeated through everyday actions and behaviours.

However, for the purpose of this study, I will focus only on Butler's earliest work on identity formation, specifically her theory presented in "Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France".

Desire as a vehicle of self-formation

Judith Butler places the term "desire" at the centre of her theory of identity development, considering it as the driving force behind the construction of our identity. In this context, desire represents a longing for something that is different from ourselves, something unfamiliar or outside of our known experiences. Butler begins her theory by highlighting the following:

Human desire articulates the subject's relationship to that which is not itself, that which is different, strange, novel, awaited, absent, lost. And the satisfaction of desire is the transformation of difference into identity: the discovery of the strange and novel as familiar; the arrival of the awaited, the reemergence of what has been absent or lost.

(Butler, 1987, p. 9)

By taking desire as the starting point, Butler aims to provide a deeper understanding of desire beyond being a mere psychological phenomenon. She sees desire as closely associated with philosophical significance, truth, and reason. Through our desires, we find a way to apply logic to the world and gain insights into ourselves. Butler seeks to unravel the implicit meanings of desire, as she believes that our desires shed light on how we interpret the world and reflect on our own rationality (Butler, 1987).

One of the main differences between Taylor's and Butler's theories becomes evident. Butler's approach appears to be dialectical. As we will discuss in the following sections, Butler argues that the existence of the "other" is necessary for the process of identity formation. Individuals need to constantly reflect on the differences or absences they observe in others around them. In contrast, Taylor's theory of identity formation focuses more on

internal relations and inwardness. Additionally, Butler introduces the term "reflexivity" to describe how desires may originate from within an individual but require encounters with external "otherness" to return and take on a reflexive role (Butler, 1987). As she notes:

In discovering that reflection is possible, and that every reflection reveals a relation constitutive of the subject, a way in which it is integrally related to the world that it previously did not understand, the subject thus cultivates a more expanded conception of its place.

(Butler, 1987, p. 8)

Butler argues that as consciousness is shaped by desire through the recognition of differences in the external world, consciousness simultaneously becomes an object of reflection (Butler, 1987). This highlights the reflexive purpose of desire, which Butler seeks to explore further. It becomes evident that desire occupies a central position between consciousness and self-consciousness.

In other words, Butler suggests that desire plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. It is not simply a matter of fulfilling personal desires but rather a process of actively seeking knowledge and self-awareness through our desires. By exploring our desires and engaging with the world, we gain insights into our own identities and develop a deeper sense of self-consciousness.

Otherness incites self-consciousness, occasions its articulation as desire, but is also the source of suffering for this emergent subject. Self-consciousness is thus additionally defined by Hegel as 'essentially the return from otherness', in which case desire, as the expression of self-consciousness, is a constant effort to overcome the appearance of ontological disparity between consciousness and its world.

(Butler, 1987, p. 34)

Butler highlights the active and reflexive nature of desire in the formation of identity. It is not a passive experience, but rather an ongoing process of self-discovery and self-reflection. Through desire, individuals continually negotiate and redefine their identities, expanding their understanding of themselves and the world in which they exist.

Otherness

Butler highlights that the desiring subject does not directly seek its own consciousness. Instead, the subject interacts with the world and transforms differences into determinate negations. These determinate negations, driven by desire, constitute the building blocks of subject consciousness (Butler, 1987). Consequently, the concept of otherness is introduced. Otherness refers to the aspects or entities in the external world that are perceived as different from the subject's own identity. The encounter with otherness prompts the subject to engage in the process of self-formation and the negotiation of their own identity.

Self-consciousness seeks a reflection of its own identity through the Other but finds instead the enslaving and engulfing potential of the Other. As desire for a comprehensive identity, self-consciousness initially expects the Other to be a passive medium of reflection for itself; the Other will mirror itself since the Other is like itself.

(Butler, 1987, p. 48)

In the journey of discovering the external world, the subject embarks on a journey of self-discovery. At each step towards finding their identity and self, the subject must let go of and renegotiate a part of that identity and self. Desire, as the driving force of discovery, is also reflexive. It not only helps the subject explore the external world but also enhances the already constructed identity (Butler, 1987).

Consciousness plays a crucial role in this journey as it reflects upon the external world and recognises differences. Through this reflection, self-consciousness emerges, and the subject undergoes a process of "becoming" something different. Language becomes a significant tool in this process, acquiring a reflexive character. Articulating the negations encountered in the external world is important, as consciousness becomes itself through this articulation. Reflexivity enables the subject to relate to oneself through language and thought. Desires also manifest as expressions of these reflexive thoughts on the negations explored, as Butler notes: "*In becoming articulated, consciousness becomes itself.*" (1987, p. 31). Reflexivity, therefore, is the ability to relate to oneself through articulation. Our desires also serve as manifestations of our reflexive thoughts on the negations we seek to explore.

Butler also delves deeper into the concept of difference. For Butler, these negations not only differentiate but also bind. They serve as means through which we experience the external world and ourselves. In addition to desire in Hegel's work, which appears as confrontation, Butler highlights the binding quality of desire. The Other is not only different but can be seen as another mirror of our own self. Thus, the satisfaction of desire leads to a more expanded self.

In Butler's theory, recognition plays a dialectical role. The subject's reflection in and through the Other is achieved through reciprocal recognition. This mutual recognition becomes the object of desire for both parties, as the self faces the Other and recognises their similarity. Initially, this encounter may involve a sense of losing oneself. However, as the subject seeks recognition from the Other, it is crucial to reciprocate and achieve mutual recognition. The desire for full and authentic existence is intertwined with the desire for recognition, as it leads to the attainment of a more capable identity through mutual acknowledgment. As the subject needs recognition from the Other, it is necessary to reciprocate, thus mutual recognition must be achieved. The essence of this is captured in the following: "*The desire to live in the full sense is rendered synonymous with the desire to attain a more capable identity through reciprocal recognition.*" (Butler, 1989, p. 55).

3.5. Critical Adult Education

In examining the perspectives of Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, and Judith Butler on identity formation, we have encountered significant elements that align with the principles of critical adult education. Firstly, Paulo Freire's approach to adult education closely aligns with Honneth's theory of recognition, specifically emphasising love and education's aim of the flourishing of individuals. This alignment underscores the crucial role of cultivating a supportive and caring environment within education. Secondly, Butler's notion of mutual recognition emerges as a central desire in the encounter between the self and the Other. The pursuit of mutual recognition, accompanied by a commitment to understanding similarities and embracing differences, fosters a collaborative and inclusive learning environment in critical adult education. Lastly, Taylor highlights the importance of self-discovery and personal responsibility in the journey of identity formation, aspects that resonate with critical adult education's aims of the learners to examine and explore their position in the

world. As Freire expresses, "*awareness of our imperfection makes us responsible beings, just as the perception of our existence in the world makes us moral beings*" (Freire, 1998, p. 36). In the following section, I will delve deeper into the principles and practices of critical adult education.

Paulo Freire's Critical Adult Education theory is key for emancipatory pedagogy. His position, that education is not a politically neutral process but rather politically charged, forms the basis of his theory and serves as the lens through which he analyses the educational process (Freire, 2000). Education, according to Freire, is an act of liberating both the student and the teacher from the constraints of silence and monologue. This highlights the significance of educational dialogue and its role in the educational process. The principal aims of education, as emphasised by Freire, are critical reflection, critical awareness, and praxis, which involve taking action for change and social transformation. In the following sections, I will provide a brief overview of the essential aspects of emancipatory education, drawing from the works of Freire, Ira Shore, and other educators within the field of critical emancipatory pedagogy.

According to Freire, education is a social institution influenced and shaped by socio-political factors, and participants often learn to conform to social imperatives (Jarvis, 2003, p. 135). Since education is inherently political, its purpose and outcomes cannot be treated as politically neutral. The prevailing politics of a society are reflected in the methods, content, and outcomes of teaching. Therefore, it holds value to examine prison education through the lens of radical/emancipatory education, as it sheds light on the political nature of education within the prison system.

The banking model of education

Freire sharply criticises the dominant model of education, which, according to him, treats students as empty vessels that the teacher fills with knowledge without their active involvement. Freire refers to this model as "banking," a concept that promotes passive learning. In this model, students are treated as objects, while the teacher holds the role of authority. The learners' actions are limited to passively accepting and storing the knowledge deposited by the teacher (Freire, 2000). This approach perpetuates a division between those who possess knowledge and control it, and those who are characterised as ignorant and

accept it uncritically. It is representative of an oppressive ideology that suppresses inquiry and critical thinking.

The results of this education model include the loss of students' creativity, the restriction of their critical consciousness, and the limitation of their ability to intervene in the world and effect change in their own circumstances (Freire, 2000). In contrast, the model of critical education or liberating education prioritises action and reflection on everyday reality with the intent of transformation. According to Freire, these two elements constitute the essence of emancipation and the purpose of education. Emancipatory education transcends the teacher-student divide and promotes student autonomy and agency (Freire, 1998). It serves as the foundation for critical thinking, opinion formation, and what Freire terms "epistemological curiosity" (Freire, 1998, p.12).

Freire believed that all learners are able to engage in critical thinking to understand their existence in the world and their interactions with it. The aim is to empower individuals to take action and transform their lives and, consequently, society. In the model of emancipatory education, learners and educators share responsibility for the learning process, and their relationship is based on dialogue rather than unquestioned authority. This transformative educational process challenges the oppressive exercise of education and seeks to foster critical consciousness for critical intervention in reality (Freire, 2000). This forms the basis for the educational relationship: support, encouragement and acceptance.

Dialogue

Dialogue plays a pivotal role in the learning process, aligning with Freire's belief that education should be grounded in a "pedagogy of questions" rather than a "pedagogy of answers." This perspective emphasises the importance of stimulating students' curiosity, leading them to question and inquire in order to formulate their own responses (Freire, 1997). This approach stands in direct contrast to the dominant "pedagogy of answers," which promotes passive learning by mechanically acquiring predetermined content without engaging with its significance or mobilising learners (Freire, 1997, p. 31).

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning is based on a similar framework, emphasising the main objective of adult education as the examination and liberation from dysfunctional perceptions imposed by the prevailing socio-cultural context. Reflective dialogue,

according to Mezirow, serves as the primary means of achieving transformative learning, enabling individuals to assign meaning to their lived experiences (1991). Both Freire and Mezirow view education as a means of liberation, although they approach it from different perspectives. Jarvis (2003) notes that Mezirow focuses on the psychological aspect, whereas Freire emphasises liberation from false consciousness and emphasises the inseparable connection between liberation and taking action. Consequently, in Mezirow's theory, transformation primarily occurs within the individual, involving a revision of their perceptions. In contrast, Freire advocates for action to transform not only the individual but also the world at large.

Critical awareness

Critical awareness holds a fundamental place in Freire's theory, encompassing both students and teachers engaged in the pedagogical process. They develop themselves and strive to critically perceive their existence in the world, acknowledging their imperfections (Freire, 2000). Recognising this imperfection is crucial for active participation in the educational process. According to Freire, "*awareness of our imperfection makes us responsible beings, just as the perception of our existence in the world makes us moral beings*" (Freire, 1998, p.36). Thus, as conscious entities in the world, we bear the moral responsibility for our actions (Freire, 1998). This perspective is essential because if education is seen as shaping moral beings, it also becomes a catalyst for social change (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Freire & Shor, 1987).

Critical awareness becomes necessary for learners in order to reject the consciousness fostered under oppressive conditions, which presents the world and reality as static and predetermined. In this context, inequalities and injustices remain unquestioned, leading individuals to internalise this legitimacy and perceive themselves as incapable of effecting change (Freire, 1997). Critical pedagogy condemns such fatalism and the educational model that perpetuates it. It explicitly aims to resist the formation of fatalistic consciousness, whether among learners or teachers (Freire, 1997). Participants in the teaching and learning process become potential agents of transformation. Transformative/emancipatory education strives to make individuals aware of the constraints and limitations imposed by their economic, social, and cultural environments. Simultaneously, through action, it aims to subvert and confront these factors. Freire

emphasises that being aware of these binding factors is vital and so is the fact that they do not constitute insurmountable barriers. Shifting consciousness entails transitioning from an individual bound by environmental constraints to an individual who can determine their relationship with these constraints (Freire, 1998, p. 34).

Freire first introduced the concept of awareness in the 1960s, outlining three levels: the magical or adaptive level, the level of transitional consciousness, and the transformative or critical level. At the initial level, individuals internalise the dominant ideology and only superficially and passively perceive the world around them. At the second level, they begin to recognise the problematic nature of reality but lack a critical conscious attitude. The final level represents individuals who perceive reality and engage in a dialectical relationship with it. Critical awareness encompasses an intellectual approach to reality and the subsequent action taken by the individual. Consciousness, as understood here, reflects the individual's reflection on material reality, a dialectic between perceiving the world and intervening in it (Freire, 2000). It is crucial to note that critical awareness is an inherent necessity of the human condition, fostering a deeper understanding of the world, events, and the development of epistemological curiosity (Freire, 1998, p. 35). Moreover, critical awareness is essential for taking action since the form of action adopted by individuals is largely influenced by their perception of themselves in the world (Freire, 2000).

As previously mentioned, the awareness of imperfections serves as a starting point for both teachers and learners' engagement in the educational encounter. Recognising that it is not possible to know everything while also acknowledging that it is not possible to not know anything, highlights two main points of critical education. First, it challenges the authority of the teacher, acknowledging that knowledge is a cultural construct rather than a fixed entity to possess and transmit (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Additionally, as Freire and Shor emphasise, knowledge is a collaborative creation between teachers and students. They highlight that in the modern era, knowledge is produced outside the classroom, and education often functions as a service delivery system that commodifies and reproduces this knowledge (Freire & Shor, 1987). Genuine humanistic educators and authentic revolutionaries aim for the transformation of reality alongside learners, not solely by themselves or for the students but in collaboration with others (Freire, 2000).

Education as an act of love

Finally, it is crucial to acknowledge education presented through the theory of liberating education as an act of love. The motivation of educators lies in their deep faith in humanity, their rejection of fatalism, and their strong belief in the capacity of all people to become agents in their own learning, regain control of their existence, and actively participate in the transformation of the world (Freire, 1997).

In the perspective of critical adult education, the educational encounter goes beyond the mere transfer of knowledge and skills; it becomes a platform for the production or construction of knowledge. For educators embracing liberating education, it is crucial not to adopt a condescending or paternalistic stance towards learners. Recognising the challenge of displacing the social context of education and rejecting the role of authority, the primary goal remains the development of an educational encounter where learners and teachers both play critical roles in the acquisition of knowledge (Freire & Shor, 1987).

Furthermore, one of the fundamental tasks of the teacher within the context of liberating education is to foster the cultivation of critical competence (Freire, 1998, p. 13). The learning process is rooted in questioning and research on the part of the individuals involved. In an egalitarian relationship where the teacher is not the sole knower and the learner is not merely the object of knowledge, the learners engage in continuous transformation, actively participating in the construction and reconstruction of educational content alongside the teacher, as equal participants in the learning process.

Moving beyond the separation between the subject who possesses knowledge and the object who lacks it, a key aspect emerges as a foundational pillar of the liberating perspective: the starting point of the learners, which encompasses their cognitive background, as well as their linguistic, cultural, and social environment. This encompasses the life experiences they bring with them. Critical education respects the cognitive starting point of each individual and creates conditions for discussing the socially constructed nature of knowledge, its content, and its connection to power relations. It is considered essential for a liberating pedagogical process to incorporate the starting point and life experiences of individuals as a bridge to create the teaching content (Freire, 1998, p. 16).

Moreover, action plays a central role in the learning process. As students take action, they become active agents in their own learning, making decisions, and are not treated as mere

objects to be controlled (Freire, 2000). Autonomy and acceptance of students' identities continually emerge as fundamental pillars of liberating education. Teachers should accept and legitimise students' curiosity within the aesthetic, linguistic, and syntactic environment in which it is expressed, without suppressing it (Freire, 1998, p. 39).

A necessary condition for the aforementioned is the use of dialogue as a vehicle for the educational process. Rejecting the subject-object dichotomy in learning, critical education promotes the expression of students and engages in meaningful and democratic dialogue with them, rejecting any form of power imbalance (Freire, 2000, Freire, 1998).

Dialogue in liberating education is grounded in love and humility, fostering a relationship based on mutual trust (Freire, 2000). It inherently involves the acceptance of the identities of all participants and their right to shape the world through their perspectives and experiences. It is a process in which teachers and students collaboratively direct the activity of knowledge. Lastly, the subject of the dialogue arises from the experiences and backgrounds of the participants, emphasising the importance of cultural foundations and the existing knowledge of individuals. Freire conducted research and lexical studies with the people involved, highlighting the significance of grounding education in culture and the pre-existing knowledge of participants. The entire theory of liberating pedagogy is rooted in dialogue characterised by respect and equal participation.

Critical Literacy

In conclusion, along with critical awareness, critical literacy plays a vital role in the educational process. Critical education recognises that education cannot be separated from the moral formation of individuals (Freire, 1998) and that the educational process cannot be detached from its political dimensions. Therefore, the process of literacy is not neutral; in addition to acquiring skills to adapt to reality, it directly connects with the experiences and prevailing social conditions of the participants, analysing these elements and taking action to transform them.

The literacy process is seen as a creative endeavour that encompasses both the acquisition of skills and the development of critical awareness of social reality. In the context of emancipatory pedagogy, language, reading, and reality are inseparably linked, implying that understanding and "reading" the world require individuals to grasp the relationship between text and the context in which it is written (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

Against the neo-liberal model that emphasises the transfer of skills and the technocratic way of learning to read and write, it is highlighted that the process of literacy is a dynamic, creative and political act (Freire & Macedo, 1987, Freire, 2005), resulting in the formation of a critical perspective on literacy. The political nature of the literacy process is most clearly explained by Freire, who mentions, referring to Antonio Gramsci, that the critical reading of the world combined with the political practices of mobilisation and organisation constitute a tool of counter-hegemony (Freire & Macedo, 1987). The experiences of the students come to the fore, as the topics that will be used in the literacy process will arise from their own daily life, from their own verbal universe, so that they are connected to their existential experience and have meaning for themselves (Freire & Macedo, 1987). The deconstruction of the hierarchical value of knowledge and cultural capital is the basis for respecting and accepting any experience, linguistic code or value that learners bring to the learning process and, therefore, the construction of knowledge based on their experiences (Freire & Shor, 1987).

By developing the capacity for critical reading, individuals become agents of the literacy process and acquire bases to understand reality dialectically, rejecting any fatalistic perspective. The goal is for students to understand more deeply, both the power relations that govern the economic and social reality and their rights, to recognise injustice, even if it is hidden behind the veil of normality, and to critically perceive their position in the world (Freire, 2000).

The learning and literacy process in critical education avoids positivist and utilitarian approaches, which reduce literacy to a simple acquisition of skills and aim to create "functional citizens", who will meet the demands of modern society and the labour market. The emancipatory approach aims at the socio-historical understanding of the context in which knowledge is produced, at the critical reading of reality and at taking action for its transformation (Freire & Shor, 1987).

However, it should be noted that learners also need the knowledge that exists in the dominant culture; despite all this, their acquisition should not be carried out at the expense of a thorough and deeper understanding of reality, which remains the primary goal (Freire & Macedo 1987, Freire & Shor, 1987). Finally, by understanding the place in the world, the rights but also the possibilities of action, the subjects of learning develop a positive self-image and are empowered through the learning process (Freire, 1998).

3.6. Bringing it all together: Relation-to-self, Recognition, and Adult Education

In this context, an integral part of this project concerns the lived experience of prison education and explores the existence of changes, developments, and transformations regarding participants' relation to self and their relevance to recognition theory. The value of Honneth's theory lies in its recognition of the pivotal role of self-formation in empowerment and the struggle against social injustice (Honneth, 1996). Furthermore, Honneth's theory contributes to the construction of a critical theory of adult education (Fleming & Finnegan, 2010; Fleming, 2015). This convergence of the personal, political, and educational aspects provides a multilateral basis to examine adult education in prisons as a form of transformative learning.

Within the realm radical pedagogy, Freire's theory of emancipatory adult education emphasises viewing participants in the prison setting as whole persons and cultivating critical consciousness. As highlighted by Warner (2007, 2010), prison education should encompass vocational and general education, as well as social education and the development of critical consciousness. Similarly, the significance of recognising participants' previous experiences and personal identities is underlined in both theory of recognition and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1987).

Furthermore, Honneth's theory has a sociocultural background and Freire's theory has a more educational focus, they share the need for recognition and respect in the educational process and in the pedagogical relationship that emerges from it (Honneth, 1996; Freire, 1987; Fleming, 2015). Furthermore, Freire's theory focuses on the transformative result of the educational process, empowering participants and promoting critical thinking (Freire, 1998). According to Freire (2000), this transformative educational process, treating participants as "whole" persons and going beyond vocational learning, addresses the needs of individuals as social beings and citizens.

Efforts have been made to explore the implications of Honneth's theory of recognition in adult education, particularly in Fleming's writings, which provide insightful connections and comments on the value of linking the theory of recognition to adult education (Fleming & Finnegan, 2010). Fleming suggests that there is value in exploring the educational experience of adults returning to education through the lens of Honneth's theory of recognition, an area that has been little explored. Moreover, the connection between radical

pedagogy and the theory of recognition lies in providing a normative foundation for social criticism. Many educators have drawn inspiration from critical education and relied on it as a means to view education as a tool for social justice. Bolin (2017) highlights the connection between critical adult education and education for social change, warning against the risk of reducing education to a mere acquisition of skills for employability when viewed through the lens of neoliberalism. This recognition of education's core formative element is crucial for educational policy.

Viewing adult education in prison through the lens of Honneth's theory allows for an examination of the development of self-respect and self-esteem. Fleming and Finnegan (2010) support this focus, stating that one is led to ask how in a modern world one can acquire self-esteem and whether the achievement of adult education can contribute to self-esteem. Building on this argument, it is important to remember how self-esteem is built according to Honneth, where self-esteem is built through the respect one receives for one's work, and only through self-directed and autonomous work can individuals manifest their freedom of will (Huttunen & Murphy, 2012).

Furthermore, considering the struggle for recognition within the context of imprisonment and the right to education, one could wonder if prisoners have been denied recognition. It is well established in literature and policy that one of the reasons education is offered in prisons is to counteract the detrimental effects of imprisonment (Council of Europe, 1990; Warner, 1998). To achieve this objective, education must be directed toward the whole person, as emphasised by radical pedagogy theories. Key elements of Freire's pedagogy align with the lens of recognition theory and provide valuable insights into the potential of education to counteract the effects of imprisonment through recognition.

Finally, the relationship between teachers and learners plays a critical role in promoting social equality and justice within the educational context. Critical educators focus on the classroom and the relationship between teachers and students, as they observe that an authoritarian approach adopted by educators tends to result in an inequitable society (Bolin, 2017). The dynamics of this relationship shape the educational environment and have implications for social equality. By integrating Honneth's theory of recognition, Taylor's theory of identity formation, and Butler's theory of the self, a framework is established for investigating the impact of education on identity development in the prison system.

3.7. Conclusion

In Chapter 3, I have delved into the theories of identity formation and recognition, examining the works of Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, and Judith Butler. These theories offer valuable insights into the process of constructing one's identity and its inherent connection to recognition. By analysing these theories, my objective was to establish a comprehensive framework that bridges the concept of relation to self with an educational context.

Firstly, Axel Honneth's theory of recognition holds a prominent place within this framework. Honneth emphasises the significance of self-formation in empowering individuals and fostering resistance against social injustices. His theory serves as a key element in constructing a critical theory of adult education, highlighting the importance of recognition and respect throughout the educational process and the pedagogical relationship that emerges within it.

Additionally, Charles Taylor's model of identity formation contributes to the framework by stressing the value of modern inwardness and the affirmation of ordinary life as fundamental aspects of identity construction. Taylor's perspective emphasises the role of personal experiences, values, and narratives in shaping individual identities, providing a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in the process. Furthermore, Judith Butler's theory adds a unique dimension to the framework by exploring desire and the relationship to the Other as a catalyst for self-formation. Butler highlights how desires compel individuals to seek what is different from themselves, leading to the transformation of difference into an integral part of one's identity. This dialectical relationship between the self and the Other underscores the significance of recognition in identity formation. Bringing these theories together, we can establish a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between identity, recognition, and education. Adult education, in particular, becomes a fertile ground for applying these theoretical perspectives. By treating learners as whole persons and acknowledging their previous experiences and personal identities, adult education can create a supportive and inclusive environment that aligns with the principles of recognition.

Chapter 4

Methodology

The Story of Stories

Through the five years of this research project, I learned a lot about stories.

I listened to a lot of stories, but I also *learned about* stories.

This work consists of pieces that came together to form a big story,
little pieces of experience and fragments of different lives,
moments of learning and trajectories of transformation,
not only the participants'
- but mine too.

The story of how it all started

In 2016 I found myself visiting a prison in Volos, Greece.

At the time, I was pursuing a postgraduate degree and conducting research specifically focused on Adult Education and Second Chance Schools in Greece. This significant visit to the prison was made possible through the organisation and coordination of the conference "Education for Juvenile Delinquents: Difficulties and Prospects", held in Volos, Greece in January 2016. This visit proved to be a transformative experience. I was very fortunate to find myself among people engaged in prison education, as teachers or professionals in the areas of counselling and advocacy. On this day trip to the prison, that was arranged by the conference organisers, we spent the day with the prisoners, we got the chance to mingle and talk in the yard and then we were presented with a school play and a song they had written with their music teacher. We finished the day forming a circle, were we all sat next to each other and talked. The prisoners shared their experience of prison education and we - the visitors listened. It was a very hopeful end to a fascinating day, and we did chat - but mostly and more importantly, we listened.

The setting

The poor prison conditions formed a stark antithesis in my head to the pleasant atmosphere of friendliness and sharing that filled the room whenever the students interacted with their teachers. Prison is undeniably a grim environment, a fact that is recognised in many prison education policies worldwide, and yet this gloomy atmosphere did manage to disappear - even if just for a few seconds when the students ran to hug their teachers at the end of the play, when the teachers gave encouraging looks back to their students, and when they presented to an audience the hard work and progress they had made during the last months. The audience may not have been aware of the students' starting point or the distance they had travelled since then, but it didn't matter. Their teachers knew and they were proud of them. And more importantly, the students knew too - and they were proud of themselves.

All people who are involved in education are no strangers to these emotions.

This is where the power of education is really evident. This is where the magic happens.

The goodbyes

By the end of the day trip, we found ourselves sitting in a circle, engaging in a productive discussion. The discussion, I thought to myself, was going very well. We did listen to the teachers, and the students passionately share their thoughts on the improvements that could make the educational experience so much better for everyone involved. Indeed, all teachers were teaching there voluntarily, and there was almost no support in acquiring books or any kind of materials - and dedicated educational space did not really exist. I remember thinking that these teachers do all this work with so little and the students were brilliant, so engaged and committed. They did share stories of how much they loved going to school *in here* and how they had left school when they were younger, *outside*.

We all agreed that things could be better - and they must be. We have a duty as educators to fight for quality education for everyone.

And then, as it was time to leave, one student raised his hand. Those words that he said is why I will never forget this visit, and I share them here:

“Dear visitors thank you for coming here today. I think I speak for everyone when I say that it has been an honour to have important people like you here today, researchers, and academics. Thank you for agreeing with us that things in prisons could be better.

But.

It is not the first time we have had people visiting.

It is not the first time that we hear people say that things should change. But then they leave and we stay here - and nothing changes.

So I invite you, when you leave this place, not to forget about us. Instead, try and do something about it.”

I left the prison that day with the words echoing in my head. When I took back my bag at the exit of the prison I opened my notebook and wrote down those words. I said to myself, I must not let those words and the meaning they carry, fade away. *I wanted to preserve them.*

Those words and their meaning became in many ways a guiding compass for me in the future. I went on to get involved in Adult Education. I reflected on the role of education and the “non-conventional” learning spaces. When my current PhD supervisor said that to do a PhD you have to have “a burning question” my reply did grow out of those words. “I do!”

What can we learn about prison education, if we listened to the voices of the people who experience education as students?

I knew this was the beginning, but now at the end of the path, I realised that those words were the root of another key part of the journey.

Those were the first words *I wrote down.*

This is when I realised the *significance of the voice.*

In a way, that was the first *story I listened to.*

So, to the young man that raised his hand and his voice, thank you.

I did not forget.

4.1. Introduction

This is a project that puts its primary focus on stories. That is, the lived experience as people who participated in education while serving their time in prison looked back at it and narrated it to me. This chapter presents all the steps I needed to take to reach those people and listen to their narrations, so it outlines the process of fieldwork and data generation. Against this background, it was their words that formed the story, and consequently, it was their words and their meaning that made this research possible. In the summer of 2022 during the last months of writing up, I came across a children's book by a Greek author, Ioanna Giannakopoulou, titled: *Aliki found her name*, which in the introduction read:

*We are made of our stories,
Of the things we remember,
And the things we hope for...*

(Ioanna Giannakopoulou, *Aliki found her name*)

Those three sentences reveal the core of the narratives I spent many months reading and carrying with me. As I found myself swimming in the sea made of these peoples' lives, memories, hopes and dreams for the future, those three sentences summarise how they shared parts of themselves with me. This chapter is the story of how I reached their stories and how I came to tell them in this piece of research.

With this in mind, I am going to describe in this chapter the methodological approach I followed in this project, and the way through which the stories of the participants were generated and analysed. I will present the research questions and I will provide an account of how the research design came to acquire its final form, by presenting the rationale for the methodological approach of narrative inquiry. Furthermore the research tool of life stories will be discussed, as well as the challenges I encountered through the fieldwork and the steps I took in order to face them and complete the research. I will also address the limitations regarding the project, the access to population and recruitment of participants and the impact that COVID-19 had on the research. Finally the first steps of the analysis process will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

4.2. Aims and Research Questions

In this section I will begin with the research questions and rationale underpinning the narrative inquiry methodology I followed for this project. The project seeks to understand the experiences of prison education and to find the connections between the important events in those life trajectories and the themes of recognition and transformation. In those life narratives, the project focuses on whether or not the participants identify an enduring change in their later life, that is to say, how they view their education and themselves after release.

The aim of the research can be summarised in an overarching research question and the three subquestions as follows:

Main research question:

What are the experiences of some of the people who participated in prison education as learners through the lens of recognition and transformation?

Subquestions:

- a) What are the motivations and aspirations that lie within the adult prisoners' decision to re-engage in an educational process in prison?
- b) What do former prisoners have to say about the educational process and educational encounters in prison?
- c) Is there an enduring change within their lived experience of education in prison?

In an effort to capture the whole history that participants would narrate about themselves and their lives, the research questions provide a guideline that would help put the focus on the connection between identity or relation to self, transformation, and education. More specifically, and aligning with the narrative inquiry rationale, the three sub-questions correspond to a stage in a life trajectory. This means that each research question looks into a different stage of the educational experience, before, during and after the participant's engagement with education in prison.

Therefore, the motivation and aspiration takes into account the previous educational experience and educational background along with their experience in prison and after that. It is important to stress the fact that as previous research has looked into the lived experience of participation in prison education (Carrigan, 2013), the research questions show that the present project aims to contribute to the literature by taking the research a step further, to what happens after release.

There is value in looking into the concept of an enduring change in later life, not through the lens of mere non-participation in crime, but rather as a more holistic process.

The aim of the project is also to generate knowledge of the prison education landscape, more specifically the lived experience of prison education based on the participants' point of view and voices. That way, aspects such as relationships and self-formation can come into sharper focus.

Social class and educational exclusion the rationale behind the research question

Before proceeding further, I would like to provide an explanation for the rationale behind the research questions and the significance of the themes concerning social class and educational exclusion. Throughout my research, the participants took me on a journey into their past, revealing challenging moments from their childhoods, such as extreme poverty, parental neglect, abandonment, abuse, bullying, and experiences of educational and social exclusion. The relationship between education, social class, and social exclusion is extensively explored in the relevant literature. One common question that arises, and one I have encountered frequently in conferences and presentations of my research, is: "Isn't prevention better than cure?" This question pertains to understanding the factors that contribute to individuals from certain groups being more likely to engage in criminal behaviour, face convictions, and experience incarceration compared to those from higher social and economic backgrounds. It is essential to recognise that education exclusion and criminal behaviour are not random occurrences; they are intricately connected.

By focusing on the later life of individuals who returned to education after experiencing incarceration, this study emphasises the significance of these interconnected factors. It is crucial to clarify that exploring positive outcomes from the prison experience does not imply endorsing the prison as a "correctional" process. Instead, it underscores the

importance of processes such as education in mitigating the detrimental effects of imprisonment.

My own journey as an educator began with a powerful university lecture my first day as a student in at the School of Education in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. I will forever remember the inaugural lecture of the module 'Introduction to Pedagogy.' I was very fortunate to have been taught by Dr. Giorgos Tsiakalos, a great professor of the Department in his last year before his retirement. I vividly recall him explaining the 'promise of pedagogy,' emphasising that every child can learn and must learn. This 'promise' stresses the right to education, which must be protected at all costs for every human being, and highlights the role of the teacher in preserving that promise. It was rather a revolutionary declaration for me, and little did I know how much I would embrace this promise and make it my own mission as an educator. As Tsiakalos mentions:

I firmly believe that the “promise of pedagogy” can only be fulfilled when we, educators, are willing to share with the world not only our scientific data and the results of our research but also our deep sorrow for a young child who never became a student.

(Tsiakalos, 2002, p. 30)

4.3. Narrative Inquiry: How and why

We have to rely on statistics and personal narratives to determine how to change. With that said, the only tool that has been proven to work in rehabilitating prisoners is education. It makes sense to build on the ideas that have already been proven to work the best for changing lives and recidivism rates.

(Ahmed et al., 2019 p. 75)

In this research, the terms 'narratives' and 'stories' are used interchangeably. But what exactly is a narrative? According to Holstein & Gubrium in the introduction of 'Varieties of Narrative Research' (2012), personal narratives are stories produced in oral or written form by an individual, focusing on a significant aspect of their life. I endorse this definition in

my research, as the stories shared by the participants centre around their lived experiences of incarceration and their educational journeys.

Therefore, the project adopted a narrative approach, delving into the exploration of stories and viewing individuals as "storied" beings. This approach is rooted in the understanding that stories play a fundamental role in human cognition, sense-making, and the formation of identity and self (Rogers, 2007). Within this research paradigm, practitioners take on a theoretical stance of studying alongside the participants. This acknowledges that meaning is constructed collaboratively, and it upholds the participants' right to be active contributors in this process (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007). Respect for their perspectives is paramount in this narrative inquiry. There is great value in employing narrative research in projects where underrepresented and/or vulnerable groups are involved (such as former prisoners), but also when researchers reflect on how to look into experiences of individuals that belong to groups that have been through situations that are uncommon or unknown for the largest part of the population. Clandinin & Rosiek claim "[...] *stories are often treated as the epiphenomenal to social inquiry reflections of important social realities but not realities themselves*" (2007, p. 41). In that sense, the social dimension of understanding and inquiry comes into the picture.

Why is it important to listen to stories?

The only thing that keeps us from floating off with the wind is our stories. They give us a name and put us in a place, allow us to keep on touching.

Tom Spanbauer (1992, p. 190 cited in Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p.35)

Clandinin & Rosiek use the above quote from Tom's Spanbauer's book *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon* to illustrate that narrative inquiry views people as "storied", thus, making sense of ourselves and the world around us by constructing narratives. Thus, the story became the unit of analysis. This kind of inquiry has historically evolved as an answer to a positivist paradigm in research, as Pinnegar & Daynes state, where the assumptions about "paradigmatic knowledge" as Bruner has called it, such as reliability, objectivity, generalisability and validity are being readdressed, by looking at each one of them critically

(2007). Generalizability in particular, will be addressed later in this chapter. Narrative inquiry, following this critical stance, begins from Bruner's idea that narratives are essential to the way we think, and furthermore, to the way we construct our identity and self (Rogers, 2007).

In this context, there are two arguments in adopting this research method:

- a) the participants in the study come from a population that has experienced incarceration, therefore the research concerning the educational cannot be disconnected from that experience and
- b) the objective of exploring the connection between the formation of relation to self and educational experience needs a holistic approach in order to be investigated.

Against this backdrop, narrative inquiry emerges as the most suitable methodological approach for conducting such a study. The literature on narrative inquiry highlights its frequent adoption when researchers encounter ethical dilemmas related to investigating the experiences of individuals who have endured traumatic situations or belong to marginalised or uncommonly represented groups. In the present case, the experience of imprisonment falls into this category, making narrative inquiry particularly relevant for exploring the lives of incarcerated individuals and their unique perspectives.

As stated above, building a methodological approach against the positivist paradigm, narrative inquiry places in the centre of the study the personal lived experience, that can be unfolded in a form of narration of someone's life story. Narrative research, therefore, belongs in qualitative research, that is to say, the focus is on understanding and forming a deeper comprehension of human action and experience (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Pinnegar and Daynes argue that narrative research sees the story as the unit of the human experience, and with this in mind, approaches and research tools may vary. In the present research project, in order to explore the participants' perspectives on their educational experience and outcomes in later life, it is of crucial importance to take into account their past educational experiences, along with their identity formation experiences, before, during, and after imprisonment. I believe that social factors are key to looking into those links and therefore, narrative inquiry appears once again as an appropriate method of investigating such issues, as "narrative inquiry involves the reconstruction of a person's

experience in relationship both to the other and to a social milieu” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 5). Literature shows that in order to conduct narrative inquiry, many different tools and approaches have been employed, but all have in common four key characteristics in the core of their rationale, which I believe are highly important in this study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006):

- The study of lived experience
- The attention to temporality
- Attention to sociality
- Attention to place

All the above mentioned factors were indeed key in the conduction of the fieldwork. As I will discuss in more detail later, the three strands of sociality-place-temporality were very important when the participants talked about important and turning events in their narrations.

4.4. “If you could tell me a story” – The research tool of life-stories

However we become narrative inquirers only when we recognize and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship, primarily use stories as data and analysis, and understand the way in which what we know is embedded in a particular context, and finally that narrative knowing is essential to our inquiry.

(Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 7)

As stated previously, life story interviews are often employed in narrative inquiry and when the lived experience and the meaning made of it is put in the core of the research. Life story interviews are primarily open-ended discussions with the participants, where data is generated in the form of narration. It was a crucial factor for the project that the data is generated in a way that allows the participants space and time to share and reflect on their lived experience. As Riessman (1993) underlines that an approach with narrative elements can give more space to the participants, in our case the life story format allowed for the necessary space. This is particularly valuable when considering the concepts of the self, the life-trajectory, reflection, change, and the meaning-making process are at the core of the

study. For that reason, it was important to generate data that will enable the analysis to look through the lens of the whole person and view the lived experience through a life-trajectory form. In this way, the participants are not viewed exclusively as former prisoners, and their time in prison is not made the exclusive subject of the research, rather it is viewed through the wider life-trajectory lens.

It is essential to acknowledge that life stories were not initially the research tool I had planned for in the research design. Initially, I proposed using semi-structured interviews for two primary reasons. Firstly, I had prior experience in conducting and analysing semi-structured interviews, which provided a level of familiarity and comfort in their application. Secondly, I believed the semi-structured format allowed for flexibility, providing participants with the space to share their experiences freely.

However, as my research progressed and after a comprehensive review of the literature, my perspective underwent a significant shift within the first year of my PhD. This change included adopting the narrative inquiry approach. Ultimately, and after having received feedback from the participants, I firmly believe that opting for life stories as the methodology and research tool was the most appropriate and correct decision.

The primary goal of the fieldwork was to capture narrative accounts from the participants, creating an environment where they felt at ease to reflect and share their experiences. It was crucial to assure them that their voices were heard, and they held the central role as the principal storytellers. The end goal was to obtain narratives in the first-person perspective, allowing for a more intimate and authentic portrayal of their experiences. By choosing life stories as the research tool, I was able to delve deeper into the participants' lived experiences, gaining profound insights into their perspectives and emotions. This approach provided a more holistic understanding of their educational journeys and highlighted the value of embracing narrative methods in qualitative research.

Overall, the decision to shift from semi-structured interviews to life stories proved to be pivotal, enriching the research process and allowing for a more authentic and personal exploration of the participants' narratives.

According to Atkinson: “*The life story interview produces a first-person text, in the words of a storyteller, that can stand on its own ... or that can be examined through the lens of any theory or research question applied to it*” (Atkinson, 2007, p. 224).

For that reason, it was crucial to me that the data were generated in a way that would give the participants space and time to share and reflect on their lived experience. Moreover, considering the researcher's positionality, which will be analysed further, I considered it important to reflect on the relationship between the researcher and the participants in the study, an issue that researchers working with life story interviews address. Pinnegar and Daynes, exploring the relationship formed between the two parties in a life history interview conclude that the relationship between the researcher and the person that will narrate their story, loses any positivist characteristics and moves towards an approach where both parties of the encounter will be fully engaging (Pinnegar & Daynes). Another argument for employing life story interviews is that "*Researchers acknowledge that their subjects are not bound, static, atemporal, and decontextualized*" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p.11).

That gains particular value when in the core of the study is the notion of change and the meaning that individuals make from it. On the way we view and make meaning of the lived experience, there is an insightful analysis where narrative researchers connect the theoretical roots of narrative inquiry with the way the conception of experience is grasped and described by Dewey (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). They place emphasis on the fact that experience, according to Dewey's ontology, and consequently for narrative research, is dynamic, constantly at interaction with the world and temporal. Atkinson's definition of the life story interview is very insightful in that sense: "*The life story interview as a methodological bridge and can be viewed as a connection between 'telling and living of a narrative' (or between the lived experience of life and living life)*" (Atkinson, 2007, p. 230)

Consequently, it is essential to gather data that allows for a comprehensive analysis, taking into account the whole person approach, while simultaneously respecting that the participants have the space to discuss and reflect on their time before imprisonment, rather than solely focusing on their status as former prisoners. Against this backdrop, previous educational experiences gain considerable value, along with their family and community experiences. Experiences should not be seen merely as isolated connections but, as Clandinin & Rosiek suggest, as continuous elements that shape one another. The same authors go on to clarify why this conception bears importance for narrative inquiry:

It reinforces the idea that inquiry is not a search “behind the veil” of appearances that ends in the identification of an unchanging transcendent reality. Instead, inquiry is an act within a stream of experience that generates new relations that then become a part of future experience.

(Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 41)

Drawing upon Beuthin’s reflection on engagement with life story interviews I consider crucial the two qualities she mentions to have encountered in her experience in conducting the interviews, as two critical beliefs: the dialogical process and social influences. While Beuthin reflects on her experience, she states that how we make meaning regarding our experiences is very much linked to the sociocultural milieu and she stresses the importance of the social constructionist standpoint she adopts for narrative inquiry:

In this way social constructionism is also relativist, as our sense-making is just that, a standpoint at a moment in time, an interpretation. The connection between social constructionism and narrative is that any description rendered, such as a story, is not seen as a mirror or a straightforward representation of reality but a complex representation containing the plural voices of many.

(Beuthin, 2014, p. 127)

Building on that, in this project I consider the social background of the participants, especially in the case of former prisoners who have experienced a significant amount of time in a prison institution and have been through the justice system.

On how the narrative is shared, Atkinson draws the attention on the fact that the researcher should be conscious to leave the necessary freedom and space to the narrator in the process of telling the story:

The less structure a life story interview has, the more effective it will be in achieving the goal of getting the person’s own story in the way, form and style that the individual wants to tell it in.

(Atkinson, 1998, p. 41).

Understanding the difference between a semi-structured and narrative analysis of life story interviews, my intention was to proceed with this mindset in conducting fieldwork, always leaving room for the participant to share what they deem important.

4.5. Fieldwork: Access, Gatekeepers, Population and Sample Frame

The research aims and questions required the participation of people who went back to education while in prison, which means that they were re-engaged in learning and educational encounters while incarcerated. As the focus of the research was on the lived experience and life trajectories, I sought to speak with people who were not in prison at the time of the study, but the time between their release and the time of our encounter did not pose a limitation. On the contrary, the thinking underpinning the recruitment process was that the more variety in the time that had passed between the participants leaving the prison, the more diversity in the ways people acted on the educational outcomes. In this sense, it would be an effort to capture the life trajectories by looking at a specific moment in time. Based on the above, the population in the present research project consisted of all people that:

- a) have experienced incarceration,
- b) have been engaged in education while incarcerated and
- c) are over 18 years of age.

More specifically, the sample frame included former prisoners who were over 18 years of age in Ireland and in Greece. The recruitment processes that took place are described further below, including the ways access was gained through support groups and services that acted as gatekeepers, and the challenges and difficulties the COVID-19 Pandemic posed in the whole process. Finally, it is worth noting that although I made every effort to ensure age and gender dispersion in the study's sample, I was only able to interview male participants, as shown below. In the end, 14 life story interviews were conducted in Ireland and Greece with adult male former prisoners who engaged in education while in prison.

Single case study

This study is a single case study conducted in two European countries. However, it is important to note that the research does not fall under the category of a comparative study. The main focus of this research lies in exploring and understanding the individual experiences and stories of the participants. It follows the core principles of the narrative turn, viewing each participant as a storied individual. Therefore, it does not seek to compare the two prison and penal systems, but rather looks at the stories of the people who went through the system and re-engaged in education. Although the project takes a culturally

sensitive approach and does comment on differences on the system, where the necessity emerged from the story and the participant's narration, it does not set out to compare. The stories and the life trajectories are the main focus.

During the process of fieldwork and analysis, it became clear that there was no methodological reason to separate the stories based on the country of the participants. The stories presented many striking similarities in the main themes and often I myself forgot that the participants came from different backgrounds.

Recruitment of Participants

The strategy of recruiting potential participants posed a challenge from the very beginning. As it was not possible to reach out directly to people who might be interested in participating, I began by identifying the groups and services that were active in providing assistance and support for people after release in Ireland and in Greece. In the initial communication, I introduced myself and the project and inquired whether they would be interested and available to act as gatekeepers for the research. Getting in contact with the services that operate in Dublin (Ireland) and in Athens and Thessaloniki (Greece) first, to seek participants for reasons of proximity and easier travel, seemed to be the best approach, so a list was made for each country based on those areas.

In Ireland, several services operate in Dublin, but also in Cork, Limerick and Kilkenny. In the Greek context, fewer services and support groups exist compared to Ireland, and the vast majority operate in Athens, except for KETHEA (Therapy Centre for Dependent Individuals), which has several branches across Greece. This fact is of particular interest when taking into consideration that in the Irish Prison system there are 12 prisons and centres, including high, medium and low-security institutions and Greece has a total number of 30 institutions, that include all different levels of security prisons, as well as Special Juvenile Detention Centres and Rural (open) Prisons. The prison population, according to the latest figures is 11.131 prisoners in Greece (September 2021) and 4.087 prisoners in Ireland (May 2022).

The final list of the support groups and services for prisoners post-release contained a total number of 16 services and support groups, as seen in the tables below. I reached out to all of them for the first time as soon as I received my Research Ethics Approval from the School of Education, in May 2019.

Name	Address	Purpose
<i>Care After Prison (CAP)</i>	Dublin 2	National peer led criminal justice charity.
<i>Pathways Centre</i>	Dublin 1	The aim of Pathways Centre is to facilitate the re-integration of former prisoners.
PACE	Dublin 15	PACE provides training and education services on a pre- and post-release basis for men and women prisoners, ex-prisoners and ex-offenders.
<i>IASIO (Irish Association for the Social Integration of Offenders)</i>	Dublin 15	An independent company formed in January 2012. It is a national community based organisation for adult offenders in the criminal justice system.
<i>Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice</i>	Dublin 1	Of particular focus of the Centre is the promotion of safe and humane custody, reduction in imprisonment and appropriate services for people leaving prison.
<i>Irish Prison Reform Trust</i>	Dublin 7	IPRT is an evidence-based advocacy organisation, which works towards its strategic goals through research, campaigning and influencing policy.
<i>Fusion CPL (Working with Dublin 10)</i>	N/A	It was established in 1999 in partnership with FAS, the Community, SWAHB and the Drug Task Force.
<i>Irish Prison Service: Resettlement & Reintegration Service</i>	Longford, Co. Longford	Providing safe and secure custody, dignity of care and rehabilitation to prisoners for safer communities.
<i>Probation Service</i>	Dublin 7	Multiple locations (in every prison) <i>[Included with the intention to ask for connections to post-release groups or community based programmes]</i>
<i>Bridge</i>	Dublin 8	The Bridge Project is a community-based alternative to custody for adult males with a history of offending.

CASP (Clondalkin Addiction Support Programme)	N/A	CASP (Clondalkin Addiction Support Programme) provides a Community /Prison Liaison Service to people from the Clondalkin area who are 18 years old and upwards, who are drug users currently in Prison or about to be released.
<i>Praksis</i>	Athens	Planning and implementation of actions and interventions aiming at the eradication of social and economic exclusion of vulnerable individuals and social groups; and enhancement of social (re)integration and inclusion.
<i>Ερανόδος (Επάνοδος)</i>	Athens	EPANODOS has been established in order to facilitate and support any effort towards the social and vocational reintegration of former inmates of correctional facilities.
KETHEA (ΚΕΘΕΑ) <i>Therapy Centre for Dependent Individuals</i>	Athens	KETHEA [name of programme removed] provides counselling, rehabilitation and reintegration services to prisoners and ex-prisoners who are addicts in Greece.
<i>Onesimos (Ονήσιμος)</i>	Athens	The Prisoners' Support Association "O Onesimos" was founded in 1982 with the aim of helping materially and morally the needy prisoners, released from prison and their families.
<i>Arsis (Άρσις / Σον-ανθρωπος)</i>	Central Macedonia	Social inclusion of recently released prisoners, homeless people and people living in conditions of absolute poverty.

After contacting all the services and groups, I established contact with the Jesuit Centre of Faith and Justice and KETHEA in Greece. I travelled to Athens to meet with the Research Manager in the KETHEA head office in July 2019, and I met with the Social Policy Advocate in the Jesuit Centre of Faith and Justice in June 2019, who brought me in contact with a nun who had done significant work in Irish prisons and with whom I met in October 2019. From that contact, I found three participants in Ireland who agreed to meet with me and we met for the first time before Christmas 2019.

KETHEA constitutes the largest network of addiction and social reintegration services in Greece and one of the key actors in national anti-addiction planning and is also an advisory body to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on drugs. It has more than 100 units nationwide, and operates in 31 cities throughout Greece, designing and implementing prevention and health education programs in educational communities of all levels, in groups with high-risk behaviour and local communities. One of those programs, based either in the Greek Prisons and/or outside for support after release, was the target for recruitment. After many months of communication, one of those programs based in a Greek large city, the name of which will not be revealed for anonymity and confidentiality reasons, agreed to act as a gatekeeper. I applied to the research committee of KETHEA to be granted access and signed an agreement protocol for conducting research with them. All 8 participants in Greece were recruited from that program, and the fieldwork finished a year later, as described in the section regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

I made another two efforts to reach out to gatekeepers in Ireland in November 2019 and again in February 2020. The third one was successful and the Probation Service agreed to hold a meeting. I applied for access to the Irish Probation Service, which was granted in May 2020 and a probation officer was appointed to help me recruit participants. Again, due to the pandemic, our contact was made possible several months later, but another two participants were recruited through the Irish Probation Service and the interviews were held between October 2020 and February 2021. In the meantime, my third attempt was successful with another gatekeeper, the educational centre Pathways. The manager, one of the teachers and I met in person once before the pandemic and another two participants were successfully recruited through them.

4.6. Limitations

In terms of this project's limitations, those can be separated into the two following groups. The first one encompasses all challenges that posed a limitation regarding access to the population and recruitment of the participants. The second one describes how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the fieldwork and posed significant challenges.

The nature of narrative research

The prisoners as *whole people* perspective is highlighted in the methodology of the autoethnography of Key & May (2019). I wished to proceed with this perspective in mind, but inevitably aspects of everyday life in prison could not be explored in depth. Those perspectives, such as the everyday routine of the prisoners, their environment and the reality of the prison facility were not a primary aim of the study, without meaning that they are not a significant part of the lived experience of incarceration. Those perspectives would have been able to be explored through a different instrument, for example, observation or action research. I mention this as a limitation, as there were times that the participants shed light on those aspects, with the example of Oisin, who said that food was very important in his prison experience. He said that what he missed more in prison was his mother's food and spent a couple of minutes connecting his relationship with food to his experience of incarceration. As Parsons (2020) highlighted in a related study, the significance of everyday prison foodways extends beyond mere sustenance; it plays a vital role in shaping prisoners' sense of self and dignity. Thus, exploring these aspects further could have provided unique opportunities to deepen our understanding of the prison experience. Nonetheless, given the constraints of this project, delving into these perspectives was not feasible.

Furthermore, narrative inquiry is at its core participatory, and while involved in this project, I carried with me all the stories I listened to for a significant amount of time. We must not forget that as narrative inquiry views people as “storied”, the researcher is a “storied” individual. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) focus on that concern about narrative inquiry, that as narrative researchers we devote our energy to viewing our participants as “storied” and we must not forget that in the narrative landscape we, as researchers, are not different. While doing this project, I realised that my own narrative identity and who I am as a person influenced the research and I became more and more observant and aware of those aspects. I discuss them in detail in the section about ethics and positionality.

Access to Population and Recruitment of participants

Gatekeeping and cherry-picking

Access to population was extremely difficult as explained in detail in the relevant sections. One of the limitations I must acknowledge, while created unintentionally, is that through the recruitment process I established contact with participants that mainly had a positive outlook on prison education. They are those who continued their careers and studies carrying with them this positive experience. Perhaps that is why they were still in contact with the gatekeepers, (support groups and services or the Probation Service), whom I reached out to. Without acknowledging and considering this significant limitation, the recruitment process could have been perceived as cherry-picking.

Gender imbalance

The other limitation of the study is that, despite every possible effort, only male participants agreed to engage in conversations with me. This gender imbalance is partly due to the prison population demographics, with a limited number of female prisons in both Ireland and Greece—just two in each country. Women make up a very small proportion of the prison population, comprising 4.2% in Ireland and 4.7% in Greece, according to the latest figures from the Institute for Criminal Policy Research's World Prison Brief (2022).

I made a conscious decision not to include gender or masculinity theories in the analysis for two main reasons. Firstly, this study primarily falls within the realm of education rather than being purely sociological, focusing on examining the experiences through an educational lens. Secondly, while employing gender theories could provide valuable insights and enrich the research, adding this aspect to the scope of the study would have been impractical. It is essential to acknowledge that the perspectives shared by the participants may have been influenced by their gender, yet I wish to emphasise that this project does not aim to generalise findings. Instead, its primary objective is to illuminate individual stories, life trajectories, and the possibilities and transformations that emerged through the engagement with education or "educational encounters" within the prison institution.

COVID-19: The Pandemic and how it affected the fieldwork of the project

In this section, I am going to outline how the COVID-19 pandemic in the Republic of Ireland affected the fieldwork of this project. The virus reached the country in late February 2020, and within three weeks the situation escalated dramatically. On Thursday, March 5th 2020 the College Community received an email from the former and then Provost, Patrick Predergast, informing everyone of the first positive case within Trinity College Dublin. Five days later, on Tuesday 10th March we received communication that another case was confirmed in College. Trinity College Dublin closed on Thursday 12th March for, initially, three weeks, although this time proved to be much longer than anyone expected and, much more challenging.

The pandemic posed a major challenge in the research process and fieldwork, a disruption with no precedent that could not be anticipated. Life in the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed how we communicate and had to re-learn to interact with each other, as well as how we kept on living our own lives. As a result of this new reality, all of the fieldwork for this research was conducted with strict restrictions in place (Greece) and during a very strict lockdown (Ireland). The ways the two countries dealt with the pandemic and the lockdown is reflected in the fieldwork, how I established communication with the gatekeepers and the participants and the encounters themselves.

Along with a major delay in fieldwork, of almost 7 months, I had to redesign how fieldwork would take place, by moving the interviews in Ireland online. Another challenge that emerged was that participants in Greece were not able to participate in an online interview. I remained in close contact with the gatekeepers and when a window of opportunity arose, when I would be able to visit the centre that acted as the gatekeeper and would facilitate the interview by providing a space within their premises, I travelled and met with the participants. The fieldwork was conducted in a space they knew very well but was completely new to me. On the contrary, in Ireland, all the interviews, with the exemption of one, were online, the participants were at their own homes, and I was in mine. To this day we have yet to meet in person.

Unfortunately, the first lockdown coincided with my big breakthrough in the data generation process. Between September 2019 and January 2020 I established communication with the gatekeepers and managed to contact all the participants in Ireland

to set up an initial meeting. I met with three of them for an initial introductory meeting at a café near Trinity College, where I introduced myself and the research, shared the information sheet for participants and invited them to ask me questions about the research. They agreed to take part in the research, and we discussed possible dates for the interview meetings. During the same time, I established communication with the gatekeeper in Greece.

The data generation process was different in Greece than in Ireland. The Education Officer found all people interested in participating in the research in KETHEA. The Officer and I kept in contact through emails where I explained the research project and shared details of the participants I was hoping to find, people who had been engaged in education while in prison. The officer contacted potential participants, and 11 people who agreed to meet me were found. We discussed possible dates that would be convenient for KETHEA, as they would facilitate the meeting and the interviews by providing a space within their premises and the participants. We agreed that the second half of March 2020 would be a good period for the interviews and I went ahead and booked a ticket to Greece for March 13th 2020. Unfortunately, with the outbreak of COVID-19, the week starting Monday 9th March 2020 was filled with uncertainty for Ireland and Greece. KETHEA made contact to say that we might have to postpone the interviews, as the centre might close for a couple of weeks. In light of the possibility of a lockdown and border closure, I decided not to travel on the afternoon of Thursday 12th March 2020, the same day that Trinity College closed. This decision proved correct, as KETHEA's main premises closed within the next 3 days. At this point, fieldwork paused, for what I thought would be one or two months, and proved to be much longer.

Greece

Fieldwork started to resume very slowly in September 2020. I contacted KETHEA in August 2020, and we monitored the situation closely. As soon as their policy allowed visitors to their premises, I would make the trip to their premises to conduct the interviews. This happened in early October 2020, when I travelled to the main building of KETHEA and met with the participants in the morning. We had a group introductory meeting where I introduced myself and the research. The participants had been informed of the research by the education officer of KETHEA before our meeting. Still, I needed to repeat the

information, but also to be available to answer questions in person and also to maximise the time spent with them. We discussed their schedule, and we agreed that I would be available the whole day in a room in the building so that we have privacy. For the next three days, the interviews were conducted there. I spent two whole days in the KETHEA building, and the interviews were conducted in a room with an open window to allow for proper ventilation and masks were worn all the time.

Ireland

As soon as I returned to Ireland I self-isolated for two weeks as per the guidelines in place in October 2020. When my self-isolation period finished, Ireland went on to have yet another lockdown that lasted until December 2020. Of course, this knowledge of the length of the lockdown was not available at the time. At this point, I want to express the level of insecurity and uncertainty that everyone that lives in the Republic of Ireland and remembers the 18 months since the pandemic started can understand very well. I focused on often communicating with the potential participants and being ready to meet with them by the end of October, but the new level 5 restrictions, as well as Trinity College's policy on visitors outside the College Community, made it imperative that the interviews are moved online. Following Trinity's Policy, I conducted 5 interviews online using Microsoft Teams from October 2020 to February 2021, a GDPR-compliant tool. This second part of fieldwork was not without challenges, as the new way of living during the lockdown had forced everyone to adapt to, but also COVID-19 itself, brought about several shortcomings (finding a time that the participants had no work commitments and privacy at home to talk, participants having tested positive for COVID-19). It took a significant amount of time to schedule each interview, taking into consideration no interviews could be conducted during Christmas Holidays that year as well.

One notable case that illustrates very well how the COVID-19 pandemic brought about unexpected difficulties and challenges that could not be mitigated, is the case of Oisín. Oisín was eager to participate and considered the project's goal very important. Unfortunately, he could not participate in the interview at his own home, as he felt uncomfortable talking about his experience in prison education from his shared accommodation. His flatmates did not know about his incarceration, and he would not have

the privacy needed for this discussion. We decided to wait until we find the opportunity and the appropriate space to meet in person. The time between the second week of December to Christmas saw Dublin opening up and people being able to meet again. This seemed to be our opportunity to meet with Oisín. The access challenge was this time for Oisín to come into the Trinity College Campus. This was a new area that I had to navigate, with no clear instructions on how to have a guest for research purposes be granted access to campus, all with maintaining anonymity and privacy for my participant. In a time-sensitive timeframe, putting forth great effort to respect Oisín's schedule and the fact that he was taking a day off work to meet with me, but also fearing another lockdown might follow, I remember those days as a race against time. After a long inquiry with Estates and Facilities in Trinity College, along with Campus Security and communicating all the updates with the participant to ensure that he had a good understanding of the process I had to follow and that he was comfortable with all the steps, access was granted. The interview was conducted in a room in Trinity College, following the protocol stated in my Research Ethics application regarding interview spaces.

4.7. Reliability and Validity

Personal narratives have been used to explore the lived experience in social sciences during the last four decades. It is a methodology that sees the process of meaning-making is personal, constructed and fluid, very much depending on the socio-cultural milieu. Against this background, a common question in research arises: "How could the results be generalised to the population of the study?"

The answer regarding this project is simple, and yet, it took me a significant amount of time, research and delving into my own understanding of how and why social researchers conduct research. First, regarding this project and its research aims and questions, one other significant question must be addressed: "Is generalization even possible?" Maynes et al (2008, p.126) express the view that even an accumulation of a considerable number of narratives would not make a specific result generalizable. This is a question that narrative inquiry often provokes, and it relies heavily on the research's and the researcher's epistemological and philosophical stance. Thus, the point of this thesis is not to generalise, but to understand deeper. This deeper understanding, I believe, is critical and can be usefully applied to theory and practice. Consequently, this thesis tells a particular story of

a group of men who have benefited to different degrees from the provision of education in prison and from the educational encounters they had while incarcerated. These men have come forward to tell their stories that show the possibilities that lie in those encounters. Furthermore, these stories reveal a set of transformative events, and life chances and are describing experiences that were made possible for these people through education. In order to add validity to the research project, I conducted another two lengthy discussions with a probation officer in Ireland and a prison teacher in Greece who provided valuable information and insight regarding context and background.

4.8. Ethics and positionality of the researcher in this project

“Who owns a story? Who can tell it? Who can change it?”

To narrative researchers or people in the research community involved in narrative research, these questions are well-known. These three questions are posed by Pinnegar & Daynes (2007, p.30) and illustrate an effort to capture the fine borders between the sharing of a story and authority in research. The same researchers underline the fact that narrative inquiry is laden with questions about power and authority. It is extremely important to be aware of the border that the researcher and the participants in a study often cross, mark or negotiate. Moreover, it is not to be ignored that regarding the particular setting of prisons, ethical issues have been also raised, with respect to the fact that prisoners - an in our case former prisoners - constitute a protected group, as a consequence of the lived experience of deprivation of their liberty (Mastrorilli, 2016). Narrative inquiry though, seems to treat every lived experience, and consequently the story narrated, in that way. In order to illustrate this idea of “borders” in narrative inquiry, Clandinin & Rosiek state the following:

Narrative inquirers frequently find themselves crossing cultural discourses, ideologies, and institutional boundaries. In this work they often encounter both deep similarities and profound differences between their own experience and those with whom they work, neither of which can be reduced to the other. The result is a less harmonious single explanation of their world than it is an expanded understanding of the tensions and conflicted possibilities in the stories people live.

(Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 59)

Positionality and reflexivity

Research is difficult: It tests our knowledge, pushes our boundaries, and challenges us to grow as people while we deal with the pressure of being there for our participants in ways that we never predicted or believed were within our capacity to do.

Johnston, 2019, p.1 begins his paper on qualitative research and empathy with the above statement. I smiled without realising reading this, for how much I related to the sentiment. I knew I had to define my positionality in this project. The longer I was involved and engaged with the project, the more aspects I recognised about the influences of my ontological and epistemological stance on my research (Darwin Holmes, 2020). But what is reflexivity? According to Johnston “Reflexivity refers to the constant critical self-reflection of the researcher throughout all phases of the research process. Hence, there is a responsibility on the insider researcher to critically understand the role of the self in the production of knowledge” (Johnston, 2019, p.2).

In reflecting on my positionality in this research, I found helpful insight in Beuthin’s (2014) reflective account of her conducting narrative research with participants with whom she does not share similar lived experiences. She states: “I accept that I can only ever get close to but never actually know another’s direct experience” (Beuthin, 2014, p. 129). I consider this idea of awareness of what is shared in the moment and recognition that the story has to be treated as the participant’s account first, to be very important in conducting the interviews. For the process itself and coming to terms with the relation of power between the researcher and the participant, Beuthin puts forwards the concept of dialogical co-creating:

How does one minimize the unseen cloak of power we wear that gains us access to the individual and his or her experience; power associated with having education, being a health care professional, in this instance a nurse, and in saying I am affiliated with a university research project. [...] The interviewer, as an active participant in co-creating what transpires, aims to be dialogical: to follow all

threads of the story as it unfolds, to be genuinely curious and to ask, engage, be spontaneous, and to give up control in the interview.

(Beuthin, 2014, p. 128)

On the co-creating element in research, the term that resonated with me and my approach came from the typology of Finlay (2003), where different variants of reflexivity are presented and categorised. Finlay discusses reflexivity as mutual collaboration and reflexivity as social critique; the two variants share a common ground of focusing issues of power and inclusivity in social research. The first variant focuses on engaging the participants as co-researchers, while the second one considers issues of power between the researcher and the participants. I found myself sitting on the nexus between those two variants while always keeping at heart my journey in reflexivity, and the ways I could include elements of those two variants.

Riessman (1993) underlines the space that an approach with narrative elements can give to the participants, a fact that I confirmed when conducting our discussions. Indeed, the majority of the participants gave rich accounts of their lived experiences, placed the beginning where it made sense to them and shared even events that they did not plan to share or did not think were related until they reflected on their experiences as a story. I strongly believe that if I had interrupted them with structured questions, following a more traditional form of qualitative research, they would not have shared such rich self-reflective stories.

Head draws our attention to several ethics and power distribution issues in qualitative research. Conducting interviews and other forms of radical or non-traditional research has been long discussed in relation to the questions raised regarding handling power between the researcher and the participants. Head (2018, p. 72) highlights an aspect of that power or academic privilege that exists long before we meet our participants and stems only from our position as academic researchers:

Whenever we undertake research in education, we create populations, such as 'teachers' or 'students', which risks an assumption of homogeneity especially when another factor such as 'in secondary schools' is added. Creation of a population is

itself an exercise of power and, therefore, establishes a relationship of power differential between researcher and researched participant.

Also, Johnston (2019, p. 9) talks about the relationship between the researcher and the participants:

Researchers often abandon their participants following the completion of the study, and her words made me seriously interrogate my responsibility to stay in touch with my participants and show them the results of the study. When we do research with vulnerable populations, we can forget that our vulnerability does not go away through catharsis. We still have to live on in a stigmatizing world and continue to confront our mental health challenges.

At the same time, my research journey presented numerous unforeseen challenges that I could not have imagined or fully prepared for. These challenges ranged from initial planning and data generation to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the subsequent analysis and writing-up processes. Clark & Sousa in their 2018 paper discuss the mental health of researchers involved in qualitative research. They describe and highlight issues and difficulties in qualitative research that relate to the very nature of the research and dealing with qualitative data. They notice: *“This is not work that is done second-hand or by emotional distance.”* (Clark & Sousa, 2018, p. 1). This is precisely how I felt, once I was very deep into the project and the fieldwork. I believe it is important to highlight those challenges, reflect on them, and open them up to the research community for discussion. The following three sections highlight aspects of my own reflexive journey, the challenges that were born out of this and the value of deepening our understanding and why they are worthy of bringing them into the light.

Challenges: ethics, design and access

Challenges in this project emerged early in process when I immersed myself in the literature of the history of prison education and prison education policy. I started reflecting on the chosen methodology and research tool, both as an educator and as a social science researcher. This project began with a proposed methodology of semi-structured interviews, but during the first year, it became clear that I needed a more comprehensive tool. My initial

proposal's research tool would require me to have a set of questions or prompts for the participants. My reflection on the researcher's positionality on this project led to expanding my reading in the literature on how to do research with participants belonging to vulnerable groups. My doubts were based primarily on how I should best approach the lived experience, an experience that was far away from my own experience. I could not help but wonder, how to best form themes and structure the interview questions, and if I did that, would that semi-structured interview be the best possible way to encounter the participant's experience? I concluded that it would be an attempt on my part to control meaning, by fragmenting the experience before the actual interview encounter, as Riessman describes it (2002, p. 695).

prison education as learners. Daiute & Lightfoot (2004) argue that narrative research provides tools to explore phenomena, events, and experiences holistically, offering valuable insights into the educational and life trajectories of the participants in prison. The same authors add that through narratives, it is possible to look into the intersection of the self and society, which was also needed to find a way to approach the story as a whole within the context of prison education. Seeking a more comprehensive way to capture the essence of a lived experience, I settled on the format of a life story narrative, presented in the style of a book. I invited the participants to reflect on their experiences as if it were a book, allowing the narration to begin and unfold in a way that made sense to them and granting them ample space for their narratives. In that sense, life stories were adopted as the research tool based on the following two arguments:

- a) the participants in the study come from a population that has experienced incarceration, therefore the research concerning the education cannot be disconnected from that experience (disconnect the educational from the social and political) and
- b) the objective of exploring the educational journey needs an approach that encompasses the whole journey, attempt to capture the story holistically.

The prison education setting, or everyday life in prison education, is not often described in the relevant policy, as the aims and the rationale are. It was hard to imagine how the days go by in prison and what school means for those who participate in it. Again, the huge gap between my own experience and one of the participants I sought to talk to, stood out.

Narrative researchers have been exploring this tension of the insider-outsider in social sciences:

How is it that we access, interpret, and analyze stories that, at their heart, are distant from experiences that we ourselves may have encountered not only in our own lives but in the accounts of others, which are part of our own narrative repertoire?

(Andrews, 2007, p. 489)

Narrative research invites researchers to reflect on their own experiences and narrative identity and reflect on their positionality. By making ourselves aware of the unique combination of our situatedness and reflexivity, we position ourselves in the world and in our research framework, we seek to add and enrich the way we do research, by acknowledging and making it part of it. Researchers' reflexivity and positionality and their importance in qualitative research have been stressed (Holmes, 2020). Building on that, the view of positionality as an enrichment, rather than a barrier, has also been extensively discussed in feminist research (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2014). That means that we, as researchers, don't dispose of it or ignore it, but rather make it part of our research. As Andrews (2007, p. 510) highlights: "*Without this imagination, we are forever restricted to the world as we know it, which is a very limited place to be.*" Meaning that developing a narrative imagination becomes key in conducting narrative research. To begin by being aware of your own positionality and being ready to let go of the power to impose meaning-making, we are enabled to provide space for another worldview to unfold through the narrative.

Narrative inquiry is, in that sense, an exploration of our narrative imagination, with the importance of positionality at its core. I found that reflecting on my positionality and situatedness has been a key part of conducting this research, and indeed, this awareness proved to be an integral part of the fieldwork and how I accepted and handled moments of tension in this project's narrative inquiry. I embarked on a challenging but at the same time fascinating journey.

On the cross-cultural boundaries

To cross boundaries is to risk the self. Cross-cultural research is, at its heart, a deeply risky venture.

(Andrews, 2007, p.507)

A particular part of this project was the fieldwork in two different cultural settings, Ireland and Greece. I viewed and reflected on this tension of navigating two cultural environments from two different points of view: how different was the communication with the gatekeepers and how I engaged with the participants. At this point, I drew again upon Andrews's narrative imagination: "[...] *If we wish to access the frameworks of meaning for others, we must be willing and able to imagine a world other than the one we know*" (2007, p. 489).

In that sense, I had to situate myself twice, and acknowledge my positionality for both countries, as an outsider more in Ireland than in Greece, where the cultural background was more familiar, but as an outsider in both settings when it came to reaching a level of communication and trust with the participants. Both Andrews work (2007) and Beuthin's (2014) resonated with me in my preparation for the fieldwork, on how to be aware of my own meaning-making framework. The cultural background in this sense included the linguistic barriers I encountered when conducting fieldwork in Ireland.

To situate research interviewing within a solid methodology adds complexity; it changes the lens with which the researcher sees the world and amplifies everything that transpires in the interview. You are changed.

(Beuthin, p.126)

I was very open with addressing this linguistic barrier with the participants, explaining that I might ask them to repeat or explain again phrases that I might not have understood. I would keep notes in order not to interrupt them while they were speaking. The participants were very eager to help me understand and reply to my questions. From this perspective, this added an extra layer of communication between the participants and myself, and it

proved to be a unique opportunity for reflection for examples that the participants themselves took for granted.

After the interview: Feedback from the participants

There were moments when the participants shared their thoughts on the research process and I was careful to either note this feedback or draw it out of the transcriptions wherever it was found. Most of the feedback had to do with the way the interview was conducted and also the reasons that someone would participate in the research. I mention below two cases and the thoughts that the participants shared with me.

The first case I would like to include is Liam. Liam and I met multiple times. The first two were to introduce myself, to talk about the research, its aims and how it will be conducted and to discuss and get informed consent. Then we met twice to get the narration of his life story and I recorded those two meetings that were held on two Thursdays, one week apart. I transcribed the recording and sent it to him to read before we met again. At the beginning of our second meeting, he shared his feelings about reading his story and how he felt about the format of the life story. The passage I include below demonstrates how the “messiness” of the narrative can provide critical space and freedom for the participant.

“You know, I'm thinking about different things and have different memories and stuff like that as well, while I'm actually reading it. [...] you know, and I'm glad in a way that... it's all truth if you know what I mean. And even though, I know I said last week as well, it felt a little bit all over the place. [...] But then when I kind of got to the end, I wasn't really, but I just felt like that. [...] But when you get to the end of it, I think it's better you know, because it's not as all over the place as I think it is and it kind of tells the full whole story you know. And it's more conversational. You know than just question - answer, question - answer, question - answer, you know. [...] So I'm glad about that, because it's the truth, you know? So it is a good place to kind of be I suppose.”

(Liam 2, 4-25)

The second case I would like to include is Ektoras. Ektoras and I met in Greece in October 2020 and he was one of the last participants I met with before I returned to Ireland. Ektoras

came to meet me on his day off, on a Sunday evening and very generously gave his time to narrate his life story and experience of education to me.

I include his thoughts on his participation in the research and how he felt that he is being heard. This moment occurred after he sat down and gave me first a brief overview of his life, starting from his childhood and arriving at the point of his imprisonment. Then he paused, looked at me and I include the dialogue that followed between Ektoras (E) and I (A).

E: *Am I going too long?*

A: *No, not at all! I am really interested in everything you have to say, so take your time.*

E: *Look, that's why I wanted to come in the first place. I think I have things that are worth sharing. Because you are doing a piece of work and I appreciate it. I would like for the world learn about this. It's you who will do that, through us, so if I can do something to help you, that's why I am here.*

A: *Thank you very much.*

E: *No need to thank me.*

[own translation]

The third case I would like to include is Cian. I believe I have to mention Cian's feedback, which was truly heart-warming and comment on how I felt hearing that feedback. Cian said that he appreciated my approach, my tenacity and my diligence. His words during the pandemic were so rewarding to hear on my part. In the following passage, he is also highlighting another aspect of narrative research: he says, your PhD is my whole life. Indeed, narrative research almost always seeks to understand people's lives and perspectives and that is the reason why I deem his feedback of great importance.

*"I feel partly feel sorry for you trying to do... your dissertation topic, is your PhD, is is my f*****g life. So it's heart-warming to see how passionate you are about it and I think it's a really worthwhile topic. I feel sorry for you in some respects that you're stuck in that room, and you can't, we can't be doing this over a cup of coffee or something, 'cause it was really s*****t timing. Life is like that. You know what I mean. The way it happened, and so I appreciate your tenacity and your*

diligence together. Getting it on to the best of your ability. And I wish you well on that.”

There were two other moments that stand out as I reflect on the data-generation process and the feedback I got from the participants—a reflection that was an ongoing process during both the fieldwork and the analysis. Both moments occurred after the recording stopped and were not part of the transcription. I wrote them down, along with my thoughts, in the researcher's diary, and I include both of them as vignettes in this section, in an attempt to capture and convey the moment.

Greece, October 2020

Odysseas and I are sitting across from each other. We only have two chairs, no table between us. We are both wearing a face covering and have the windows open, as the current guidelines recommend. We are in the centre of a big city, on the building's 6th floor, next to one of the busiest

street's during rush hour. The traffic noise interrupts us frequently, but it does not seem to be bothering us. We are well into the story now, Odysseas is very generous with his narrative and I listen very carefully. We take moments of silence when the traffic noise interrupts us. We finish our discussion and I ask for permission to stop the recording.

As we say goodbye and I thank him again for his time, he walks to the door, but he hovers. He turns around and ask can I ask you something?" I immediately reply: "Of course." I put time and effort into establishing a communication with the participants, one where, despite all circumstances with COVID-19 restrictions and our time being limited, they would feel welcome to ask me questions, about any part of the research, or even comment and be vocal on the process itself. All this is valuable feedback for me and hugely enriches my own reflection. He asks: "Why do you do this? What led a young lady to go and ask ex-convict men about their lives?"

His voice carries genuine curiosity and even care. But there, Odysseas had just unfolded my situatedness as an outsider, as a PhD Candidate, a younger woman, with no experience of incarceration in my narrative repertoire. Even his unspoken communication elements highlight this distance between us his genuine curiosity, but the care and the fact that he deemed asking the question time-worthy is a product of our moment of sharing that just took place, during the narration. He might have thought that me being there was strange from the beginning of our encounter, but the fact that he actually took the time to ask, shows a level of trust where he had some certainty that I am going to reply honestly. I, indeed, am honest and I begin to explain, I share my own interest in prison education, in conducting research using this methodology, as a way to capture the whole story with respect to the participants and their right to have their story told the way they want it to be told. I share my own journey that led me to the same room on the 6th floor of the building in the city centre of a big city this very busy mid-week afternoon during rush hour. I can trace my own journey back to a visit of mine in a prison school, where a student made a remark about how often prisoners being the subject in many research projects can feel forgotten by educators and researchers (or the research community, or academia). He said, and I quote: "When you leave our school today, I invite you not to forget. Instead, try and do something about it." Those words and my visit to the prison setting marked a significant moment in my journey as a masters student, as an educator, as a teacher for adult refugees and immigrants, and it shaped me profoundly. My interest in Adult Education developed and my aim is to explore this narrative-based type of research, as I am trying to be ethical and respect the participants' voices, all the same time by looking into how those voices and those stories can have an impact on policy-making. I concluded with those words: "And that is why I am here, I am trying, I am trying to do something."

He looked at me and responded, using present tense as a contrast to my future one: "I think you are already doing something." I felt myself being deeply overtaken by a feeling of gratitude. The man who had just shared his own life story thought that I was doing something right. Odysseas was very generous in providing this reassurance, and I do keep those words as a validation that he felt safe in our moment of sharing.

Ireland, February 2021

Tadhg and I met today for the second time. We have never seen each other in person. We do not even share the same meeting space. He is in his home and I am in my room, we both very much feel very tired of the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. Ireland is in level 5 lockdown since Christmas and this week we have a total of 200,744 cases and 3,586 deaths. Tadhg and I are optimistic and we exchange words of support and encouragement. We both agree "It would be much better if we could meet in person", a thought that many people are pondering since March 2020.

As we start, Tadhg seems very eager to talk and I listen. He is very generous with his narration, he stops, he pauses to think, he laughs when he shares something funny, he is very expressive. I listen. The online setting creates an even bigger distance that I am very aware of. I am trying to be an active listener, but not overly expressive in order to not influence the narration. Tadhg now describes the moment when he left prison after serving his time and his return to his hometown. He describes his feeling seeing the sky, the first houses he saw on making his way into the city, the feeling of returning home and being reunited with the familiar again, after all this time. It is a deeply emotional moment as he tears up and cries. He goes on and I go through a moment of tension. My first thoughts are urged by a very human emotion when we see someone crying, should I say something comforting? How do I deal with this deep sharing of something so personal - over

an online interview nonetheless! I remember my reflections on my own positionality. I cannot fully understand this experience, therefore I can offer no words of consolation, but I can do what I have offered to my participant in the first place. I gave space and listened. I was present at the moment, appreciating and respecting his story, his words, his narration of that moment. I began to tear up myself but remained silent as Tadhg went on.

When his story finished, we smiled at each other and after a long pause I asked his permission to stop the recording and I thanked him for his time. I shared my thought on him sharing personal and even traumatic experiences and I said that I really appreciated his generosity and his trust. He replied: "You know, no one has asked me about my experience like that before." Tadhg's words conveyed a genuine observation, even a reflection. He was obviously content about our discussion and for me, this sharing of his thought was a valuable comment on how our encounter went. Creating a safe atmosphere and giving space and time for his story to unfold on his own terms was what I was hoping to achieve.

4.9. Narrative Analysis and Coding: Methodological Considerations

Transcribing the narratives

The transcription of the narratives was a lengthy and challenging process, albeit rich and deeply engaging. I chose to transcribe the interviews myself, without using a Transcription Software or a Qualitative Data Analysis Software for the coding process. The fact that I transcribed the interviews by myself provided the opportunity to listen to the participants' narrations and voices again. Furthermore, I took the opportunity to enrich the notes that I kept during fieldwork, by either adding notes to my diary or adding comments in the margins of the transcription document. Those comments were either thoughts I had during the encounter about the process and environment, non-verbal communication elements that I deemed worthy of noting, or connections to the literature or themes that really jumped out off the page.

In this sense, the transcription process constituted the basis for the first round of coding. Even though the use of software would not replace the process of the analysis (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012, pp. 220-221), I believe that the decision to not use one turned the process into a more reflexive one for me and I was brought even closer to the stories of the participants.

During the transcription, I was conscious to keep notes of any themes that emerged from the process. I had already asked the participants to think of their lives in the format of the book, an invitation that some used more than others. That constituted the first reading of the stories. I was also careful to transfer to the transcription any important information and notes I kept during the interviews and the researcher's diary.

What's in a name? Choosing the pseudonyms

I created the participants' profiles and chose a name from Irish and Greek history and mythology, based on their life stories. Only two of the participants replied with a specific name when I asked them to choose a pseudonym and their decisions were of course respected and those two names were kept. For the rest of the participants, after reading each one of their narratives, I chose a moment or a feature that stood out. Based on that, I searched for a Greek or Irish name for them. Below I present the participants and their pseudonyms as well as the reasons behind choosing each one of them.

Alexandros's chose to start his story by saying that "he grew up all over the place". He is a member of the Roma Community in Greece², and his parents were street vendors, travelling all over Greece. He picked his own pseudonym when I asked if there is a name he prefers, as he is an admirer of Alexander the Great.

Menelaos in Greek Mythology Menelaos was the king of Sparta and husband of Helen of Troy, whose abduction by Paris led to the start of the Trojan War. His name means "wrath of the people" in Ancient Greek. Menelaos's story is one with a turning event inspired by his contact with a literary text. Inspired by his love for literature I chose the name Menelaos by the Greek author Menelaos Lountemis. He is the one who inspired the thesis title.

² Alexandros identified himself as "athigganos" in Greek, or Gypsy. As the terms "Athigganos" and Roma can be used interchangeably in Greek, as they refer to the same group I decided to use the term Roma. The reason is that I could not find a better translation for Gypsy and wanted to avoid this term as in different European countries can be viewed as offensive.

Aris in Greek mythology is one of the 12 Olympian Gods. As he is God of War, he is spontaneous and courageous. Aris's narration involved describing a lot of moments of violence, as well as feelings of anger and isolation and how he overcame them.

Nathan chose his one pseudonym, as it is a name he always liked. He placed the beginning of his story on his first night in prison, and he loves literature.

Odysseas told me a story that involved a lot of different countries and places. His third attempt to get involved in education was the successful one. In that way, he found his Ithaka. His name is inspired by Odysseas (Ulysses) in Greek mythology, who is the protagonist of an adventure of "homecoming".

Apostolis means the messenger, or someone who has a mission to deliver a message. We decided on the pseudonym together in the beginning of the discussion. Deeply kind during his narration, it was important to him to share the grim conditions of the Greek Prison he was in.

Ektoras in Greek Mythology is a Trojan prince and leader of the Trojans on the Trojan War. Ektoras was a great warrior while kind and merciful and known for his sense of duty. Even though he opposed the War he led the Trojans with great courage. This story made me choose this name for him, as he spoke a lot about defending the label of the "tough criminal" in order to survive in prison and he shared with me how literature "set him free" in order to share his sensitivity.

Alkis is short for Alkiviades, who was a student of Socrates in Ancient Greece. His name was chosen as he discovered his love for reading after picking up "the thinnest book he could find" in the prison library, in an attempt to avoid actually reading. That book was the Apology of Socrates written by Plato.

Liam's story was a long narration of his family's history, his relationship with his mother and how he used education as a vehicle to arrive at being "the person he always was". His story included many moments revealing strength, determination and will to protect others and fight inequality. I chose the Irish name Liam as it means a strong-willed warrior and protector.

Cian had a huge experience in prison education and adult education in general, as he is now involved in programs of Adult Education and training. Cian was very generous in his narration and his life trajectory included many moments of endurance. That, in combination with his experience, lead me to choose the name Cian, that means “ancient,” or “enduring.”

Fionn’s name means “fair-headed” or “white”. Fionn has white hair and was very soft-spoken. His generous narration included sharing traumatic experiences and the ways in which he was able to make his peace with them. I thought that a name that means “white” would demonstrate the courage and wisdom in his words.

Tadhg was very expressive, he laughed and cried while narrating his story, and I did too while listening to him. He told me how he discovered Shakespeare and how amazed he was when he encountered his work! This solid connection with literature made me search for a name that reveals a kind of love for poetry or literature and chose the name Tadhg from the Old Irish Tadhg meaning “poet”.

Oisín was very excited to participate in the research and share his story, and he is the youngest of the participants in Ireland. He was determined, expressive and eager to let me in on his life journey. He is also the only participant in Ireland whose discussion was held in person during the 2020-2021 lockdown. I chose the name Oisín for him, as it is one of the most popular names in Ireland and means “little deer”.

Fergal comes from Fearghal, and means brave, courageous and valorous. Fergal was the first participant with whom I made contact. We met in person once, just before the pandemic and I never actually learned his real name. He was very careful with sharing personal or identifiable details about himself. We spoke in code about his time in prison, never actually saying the word “prison”. I ended up with a rich narration and despite not sharing his real name with me, he was extremely generous. I wanted to honour his courage by choosing the name Fergal.

Only understanding matters. We must not transform our data; we must transcend them.

(Harry F. Wolcott)

Read in the closing chapter of Johnny Saldana's *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, the above quote stayed with me for several days. After I was left with the rich stories of the people who participated in my research, I faced a big question: How would I analyse the stories? Which path was the best for me to follow to reach an understanding of the core of the stories and at the same time bring out the concepts of recognition and transformation? Based on my methodology and the choices I made during the research design process I had to find a way to respect the voices of the participants and let them be heard and search for the analysis method that would work well with the narrative form of the generated data. This section tells the story of how I made sense of the data and how I chose to present the stories in this project.

Before the analysis

I have mentioned before that I chose not to use transcription or coding software. I transcribed the narratives myself, a challenging and time-consuming process, although very rewarding and extremely valuable for the next steps. Some themes emerged right away, such as moments of recognition and transformation, relationships with significant others and moments of self-transformation. In this section, I outline the frame applied for the analysis of the data. The framework I will follow is a twofold analysis, that includes narrative thematic analysis and then elements of the voice relational approach.

For this framework, I draw upon the work of qualitative researchers, such as Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2013), and narrative scholars, such as Riessman (1993, 2007), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and Clough, Goodley, Lawthom and Moore (2004).

Before I continue, I would like to clarify that within the following pages concepts will be used such as change and transformation and the words beneficial and meaningful, when describing experiences and events in the lives of the participants. As stated in the thesis, I am careful and aware of the framework within which I use the words beneficial, change and transformation. It is clear from the literature and the public discourse that they are laden

with meaning and value that can be translated in a way that fits in a rationale that sees the prisoners as criminals that need a change to fit back into society (Costelloe & Warner, 2014). This rationale views crime and social exclusion in an individualistic way, with the reasons for those phenomena falling under personal responsibility, ignoring the socio-economic and political factors in their creation. Similarly, education is not viewed solely as a vehicle for employability, for people to fit into a perfect society. Against this background, I stand with the “educating the whole person” approach, and I intend always to use this lens in the frame of analysis.

Why thematic analysis for narrative research?

Building a framework based on narrative approaches and narrative elements of reaching the participants to listen to them, I was left with rich self-reflective narratives. During the months after the data generation was completed, not a day went by where I did not think of my data, the participants' voices and the stories they shared with me. Yet, nothing had prepared me enough for the next step. As many narrative researchers have pointed out, there is more literature on the methodologies and generating data within narrative research and less on how to analyse the data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). So what do we do when we are left alone with the stories?

First Level: Thematic Analysis

The first step I took was to go back to the fieldwork. I was careful to reread everything and ensure that no note was left that was not transferred to the transcripts. Those notes, along with my familiarity with the stories and passages from the researcher's diary proved to be an invaluable combination. I realised that there were themes that repeated themselves and that the stories, whilst so unique and different, presented similarities. I decided to let the data lead me to the first step of the analysis and to take a thematic analysis approach.

The overarching research question and the three subquestions of the research are as follows:

Main research question:

What are the experiences of some of the people who participated in prison education as learners through the lens of recognition and transformation?

Subquestions:

- a) What are the motivations and aspirations that lie within the adult prisoners' decision to re-engage in an educational process in prison?
- b) What do former prisoners have to say about the educational process and educational encounters in prison?
- c) Is there an enduring change within their lived experience of education in prison?

This project constitutes a qualitative study seeking to explore the lived experience of prison education and the link between that and the experience of self-formation. I conducted the 14 interviews with participants in Ireland and Greece, following the narrative inquiry paradigm described in chapter 4. The interviews were based on the life-story model, and were open-ended discussions, without any pre-decided questions on my part. This open-life trajectory feature is one of the most vital elements of this project's data generation process.

Building on that and the fact that I decided to follow the themes that emerged first from the beginning of the analysis, I looked for literature on narrative inquiry and thematic analysis, or how to conduct thematic analysis on narratives, "storied" data. I wanted to preserve this "storied" aspect in this research. As Riessman (1993) notes, the space that an approach with narrative elements can give to the participants is crucial to the richness of the data, a fact that I confirmed when conducted our discussions. Indeed, the majority of the participants gave rich accounts of their lived experiences, placed the beginning where it made sense to them and shared even events that they did not plan to share or did not think were relevant until they reflected on their experience as a story. I firmly believe that had I interrupted them with structured questions, following a more traditional form of qualitative research, they would not have shared such rich self-reflective stories. This fact was confirmed by the participants who shared their feedback with me.

Against this background, the first step in the analysis process had to be carefully decided, as it was of greater importance to preserve the integrity of the stories. I considered different ways to look at the stories and manage the content as the first level of analysis. I quickly rejected types of structural and discourse analysis, as those approaches placed the focus on the structural elements of the process. The structure of the story remains essential in this

project; however, these approaches were set to bring into light how the story is told, and for this project the priority was to find the appropriate way to bring to the surface what is told, that is the experience of the teller. At this point, I particularly resonated with Riessman's (2007) approach to thematic analysis, which derives from the narrative inquiry.

The same author notes that exploring the themes as analytical units can be the starting point of many category-centred research models in qualitative analysis (Riessman, 2007, p.27). It is worth noting that the thematic analysis proposed here a way to explore the data, uses and builds on the narrative inquiry tradition. This means that it is a way to look into the stories and find the themes that emerge. As Riessman highlights in the quote below, this method does not 'fracture' the data and is case-centred, so it does not necessarily seek to theorise across cases; as I do not seek to theorise across stories and reach conclusions that can be applied in the general population.

[...] in many category-centered methods of analysis, long accounts are distilled into coding units by taking bits and piecessnippets of an account often edited out of context. Narrative study relies on (and sometimes has to excavate) extended accounts that are preserved and treated analytically as units, rather than fragmented into thematic categories as is customary in other forms of qualitative analysis, such as grounded theory.

(Riessman, 2007, p.27)

The same author (2007, p. 58) organises the transcription using thematic stanzas or meaning units. By giving titles to each stanza, thematic points are created, and also suggests cleaning the speech from pause fillers to create a text in a form of pure narration. This last act of cleaning the interview of the researcher's presence is also proposed by Atkinson (1998), who states that the transcribing process of the interview should include only the words of the teller, producing thus a product of a life story in the teller's own words. I did that to the degree possible, to be left with texts that could be read as stories themselves. I should add that I kept the pauses where they had a significant effect on the narrations, as well as took and included notes of the moments the participants laughed, or showed other emotions.

In exploring how different researchers have approached the question of how we make meaning of stories, very interesting and insightful ideas came to light, all of which helped construct the frame of analysis. It is important to stress though that the literature shows that

there are no explicit methods of conducting the analysis; it is rather a process that every researcher builds for the beginning, based on the theoretical framework and the context that the interviews provide themselves. As Hollingsworth & Dybdahl put it: “*Narrative inquiries are so context reliant that they cannot be confined to one model*” (2007, p. 157). For those reasons, I point here to issues discussed by researchers in narrative inquiry that I consider creating an important basis for the analysis process.

According to Atkinson, the life story is work in progress and namely, it must be read as a whole and meaning should be made by the life story as a whole (Atkinson, 1992). Furthermore, he points to the fact that the theoretical analysis should not overshadow the teller’s point of view on the story (Atkinson, 1992). The same author suggests that three important things to keep in mind about subjective interpretations in making meaning out of life stories are the following:

- a) “We do not judge, we make connections”, meaning that the first author of the story is the teller, and the researcher’s role is not to appropriate the authorship, but rather to make connections by reading the story as a whole.
- b) Treating the life story as a text
- c) Be aware of the dynamics of the life story interview and the way the researcher and the participant engage with each other.

(Atkinson, 1992, p. 69-70)

In this context, Beuthin points to the fact that in qualitative research, which also includes narrative inquiry where life story interviews are conducted, it is important to understand that the data do not pre-exist somewhere and the researcher is responsible for “collecting” them. The data are generated during the interaction, the discussion between the two parts:

As a researcher, I do not find a story but become an active participant in a relational interview exchange. The participant and I co-construct stories in a dynamic moment in time. Said another way, an interview generated story is not just about an experience that happened to the participant but now becomes an alive new moment experienced unto itself.

(Beuthin, 2014, p. 127)

Atkinson also draws attention to the fact that people are in a constant process of change, meaning that the life story should be viewed as a person's way of expressing their lived experience at that moment in time and space and in the particular relationship built with the researcher. According to him: "[...] what is [the primary concern in a life story] *is how people see themselves at this point in their lives and want others to see them*" (Atkinson, 2007, p. 235).

Beuthin also reflects on the researcher's responsibility of meaning-making of others' stories: "*The participant trusts us to do this, and yet to do it well in light of knowing the depths of all that comes to influence and impact seems daunting, to say the least*" (Beuthin, 2014, p. 130). For the present project, the following are considered crucial to keeping in mind the frame of analysis.

Against this background, I found Hollingsworth and Dybdahl's (2007) analysis of ontological and epistemological stances in narrative inquiry very helpful. Every researcher needs to choose carefully and to be aware of their epistemological stance to make meaning of the conversations that result from the life history interviews. By the notion of epistemological stance, the relationship between the researcher and the narrator is also included, along with the way that the meaning-making process will be approached. In narrative inquiry, the process, the product and the dynamic of the relationship are inextricably linked. Hollingsworth & Dybdahl make distinctions between three different stances: the post-positivist, the constructivist and the critical one, and they highlight the fact that in the last one: "*feedback on the preliminary findings and involvement of the participants in the analysis appears to be a key issue to tackle issues of power differences and maintain a critical analysis framework*" (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007).

In adopting the critical stance, the same authors state that the theoretical position of power, relationship and identity should guide the researchers to develop the following characteristics in their interviewing and analysis:

- i. Direction of narrative shifts between narrators and researchers
- ii. The identity of the researcher is always considered in research design
- iii. Usually long relationships
- iv. Power tensions are made explicit

Concerning the analysis, they more specifically point to the fact that the narrator should be included in the process and feedback should be sought (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007). Reflective thinking on the story is a key process according to Atkinson (1992). He especially puts focus on the teller and their reflective thinking on the story, a process that could be supported by the researcher, in order to “pull out its inherent meaning” (1992, p. 63).

[...] personal mythmaking or moving from the unique story to the universal story. ... where the researcher is trying to establish or understand how the sense of self has evolved over time, perhaps as a result of key transitional experiences, how change and continuity interact in a person's life, or how the self is defined in relation to the collective, personal mythmaking could be an important specialized variation on the life story.

(Atkinson, 1992, p. 63)

Concerning the transcribing process, the life story produces a document that gives information, but also the life story and lived experience of the narrator in their own view. Atkinson (1992) states that the transcribing process of the interview should include only the words of the teller, producing thus a product of a life story in the teller's own words. Returning the transcript to the teller for them to make changes if they wish to is crucial, and Atkinson establishes this idea by saying that giving the draft to the teller is their right, as it is their life story (Atkinson, 1992, p. 57). The same author also supports the idea that the teller is the first author of a life story and that a control measure of ensuring the validity of the life is subjective corroboration, that is the step of giving the story back to the teller in order to confirm that the story and the original narration are not far from each other (Atkinson, 1992, p. 61). At this point, I must acknowledge that even though that was my intention, revisiting the participants was not possible, except for a few cases. Due to the pandemic and the limitations this posed on fieldwork, I had no access to the participants in Greece after our encounters. In Ireland, one of the participants made it clear that he would not want to revisit his story after his sharing.

What emerges from the different stances and frames of analysis in the life story is that this particular method is put into the core of the research, the whole person. It appears that in

the present project, such a research tool resonates with the “whole person” approach in prison education and provides a lens of inquiry that treats the participant not only as a former prisoner, but as a person whose experiences before and after prison have value and need to be taken into account to achieve a critical view of education in prison and what it has to offer. With all this in mind, in the first introductory meeting with the participants, I deemed it essential to spend time explaining the research purpose to them and discussing any questions they might have had. This was not only crucial for the research ethics and informed consent, but it also acted as an invaluable opportunity for a co-construction of a frame for our discussion that was going to follow. To me, this added a feeling of security that the participants will feel comfortable sharing their stories and that they understand that my position to interrupt as less as possible is based on an informed decision on my part, shaped by the literature on narrative inquiry. Indeed, this proved to be a correct decision, as the participants in their majority accepted and used that space when narrating their story.

In this first meeting, we looked at the research aims, and we discussed the three main areas of their lives that I asked them to keep in mind when shaping their story. In the process of getting informed consent, I also shared the research questions with them, to ensure that the participants understand the area of my research. I urged them to share as much or as little as they thought was necessary for their own story to be told in the way they wished it to be told.

After our discussion on the research aims and research questions, I asked the participants to take the time to reflect on their journey and their education, before, during and after prison. We discussed the format of narrating their life story as a plot of a book, this way they placed the beginning and the end where it made sense for them, and they also shared the importance of key moments.

The format worked well, and I did not ask questions during the narration, except for two participants who found it challenging to begin sharing their stories. In those two cases, I shared prompt questions, again, based on the research questions, such as:

“Would you like to share with me how would you describe yourself?”

“Would you like to share your thoughts on an important event in your life?”

The main overarching themes (Relation-to-self, Transformation, Recognition) constituted the spine of the first level of the thematic analysis. I was very careful for the themes not to act restrictively, as I looked to enrich them, always by keeping in mind the importance of preserving the integrity of the stories and the voice of the participants. I drew upon Saldaña (2015) for the coding and particularly his work on coding and narrative data, and Riessman (2008) for thematic narrative analysis.

In the thematic analysis, the first step was to focus on one interview at a time. In that way, I could concentrate on the unique aspects of each participant's narrative. From this initial stage, certain themes began to emerge, forming the basis for the coding process. Based on these themes, I identified relevant sections in the narratives. Once all the interviews had been read, I revisited them to perform a colour coding of the initial main themes.

I assigned codes or labels to the identified themes in each participant's account. This coding allowed me to categorise and organise the information, making it easier to explore the themes across the different stories, always keeping in mind the “life-story” approach. With a clear understanding of the narratives, I initiated the thematic categorisation process. As I systematically reviewed the interviews, themes and subthemes continued to emerge, and I meticulously underlined and color-coded relevant sections to identify and distinguish different themes.

Throughout the analysis, I was keenly aware and careful to maintain the integrity of each participant's story. By following this rigorous thematic narrative analysis approach, I aimed to uncover meaningful insights and provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the participants' narratives

Second Level: Voice Relational Approach and Vignettes

Against this background, I wanted to find a way to approach the data and bring out aspects of identity formation and recognition while keeping the voice of the participants. It was a demanding and difficult task. For this reason, I decided to add a second level that enriched how I approached the stories, by offering a different reading of them. The results of this process are the following and I believe did not only help me delve deeper into the stories and life trajectories of the participants but also enriched the presentation of the analysis and

findings of the project. The first outcome is the sharing of the four vignettes in the next chapter. Each vignette corresponds differently to the main themes and subthemes of the analysis. Furthermore, the vignettes convey the story as authentically as possible, in the words of the participants. And finally, this level of analysis and readings of the stories helped me create the participants' profiles and short biographies.

Another reason for adding a second level of analysis was the need to find an approach that would not only recognise issues of power, ethics and positionality of the researcher in doing research with human participants but considers those issues as an integral part of the process itself and offers room for reflection on them. In the stages of exploring different methodological approaches and shaping my way of analysing the data, I found particular value in reading other researchers' accounts of projects that put the focus on a lived experience, that the researchers do not share with the participants of those projects. Those examples often come from feminist research, disability studies or nursing and the two researchers that I drew upon were Beuthin (2014) and Hopkins (2011). Beuthin shared her experience of researching the lived experience of terminally ill patients, and Hopkins researched the experience of disabled students in English Universities. In my case, I wanted to approach the personal stories that the participants ethically shared with me.

Lawson presents the voice relational approach to explore narrative data with the help of multiple readings. In her words, it has its roots in feminist traditions:

“Much of the feminist work within the qualitative tradition has problematised the notion of ‘voice’ and power within research. What this approach offers is multiple readings of an account, potentially offering richness and complexity while retaining a self/person/individual within the story.”

(Clough et al., 2004, p. 118)

This is very important to me as a researcher, as I often reflected on the challenge posed when studying the lived experience of a group of people, that is so different from my own experiences. This is where Lawthom's (2004) voice relational approach mainly offered that element of reflection I believed my analysis framework needed. Lawthom's approach is based on the Voice-Relational Method by Brown & Gilligan (1992), who developed this method to analyse the stories of adolescent girls. The rationale that those researchers share

is essential; they realised that they needed a method that would keep the participant's voice and help the research team to listen to the stories. Brown & Gilligan share their journey of building this approach:

No longer steeped in a dispassionate discipline of testing and assessment, we entered into relationships which changed with each new encounter, and we began to learn from the girls and the women who were now joining us in this study. Clearly we needed a different way of working and a method which did not interfere with our ability to listen to ourselves and to others but which enabled us to bring our knowledge as women and as psychologists into relationship with our work.

(Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p.15)

In my case, I also needed to enrich the data presented in a way that would bring into light the different aspects on the stories the participants shared, which would enable me to listen to their stories and look into their relationships with others and themselves. Both my theoretical framework and the methodological one are based on the fact that I am aware that I, as a person, cannot fully understand the lived experience of incarceration and educational exclusion. But I looked for and read other researchers' similar concerns and their reflections on working with people who share complex and personal stories like my participants did. I might not be able to understand the lived experience, but I can approach the participants and their stories most ethically and honestly I can, as a researcher. I carried this awareness throughout building a robust frame of analysis, that will do the participants' stories justice, and their lived experiences will be explored with integrity. Brown & Gilligan (1992), Clough et al (2004) and Hopkins (2011), all underline the significance that the voice relational approach places on listening to the different voices emerging from stories and giving space to those voices in the analysis, as shown in the words of Lawthom:

However, each distinct focus aims to span and track the individual's agentic voice together with the voices of those in relationship with the individual, through to shared societal discourses. The focus on voice aims to transform the act of reading into an act of listening as the reader takes in different voices and follows them through the narrative.

(Clough et al., 2004, p. 118)

Building on the voice relational method, the multiple readings that Lawthom suggest bring into light two crucial aspects of the stories, the relationship with the self and the relationships with others. Using the first layer of the thematic analysis, the second level was based on the voice relational approach. This combined approach will contribute to the trustworthiness of the analysis.

In her overview, Lawthom (Clough et al. 2004 p.118) proposes four readings, each grounded on a different exploration, as presented below, together with how this project will apply each step.

Reading 1: Reading for plot and our response to the narrative

The first step's aim is for the reader/researcher to read the story for herself. The researcher is encouraged to be curious and explore what the story is about if there is a subplot, who are the main characters, and what are images the narrator might refer to more than once. Lawthom underlines the importance of the emotional response; this allows the researcher to use reflexivity to understand their response to what has been said and shared.

In this project, this step has already been done, in reading and transcribing the story, by keeping notes from fieldwork and especially on the days of encounter with the participants, and by sharing the story, once written, with the participants. Therefore, this particular step did not appear as a distinct level of analysis, and I proceeded with the second reading after the 1st round of coding.

Reading 2: Reading for the voice of 'I'

This step includes tracing in the text the references to the pronouns 'I', 'we' and 'you', to create a map of how the narrator expresses their image of themselves through different layers of self-presentation in the text. I found that Lawthom approaches the relation to self, by prioritising the participant's voice to fit my own methodological and theoretical framework. Furthermore, Lawthom notes that this qualitative approach holds a holistic view of the notion of the self: "The analysis here aims to stay with the respondent's multi-layered voices (I/we/you) rather than slotting them into single-layered themes or memos (as with other qualitative analyses)." (Clough et al., 2004, p. 118)

Reading 3: Reading for relationships

According to Lawthom (Clough et al., 2004) this reading seeks to approach the narrator's way of relating to others. It traces how interpersonal relationships and social networks emerge from each story. This step brings into focus an essential aspect of the project, the exploration of the shaping forces and critical moments that the participants' stories present. This reading acts as a connection between the previous one and the reading that followed. That means that the analysis of the life trajectory themes between the relation to self and others, persons or groups, prepares the ground for exploring the theme of recognition, in the last part of this threefold analysis. This step proved to be extremely valuable in reaching the themes and subthemes. Through this reading for relationships, I collated the themes and subthemes repeatedly. I arrived at a table containing everything three different times before I concluded with the last one presented in the thesis.

Reading 4: Placing people within cultural contexts and social structures

The last reading that Lawthom proposes, looks for connections with the socio-political context and seeks to explore the cultural aspects that the story brings to light. This step was not followed exactly in this project, instead, I used this last step to approach the data with the meta-theme of recognition in mind. Those two last readings were particularly helpful in order to employ a culturally sensitive approach despite the single case study methodology, which is going to be commented at the end of Chapter 5.

4.10. Conclusion

The methodology chapter of this research project provided a comprehensive overview of the methodological approach employed, the research questions, the rationale for using narrative inquiry, the research tool of life stories, and the encountered challenges during the fieldwork. Additionally, it outlined the significance of studying the experiences of prison education through a narrative lens, focusing on recognition and transformation. The research questions were structured to explore the motivations, aspirations, and enduring changes in the participants' educational experiences before, during, and after imprisonment. By adopting a narrative approach, the study acknowledged the importance of stories in human thinking, meaning-making, and identity construction. Narrative inquiry was chosen as the most suitable method to capture and analyse the personal lived experiences of individuals who had experienced incarceration. This methodological choice allowed for an

in-depth exploration of the participants' perspectives on their educational journeys and the impact on their lives after release. It also emphasised the social factors and the interconnectedness of sociality, temporality, and place within the participants' narratives.

The methodology chapter also acknowledged the limitations of the research project, including challenges related to access to the population, participant recruitment, and the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlighted challenges faced by qualitative researchers and the importance of addressing these issues within the research community.

Moving forward to Chapters 5 and 6, the analysis of the data will follow a twofold framework, incorporating narrative thematic analysis and elements of the voice relational approach, as it was presented in the end of the methodology chapter.

Chapter 5

Analysis

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 5 delves into the heart of the research, presenting a comprehensive thematic narrative analysis of the data generated during the fieldwork. This will be supplemented by the inclusion of quotes from the participants' narratives, through which, I seek to provide a more vivid and authentic portrayal of the participants' voices and perspectives.

Following the life-story approach, I begin by exploring the participants' lives before prison, delving into the key themes that emerged during the exploration of their pre-incarceration experiences. Against this backdrop, family dynamics, youth experiences, and previous educational encounters become focal points of the analysis. By carefully examining the main theme of various forms of misrecognition, experiences that shaped the participants' paths emerged. These constitute the subthemes and include challenges within the family structure, experiences of rejection by formal education, and involvement in criminal activities driven by societal circumstances.

The next section focuses on the participants' lives in prison, where the overarching theme is moments of recognition and the main themes are the key events and significant others. Throughout this section, the profound impact of significant others emerges as a main theme, particularly their teachers and mothers, highlighting the transformative role educators and family support played in shaping their educational journeys. Another significant aspect that arises during this phase of their lives is the theme of turning events and milestones. Within this theme, three subthemes are analysed: the return to education, the discovery of a different way to exist in the world, and the ability to receive help when needed.

Transitioning to life after release, the focus shifts to the participants' post-prison experiences, where the concept of the self takes centre stage as an overarching theme. This section illustrates the agency that participants demonstrated as they navigated their lives

after release. Three subthemes are encompassed here, including their continuation and progression in education, their wish and aim to give help and support to others, and their aspiration to build an "ordinary" life. Furthermore, embracing the learning and the effects of their educational journeys, the second theme is that of transformation, which encompasses the subthemes of participants developing more patience and self-confidence, along with an ability to "read" the world differently.

In the concluding part of the analysis, the culturally sensitive approach is addressed. This section acknowledges the importance of considering cultural contextual differences and nuances when analysing the data, ensuring a reliable methodology and a respectful presentation and analysis of the participants' diverse experiences. Through the thematic narrative analysis presented in this chapter, I hope to offer a holistic understanding of the lived experiences that defined the participants' educational journeys within the prison system.

5.2. Life before prison: Family, youth and previous education experience

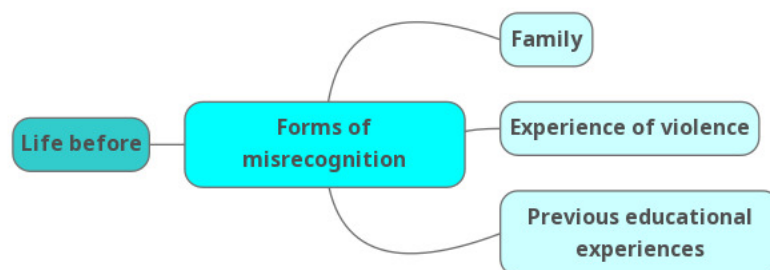


Figure 1: Life before prison: theme and subthemes

In this section, I explore the aspects of the participants narratives focusing on life before prison, exploring the overarching theme of forms of misrecognition. These forms of misrecognition encompass various subthemes, shedding light on the profound impact they had on the participants' lives. Family dynamics played a significant role in shaping an individual's experiences, and within this theme, we encounter the challenges stemming from difficult divorces, absent fathers, alcoholism, and abuse within the family.

Difficult divorces were a recurring theme, as well as fathers that were either absent or abusive, as many participants highlighting the absence of a paternal figure in their lives. The insidious presence of alcoholism and abuse within the family further exacerbated the participants' struggles. The participants shared instances of physical or emotional abuse inflicted by one parent, often the father. Another theme that emerged prominently was the participants' experience of violence, which had profound implications for their paths leading to prison. Tragically, many participants did share how the death or even murder of a close friend left an indelible mark on their lives. This theme of experiences of violence does include the harsh realities of prison violence the participants experienced. Additionally, their drug addiction struggles forms an integral piece of this first part of the analysis.

Moreover, the third theme regards the participants' previous educational experiences. Those experiences were mostly of rejection and/or physical abuse in the formal education system, resulting in a lack of interest and motivation to progress further. Many encountered teachers who resorted to physical punishment or subjected them to verbal abuse, which left the participants disengaged from the educational system, diminishing their prospects for progression.

As these themes unfold, the profound insights provided by Honneth's theory of recognition become evident. The detrimental effects of violence, abuse, and abandonment within the first sphere of love, namely the family, severely hurt one's self-esteem. The participants' experiences highlight the deep impact this had upon their sense of worth and belonging, underscoring the critical importance of recognition and support in shaping an individual's life trajectory.

Family

Within the theme of family, the participants did share in their narratives their childhood experiences, relationships with their parents, and the challenges they encountered. Difficult divorces and the absence of fathers in their lives with many participants being primarily raised by their mothers were a recurrent theme. Moreover, some participants shared accounts of physical abuse inflicted by their fathers at home. Of particular significance in the context of Ireland, issues with alcoholism were prominently brought to the forefront of

their narratives. Additionally, the participants narrated the challenges they faced in their relationships with various family members, shedding light on the complexities of familial dynamics. The subtheme of family uncovers not only those complexities, but also the significant influence of social class on the participants' life trajectories. As the narratives unfolded, the ways social class played a defining role in shaping the participants' childhood experiences and relationships within the family was a common thread.

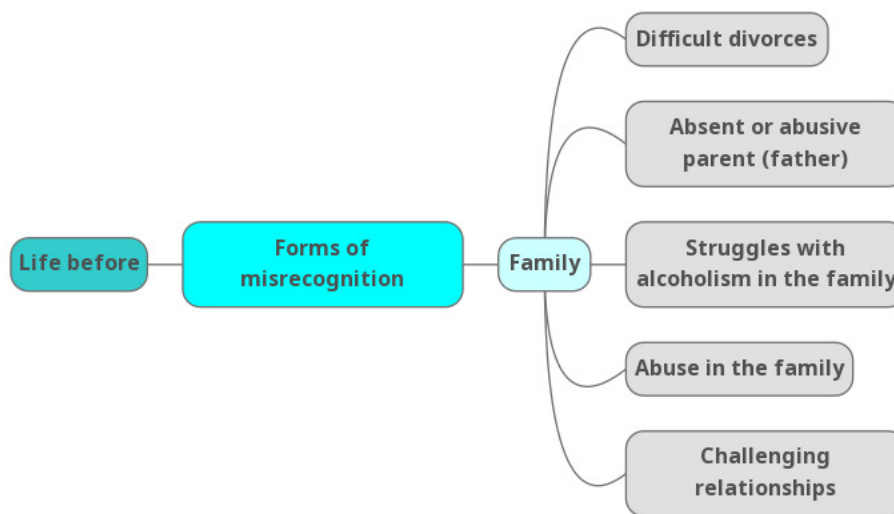


Figure 2: Individual codes for the subtheme of the Family

Some participants chose to focus less on their fathers in their narratives, while others devoted considerable attention to this aspect of their lives. In the case of Tadhg, he shared that his early experiences in life were profoundly shaped by his family's social and economic circumstances. Coming from a poor family during a time of limited job opportunities, his father's struggles with alcoholism compounded their financial hardships. Tadhg candidly shared how, when his father did find work, the money would be spent on alcohol, leaving the family with little to sustain themselves. There were times when they lacked sufficient food, relying on the support of his mother's family, who were also facing economic challenges. Tadhg's narration provides an illustration of how social class and his father's alcoholism deeply influenced his childhood experiences, leaving lasting imprints on his life trajectory.

“I suppose [I’d start] by my early experience in life, that would have been we were a poor family around that time, there wasn’t a lot of work, my father was a drinker and when he did find work he used to drink all the money. And there were times when we didn’t have enough to eat, we’d have to depend on my mother’s family, and they weren’t well off either.”

(Tadhg, 1-5)

The quote by Fionn provides an account of the disruptive nature of his home life during his formative years. Fionn reflected on the disruptive environment he grew up in, characterised by significant physical abuse within his family. As Fionn said, the constant fear and trauma stemming from his father’s harsh punishments profoundly affected his ability to learn and grow as a child. These traumatic experiences had impacted his personal life but also had lasting effects on his education during his primary school years.

“But my home life was very disruptive as well, because I came from a very physically abusive home. As a child, my father was very physical with this punishments and we were constantly at fear. So the trauma of that would have affected me learning growing up, as a child, and again from first class up to sixth class, which would be in the school, the primary school years.”

(Fionn, 55-59)

The narratives of Fionn and Tadhg demonstrate the significant impact of misrecognition within the family context, as highlighted by Honneth’s theory. Fionn’s reflection on his physically abusive home shows the detrimental effects of such experiences on an individual’s self-esteem and well-being. As he shared, this experience profoundly influenced his educational journey. Similarly, Tadhg’s recollection of his family’s poverty and his father’s struggles with alcoholism brings to light the intertwined role of social class and family dynamics. The lack of social capital within his family further limited his access to resources and opportunities, shaping his early experiences and progression in education.

Experience of violence

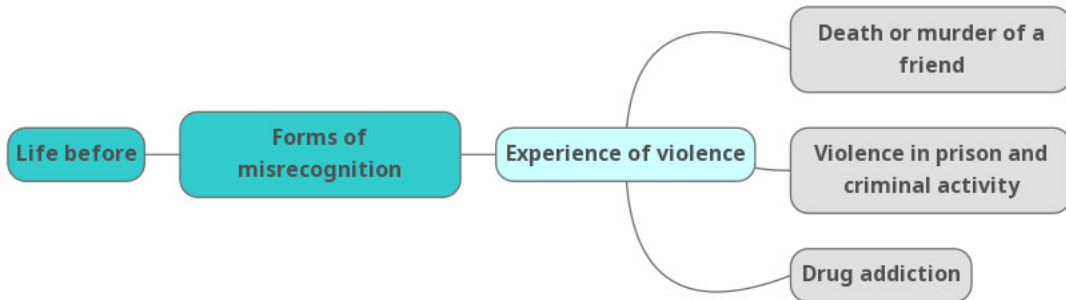


Figure 3: Individual codes for the subtheme of Experience of violence

The path of dropping out of school and joining the workforce was a common trajectory shared by all the participants, leading them, in one way or another, towards involvement in criminality. Within this reality of criminal activity, the participants found themselves in an environment full with violence, as described in their own words, leading to experiencing feelings of mistrust towards others. Furthermore, the experience of a loss was common thread in the narratives. This experience was shocking and traumatic, as narrated by Cian. Witnessing the tragic murder of his friend, stabbed in the chest with a butter knife in prison on an ordinary Tuesday afternoon, left an indelible mark on Cian's memory. The stark reality of how close death is and the extreme manifestation of violence through such a violent act (murder) had a profound impact on the participants' life trajectories.

*“[...] that my friend got murdered in front of me. He got stabbed with a butter knife in his chest and he bled out and this is 12:00 o'clock on a f****g Tuesday and he bled out on the land and the blood was f****g on the walls everywhere and I would like [expression of shock]”*

(Cian, 101-104)

Alexandros, too, found his life at a pivotal turning point, a moment that sparked a new pursuit of education and change. Reflecting on this life journey, Alexandros shared that the death of one of his brothers became a defining experience. This loss of his beloved friend led him to reconsider his path and seek different options.

“In my life, my best teacher was a death of a brother. This was the best lesson for me to learn after all that had happened. He was my friend. After that, I started... [seeking education]” [own translation]

(Alexandros, 131-133)

Different forms of violence in prison emerged as a recurring theme in the participants' narratives. Many identified the hostile and harsh prison environment to being a significant factor contributing to their own feelings of anger, isolation, and aggression. Tadhg shared how the suffocating atmosphere of the prison filled him with rage. He reflected upon the mentality of retaliation and revenge, feeling ready to harm anyone who dared to look at him. Looking back on those experiences now, Tadhg realised the profound impact that environment had on him, and how it influenced his mindset and emotional state during his time in prison.

“Being there I just felt suffocated, soon taken over by rage and I remember walking, being handcuffed and walking through the prison and looking at anyone dare look at me, and “I'll kill them” and that's the mentality...That's the mentality that I think I had a lot of the time, and didn't realise until now there without my starting looking back on that stuff.”

(Tadhg, 97-101)

Similarly, the narrations from participants, especially those in Greece, shed light on the grim conditions of prison life, with many devoting significant time to share the impact it had on them.

Apostolis, described his life behind bars, as soul-crushing. He did share the emotional toll of returning to a cell with an iron bed and a thin mattress after enduring the psychological strain of prison life, which he described as “soul-crashing”. Apostolis's account provides an understanding of the immense difficulties and emotional burdens that prisoners endure, offering a profound insight into the detrimental effects of imprisonment.

“But it [life in prison] was very difficult, you can't understand that. You can't feel it... For one who has been a prisoner, it isn't easy. It's soul-crushing, I can tell you. And especially when you come back [to your cell], and you're so dead from all that psychological stuff, and you're lying on an iron bed with a thin mattress, it's very

difficult. I say it, and I shudder. It is very difficult; existence in prison is not easy. [...] It is very difficult to share and say such things, it is very difficult to talk about the past. The past is such a weight. I say this and I get emotional. When you have suffered, you've been on the streets, it's very strange. You can't feel what I am saying 100%. But I'm happy with what I'm doing now and that I'm here"

(Apostolis, 45-51, 125-132)

The story of Oisín does highlight the inhuman conditions and extensive violence within the prison environment. During his very first day in prison, Oisín experienced an attack, an incident that emphasises how normalised the presence of all forms of misrecognition - violence, aggression, and lack of trust - were in the everyday life in prison. Oisín's narrative reflects the disturbing reality of life in prison:

"So I went in, and I was in there, and it was the very first morning I landed there. And it was the first time I got locked up, I didn't know what way it worked. There were two of us in the cell, the very first time, and I was sitting on the bottom bunk, it was bunk beds. So this lad kept coming in. I said it must be his friend. My cellmate's. I didn't know him, he kept coming in, but then he wasn't saying nothing. It was like he was afraid to do it - because he was made to do it. So he comes in that third time, and as I said, a lot more people knew. So I sit on the bottom bunk, and he just said, "What's your name again, boy?" and launched a big knife. He tried to cut my throat, you know. And so he jumped on me, but I kicked him in the chest. Now I just got lucky, and he fell on the ground. [...] And he got paid €20. That's how bad drug addictions are. He would have done that for €20 like, he was willing to kill me, caught me throat with a knife that size, like. Yeah, and that's what you got for it. So that's what the prison system is like in Ireland. It's crazy, but that was normal. Like, I would have just... Like that. I wouldn't have lost an hour of sleep over that, you know, that's just normal. The normality back then."

(Oisín, 760-775)

Therefore, the subtheme of experience of violence, alongside the profound and lasting effects of the prison environment on the well-being of those incarcerated, emerges prominently in these narratives. These accounts provide a poignant glimpse into the harsh realities faced by individuals within the prison system, where violence becomes a norm. Honneth's theory of recognition sheds light on the detrimental nature of such violence on the formation of identity, as it constitutes a form of misrecognition and denies these individuals their inherent dignity.

Previous experience in formal education

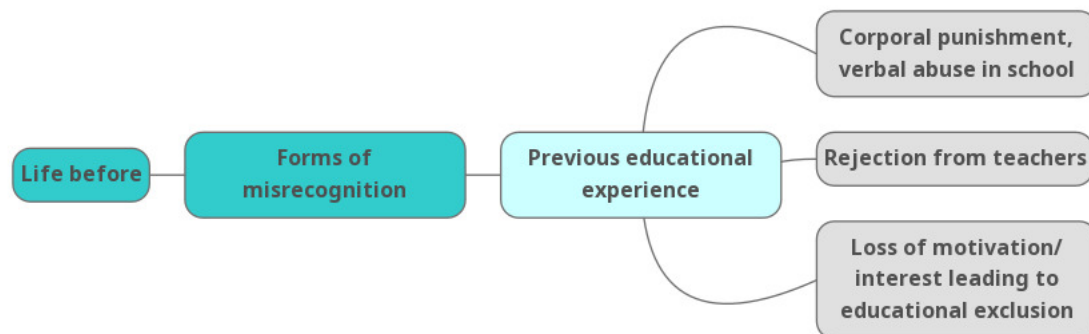


Figure 4: Individual codes for the subtheme of Previous experience with formal education

Within the subtheme of previous experience in formal education, the narratives reveal a range of memories and experiences that include bullying, rejection and physical abuse in the form of corporal punishment. For some participants like Fergal and Tadhg, the experience of formal education was marked by discrimination and exclusion due to learning difficulties and socioeconomic status. Their memories shed light on how these challenges transformed the school environment into a hostile place, leaving lasting impacts on their educational trajectories.

Fergal recounts the struggles he faced in primary school, where a lack of understanding and knowledge about dyslexia at the time led to him being labeled as "dumb" and subjected to harsh treatment and physical punishments:

“Basically my education was that I, like everybody, I went to school when I was about five years of age and that's when ... yeah, you just went from first class, so you went from babies to 1st class, to 2nd class, to 3rd class, more to do with your

age than anything else. And when I got up then in primary school, which is Junior School, I got up to ... there was the teacher in the school I went to, and a lot of the cases, was the first and second class with one teacher. So he's dealing with around 50-60 kids, and there was really...

Then you went to third-fourth class, first, second, 3rd, and 4th. So I never got past them, because they realised that I wasn't ever going to learn anything. At the time they did know anything about dyslectic or anything. So I was just called dumbs, and there were five of us in the class. We were given a bag of marbles, and told to go down to the back of the room, play marbles, and keep quiet. And so up to then, it was just every day was slaughter in school. We were just got heavily beaten every day for not knowing an exercise, not being able to do it, that there were just the times that we lived in. That, parents at the time, my parents, we had nine at home, so parents in those days didn't do homework in our life. And so my mother didn't notice that I couldn't read until I was about 11 years of age.”

(Fergal 3-23)

Similarly, Tadhg's experience in a secondary school, despite his initial feelings of enthusiasm, turned into one of embarrassment and shame. These circumstances led to him leaving formal education. His memory and reflection on that shows how much socioeconomic factors affected a person's educational journey.

“So school was OK, I went to primary school, and I did well in that. I won a scholarship to go to a local secondary school. And remember my start there, the difference between me and everyone was so big, like they were all really well dressed and well-spoken and I was more from a working-class background. It was [name of school removed], and I liked it. I started to make friends and one day we got a letter from the college asking for a subscription that everyone had to give this subscription to keep the Technical College. We hadn't any money and couldn't do it, and I was so embarrassed, and one of the brothers [teachers] stopped one day and asked for the money and said “did your mother not get the letter?” I said she did, but normally we do not have any money. He said, “you're gonna have to

pay the money. And so I left after about six months, from that kind of pressure of having to get the money that we hadn't got."

(Tadhg, 12-23)

In other instances, the lack of interest in formal education became evident, as individuals felt that continuing their education wouldn't be a feasible path for them. The idea of progressing in education or attending college was never even discussed within their families or communities, and the immediate need to secure employment became the primary concern.

In Nathan's story, he shared his regret for not prioritising his education, as he didn't fully appreciate its importance and was never encouraged to. Nathan did drop out of high school after just one year. He started working in construction, following his father, but later, his life took a turn due to drug abuse.

"And the only thing that have in my mind was my education. This was, of course, it turned out to be a big mistake; I understood it when I grew up. I have said several times in my life, that if I were to go back to the past what I would change, and I believe that very strongly, I would not change anything from my past, the only thing I would change would be my education, going to school, just going to school. I mean, I've been saying this all the time until today. Unfortunately, I couldn't finish; I didn't finish high school, and I dropped out in the first year of high school and started working. My father brought me to his job - construction. And I stayed there until I got sick from drug abuse and could not work anymore."

(Nathan, 13-22)

In conclusion, within the theme of forms of misrecognition in life before prison and re-engaging in education, the narratives of the participants shed light on the influence of family dynamics, the experiences of violence the participants identified as important, and previous educational experiences. They did share instances and experiences which they deemed important and revealed various forms of misrecognition in formal education, leading to their educational exclusion, including verbal and physical abuse.

Socioeconomic factors also played a crucial role in limiting their access to education and opportunities, shaping their educational journey, as highlighted in the relevant literature on early school leaving. Additionally, Honneth's theory of recognition provides a lens through which we can understand the detrimental effects of misrecognition and the denial of dignity in various aspects of the participants' lives.

The significance of exploring these aspects of life before prison and their connection to experiences within the criminal justice system lies in the valuable insights they provide when tying back to the research questions, particularly the first and second ones: "*What motivations and aspirations drive adult prisoners to engage in the educational process while in prison? How do former prisoners perceive the educational process and their encounters within the prison system?*"

By delving into the participants' narratives about their life before prison, we gain a deeper understanding of the factors that shaped their educational journeys and life trajectories, which are crucial for addressing the first research question regarding motivations for educational engagement in prison.

Additionally, as it will be evident in the next theme of experiences within the prison education system, these life narratives form an antithesis with their previous educational experiences. This contrast between their challenging past encounters in the formal education system and their engagement with educational opportunities within the prison environment becomes apparent. By tying these life experiences back to the research questions, we can better understand this interplay between their past and present educational experiences.

5.3. Life in prison: Education and turning events

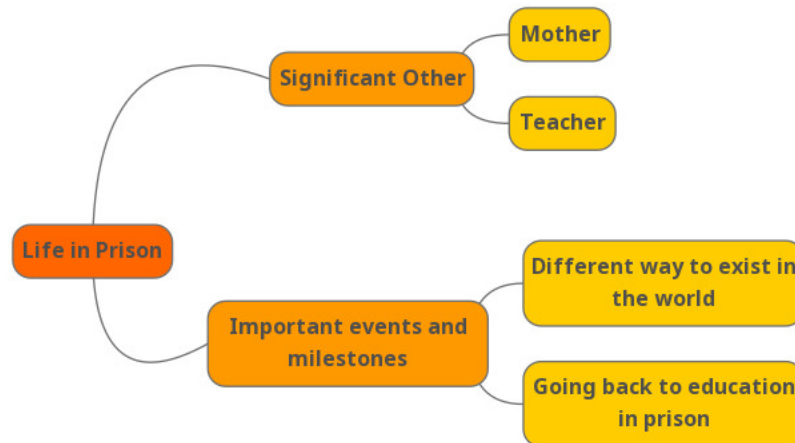


Figure 5: Life in prison: Themes and subthemes.

In this section, following the life trajectory of the participants, the analysis turns to the period of the participants lives that they spent in prison, with a specific emphasis on their engagement with education and the turning events that shaped their journeys. During this time, the influence of significant others, particularly the participants' mothers and teachers, emerges as a powerful force in their lives, as they played key roles in providing recognition, support, and guidance. These relationships and their support and belief in their potential helped the participants navigate the challenges they faced during their time in prison.

Additionally, specific events and milestones in prison served as turning points for the participants. Their engagement in adult education offered a space where the participants could explore different possibilities and parts of their identities as the participants discovered a different way to exist in the world

In the subsequent sections, the analysis will delve deeper into the participants' narratives, examining the profound impact of education, significant events, and milestones on their lives during their time in prison. Through their stories, the aim is to understand and illustrate how recognition, support, and a reimagining of possibilities can serve as catalysts for their lives after release.

Significant Other

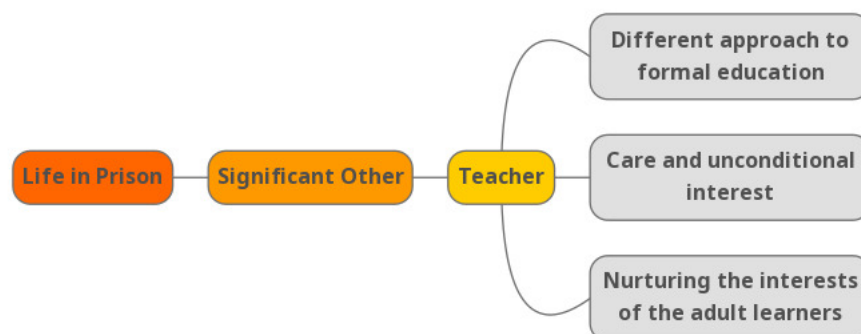


Figure 6: Significant other theme and teacher subtheme individual codes

Teacher

They encourage everything. They praise everything, I suppose praise, I never got in my life.

(Fergal, 271-273)

As the participants' narratives shifted to their encounters with education in prison, the significant role that their teachers and educators played in their journey became evident. They spoke of a stark contrast between their experiences with teachers in formal education during their earlier years and those they encountered within prison. These educators soon emerged as significant others, and played a crucial role in the identity formation of the participants. The relationship between the participants and these teachers was marked by a sense of unconditional support and recognition.

Notably, the participants expressed that is educational relationship differed from their previous experiences, and these teachers did in fact see the potential in each individual and encouraged them to pursue their educational aspirations. These elements align with established principles in adult education theories and the theory of recognition, placing emphasis in the intersubjective relationship.

An example of this transformative influence is evident in Tadhg's account of his first art teacher, who not only nurtured his artistic interest but also inspired him to continue his education within the prison system.

With true heartfelt emotion, Tadhg shared with me how he and this teacher met, and how this encounter provided him with a sense of acceptance and understanding that he had never experienced before in his formal education. This teacher showed warmth and kindness, creating a safe space where Tadhg, despite feeling inadequate in art, found encouragement, which turned to be instrumental in shaping Tadhg's educational journey.

“So one day I heard about the school and they were all on holidays so it's just an art teacher... (voice breaks and he tears up)... Sorry... (wipes off tears) He was a lovely guy and that was the first time that I met a teacher that ... I kinda felt judged or something like that in school. This guy was just great, I was useless in art, but it kind of helped me. I drew a portrait of meself and never resembled meself (laughs) it was brutal! Over a period of time, you know, he was saying there's other classes there and that the school will be back, the few months after the Holidays now and whether I would be interested and I said yeah yeah. I was kinda really well kinda, you know, not getting into fights, but still, that anger was there and the education was there and the drawing and I remember I did get to a point where the drawing of meself started to look like me (laughs), and that was really nice.”

(Tadhg, 105-118)

Cian's experience with education within the prison setting was described as escapism, a sentiment shared by many other participants. Initially attending school in prison as a means to pass the time and escape the prison environment, Cian found a significant difference in this setting. The teachers engaged with the students, showing genuine care and fostering an environment of respect and understanding. For Cian, this educational relationship with his teachers became a vital source of motivation and support, a human touch that was absent in many aspects of prison life. It became the guiding force that kept him returning to the school.

*“So I went down there and then that's when I sort of less and less and less drugs just sort of lost appeal to me you know and so I used to go up to the school, then just as a form of escapism, you could leave prison without actually leaving the walls, and the teachers were engaging. They spoke to you like a f*****k human being, not like a*

prison officer, going, you know... and it was all that and it was bad human touch that kept me going back.”

(Cian, 118-125)

The support from the teachers is the element that many participants appreciated the most, including Odysseas, who talked about the volunteer teacher he encountered in prison. Now that he is released, he can see how much teaching means to her. He explained that because of COVID-19, Maria, the volunteer teacher, cannot visit the prison anymore. Since she volunteers, there is no official support for her and her teaching, and no official policy to justify her prison visits during the pandemic restrictions. As a consequence, her students were left without educational opportunities for as long as the pandemic affected the prison rules on visits. Odysseas said to me:

“Now Maria, the volunteer, cannot go in [the prison]. You can see that she freaks out more than anyone only when thinking that she abandons her students. So, you do know the difference when someone cares and when it is ticking boxes for them.”

(Odysseas, 391-394)

Similarly, Fergal drew a comparison between his experiences in formal education and prison education, revealing a strong antithesis. In his early school years, he faced acts of misrecognition that affected his self-worth. However, within the prison education system, Fergal encountered acts of recognition that transformed his perspective. Teachers focused on his potential and encouraged his learning, fostering a sense of belonging. The stark contrast between these experiences is highlighted in the impact it had on Fergal's self-identity:

“[...] encouragement is enormous. I don't know if I can put it down other than you are welcome there, you are made to feel that you know, we will help you with this and it's not a struggle. You're encouraged in the sense that everybody will have the same issue. Just gentle little but huge hits of encouragement and that I don't know, I can't find a better word for it at the moment now, other than I think it's just encouraging people to maximise where they are and try and do better. Say I went to school from

whatever 5 until I was 11 years of age and every day was murder, was slaughter. Now my mother used to say, now when she looks back on it, that it was amazing that I went to school every day. I did go to school every day, but it was just hell. School was just hell, because you know, just getting bet every day. I was getting bet every day for everything.”

(Fergal, 309-319)

Tadhg's educational journey within the prison system took a transformative turn when he encountered a significant figure who played a pivotal role in his learning process – his probation officer. This probation officer provided genuine care and interest in Tadhg's academic development, particularly in improving his reading and writing skills. This encounter became a turning point, as it highlighted the transformative power of a supportive and caring significant other in the prison education system.

“So there were still problems with the words, but I was getting a lot better, really made me, you know, my vocabulary was kind of soaring, having really good conversations with people about current topics and stuff like that. So one day the probation officer is coming to me and said we are going to let you go. And I had never thought of getting out, or what to do, I made lots of friends and because even though I would be kind of fearless, and wouldn't be afraid, I suppose they looked upon me like an assassin and I remember thinking, no I want to continue my education, you know? And they went “look at it, if you're stuck for a few quid, come” So a prison officer drove me down to the train station the probation officer was waiting for me, gave me a few quid in an envelope for meself (tears up)”

(Tadhg, 261-282)

Mother

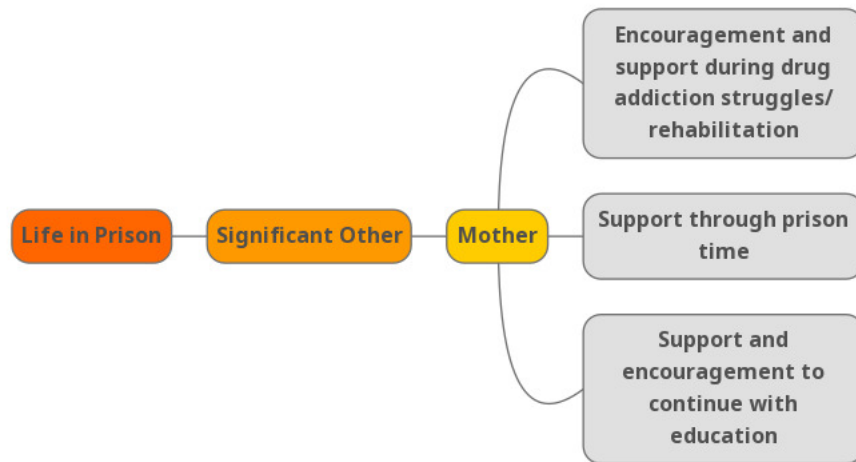


Figure 7: Significant other theme and mother subtheme individual codes

The role of the mother figure as a significant other is a recurring and key theme that emerged from the narratives of the participants. Throughout their life journeys, the support and recognition they received from their mothers proved to be a transformative force, shaping their identities and aspirations. This section delves into the profound impact of maternal recognition on the participants' lives within the prison education system.

Cian's journey, for instance, portrays the remarkable support he received from his mother upon his release from prison. Within ten days, his mother's support and assistance enabled him to rebuild his life, providing a solid foundation to pursue an education that seemed unattainable before:

*“and I got the access course. and then I got in! So I literally I got out from prison in 2011 and in 10 days, I'd nothing, I had a bag of clothes, so I had to get a flat, apartment, luckily I still had a little bit of money left and I had the support of my family and particularly me mother who's like a best friend so she was able to, I don't know pots, pans, duvets, everything starting from scratch and in 10 days to get my s****t together and get into course.”*

(Cian 212-217)

Similarly, Liam reflected on how his mother's compassionate nature, demonstrated in her work, as she worked in areas like women's refuge, was influential and shaped his own attitudes towards others. Her own pursuit of higher education as a mature student further inspired Liam's determination to embark on his educational journey within the prison setting.

“so I would suppose been looking back I suppose, I would have been also aware of that, you know, so that was obviously in my mother's nature. You know, that type of, I suppose, working in those type of areas (women's refuge), as well so that attitudes are, I suppose maybe towards people and you know... not looking down on people and kind of helping people and stuff. That type of thing you know, I think kind of most of obviously, formed me as well in some way. [...]
I could actually do it, you know, and I think at that stage also, my mom had gone back to third level education as a mature student and stuff, you know?”

(Liam, 984-985)

In Fergal's case, his mother's unwavering encouragement transcended emotional support, and became the motivation behind learning how to read and write. She took the initiative to help him learn how to write through their correspondence while in prison, as Fergal shared with me:

“when it was away I joined a conventional school. Because then I went down to learn how to write letters. I couldn't write to my mother. I wasn't able to write properly. And so I went down, first of all, to learn how to write, how to address a letter how to, you know, how to just put the words together and then from there then, they were encouraging. I mean I'm learning ever since and I know one of the huge things that helped was that I started writing to my mother. I moved away from Dublin at the time and the only communication I had with my mother was to write a letter. So I used to write to her every single day. And because I was writing to her every day, she would write back to me and she would highlight all the words that I spelt wrong. And simply writing and down the same kind of words day, and you know, after day they started to come together.”

(Fergal, 162-173, 285-289)

In conclusion, Butler's theory of otherness sheds light on the instrumental role of significant others in the formation of the self, as the narratives of the participants highlight. The encounters with significant others, mothers and teachers, served as catalysts for self-discovery and identity renegotiation. These encounters are driven by desire, which as Bulter (1987) notes, compels the subject to explore and articulate their reflections on the differences encountered in the external world. Through mutual recognition with significant others, the participants narrated stories of attains identity development and a desire for authentic existence. These narratives emphasise the immense importance of meaningful relationships and recognition from significant others as vital components of the educational journey.

Turning events and milestones

Engagement in Adult Education

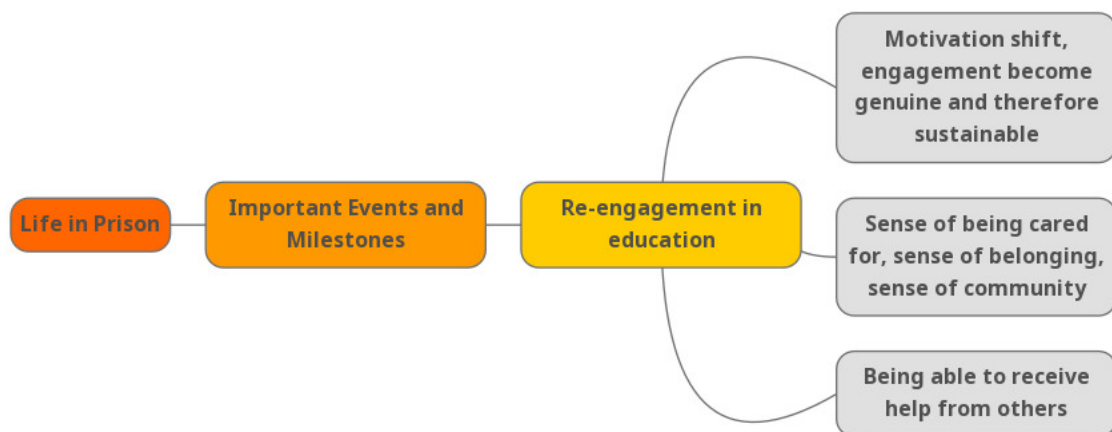


Figure 8: Important events and milestones theme and re-engagement in education subtheme individual codes

In the pursuit of education within the prison system, the narratives of the participants reveal a series of turning events and milestones that have profoundly influenced their educational journeys. These pivotal moments have played a critical role in shaping their perspectives on learning and sense of self. These events represent significant experiences where the participants identified their importance, recognising how they brought about changes in their life journeys.

Fergal's experience exemplifies the profound influence of maternal encouragement, which surpassed emotional support and became the driving force behind his learning journey. His mother's dedication to helping him learn how to write letters while in prison not only facilitated communication but also ignited his passion for learning and literacy. This poignant example underscores the powerful role of significant others in the participants' lives, propelling them towards educational pursuits within the prison setting.

*“but the difference was that in adult education there was no shouting. There was no punishment. You didn't even have to pay attention. You didn't have to be there. You choose to be there. We would start up every September in adult education and we would be maybe eight people, maybe more, maybe less would turn in, but after about three weeks there were two of us and we stayed there for the year and I stayed there longer. You're getting that intensive attention and but it's they move along at a nice, gentle pace and are hugely encouraging. They encourage everything. They praise everything; I suppose praise, I never got in my life. It was just, you know, “just what the F****K is wrong with you, you're stupid” you know, you just got walloped, all the time to any side of education. At home, when I was younger my mother would ask my brother to help me with things and because he had no effort in understanding things. He would show you once and that was it. You know they got education. It's a different thing. It's just it's all praise. And even praised when you make a mistake, I suppose (smiles). But it helped!”*

(Fergal, 263-269)

This shared experience resonates with the majority of participants' lives within the prison setting. However, it is important to acknowledge that not all prisoners reengage in learning with the same motivation or outcomes, as demonstrated by Oisín's example:

“[...] because although I was, always going to go to education, at the start, I was to be a better criminal. But then it changed me way of thinking.”

(Oisín, 247-249)

Cian's journey of education within the prison system began as an escape from the harsh realities of prison life. However, something transformative occurred when he achieved a significant milestone – obtaining a certificate that held genuine meaning for him.:

“So I got this Cert and then I started, I suppose that was the first Cert that it actually meant something. So I got transferred on up to the training unit. Which is closed now, but at the time it was open, like a semi-open prison, part of [name removed] and same thing again, the school, and is where basically I turned into a serial course offender.”

(Cian, 165-171)

As Cian narrated, he was used to being labelled and treated as mere criminal, often stigmatised and judged. However, a pivotal moment occurred when they realised that in the classroom they were viewed differently – not just as prisoners, but as students with unique potential and capabilities.

Cian's transformative experience exemplifies the *whole person* approach described by Warner and Costelloe (2003; 2014). As he engaged in the educational setting, he noticed a stark contrast in the way he was treated by his teachers compared to the prison officers. The teachers acknowledged his humanity, addressing him by his name, asking about his experiences beyond prison, and showing genuine interest in his thoughts and feelings. They recognised him not solely as a prisoner but as an individual with thoughts, emotions, and aspirations, aligning with the critical adult education philosophy.

This marked difference in treatment created a profound impact on Cian's sense of self-worth and the way he viewed education. He felt valued and respected, and the recognition he experienced in the classroom transformed his perception of education. It became a means of empowerment and education was no longer merely an escape from prison life; it became a path through which he explored his potential:

*“So because I wanted nothing to do with the prison service, I had a sort of resentment stored for prison officers, 'cause I have seen some of the stuff that they were doing and I was like f*****k they're criminals for what they're doing and getting away withit.*

*And it was like a closed environment. No one sees what happens over there; well, I seen it. [...] Now, I know that a certain disconnected sort of gallow humor, but some of the stuff I seen - I seen prison officers kicking the s****t out of people and battering... I think the law has changed now I'm talking 20 year ago, 25 year ago and teachers were separate to that. They spoke to you like a f*****g human being. And you develop a relationship with the teacher, so I'll come in "Angeliki, how are you? How was your weekend?" And I got "my weekend was *****. I was in prison. What did you do?" - "Oh, I went to a concert and think oh, I've read this book, have you read this newspaper?" and I started to question then that 'cause a lot of the newspapers look at read in prisons are the f*****g Sun and the Star, tabloid newspapers and topless girls and gangland s****t."*

(Cian, 526-546)

Indeed, one of the most transformative moments for the participants in their educational journeys within the prison system was the acknowledgment and receipt of help from significant others.

In the case of Tadhg, he initially held reservations and even a degree of resentment towards his probation officer, an Englishman from Manchester. However, when the officer offered to help him with reading, spelling, and pronunciation during lunch hours, Tadhg decided to give it a chance. At first, he felt awkward and embarrassed, struggling to pronounce words and understand complex concepts. Yet, the probation officer persisted in his efforts, patiently working with Tadhg and fostering a supportive learning environment.

As they engaged in meaningful conversations and learning activities, Tadhg's spelling and concentration improved, and he noticed a positive change in his thought processes. The officer's dedication and genuine care had a significant impact, not only on Tadhg's literacy skills but also on his sense of self. Despite initial reservations, Tadhg grew to appreciate the support he received and developed a mutual respect with the officer, who saw potential in him even when he himself had doubts.

This transformative encounter with the probation officer reflects the essence of the whole person approach and critical adult education philosophy. The officer's recognition of

Tadhg's humanity and individuality, coupled with the ongoing support and belief in his abilities, became a turning point in Tadhg's life. The relationship went beyond superficial help; it provided a sense of validation, encouragement, and empowerment.

*“one of the probation officers came to see me, an English guy, (leans forward to the computer screen), I didn't like English people back then, you know from Manchester,, and really very nice, you know, but I had my attitude. He says look, I will come down here, every I think was two days, during my lunch hour and help you with your reading and your spelling and your pronunciation and I wanted to tell him to go f**** himself, but I didn't. So I decided I'd take the help. He used to come down all the time (tearing up) I felt so awkward (pause to drink water), so embarrassing, letting the man know that I could not pronounce words and uh! But he was great. And I used to look forward for him to come down and we would be talking for ages and I couldn't understand half the things he would say to me, you know? Behaviourism I hadn't a clue, try to explain these words! And I remember one day getting this word, but what the fuck is this now, I'm trying to pronounce it, you know, and so I was kind of waiting for him to come in and “look I'm not able to do that one”, but you know it's phenomena. We eventually got me, phenomena, “Ah, so what is this?” and he explained to me. So that is the way we kind of worked. He helped me with the words and pick out words and I'd write down the words and my spelling got better, my concentration got better, I think because I was talking to him and slowing down and my mind was slowing down a little bit [...] that probation officer that fell from Birmingham with the very English accent which p*****d me off! (laughs). This probation officer, he really p***** me off at all that the big words and he would ask me “do you understand that?” I mean, I would say “yeah” and I didn't, you know? But he kept coming back, you know, he was amazing! I must've put him off with my attitude, but he kept coming back you know? (tears up) [...] I don't know what he's seen in me when he did see me at first, because I was looking really wild at the time. I was acting wild and very angry. And he must have seen something cause he gave a chance. And throughout my life right up until I did my last year course he supported me. As a person, and financially through the department of justice.”*

(Tadhg, 534-578, 610-620)

Similarly, Cian's experience with his teacher marks a significant turning point in his journey. As he reflected on various points in his life story, Cian identified certain key events and individuals who played instrumental roles in his life. Among them, the teacher who brought him to college holds a special place in his heart.

In Cian's own words, he could recognise that some people genuinely care, going the extra mile and investing their time and effort in others' progress and growth. This level of care and support left a lasting impression on Cian, who recalls the incident with gratitude and admiration. The teacher's commitment to going above and beyond, even when it wasn't required, showcased a genuine interest in Cian's success. This relationship transcended the traditional student-teacher dynamic, with genuine care at its core, blossoming into a friendship that persists to this day.

*[...]I could list out at different points in my life or journey, certain key individuals who were instrumental at the right time, at the right place that little bit of support, that little bit of encouragement, like I ended up the teacher who brought me to [name of college removed] first. We're still friends. He's 74 something - 75 and he lives down in the South Coast and I go down once a year; I go, I drive down or go out for lunch or we go for a drink and I know his wife and I know his daughters [...] You don't know what way it's going to go just... So certain times you meet certain people like I've met, I met lectures who were doing their PhD's, who are now professors or Head of Departments or something, and we are friends. So it's meeting them at the a certain time and you couldn't plan it out if you if you started this by 25 years ago, if you just said this to me that I would have this life now, I would probably didn't think I was gonna live past 30 'cause a lot of my friends are dead. People who gave a s****t when it wasn't their turn to give a s****t. They genuinely cared 'cause you can smell b*****t and you know someone's just punching in the time and doing the job. They come in X,Y,Z, good luck. But the people who actually took the time, that sort of resonated with me. They're getting paid, whether I do this or not, they get paid, but they actually go the extra mile. When I was doing my thesis for my undergrad, this the one we are still friends and he was in London. He was living in London, he used to come over here and go back, and he rang me off his home phone from London, and spend 2 hours going through the final proof of my thesis, changed "and" to "or", this*

*to there, add this here, full stop there. That level of.... and always I never forgot that I was like 'cause I didn't give a s***t, I was like submit it, it'll do, he said "no, no, it's really good, but if you just do this" and he went through paragraph by paragraph, line by line of my thesis, and it must have been shite, 'cause I just knocked it together. You know what I mean? (laughs) But he actually: "no change this here, that's really good there, maybe find a quote to back up what you're saying, 'cause what you're saying is right, you just need to back it up" that it and he gave a s***t when it wasn't his turn to give a s***t and I could sense that. And that was powerful, then 'cause you thought, Well, they actually went the extra effort on this. The least I can do is give it another day of trying to find things you know.*

(Cian 651-673)

In conclusion, the narratives of the participants within the prison education system demonstrate the instrumental role of significant others and pivotal events in shaping their educational journeys and self-perceptions. These encounters with caring teachers, and probation officers, and supportive family members, especially mothers, went beyond mere emotional support. The assistance received during these interactions not only facilitated learning but also had a lasting effect in the formation of the self. Furthermore, these experiences underline the whole person approach and align with the principles of critical adult education, recognising the importance of acknowledging adult learners as complete beings. These experiences align with the principles of critical adult education, which emphasises the importance of recognising adult learners as complete beings with valued previous experiences, and education as an act of love and empowerment. By valuing individuals' identities and perspectives, liberating education nurtures a transformative educational encounter where learners and educators collaborate in shaping the world through knowledge, understanding, and mutual respect.

A different way to exist in the world

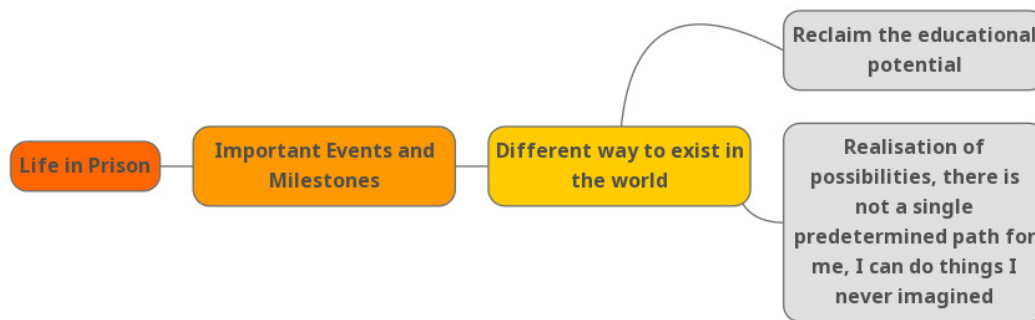


Figure 9: Important events and milestones theme and different way to exist in the world subtheme individual codes

The narratives of the participants pointed into the impact the educational journey in prison had, regarding opening up new possibilities for them to exist in the world and connect with others in a different way. This transformation was deeply rooted in the concept of self-discovery, as the participants discovered their capacity to shape their own lives, reclaim their educational potential and make meaningful choices. Liam and Cian's narratives reflect how education empowered them to imagine themselves differently and pursue new paths in life.

For Liam, a social science degree offered an ideal opportunity to explore topics he was already passionate about, such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, family, and community. The educational experience allowed him to delve deeper into these subjects, gain new perspectives, and engage with others' viewpoints, fostering a sense of agency and confidence.

“So I decided then that I was going to do and and then you can do that from doing a social science degree so there so, and that was all about people and that's that was genuine and naturally just the type of person I was already. Anyway, this seems like a perfect fit for me. You know what? When I looked into it, it was like, poverty, inequality, race, you know, gender, family, community. All this. I was like I was straight in, I was like that's perfect I could already talk about these things. Have opinions on these things. And so I will need to know more from what other people think and study and all that, you know.”

(Liam 1018-1027)

Cian's engagement in education was marked by a gradual detachment from their previous life and the opening of new opportunities. This journey opened up a whole new world, one they never knew existed. Though unsure of their specific direction, Cian knew that returning to prison was not an option:

*“So I mean, there was less and less and less and less, so I mean there is still, if I see, I mean I am happy to say, I didn't fall out with them or with anything, just less and less in common and it opened up a new world in terms of, I then had friends who are, and I have to say still to this day, some of my professors, some of my doctors, some of our dentists, just at whole circle of life that I never, didn't even know existed, you know. And my confidence grew, I did the {name of college removed} Access Programme, still have, still are friends with some, I was at someone's wedding last year who was a lecturer on the course and went through and still didn't know what I wanted to do, but I knew that I was getting a bit... That the jail was a mugs game, was a dead end game, there was no, you just find out that prison was not a f*****g nice place and I knew I didn't want to go back, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do but I didn't want to go back.”*

(Cian 228-241)

Ultimately, the stories of the participants in the prison education system underscore the potential of education to lead individuals towards self-discovery and empowerment. By embracing the principles of critical adult education and recognising learners as complete beings with unique perspectives, educators can play a transformative role in the lives of those they teach, fostering a sense of agency that is sustained in life after release.

5.4. Life after release: Agency and transformation

In this last section, the themes of agency and transformation take centre stage. Agency, as expressed by the participants, represents their capacity to act and make decisions that would shape their lives after release. Their educational journey played a profound role in cultivating this agency, empowering them to take charge of their futures despite the challenges they faced.

The theme of transformation through education, uncovers the profound impact education had on the participants' self-worth and self-confidence. Their educational journey reshaped their perceptions of themselves and others, fostering a deeper understanding and connection with the world. Those themes and their subthemes are explored in the subsequent sections, as the analysis delves deeper into the parts of the narratives of the participants that concern their post-prison paths, examining the various ways agency and transformation were expressed throughout their educational journeys.

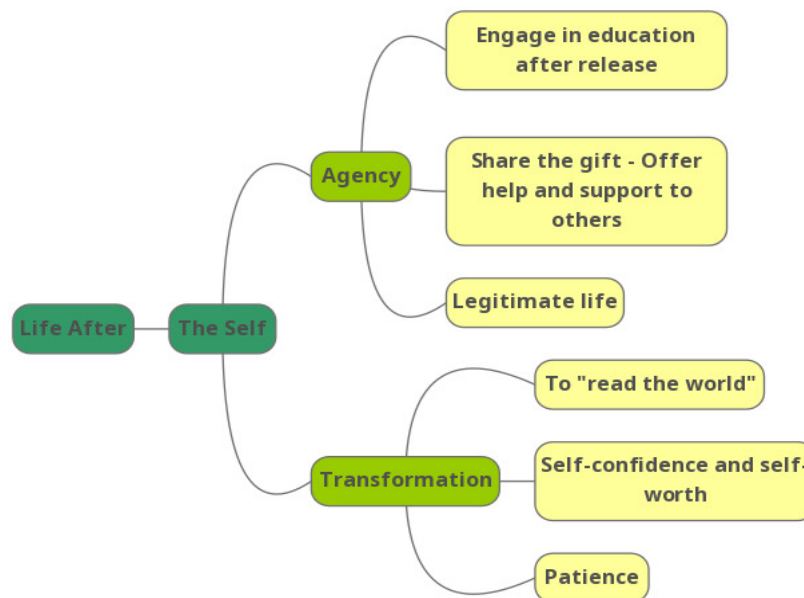


Figure 10: Life after release: Overarching theme, themes and subthemes

Agency

The theme of agency in the context of the participants' experiences within the prison education system encompasses the various ways they exercised their capacity to act and make decisions that their lives after release.

After their time in prison, the participants actively pursued education, taking the decision to participate in adult education programs, access academic courses or vocational training, and obtain certifications, despite the challenges they faced. This proactive approach to education reflected their agency in seeking personal development and growth.

Another manifestation of agency among the participants was their desire to help and support others. Having experienced the transformative power of education, they sought to share their knowledge and experiences with fellow inmates, offering guidance and encouragement. This desire to support others exemplifies agency as they actively giving back to their communities.

Moreover, the participants aimed to create "an ordinary" life for themselves, free from the cycle of crime and incarceration. They made conscious choices to distance themselves from their past actions and build a new identity based on what they deemed important. This aspiration for a different life reflects their agency in shaping their own narratives and determining their future paths. Those subthemes are going to be further explored in the next section.

Continue with education

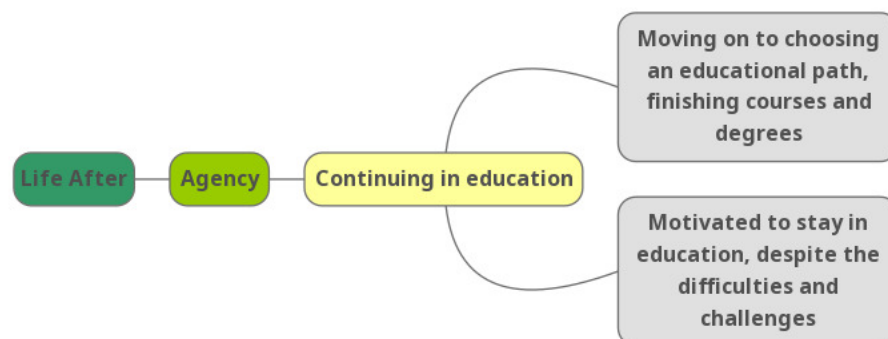


Figure 11: Agency theme and continuing in education subtheme individual codes

Initially, Liam did not have a concrete plan to continue his education; he started attending school to pass the time and explore new subjects. However, Liam ended up taking action and making the conscious choice to pursue a degree in social policy and sociology. He recognised that the course content mirrored his passions and allowed him to explore topics he already cared deeply about. This realisation transformed his educational journey into a natural progression of his existing thoughts and perspectives.

For Liam, the process of learning and pursuing higher education felt easy and meaningful. It was not just an academic pursuit; it became a path of self-discovery and alignment with his core values and interests. The sense of ease he experienced reflected the harmony between his personal interests and the subjects he was studying.

On becoming agent of his own learning Liam explained how he decided to continue on and build a professional career:

“I really felt like this course and sociology and social policy was everything that I had already kind of been thinking about really and stuff like that, I actually already cared about, I just never come across it and never had these conversations or nobody had presented it to me in this way, and it felt easy for me to just ... I was already thinking about Travellers and inequality and race and discrimination and gender! And, you know, I'm fairly aware of these main issues, and this is cause-effect, not everything, of course, there's so much more to learn, but I learned in college. It felt just natural that this is what I feel and this is what I think already, this is a perfect course for me, you know, and it, and it was easy for me. I felt it was easy.”

(Liam2, 507-518)

Ordinary life

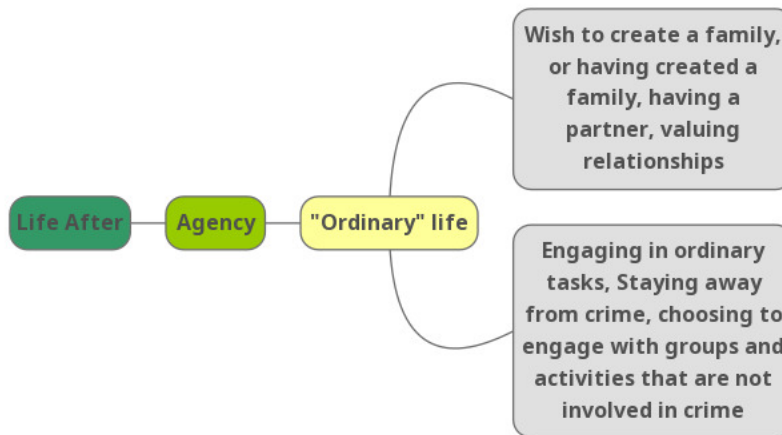


Figure 12: Agency theme and ordinary life subtheme individual codes

The participants' narrations about finding joy and fulfilment in ordinary life align with the notion of ordinary life discussed by Taylor (1989). Taylor emphasises the significance of self-formation and the construction of a new identity through the ordinary aspects of life. For the participants, the ordinary holds a special place as it represents the stability and legitimacy they have achieved in their lives after release. Furthermore, their decisions are built on their desires and the things they deem important in life. Returning to Taylor's concept of ordinary life, it highlights that it is the everyday experiences, practices, and relationships that shape an individual's sense of self and identity. It is within these seemingly mundane and routine aspects of life that people find meaning, purpose, and a sense of belonging.

Menelaos expressed contentment with the simplicity of his life. Despite facing difficulties, he expresses a positive outlook on his life, appreciating his job and the modest home he has. His words highlight the importance of finding joy and fulfillment in the simple things and embracing the ordinary aspects of life:

“Yes, my life might have difficulties with what I'm doing now, because I have a job, I work in a parking lot now, I have a small house, it's nothing fancy, but I liked it. I like what I've got.

(Menelaos 207-209)

Furthermore, Tadhg in his narrative described building strong relationships and achieving the goals he had set for himself. The experience of going on his first legitimate holiday, paid for with own money, brought him joy and a sense of accomplishment. Tadhg's life has shifted from one of uncertainty and illegitimate actions to a place of stability and freedom.

“So over the years I’ve built up really good relationships with other people, and I’ve done most of the things that I wanted to do. I remember my first holiday, my first paid holiday from proper legitimate money! Feeling great, taxing my car, assuring my car (laughs!) and doing nothing wrong or illegitimate. I don’t have to look over my shoulder because of all the help I got; that’s what people said to me. If we do that, I will enjoy the rest of my life.”

(Tadhg, 579-585)

Drawing on Taylor's perspective, the participants' experiences highlight the role of moral consciousness and its formation in their transformative journeys. Questions about what gives meaning to their lives and influences their respect for others became central concerns. Taylor's concept of "strong evaluations" becomes relevant as the participants make their own judgments about what is right or wrong, better or worse, and use these evaluations to shape their understanding of self-worth and dignity.

Through their post-prison experiences, the participants challenge their past identities and redefine what is essential and valuable to them. The processes of self-formation and moral intuitions are linked, leading them to appreciate the significance of ordinary life in finding meaning and purpose. By embracing the ordinary, they discovered peace and a newfound respect for themselves and others.

Sharing the gift



Figure 13: Agency theme and sharing the gift subtheme individual codes

The theme of the desire to give back and become useful to others, as well as mirroring the recognition received through the educational encounter, emerged as a significant aspect of the participants' transformative journeys. As Reese (2017) notes, this "reciprocal reflex" is evident in the inmates-turned-students expressing gratitude for the educational efforts, while volunteers, in turn, find fulfilment and meaning in this exchange:

The clients (inmate-students) are visibly moved by the experience. They express gratitude for the outreach efforts. The volunteers express gratitude for the gratitude. The "reciprocal reflex" enables the volunteer experience to be rewarding, fulfilling and meaningful. [...] The "reciprocal reflex" leads to lifelong learning for all involved.

(2017, p. 697).

For some participants, this desire to give back led them to pursue careers in education or advocacy. Liam, for instance, found his calling as an educator, where he could genuinely care for and help others. His teaching identity was shaped through his own educational journey, where he learned to encourage and inspire students, highlighting that everyone has the capacity to learn. Liam's understanding of the transformative power of education goes beyond theoretical knowledge and connects with the real-life experiences of his students, a concept that sits at the core of critical adult education.

“Now I don't search for adornment or praise or stuff like that, but at the same time I get to be the person that I actually always was because I get to care and show empathy and genuinely help people as an educator now, you know?”

(Liam2, 445-447)

“There are a number of reasons around why these things have happened. But people carry it, because we've lived very closely, but in the past, Catholic Ireland and colonialism in the past, there is the psyche of that fear, shame, guilt in Irish society. So people, are 90% I would say, I hate generalisations, but it's very common for people who have been through addiction, they are masking, they are hating and are blaming themselves, you know, for other things that are going on and there is fear and shame and guilt going on there. And it's unnecessary because it's just not true. So we explore all these type of things and try to look at these things, how these experiences can then be used in a positive way? Because this is whenever, even opening a book or talking about any theorists or sociologists or anything like that, yet we're still talking about the real issues that are going on in society, but every student around the table has experienced them first hand. That's more important and carries more weight for me than opening the book and finding out what Carl Marx said in the 1800s about social class you know, and the division of labour or something. That's, that's fine. And that is what it is. It's a theory. This is it, here in the classroom. This is an actual real life experience. Like, if somebody is sitting in front of me and they've been through addiction, there's not a thing in the world that me or any other educator or any sociologists or theorist in the world can tell them, what it's like to go through addiction.

Nobody, 'cause they've gone through it themselves and it's individual, but there are larger cause and effect of these societal issues and a lot of people never get a chance to even sit down and to think about that, or for someone to say that that's not your fault, or to find out that “hang on a second, this there's been a societal system here in place in Ireland for generations and generations and generations that has actually been set up in such a way that there is going to be fall out!” It's functionalism! Like you know, that there is going to be fallout. But not everybody can make it to the top, even though it's the narrative, that it's all equal opportunity and stuff like that, the truth is that it's not! It's education systems, political systems,

social welfare systems, every system set up in such a way it steered that not everybody, to lead some people to sweep the street...”

(Liam2, 208-228)

Odysseas shared his experience of witnessing the suffering of innocent people in prison and how this had profoundly impacted him, motivating him to make a meaningful difference. His narrative reflects a deep sense of empathy and a passion for standing up for the rights of others:

“I want to study Law, I am determined. I've wanted this deep inside for many years, maybe since... when what it? It first entered my mind in the 90s, but I forgot about it, but as the years went by the wish came back. I want to fill the void, and better to fill it like this. It is not an issue of finding a job, I have simply reached a point where I see when there is no knowledge, no information, I have seen how many, how many victims, innocent people... I want justice.”

(Odysseas, 367-376)

Similarly, Alkis' shared that his desire to help others is driven by a profound understanding of the complexities of life and the importance of not judging individuals solely based on their past experiences:

I want to help others, honestly, wherever I am, I want to... You know what? I got a lot of help here myself and I think it's my duty to help other people too, people who may have gone through things that I went through, to let them understand that this thing can be different. I want to help people, to make them understand that life it's not black or white, outside or inside, criminal or not.

(Alkis, 431-438)

Finally, Fionn became an educator himself and emphasised the importance of recognising the best in people, helping them discover their potential and contribute to society positively. He shared how being a teacher involved encouraging learners and breaking down barriers, fostering an environment where people feel safe to express themselves and learn at their own pace.

“I think as a teacher, that's why it's important that everybody has the capacity to learn. There's no such thing as a stupid person. And you know I always said to people saying to me “but I can't read and write, I am not able to read” - “No”, I said, “you just haven't learned yet”. And I would say that you just haven't learned yet. I said “Noone was born and able to read or write”, I said, “but we learned” and I said “you can learn, but you know, don't do it because of me. Do it because you want it and at your own pace.” So it's encouraging people you know not labeling or putting people down because of their educational standards. It's encouraging people to learn. And you know, for some of them it could be just being able to read the newspaper, they're happy, you know, and I suppose that's just me, what a teacher would be, you know? And you know, finding the best in people. Cause everybody has the best. Everybody has a skill and everybody has something important inside them and as a teacher you need to pull that out, you know, and I suppose the difficulty for me this year, has been with the lockdown and all that. I haven't been able to do the physical teaching and physical training we do. I miss that terribly. You know, I miss being with the lads. I miss being in the classroom with them and talking to them. And you know on a break, having a chat and I being one to one with them, you know, 'cause you get to know them, you get to understand them and you know, and you break down that barriers from them you know, and I keep saying “lads, there's nobody is nobody here who is going to give me the wrong answers or the right answers, you gotta learn. This is what it's about and you know, I don't know everything, and if I make a mistake, I'll let you know. But if you ask me something I don't know, I'll tell you.”

(Fionn, 570- 592)

Indeed, as the participants expressed their desire to mirror the recognition and support they received through education, they also sought to extend this transformative potential to others around them. Their narratives reveal a profound sense of social responsibility, with many expressing a deep commitment to helping those who might have gone through similar challenges. By recognising the importance of challenging societal injustices and inequalities, the link to Freire's theory on critical awareness (2000) and to a renewed sense of agency is

evident. Their commitment to help others and contribute to a more just and compassionate world echoes the core principles of critical awareness and emancipatory adult education.

Transformation

The theme of transformation through education becomes evident in the participants' accounts, particularly in relation to their self-worth and self-confidence. Their educational journey played a profound role in reshaping their perceptions of themselves and others, as the participants shared their stories. This section encompasses the changes in life after release that participants experienced and identified within themselves. Their experiences reflect the enduring changes that occur when individuals are given the tools to critically engage with their own lives and the world around them.

Self-worth and self-confidence

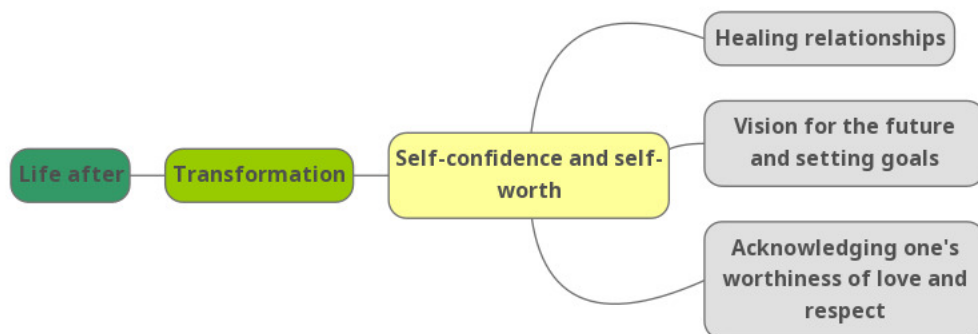


Figure 14: Transformation theme and Self-confidence subtheme individual codes

Alkis' realisation that he shares common desires with others, highlights a powerful moment of self-awareness and empathy. This shift in perspective illustrates how education did challenge stereotypes and preconceptions, fostering a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness among people. Alkis' revelation echoes the essence of critical education, which seeks to break down barriers and promote a more inclusive society.

“[...] when I meet other people, who have nothing to do with the part of crime or drug use, and I see that I am no different from these people. I mean, they want the same things I want in life.”

(Alkis, 132-135)

Similarly, Alexandros' in his narration reflected on the significant changes he experienced. His engagement with education opened a path towards self-discovery where through books and learning, he found a way to unlocking parts of himself and understanding the world around him.

Furthermore, it allowed him to break free from the shame and insecurity that stemmed from illiteracy and embrace his identity without reservation.

“Before school, I was a bit wild, had no manners, no good manners, I would pick fights, I had no consideration for anyone, no respect for myself, and most importantly, I did not love myself. After school, what I learned was to love myself, to have self-respect, to care, to show my feelings, to be stronger, to care for the environment, to care for my fellow man, to develop as a human being, and to learn to listen. I believe this happened through books, you unlock yourself, you learn about the world, you learn about other countries and that's how all this learning comes. [...] I've learned all this from school. To care, because I was an introvert character. I was ashamed of myself, for my community, that I was illiterate. All this created a complex for me. And through school, I've learned all this, I'm not ashamed of myself. I'm not different to others and I am equally happy that I am who I am”

(Alexandros, 135-174)

While already having the ability to engage in discussions about various societal issues, Liam found the missing piece in his educational journey by acquiring the external information to support and strengthen his understanding. This process allowed him to bridge the gap between his life experiences and the broader society.

“I could have a discussion already about any of these kind of issues, I suppose, and then so I just had to learn the outside stuff around them, you know? So I definitely spent that time as well though thinking and linking my life and my experiences with

the wider society and now I had this academic information to link it all towards as well, you know. And I really felt at home. I loved it to be honest and I felt very lucky.”

(Liam2, 533-540)

Furthermore, his experience with sociology opened Cian's eyes to the potential of education as a means of self-discovery and empowerment, fostering a genuine interest and appreciation for the learning process. Additionally, Cian, sociology acted as a bridge between his existing knowledge and the formal academic world. He realised that many of the concepts and ideas he already understood were being given a scientific language and framework through sociology. This realisation boosted his confidence and affirmed that he possessed a wealth of knowledge that was valuable and relevant.

*“And I never been interested in school in like I thought learning is for children. This was different because you were asked for your opinion and like sociology, sort of floated mine. It was like putting a scientific language on s****t you already know and this terminology, and I found out I did know a lot about.”*

(Cian, 128-131)

Both self-confidence and building on the previous life experience of the participant are key aspects of critical education. The empowerment of the learner, as well as nurturing that epistemological curiosity (Freire, 1998) seemed to be one of the enduring changes. Also, breaking that stereotype, of not belonging to the school, is noted by Warner as one of the factors contributing to successful education. The participants' experiences reflect the enduring changes that occur when individuals construct the tools to critically engage with their own lives and the world around them, through education. Education served as a means to bridge the gap between their previous identities and their aspirations for personal growth.

A different way to “read” the world

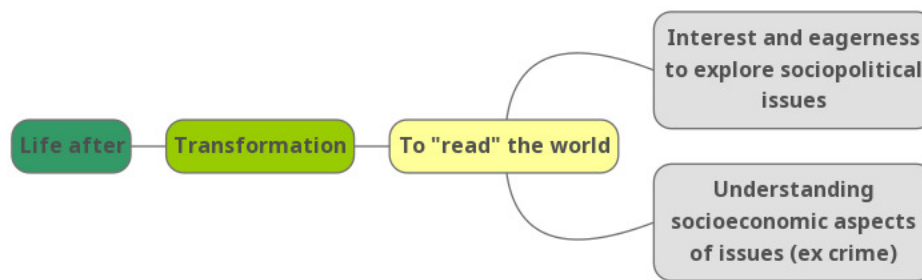


Figure 15: Transformation theme and to "read" the world subtheme individual codes

The theme of "A Different Way to 'Read' the World," is inspired by critical pedagogy, as this phrase is often used in Paulo Freire’s writings:

“Reading the world precedes reading the word, and the subsequent reading of the word cannot dispense with continually reading the world. Language and reality are dynamically intertwined.”

(Freire, 1983, p. 5)

It refers to the act of critically examining and understanding the broader social, economic, and political contexts that shape individuals' lives. By reading the world, learners recognise the various power dynamics, inequalities, and cultural influences that impact individuals and their communities. They understand deeper the social realities and challenges they face, allowing them to engage in transformative learning that goes beyond simply reading words on a page.

This process of critical inquiry enables learners to develop a more informed and empathetic perspective, empowering them to challenge oppressive structures in their personal lives and their communities.

Menelaos's experience illustrates how education enabled him to challenge societal taboos and prejudices, particularly in the restrictive prison setting. Through critical engagement with literature and open discussions in the educational group, Menelaos was encouraged to share his thoughts genuinely. His personal growth is evident as he narrates how reading broadened his horizons, enabling him to understand and connect with others:

“And to open your mind, and to change your way of thinking and stereotypes. Me, let's say in prison, there are some things that are a taboo. In other words, seeing a person who is homosexual, no matter how much you accept him as a person outside in society, in prison you cannot say that, that it does not bother you. You cannot do that. Because that's how things are set up, you have to present this type of masculinity and be racist, of course. In other words, it is the Russians with the Russians, the Albanians with the Albanians, the Greeks with the Greeks. They may all be together, but when something happens they will be separated. I'm generally not a person who would criticise the homosexual or anyone, but in prison, I might not have said anything, but when someone said something, I wouldn't stop them. And you get into it little by little and you lose it. [...] But in the literature group with Tereza, when we discussed homosexuality and discrimination and I was asked to share my opinion I said the truth. And Tereza said, I didn't expect you to be like this! And I say that, here in prison, things are strange and you can't speak your mind openly. I think reading helps you change things a lot. About other religions and about homosexuality, and about racism, in general about everything. It opens your mind a little and you wake up. When you don't read... Buddha said, when you talk you will repeat the same things, when you listen, you will learn something new. If you learn to listen, you will learn something new. And now I am reading and I sit down to listen to others.”

(Menelaos 273-294)

Similarly, Fergal's in his narrative shared how he pursued his studies with the Open University, and he gained confidence and a broader vocabulary, allowing him to engage more meaningfully with complex debates and political discourse:

“The biggest thing that gave me is that I can understand what people say when I'm listening to debates. I'd listen to debates now on say, on the radio on there's a program on the BBC on a Friday night and they'll bring in politicians and they will use words that wouldn't have made sense to me before the Open University that do makesense now. They use words, it could be a word as simple as retic, but I think they use words like rhetoric to bamboozle the vast majority of people and I have a huge knowledge of

a lot of these words now that don't phase me anymore, but there's still loads I don't know. But then, there's a lot of words that people that are in the academic world use, that are not used in the normal language, in the normal lexicon of words. And it's just that has helped me in that. When I'm listening to people, I can understand a lot of what they're saying. That, I'm not lost. And the same with the reading of the newspapers I enjoy reading them all. I'm always reading something on the go and so, it helps that way. It gave me the confidence to be able to... If you can understand what people say, that's being said, then I don't have to go after find out. I'm lost if I have to go out and find out what that word means, that it lets me listen to more debate. And to read a better quality paper."

(Fergal, 343-361)

Tadhg's story included him expressing a newfound appreciation for the world around him and his understanding of politics demonstrated the deep impact of education in expanding his worldview. Education became a catalyst in encouraging him to critically analyse societal issues and engage in meaningful discussions with others.

*"What education has done, it has opened up my eyes, you know, I can see properly, I can look outside the window and notice and appreciate everything outside. I never had that before. I have a much better love and understanding of the world I live in. I never had that before. I have grace, political beliefs and I have a greater understanding of how the political world works. So I was delighted when Trump got dumped out, I hope they ***** lock him up for the rest of his life (laughs) So that's the kind of...my world is not more expansive and much more interesting and I'm so blessed with all the people I work with, so blessed to meet the students I get to meet. I am blessed to have this voice that I never knew existed, and this brain that controls it (smiles) that gives me the most, excuse me, to communicate with other people. You know, so huge differences. I'm so glad I'm able to kind of accept that I do really help people and they appreciate, you know."*

(Tadhg, 648-661)

The narratives of the participants align with Paulo Freire's concept of critical pedagogy. critical pedagogy seeks to empower learners by liberating them from oppressive systems and encouraging active engagement in transforming their world. The participants' experiences

demonstrate how education played a transformative role in their lives, enabling them to challenge societal norms, develop critical thinking skills, and become active agents in their own lives.

Patience

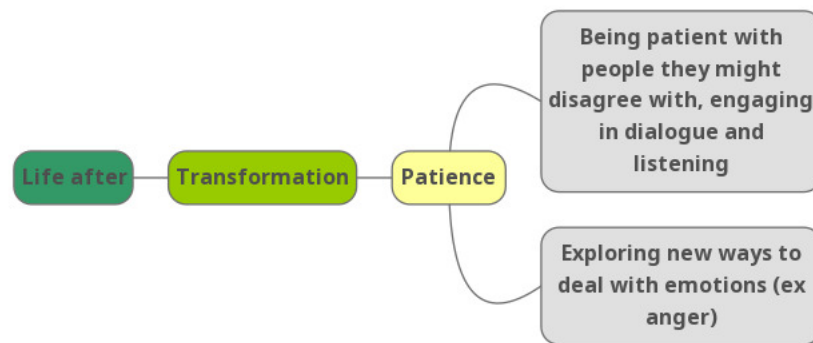


Figure 16: Transformation theme and patience subtheme individual codes

When reflecting on enduring changes on themselves, the participants did identify patience, which emerged as a recurring theme. This theme became particularly evident in the stories of those who had previously had experiences with violence, primarily of a physical nature. For them, cultivating the ability to exercise self-control and taking control over their emotions marked a significant achievement and a crucial component of the new identity they aspired to build. As recipients of recognition, the participants found themselves reflecting this element within group settings and educational encounters, as it profoundly shaped their behaviour. Through this mirroring effect of recognition, the participants started to redefine their self-identities.

Two participants, Alexandros and Odysseas, expressed how their experiences led them to embrace patience as an aspect of their selves. Alexandros narrated his journey of learning to be patient, which entailed sitting down to read and engage in discussions with others—something that as he shared, had previously tested his patience. In the classroom, the recognition from the teacher and the encouragement to discuss topics respectfully, shaped his sense of self as he shared:

“Basically, I learned to be patient, because I didn't have the patience to sit down and read or discuss things with someone. In the classroom, whether we like it or not, the teacher passes it on to us, to discuss humanely, to keep a level, not to offend others, to improve my speech...”

(Alexandros, 101-104)

Similarly, Odysseas shared how the educational environment fostered a change in his approach to communication and understanding. He described how he no longer feels anger or frustration as easily as before, when trying to explain something to someone who may not respond initially. The supportive atmosphere in the educational setting allowed him to express himself freely without fear of being misunderstood or penalised. This environment enabled Odysseas to let his empathy grow:

“The way, how you tell someone something when they don't understand, I don't get angry anymore. The way you convey something to someone. That what I kept, this is how I experienced it there, they didn't want us to feel like we were imprisoned. They would say, here we are not in prison now! Here you can say anything, without being misunderstood, without being penalised or anything!”

(Odysseas, 268-273)

Alexandros's and Odysseas's accounts strongly support two main ideas presented in the theory: the significance of recognition in the intersubjective encounter and the importance of a supportive educational environment, centred around the individual, in fostering patience and, as the participants identified, in the development of parts of a new self-identity. The theme of patience, inextricably linked to recognition, reflects the profound impact of acknowledging individuals' potential and providing spaces for that potential to flourish.

5.5. Comment on the culturally sensitive approach

As clarified in the methodology, this study is designed as a single case study conducted in two different countries: Ireland and Greece. The focus of the study are the life trajectories of the people who agreed to take part and share their stories, this research does not seek to take a comparative approach and compare systems and institutions. Furthermore, a comparative approach would not be possible as in the scope of this project. After conducting the analysis, an additional reason for the single case study approach became evident. The narratives presented striking similarities, to the extent that there were moments when it was difficult for me to remember whether an event had occurred in Ireland or Greece. However, despite these resemblances, noteworthy cultural differences in prison life also emerged, and I present them in this section.

One notable difference is the issues of overpopulation and shortage of resources that were more evident in the stories from the Greek context. The educational encounters in Greece were mainly between the participants and volunteers, a fact that highlights the limited resources and support for educational initiatives within the prison environment.

On the other hand, the narratives from Ireland highlighted the presence of support systems both within the Irish Prison Service and external educational institutions. Participants in Ireland shared instances of receiving encouragement and assistance even after their release from prison. The stories of Liam and Tadhg demonstrate the support they received in their educational journeys.

The welcoming attitudes of third level educational institutions in Ireland towards former prisoners became evident in the interview process. This acceptance and recognition of their past experiences fostered a sense of belonging and encouraged the participants to be more open about their previous incarceration. In contrast, the Greek participants faced greater obstacles in seeking to continue further in education after release. While they demonstrated motivation, financial challenges often hindered their progress.

As a result, the participants in Greece had not reached as far at the time of our encounters, except for Ektoras (Vignette no1 in Chapter 6). While all of them pursued education after their release, the challenges of making ends meet significantly had a significant impact on

their progress. It is important to note that this observation does not mean to argue that the life trajectories or the path to higher education for the participants in Ireland were easier or without struggles. Rather, it aims to highlight the significance of providing adequate support to people after release. Indeed, the Irish stories presented a unique set of circumstances that differed from those in Greece.

The stories of Liam and Tadhg demonstrate the support they received in their educational journeys.

“So at that time then I wasn't allowed to go out to [name of University removed] on my own. So the nun actually brought me out. For me and another guy, she drove us out to [name of University removed] to do our essay exam anyway in different courses, but anyway, so we went out, did the essay exam. That was grand. Came back an within a week, I had an interview! So it's back to the nun again and she brought me back out again and went out for the interview and when I went, when I went into the interview, I said to them, sorry just before we start can I just let you know that I'm actually coming from prison today and told them the situation. Said this is it, I am getting released now in December, even though the course starts in September. And, I said, I have been brought out by the nun here just today and I told the whole story basically more or less. And I remember, I don't ... I can't even remember who the lady was, but it was a woman and a man there anyway and I remember she went straight away like that, she went like that put her arms around me and said “oh brilliant!” that's what she said and my reaction was so surprised, so surprised by this, because this was a thing for me, I thought like I'm going out here to University you know? And I'm gonna just tell them straight up. I'm not going through any of this stuff where I'm not saying anything, I'm gonna live my life hoping somebody doesn't find out something I've been in prison or anything. So I said I said to myself, I'm just telling them from the start and that's it. I'm gonna do that. Their reaction was so welcoming. And then that whole interview we just didn't really kind of... Well, we did have an interview, but it wasn't in the way that they probably had planned it was gonna be, because they were just asking questions, loads of questions about prison and how I

would link it into the course and how all the social elements and what I thought of this and this and this being in prison and all that and I was wellable to talk about those things you know, and it all went like that, and they were like this is brilliant. You know that's just I was shocked that they were so welcoming because I would come from prison and my perception of somebody from prison being in the University campus didn't really match up. And within a couple of days, only two or three days [name of University removed] offered me a place and because they had gotten back to me so soon and because they were so welcoming and the conversation we had on the interview and all that, I accepted immediately.”

(Liam, 1083-1119)

Tadhg was another case where when he decided to continue with his education after release, he faced the challenge of funding. Fortunately, he did receive financial support from Department of Justice. This demonstrates again, the impact of supportive policies and recourses can have on the educational journeys of adult learners after prison, and ultimately in their smooth transition back to society.

- Someone told me that [name of college removed] are doing a diploma in [name of course removed], would I like to apply for it? And I did not know where that college was, and he says to me there is a fee and you have to have funding from somewhere. So I contacted me friend in the Department of Justice, can I say his name?

- Yes if you mention it I will not use his real name in the transcript, so it's OK to say it!

(Continues proudly) Conor! Lovely man and I told him I just finished this course and that one of the guys told me about this diploma and I wanted to work in the area, And so he said, he'd come back to me and he did come back to me and said, OK, apply we will pay for you. So I applied, and, uh I went for the interview one day but I didn't get it. A week before the course was about to start, the one who runs the

*course called me and said that somebody dropped out, would I like to do it and I wanted to tell her to **** * (laughs) but I didn't! And I spoke with Conor and he said go for it. So I remember the first day going to college, I couldn't believe it! Walking in, I felt really proud Walking through those gates and felt different from everyone else because, uh I suppose from my background I kinda knew that these people are kind of wealthy and all that kind of stuff. But I was determined to do the course and do well. And turns out that on this course there was a couple of prison officers who wouldn't talk to us! (laughs) Because that's what it was like back then you know, prison officers wouldn't talk to prisoners or former prisoners. There was a couple of social workers and there was couple of other prisoners and I became very friendly with the other prisoners. And over the course of the year I became friendly with everyone, even the prison officers, started talking to us. One of the prison officers came out to me asking for help with a piece of work is was doing. So it was great, and kind of broke a barrier as well, didn't realize at the time, you know.*

(Tadhg 357-388)

5.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, Chapter 5 has provided a thematic analysis of the of the participants' narratives. The analysis has revealed key themes, such as misrecognition, significant others, turning events, agency, and transformation, that shaped the participants' educational journeys and their lives after release.

The participants' stories highlighted the profound impact of family dynamics and previous life experiences, setting the stage for their paths before incarceration. Within the prison, moments of recognition and the support of significant others, particularly teachers and mothers, played a pivotal role in guiding them towards education and self-discovery. Turning events and milestones in prison served as catalysts for their transformation, opening up new possibilities and paths.

After release, the participants demonstrated agency by actively pursuing education and seeking to support others who might have faced similar challenges. They underwent personal transformation, gaining self-confidence, patience, and a new perspective on the world. Throughout this chapter, the principles of critical education, inspired by Paulo Freire, resonate strongly. The participants' narratives exemplify the liberating potential of education, empowering them to challenge societal norms and become active agents in shaping their lives and communities. A culturally sensitive approach was paramount in understanding the diverse experiences of the participants, acknowledging the importance of considering their unique contexts and backgrounds.

Overall, the thematic narrative analysis presented in this chapter offers a comprehensive and authentic understanding of the participants' lived experiences within the prison education system. These stories underscore the immense potential of education to cultivate agency and support self-transformation.

Chapter 6

Vignettes

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I chose to present four stories as vignettes, which aligns with the voice relational approach discussed in the methodology chapter. The rationale behind this choice is multifaceted. Firstly, I believe it is essential to provide readers with insight into the experience of listening to the peoples' stories during the fieldwork, to the extent possible. By presenting these vignettes, I aim to offer a glimpse into the lived realities and encounters that shaped my understanding of the participants' stories.

Secondly, having already introduced the participants through their profiles and brief introductory narratives, this chapter serves the purpose of bringing their stories closer to a wider audience. By delving into the details and complexities of these vignettes, I hope to foster a stronger connection between the readers and the participants, enabling a deeper engagement with their narratives.

Thirdly, the inclusion of these vignettes serves the purpose of preserving the authenticity of the participants' voices. By enclosing the narratives within the vignette format, their unique perspectives, emotions, and experiences are upheld and honoured. The presentation of their narrative accounts allows their voices to shine through, capturing the nuances, tone, and individuality of each participant. This approach ensures that the stories remain genuine and true to the lived experiences of those involved, further enriching the overall portrayal and offering a genuine glimpse into their journeys.

Finally, the inclusion of vignettes provides an opportunity to explore the interconnectedness of the main themes identified in the previous chapter. By looking at how these themes emerge throughout the stories, the vignettes offer a rich tapestry that captures the participants' relationships with others and themselves. Within their narratives, moments of recognition, misrecognition, and self-transformation are deeply integrated and intricately

woven. Returning to the voice relational approach which was introduced and discussed in the methodology chapter, the vignettes represent elements of the following readings:

Reading 2: Reading for the voice of 'I':

- Create an understanding of how the narrator expresses their self-image through different layers of self-presentation.
- Prioritise the participant's voice and consider their multi-layered voices rather than fitting them into single-layered themes.

Reading 3: Reading for relationships:

- Explore how the narrator relates to others and how interpersonal relationships and social networks emerge from the story.
- Connect the exploration of relationships with the previous reading on the self, to exploring the theme of recognition.

Reading 4: Placing people within cultural contexts and social structures:

- Consider the socio-political context and cultural aspects brought to light by the story.
- Explore connections between the narrative and the larger cultural and social contexts.

Based on these reading and led by the voice relational approach, I include in the end of each vignette a short reflection on each story.

It is through the stories of Ektoras, Oisin, Aris, and Fionn that I believe all the diverse themes discussed in the analysis chapter can be effectively highlighted. By presenting these vignettes, the aim is to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the participants' life trajectories, illuminating the profound connections between their experiences, relationships, and personal transformations. These stories serve as a powerful vehicle for capturing the essence of their narratives and emphasising the significance of their voices within the broader context of adult education in the prison setting.

Ektoras and sharing the gift of helping others

Ektoras is one of the participants I met with in Greece. Our meeting took place on a Sunday evening, towards the end of a long day of meetings. He seemed like a very calm person, with dark eyes and dark hair and his words flowed with a sense of tranquillity. Since our introductory meeting, it was evident that he had taken the time to reflect on the significant aspects of his educational journey, eager to share his insights with me. He started with a summary of his life as a book and continued highlighting the parts he thought were important in order for me to understand his life trajectory. He talked about books and poetry and how the experience of education shaped profoundly his views on giving back and helping others. He talked about how he experienced a change in himself, he gave me a glimpse of how his attitude towards violence shifted, and how, through education, he found the strength to release the label of "criminal" that had been imposed upon him and which he defended for a long time. He finished his narration with something he "believed was important to be said" about the prison education system in Greece and it is my duty to let his words be heard.

This is his story.

"Life is wildly extraordinary..."

*I would take it from the beginning., that I was a child, who had not learned about boundaries. So that child thought that certain things, like stealing or having delinquent behaviour, are normal. As a result, together with the drug use, he reached a point to of suffering the consequences. **The consequences in terms of delinquency is imprisonment; in terms of drug use, it is to lose yourself.***

So I had been so disconnected from myself and I was also confined in four walls. This had a positive aspect, because then I went looking for the reasons behind that. I searched and I searched, and I was able to find some answers. It all started when I took responsibility for things, that the life I lead until now and was my choice,

regardless of the fact that to a certain extent, the drug use makes you not have a conscious choice; despite all this, it is still counted as a choice.

This choice brought me to a point where I found only walls and no doors. Until then, I had experienced some very, very difficult things and sometimes dark things. As I told you, I asked myself if this is what I want for my life and I took another a different path because I understood, I concluded that it was not what I deserved and not what I wanted, so I wanted to stop doing that to myself.

*And I turned my whole journey around in prison., I served 8 and a half years, and I went to counselling at KETHEA. My opinions, in the beginning, were kind of “heretical” in relation to what these people did in there, that they were receiving a salary and they came to see me just to justify the salary. [...]. **So I went to the KETHEA rehab community, inside the prison and I started to “take pieces out of my armour”.** This resulted in me revising my prejudices, ideologies, philosophies of life and opinions that I had before, in order to follow another a different path, which is difficult, but has no such consequences. This is the summary of my story.*

My own education had stopped until at the first year of secondary school. By that time I had taken the wrong turn in my life completely; I was no longer interested in my education. I neglected to mention that I was an athlete, I played football from a young age, and I got to the point of playing professionally, but I got involved with the hardest drugs let's say, I started using cocaine and that's where all this stopped. Then I stopped in the first year of secondary school - that did bothered me later after I had cleared my mind.

For that sudden loss of my educational development - I wanted to do something. There is a framework that gives us the possibility to submit an application to be tutored privately, and in one year we can complete the syllabus of secondary school, let's say, as I did. So I started from there. There is not a specific organisation and formal structure, that simply does not exist, the education project and the whole thing is able to run because of two volunteer teachers.

Now there are two things, Firstly someone can take advantage of it with a real purpose and with honesty and try to develop themselves educationally from where they stopped. Or it can be something to use to “escape”. Because when we talk about incarceration, all the things take dimensions that are ... very different. In my case, I wanted to complete my education, even in this way, because I had lost too much time. And it would be three years for me, all right. I did tutoring, with volunteers, I got out, I was released, and somehow we let the school year go by because I was not well-prepared and, as I told you, there is no specific formal structure for us, that send teachers for the lessons that we will be taught and examined in. I let the year go by. Then, I followed the Second Chance School, I got prepared, I sat the exams, and I got a very good grade because I did a good job. I got my secondary school diploma, and then I applied for and got a scholarship from KETHEA, as they collaborate with IEK³.

*I've been doing judo for quite some time. In the judo school, I saw and experienced something very important. The judo school had started a program to train children on the autism spectrum so that they could acquire some judo techniques. I had the role of the teacher's assistant, and the experience I had and lived with the children, I felt that it reshaped me as a person. **Helping people who have no other choice deeply touched me.** And so I applied for scholarships and funding, and now I am studying occupational therapy instead. I have finished the first year, and now I am going to start the second. I still have a year and a half to go.*

***Look, I felt the change happening when I stopped defending, in my own mind, a label that until a little while ago, was the one I bore.** For example, “illegal” or “criminal”. It is a word that creates a kind of excitement in the people. For people like me and in my path, that means, in the “criminal” world when you go to prison, no one will admit that they have lost their freedom because they have stolen 500 euros or 200 euros or 10,000 euros. Because first of all, all this money goes to dealers, who are the ones who provide you and fix you up, but when you go to prison you want to*

³ IEK are private vocational training institutes in Greece.

*show that you are something else - a big deal. **That you are not just somebody, because there are small fish, like I was, and there are also big fish.***

I have met people who have done big things. In other words, in the middle of this entire journey, I met a man who was a robber. A professional robber. He was 52 years old. Because inside in prison there is a lot of time and you can find people to talk to, I asked him a question. At the age of 52, this man had served 26 years in prison. And I asked him, was it worth it? He told me no. 52 years old, I haven't lived, he told me. Well, if you put it down, this man speaks to me with an experience of 52 years here; I was 33 at the time, okay?

*All this suggests that whatever you do is futile. **Because I am a person that enjoys simple things, like sitting at home in the evening... Feeling the wind on my face at my balcony, and while having a smoke, reading. You can't find those things inside.** But in order not to reach 55 years old in prison myself, I stopped defending the label that the criminal justice system had attached to me, “dangerous”, “illegal”, and “criminal”... **Because these are only for the “margin” that society sets for you, i.e. a place with cement and barbed wire, so you can brag about what you've done. It was the main thought or question to myself. That this thing has to stop. I am neither a criminal, nor an illegal, nor dangerous...***

*So I started reading in prison because I was tired of all this; both consciously and subconsciously, it's always the same thing. You socialise with the same people who are convicted, and it's always their lawyers the ones to blame; it's like playing the same tape over and over again. It's the lawyer's fault, the police... I'm tired of this thing. [...] **I was reading, in my attempt to be by myself and have something more positive for me, away from this miserable life I was living, that is, to escape from that reality a little** [...] Well, when I went to the community [KETHEA], however, the coordinator of the literature group, Tereza, contributed greatly in that, but it was also my own personal need. From then until now, I already have built my own library, I spend my money on buying books. **Because I wanted to change some things and education is a means that can take you where you want to go with safety.** We did poetry and literature, and from there I believe - no, I don't just believe it, I am sure of*

it - that there has been a great improvement and development in me. The fact that I still support that choice and have included incorporated it in my daily life proves that it had a lot to offer. And it is one of the good habits I have adopted. The coordinator, Tereza, comes first.

I saw that my education was incomplete, at every moment in the effort of change and building a new identity in my new life, I always found that my shortcomings are were educational and that something must be done. Well, the fact that you have a certificate doesn't mean anything.

However, if I apply for a job or something, I don't meet the prerequisites that the employer is asking for; clearly, compared to me, someone with a certificate will have a better chance at the job. That's one thing. The certifications are needed mostly so that you don't have to say too much. And the second thing is more internal. I realised that my vocabulary was limited and my way of thinking was stuck, so it had to be enriched. I speak Greek well, but the slang had taken over to a very large extent. It's a mix of things, but mainly it was my internal need for development because I think it was within my abilities and I wanted to move on.

The judo made it clear to me that one of my inner needs is to help my other fellow people and not in a way of being condescending, that is, that now I am “fixed” and have solved all my problems and I am helping you.

*Because I found that we have so much in common and many “parallels” with the specific group of people [meaning former prisoners and people in the spectrum], in racism, prejudice, and carrying a stigma, the only difference is these people did not have a choice. I had a choice, conscious or not, it was a choice. So the approach I had to these people was so genuine and effortless, and they may have a different way of communicating, but they have very deep empathy. **Well, the effect it had on me was emotional, because I was already been seeking such connection and found it to be nourishing. So, in order for the shadows of the past to go away, I have to replace them with something new, with health, with value and with humanity.** Well, this was so appropriate. Little by little I came to understand that, but I'm telling you because I was involved a little over a year ago, **this is still softening the rough edges***

*of my character. Because I'm telling you, even if you go to rehab if you don't find a substitute, if you don't replace the experience, it will resurface, fatally. **Therefore, education is the vehicle. And after comes an interest, whether it's a hobby, or an occupation, it is to get rid of the darkness, the old habits, all of that, if you don't find something that affects you emotionally, the rehab alone doesn't do anything.***

*So where am I going with this "vehicle"? My purpose is to provide help, as I told you, in an ultimately selfless way, but at the same time, because I'm quite exhausted, and in terms of supporting myself financially. It's the saying, if you do what you love, you don't really work. So this is my goal, and all this entails various things, the main thing is that it raises my intellectual level a little [...] **and I focus very much on my psyche. I want to do something that is does not feel like a chore.** [...]*

***Building a new identity is an essential work for everyone, specifically for me it took a long time to find out what I had achieved; the experiences of childhood, and family, those are the roots from which behaviours stem from, and then the drug use, and the prison. [...]** I am processing the remains of the past, with the aim to search for what is there in my "backyard" and to clean up a little. I would say that the definition of the new identity presupposes the values and principles that the individual has at this moment, that he had from the moment he was born, before he became a criminal, or a drug user. [...] So the values, the principles and the elements in general, of nobility, legality, solidarity, humanity, some of the elements that my character has, need to be reformed, they are not absolutely bad just because my eyes have seen so many negative, sad, difficult and harsh images. [...] **But in two words, my new identity, in order to have a solid foundation, must have principles, and values, which are not fake, and must be based on my new philosophy and legitimacy.** To choose to do the good and the right thing. It is mainly these values.*

So judo and the literature group were the education for me, and through the literature group and poetry, I developed my vocabulary and the way I speak. Because it didn't have a good structure, I had a lot to say, but the way I spoke didn't have a structure, so I rambled on, and I would lose the meaning of what I wanted to say. Poetry can reveal so many meanings with two words, how is that possible? So there was a

change, I started to better processing my thoughts before they transformed into speech, and as a result, I was able to engage in a better higher-quality dialogue. After all, literature is a journey of its own, each book, you find ways to relate to it, and you are transferred in into the imagery, so the brain sharpens more. [...]

From the literature group, the memories are too many and most of them are so deeply imprinted, i.e. they have a depth to such an extent that they make me emotional, and in general they have touched me profoundly. Because something that it happened during the period that I was incarcerated, was that my father died. And Tereza brought me a poem, The Dream by Odysseas Elytis, and through all the emotional stress of the loss that I was experiencing and it was so fresh, the poem was something that I could relate too much at that moment. Indeed, there are many moments. For the literature group, I have kept everything, we have also written a journal, there are too so many moments.

And from the first time I heard the poem “Dying slowly”, it really resonated with me from the first moment I heard it and it expresses me this is true now still, you know? But because I'm telling you, for me, Tereza, the coordinator, her presence was key, that's why I like volunteering. A teacher bringing in their own passion, books and literature, and they can be such a healing things for others. Look, one time we were reading Oliver Twist and that we had turned off the lights, we had candles, that is, we were reading something taking place on a train, let's say, it was as if I found myself inside the train, right there! And I'm telling you I was a person who, overall, was very tired of prison and of harsh images in general. There's no need just to... well, I've seen enough violence. I've been to several prisons, I have seen brutal things. And just the fact that you are there, being able to see only a wall, morning, noon, evening, the same wall [...] After I came out, after so many years, my mother hugged me and I could not feel it, that is, I could not let go at all, not even at my mother's caress. I became estranged from all this.

But back to Tereza and poetry and literature, what we did there was so exciting, only when I let myself express my feelings, I felt liberation, because all these years,

I've been telling you that you have to play it that I am like a big deal, I'm someone, but my needs were different, and I was so tired. I mean, this self-image, the false image, I was able to support it for many years and in a very good way, I also cut my hair, I had a fierce face, I went to the gym a lot, I supported it well, but my soul, my psyche, wanted other things. So in the literature group I found what I wanted since I was a child, and I couldn't find it. With the result that I got lost on the road. But I found it in the group. All my sensitivities were brought in the surface. First of all, that showed me that I, myself, am a sensitive person and that this is what I want for my life. Not for others, for me. Because I tell you, when I read a book, that offers me so many things. First of all, it's not, it's not foreign to me! [...] I get the new knowledge and it serves me in many things, in my thinking, my vocabulary, from the enrichment of the vocabulary and the development of the quality of my language. I don't want to prove anything to anyone and it's okay if someone makes a mistake like I do and my girlfriend corrects me, (laughs) but I have a good level of speech now... It makes me feel useful for myself, it makes me feel like I'm not semi-literate, it makes me feel like I'm doing something that's good for me, I do not cause harm to anyone and finally it's one of the things that all people do, well most people, through education and that's the way it should be.

One of my favourite books is Elias Venezis's Number 31328⁴. This book gave me, in a very direct way, a harsh reality. The evil and harm that a man can do to a fellow man, or to himself, and the reasons for which this is done. But the conditions these people went through, I could relate so much, and that touched me even more. This book came after Tereza's suggestion, because it also talks about violence and things. [...] I keep praising Tereza. Tereza has done a couple of extra good things. In addition to literature, she has also brought a friend of hers who is a counsellor. And we made a sculpture about violence, and we talked about violence. I'm telling you we made a

⁴ The book Ektoras is referring to is Number 31328 (Greek: Το Νούμερο 31328) and is an autobiographical novel by Elias Venezis. The novel recounts his personal journey as a captive of the Turkish Army during a harrowing death march into the Anatolian interior. At the age of 18, Venezis was captured and forced into a labour battalion known as Amele Taburlari or Amele Taburu. The prisoners were forced to march deep into the interior, but tragically, the majority died due to the extreme hardships they endured. Out of the 3000 people, only 23 managed to survive.

group sculpture with our bodies, like a frozen image, representing violence. **And as I was static, just before the action, I started to get a rapid heart rate, that is, I saw for the first time what violence causes in me. And the thoughts that came with that feeling were, "do I want this for myself?", "I don't want it, I don't want to hit another person anymore". Because I do have convictions for hooliganism, for physical harm, all those related to violence.** I'm wondering to myself how I got to the point of getting involved in fights and the likes. Of course, how can I say it, I was trapped in a situation, I couldn't do otherwise because I had to defend that identity. I know that I did things that caused a great harm to myself, a greater harm than prison. Of course, I do not wish prison for anyone, I don't even want to think about going back there!

How this book ends... Life is wildly extraordinary... Every time I have had a nice day, which brought me joy, or I tried something, and I achieved it, it makes me reflect on, it makes me think, let's say - I'm optimistic in general - about what the future holds. What I'm thinking is what I want is for me to be well. To be well, we mean in terms of health. Because, from the beginning of the treatment, which does not end after a while, from the awareness of right and wrong, I have the choice, so if I return to drug use and delinquency, it is a conscious choice. [...] Well, I think that if I'm well, the future will bring whatever the future holds for me. Somehow no one will be ashamed of me, not even myself. I am trying, in two years I finished secondary school, I have the scholarship and I progress, socially I have been in a relationship with my girlfriend for a year and, we work on our relationship and we go to couples therapy... human relationships are the most difficult thing [...] Well, all of this is quite extraordinary, it fills me with enthusiasm and optimism, because I tell you, from the moment you understand, what you should and what you should not be, everything is clear afterwards. [...] This door was always open. This door is there, it won't go away. **I just unlocked my own door in the mind, and happily understood the possibilities.** You can get in there for some reason, but this place, this whole situation, you can get past it, if you have an option. [...]

*I will tell you something as my own conclusion, about the essence of your research, which I think must be said. This situation, the penitentiary framework, the incarceration reality, and anything that makes the prison in Greece, belongs back to in the middle ages. The majority of people lack motivation to go to education, this place only constantly contributes to the development of more criminals. That is, someone can go to prison for 6 months, and then re-entry into society has an expiration date, and that's because no one can come out of that place in a better state than what he entered. So I consider it fortunate that there is the KETHEA community in prison, but even there, there are people who exploit it for the benefits of the law. [...] Because I consider myself extremely lucky, because I found a place to work on my addiction, there was a place for all this to take place and realise, my expectation is and will always be high. **I wish for that to be in all prisons, but the situation is just not good, not good at all. To conclude, the situation in the prisons is deplorable, due to overcrowding, violence, bribery, and the likes. And unfortunately, this framework does not help the statistics, just one or two lucky ones will come out better. This does not help society as a whole.** [own translation]*

I stopped defending the label that the criminal justice system had attached to me, “dangerous”, “illegal”, and “criminal”... It was the main thought or question to myself. That this thing has to stop. I am neither a criminal, nor an illegal, nor dangerous...

In Ektoras's life-story, significant moments and themes emerge that shed light on his journey of change and transformation. His experiences of previous involvement in criminal activities and violence imposed the label of "criminal" upon him. However, as he narrates it all started when he decided to return to education and encountered the support and volunteering efforts of Tereza, the literature group coordinator. Through literature and poetry, Ektoras found motivation for agency and self-discovery, shedding the label of the "tough criminal" and embracing other aspects of himself, such as sensitivity.

The theme of recognition within the educational encounter is prevalent in Ektoras's story. The significance of values, principles, and personal development is highlighted by Ektoras's desire to provide help in a selfless way and engage in activities that feel meaningful and liberating. Also the theme of sharing the gift of help is evident in his story, as Ektoras sees himself as someone whose newfound purpose is to help others, recognising the importance of extending support to those who may not have had a choice in their circumstances. The poem that Ektoras refers to in his narration is titled “Dying Slowly” by Martha Medeiros and it is presented below:

You start dying slowly if you do not travel, if you do not read,
If you do not listen to the sounds of life,
If you do not appreciate yourself.
You start dying slowly
When you kill your self-esteem; When you do not let others help you.
You start dying slowly
If you become a slave of your habits,

Walking everyday on the same paths...
If you do not change your routine,
If you do not wear different colours
Or you do not speak to those you don't know.
You start dying slowly
If you avoid to feel passion and its turbulent emotions;
Those which make your eyes glisten
And your heart beat fast.
You start dying slowly,
If you do not change your life when you are not satisfied with your job,
or with your love,
If you do not risk what is safe for the uncertain,
If you do not go after a dream,
If you do not allow yourself,
At least once in your lifetime,
To run away from sensible advice...
You start dying slowly
When you pass your days complaining of your bad luck or the
incessant rain.
You start dying slowly
When you abandon a project before starting it,
if you do not ask about something that you do not know or if you do not answer when
being asked about something you know.
Let's avoid death in soft doses, remembering always
that to be alive demands an effort much bigger than the
simple fact of breathing...
And only through perseverance is that do we reach for
a wonderful feeling of happiness.

Dying slowly – Martha Medeiros

Oisín left school early and became involved in the Irish drug scene for a long period. He found himself on the run for a couple of years, fleeing the country, but eventually, he was arrested and went to prison. It was during his time in prison that Oisín reengaged in education. Asked to reflect on an important moment in his journey, Oisín shared the following with me, which occurred during his graduation ceremony for a degree in computer science. As he stood among his fellow graduates, he unexpectedly spotted a familiar face - the very policeman who had arrested him years earlier. This officer was not just an acquaintance, but someone Oisín had known on a personal level, aware of his family and past. In the following account, Oisín recounts the encounter and its significance for him.

In Oisín's story key themes are interwoven. Firstly, his re-engagement in education while in prison served as a turning point in his life. According to him, this symbolises a profound shift in his mindset and priorities. Secondly, the moment of recognition during the graduation ceremony is a powerful instance of self-realisation for Oisín, as the encounter with the arresting officer serves as a significant marker of change within himself. It represents a moment of pride and acknowledgement, showing that Oisín had made progress in his life.

This is his story.

***“I was, always going to go to education,
but at the start I was to be a better criminal.
But then it changed me way of thinking.”***

*Before I started, you know, when I was in prison, it was like I always did have it in my head I might go back to education and all. **And at the same time, I was trying to play the system too, to get out early.** But because I have a bad record, I don't get out*

early ever. [...] but at the start it was kind of like, I'll get an open prison. I want to get it, you know, so I'll keep doing it. That's another driving force, but my kids, obviously. And the time of thinking when I was on the run for eight years waiting to be convicted, so I came back. Life was a bit different. I had lost loads of friends, as I said, murder and drugs, and I just knew it was time to change.

So I went to prison, [...] I was straight into the school. I was trying to better myself, but I also was trying to get an open prison, you know. And I knew I wasn't getting the open prison about halfway through, I was told there was a block against me.

But anyway, so yeah, I was getting into education. I kept doing it, I kept doing it. I knew I wasn't getting the open prison, so I still kept on, I wasn't going to stop like I was so far into it. But at the start it was the way I wanted to get this open prison, but that wasn't happening. But then it became an addiction as I was halfway through it. And then my mentality started to change and started thinking different. You know, when I was getting educated, I couldn't mix with the old friends I used to be in the prison, because I just wasn't on the same level. I had nothing in common with them. So I still kept going school and just kept going and going like, well.

Education changed my whole way of thinking. It was one course, basically, that changed my whole way of thinking. It was a social science course and communications. Then two things really changed my whole way of thinking. Just two courses. And they were only a level five like! It was a year-long course, so it was it was the longest like, it was one of the longest ones I'd done in there, like, you know, just one course. But I was also five or six courses at the same time. [...]

I came up with an idea because of what worked for me. [...] A point system. With the point system, you would go in just as I did, just to try to get the open prison. **But when you have it really, education really changes it.** Those absolutely changes it, because it changed my whole way of thinking. [...] And so if there was a point system that everyone goes in and no matter how many, so you do whatever, always you get points and points, you come to a certain amount of points, you automatically get to an open prison. And I guarantee I would say the points I set, whatever standard like,

so I guarantee that most people get to that standard, none of them would want, they won't care even about the open prison. The whole thing gonna be changed, like. That's what happened with me, because I was just trying to get in open prison at the start and that didn't happen. But the point system would entice all the criminals to go to school, thinking they'll get an open prison. Well, obviously they would end up there in the end. They would have changed. They would have changed the whole way of thinking, just earning them points. It does like it, did for me anyway. But it wasn't points. I would seek education cause it was the open prison I was working for. Yeah.

*I grew up in a rural area, really bad area, [name of area removed] and the drugs, crime, robberies, all this. So I grew up there and I grew up, no father. Was a big family. Didn't have much. So I started selling drugs. I worked. I did have jobs. Like I had an apprenticeship when I was 16, when I left school but couldn't get into it. I just didn't like it. It wasn't for me. **So I left that and I chose a life of crime. I didn't chose it, just it was kind of normal from where I came from and the people I was hanging around. You don't know you're in that depths of crime until you get out of it because it's a normality, you know, like carrying guns around with you. And I'll just get around like that was normal and houses getting shot or bombs around you, you know, all that, bulletproof house and all like, me ma's house. And so families fighting, each family there was a big fuse, loads of shootings. I got shot and stabbings, all this. I mean my ma got shot in the head. She's not in the crime and not like that. She was a pure accident. Someone shot through the window and she got hit. Like it wasn't a target, they were a team to target me. She just beside me. And so I was just crime. Just all crime. [...]***

*By the time I was 20, I didn't think I was going to get to 21. I always said, I'll be probably dead by the time I'm 21, so I didn't care. So me acting the b***s like, I wasn't a good person. Like I was trying to be the best criminal I could have been, the best scumbag you could have been. But that's one of them areas. **That's the mentality we all have, because I know the chances are out there. Would you have to go out***

and really look for them? You know, like it's not like education it's not most in them areas. It's, it's not valuable. Like I didn't know the value of education until I went to prison. I didn't like. And... It's just one of them. So there was always a lot, there was a lot of trouble, drug abuse growing up. And I got addicted to heroin when I was 17, real young, because I was selling the stuff making loads of money and just, I was just young and stupid. And I got addicted to that stuff, years ago. But it was then when I went to, I went on the road. So a good bit of time. I think that helped as well because I was away from all [...] I always knew I was going to come back as I had a girl coming over and ended up having kids with her. [...]

*So I was coming back and I said, I'm going to get into education. I'm going to make the most of this time because of the years thinking about it. And I knew I was going to do it. **So I said, really, I want to get what I can out of this, I'm not going to sit around and waste eight years sitting here in the room like.** [...] Well, not that I think I was there 28 years old and I had only a junior cert. That's all I had like.*

The first one [of the two kids] was just a baby [when I came back]. The second one, you know, when I was in prison, like, I didn't really know, now we are the closest ever. Like, he loves me and I love him like, he stays with me every weekend. But I didn't really get to know him that way. I because he was only a little. She was pregnant when I went in, actually. So I never it was only when I got out I got to know him. But we are real close, as I said. I was only there for I got five years. But I didn't say, you don't do five years. You do three years, seven months.

So I did more than people in the education that people who had 25 years in those three years. [...] I went straight to school the next day. I knew... I went straight to school anyways, the next day. Even at the start I wanted to go to school just to have something for court, you know, certs or something. You know, like say "he's doing his leaving cert and there's that". And just to try to get some time off, it did help. I got two years off, but there were conditions that I had to go to education when I'm out, but I was out that was my plan regardless, because I was doing already so much in prison, but there's a lot of people get them conditions that have no plans at all to go

to education and they don't want to go to education and at the end they just go back in prison. But it did work for me, in that sense. But so I come back, stayed in prison, just went to school every day, done every qualification that could be in there. **But the main one that did change my way of thinking was a social science QQI, because it really looked at what's going on around you like, and you really thought about it and studied it.** And then I done a communications class that you'll be presenting and talking and this and that and that really opened me up. **It gave me confidence to do that. And that helped me a lot like communications course. And then I just kept going, going, going. I come out there with like 50 QQIs, went straight to the access programme after that, and now I'm doing a business degree. [...]**

Education definitely changed my way of thinking. Definitely the social sciences one. Um. The teacher Orlaith. You know, probably some of the best people ever met in my life. And I'll think about them all the time. They always come to my mind, like. So most days I think about them, and that's weird like, to even say that, you know, because I'm always in some academic stuff, like, I've been doing that for the last five, six years now. So that's just my life now. It's just education and making me life better. I think of them a lot. I do. **Because they are good people, they've done so much for me. She went out away for me, like.** Sometimes they would come in, you know, like a half five in the night but they didn't have to - to the prison like, to do a class just with me, you know, I'd be the only student, because no one was really taking the education as seriously as me in there. I always knew why. Even at one stage I was thinking like education - if that would make me a better criminal. I was thinking that at one stage, I'm not going to lie like that. You don't even think of criminality then. It just goes away in your mind.

And then you hear, as I say, when I hear people talking about stuff like that, I cringe and I don't even like it, I don't. I've nothing in common with them anymore. Like, I don't regret being at it. **Like, I think it's an achievement in itself, changing like that itself, like from being so bad to being so good, like, it was definitely education that**

has done it. It was only education that done it because although I was, always going to go to education, but at the start I was to be a better criminal. But then it changed me way of thinking. [...]

Education to me is ... Social mobility, you know, like it's the only thing that can guarantee you a better life, education is. The only thing. That's what I find. But it's very addictive, education. I find that like and I hate starting something and not finishing it. I couldn't do that. That would really piss me off. And that's why once I start something, I'm going to finish it. So that's why. [...]

[A better life for me] is the peace. I love the peace. I love not worrying about...
Even now, like my family is still in that. My ma rings me, you know, like if I leave my house, I think there's 8 minutes from our house to mine. Now, my mom, she would say, "make sure you ring me when you're home". It's the stress I put on her over the years, and she still does that every day. Like she still worries like. An education is that ... an open door like. Like I was saying, I live in a lovely big house now with lovely people, and it's helped me in that sense. And that wouldn't have happened without education. And then, although I think sometimes that I don't fit in there, but I do, that's just my way of thinking. But I don't tell them about me past, no one. Well, one or two, but they're okay, but I try not... So I think I spoke to two girls from Kazakhstan that they work around the house and that. And they sussed that out. [...]
*I didn't tell them about prison or anything too bad. Like I just said "Yeah, I'm not from an area like this", but yeah... **I'll tell you one thing, anyone I would have ever said it to, you know, like in college or anything, it helped me more than it went against me, that I was in prison, it really did. I've never had a lecturer look down on me. Anything I've ever said it to, helped me. So I find in that sense, it helped me. I've never said the story to somebody, say... Look, everyone just be shocked and say fair play to you, to come from that to where you are now. Well, it's not going to stop. I've told you that my way of thinking has changed in prison and education has done that.***

But it wasn't that at a start like, I was just had my own agenda for education. It wasn't kind of a way to better myself, but I did better myself by an accident kind of thing, like. [...]

Orlaith and Rory. There was a guy called Rory. He'd done my leaving certs and so I spent a lot of time with him, like he put a lot of time into me. I always think, right, there are all investing their time on to me, also, you have to kind of get results here. You're just being mad if you don't. [What motivates me to keep going] My kids and me ma. And my quiet life. The peace. I love the peace. Now, sometimes I'm not going to lie to you, like sometimes I'll be like, I miss it, criminality like. I'm not going to lie about that. Sometimes I do miss it, but it's not an option. I miss the money. I don't miss the stress. Yeah, I don't miss the shooting. Don't miss people trying to kill me, you know, all that. And it just became normal where we live. Like now I'm not saying, there's a lot of good people where we live, like they have went to college and me next door neighbour went to college, I know him very well like. But it's a very small minority of people that go to college. So it was kind of one of them areas you think there's just two options. Sell drugs or rob, that's the only options you think you have or get a job. [...] And the way I look at it, it's that worth putting all that stress on everybody just to go around and those nice cars and clothes? I don't think so, you know. But that's the way they think because they don't know any better. That's what it is. I don't blame them. I blame society, not them like.

[...] But then when I got educated it changed my whole way of thinking. It really did. It changed my whole way of thinking. It's the best thing I ever done. But it wasn't easy. It was a lot of sacrifices. Even now, I sacrifice a lot. I still sacrifice, and I probably will sacrifice and for the next couple of years. But I will do it. It'll be worth it. I learned to live on little money. Now, you know, it's normal. I'm not doing that bad because I live in a nice place and driving the car and never would have thought it would happen. I go away a few times a year... And if need money, I can get it off my family, you know, so I don't care about money now, education means more to me than money. I can make a lot of money if I wanted. I turned me back to money for

education. I did already. One bad thing about education. Yeah, I'll tell you this is you really realise what idiots you had around you, when you get educated. And that's one thing. When I got educated, I really realised what idiots I was hanging around with. Like, I was like, I am not going to call them stupid, but they're just not educated and just think different things, like the way I used to think. I just had nothing in common with them people no more. I don't want to be with people don't have goals, you know, they just live day by day. I don't want that. **I like the structured life now. I can't wait to get a job and just live a normal life like I'm living a normal life. It's just a student life now.** [...] When I didn't care about getting the open prison, that's when I really realised that something has changed. I didn't care about that then. And then it was even stages when I was offered, not an open prison, but it's a bit of a better prison and I refused it because I wanted to stick with my education. Around then I knew this was important to me. It became addictive, really did. The amount of qualifications I've come out with already, even now from prison, like. [...]

[What inspires me] all the bad I've done in life. That's one, I got loads of inspirations. All the bad I've done in life. I want to prove people wrong and my kids, my mum and it keeps me away from, it keeps me, it keeps me grounded, education does like. So I'm always busy. I've no time to think about bad stuff like and I'm so busy in education and I'm not thinking like in that criminal world, it changes you. It's a fact. It has worked for me, but it's so easy to come in here. [...] It did change my way of thinking, helped me a lot from the one I used to have then. It was the social sciences on that really helped me. It was because I looked... **Before I didn't look at that sort of stuff, you know, like society or this, that.. It showed me the world. It showed me what's around me. It showed me what's around me, it really opened me eyes. I didn't care about what was around me then. I just cared about myself. It was selfish. It helped me with confidence, education did. Helped me speak.**

[...] But the education, that changed my whole way of thinking for the better. Like they should invest a bit more time and money into education in the prisons. I'm not saying it's bad, it's really good. But if you want to go, you have to kind of have to go

out of your way. You have to work really hard. Well, they should make a mandatory that you have to do it or else you have to be there. That's what they should do. And it would help because a lot of people are just sitting around in prisons doing nothing, nothing, just plotting and planning for how to get the next dose. That's what prisons are, if you have drugs, you're the main person in there. And I know it's blatant, it's shocking and it's wrong, but that's how it is. [...]

My best moment? I think it was when I was wearing my cape, you know, like this. And getting me cert. Listen to this. I'm glad you said that, right? When I was going in to graduate, the sergeant that's dealing with me all my life was graduating a law degree! And he's a cop! And he seen me! [...] **So, there was a cop that had me arrested, locked me up for years, and he was doing the law degree and I the computer science one and he seen me! Yeah and he seen me, and he comes over and shook my hand and says, "Fair play to you" he says!** [...] I felt good because... He knows me ma as well, he knows me ma was shot in the head over me and all. And he says, you know, like he turns and says to me, "I always knew you are smart" he says, "So I always knew you were smart, but fair play, for doing this". And he even said, "this is going to open some doors for you". And it did like, he was right! But before I wouldn't have even spoken to him. And shake his hand and congratulate them and all, like, and he's doing the same to me. But that's a sort of a change for me, like and I remember I seen them, you know, because you do in [name of venue removed], everyone's graduating and I had seen him walk past me and I said to me friends "he caught me with a gun!" The same cop did when I was 16 like, they caught me with a gun. And so he knows me, knows me real well. You know, he knows my family well, well, no, not in a good way, like. And so I seen him and said he looks like a cop that we know. And I said, couldn't be, you know, what he be doing here like, because he's a sergeant, he already has a good job! And then, you know, the names come up on the screen. I see his name. I said, that is him! My ma was in the crowd, she's seen the name on the screen! So after we were in [name of place removed], you know, they're getting sandwiches and tea or whatever, and he comes over to me, then. It was like as if he came there just to see me, because he didn't stay long either. You know, he

comes over. He's in his cape and I am in my cape and congratulates me! I'd say he didn't look any different, but I'd say for everyone I knew I suppose I would look strange! [...] I was shocked! He was treating me different, anyways, he wasn't talking to me as criminal. You know, he's talking to me as an academic, not a criminal. And I did feel good, like not going to lie. My ma was there as well, and she was proud.

*Never stop. I just don't want to be in trouble and I don't want to go through all that stuff again. The heartache and people dying and ... Not a life to live. **But when you are stuck in them places, you don't know any different. That's the only life to live. Education showed me there's a different life to live.** And that's what I'm living now. I've been living it since 2015. And I've never looked back like. I always get chances to look - loads of offers to do this and that and I just refuse them because you could easily fall back into them traps. Friends trying to give me brand new cars and all, you know. I just won't take them. I don't care about that sort of stuff anymore. You don't bother me like that. I just want to achieve this degree. That's the main thing now.*

But when you are stuck in them places, you don't know any different.

That's the only life to live.

Education showed me there's a different life to live.

In Oisin's story, several key points and themes can be identified. Recognition, both from others and within himself, played a crucial role in Oisin's story. As he shares in his narration, through various educational courses, such as social sciences and communications, Oisin experienced a significant change in his way of thinking and gained confidence. Then, the unexpected encounter with the arresting officer during his graduation ceremony symbolised a moment of self-realisation for Oisin. The officer's acknowledgement and congratulatory words demonstrated a shift in their relationship, from one defined by Oisin's past criminality to one based on academic achievement and personal growth.

Motivation for change and self-improvement also emerged as a significant theme in Oisin's story. His motivation changed after he engaged in education and as he shares, his children, his mother, and the desire for a peaceful life served as powerful motivators for him to keep going and pursue a better future. Furthermore, as he shares in his story, education provided him with the tools and perspective to challenge the limited options he once believed were available to him, and tools to “read” and “understand “the world around him.

Aris, the last participant I met during my time in Greece, held a unique connection with me as he was the only one that was of similar age as me. Soft-spoken and reflective, Aris opened up about his childhood and his involvement in a life of crime and violence. Alongside battling drug addiction, he found himself involved in fan violence and sports hooliganism. Aris's encounter with the justice system started early on, receiving his first conviction and subsequent detention as a teenager. During our conversation, he shared a profound of the ways in which he identified change within himself, with a particular emphasis on trust and education, in his words, how he learned to trust others through his engagement in education.

Aris shared how he developed the ability to trust others, recognising the significance of forming genuine connections and support systems. As a symbol of his journey, Aris chose the bookmark. To him, it represented the idea of returning to something meaningful. It symbolises how you can always return to something, as it is never too late. Aris expressed the belief that no matter what life throws at him, the progress he has made and the self-care he has embraced cannot be taken away; it remains a part of him. Aris entrusted me with intimate details and experiences that he had not shared with anyone else and I am deeply honoured.

This is his story.

***“I found trust. I trusted others,
Which is a very hard thing to do, to trust in prison.
Despite all this, I trusted others and started to share things about myself.”***

The truth is that I was thinking about it, what you said... I don't know the title. I would definitely say about a child who grew up with his family, with family values, even though he later turned away from the family. I have certainly received so much,

values, some things that even now in my life, I do keep them close to my heart, kindness, all these.

But, as a child, I also wanted to make my revolution, and that's how it all started, because I knew how much my parents loved me, so what I wanted to do something that would hurt them, and that was to harm myself. I didn't get it then, now that I've left it behind me, I understand it. There was a lot of fighting in my house, my parents were shouting and fighting, so me and my sister did not want to see that, we would cry a lot... I was looking for ways to leave the house and started hurting myself. **I got involved with gangs from Russia, I wanted to join groups and show that I am a big deal, I wanted to feel like I belonged.** Of course, my parents didn't let me hang out with them, and I didn't listen to them, whatever they told me not to do - that's exactly what I did. And so from there, I started smoking, I started taking cigarettes from my father in secret, then I started, at a young age, to steal from shops, from the supermarket, chocolates, chewing gums, these were the first steps, I remember. And for sure, I would try to be the best of all, the one who steals the most, the one who steals the fastest, the one who doesn't let anything get to him... and that's what I was trying to do. And so from there and later I started stealing cars, drugs came into my life, and so I thought I was someone, you know.

And basically, I was the youngest in all the groups, and wherever I go, I am always the youngest. And here in the KETHEA community I am the youngest. Now I'm 27; now I've grown up (laughs). **In some things, I feel that I am still young and maybe there are some things I have not experienced in my life. And I want to experience them. I grew up before my time.** I see that now, let's say with people I hang out with, girls and boys, who are 25-26 years old, and I see a difference on how they think, I listened to the things they say, and I try to participate somehow, but sometimes I feel awkward and I cannot connect with them. I say to myself, look... and there I see in myself that I have indeed grown up before my time. [pause]

*Then I started with the sport hooliganism, let's say. I was a fan of PAOK. I liked all the stuff going on there, because I was used to drama from a young age, my father hitting my mother and being physically violent at home. So for me, it was something familiar the incidents of violence and hooliganism... until at the age of 17 I was already using drugs, I was taking different drugs, so at 17 came my first sentence, as a minor, in youth detention. **Because when I went to prison for the first time I met people who looked at me like I was somebody. They encouraged me, like “good for you” and “you do things”, so I had a status in the prison as well.** And I stayed there for 6 months; I got out for the first time, after 6 months and then I had already tried heroin in prison, youth detention was very harsh, riots, stabbings, the prison was full of shit. You'd say good morning to someone and they would try to stab you! it was a very harsh prison for minors. I got out after 6 months, and then I was involved with hard drugs, I was going to parties, I was taking LSD, ecstasy, in general I was trying everything that was available to me.*

***What I liked is that when I got out of prison the first time, was the way people approached me, who looked at me as if I was someone;** when I got out of prison, girls started to approach me and even those who wouldn't talk to me before. I liked all that, and after a year and a half, I got back in prison ... for a beating up someone. I got in again. I beat up a police officer.*

*The second time was 5 and a half years. When I entered the youth detention again, there I started like I was someone, at the age of 19, especially towards the warden and the managers. I got to the point of going into the warden's office holding knife to threaten his life... I was sent to the adult prison, at 20 years old. Lots of solitary confinement, too much. I might have spent more than a month in solitary confinement, in isolation. I was being transferred from one prison to another, always to a bigger one. I was always known where I went, I had connections with the rest of the prisons. When I caused a fight in the first prison they sent me to an even tougher prison. **I think that was a 5 and half year disaster.***

After 5 and a half years, since I experienced 5 prisons, I was released after 5 and a half years and when I was finally released and I didn't have anyone, my mother lived

abroad, only my father was here, I went and met my father, but he was confined in the house, he had lung cancer. My mother abroad... And I had a girlfriend while I was in prison for 5 years. We knew each other from before, but we stayed for many years together. And I went to live with her, but it was so unfamiliar, **I was completely institutionalised. And so, after only 2 months I was back in prison.**

When I got out after 5 and a half years, yes, I did a lot of drug use, I used heroin and cocaine, but I always thought and I knew this was not me, I was never like that. I thought I did it because I needed it for support, but it wasn't my own thing. I wanted to throw it away somehow, I was looking for something to hold on to and escape from it. Because deep down I knew I wasn't that person, that was not me.

Basically when I got out and I saw my parents, my mother was with another partner. This annoyed me, it was too much for me. Somehow I took my father's side and reacted in a very bad way. I went back to prison. **When I was arrested the last time, I asked the court to put me in a treatment program for drug abuse.** I had heard about programs before, but I just made fun of them, I wasn't interested. Until I asked the prosecutor to put me in a program, because I really wanted help. **Prison didn't help me, all these years, prison made me worse. And he didn't send me to a program.** When I went to prison I had heard about KETHEA and I knocked on their door, they told me to apply, and I applied. Then I waited for my turn to come. I went and asked every week. Despite all this, I persisted.

I wanted to get out of prison too. I wanted did not want to see those people anymore. And that day came, when they did called me and I went for an interview. I did the first group therapy, the second, the third, I liked it. **I related to the others. Yes, I also saw those who were there to get some sort of certificate. I could see in myself that I would leave that place feeling better.** They made fun of me in prison, saying things like "where are you going", "only snitches go there", etc. I wanted to find a way to escape from all of this and that way was the KETHEA program. I moved on to the next phase and that was the preparation to enter the KETHEA community. I joined

*the community. Basically, I had no idea what the program would be like, and the community in general, the truth is that when I entered I was a little scared. **And there I found, I don't know, what I was looking for all my life... all the warmth and understanding I got.** It was so different in the program compared to the rest of the prison. So I found what I was looking for. I found warmth, hugs, love. Someone to share, to talk to and to talk honestly, without being afraid, to share things about myself. [...]*

I found trust. I trusted others, which is a very hard thing to do, to trust in prison. Despite all this, I trusted others and started to share things about myself.

In the community I basically started reading books. In the beginning I was reading psychology books by Nietzsche and Freud and such. And then I realised that they were not helping me and that I am not on that level and I am losing the essence. I looked for something different. And I started reading novels. So with battles and such and I liked it. I am dyslexic, when I'm stressed I start and get stuck and I read slowly, I need to spell things out sometimes.

There was a volunteer teacher there. I approached her, I was interested in being tutored, to learn to write essays. In general, when I... I like to write. Let's say when I'm not feeling well I can sit down to write and analyse what I feel, my thought.** You know, I saw this today and what it did to me, the thoughts it provoked. And so slowly I started to read. I have a problem with spelling, but I improved both my handwriting and my spelling. I had dropped out of school in the first year of lower secondary school, when I was 13. I started studying, I started reading, I sat the exams, I passed. Basically, when I sat the exams last year, it's been a year and some months now... those were the days I was waiting to get out [meaning to get out of prison, as in Greece they sit the exams in schools outside of prisons, always accompanied by the police]. **And I passed the exams, basically I was studying like this for the first time in my life, and I liked it. Mathematics, which I used to hate, here I liked it! There was someone here, who spoke to me nicely and explained stuff I did not get and I understood them.

So I studied and I did well. Let's say when the professor gave us the questions there in the exam, I knew them all. Me! That I was never a good student! Never been able to remember things! So I passed and I set as my goal to finish the secondary school... Now I am in the second year of secondary school. [...]

I was released last year and after many years I went back to school. It was the first day I went to school, I felt awkward... [...] It's somehow different. Now I work a normal job, every day, 6 out of 7 days a week. [...] I'm tired, I wake up at 7 in the morning, until 4 when my work ends, sometimes 5, I come home, I eat, I take a shower and I go to school. [...] Even though I'm also struggling with finances. I have an expensive rent and while I have a house in the west part of the city where my parents are, I don't want to go to the west to live. No, I don't want to, I grew up there, everyone knows me there, I want to go somewhere where they don't know me, I want to live another life. [...] this year I'm thinking about what to do, what the future holds. What I said at the beginning, many times I feel that I haven't done things and I want to do them and sometimes it doesn't happen, because I've passed that age, the moments is gone and I have to look after other things now. [...] Actually, I want to do a second job to support myself, but there wouldn't be any time for school. But I don't want to leave school, to lose this environment of the school.

Basically, in the beginning, I wanted to go, like, into the humanities. Because I wanted to deal with the humanities, in general when I started and in the [therapy] groups, I started to take a stance and so I started thinking a little bit deeper. When I would talk about, for example when I would focus on drug use, I would give some answers that would make the other person think that what you want to do is a consequence of this. I related to so many issues, so I would speak many times, we shared so much, we did... This is it basically, that I want to help people, and from a young age, I had a period in my life when I was a volunteer in the Red Cross. I still have contact with them. When I have time off I visit, I just can't volunteer anymore as I have a criminal record. But with the people there I know that if I tell them I need

help, they will help me, just like with family. Because they know that if they ask me for something, I will do it, even though I was on drugs during that period, I did not do anything wrong.

Well education for me is... Basically, it helped me not to feel bad about my dyslexia, not to be ashamed to speak, to be able read out loud to people. Not to have insecurities that I'm reading in syllables, that when I read out loud, I might get stuck but I'll take my time again, I won't give up. I want to see it through to the end. To get the specialty, I will think about it for the time being if I want to give Panhellenic exams, to go to IEK. And I hope that what I want to finish, the tourism studies, at some point I will deal with it. I know Russian very well, I speak, I write, I just don't know the alphabet, I just don't know it. But I manage. I know a little English and I want to learn Italian now. The more I learn for me, the better.

[Learning] **It gives me ways to open my mind and then be able to... for example with mathematics, with the work I do it is necessary, because it has to do with money, quantities, pieces, so that's one reason. The school helps me with the philology because, as I told you, I have dyslexia, it goes away little by little, it needs work, I understand that it needs work, so I practice it every day. In general, knowledge is knowledge, it makes me a better person.**

I see a big change in myself. The way I speak. The way I state my opinion and take a stand on some issues. For example, I would to be in a group and like a good time and now we are talking, they were talking about some issues and I have no idea. All I know is about penalties etc. And I couldn't participate in the discussion and that made me feel bad. Along with school, it includes dating, lessons, some topics we discussed. I take someone from there so I feel like I can participate in a group where there will be a discussion. That's important to me. This gives me, how can I say it... space. I just feel that it is useful, that I can participate as well. I'm not far away, **I'm not that different from the rest of the people. We all experience the same situations, the same things, just in different ways and at different times, but we all have our**

problems, that's what I see. Many things are just in my head. This helps me in my social circle. [own translation]

Reflections on Aris's Story

*“And there I found, I don't know,
what I was looking for all my life...
all the warmth and understanding I got.”*

In Aris's story, the key events he recognises include his decision to turn to the KETHEA community and seek education. It was there that he experienced a sense of recognition and support, which allowed him to develop trust in others, despite the very challenging prison environment. Through education, Aris forged connections with fellow participants, sharing personal experiences and fostering a sense of community. He mentions that he discovered that he was not that different from others and that he could find a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging and support enabled Aris to find motivation for self-discovery and to become agent of his own learning. It is the continued dedication and commitment to education, despite the everyday difficulties of balancing work and school, that reflects his agency in overcoming obstacles and pursuing his own learning journey. Aris's story highlights very distinctively the themes of recognition, trust-building, and agency.

Fionn and forms of misrecognition

Fionn struck me as a very warm person from the very beginning. He has white hair and he smiles a lot. During our conversation, I was deeply moved by his generosity in sharing his life story. It was evident that he had dedicated considerable thought and reflection to his narrative, and his ability to maintain a structured and cohesive account was remarkable. Fionn opened up about his childhood and his experiences within the formal education system. He shared the various forms of abuse and misrecognition he had endured personally or witnessed in others. Despite the challenges he faced, Fionn did engage in education in prison and spoke of the impact it had on him, emphasising the key role played by a supportive probation officer. Fionn's positive experience led him towards a successful career in educational support and addiction counselling, where he has been involved in facilitating programs within prisons. When asked about the object that best symbolises his life journey and trajectory, Fionn pointed, without hesitation, to his wedding ring. To him, the ring encapsulates the profound significance of love, commitment, and connection, and the fact that he did find that in life.

This is his story.

***“I struggled with school then and
I was never seen as being the part of the system.”***

And so I just I suppose I started.

*I was born and raised in a very small rural town, here in Ireland. Uh, it's in the Midlands, so very rural town. I was born into a very middle-class, working class, depends on the opinion, family. My father was a plumber. My mother was a housewife. **I grew up in a very staunch conservative Catholic home.** There was seven, I have seven siblings. I'm the eldest of 7 of my parents' children. I have three brothers and four sisters. My mother and father split up years ago and they have another two kids from a different relationship. Of the original family, I have three*

brothers and three sisters and myself and I am the eldest of those. So we grew up in a very small rural town in the 70s and 80s in Ireland, which would have been very kind of... you know, it wasn't much going on in the town. It was a very isolated town, I suppose from everything. So I suppose I started school at four or five. It was primary school with the nuns. It was in the Presentation Convent and everybody went to Catholic schools then in Ireland. And so I started in primary school in first class or the senior infants or whatever it was called. **Back then my memories, back then weren't pleasant.** I have only one memory from and really, that you had to have a certain standard coming into school, we lived in poverty, a lot of poverty in our home and you had to wear a certain kind of shoe for school. I didn't have them one day and I was forced to wear a nun's pair of shoes. **So that was my first memory of school, would be one of embarrassment and of being shamed. And I wasn't a great student, I never really... I could learn, but it never had the capacity to learn growing up.** So for me, school wasn't a pleasant experience. I was very bad at language, especially at Irish language, trying to learn that, I was very bad in mathematics and I still am today (smiles) in maths.

And I suppose those early years and early primary school would have been around basic learning skills. I read and write, I was OK with that, literacy issues, I have no problem with - reading and writing and I am a good reader. I love reading and I still do today. So that was the first couple of years before, I then went to primary school, which would have been the Christian Brothers Primary School. **And I suppose back then, corporal punishment was prolific in the schools then.** So again, because of the part of town I came from, we were treated differently to other persons in town by the teachers. For example, if you came from a very rural background of farmers where there was a lot of wealth, you were treated differently. **When you came from a housing estate - that I came from - you were kind of treated differently, your position in the classroom was different from the - as we called them - rich kids, so we were put in the back of the classroom rather than the front.** And we were kind of treated differently in that sense by the Christian Brothers, by the teachers. **Again,**

in my school there was a lot of bullying for me in school. There's a lot of fear and trepidation at school. But my home life was very disruptive as well, because I came from a very physically abusive home. As a child, my father was very physical with this punishments and we were constantly at fear. So the trauma of that would have affected me learning growing up, as a child, and again from first class up to sixth class, which would be in the school, the primary school years. I didn't enjoy school, but yeah, I like to learn. I was very interested in history. History was a thing that always interested in. I wouldn't have said I was academic by any stretch of the imagination (smiles). But yes, I know I'm a very academic person today, but back then I wasn't given the opportunity to be academic. 'cause we learned the basics. You know you had your basic class system, where you had your History, English, Maths, Irish (which I hated), and that's me whole language, but I still hear Irish... Geography. And then there was the music classes and things which I was never into, I was never part of it.

So I struggled in primary school as well, and I wasn't very focused and what I needed to do. I couldn't sit down and do homework, our home life didn't help with that either, there was six or seven of us at that age, growing up together and you know, we never had the proper school books, we never had a proper place to... there was me and my three brothers in one bedroom and there was my three sisters in another bedroom, you know. We lived in a small house. And you know you couldn't study you couldn't... There wasn't time given to study or to learn. My parents, my father in fairness, in that he was physically abusive, in that sense, he was a good worker. He worked all his life and he never had any addictions or issues like that. So he worked full time but at night time he done other jobs as well. And my mother was there mostly in charge of the home and she never encouraged us to learn. She never kind of sat down, you know: "You have to do your homework now, get it done" so we never really know - we were all I was always in trouble in school. I never had my homework done. Um, you know, I never had the right books that were needed because one of my siblings would have destroyed the book. Are you know they would destroy

my notebook or my copy book or whatever. So again, in primary school there was a struggle. You know, and then, I suppose, then again, it because, as I said, the physical punishment. So you were usually sent to the headmaster. But the punishment was usually with the leather as they called it. It was a strip of leather about that length (shows with hands), and inside had coins and you put your hand out and you got (again demonstrates making the gesture) slapped hard, as punishment and the teachers in the class would also hit you or assault you, because that was the norm. That was the way teaching was done back then. You were constantly being punished physically for your whatever discretion in the school. Um, because we were always a family without money, you know our clothing wouldn't have matched anybody else's, so there's a lot ... **I was bullying an awful lot in school and continued to be in primary school, and because it's just I was struggling, I struggled with school then and I was never seen as being the part of the system.** I was always part of kind of "he's too stupid, he won't learn". So there was never any help given to me in primary school. You know, I went through all of the first to sixth class in primary school again. I just got through every year. In sixth class, we had to do an assessment to go into secondary school so that for me would have been along 1982. I would have progressed into secondary school and we had to do an entrance exam for that. Of course because of my learning lack of knowledge I was put into what they called third level. So you had a very high level, then the next level and then the likes of myself.

So I went into secondary school around 1982 and that was an absolute nightmare for me. Because again, there was a lot of bullying going on. And I began at that stage to not go to school when I should've been going. I would leave the house, but I would go somewhere else. So I missed out a lot of my education and they never took part in education. And yet, I had a desire back then to be a teacher, but yeah, I couldn't learn and I struggled, I hadn't focused in secondary school. So, um, I went into secondary school then and from first year to third year. I lasted as far as third year. I would have been around 15-16. I done what was then known as intermediate certificate, which is today called Junior Cert. **I sat the exam for that, I literally**

*walked in, sat down, got the exam paper wrote stuff like f*** all teachers, hang all teachers, stood up and left. So I failed my intermediate, I didn't pass any of the nine exams I sat. And I was asked to leave school, my headmaster at the time said "get out, you'll never learn, we don't want you back, don't come back to the school". And I left formal education then. Again, I hadn't learned and my literacy, my reading and writing was perfect. There was no issue around my knowledge around certain stuff, around history was fantastic, I really enjoyed that, you know, but in regards to the skills you needed to go into employment, I never had them skills, mathematics, you know stuff like that.*

*So I left school at that school at 15. Yeah 15, it would have been. And I got a job working on a coal truck because I was basically told get a job or get out of the house. So at 15 I had to get some employment. **Then again because of the trauma of childhood and bullying, I could never, I never coped with life.** So I began drinking. Now alcohol would be a part of my teenage years as well. I started drinking at the age of 11 and I continue drinking then from my teenage years and so between the ages, I suppose of 15 and I would say 24 education was gone.*

*I didn't go into education in any way, I went between jobs, I got onto a kind of, it was kind of a development program for what would be seen as the early school leavers back then. And I would do lots about metalwork and woodwork and learning skills like that, and I did it because I got paid every week and I had money for drinking. It was grand, I didn't care about anything that. I done a course in one of the colleges in Ireland, now I won't mention the college. And I lasted two months, I was 16, because of sexual abuse from one of their the priests, I went into college and I left after two months because of what was happening. So that was then. So I left that. And again, alcohol in my life as a teenager was a disaster. I drunk an awful lot. I got into a lot of trouble. I self-harmed from the age of 13 with overdoses and cutting myself. So, my childhood and my teenage years were very traumatic for me. Up to the age of 24 and in 1994. I was sent to prison. I was sentenced to life imprisonment for [information removed]. **And I was sentenced to life imprisonment in '94.***

*And that began my change in life. I realised where I was, what I had to do, and what my life story was now and I made a decision then. I wasn't going to spend the rest of my life in prison. I was going to get out by some way and to do it properly. So I began to change myself. So after a year of my sentence, I decided I wanted to go back to education. I wanted to learn. **So I went to the school in the prison. And then they were fantastic. I have to say they were very supportive.***

*So I studied a Social Science degree in prison from 1995 up to 2001, it was a 6-year program. And I passed that. No, I have to say I enjoyed it. The learning was fantastic and for me, it was important to learn and to see how intelligent - that I had intelligence that I had the capacity to learn. **But that aside, I was I annoyed at myself that I didn't do it when I could have, when I was in school. I had that capacity to learn but I never, I never used it when I was in school.** And while I was doing the degree, I also done a two diplomas at the same time, one in criminology and one in education and special needs. So I have done that and I spent a lot of work on that and I achieved my degree, I achieved my diploma, which was a fantastic feeling for me. **I was the first one in my family to get a degree while in prison. I was allowed out for the day to go and get my degree in the college here in [location and college name removed], and my father and some of my siblings attended and it was a very proud day for me.** And of course, me being me as well, I am very cheeky, when I got my degree, I actually photocopied it and wrote in the back of it "Who's stupid now?" and posted it to my old headmaster. Well, he didn't respond to, (laughs) but as I was angry as well, in the sense that if I had been given a chance back then, maybe if somebody had focused on me, I could have learned and my life might have taken a different path. **So it was fantastic the support I got in prison because I was treated as an adult and I was encouraged to learn.** I was encouraged, you know, and I was given as much support and I needed. And I did struggle. I did struggle with the degree several times over the years because it was hard doing this without coming from the background formal education. And but the focus, I think for me was that this wasn't an exam for anybody, I doing this for myself. I wanted to learn, because I was aware*

that in order to go forward in life, you need an education. And I really I really, you know, I believe in education. And today, I always believe in it, you know.

*So that was what my prison education was all about. I know over the years in prison I have done courses and personal development and learning because they were all needed to be done. But the difference between my formal school years and my prison school education was that I was doing it for me. I was doing it for myself and the benefits I got from that education was fantastic for me because it gave me a lot of courage, a lot of self-esteem, you know, that I could actually achieve it. You know, if I sent off an assignment and it came back, I was always shocked at the points because, well, I got great results! (laughs) **Whereas in all my education I knew was gonna fail so I didn't bother. This time I wasn't, I was aware I needed to do this and I pushed myself.** [...]*

*Then I got into another education program called Alternative To Violence Program and I took part in that as a participant to learn how to live life with a nonviolent way. However, I did ended up becoming a facilitator for that program, so I would then deliver the program to my peers within the prison as well, so that was learning for me, another educational session for me because I learned how to work with people I learned how to work with groups, facilitate my peers in a group. [...] Also trained other people to be facilitators. So I end up in a very educational background, I became a teacher, that I always wanted to be, but a different way than the teacher I thought I would be. So my last year in prison I got a job working with young men and antisocial behaviour in [location removed] and as part of that I learned the skill to develop training programs for people. [...] **So I suppose the encouragement I got was important, because it made me feel maybe normal, and people were encouraging for no other reason except for my own benefit.** And though I was afraid to go into education, I was afraid because I didn't want to be seen as being stupid, because I failed every exam I did, you know, I wasn't good in education in schools and I didn't want to have that embarrassment, I did not want to have these feelings again. But I was encouraged to go and when I went to speak with the school, I said*

like “I want to do this, I want to go to university and they said, well, let's stop a second and think, why don't you try and do this first?” [...] **And you know, it was that encouragement I got...**

*And it was also talking, talking with the probation service, talking with a probation officer, you know, and she was saying, you know, how important education is and you know it's needed, and if I wanted to achieve anything in life that, if I was going for a job in the future, if I had no education and there is someone that has education, who are they going to choose? So there was that part of it as well, and it was that kind of reality that was said to me. And so I decided to go for it, and it was the best decision I ever made because it brought me into an area in my life I never thought I'd be. You know, I mean, if I went back to '96 now and someone said to me that, you know that, nearly 30 years later that I'd be a project leader or working in an organisation I would laugh at you! But I began that path that gave me the life I have today. And it's a life that I should have in my teens and my 20s but because of all the damage and everything else, I could not achieve that then, I am achieving that now. [...] **By making the choice to do that change, education was a big part of that, because it taught me a lot about myself that I had the capacity, that I have, you know, all that knowledge and intelligence in myself, and understand that actually no, you're not stupid. You're not inferior and you are not a waste. And that strengthened my belief in myself. And that brought me on the path I went on.***

“So I suppose the encouragement I got was important, because it made me feel maybe normal, and people were encouraging for no other reason except for my own benefit.”

In Fionn's story, I focused on moments of misrecognition within the context of formal education and instances where he showed agency and identified change. His educational journey was characterised by various moments of misrecognition. Memories of school were mainly fear and anxiety due to prevalent bullying and the use of corporal punishment. Fionn, coming from a less privileged background, was treated differently by the teachers. Moreover, his home environment included physical abuse. These experiences in the first part of his narration are linked to the theme of misrecognition, which, as he narrates, affected Fionn's self-belief.

Fionn's narration takes a turn when he describes the beginning of his imprisonment and his decision to engage in education. The support he received from the prison school staff played a vital role in his journey. Reflecting on his past, Fionn expressed a sense of pride when he received his degree. The support and encouragement he received in prison education made him feel valued, motivating him to progress academically. Through his education in prison, Fionn did challenge his negative self-perceptions. Themes of the significance of educational relationships, the creation of a supportive and safe learning environment in prison, and the empowerment and agency experienced by Fionn are interwoven in the second part of his story.

6.2. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has presented four stories as vignettes, employing the voice relational approach discussed in the methodology chapter. The inclusion of these vignettes serves multiple purposes, including preserving the authenticity of the participants' voices, and exploring the interconnectedness of the main themes identified in the previous chapter. Through the vignettes, the participants' unique perspectives, emotions, and experiences are upheld and honoured. Their narratives are presented authentically, capturing the nuances of each story. The vignettes align with the voice relational approach and encompass readings for the voice of 'I', relationships, and placing people within cultural contexts and social structures. By delving into these readings, a deeper understanding of the participants' self-images, their relationships with others, and the broader cultural and social contexts that shape their experiences is achieved. The inclusion of these vignettes in this chapter enriches the presentation of the participants' narratives and contributes to a more comprehensive exploration of adult education in prison, as these stories amplify their voices, emphasising their agency, resilience, and aspirations for the future.

Chapter 7

Discussion

While well-intentioned, reformers are currently only guessing at the solutions. We live here, and we know how to fix it. Why is no one asking us?

(Ahmed et al., 2019, p. 74)

7.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the key findings that emerged from the exploration of the lived experience of prison education experiences through the lens of recognition and transformation. It highlights the significance of relationships and recognition within the educational encounter. The implications for policy and suggestions for further research are also discussed. Lastly, the thesis concludes by highlighting the value of narrative research and provides a personal reflection on my own learning journey throughout the project.

7.2. Going back to the research questions

Returning to the research questions that guided this thesis, this section aims to summarise the key findings by examining each of the questions.

Main research question:

What are the experiences of some of the people who participated in prison education as learners through the lens of recognition and transformation?

Subquestions:

- a) *What motivations and aspirations drive adult prisoners to engage in the educational process while in prison?*
- b) *How do former prisoners perceive the educational process and their encounters within the prison system?*
- c) *Is there an enduring change within their lived experience of education in prison?*

- a) As revealed in the analysis, all participants shared narratives that portrayed a positive outlook on prison education and the outcomes they achieved. Each participant explored the possibilities that education offered them, meaning that they engaged with what was made available to them. The motivation for re-engaging in the educational process varied among the participants. Some initially showed a different kind of motivation, viewing education as a means to escape the prison reality or pass the time.

However, their motivation transformed as they began to be perceived differently by significant others within the educational context. Through education, they formed new relationships or healed old ones, realising that they shared more similarities than differences with others. They were able to see themselves belonging to a group of people who continue in education or lead "ordinary lives". In some instances, education was the vehicle that helped them reach somewhere they wanted to go but had not found another way to do so, as Liam stated, to arrive at "the person he had always been". It is worth noting that, in the Greek context, this finding aligns with the literature, as Papaioannou et al (2016) also comment on this motivation shift, noting that the adult learners' experience in prison education led them to prioritise education and express a desire to continue their studies after release.

- b) The participants shared valuable insights regarding the educational process and their encounters within prison through their narratives. For many, education served as a turning point, a transformative experience that opened a door self-discovery. It became the space within the confines of prison where they had the opportunity to be viewed differently, removing the labels and stereotypes associated with their past and their educational potential. The educational relationship, whether with educators, or probation officers emerged as a key event, as it provided a supportive and empowering environment for their educational journey. In contrast to their prior experiences with the formal educational system, which may have been negative and disheartening, education in prison represents an antithesis and a chance to reclaim their intellectual potential, and engage with relationships that value their experiences.
- c) When examining the enduring change within their lived experience of education in prison, the participants described transformations on multiple levels in their lives after release. One significant aspect is the shifting attitude towards violence. Throughout their educational journey there were opportunities to confront and challenge the patterns of violence that may have characterised their past. Education fostered empathy, self-acceptance and self-reflection, which in turn contributed to a change in their perception and response to conflict. Furthermore, education empowered former prisoners to build new lives by making “ordinary and legitimate” choices and finding peace in them. The participants shared how education provided them with the tools necessary to pursue employment, establish stable relationships, and contribute positively to their communities. The inspiration to share and offer support to their community was also evident in their narratives. The lasting effect of regaining agency was another vital aspect of their lived experience of education in prison. Overall, education served as a catalyst for the participants to rediscover their sense of self and to regain a sense of control over their lives, reclaim their educational potential and to redefine their identities beyond the confines of their criminal past. In conclusion, the lived

experience of education in prison did have a profound and enduring impact on the participants.

7.3. Against the managerialistic approach- relationships matter

Those cheerleaders can chant all day every day and even get the USP Atlanta debaters to echo their chants, but it sounds to us like more hot-air politicians, empty promises, and joining whatever is the popular movement until the next one comes along. How come no one has a plan? A real plan with actual details, not just the keywords of “drug alcohol treatment,” “education,” “re entry,” and “job training”?

(Ahmed et al., 2019, p.74)

The above critique of the neoliberal approach to education by Ahmed et al. (2019) resonates with the findings of this study, which highlight the significance of relationships as the cornerstone of the educational process. The emphasis on skills acquisition overlooks the underlying socioeconomic factors of educational and social exclusion and ignores the significant impact of meaningful relationships in education. This aligns with Czerniawski's (2015) argument, which emphasises the crucial role of prison educators and the broader educational community in cultivating a comprehensive curriculum that extends beyond mere employability. Guided by the principles of adult education (Freire, 2000), such as active participation and respect for learners' life experiences, prison education is effective and beneficial when it recognises individuals as active agents in their own learning journeys, valuing their prior experiences as a foundation for knowledge-building.

Moreover, the concept of a wide curriculum is essential in prison education. Costelloe and Warner (2014) do highlight the significance of such an approach in prison education: a broad secondary school curriculum with consideration for the specific needs of adult learners. While the literature often highlights education's role in reducing recidivism, Key

and May (2019) propose a different perspective: viewing prison education as resistance. This perspective aligns with critical adult education theories and underscores the importance of an ideological framework that goes beyond vocational training to address prisoners' overall development. Thus, the curtailing of educational provision, as emphasised by Costelloe and Warner (2014), becomes a matter of vital importance. It is crucial for prison education to extend beyond vocational training and employability, embracing a comprehensive and transformative approach that addresses the needs of adult learners in prison.

7.4. Recognition

Through the narrations of the people who had indeed transformed themselves and their lives, it is evident that what matters most is the relationship at the heart of the educational encounter. The relationship between the individuals that participate in education, as teachers and as learners, sometimes without the distinction between the two roles is proven to be key.

The importance of recognition emerges as a core finding in this research. As highlighted in the life-stories, participants did find motivation for personal transformation when they are acknowledged and viewed through the lens of recognition by significant others. The participants shared this motivation shift through their educational journey and the relationships they formed with others in prison education. These significant relationships enabled them to perceive themselves in a different way. Recognition becomes the driving force behind their pursuit of an "ordinary life" and the adoption of new identities, such as student, teacher, partner, or son. An important note is that the process of shedding old labels and embracing new ones, demonstrated in this research, is inherently a social process that cannot be undertaken alone.

Honneth suggests that individuals derive motivation and potential for personal transformation when they are recognised and affirmed by significant others within their

social sphere (1996). Through the lens of recognition provided by these significant others, individuals learn to perceive themselves as valuable members of society. This recognition becomes the driving force behind their aspirations and the adoption of societal roles. Prisons, more than any other context, necessitate this process of recognition. People in prison face unique challenges and often lack opportunities for self-realisation and positive recognition. In light of Honneth's theory, it becomes evident that education plays a pivotal role in facilitating the transformative process within prisons. By providing an environment that fosters recognition, education helps individuals reclaim their educational potential and desires and rebuild their self-esteem.

In addition, this research underscores that while recognition plays a pivotal role in empowering individuals within the prison education system, it does not overlook the urgent need to change the political discourse surrounding crime. It calls for a shift from the prevalent individualistic approach, which places sole responsibility on the individual, to a more comprehensive examination of the sociological roots of crime. This broader societal perspective, addresses the underlying factors that lead to criminal behaviour, such as socioeconomic inequalities, lack of access to education and employment opportunities, and systemic injustices, all of which emerged as themes in the narratives of the participants.

Embracing the theory of recognition, this research underscores the significance of social processes and the role of education in enabling adult learners in prison to reclaim their agency and educational potential.

7.5. Implications for policy

Most prisoners want to change their lifestyles, but some just cannot find the proper paths for applying the change they desire. They want to change their paradigm but can't find practical applications that provide bases for transition. These stories will never be heard by lawmakers nor citizens because there is no platform that provides criminalized others a "voice" to represent themselves.

(Ahmed et al., 2019, p. 70)

While the primary goal of this project is not to generalise findings, but rather to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences of former prisoners in education and their life trajectories, it is important to acknowledge the implications these insights hold for policy considerations. By the life-stories that the participants shared and the key themes that emerge from the analysis, it becomes possible to identify key areas for policy development and improvement. While recognising the need for context-specific approaches, the following implications emerge from this project:

Enhancing Engagement and Motivation in Education

The narratives highlight that education serves as a powerful tool for re-entering society and mitigating the negative effects of imprisonment. However, the participants also express that education is the only aspect of their incarceration that had a positive impact. They emphasise the importance of motivation in their engagement with education and stress the need for adequate resources to be made available. The narratives reveal that once the adult learners are actively involved in their education, they demonstrate a commitment to continuing their educational journey and making progress.

Therefore, efforts should be made to improve motivation and engagement in education within prisons. To achieve this, it is crucial to provide adequate resources and create a safe

and respectful environment. Reducing barriers to accessing education within prisons is key, along with fostering engagement.

Promoting Family and Community Involvement

Family plays a vital role in the participants' journeys of education and self-formation. The involvement of family members and the community is seen as invaluable by the participants, with their mothers and educators identified as significant others who were the key sources of support and guidance. It is essential to encourage their active involvement in supporting the adult learners in prisons. By fostering these relationships, educational journey and successful re-entry into society can be hugely benefited.

Therefore, policies should be developed to facilitate meaningful connections between adult learners and their families, as well as use community resources to enhance support networks.

Harnessing Lived Experience

All the participants mentioned in their narratives the desire to share the gift of help and support. This desire to contribute and help others, often lead them to pursue careers in education, training, or facilitating seminars. This valuable lived experience should be recognised and harnessed within the prison education system. Encouraging the involvement of people with first-hand experience of prison education in decision-making, planning and organising educational initiatives can have significant benefits.

Their unique perspective and insights can greatly enhance prison education programs, while also demonstrating the value and applicability of lived experiences. This recommendation emphasises the potential of these individuals to contribute to society and should be considered when shaping policies related to prison education.

Summary of Policy Recommendations

- Improve motivation and engagement within prison education by providing adequate resources and creating a safe and respectful learning environment.
- Reduce barriers to accessing education in prisons and foster active engagement to promote positive outcomes for people in prison.
- Encourage active involvement of family members and the community in supporting adult learners in prisons.
- Recognise and utilise the valuable lived experience of individuals who have successfully undergone prison education by encouraging their involvement in planning and organising educational initiatives.

7.6. Suggestions for further research

A different point of view: teachers and probation officers

This piece of research on prison education has focused on capturing the participants' perspectives, which has offered invaluable insights into their experiences of the prison education system. However, one of the main findings of this study, the key role that significant others, probation officers and prison educators have had in the journeys of the participants, has showed a valuable suggestion for further research. By considering an exploration of the educators' point of view, particularly the teachers who played a significant role in impacting the participants' educational journeys, further research could seek to shed light on the factors contributing to such educational relationships. Questions that may arise would concern the principles and practices of adult education, including individualised teaching approaches, the role of encouragement and support, and the effectiveness of different pedagogical strategies. Examining what teachers have to say about their experiences in prison education will provide valuable insights that could contribute to the enhancement of prison education practices.

In that sense, understanding the views of educators and probation officers as "the other side" of the educational process will enable researchers to gain a comprehensive

understanding of how recognition operates from both the learners' and the professionals' perspectives. Recognition is not solely received by the learners; it is an integral aspect of the educational relationship experienced and enacted by all parties involved, including educators and probation officers. By exploring how these professionals experience recognition, both on a professional and individual level, we can better comprehend the dynamics of the educational relationship. Such research has the potential to inform policy and practice, leading to more effective and supportive prison education programs.

A different point of view: A woman's experience

As discussed in the limitations section of the thesis, this project did not include any women participants due to unsuccessful attempts to achieve a gender-balanced population for the study. The challenges and reasons behind the inability to recruit women participants were explained in detail earlier. Consequently, the narratives presented in this study primarily focused on the prison experiences from a male perspective.

Given the complexities surrounding access to women in prisons and the significant gender imbalance within the prison population, it would be beneficial to look at the life trajectories of women who have experienced incarceration and engaged in education while in prison. Exploring their experiences could offer invaluable insights and shed light on dimensions of gender and education that may have been overlooked in the narratives of male participants.

Furthermore, it would provide the opportunity to examine the intersectionality of gender, education, and other social identities within the prison context that would contribute to the development of gender inclusive educational policies and programs.

A different point of view- Who did not continue in education?

Another limitation of the research discussed in Chapter 4, was the recruitment of participants who had positive experiences with education in prison, and perhaps that is why they did stay in touch with gatekeepers and support services. Against this background, it is worth noting that exploring the perspectives of former prisoners who did not engage in

education or those who engaged but did not continue, would have a significant potential for recommendations for educational policy. While recognising the challenges that access to this populations poses, a suggestion for future research endeavours would be to include individuals who initially started but did not continue in education, to capture their lived experience. Examining the reasons behind non-participation or leaving prison education would provide insights into the barriers and challenges faced by people in prison in accessing and sustaining their engagement with education. This would not only help understand the complexities involved in promoting education within prisons, but also contribute to the refinement of educational policies and practices in prisons.

7.7. The Path ahead: on the Value of narrative research

The shared reflexivity and open disclosure of the researcher's dilemmas guarantee a fair, mature, and critical dialogue between scholars and their readers, a dialogue that gives the field of narrative research its energy and drives us all forward.

(Lieblich et al, 1998, p. 171)

Through sharing my own experiences, reflections, and observations during the journey of conducting narrative research through life stories, I aim to advocate for the immense value of this method in the social sciences. Without seeking to compare different methods, within the much-debated issue of qualitative-quantitative methods, I am making a case for encouraging the research community to engage in narrative research or include narrative elements in their research, despite the challenges that can be encountered. By viewing these challenges as opportunities to deepen our understanding of different types of qualitative inquiry, I believe there is an invaluable opportunity to overcome them and discover pathways in order to use their value in the research process. Narrative elements in research can indeed provide an insight into the lived experience that can be proved very valuable and useful in educational research and policymaking. That is as narrative inquiry and

analysis require a level of personal involvement, it is indeed at its core about the personal and the specific. And that makes it a way to explore the educational experience and its outcome by building on the insight that narrative inquiry has to offer.

“The singularity of experience offers one of the possible ways to confront the universal”

(Andrews, 2007, p. 491)

Although the literature on narrative research continues to grow since the “narrative turn” (Goodson & Gill, 2011), I found the engagement with how other researchers reported on and documented their fieldwork experiences particularly useful. The sharing of specific tensions, challenges, obstacles, or unanticipated difficulties, along with the methods they employed to address and integrate them into the research process, has prepared me for encountering my own moments of tension. I was made more aware of the kinds of tensions I might encounter and how to better design the research process in order to do it in the best way for the participants. It is again how through the specific, a more general understanding is achieved. By sharing my reflections on these challenges and the lessons learned, my aim is to contribute to the deepening of our collective comprehension of narrative methods and their effective employment in field research.

7.8. My own learning

I wish to conclude this thesis by sharing my own learning. I am very grateful for the stories I heard and it was an honour to be the one the participants trusted enough to share their memories, their life stories and their hopes and dreams. I am convinced and I made the case in this thesis that narrative research or narrative elements embedded in other types of social research can be more than beneficial in educational and social research and provide a perspective that can be proven invaluable in educational and social policy. More importantly, it provides a framework for reaching those voices that are often unheard. As seen in my own experience and as the feedback from the participants showed, the narrative

inquiry was the best approach and I might have not been able to even reach the participants if I had a different approach, especially under the circumstances the pandemic imposed. Narrative inquiry and the life stories, reflexive research along with a holistic framework employed provided a unique opportunity. Firstly, it gave me space to reflect on issues of ethics and positionality, the role of education and spaces of social exclusion in society. Secondly, it gave space for me and the participants to renegotiate issues of power, control and construction of knowledge.

I finish this research and I have learned that I did everything in my power to treat the participants and their stories with respect. I learned more about how to do that. I respected their time, space, stories and boundaries and all this came through my own learning during this research. I finish the project knowing that I carry with me the stories of people, parts of them, and their voices that were heard in this thesis. I finish this project and I know that the participants carry a little piece of me too. I finish this project that started in 2017 believing that I have learned to be a better educator, a better researcher and a better listener. I finish this project knowing that I am not the same as when I started, and I am grateful for that.

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Appendix

Letter to the gatekeeper for Ireland



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Letter to the gatekeeper

Dear [name of the manager or communications officer of the relevant service or support group],

My name is Angeliki Lima and I am currently a PhD Student in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. As part of this programme I am conducting research in the area of Prison Education and self-formation, looking at formerly incarcerated people's views on prison education and its effect on their later life (if any).

My research is under the supervision of Dr Aidan Seery and is entitled "Towards a critical adult education in prison. Participants' views on motivations, educational process and outcomes through the lens of recognition and transformation. A comparative study between Ireland and Greece."

I am writing to you to request your participation as my gatekeeper in my research. I am aware of your hard work and I would greatly appreciate your assistance with this project. I can foresee no risks being associated with individuals in this study, beyond those experienced in everyday life.

The data collection for the project includes a series of audio-recorded life history interviews with the participants that wish to take part in the study. The information gathered will be treated with the appropriate privacy and anonymity. No information about your service or the participants, will be identified in the research. All information will be stored safely with access only available to the participant, myself and my supervisor. Data will be retained

for no longer than necessary and will be destroyed after all phases of data collection are complete and the data will have been fully anonymised. The anonymised results will be included in a thesis and may be discussed at conferences or published in academic literature.

Please note that you are under no obligation to participate in this study. If at any time a participant wishes to withdraw from the study, they may do so at any time, without having to give a reason and without prejudice. If you have further questions regarding this research please feel free to get in touch using the email addresses listed below. Finally, I would like to thank you for the time and consideration of this request. Your overall contribution to the research is of vital importance.

I am looking forward to hearing back from you at your earliest convenience. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and consider my request.

Kind regards,
Angeliki Lima

Student email: anlima@tcd.ie

Supervisor email: seerya@tcd.ie

Phone: +353 838276532

Participant's information sheet and consent form for Ireland



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Participant's information sheet

Title of the Study: "Towards a critical adult education in prison. Participants' views on motivations, educational process and outcomes through the lens of recognition and transformation. A comparative study between Ireland and Greece."

The Study:

My name is Angeliki Lima and I am a PhD student in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. As part of my PhD thesis I am carrying out research in the area of Prison Education and how this education can change how people see themselves. I would like to hear about your experience of education in prison and your views on how this affected your later life, or not.

Participation information:

If you agree to take part in this study, I will invite you to take part in an interview/discussion with me. I will be asking questions about your life story, about yourself and how you experienced education in prison. I will invite you to talk about yourself before and after being in prison and about your life after release. Your story and experiences are personal and I will treat them with respect. I will treat our conversation as private and make sure that no one can identify you afterwards from either a recording or a text. I will record our discussions in order to listen to them again and write them down, but we will agree a name

for you that is not your own at the beginning so that you do not use your real name in the interview. I will transfer the recording into text without any names or things that could identify you. I ask your permission to keep this text for no longer than ten years for research purposes. I will destroy the original recordings as soon as my examination is over. The only people that will be able to access them will be you, me and my supervisor and potentially the examiners of my thesis. Any quotes that I will use in the final thesis will not have any names or items that identify you. The results of the study may be discussed at conferences or published in a book or a journal.

You do not have to take part in the study if you do not want to, of course. In case you decide to take part you may change your decision and withdraw even after the research has started, without saying why. If you have any questions or if you do not understand something, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Researcher Contact details: Angeliki Lima anlima@tcd.ie

Supervisor Contact details: Dr. Aidan Seery seerya@tcd.ie

Consent Form

Title of project: “Towards a critical adult education in prison. Participants’ views on motivations, educational process and outcomes through the lens of recognition and transformation. A comparative study between Ireland and Greece.”

You **do not have to** take part in this study. If you agree to take part and at a later stage you feel the need to stop, you are free to do so.

Please answer all of the following (tick the appropriate box):

Yes No

I have read and understood the information sheet.

I understand what the project is about, and what the results will be used for.

I am fully aware of all the procedures involving and of any risks and benefits associated with the study.

I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any stage without giving any reason.

I am aware that my results will be kept anonymous.

I agree to participate in the above study:

Signature of the researcher:

Date:

Signature of the participant:

Date:

Letter to the gatekeeper in Greece



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Φύλλο ενημέρωσης διαμεσολαβητή για πρόσβαση σε δείγμα πληθυσμού

Αγαπητέ [όνομα υπεύθυνου δομής ή υπηρεσίας],

Ονομάζομαι Αγγελική Λίμα και είμαι διδακτορική φοιτήτρια στην Παιδαγωγική Σχολή στο Trinity College Dublin, στο Δουβλίνο της Ιρλανδίας. Στα πλαίσια του προγράμματος αυτού διεξάγω έρευνα στο πεδίο της εκπαίδευσης στις φυλακές και στην διαμόρφωση της Ταυτότητας, εξετάζοντας τις αντιλήψεις πρώην κρατουμένων σχετικά με τη βιωμένη εμπειρία τους σε εκπαιδευτικές διαδικασίες στη φυλακή και το πώς βίωσαν τα αποτελέσματά της (σε περίπτωση που υπήρξαν αποτελέσματα).

Η έρευνά μου διαξάγεται υπό την επίβλεψη του Dr Aidan Seery, και έχει τίτλο «Προς μια κριτική εκπαίδευση στις φυλακές. Αντιλήψεις των συμμετεχόντων σχετικά με τα κίνητρα συμμετοχής, την εκπαιδευτική διαδικασία και τα αποτελέσματά της, υπό το πρίσμα της αναγνώρισης και του μετασχηματισμού. Μια συγκριτική έρευνα μεταξύ Ιρλανδίας και Ελλάδας.»

Σας γράφω με σκοπό να σας ζητήσω να γίνετε ο διαμεσολαβητής στην έρευνά μου και να βρω ανθρώπους που θα ήθελαν να μου μιλήσουν για την εμπειρία τους σχετικά με την εκπαίδευση στη φυλακή. Γνωρίζω το φόρτο εργασίας που αντιμετωπίζετε καθημερινά και για αυτό το λόγο θα ήμουν ευγνώμων αν αποφασίζατε να με βοηθήσετε με το αίτημα μου

να βρω συμμετέχοντες ή συμμετέχουσες μέσω της δομής ή της υπηρεσίας σας. Δεν προβλεπονται ειδικότεροι κινδυνοι για μεμονωμενα ατομα στο πλαισιο της παρουσας ερευνας περαν οσων ειναι συνηθεις στην καθημερινη ζωη. Η συλλογή δεδομένων για την

έρευνα περιλαμβάνει μια σειρά βιογραφικών αφηγηματικών συνεντεύξεων (life history interviews) με όσους και όσες ενδιαφέρονται να λαβουν μέρος στην έρευνα.

Για τα δεδομένα που θα προκύψουν από τη διαδικασία συλλογής θα τηρηθεί αυστηρά η ανωνυμία. Καμία πληροφορία σχετική με τη δομή ή την υπηρεσία σας δε θα δημοσιευτεί ή θα είναι αναγνωρίσιμη στην τελική μορφή της εργασίας. Επιπλέον, τα δεδομένα θα αποθηκευτούν σε ασφαλές μέρος και θα καταστραφούν μετά το πέρας της ανάλυσης, της συγγραφής και της εξέτασης της εργασίας. Τα μόνα άτομα που θα έχουν πρόσβαση σε αυτά θα είναι τα άτομα που θα δεχθούν να

παραχωρήσουν συνεντεύξεις, η ερευνήτρια και ο επιβλέπων καθηγητής. Τα τελικά αποτελέσματα της έρευνας είναι πιθανό να συζητηθούν σε συνέδρια, ημεριδές ή/και να δημοσιευτούν σε επιστημονικά περιοδικά ή βιβλία.

Θα ήθελα τελικώς να σας επισημάνω πως δεν είστε υποχρεωμένοι να συμμετέχετε στην έρευνα και πως ο κάθε συμμετέχων ή η κάθε συμμετεχουσα μπορεί να αποσυρθεί από την έρευνα επιθυμεί χωρίς να προβεί σε εξηγήσεις.

Βρίσκομαι στη διάθεση σας για οποιαδήποτε πληροφορία ή διευκρίνιση σχετικά με την έρευνα και τα στοιχεία επικοινωνίας μου βρίσκονται παρακάτω.

Σας ευχαριστώ ειλικρινά για το χρόνο που διαθέσατε και την εκτίμηση του αιτήματός μου.

Με εκτίμηση,
Λίμα Αγγελική

Στοιχεία επικοινωνίας ερευνήτριας: Στοιχεία επικοινωνίας επιβλέποντα καθηγητή:

Αγγελική Λίμα anlima@tcd.ie

Dr Aidan Seery seerya@tcd.ie



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Φύλλο ενημέρωσης συμμετεχόντων

Τίτλος έρευνας:

«Προς μια κριτική εκπαίδευση στις φυλακές. Αντιλήψεις των συμμετεχόντων σχετικά με τα κίνητρα συμμετοχής, την εκπαιδευτική διαδικασία και τα αποτελέσματά της, υπό το πρίσμα της αναγνώρισης και του μετασχηματισμού. Μια συγκριτική έρευνα μεταξύ Ιρλανδίας και Ελλάδας.»

Η έρευνα:

Ονομάζομαι Αγγελική Λίμα και είμαι διδακτορική φοιτήτρια στην Παιδαγωγική Σχολή του Trinity College Dublin, στο Δουβλίνο τη Ιρλανδίας. Στο πλαίσιο του διδακτορικού μου, κάνω έρευνα πάνω στο πεδίο της εκπαίδευσης στις φυλακές και στη διαμόρφωση της ταυτότητας. Για την έρευνα μου θα ήθελα να μου μιλήσετε για τις αντιλήψεις σας για την εκπαίδευση στις φυλακές, τη δική σας εμπειρία και τον τρόπο με τον οποίο επηρέασε τη ζωή σας μετά.

Πληροφορίες συμμετοχής:

Αν δεχτείτε να συμμετάσχετε στην έρευνα, θα σας καλέσω να μιλήσετε μαζί μου και θα σας πάρω κάποιες συνεντεύξεις. Θα μιλήσουμε για την ιστορία της ζωής σας, για τον εαυτό σας, για την εμπειρία σας στο σχολείο και στην εκπαίδευση στη φυλακή. Επίσης θα σας ρωτήσω ερωτήσεις σχετικά με τον εαυτό σας και πως ήταν πριν και μετά την φυλακή. Γνωρίζω πως οι πληροφορίες αυτές είναι προσωπικές και θα τις σεβαστώ απόλυτα. Όλες οι πληροφορίες θα είναι ανώνυμες και θα σεβαστώ απόλυτα την ιδιωτικότητά σας. Δε

μπορώ να σκεφτώ κάποιον κίνδυνο που μπορεί να δημιουργήσει η συμμετοχή σας. Θα καταγράψω όλες τις πληροφορίες με μαγνητοφωνάκι έτσι ώστε να τις ακούσω ξανά αργότερα και να τις γράψω σε χαρτί. Αυτό σημαίνει πως θα έχω τις συνεντεύξεις μας σε γραπτή και ακουστική μορφή. Θα συμφωνήσουμε από πριν ένα όνομα διαφορετικό από το δικό σας και κατά τη διάρκεια της συνέντευξης θα σας αποκαλώ έτσι, αυτό θα γίνει έτσι ώστε κανείς να μην μπορεί να αναγνωρίσει τη συνέντευξή σας και θα διασφαλίσει ότι αυτή θα παραμείνει ανώνυμη. Θα κρατήσω όλο το υλικό σε ασφαλές μέρος μέχρι να τελειώσει η έρευνα σύμφωνα με την ελληνική νομοθεσία για την προστασία προσωπικών δεδομένων. Σας ζητώ την άδεια να κρατήσω τα ανώνυμα αποτελέσματα για ερευνητικούς σκοπούς και σε κάθε περίπτωση δε θα κρατηθούν πάνω από δέκα χρόνια. Οι μόνοι άνθρωποι που θα μπορέσουν να τις ακούσουν ή να τις διαβάσουν θα είναι εσείς, εγώ και ο επιβλέπων καθηγητής μου, και πιθανώς οι εξεταστές της διατριβής μου. Ότι απόσπασμα χρησιμοποιήσω στην εργασία μου θα είναι ανώνυμο. Αυτό σημαίνει ότι διαβάζοντας την εργασία μου δε θα μπορεί να καταλάβει κανείς πως έχετε μιλήσει μαζί μου και κανείς δε θα μπορέσει να συνδέσει αυτά που είπατε με εσάς τον ίδιο/την ίδια.

Τα δεδομένα που θα είναι ανώνυμά, μπορεί να κρατηθούν για παραπάνω διάστημα για τις ανάγκες της έρευνας. Τα ανωνυμοποιημένα αποτελέσματα μπορεί να συζητηθούν σε συνέδρια ή να δημοσιευτούν σε βιβλίο ή επιστημονικό περιοδικό.

Δεν είστε υποχρεωμένος ή υποχρεωμένη να συμμετάσχετε στην έρευνα αν δεν το θέλετε. Επίσης, αν αποφασίσετε να συμμετάσχετε μπορείτε να αλλάξετε γνώμη και να αποχωρήσετε, χωρίς να δώσετε κάποια εξήγηση. Μπορείτε οποιαδήποτε στιγμή να σταματήσετε να συμμετέχετε στην έρευνα, αρκεί να είναι πριν τα δεδομένα από τις συζητήσεις μας γίνουν ανώνυμα. Αν έχετε κάποια ερώτηση ή αν κάτι δεν είναι ξεκάθαρο, θα χαρώ πολύ να απαντήσω στις ερωτήσεις σας.

Σας ευχαριστώ πολύ για το χρόνο σας και τη βοήθεια σας!

Στοιχεία επικοινωνίας ερευνήτριας: Αγγελική Λίμα anlima@tcd.ie

Στοιχεία επικοινωνίας επιβλέποντα καθηγητή: Dr Aidan Seery seerya@tcd.ie

Φόρμα συγκατάθεσης

Τίτλος έρευνας: «Προς μια κριτική εκπαίδευση στις φυλακές. Αντιλήψεις των συμμετεχόντων σχετικά με τα κίνητρα συμμετοχής, την εκπαιδευτική διαδικασία και τα αποτελέσματά της, υπό το πρίσμα της αναγνώρισης και του μετασχηματισμού. Μια συγκριτική έρευνα μεταξύ Ιρλανδίας και Ελλάδας.

Δεν είστε υποχρεωμένος ή υποχρεωμένη να συμμετάσχετε στην έρευνα αν δεν θέλετε. Αν αποφασίσετε να συμμετάσχετε μπορείτε να αλλάξετε γνώμη οποιαδήποτε στιγμή και να αποχωρήσετε όποια στιγμή θέλετε, χωρίς να δώσετε κάποια εξήγηση.

Παρακαλώ απαντήστε σε όλες τις παρακάτω ερωτήσεις βάζοντας τικ στο κατάλληλο κουτί ()

Έχω διαβάσει και έχω καταλάβει
το φύλλο ενημέρωσης.

Ναι **Όχι**

Έχω καταλάβει το σκοπό της έρευνας
και το πώς θα χρησιμοποιηθούν τα αποτελέσματα.

Γνωρίζω τις διαδικασίες που θα πραγματοποιηθούν
και τους κινδύνους και τα οφέλη που έχουν σχέση
με την έρευνα.

Γνωρίζω ότι η συμμετοχή μου είναι εθελοντική
και ότι μπορώ να σταματήσω όποια στιγμή θέλω,
χωρίς να δώσω κάποια εξήγηση.

Γνωρίζω ότι τα αποτελέσματα θα είναι ανώνυμα.

Συμφωνώ να συμμετέχω σε αυτή την έρευνα:

Υπογραφή ερευνήτριας:

Ημερομηνία:

Υπογραφή συμμετέχοντα ή συμμετέχουσας:

Ημερομηνία:

School of Education Research Ethics Application Approval

Review Submission History: 8-5-2019 Ethics Submissions and ...

https://ted.blackboard.com/webapps/assignment/uploadAssignm...



My Learning Space

ANGELIKI LIMA

ET7259-A-Y-201819 RESEARCH ETHICS

Submit your ethics proposal or resubmission HERE

Review Submission History: 8-5-2019 Ethics Submissions and Resubmissions

Review Submission History: 8-5-2019 Ethics Submissions and Resubmissions

Assignment Instructions	Assignment Details
<p>Please find attached the resubmission with all feedback received on 1st of May incorporated and highlighted in the document.</p> <p>Kind regards,</p> <p>Angeliki Lima</p>	<p>GRADE LAST GRADED ATTEMPT Approved</p> <p>ATTEMPT 08/05/19 13:13 Approved</p> <p>Submission</p> <p>Submission Text</p> <p>Research Ethics Committee application Lima Angeliki Resubmission 2.pdf <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>← OK</p>

Emails to the gatekeepers - Invitation for Research support

Request for participation in a research project

Angeliki Lima <anlima@tcd.ie> 5 February 2020 at 15:22

To: [name of the Gatekeeper]

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Angeliki Lima and I am a third year PhD student in the School of Education in Trinity College Dublin. My PhD research looks at education in prison, from the prisoner's perspective. Looking to understand the lived experience of education in prison, I am now in the process of finding participants for my study. The methodology that I am following is narrative inquiry, a series of unstructured interviews/discussions, where the participant's experience is understood narratively and as a story.

For that reason I would like to invite formerly incarcerated people to take part in a series of discussions with me.

I am writing to you as I would like to ask you to act as a gatekeeper and ask for your help in the process of recruiting participants for my study.

I would be grateful if you would take the time to read the attached letter, where you will find more information about my research and ask you about your availability to arrange a short meeting with me, at your earliest convenience, in order to discuss in more detail and purpose and the process of the research.

I remain at your disposal for any further questions or clarifications.

Thank you very much in advance for taking the time to read this and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Angeliki Lima

Angeliki Lima

PhD Candidate | Trinity Long Room Hub Early Career Researcher
CAVE Research Centre, School of Education Trinity College Dublin

Agreement Protocol for the Conduction of Research with ΚΕΘΕΑ



ΠΡΩΤΟΚΟΛΛΟ ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑΣ ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΔΙΕΞΑΓΩΓΗ ΕΡΕΥΝΑΣ

Στην Αθήνα σήμερα, 10 Δεκεμβρίου 2019, μεταξύ:

1. του Κέντρου Θεραπείας Εξαρτημένων Ατόμων, εκπροσωπούμενου από τον κ. Γεράσιμο Παπαναστασάτο, Υπεύθυνο του Τομέα Έρευνας ΚΕΘΕΑ
και

2. της κας. Αγγελικής Λίμα, συμφωνήθηκαν και έγιναν αμοιβαία αποδεκτά τα ακόλουθα που αποτελούν τους όρους της συνεργασίας:

Το ΚΕΘΕΑ αποδέχεται την αίτηση της Αγγελικής Λίμα και στο εξής καλούμενη «η ερευνήτρια», να πραγματοποιήσει διδακτορική διατριβή με θέμα ««Towards a critical adult education in prison. Participants' views on motivations, educational process and outcomes through the lens of recognition and transformation. A comparative study between Ireland and Greece» καθώς και επεξεργασία δεδομένων τα οποία σύμφωνα με το σχέδιο που έχει κατατεθεί, συνίσταται στα εξής:

1. Στόχος της παρούσας έρευνας αποτελεί η μελέτη της εκπαίδευσης στην φυλακή και η διαμόρφωση του εαυτού. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, η έρευνα στοχεύει στην διερεύνηση των κινήτρων συμμετοχής στην εκπαιδευτική διαδικασία κατά τη διάρκεια της φυλάκισης καθώς και των αντιλήψεων των πρώην κρατουμένων σχετικά με τον τρόπο που βίωσαν αυτή την εμπειρία και τα αποτελέσματά της στη ζωή τους μετά την αποφυλάκιση. Για τη διεκπεραίωση της έρευνας θα πραγματοποιηθεί ποιοτική έρευνα με αφηγήσεις ζωής.
2. Το δείγμα που χρειάζεται στη συγκεκριμένη εργασία θα αποτελείται κατά προσέγγιση από 15 άτομα, μέλη του Θ.Π.ΚΕΘΕΑ ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΑΣ
3. Εποπτεύων για το σύνολο της εργασίας είναι ο Γεράσιμος Παπαναστασάτος, Υπεύθυνος του Τομέα Έρευνας ΚΕΘΕΑ.
4. Η ερευνήτρια δεσμεύεται να παραδώσει ηλεκτρονικό και έντυπο αντίγραφο της ολοκληρωμένης διδακτορικής διατριβής της στο ΚΕΘΕΑ για την ενημέρωση του αρχείου του.
5. Η ερευνήτρια δεσμεύεται για το απόρρητο των στοιχείων τα οποία θα συλλέξει κατά τη διαδικασία της έρευνας σύμφωνα με τις αρχές και τον Κώδικα Δεοντολογίας του ΚΕΘΕΑ .
6. Η ερευνήτρια δεσμεύεται να σέβεται και να τηρεί τους κανονισμούς του ΚΕΘΕΑ όσο βρίσκεται στους χώρους του.
7. Η ερευνήτρια δεσμεύεται και οφείλει να συμμορφώνεται στις ειδικές συνθήκες και κανονισμούς που επιβάλλουν τα θεραπευτικά προγράμματα εφόσον έρχεται σε επαφή με αυτά.
8. Η ερευνήτρια δεσμεύεται να αναφέρει στην εργασία της και σε οποιαδήποτε δημοσίευση ή δημοσιοποίηση της εργασίας αυτής ότι τα στοιχεία συλλέγησαν με την συνεργασία του ΚΕΘΕΑ.
9. Το ΚΕΘΕΑ διατηρεί το δικαίωμα να αξιοποιήσει μέρος ή το σύνολο της διατριβής με σαφή αναφορά ότι πρόκειται για διδακτορική διατριβή της ερευνήτριας στο πλαίσιο της συνεργασίας μας.

10. Το ΚΕΘΕΑ διατηρεί το δικαίωμα να μην επιτρέψει την με οποιονδήποτε τρόπο δημοσιοποίηση μέρους ή του συνόλου της εργασίας ή δεδομένων, εφόσον διαπιστωθεί ότι δεν υπάρχει πρόνοια προστασίας της ταυτότητας των συμμετεχόντων ασκώντας κάθε νόμιμη ενέργεια σε περίπτωση μη συμμόρφωσης της ερευνήτριας.
11. Το ΚΕΘΕΑ διατηρεί μονομερώς το δικαίωμα λύσης της συμφωνίας και της απαγόρευσης της συνέχισης της έρευνας αν δεν τηρηθεί κάποιος από τους παραπάνω όρους.

Η ΕΡΕΥΝΗΤΡΙΑ



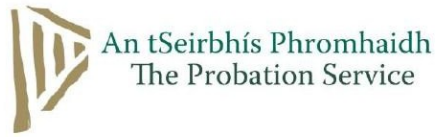
Λίμα Αγγελική

Ο ΥΠΕΥΘΥΝΟΣ
ΤΟΜΕΑ ΕΡΕΥΝΑΣ ΚΕΘΕΑ



Γεράσιμος Παπαναστασάτος

Application to the Irish Probation Service



Research Application Form

This form must be completed on all applications to conduct research within the Probation Service or involving persons engaged with the Probation Service.

Part A – Personal and Research Details

1. Personal Details

Name(s)

Angeliki Lima

Address

05 Greenfield
Manor,
Greenfield Park

D04 Y978

Landline

Email anlima@tcd.ie

Mobile

+353 838276532

2. If this research forms part of an academic course, please indicate the following

Academic Institution:

Trinity College Dublin, School of Education

Qualification for which you are aiming for

PhD Education

3. Title of Proposed Research



“Towards a critical adult education in prison. Participants’ views on motivations, educational process and outcomes through the lens of recognition and transformation. A comparative study between Ireland and Greece.”

3. Description

Provide a brief description (approx. 200 words) of the research proposal, including aims and objectives.

Employing the research tool of life history interviews with people who participated in prison education as students, this comparative study explores the lived experience of prison education and the educational policies implemented in prisons both in Ireland and in Greece.

This exploration of the participants’ lived experience is analysed against a framework employing theories of identity formation and critical adult education. This holistic framework will help shed light on crucial aspects of the educational programmes in prisons and their outcomes, as well as on the lived experience of the participants by bringing together personal and the socio-political elements of the process.

The exploration of the prisoners’ lived experience of education and of how they act on it in later life (motivations, participation and outcomes) provides insight into the identity formation of the participants that takes place through education. That includes the existence of changes, developments and transformations with respect to the relation to self and the processes of empowerment and critical thinking that take place.

The intended outcome of the study is not only to provide a deeper understanding of the participation experience of students in prison education, but also to offer constructive recommendations towards policy planning and implementation, as well as to provide impetus for a profound debate on education as a tool against social inequalities.

a) The main aim of the project is to explore the field of prison education and self-formation within the Irish and Greek context, in order to deepen our understanding of adult education in non-conventional spaces.

The project’s objectives include:

- i) Provide insight on the educational experience in prison from the participants’ point of view.
- ii) Explore this experience in comparison to current educational policies and recommendations.
- iii) Explore how the educational experience has any impact on the identity formation of the participants.
- iv) Inform current policy and provide a constructive adult education model for prison education.

4. Research Methodology

Indicate the research methods, including samples, instruments, measures, procedures, analysis, personnel and the likely time scale of the research project.

It is proposed that the project would take a comparative study approach, which will focus on Prison Education in Ireland and in Greece, where two case studies will take place in each of the two countries.

Methodological approach: Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a holistic approach, where stories are explored and views people as “storied” individuals. This type of inquiry begins from the idea that narratives are an integral part of human thinking and furthermore, of the construction of identity and self (Rogers 2007). In such research, practitioners adopt a theoretical stance

of studying with, rather than studying of the participants. It is taken into account that meaning is constructed and respects the participant's right to be a part of this construction.

Moreover, literature shows that this approach is often employed when the researchers face ethical issues about looking into experiences of individuals that have been through either traumatizing situations or belong to groups that have been through situations that are uncommon for the largest part of the population, as in the present case is the experience of imprisonment.

Data generation instrument

Life history (or life stories) interviews are primarily open – ended discussions with the participant, where data is generated in the form of narration. It is very important that the data is generated in a way that would give the participants space and time to share and reflect on their lived experience. That gains particular value when the notion of change and the meaning that individuals make from it is in the core of the study. For that reason, it is important to generate data that will enable the analysis to look through the lens of the whole person, giving the participants the space to talk and reflect on their time before imprisonment and ensuring that they are not looked at as mere former prisoners, but as fully-rounded citizens.

Population and sample

The population for this project consists of people that meet all of the following requirements: a) have experienced incarceration, b) have been engaged in education while incarcerated and continued being engaged in educational processes after release or not and c) are over 18 years of age. More specifically, the sample frame will include approximately 15 former prisoners, men and women, over 18 years of age, in Ireland and in Greece. Every effort will be made that age and gender will be widely dispersed in the sample of the study.

Moreover, I would like to apply for permission to speak with Probation Officers in order to enrich the background of the research. These people will not constitute research participants and any data emerged from our discussion will be used as background information and will not be analysed against the theoretical framework.

Completion of fieldwork is estimated to take place between July and August 2020 to allow the 2020-2021 academic year for analysis and writing up the thesis.

5. Outcomes

Outline the expected output and outcome of this research in general and for the Probation Service, in particular.

The study of prison education in Ireland and Greece will constitute a comparative study in the European area, one of the few done so far, especially between those two countries. By combining philosophy, education and sociocultural theory elements, this thesis will advance the state of the art by deepening our understanding of the lived experience of adult education and social exclusion. It will also constitute a study looking at the life after release of former prisoners, the findings of which will make a contribution to existing knowledge by informing prison education policy and relevant stakeholders, such as the Probation Service.

Part B – Research Ethics

6. Ethical Considerations
Outline the ethical considerations that you consider relevant to this proposal and provide details as to how you have addressed them. Please attach a copy of any Code of Ethics and/or Professional Practice Guidelines underpinning your proposed research and application.
<p>The research will adhere to Trinity's Policy on Good Research Practice (attached) and will be also based on the Epigeum research integrity training provided by the Office of the Dean & VP for Research in Trinity College Dublin. It will be based on respect for the participants and the stories they are willing to share, beneficence and the absence of maleficence and justice.</p> <p>Positionality of the Researcher: I realize that conducting life history interviews with former prisoners, an underrepresented population, creates an uneven power relationship, as in every research and interview setting. Therefore, I am aware that I must be reflective on my position as a researcher conducting narrative research with participants that I do not share similar lived experiences with, such as incarceration. In this project I consider the awareness of what is shared in the moment of extreme value and I acknowledge the importance of recognizing that the story has to be treated as the participant's account first.</p>
7. Confidentiality
(a) Describe procedures for maintaining confidentiality (if relevant).
<p>Identities of the participants will be protected and anonymity will be assured, by using pseudonyms for the participants. The responses will not be attributed to individuals and any identifying information will be removed from the interview transcripts.</p> <p>The data generation process will proceed as follows: in advance of interviews I will agree the use of a pseudonym with the participants. In the course of the interview I will refer to my participant only by this pseudonym and participants will be asked to identify institutions and individuals descriptively and not nominally. This will ensure that the data are anonymized at the earliest possible point in the process. The pseudonym key will be stored in the encrypted USB only. The key will be retained only until the examination process is complete and destroyed thereafter.</p>
(b) Arrangements for safeguarding data
<p>Data will be stored, processed and destroyed in line with the TCD's Policy on Good Research Practice, with Irish Data Protection Laws and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Interview recordings and transcripts will be securely stored on encrypted USB in compliance with GDPR.</p> <p>Access to raw data will be limited to the researcher, the supervisor, potentially examiners of the thesis and the participants (only to the raw data that pertain to themselves). Also following transcription the raw recordings will be destroyed and only the anonymized transcripts will be held for a maximum of 10 years to allow for further publications.</p>
8. Risk and Risk Mitigation
Outline any risks associated with your research proposal and the risk mitigation which you have included:
<p>Firstly, a risk consists in securing enough participants for the interviews and avoiding participants' attrition. This is the most common methodological risk in qualitative studies, especially in those involving children or adults that belong to vulnerable groups. I realize that this is a population that presents difficulties regarding access and that I</p>

should be mindful and respectful of the participants' lives and time. The well-being of the participants is of primary importance. As my initial contact with the support groups and services was successful, I am confident that I have their full support in mitigating the risk concerning the securing the necessary number of participants. To further ensure that this risk concerning participants' attrition will be minimized, the methodology employed and the specific research instrument that will be used are based on engaging the participants in the project in a meaningful manner. It is my intention to meet with them on more than one occasion in order to build a good, honest, strong and confidential relationship with them.

Moreover, two security concerns arise for the researcher. 1. It is not possible to know whether the potential participants will have a documented history of violence. 2. Interviews will be one-to-one, meaning that no third person will be present.

In order to address these concerns, I will adhere to the TCD Lone Worker Guidelines (attached) as appropriate. More specifically I will always carry my official ID and my mobile telephone, and all interviews will take part either on TCD premises in the School of Education or a room provided by the support groups and services which will act as the gatekeepers. I will make every effort possible for the location of the interviews to be have direct and easy access to other people. Finally, I will nominate my supervisor as the person who will monitor the duration of the interviews and will always be kept in the aware of my whereabouts when conducting interviews. I will follow the lone workers guidelines and use my professional judgement at all times, especially in case I do not feel comfortable or safe.

9. Conflict of interest

Please give details of any potential conflict of interest, including employment or membership of any bodies with an interest in the research and outcomes.

There are no known conflicts of interest related to this research project.

10. Informed Consent (if relevant)

Specify the consent procedures proposed for this research proposal. Please attach a copy of the consent form and subject information leaflet. Please note that a description of the study and relevant safeguards must be given to participants.

I plan to schedule a first meeting with potential participants and explain in detail the purposes of the study and how the data will be generated, in order for them to decide whether they would like to participate in the interviews. Also, they will all be presented with an information sheet that is attached to this application.

For those interested, consent will be sought through a signed consent form (also attached) before their participation in the interviews. Participation will only commence when consent has been granted from all parties..

I will be very careful concerning the language used in the consent forms in order to ensure that the participants understand the purposes of the study and the way data will be generated. Participants' rights to withdraw anytime from the study will be underlined. No data will be generated, until all forms have been signed by all relevant parties.

Part C – Academic Background

11. Please insert below any personal and or professional competencies that you have that would assist you in carrying out this research.

The proposed project has the objective of delving in the real experience of education in prisons in order to scrutinise the present policy recommendations through the voices of the participants involved in prison education. For this purpose, I demonstrate below how the specialist knowledge and skills required to undertake this PhD are already in place or will be further enhanced over the course of the research.

Management of qualitative data:

For the proposed project, a large amount of qualitative data must be generated, managed and analysed. In order to manage the qualitative data generated from the interviews I will draw on my experience built during the undergraduate and postgraduate theses where my research projects included fieldwork, employing different methods of data generation and management of qualitative data (individual interviews, focus groups and group interviews).

Knowledge on Educational Research Methods:

This type of research requires specific skills and knowledge on educational research methods, as well as empirical qualitative research, which I have developed significantly during my undergraduate and postgraduate course of studies. Having successfully completed three Educational Research Methodology modules (undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD level) I have come to consider that my theoretical knowledge on the issues that are related to empirical research and demand a strong background, are in place. Moreover, I have attended the seminar on "Considerations and Challenges in Life Story Research" that strengthened my knowledge and skills required to undertake this project by employing life history interviews. For the document analysis educational policy analysis skills are required, which I have developed during my time in CAVE Research Centre, where I worked independently on analysing Ireland's strategies and policies on the Internationalisation of Higher Education.

Working with adults that have experienced incarceration:

The proposed project requires access to an unrepresented population that consists of adults that have experienced incarceration and may have difficult previous educational experiences or have experienced social exclusion. I consider that my time teaching Adult Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Greece has provided valuable insight and has prepared me to engage with adults belonging in vulnerable groups. Furthermore, I have completed training on Vulnerable Adult Protection offered by Trinity Vincent de Paul Society and I am currently completing training offered by the Office of the Dean & VP for Research in Trinity College Dublin on "Research Integrity", which I consider to be a significant asset in my skillset.

12. (a) Academic Supervision	
Supervisor:	Dr Aidan Seery
Contact number:	+353 1 8962004

13. Dissemination of research findings
Outline plans for the dissemination of research findings and/or publication.
Publications in peer-reviewed journals will be pursued throughout the PhD to the following key journals: European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, The Prison Journal, Journal of Social Inclusion, The Journal of Prison Education and Reentry, the Irish Probation Journal and the <i>Working Notes</i> (the journal published by the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice). The findings will be shared with KETHEA, the largest rehabilitation and social reintegration network in Greece, that currently acts as the gatekeeper for the participants in Greece. Publications will be deposited with TARA, TCDs Open Access platform.

14. Is your research being funded?	
	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes:	
Funding Body	School of Education, Trinity College Dublin Funding by this body ends by August 2020.
Funder Contact Name	School of Education, Trinity College Dublin
Funder Contact details	School of Education, Trinity College Dublin Arts Building Trinity College Dublin Dublin 2 Ireland BYRNED64@tcd.ie

Part D – Consent and Declaration

15. Consent to be Contacted
I agree to co-operate with the Probation Service and liaison arrangements in preparation for and during the research project and to provide relevant information when requested. (Note that agreement is a condition of approval)

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Output Agreement

I agree to provide copies of Reports / Findings / Conference Papers arising from this research proposal to the Probation Service. (Note that agreement is a condition of approval)

Yes

✓

No

Signature



Date 22.02.2020

Final decision on all research applications is at the discretion the Director of the Probation Service and subject priorities of the Probation Service the availability of appropriate resources.

Note:

* The Probation Service advises that you refer to the appropriate sections of the Declaration of Helsinki¹ and give due consideration to the ethical principles/guidelines of your own discipline regarding research.

Applications should be sent to:

The Research Office

The Probation Service, Haymarket,

Dublin 7.

Email: research@probation.ie

Irish Probation Service Application Approval



Angeliki Lima <anlima@tcd.ie>

Application Form attached

Gerry P McNally <GPMcNally@probation.ie>

12 June 2020 at 13:59

To: Angeliki Lima <anlima@tcd.ie>

Cc: [REDACTED]

Angeliki

Please accept my apology for our delay in the consideration of your application to conduct research in the Probation Service.

The Probation Service has agreed in principle to facilitate and support your research proposal. Any research or interviews with persons in custody in prison will require the separate approval of the Irish Prison Service Research authorities.

Margaret Griffin, Regional Manager, has agreed to be your liaison and support person in the Probation Service for your study. She will consult with you and help to identify and contact relevant bodies and persons for your study objectives. Margaret will also be available to further review instruments and consent forms you will use in the study.

Margaret Griffin can be contacted at [REDACTED] and by phone at [REDACTED]

Best wishes and good luck with your research and studies.

Best wishes

Gerry

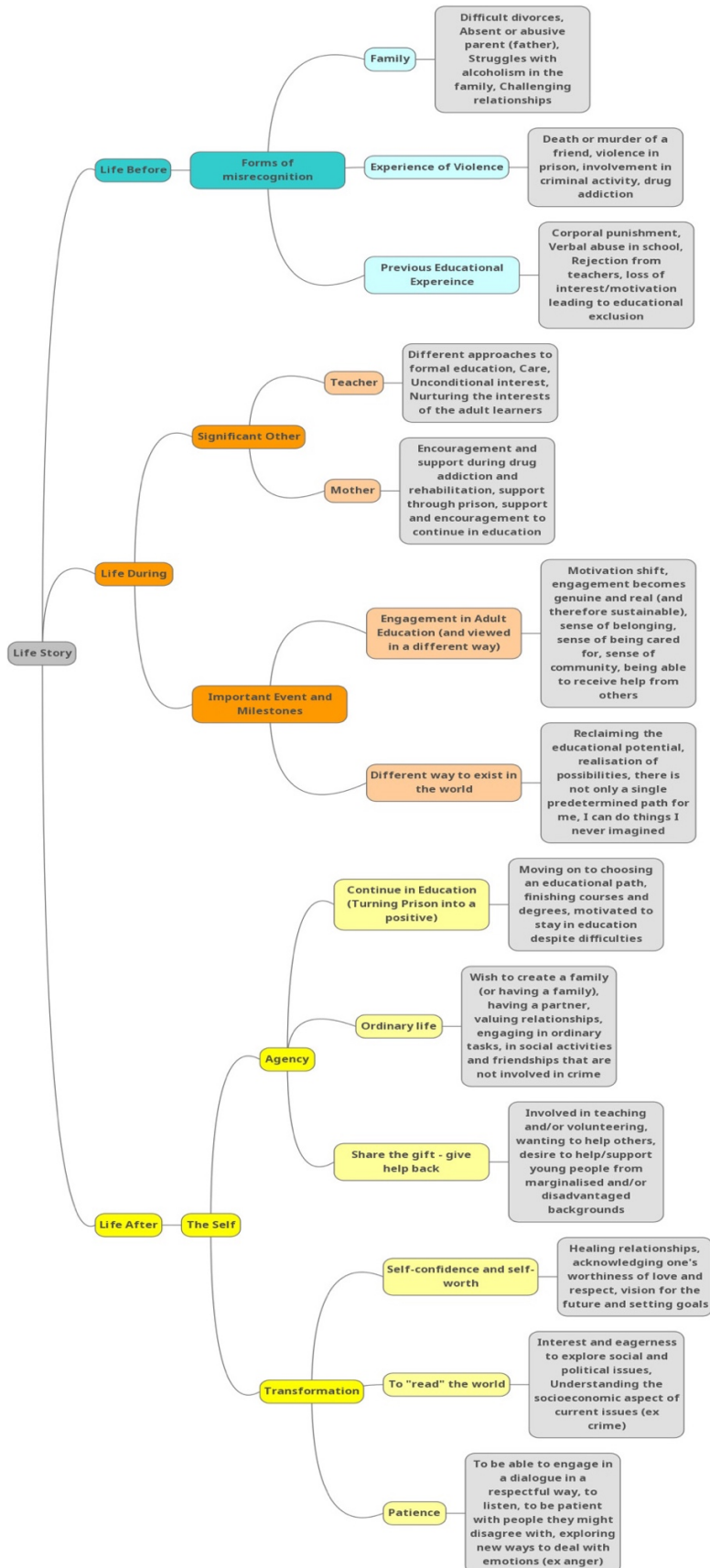
Gerry McNally | Assistant Director | The Probation Service | Haymarket | Smithfield | Dublin 7 | D07 WT27

✉ Email: gpmcnally@probation.ie | 📞 VOIP: 823647 | 📠 Tel: (00353 (0)1 817 3647 | 📱 Mobile: 00353 (0)86 8281230 | 🌐 Website: www.probation.ie

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The life story: Overarching themes, themes, subthemes and individual codes



List of participants

Name	Country	Age	Time after release (approximately)
Cian	Ireland	Early 40s	14 years
Fergal	Ireland	Mid 60s	>15 years
Fionn	Ireland	Late 50s	18 years
Liam	Ireland	Early 40s	11 years
Oisín	Ireland	Early 30s	5 years
Tadhg	Ireland	Late 60s	>15 years
Alexandros	Greece	Early 30s	2 months
Alkis	Greece	Late 30s	18 months
Apostolis	Greece	Late 30s	<18 months
Aris	Greece	Late 20s	18 months
Ektoras	Greece	Mid 30s	2 years
Menelaos	Greece	Early 40s	2 years and 6 months
Nathan	Greece	Early 40s	8 months
Odysseas	Greece	Late 40s	<18 months

