# Gifted Students and Their School Libraries:

# Educational Environments, Experiences and Explorations

By

**Mariusz Sterna**

BSc, BEd, BSpecEd, Master of Education (Gifted Education)

*Thesis*
*Submitted to Flinders University*
*for the degree of*

**Doctor of Education**

College of Education, Psychology & Social Work
18th July 2023

# ABSTRACT

The research for this thesis investigated the role that secondary school libraries play in the lives of gifted students in South Australian schools. The following research questions framed and guided the research: How do intellectually gifted students (a) describe their experiences of using a secondary school library, and (b) in what ways do their experiences differ from other students?

A three phase, mixed methods approach was used for the research, which comprised an exploratory qualitative phase (Focus Group Discussions), an exploratory quantitative and qualitative phase (Survey Research), and an explanatory qualitative phase (Semi-structured Interviews).

Volunteer Research participants were undergraduate students in their first semester of tertiary education at Flinders University. Exploratory Focus Group Discussions provided initial data that assisted in creating a more focused survey instrument, which also included a participant giftedness assessment measure. Three distinct participant giftedness groups were identified through the survey instrument. These were: students officially or formally identified as gifted, students who self-identified as gifted in the survey instrument, and students who had not been officially identified and did not self-identify as gifted.

Participants' school library experience data, including the pivotal final year of high school, reflected a high percentage of participant feedback from individuals who were either formally assessed as intellectually gifted or self-identified as intellectually gifted.

Three key findings emerged from the research, which reflected various aspects of the experience of school libraries by gifted and non-identified as gifted participants. These were: 1) School libraries as places of refuge, 2) School library and academic achievement, and 3) Students' experiences of school library staff. The theoretical works of Hall's Proxemics (1966), Foucault's Heterotopia (1967) and Soja's Thirdspace (1996) were used to interrogate and discuss the findings.

The study found that for gifted students especially, a school library becomes their safe-haven in relation to wider school environments, which many of them perceive as not entirely safe. For gifted students the school library also becomes a space which positively impacts their affective and social needs as well as academic achievement (provided the library resourcing caters to their intellectual requirements). Finally, the study found that a school library is a problematic, contested space of often negative library staff-student interactions, which impact the lives of both gifted and students non-identified as gifted. The key message of the study signals concerns about: the systemic design of the schooling experience in terms of inclusivity for

students who are gifted, highly intellectually able and / or vulnerable, as well as the nature of student-staff social interactions within school libraries.

The three research findings are presented in relation to their implications for educational policy design and recommendations for practice. For each finding, the recommendations are offered for three levels of educational operational governance and practice, i.e. educational systems, individual schools and individual school library. Some implications for policy development and practice for the tertiary education sector are also provided. Additionally, the study findings highlight opportunities for further research on libraries and giftedness for universities and other tertiary educational institutions.

# CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES

# LIST OF FIGURES

# DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis:

1. does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university

2. and the research within will not be submitted for any other future degree or diploma without the permission of Flinders University; and

3. to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.


Signed....................................................

Date........................................................

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

## 1.1 Preamble

This chapter foregrounds research on the role that school libraries play in the lives of gifted students and those who have not been identified as gifted. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the focus of my research and the significance of it, to outline the research background and methodology, to present an overview of the literature undertaken to support and frame the study, and to introduce the theoretical work used to generate findings.

## 1.2 My history

My experience with libraries reaches deep into my childhood. Throughout my secondary school years both in Europe and Australia, public and school libraries were my places of solace, while books were my personal worlds. Upon enrolment at Flinders University for my first undergraduate degree (BSc), I sought and won a part-time position at the University Central Library. I held onto this position throughout the time of completing my three undergraduate degrees and well into the first year of my employment as a full-time teacher. The day I resigned from working at the university library remains one of the more difficult days of my life but I understood that, with it, new wide horizons were also opening.

My life-long commitment to Gifted Education began after my introduction to its concepts and practices, which really resonated with me personally, while studying for my undergraduate Education and then Special Education degrees. Upon completion of the BEd, I began my teaching career in secondary schools. Noticing the lack of support for gifted students, the theoretical knowledge quickly turned to practice as I volunteered to create and coordinate gifted programs in two consecutive secondary schools where there were none. While teaching Mathematics, Biology and Science full time, also I realized how much I missed my professional contact with libraries. Hence, I enrolled in and completed the postgraduate course in Library and Information Studies to become a qualified Librarian and Teacher Librarian. My teaching career was subsequently enriched with work as a Teacher Librarian, running secondary school libraries. The thirst for knowledge connected to Gifted Education also continued and was

temporarily quenched through the completion of the Master of Education (Gifted Education) degree. After a short study pause, I was admitted into the Doctor of Education program at Flinders University, studying part time. During my early candidature, while working full time in schools, I joined a group of dedicated, passionate individuals wanting to create from scratch the first ever independent school for gifted children in South Australia. After several years of hard after-hours and weekend work, the school became a reality and, for a time, I was its first Deputy Principal.

Due to pressures of work and the pandemic I took an extended break from study but then with renewed interest and energy I came back to complete the Doctoral degree.

The welfare of gifted students and the importance of school libraries within educational settings remain my primary, professional, decades-long commitment, my calling and I hope an important part of my professional legacy.

## 1.3 My standpoint

In summary, I believe that:

• the educational needs, interests and aspirations of gifted students must, as a matter of mainstream policy and practice, become the measures of care that will enable them to work and perform to their always expanding potential,

• for students who are gifted, intellectually able, vulnerable or disadvantaged, as well as all other students, school libraries can play a critical support role through relevant resourcing strategies, professional help and guidance, and appropriate social and behavioural mentorship,

• significant educational change that makes a difference to gifted students and staff who support them can happen from the ground up and permeate into wider, organizational and systemic practices and policy formation for broader educational implementation.

## 1.4 My motivation

Despite ongoing positive change in South Australian / Australian educational settings in recent years, there still exist pockets of unseen, invisible disadvantage. This is not to apportion blame, as Education is a 'process' that is highly complex and characterised by multiple competing priorities. One such disadvantage is connected to the lack of provisions for the needs of gifted students. While a large-scale comprehensive educational change takes time and substantial resources, there are other pragmatic, practitioner-level approaches which can make a significant positive difference to the lives of gifted, intellectually able and vulnerable students. My primary motivation to conduct this research was to explore alternative ways of seeing,

thinking, knowing and doing, which can initiate a rethink and a significant positive change to the current status quo. The findings of my research on school libraries and giftedness can provide insights, understandings and strategies on how to respond differently, pragmatically, immediately and directly to the needs and wellbeing of gifted, highly intellectually able and vulnerable students.

## 1.5 Research rationale and context

The research undertaken for this thesis represents a new and unique area of study which merges Gifted Education and Library and Information Studies into a never-before-attempted, original mixed methods research. Uniquely, the research also employs three separate spatial theories applied to school libraries as places and as spaces in order to reveal findings.

As noted, the idea for the research emerged from my extensive practitioner experience. In this research, the depicted student behaviours expressed as an affinity for use of school libraries are framed as a response to lack of equity of school based opportunities some students experience within their schools.

In South Australia, residents have access to various types of libraries which include public libraries, community libraries (combined public–school libraries), reference libraries, TAFE libraries (technical college libraries), university libraries, and in some instances specialist private library collections. School libraries, especially at primary school levels, generally serve as the first point of contact between a young student and a library, although, based on practitioner experience, this may not be the case for some gifted children or children from higher socio-economic backgrounds. The first experiences of a library, be they positive or less so as evidenced in this research, may imprint a lasting effect on a student's attitude toward libraries and a view of library usefulness and friendliness. School libraries across the state differ a great deal in terms of their collection focus and quality, location and accessibility within the school grounds, level of real or perceived welcome, hours of opening, professional help on offer, technologies available to students (and staff), and the size and usefulness of library space. Generally, these differences are not dependent on the school type and age (government / private, single sex / co-educational), geography or location, level of affluence, or school values and academic aspirations.

However, what school libraries do have in common are the often highly prescriptive rules and regulations governing student usage of library spaces and collections, which students must learn to navigate, in order to use the library successfully. For students who wish to use the school library spaces and resources regularly, especially during lesson free times, the tension between the rules-based systems within must be calibrated not only against the general lack of

rules outside the library but potential other 'perils of student life' – as evidenced by participants' opinions in this research.

Most school libraries are divided into various spaces which cater to different types of student activities, ranging from quiet reading spaces, technology rich spaces, quiet study spaces and group discussion spaces. As a practitioner researcher, I know that the majority of school library collections in South Australia cater to low and middle level academic abilities with only a few libraries including sub-collections catering to high ability student needs and interests. This has been an issue for a long time now, as Brown and Rogan (1983) indicated, in that gifted readers may be at risk of losing the connection to schools as places to find wonderful books because they are hindered from finding and interacting with reading materials that are suitable for them. I know from experience that this situation can become a source of tension, stemming from the contrast to the often seemingly intellectually aspirational décor of school libraries which can include sculptures and posters of highly successful, mostly male figures like Newton, Einstein or Shakespeare, in addition to other cultural signifiers.

Most school libraries are run by teacher librarians but in South Australia the increasing trend known and discussed by teacher librarian groups, potentially related to greater financial savings, is to staff school libraries with librarians who are not trained practising teachers, along with traditionally employed support staff and volunteers.

The student-perceived sense of welcome and the general atmosphere of a school library is often a result of the type of library staff expectations, rules, hours of service, helpfulness and staff social dispositions. Based on practitioner observations, students who make the school library space their space, through choice or necessity, appear to quickly work out the intricacies of the physical and social school library space, adapt, come together into small or larger groups, and remain a mostly cohesive group throughout their time at the school. While different student groups gravitate to different school spaces for socialization, recreation and safety, the students who chose the school library in this study reported its security and physical comfort as very important features.

Schools, especially those schools that draw their enrolment catchment from a range of different locations, are more likely to have individuals in their student cohort who exhibit high intellectual aptitude, creativity and academic performance beyond their age peers, as well as a unique attitude to acquisition of knowledge, reading, and specific psycho-social characteristics, that is, a set of characteristics that indicates attributes and levels of giftedness. For example, Gagné (1998) suggested a system of giftedness intensity levels, with the minimum threshold fixed at 10% of the population being labelled as mildly gifted. Within the top 10%, Gagné's differentiated model of giftedness and talent (DMGT) distinguishes four selective giftedness subgroups:

moderately (top 1%), highly (top 1:1,000), exceptionally (top 1:10,000), and extremely (top 1:100,000) (Gagné,1998a). The giftedness traits and intensities may influence how such students perceive, seek out and use school (and other) libraries.

Many highly intellectually able students and those identified as gifted seem to naturally gravitate to certain parts of schools while actively avoiding others. One of those contested spaces attracting gifted students is the school library. From my practitioner researcher observations, this pattern of behaviour tends to repeat itself yearly with each new intake of students into high schools. Within schools, the reasons for such behaviours have been anecdotally connected to specific individual and group motivations, but a data-driven study designed to reveal the research-supported facts in place of assumptions had not been conducted prior to this research, and it was this existing research gap that prompted me to conduct the research.

All students deserve the education, resourcing and school-based care they are entitled to receive. This points to the overarching question of whether the presence or over-representation of high ability and gifted students in school libraries is for them a necessity or a choice? Is it a function of social, cultural, physical, emotional forces naturally attracting and pulling them in, or something better described as an external, forceful push toward the school library. The core of this research centred on understanding the dynamic of what happens in school library spaces for different student groups, in order to consider potential responsibilities and / or opportunities on the part of schools that would help design service structures that best reflect equity and include school-based provisions for all students.

## 1.6 Research focus

The schooling experience for gifted students varies, depending on a number of factors including the type of school attended. A significant body of research contains data on these experiences (Coleman, Micko & Cross, 2015). The majority of schools include school libraries which provide resources, advice and supervised learning spaces (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Hay, 2010). In school libraries, students can borrow books and equipment, work collaboratively or alone on their schoolwork or personal research, use technology, socialise or enjoy their own company in a safe supervised space (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Hay, 2010). Throughout the world, a substantial amount of research has been conducted on students' use of school libraries, however, very little is known about the relationship gifted students have with school libraries, especially compared to the general student population. Here, gifted students' attitudes, usage patterns, behaviours and social interactions in the context of school library use have been the focus of the study. The research aimed to provide findings for the existing knowledge gap, along with implications and recommendations for policy and practice stemming from those findings, and to suggest further research directions in this area.

## 1.7 Research question

My research question was based around investigating two key issues connected to school libraries and giftedness:

> How do intellectually gifted students describe their experiences of using a secondary school library, and in what ways do their experiences differ from other students?

## 1.8 Conceptualisation of giftedness

Currently, there is no commonly agreed upon unitary definition of giftedness, as researchers, parents and practitioners prioritise different conceptual perspectives and views (Sternberg, 2010; Garcia-Ross, Talaya & Perez-Gonzalez, 2012). However, despite the generally contested space in the conceptualization of giftedness, there is a broad level of agreement concerning gifted individuals as being those who exhibit advanced intellectual potential or performance and unique socio-emotional as well as psycho-social characteristics and vulnerabilities, representing a group of students worthy of research considerations to accommodate their educational experiences and needs (Sternberg, 2010; Jones, 2013; Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius & Worrell, 2011).

Much of the available literature on the education of gifted students has historically begun by being located within Special Education research, inadvertently pointing to a model of deficit and concern for certain aspects of giftedness, and specifically focussing on socialization and socio-emotional wellbeing of gifted students (Bailey, 2011; Fonseca, 2011). Multiple early attempts at defining intellectual giftedness have provided a quasi-deficit model in the context of socio–emotional development and functioning of gifted individuals as compared to those not identified as gifted. Coleman and Cross (1988) went as far as equating giftedness with a "social handicap". Some of the more current and highly contested definitions of giftedness still include aspects of socio–emotional vulnerability (Sternberg, 2010; Bailey, 2011; Fonseca, 2011), with the recent intense debate on this subject between Vuyk, Kerr and Krieshok (2016, 2021) and Grant (2021) being discussed later in the Literature Review chapter.

What unites most of the giftedness definitions is their reliance on individuals demonstrating high levels of performance / achievement on standardised tests and expected high level academic success especially in a specific domain of human functioning at a level significantly beyond the norm (VanTassel-Baska, 2005). Commonly agreed upon characteristics of giftedness include superior memory, extensive vocabulary, heightened sensitivity and experience of feelings and emotions, high level of abstract thinking, idealism, imagination and curiosity, as well as a wide range of interests and a sophisticated sense of humour (Sternberg, 2010; Subotnik, Olszewski-

Kubilius & Worrell, 2011). Such thinking however may not take into account the lived-in reality of a minority of gifted individuals who, for a variety of reasons, are not able to demonstrate high levels of achievement on standardised tests, or to outwardly demonstrate common giftedness characteristics, often becoming mislabelled, unidentified or at best labelled as the under-achieving gifted (White, Graham & Blaas, 2018). This means that in order to accurately capture giftedness of an individual, one must consider aspects of agreed upon, externally verifiable facets of giftedness, as well as the life context of the potentially gifted individual. The reasons for the inability of some individuals to display high levels of performance or achievement despite giftedness can include a learning difficulty or disability, an individual's background and history, language and cultural barriers, aspects of giftedness becoming channelled into unique / unusual interests and disciplines, or a lack of opportunities and provisions to thrive intellectually and / or academically (Frasier, Garcia & Passow, 1998; Sarouphim, 1999). Consequently, a truly comprehensive giftedness identification regimen should take into account potential causes of performance / achievement deficit in addition to applying the well-researched, unique and commonly shared characteristics of giftedness and giftedness-driven performance.

In South Australia, the busy reality of many educators means a pragmatic approach often dictates the method for identification of giftedness in schools. It is commonplace for teachers to use different definitions of giftedness as well as types of evidence required, while also adhering to different school sector giftedness identification and provision policies and directives. Inconsistent professional understanding and training level of staff about giftedness also play roles in the quality of giftedness identification outcomes (Jarvis & Henderson, 2012, 2014).

## 1.10 South Australian research context

In this research, the local context of giftedness identification plays a significant role. In Australia, a Federal mandate for gifted and talented education is still non-existent (Jolly & Robins, 2021), with policies for gifted education governing the identification process, educational delivery and program evaluation becoming a local / state or educational system's responsibility (Jarvis & Henderson, 2012). Over time this situation has added to a local reality where gifted education in South Australia is not seen a priority but rather something of an elitist approach to the provision of education, and one to be undermined rather than supported (Jarvis & Henderson, 2012). As a result, "as gifted students move from classroom to classroom or school to school in South Australia, they are likely to experience considerable inconsistency in the extent to which their needs for challenge, complexity and support are addressed" (Jarvis & Henderson, 2012, p. 20). Furthermore in South Australia, the introduction to gifted education is also not mandated in undergraduate teacher training, the consequence of which is a localised teacher cohort with little to no professional knowledge and experience of providing relevant educational and affective school-based practices for gifted students (Jarvis & Henderson, 2012). This is

significant because Plunkett and Kronborg (2011) report that in the absence of professional learning in gifted education, teacher attitudes toward gifted students can become misinformed and often negative, perhaps potentially influencing their willingness to identify and effectively serve gifted individuals. The omission in teacher training means that teachers in South Australia are mandated to use The Australian Curriculum (ACARA) (2013) document, which includes the terminology "gifted and talented students" in the context of student diversity. Therefore, in terms of the South Australian experience, the views of Griffin (2015) and Masters (2015) that gifted students represent the most disadvantaged student group, least likely to receive appropriate challenge and appropriate learning opportunities, may be particularly poignant. Are there simple solutions to this? Unlikely; however this research on school libraries and gifted students may go some way toward improving understanding of gifted individuals in their local context, and provide alternative, achievable, cost effective ways to support the gifted outside classrooms.

In terms of conducting gifted education research in South Australia, this complex localized reality creates significant issues for participant giftedness identification accuracy, reflected research methodologies attempting to find an optimal solution for data collection validity and reliability.

## 1.11 Study-specific giftedness identification dilemma

Although the author recognises that there are many ways of understanding and identifying giftedness, the aim of this study was to capture a broader experience of giftedness as dictated by the South Australian lived-in reality. For this study, participants' assessment of giftedness relied on several approaches, ranging from officially / formally endorsed school-based giftedness identification based on high academic performance and standardised tests, to various alternative measures. These alternative measures included: self-assessment of giftedness in the survey instrument, based on an abridged giftedness definition, characteristics of giftedness and examples of "ways of being gifted", acceptance into advanced academic class or program or university course through the "Enhanced Program for High Achievers", or having progressed ahead of year level peers in one or more subjects (Appendix 1).

Although this giftedness identification approach can have some drawbacks, as it may equate giftedness with high performance rather than with potential to higher than desired degree, considering the challenging South Australian context, it nevertheless provided a comprehensive and acceptable measure of giftedness. The approach actively attempted to also include the non-high-achieving gifted individuals and those who never had an opportunity to be officially identified as gifted during their schooling years, in order to bypass the idea that if a student has not been identified as gifted through official channels he or she cannot be gifted. The giftedness identification process was further strengthened by the participants in this research having been

admitted into university degrees, thus potentially reflecting higher levels of prior academic performance. Applying a multi-level approach to self-identification of giftedness also adheres to a more progressive way of defining giftedness, inclusive of lived experience of minority groups and twice-exceptional students who may be gifted and have a learning disability or difficulty. The South Australian educational giftedness context, without a state-wide mandated giftedness identification regimen, without mandated gifted education undergraduate teacher training, and with a lack of easily accessible and wide-spread selective schools for the gifted, creates certain barriers to rigorous research in this field. This however cannot stop research into giftedness in South Australia, as it would mean that gifted students in this state are deserving of less attention and care than elsewhere.

## 1.12 Theoretical and operational definitions of giftedness

For this study, the abridged theoretical definition of giftedness was 'above average intellectual aptitude translated into potential or real performance'. In its expanded form, giftedness is theoretically defined here as: 'A continuum of high-performance progression toward talent development, starting with evident above average ability or potential, moving toward ability translating to above average performance and culminating with well-practiced high-level ability expressed as talent' (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius & Worrell, 2011; Sternberg & Davidson, 2005; Maker & Nielson, 1995). The operational or working definition of giftedness for this research reflected the local context and a pragmatic approach to giftedness identification, which includes: 1) standardised measures of intellectual / academic aptitude and performance, 2) self-assessed measures of intellectual / academic aptitude and performance, and 3) self-assessed presence of personality traits / characteristics commonly associated with giftedness.

## 1.13 School experience for the gifted

The schooling experience of gifted students qualitatively differs from that of students not identified as gifted (Riley & White, 2016). The primary reason for this experiential divergence is that gifted students feel a sense of difference from others, where feelings of different-ness and isolation become compounded with age as the ability gap increases (Coleman, Micko & Cross, 2015). These feelings and perceptions of gifted children set them apart from age peers and stem from two critical aspects of giftedness: ability and motivation (Coleman, Micko & Cross, 2015). Becoming labelled as gifted often adds feelings of confusion during school life as students come to be perceived differently by teachers and especially by peers who often taunt them about their giftedness (Coleman, Micko & Cross, 2015). In regular, non-specialized school settings, gifted students describe their lived experience of schooling as that of waiting for others, boredom and not being challenged, academic resistance and being bullied by peers (Coleman, Micko & Cross, 2015; Peterson, Duncan & Canady, 2009).

Throughout gifted students' schooling, the negative experiences are reportedly offset to some degree by the presence of key positive relationships in which teachers represent a key element (Coleman, Micko & Cross, 2015). Gifted students speak of teachers' passion, knowledge, and concern for students by showing understanding and acceptance as a motivating force for sustained academic achievement (Coleman, Micko & Cross, 2015). This is particularly important as gifted students, in addition to lack of extensive peer relationships, are often reluctant to communicate about their difficulties with significant adults (Peterson, Duncan & Canady, 2009). Common components of the lived-in schooling experience for the gifted are a feeling of loneliness, lack of confidence, feelings of responsibility for others, and experiences of painful social situations (Peterson, Duncan & Canady, 2009). These characteristics, combined with appreciation for knowledge, suggest that gifted students may naturally gravitate toward places where knowledge, potential social interactions with like peers, and safety abound: places like school libraries.

## 1.14 The school library

The fundamental purpose of a school library is the support of school curriculum delivery as opposed to other libraries including public, specialist, technical college and university libraries (Loh, et al., 2017; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Hay, 2010). A significant amount of research points to the positive influence school libraries and Teacher Librarians have on the lives of school students (Loh, et al., 2017; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2004, 2005; Hay, 2010). Furthermore, school libraries are reported to have a positive impact on student psychological development because they empower the learner, improve self-esteem, confidence and learning independence (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Hay, 2010). School library staff can provide research and technological and reading advice, in addition to creating a safe, contemporary, relevant and welcoming supervised space (Wittmann, & Fisher-Allison, 2020).

This would suggest that school libraries may also play a significant role in the lives of gifted students. Unfortunately, the research available currently is limited, non-empirical, dated, and mostly concerns primary age students. Furthermore, that research primarily deals with issues of reading, book ownership, and students' library type preferences. This points to a lack of relevant data concerning the usage patterns and perceptions of school libraries by older gifted students in contrast to students not identified as gifted.

## 1.15 Research design and methodology overview

This study targeted the existing research gap, investigating giftedness and the perceptions as well as use of school libraries by gifted and not identified as gifted students. Due to previously reported inconsistencies in giftedness identification approaches in South Australia (Jarvis & Henderson, 2012), also reflecting the general Australian attitudes toward giftedness as reported

by Jolly and Jarvis (2018, p. 94), i.e., "societal attitudes towards gifted children have vacillated between ambivalent at best and antagonistic at worst", an accessible, pragmatic approach to assessment of giftedness was applied in this research.

The participant target group for this study was first year university students, comprising individuals coming from all South Australian school sectors (Government, Catholic, Independent), and many cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. The participant sample for each phase of the voluntary study was drawn from first year undergraduate Bachelor of Education students at Flinders University, South Australia. The study focussed on early first semester informant participation to strengthen the recollection and accuracy of the collected data. The choice of university students as participants provided a potentially higher than average proportion of gifted individuals. Based on participants' self-nomination, the study informants were classified into three giftedness groups: officially or formally (school / psychologist) identified as gifted, self-identified as gifted (based on survey instrument provided), and those not officially or self-identifying as gifted. The research was conducted over two consecutive academic years, because analyses and outcomes of each research phase dictated the methodological design of the subsequent research phases.

The three-phase, mixed methods approach comprised exploratory focus group discussions, followed by exploratory quantitative and qualitative survey research and finally, explanatory semi-structured interviews. Focus group findings helped identify issues relevant to participants and generate the research instrument in the form of a questionnaire. The quantitative and qualitative findings from survey research were applied to generate interview questions for the semi-structured interviews in the final explanatory phase of the study.

## 1.16 Study limitations

Despite introducing several de-limiting factors into the design of the research, there were several limitations stemming from the design, type and size of this study. Some of these included: the geographical location and the South Australian context, the retrospective and exploratory nature of the research, limited participant numbers and cohort type, and constraints on research timelines and length of the dissertation.

## 1.17 Theoretical framing for the study

In order to reveal extra depth and subtlety in the findings, the data were viewed through the prism of spatial theories of Hall's Proxemics (1966), Foucault's Heterotopia (1967) and Soja's Thirdspace (1996). Pragmatism (Morgan, 2014; Patton, 2005) was chosen for its theoretical and practical strengths to underpin the research design. Spatial theoretical tools applied in this research enabled the examination of how the school library space, rules, hierarchies and its

physical properties may be influencing the socio-cultural and relational students' perceptions and use of library spaces. The strength, limitations and implications of applying these theories to the data will be discussed in further chapters.

## 1.18 Thesis Structure

This thesis contains the following chapters.

1. Introduction, which provides the background and context for the study, in addition to introducing the relevant terminology and definitions, the research purpose, methodology and design, theoretical tools applied, research question, study limitations and the overview of the thesis structure.

2. The Literature Review chapter outlines and critiques existing, relevant research connected to all aspects of the study.

3. The Methodology chapter provides the rationale, description and methodological detail of the research design for the study.

4. The Results chapter provides a detailed account of the data obtained in the study.

5. The Discussion chapter introduces, frames, justifies and explains the key research findings.

6. Implications for policy formation and practice provide context for the research field, as well as recommendations for further research.

## 1.19 Summary

The Introduction chapter has provided a roadmap of what the study is about, the existing research gap and an overview of the reasons for applying the specific research methodology. This mixed-methods study explored how intellectually gifted students think about, perceive and use their secondary school libraries, and how their experiences differ from students not identified as gifted. The study applied Pragmatics theory for research design and three spatial theoretical tools: Hall's Proxemics (1966), Foucault's Heterotopia (1967) and Soja's Thirdspace (1996) to uncover findings from the data.

The following Review of Literature chapter provides background information and context on major aspects of the research, provides explanations for concepts and terminology, and clarifies sometimes competing ideas and findings, while justifying and embedding theoretical positions within the study. The chapter also provides an evaluative comparison of literature relevant to the study by critiquing available research-based evidence, justifying the research methodology applied, exploring the research gap and qualifying the need for this research.

# CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature related to the focus of my research, namely, how students who are gifted think about and use school libraries, compared to students who are not identified as gifted.

First, the literature review introduces and examines research related to various conceptions of giftedness and high academic achievement. Secondly, it examines the effectiveness of school libraries and Teacher Librarians in the context of educational and socio-emotional outcomes for different groups of school students. Thirdly, the chapter introduces school libraries as spaces and sites of service provision in the context of spatial thinking, lived spaces of social significance, power relations, indoctrination, marginalization and empowerment. Finally, the chapter presents the theoretical tools used for research design and data analysis including Hall's Proxemics (1966), Foucault's Heterotopia (1967) and Soja's Thirdspace (1996).

In this study focussed on perceptions, usage patterns and experiences of school libraries by gifted and not identified as gifted students, an understanding of giftedness becomes essential as it highlights and frames certain shared traits and characteristics which may influence individual and group behaviours captured in the data. To provide insights particularly relevant for the research, this chapter presents a special focus on socio-emotional aspect of giftedness. Additionally, the concepts of belonging and libraries are presented in context of intellectual giftedness.

## 2.1    Conceptions of Giftedness and high achievement

Giftedness identification followed by relevant educational provisions during school years have been identified as an educational delivery necessity because, traditionally, gifted students have been burdened with the expectations of becoming future leaders in all fields (Craven & Marsh, 2008). In spite of decades of research, currently there is no singular, universally agreed upon definition of giftedness, and definitions that are available are contextually, socially and culturally constructed (Ngara & Porath, 2007; Perkh, et al., 2018).

Historically, it was Galton (1874) who first realized that nurture, as well as nature, drives the development of the mind. Later, seminal research by Terman (1925) in his longitudinal studies of genius, first attempted to define giftedness. Spanning the time between the 1900s to the 1950s giftedness was associated with high intelligence scores (Von Karolyi & Winner, 2005). Only since the 1960s has the research on giftedness broadened the understanding that there is more to defining giftedness than just intelligence measures (Borland, 1989; Von Karolyi &

Winner, 2005). A key divergence in defining giftedness was related to perceiving it as either a *potential* to achieve or as evidence of *achievement,* along with indication of above average intelligence (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius & Worrell, 2011). This distinction between manifest high performance and the potential for high performance is also the basis of giftedness differentiation into the terms *gifted* and *talented* (Gagné, 2003; Gagné, 2010). Gagné defines talent as further development of giftedness, arguing it is "the outstanding mastery of systematically developed competences (knowledge and skills) in at least one field of human activity to a degree that places an individual in at least the top 10 per cent of their learning peers" (Gagné, 2010, p. 82). This conceptual separation is important as it points to the idea that in the absence of favourable conditions addressing the learning and socio-emotional needs of students, giftedness may not develop into talent.

While giftedness and high achievement are reported to be closely linked in much of the literature, according to Parekh, Brown and Robson (2018) there is a rarely occurring relationship between early giftedness testing followed by identification in primary school years, and subsequent evidence of high achievement of gifted individuals in high school, meaning early giftedness identification does not guarantee later years' high achievement. Furthermore, Perekh, et al. (2018) reported that in Canadian schools most very high achieving students were not in fact identified as gifted, and that male students were more likely to be identified as gifted while female students were more likely identified as very high achievers. This points to several potential issues associated with the entrenched social construction of giftedness and common identification practices which may prioritise and trade accuracy of outcome of standardised testing for replication of dominant social structures, advantage and privilege. Furthermore, it also highlights the preoccupation of the research field with identification and defining of giftedness in place of the bigger issue – the purpose of giftedness. For example, Sternberg (2017, 2018, 2022), leading the conversation on what and for whom is giftedness, points to the obsession with 'pseudoquantitative precision' in understanding giftedness, in place of what to do with it to benefit the world and not potentially add to world problems in the future. Recent quantitative analyses still reveal inconsistencies of approaches toward giftedness and point toward a necessity of creating global definitions, conceptualizations and identification regimens for theoretical and practical consistency in the wider field (McBee & Makel, 2019). Subsequently, Sternberg (2017, 2018, 2022a) alludes that current approaches do not address issues such as societal investment in gifted individuals commonly resulting in it solely benefiting the gifted instead of wider society, and / or potentially bringing future pain and suffering to humanity from the malevolent workings of 'superior' gifted minds. Sternberg (2021a, 2021b, 2022b) responds to this problem by dissecting the concept of giftedness into the more traditional approach of 'transactional giftedness' that predominantly benefits the gifted individual, and 'transformational giftedness' which is underpinned by the altruistic drive to make

the world a better place. Educationally and pragmatically, not only should our interest and investment in gifted students become mindful of developing altruism-driven individuals, but we should also encourage those with traits of transformational giftedness to transition into pathways for career-related leadership positions of responsibility, where they can positively impact the world (Napier & Halsey, 2022, p. 39)

In relation to emerging theories of giftedness through time, giftedness can be portrayed as either *traditional* or *emerging* (Clark, 2008). The *traditional* view sees giftedness as a fixed concept or entity which can be partially explained through standardised test measures, like the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) or Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, gauging a person's cognitive ability (Clark, 2008). In this context, intelligence is represented on a population-based bell curve, with giftedness occupying a small range of the IQ (Intelligence Quotient) scores (Clark, 2008) and individuals who score the highest 1–1.5% on tests for intellectual ability being classified as gifted (Moon & Dixon, 2006). According to Borland (2005), historically the hierarchical categorisation of children using psychometric measures of ability and IQ was a power relations exercise, the key feature of which was their convenience-based classification into sub-normal, normal and the super-normal, a group later renamed as the gifted and talented. The *emerging* giftedness paradigm, however, sees intelligence and subsequently giftedness not as a fixed, test dependent concept, but one which is changeable, dynamic, multidimensional, and one which relies on exposure to environmental factors and the level or intensity of those interactions (Clark, 2008; Colangelo & Davis, 2003). This differentiation in understanding of giftedness is relevant to this research and its South Australian context as the dependence on traditional, psychometric assessment of giftedness cannot be depended on reliably due to lack of resources, expertise and even willingness to implement such testing. Subsequently, parallel observational measures of giftedness characteristics and 'ways of being' used for giftedness identification in this research, derived from literature, become equally relevant as a viable entry point into giftedness assessment in the local context.

As in the case of giftedness, there is no consensus on defining human intelligence but, as Sternberg (2018) alludes that intelligence seems to involve more than IQ. The interplay between cognitive ability and the socio-cultural context has produced various approaches to defining intelligence including Sternberg's practical intelligence (Cianciolo et al., 2006), Spearman's concept of 'g' (Horn & McArdle, 2007), Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner & Hatch, 1989), or Kincheloe and Steinberg's postformal intelligence (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1993). Sternberg's (1986) influential, triarchic theory of human intelligence points to intelligence being influenced by and influencing a set of non-intellectual elements like environment or social interactions. In this definition, Sternberg includes knowledge acquisition, meta-components and performance components, pointing to intelligence being a process rather than a static entity. Critically, intelligence is at the core of conceptualizing and defining giftedness, as it influences

the way we see, portray and interact with those who are gifted (Borland, 2005). Giftedness perceived as a product of human intelligence can be viewed in different ways depending on the theoretical lens applied. Borland (2005) speaks of giftedness as a socio-cultural creation which is a "matter of values and policy, not empirical research" (2003, p. 112), while Roeper (1982, p. 21) writes about giftedness as "a greater awareness, greater sensitivity, and a greater ability to understand and transform perceptions into intellectual and emotional experiences".

The approach to defining giftedness which considered human traits beyond those limited only to IQ test measures, helped to reduce the underrepresentation of students from cultural and linguistic minority groups who were creative and artistic, but wouldn't or could not perform well on tests (Maker, 1996).

Overall, the gifted group is heterogeneous and varies significantly internally as a population (Tomlinson, 2005; Kanevsky, 2011), as the differences encompass cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in addition to the specificity of gifts (VanTassel-Baska, 2005). In other words, social stereotyping of the gifted population is a highly erroneous approach as gifted individuals are highly diverse. Gross (2004) reported on the danger of equating intellectual giftedness with social and economic privilege, as a result of which intellectually gifted children would remain on the receiving end of resentment and distrust, which in turn would have significantly adverse consequences on gifted education in Australia.

Considering the complexities involved in defining giftedness, there is a potential for an unintentional grouping overlap between those identified as gifted and those considered as high achievers, which can result from the applied identification regimen (Bain & Bell, 2004). One discernible difference between the groups resides in the results of social attribution tests, where gifted individuals attribute success to effort ahead of ability, whereas in high achievers this order is reversed (Bain & Bell, 2004).

## 2.2   Models of giftedness

There are a number of stereotypes associated with theorising of giftedness. Some of the most quoted are Harmony Theory, where the gifted are considered well-adjusted and successful at dealing with life, and Disharmony Theory which posits that high intellect comes at a cost and threatens the harmonious development of a gifted individual (Godor & Szymanski, 2017). In relation to conceptualizing giftedness, Reis and Renzulli (2003) coined two terms describing types of giftedness: Schoolhouse Giftedness and Creative-productive Giftedness. Schoolhouse Giftedness referred to standardised IQ measures, school tests and academic achievement as identification tools, a finite and biology-immersed concept, while Creative-productive Giftedness concentrated on concepts of content (ability to apply information) and process (thinking skills) as applied to real life situations and problems.

Taking into account the various discussed theoretical and pragmatic aspects of giftedness, the research undertaken, analysed and documented in this thesis was informed and framed by conceptions of intelligence and intellectual giftedness which take into account contextual, cognitive, behavioural and giftedness assessment complexities relevant to a study's geographical setting, and the multi-dimensional nature of a study encompassing spaces, institutions, interactions and power relations. This research specifically focussed on aspects of intellectual giftedness, where participants reported their experiences of school libraries as outcomes of their observations, considerations, decisions, actions and interactions.

As advanced cognition is central to conceptualizing academic / intellectual giftedness, Bandura's (1978) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was drawn upon and applied in this research to link the relationship between environmental factors and behavioural decision-making processes in terms of personal development and school academic achievement. Bandura's SCT contends that individuals, rather than instinctively responding to their environment, engage in decision making processes based on their observations and perceptions of what happens in their environment. SCT posits that there is a reciprocal relationship which mediates between the cognitive, behavioural and environmental factors in decision-making processes concerned with learning. Such human functioning and interaction with environmental factors is termed the triadic reciprocal causation, which is based on core processes of observation, interaction and reflection (Bandura, 1978).

In conceptualising giftedness for this research, Feldman's developmental conception of giftedness was utilized for its social cognitive and constructivist approach to knowledge creation, resulting from individuals interacting with the environment (Feldman, 1982). The theory is useful in attempting to understand the concept of gifted achievement as a consequence of the opportunities, quality and nature of the interactions with the social and physical environment, as well as in its inherent developmental optimism about ability and performance of the gifted in light of the common barriers gifted students experience in school settings, including libraries. Feldman's conception of giftedness is a progression of the Piagetian and Vygotskian theories concerned with cognitive development and knowledge coming into existence as a consequence of social construction (Kalina & Powell, 2009). This is important in recollective studies like this one, reporting on longer term experiences, as the theory embraces the idea of human development occurring in stages, but without the handicap of stages being seen as age specific with their consecutive / transitory nature influencing the reorganization of individual's physical, cognitive and socio-emotional factors and functioning. Fortunately, through an overlap in fields of Psychology, Education and Human Physiology, our understanding of human psycho-social development is now very comprehensive. Feldman's developmental theory of giftedness is based on three concepts: (a) the interaction between an individual and her or his environment, (b) the developmental stages, and (c) the transition between the stages (Feldman, 1982). This

points to giftedness being a process, and a dynamic one at that, rather than a predetermined, static, biologically derived entity.

Such an approach where giftedness is seen to be a rolling continuum is generative in terms of investigating gifted individuals' evolving ongoing experiences in the context of what happens in schools and inside school libraries. Participants' lived experiences over extended period of time – encompassing physical, cognitive, social and psychological development – becomes a recounted story of individuals and groups interacting with one another, with 'others', with rules and regulations of institutions, and the spaces of freedom or containment they find themselves in.

The educational reality of the South Australian context for this research forces an alternative, pragmatic conceptualization of giftedness, and this also becomes a strength of this study, as it forces a deep interrogation of ideas and concepts that help recognize aspects and manifestations or characteristics of 'lived / experiential giftedness' beyond exclusively psychometric measures commonly applied elsewhere.

For this research, giftedness was regarded as a developmental construct, one that is not always linear and highly dependent on the mind communicating and interacting with the environment (Subotnik, et al., 2011; Sternberg & Davidson, 2005). Giftedness can be latent or even silent in cases where the manifestation of high level of intellectual or cognitive potential is translated into high level performance achievement with few known reference points, or within domains unrecognized or unvalued by mainstream socio-cultural understandings (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005; Gardner, 1994); for example, a gifted individual may exhibit exceptional proficiency in decoding the nuances of an ancient, unused language script, an advanced skill unappreciated in the context of mainstream education.

Despite the contested nature of giftedness, there are several commonly accepted giftedness characteristics relevant to this study, although few gifted individuals are found to exhibit all the attributes listed. These listed attributes include advanced memory, creativity, superior reasoning skills, task commitment (motivation), analytical thinking (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002; Collins, 2001) and unique socio-emotional functioning (Moon & Dixon, 2006). The socio-emotional characteristics include advanced moral judgement, heightened self-awareness and sensitivity to the expectations and feelings of others, perfectionism, introversion, high expectations of self and others, idealism, a sense of justice and higher levels of emotional depth and intensity (Clark, 1992; Silverman, 1994).

A particularly prevalent characteristic of giftedness, and one contextually relevant to this research, is advanced language ability, expressed through extensive use of vocabulary and reading proficiency (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005; Gardner, 1994) potentially highlighting the

importance of reading and libraries in the lives of gifted children. Loh, et al. (2017) report a strong correlation between independent reading and academic achievement, while Neuman and Celano (2012) associated wide and varied reading to attainment of information capital which comprises knowledge-based and analytical reasoning. Mason and Au (1990) define gifted readers as children with exceptional reading ability and the capacity to comprehend text information well above their age peers. Swanton (1984) found that, due to their diverse interests and superior reading skills, primary school gifted readers prefer using public libraries to school libraries, as public libraries mostly cater for adults and adult difficulty level reading materials. Swanton's (1984) research also shows that the reverse trend is true for readers not identified as gifted, potentially due to the type, accessibility and availability of the preferred reading material. Gifted students are reported to favour specific reading genres such as science-fiction or fantasy, which stretch their creative imagination into areas not connected to everyday-life experiences or reference points (Swanton, 1984). Incidentally, based on this practitioner researcher's experience, these types of reading materials are hard to find in most school libraries, which may force students to use other libraries. In contrast, the main reported genres of preference for non-identified as gifted primary school readers include comedy / humour, biographies, horror, war and adventure, all widely available in school libraries (Swanton, 1984). Primary school gifted readers are reported to own twice as many books as non-gifted peers, to enjoy reading twice as much (Swanton, 1984), and to report that public libraries contribute to their personal growth more than any other institution (including their schools) during summer times, when opportunity for countless activities abound. Swanton (1984) also reports that for over half of primary school gifted readers, most likely due to adult focussed resourcing strategies, public libraries remain the main source of recreational reading, which is almost three times as much as the next source – the school library. School libraries however are reported to be instrumental in creating a reading culture amongst students (Adkins & Brendler, 2015), which in turn can lead to improvement in academic achievement (Barrett, 2010; Lance 2002) as students become competitive in terms of knowledge attainment and language development. Other theorists construct the source of knowledge attainment differently, seeing it more as an important part of intelligent performance contributing to the development of expertise acquired through deliberate practice (Ericsson, 1998; Ericsson, 2002; Keating, 1990; Sternberg, 1999; Sternberg, Grigorenko, & Ferrari, 2002). Irrespective, access to knowledge appears critical to the psychological development of gifted individuals and (school) libraries play a vital resource role.

Depending on the identification approach and the theoretical and research lens applied, giftedness can be framed as a manifestation of human potential, human performance (or production), or as a socio-emotional way of being (Neihart, 1999; Silverman, 1993). Giftedness can also be described as domain specific or domain general human potential or performance (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005). With the evolution of conceptual understanding of giftedness

eclipsing its initial reliance on high IQ (Terman, 1922; Gagné, 2003), researchers such as Borland (2005) have gone as far as suggesting an anti-identification and anti-labelling approach to giftedness in order to avoid stigmatization, stereotyping and unrealistic expectations.

Combining the most relevant conceptual understandings for this research, the theoretical approach to giftedness, expressed as the real-world working definition of giftedness, is as follows. Giftedness is a continuum of performance progress toward talent development, starting with evident above average ability, moving toward ability translating to above average performance, and culminating with well-practised high-level ability expressed as talent (Subotnik, et al., 2011; Sternberg & Davidson, 2005; Maker & Nielson, 1995). Furthermore, regardless of whether giftedness is framed as outwardly expressed inherent psychological characteristic(s) or a behavioural quality, it is responsible for behaviours and *ways of being*, which culminate in experiencing the human condition differently to those individuals who are not identified as gifted (Maker & Nielson, 1995; VanTassel-Baska, 2010).

Gross (2006) argues that in the Australian context the ongoing negative academic and social effects of protracted, imposed under-achievement and social isolation inflicted on gifted children through mismatched schooling can reinforce their concealment of giftedness. The 2004 Report on School Performance asserts that Australian schools differ significantly in effectiveness, with students highly segregated along social and academic lines intensifying between-school differences in student outcomes, with results influenced markedly by the individual school the child attends, regardless of her or his ability level (Lamb, et al., 2004). Ad-hoc, highly varied approaches to gifted programming in schools can also add to within-schools often stereotyped perceptions of gifted students and their place in the hierarchy of educational delivery ranking.

For gifted students, the complexities of navigating school life beyond those of academic performance, including social interactions with staff, non-gifted peers or institutional rules and regulations, may impact their emotional wellbeing. The following Chapter 2 section deals with aspects of giftedness related to socio-emotional functioning of gifted individuals.

## 2.3 Socio-emotional context of giftedness

In this study the socio-emotional or affective consequences of giftedness played a particularly critical role, as participants shared their school library experiences not only in terms of what happened but also how they felt in the context of their experiences. The idea of socio-emotional vulnerabilities of the gifted population being central to this research deserves a deeper consideration.

Dabrowski's (1964) Theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD), using the concept of Overexcitabilities (OEs), frames gifted individuals as being at risk of emotional maladjustment.

Dabrowski stipulates that the gifted disproportionately experience the process of positive disintegration and personality growth, translating to heightened intensity and sensitivity which can outwardly manifest as socio-emotional vulnerabilities. Research on OEs has shown an association with giftedness (Lysy & Piechowski, 1983; Piechowski, 1986; Piechowski & Miller, 1995), however the connection between behavioural socio-emotional vulnerabilities and giftedness has been contested for a long time, with the latest major iterations coming from research by Vuyk, Krieshok and Kerr (2016). To more accurately reframe socio-emotional vulnerabilities, their research proposed the replacement of OEs with an Openness to Experience (OtE) personality domain within their Five Factor Model (FFM). Vuyk, Krieshok and Kerr (2016), coming from a Psychology background, suggested that the field of Gifted Education has often misinterpreted the conceptual application of OEs and resultant socio-emotional vulnerabilities in wider contexts, as OEs should not be employed alone but strictly as part of TPD.

While some have suggested that the gifted have qualitatively different nervous systems due to OEs (Piechowski, 2006), others have assigned the heightened intensity echoing OEs to different sources i.e., higher OtEs (Zeinder & Shani-Zinovich, 2011). Where anxiety and depression are giftedness facets of Positive Disintegration, in mainstream psychology these are considered to be disorders (Mendaglio, 2008). Recently, Grant (2021), in his response to the Vuyk, Krieshok and Kerr (2016) article, stated that OE facets, which frame intensity and over-sensitivity, are merely similar to OtE facets. Grant (2021) further asserted that TPD which incapsulates OEs is a long-standing theory applied in Gifted Education, while the FFM is a model and, as such, it describes behaviours but cannot explain them - while TPD can. In response to Grant (2021), the reply from authors Vuyk and Kerr (2021) appeared to have less robust substance and was less academically convincing as it primarily relied on the 'morality and ethics of white oppression' which, although certainly valid, may need to occupy a different academic discourse space. Subsequently, at least at this point in time, in addition to long term practitioner observation there still appears enough validity to research supported existence of socio-emotional vulnerability of gifted individuals, a concept highly relevant and evidenced in the data from this study.

In school settings, gifted students commonly have needs that are unique and different from other students (Zedan & Bitar, 2017). For the gifted, heightened feelings of self-awareness, self-doubt and self-perception (Piechowski, 1997), combined with personality traits of perfectionism (Davis & Rimm, 2004; Silverman, 1994), hyper-sensitivity and intensity (Silverman, 1997), in addition to feelings of self-doubt, and inferiority (Piechowski, 1997), may influence the way a gifted individual views the world and interacts with various situations and environments (Davis & Rimm, 2004). Nonetheless, by understanding brain development stages of adolescence, we know that the gifted like all others simply desire to be part of the group, just wanting to fit in

(Cockerham, et al., 2021). When gifted individuals begin to focus more on their failure than their success, they start to demonstrate unhealthy perfectionism (Mofield & Parker Peters, 2018). Gifted and high ability students' social aptitudes are greatly affected by how they perceive themselves and how they are seen by others (Phelps & Lewis, 2022). Just as crucially, these students come into high school with a heightened perception of the expectations other people have of them and increased ability to self-criticize their own performance (Alodat, et al., 2020; Cross, 1997). According to Jackson and Peterson (2003), for the gifted, the kaleidoscope of heightened emotionality associated with giftedness can outwardly express as the experiential norm present in everyone, stopping distressed gifted individuals from seeking help so as not to emotionally overwhelm others. Such traits or vulnerabilities occur in most 'profiles of the gifted' with only a few profiles seemingly less prone to experiencing socio-emotional developmental difficulties. Work published online by Betts and Neihart (2010), which builds on prior work of Roeper (1982) and Neihart (1999) describing profiles of the gifted (Appendix 2), may be useful in understanding the specific socio-emotional predispositions of gifted students, potentially pointing to benefits of a school library as a social hub for safely interacting with peers and adults, technology, knowledge attainment, and a place for cognitive development. According to Neihart (1999), approximately 90% of gifted students fall within the profile of the "successful gifted" (Appendix 2), with the recommendation requiring "more time with intellectual peers" potentially translating to more time socializing with other gifted students in a place like the school library. In fact, all bar one of the six gifted profiles (the autonomous learner) include some form of recommendation for more time spent with 'like peers', essentially recommending the provision of a safe environment where such social interactions can take place (Neihart & Betts, 2010, p. 1). In this context, school libraries as places where gifted students can meet and interact socially with like peers in the relative safety of an adult supervised space, away from unpredictable weather and unwelcome attention of potential bullies, can become a significant oasis of safety, security, belonging, friendship development and intellectual challenge.

The large body of research data showing a heightened level of socio-emotional vulnerability within the gifted population has been contradicted by other research reporting the reverse. Kitano and Lewis (2005) frame giftedness as a protective factor against psychological conditions such as depression and stress stemming from isolation, with high cognitive abilities allowing for better utilization of available resources, minimizing risks of developing adverse conditions. Bland, Sowa and Callahan (1994) make a similar claim, suggesting that many aspects of giftedness overlap with the concept of active resiliency, limiting socio-emotional vulnerabilities potentially developing into undesirable conditions. However, even if these findings are accurate, they still might not negate the potential socio-emotional benefits that school libraries may provide to the gifted student cohort, especially in schools where gifted education provisions are limited or non-existent. Godor and Szymanski (2017) argue that much

of the evidence concerning social adjustment difficulties may be rooted not in the internal characteristics of giftedness, but as a response or reaction to repetitive exposure to mismatched curriculum and subsequent stereotype-reinforced behaviours, driving the perception of the gifted as socially maladjusted misfits.

In contrast, an extensive body of research asserts that gifted students are more vulnerable to experiencing negative psycho-social states (Nugent, 2000; Sternberg & Davidson, 2005). Neihart (1999) writes that, due to heightened level of sensitivity to interpersonal conflict along with high cognitive abilities, gifted individuals are more prone to experiencing negative socio-emotional states and psychological instability.

Giftedness alone does not guarantee life success. However, while giftedness represents a single dominant aspect of a person's life, its manifestations can influence the feedback loop which determines the way an individual perceives, interacts with and experiences various environments (Subotnik, et al., 2011; Sternberg & Davidson, 2005), including the school environment. The interplay of the vulnerabilities associated with giftedness and the environment may influence the overall everyday-life experience of gifted students, with supportive school environments more likely to counterbalance the negatives of socio-emotional vulnerability. The research-based contradiction regarding the positive versus negative effects of giftedness on individuals' socio-emotional functioning may be explained by giftedness levels where, for example, profound giftedness may be associated with greater socio-emotional adjustment problems (Gross, 1994), or be related to specific individualized life experience and resulting identity formation. One consistently accepted notion asserts that certain demographic backgrounds (e.g., low socioeconomic status) can lead to socio-emotional vulnerabilities in gifted individuals to develop into adverse experiences (Mueller, 2009).

### 2.3.1  Giftedness, belonging and safety

According to Allen et al. (2021, p. 88), belonging can be defined as "a subjective feeling that one is an integral part of their surrounding systems, including family, friends, school, work environments, communities, cultural groups, and physical places". Belongingness, described as the state or quality of belonging, is understood as inter-personal relatedness, which along with autonomy and competence is considered an essential requirement for healthy psychological development of individuals (Connell & Wellborn, 1991).

Radich (2012) takes the idea of belonging beyond the emotional into the physical space, framing belonging as a physical environment which becomes a safe place for connecting with other people or working alone. Antonsich (2010) widens the concept further, describing belonging in terms of familiarity, security, comfort and emotional attachment, which is also secured and mediated through continuity and memory (Robinson & Notara, 2015).

Connectedness is a vital aspect of belonging and depicts the number as well as quality of an individual's connections to people as well as places, leading to an individual's sense of belonging (Robinson & Notara, 2015). However, for the human experience referred to as a *sense of belonging*, it is the quality of these relationships that is more important than the sheer number and nature of the relationships (Walton & Cohen, 2011).

Goodenow (1993, p. 80) speaks of the sense of belonging as a feeling of "being accepted, appreciated and understood in our relationships with individuals and groups of people". The concepts of belonging and connectedness can overlap into "belonging in school" when students feel accepted, respected, included and valued (Goodenow, 1993, p.80), while students' feelings of safety and security come from the positive interplay between the physical and relational factors within a school (Robinson & Notara, 2015). School belonging matters in students' lives as it impacts their academic performance and psychological well-being (Tillery, et al., 2013). For the gifted, school experience in the context of belonging includes not just the interactions and relationships with peers or classmates as well as teachers, but also with the curriculum (Godor & Szymanski, 2017), which means that for the gifted a mismatch in a school's curriculum delivery can impact their feeling of belonging.

Ryan (1995) describes the relatedness aspect of belonging as the need for being securely connected with others in a specific environment. When the relatedness need is not satisfied within educational settings, the consequences can include reduced motivation, isolation, compromised development and reduced academic performance (Deci, et al., 1991). In the context of an individual, belonging can be described as an identity congruence which takes into account the unique interplay between multiple personal identities such as gender, ethnicity or ability, and then adjusts the standing of these to better fit a social group of value to the individual (Hughes, 2010). The fine tuning of identity congruence stemming from social engagements between like-minded gifted individuals has been reported to influence their sense of belonging (Riley & White, 2015).

Making and keeping friends has been reported as being one of the most difficult challenges for gifted adolescents (Piechowski, 2006). Social belonging framed as social connectedness is a basic human motivation and a predictor of favourable life outcomes, buffering negative aspects of mental and physical health complications (Walton & Cohen, 2007), while the stigmatization of certain groups within school communities creates 'belonging uncertainty' (Walton & Cohen, 2007, p. 1). Inclusion can be characterised by two main components, belongingness and uniqueness, where the feeling of inclusion on the part of an individual derives from fulfilment of needs provided by the group and group acceptance of an individual's uniqueness (Jansen, et al., 2014). The success of being included is more attainable if members of the group are of similar dispositions to the individual (Jansen, et al., 2014).

Students who are gifted do actively seek social, emotional and intellectual connectedness with others (Riley & White, 2015). Riley and White (2015) report that students who are characterised by abilities and qualities that can be described as exceptionally advanced, and which differ qualitatively compared to same age peers, may feel a sense of alienation. Gifted students experience a higher incidence of social isolation (Colangelo & Davis, 2003), which may stem from being a distinctive, poorly understood and socially disconnected minority group with evident vulnerabilities and unique *ways of being*. One of the universally reported research threads on the gifted includes one termed as "longing to belong" (Blackett, 2006, p.15), to be understood and to share the life experiences with like peers, or individuals who share similar perspectives, viewpoints and interests (Adams-Byers, et al., 2004; Wood, 2010; Levine & Cox, 2005; Mondani, et al., 2014). Subsequently, for the frequently marginalized and segregated gifted individuals, the intrinsic need for healthy experience of belonging may be magnified, as is the need to address their isolation - as an educational equity challenge in schools (Riley & White, 2015).

For most adolescents a central setting for social interactions is their school environment, which for gifted individuals can be a source of great apprehension (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005). Robinson, et al. (2002) report that, for the gifted, the majority of their socio-emotional concerns have their roots in school environments poorly adapted to their unique needs, pointing to the necessity of managing this problem at its source. In response to various expectations, gifted students are under significant, constant pressure to achieve academically (Moon & Dixon, 2006) and such expectations are often internalised into self-concepts focussing on achievement outcomes rather than self-concepts concerned with who they are (Silverman, 1997).

Positive self-concept, a key component of human psychological wellbeing, plays a critical part in fostering and supporting the potential of gifted students, facilitating happiness, motivation and academic achievement (Craven & Marsh, 2008). For the gifted, who may be particularly vulnerable to emotional anguish peaking around adolescence, the motivation for cognitive improvement expressed as academic achievement often overshadows the need for healthy socio-emotional development, essential for appropriate psychological functioning (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005). In some gifted, the asynchronous development can cause the development of psychosocial skills at a slower rate than their age peers (Rakow, 2020). The successful progress toward healthy affective or socio-emotional development in the gifted equates to strategically navigating countless developmental risks which can advance or halt its healthy progression, and which are paradoxically often juxtaposed against one another (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005). Some of these include:

- a significant drive for academic achievement (Sowa & McIntire, 1994), and social acceptance concerns threatened by demonstrating high achievement (Dalzell, 1998),

- a heightened need for conflict resolution followed by excessive propensity for masking emotional distress in front of others (Gross, 1989),

- an asynchronous development of the emotional vs. intellectual self, resulting in above average intellectual development, but regressed age peer-compared social development limiting meaningful social interactions, resulting in social isolation and reduced sense of belonging (Silverman, 1997).

As the self-actualization aspect of human functioning is believed to be critical for healthy development of one's personality, accommodating the human need for *belonging* becomes absolutely vital (Maslow, 1970).

Schools as institutions are primed to promote performance and achievement over the socio-emotional needs of individuals (Maehr & Midgley, 1996). While some research frames schools as alienating institutions for individuals and groups (Hascher & Hadjar, 2018) not all students might experience the lack of belonging as alienation. Although active promotion of student well-being in Australian schools continues, gifted students may still be more susceptible to experiencing social isolation (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005), as their heightened emotionality and sensitivity eclipse those of their peers (Hebert & Kent, 2000). For some gifted students, social isolation may stem from problems in casual communication with peers due to disparities in vocabulary use, heightened intensity, overexcitability (emotional, intellectual, sensual, imaginational) (Gross, 2009), superior intellectual reasoning and a preference for the company of intellectually closer, older students or adults (Colangelo & Davis, 2003).

Some schools adopt organizational and institutional practices which neglect or even undermine students' experience of membership in a supportive school community (Osterman, 2000), despite social exclusion during adolescence being a predictor of distress (Kenny, Dooley & Fitzgerald, 2013). To put this in more concrete terms by applying this practitioner researcher's experience, such practices can for example include school wide policies related to extracurricular opportunities, wearing of school uniform, or some schools' narrow single-minded academic excellence focus (Physical Education, Music, Art, or Mathematics and Science) which can exclude some students' aspirations. Osterman (2000) additionally presents belongingness as being a regulatory dimension on motivation and performance, a critical identity component in gifted individuals (Neihart, 1999). The healthy development of identity in adolescence is reported to be highly dependent on attaining a sense of belonging expressed as freedom for self-disclosure with like peers (Davis, 2012), which for some gifted can be problematic.

According to Resnick, et al. (1997, p. 831), a number of protective factors help individuals reduce or neutralize the risk of socio-emotional vulnerabilities becoming expressed as emotional deficits (e.g. depression). These fall within the three categories of: personality (e.g.

self-esteem), family cohesion (e.g. parent–family connectedness) and, critically, environmental factors (such as belonging to the school community) (Resnick, et al., 1997). Such shielding factors can significantly impact the optimal psycho-social development of gifted individuals (Mueller, 2009).

Extrapolating on the third factor, it could be theorised that providing a sense of belonging through the school library may potentially deliver a protective element against socio-emotional vulnerabilities, bringing positive socio-emotional and achievement outcomes for gifted students. However, any practical implementation of school library student social supports targeting improved sense of belonging may require careful design consideration, as Dunn, et al. (1987) suggest that the preferred social supports sought are different for females, who seek social support from multiple sources, and males who almost exclusively seek support from peers.

## 2.4 School Libraries and giftedness

Definitions of what constitutes a library vary, depending whether the focus is on their function (e.g. a collection of books or other resources) or a place (a building or a room). In the South Australian (SA) context, within schools, school libraries are often seen as particularly contested entities which are given a multitude of 'non library' official labels such as Information Centre, Reference Centre or, most common, the Resource Centre. The assigned 'centre' nomenclature may contain a dose of irony as school libraries in South Australia often reside on the geographical and status peripheries of school sites, which is also evidenced in this research.

As school libraries are at the core of this research, it is important to illuminate their key functions, their educational and social contributions for the school community, and the nature of the organizational and social interactions that exist within their real and abstract boundaries.

School libraries exist to support curriculum delivery and educational outcomes for students (Loh, et al., 2017; Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Hay, 2010). They can have a significant impact on student psychological development, as they empower the learner, improve self-esteem, confidence and independence, while instilling a sense of responsibility with regard to the individual's own learning (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Hay, 2010). School libraries' positive influence on student learning extends beyond the physical (or virtual) realm, moving from passive into active influence which exists beyond the confines of the school (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005). School libraries become agents for active learning by encouraging critical knowledge examination, helping to develop personally relevant conclusions, viewpoints and positions (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Hay, 2010). By using school libraries, students are shown to develop cognitive and affective scaffolds necessary to engage appropriately with information, not only in an informational but also in (knowledge) formational and transformational ways (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005). In the school library students can freely explore conflicting ideas, be

introduced to new experiences and make accidental and planned discoveries (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005). The importance of the school library extends to supporting vulnerable learners, helping build communities and developing social capital (Hay, 2010).

Todd and Kuhlthau's (2005) seminal study, based on data from over 13000 grade 3 to 12 students in Ohio USA, found that by using their school libraries students were able to better find, use and cognitively engage with information, subsequently improving their school achievement. In that study students reported that their school libraries provided computers and instructions on using them, extended students' reading engagement and literacy proficiency by providing wider reading interests and fostered independent learning beyond the school library confines. The research also revealed that students benefited from using their school library beyond school achievement measures into many other dimensions of learning. However, for school libraries to offer maximised educational and social benefit to students, consideration of school libraries as intentionally designed educational spaces must occur. For example, Burke and Grosvenor (2008) suggest that the school's attitudes toward learning are reflected in the design of the school library as an educational space.

In South Australia, many school libraries are run by Teacher Librarians (TL) who bear the operational responsibility for the library including overseeing the work of auxiliary library staff who have various technical responsibilities in addition to interacting with students and school staff. The school librarian's position is unique compared to teachers as there is generally only a single librarian in a school (Hartzell, 2002). Many interactive work models describe a school librarian's role as collaborative work with other professionals (Chu, et al., 2008; Kuhlthau, 2010). Teacher Librarians are qualified teachers who are also post-graduate qualified librarians. In South Australia, some smaller schools, especially primary schools, do not have a TL or a qualified librarian in charge of the school library, with instead, a designated teacher or even a teacher's aide taking the responsibility for the library. In SA, some schools do not have a school library at all, with 'in classroom' book collections becoming the responsibility of the class teachers. In recent years in SA there has been a seemingly financially motivated reductionist movement to decrease the size and prominence of school libraries, replace TLs with non-teacher librarians, and reduce and / or move the physical collections into the digital realm. While this research does not address this emerging situation, it would be interesting to uncover its effect on student wellbeing and academic achievement in other research.

The professional input of Teacher Librarians into school communities has been evidenced, with research in North America, Britain and Australia showing that for as many as 99.4% of school students, Teacher Librarians' work has directly and positively influenced the attainment of higher educational success (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Hay, 2010; Hughes, 2013; Lonsdale, 2003; Repinc & Primoz, 2013). This is achieved by promoting student engagement occurring within

and away from the school library, leading to outcomes of better academic outcomes and higher personal agency for further learning (Hay, 2010; Lonsdale, 2003). The 2011 Australian House of Representatives Inquiry into *School libraries and Teacher Librarians in the 21st century Australia* also acknowledged that (p. 48) "teacher librarians play a significant role in helping gifted children". Additionally, Churchill (2020, p. 30) states: "Gifted readers deserve a school librarian who takes time to cultivate a relationship with them and provides them with ample opportunity to find what they want".

Based on this researcher's professional experience, school libraries attract a cross section of students in terms of gender, age, ability and socio-economic background, however the most commonly observed library user student group is made up of highly able, knowledge 'hungry', motivated students who prolifically use the library resources as well as spaces and who are often representative of students identified as gifted or high achieving. This perhaps might not be surprising as gifted individuals are often characterised as having a broader knowledge base in addition to being highly capable of creatively using and expanding their knowledge (Shore & Kanevsky, 1993). Furthermore, gifted individuals demonstrate high levels of declarative knowledge linked to finely tuned procedural knowledge and are more sophisticated in their metacognition and self-regulation (Shore & Kanevsky, 1993). Ceci (1991) suggests that the innate variances in information processing abilities of gifted vs. non-identified as gifted children influence the type, amount, and organization of knowledge a child attempts to acquire. Furthermore, Ceci (1996) links individual's highly expanded knowledge base to other determinants of high intelligence, with knowledge and its accessibility being an essential precursor for high intellectual functioning. In the context of this research, the eagerness for knowledge attainment in gifted students could be interpreted as an innate propensity to gravitate toward circumstances and places where vast amounts of knowledge are easily, safely and freely available; perhaps places like school libraries, with their highly organized knowledge and information content, multiple knowledge formats and the scaffolded complexity of that knowledge (Morris, 2004).

### 2.4.1  School Libraries as lived spaces

Libraries and in particular school libraries exist in a multitude of shapes and sizes, but ultimately all have some type of intentional or unintentional architectural underpinnings. Historically, architectural designs adapted for schools, and by extension school libraries, were not considered a 'front of mind phenomenon' reinforcing pedagogy but were at best a semi-deliberate approach used for the greater educational good (Gulson & Symes, 2007). While Universal Design, an architectural movement attempting to create 'fair access for all', is gaining merit in designing educational institutions and places, in South Australia many of the existing school libraries inhabit old, often repurposed buildings, which as such can be considered not only physical or material, but also (historically) symbolic in nature (Foucault,1967), where the

power relations and entrenched hierarchy of the library unfolds for all. As a practitioner researcher, reflecting on years of experience, school libraries are operationally complex places where students need to navigate a multitude of discernible and hidden elements. Just some of these include social and personal hierarchies, institutional and library specific rules and regulations, geographies of design and architecture, resource priorities and technological immersion, cultural and historical ethos and expectations, inclusion and exclusion practices, and of course institutionally enforced concepts of time. Considering such complexity, determining what happens in school libraries for various student groups in SA schools requires a multifaceted approach. In order to explore the said phenomenon, this research drew upon the theoretical spatial underpinnings of Hall's (1966) Proxemics, Foucault's (1967) Heterotopia, Soja's (1996) Thirdspace (Figure 1), as well as Pragmatism (Morgan, 2014; Patton, 2005, p. 153) as a research design framework.

**Proxemics**

Pragmatism

Giftedness

and

School
Libraries

Thirdspace

Heterotopia
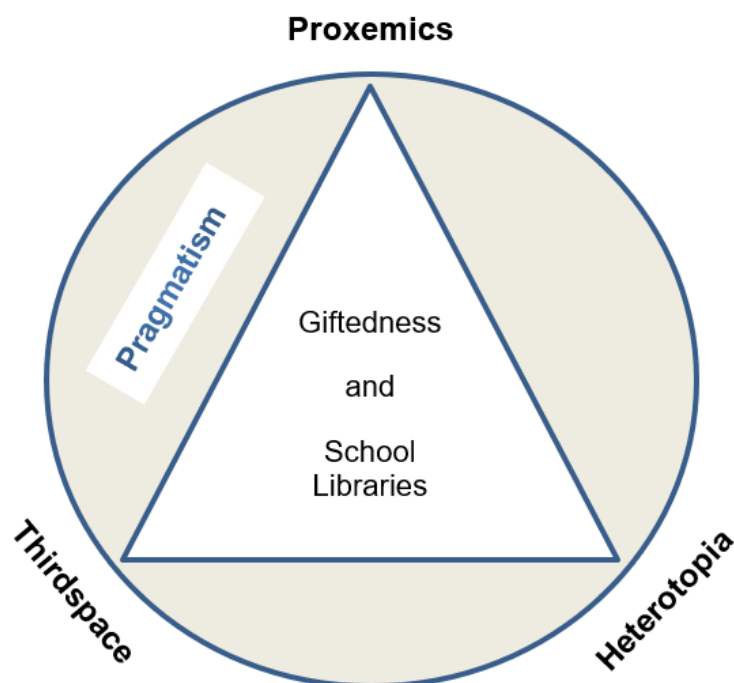
**Figure 1: Graphical representation of theoretical approaches employed in the design and data analysis of the research.**

## 2.5 Theoretical underpinnings for the research

As research based studies specifically concerned with what transpires for gifted students in their school libraries could not be found, Pragmatism (Morgan, 2014; Patton, 2005) was selected for its theoretical and practical strengths to underpin the research design inclusive of three successive research phases. As Pragmatism targets "practical understandings" of actual real-life issues (Patton, 2005, p. 153) through the examination of research data in context of its practical consequences (Morgan, 2014), this theoretical approach provided a valuable tool for developing targeted, consecutive research methods for each new phase of research, based on newly illuminated findings considered worthy of further exploration.

Kelly and Cordeiro (2020, pp. 1, 2) state that "pragmatic inquiry recognizes that individuals within social settings can experience action and change differently, and this encourages them to be flexible in their investigative techniques". In a research area such as this one, with very few prior points of reference, this methodological flexibility becomes extremely valuable as data and subsequent findings unfold consecutively and dictate not only the direction of further inquiry but also the most appropriate methodological strategy to illuminate further findings. Pragmatic reasoning pushes the researcher and research to align future research choices for relevance and successful outcomes "in terms of carrying us from the world of practice to the world of theory and vice-versa" (Kelemen & Rumens, 2012, p. 1). As pragmatism focusses on the inquiry process as well as practicality, a "pragmatic approach to problem solving in the social world offers an alternative, flexible, and more reflexive guide to research design" (Feilzer, 2010, p. 7). Furthermore, Kelly and Cordeiro (2020, p. 2) state, "interpreting knowledge and beliefs leads to action and reflecting on actions leads to new ways of knowing and acting", a concept that was a primary driving force in this research.

While some researchers and theorists posit that pragmatism focusses on exclusively what works to the detriment of its true philosophical roots (Hesse-Biber, 2015), others maintain that this approach "actually helps validate research questions and focus inquiry processes" (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020, p. 3), as "Pragmatism provides a richer and more realistic view of human behaviour than the ones used by rationalists and structuralist accounts" (Farjoun, Ansell & Boin, 2015, p. 4). Above all, pragmatism does not impose a choice on research methodology but instead provides a structure that allows researchers to decide on methods that are most applicable (Feilzer, 2010; Morgan, 2014).

School libraries, aside from being parts of educational institutions, are also spaces inhabited by people and their interactions. Based on the researcher's professional experience, consideration of the spatiality of school libraries and how those spaces influence social interactions and vice-versa is a critical often overlooked aspect of or means for uncovering what happens for students inside those spaces. This study interchangeably employed several investigative means to

answer the research question(s). Firstly, Proxemics was the initial analytical tool used to look at space and the effect it has on human behaviour, communication, and social interactions. Hall (1963), the cultural anthropologist and the creator of the study field of Proxemics, defines it as "the interrelated observations and theories of humans' use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture" (Hall, 1963, p. 1). While Proxemics is often associated in popular culture with the immediate zones of personal space, Hall (1963) stipulates that proxemics is useful in evaluating not only the way people interact with others through social interactions, but also through the organization of space(s) in (houses and) buildings.

Secondly, Foucault's (1967) theorising of Heterotopia was used to further illuminate the depths and layering of meaning from school library spaces' social and experiential interactions. Heterotopia, translated as 'other space', encourages facilitates and energises the uncovering of what is hidden, what is beyond obvious, 'worlds within worlds' (Foucault, 1967, 1971). Drawing on Foucault work, the school library can be characterized as a heterotopic place, a real place, a deviation space, shaped but rejected by the school institution, as it gains more or other symbolic meaning than the institution itself. Foucault presents a number of Heterotopias but, in context of this research, 'Heterotopia of time' is of particular interest as it speaks of spaces that exist in time and outside of time (Foucault, 1967, 1971), like libraries where their space, social histories and resource collections represent time not as a linear entity but randomly, as future, past, now or imaginary, all at once and / or separate.

Thirdly, the research employed Soja's Thirdspace (1996), which is considered a development of Foucault's work on Heterotopia and the spatial trialectics created by Henri Lefebvre in The Production of Space (Lefebvre, 1974, 1991). Soja's theoretical influences on the formation of Thirdspace can be also attributed to the social activist, feminist works of bell hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins, 1952–2021), which focussed on exploratory work on the intersectionality of race, capitalism, and gender, and their capacity to generate and perpetuate systems of oppression and class domination. Soja's theorising (1989, 1996) appeared to be a reactive response toward the pervasive dominance of social and historical perspectives in research discourse (Halsey, 2013). Soja (1996) posits that space exists in a variety of contexts and that thinking about space beyond or without the confines or boundaries of the physical and historical perspectives has the potential to reveal 'spatial understandings' that in a traditional sense are hidden, silenced or subjugated. Of particular relevance to this research on students' perceptions and use of school libraries is Soja's concept of 'spatial justice', an emancipatory approach of challenging "the production and reproduction of unfair geographies" (Soja, 2010, p. 54). This is relevant to seeing a school library as a physically / geographically, institutionally and socially contested space, where the manifestations or imaginings of belonging, control, or power may conceal deeper understandings under the veneer of shared social space and the carefully chosen and distributed cultural signifiers within it.

Soja's Thirdspace theory (1996) evolves from a consideration of First space and Second space into 'Thirdspace'. First space refers to space as a physical environment which can be mapped, empirically measured and exists to us by being perceived in the real world. First space exists as a result of planning laws, political decisions and urban transformation over time. Second space is an abstract concept of space, a space that is imagined and ideologized, conceived of and existing in the minds of people who reside in it (Meredith, 2016). Second space perception of space is influenced by marketing strategies, human imagination and social norms that impact how people do or should behave in a space. The concept of Second space is particularly useful in this research for thinking about school libraries, as these are usually highly dynamic places of change, where ever new, continuously changing, revealing and renewing approaches to utilizing the physical, social spaces across time are part of routine practice that is highly institutionally encouraged and expected. Finally, Thirdspace is an intersection of the 'real and imagined' space, a 'product' of First space and Second space, the lived space, the social space, an experience of space that people actually live in and know, a "socially-produced" space (Soja, 1989, p. 80). Using the Thirdspace model, Soja embraces and transcends First space and Second space to open the dichotomy between the physical world and ideology through what he refers to as Thirding-as-Othering, an arena and location for opening the possibilities for social liberation or emancipation (Meredith, 2016).

A small criticism of Soja's Thirdspace framework is that Soja's contention that 'Everything comes together in Thirdspace' (Soja, 1996) may be a problematic and significant over-reach, as life is complex with unquantifiable diversity, and applying such a potentially reductive framework might not be able to always provide satisfactory answers to questions posed (Meredith, 2016). In fact, in response to the rather finite statement of "Everything", Meredith (p. 79, in Økland, Cornelis de Vos, & Wenell, 2016) teasingly inquires as to whether Elvis might still be alive in Thirdspace? Additionally, the emancipatory potential of Thirdspace (which is seen as one of its greatest strengths), while attempting to unearth the true dimension of the lived space, might be compromised from the outset if one considers that the oppressed as well as oppressors can inhabit the same lived space (Meredith, 2016). Still, regardless of these Thirdspace critiques, the framework nevertheless represents a powerful, useful and viable way to analyse and uncover 'the unseen', 'the taken for granted', 'the silences as well as the sounds' in a space like a school library. Additionally, the shared theoretical reliance on theories of Proxemics as well as Heterotopia beside Thirdspace, helps to illuminate and ameliorate any of its potential theoretical limitations.

## 2.6 Summary

This chapter has provided a roadmap of the key concepts, definitions, explanations and examples related to the research, including giftedness, belonging, school libraries and spatiality.

It has also provided an overview of the theoretical tools which underpinned the study design, data collection and analysis. The following chapter focusses on research design and methodology to provide the background information and context for the research methods applied and the justification for their use.

# CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This has been a mixed methods research (MMR) study with a focus on giftedness, investigating the perceptions and experiences of secondary, intellectually gifted students and those students not identified as gifted in using school libraries. Employing a sample of first-year university students reflecting on their recent secondary school experiences, the study aimed to answer the following research question:

*How do intellectually gifted students (a) describe their experiences of using a secondary school library, and (b) in what ways do their experiences differ from other students?*

This chapter provides details of the research design, participants, and research measures, as well as the processes of data collection and analysis.

## 3.1 Research Design

The study applied Pragmatics theory (Morgan, 2014; Patton, 2005) for research design, and then three spatial theoretical tools, Hall's Proxemics (1966), Foucault's Heterotopia (1967) and Soja's Thirdspace (1996), to analyse findings from the data.

The inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis allows for attainment of multiple outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2005). The simultaneous integration of these two different approaches allows synergies across the data to be highlighted (Creswell & Creswell, 2005; Greene, et al., 1989). In the context of this relatively unexplored area of research, MMR's capacity to produce rich data was selected as the most appropriate method. The study applied Pragmatism as a research design framework as it provided a tool for developing targeted, consecutive exploration approaches for each new phase of research, based on prior newly illuminated findings warranting further exploration.

Focus group discussions, survey research and semi-structured interviews were sequentially employed to explore the perceptions and experiences of participants. MMR's potential to generate interactive benefits which stem from the integration of quantitative and qualitative data was a key reason for applying this design to the study (Testa, Livingston & VanZile-Tamsen, 2011). Data analysis included Thematic Analysis (TA) for the qualitative research outcomes and descriptive and inferential statistical analysis for the quantitative data. After TA of the data, the uncovered themes were selectively considered and then viewed through the prism of spatial theories of Hall's Proxemics (1966), Foucault's Heterotopia (1967) and Soja's Thirdspace (1996). The researcher employed an exploratory sequential MMR design based on the research

by Myers and Oetzel (2003) which investigated interactive mutual acceptance for newcomers into organizational settings. However (as depicted in Figure 2 below), to better address the research aims of this study, a critical third explanatory phase was added to the original Myers and Oetzel (2003) research design based on Creswell and Plano Clark, (2011, p. 124).

Therefore, the three-phase study used a qualitative approach (focus groups) to obtain data in Phase 1 which helped design the survey instrument for Phase 2. In Phase 2, quantitative data were collected via a questionnaire to provide a broad sense of participants' perceptions, attitudes, opinions and behaviours across a larger sample. Additionally, the data from the qualitative part of Phase 2 survey research allowed for issues to be examined in detail and in depth, to make sense of reality and to describe the captured social world. In Phase 3, semi-structured interviews were employed to provide deeper insights into the quantitative constructs and qualitative themes revealed in Phase 2. As each phase of the research was informed by the data from the previous phase, this type of MMR is deemed as developmental (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Figure removed due to copyright restriction

**Figure 2. Diagram of Sequential Exploratory MMR design adapted for the study.**
(Adapted from: Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 124).

Researchers often use existing literature as a basis for identifying the questions they will ask participants. As the area of research in this study (overlap between giftedness and school libraries) had yet to be explored, relying solely on findings from the literature to design the research instrument(s) was disregarded as it was deemed insufficient. Consequently, Phase 1 focus group discussions employing open ended questions (Appendix 3) were utilized to collect exploratory data. During the focus group discussions participants were asked questions about:

a) recollections of participants' school libraries

b) library atmosphere, accessibility and resourcing

c) motivations for using the library

d) student types using the library

e) school library staff

f) advice on improving school libraries.

Prior to being used in the study, the focus group discussion protocol (Appendix 3) was refined using two separate pilot conversations about school libraries (and other libraries) with senior secondary students (Yr. 12) at the practitioner researcher's school. The data obtained through focus group discussions provided the findings required for the development of the Phase 2 survey instrument design. The instrument development was guided with the help from the Statistical Research Consultant at Flinders University. The Phase 2 survey included quantitative and qualitative data collection sections and was aimed at a larger participant sample. The survey instrument (Appendix 1) was designed to collect data related to secondary school library use and participant giftedness and demographic data.

The tertiary student group approached to volunteer to participate in focus group discussions and survey research phases of the study was purposefully selected (Creswell & Creswell, 2005). The study targeted those students who had recently completed secondary education and enrolled in university undergraduate courses. Convenience sampling (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016) was used for Phase 3 of the study. Demographic data, responses to questions which involved indicating an answer by marking a scale, and qualitative data were collected within the survey instrument. Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis was applied to the quantitative survey data ($N$=155) and this is discussed later in this chapter. Thematic Analysis (TA) (Boyatzis,1998) was used for the qualitative component of the survey instrument as well as for focus group data and semi-structured interview data. TA findings from focus group discussions, in addition to providing input for the development of the Phase 2 survey instrument, also provided insights for the development of the Phase 3 semi-structured interview questions (Appendix 4). The explanatory Phase 3 of the study (Figure 2) consisted of eight semi-structured interviews, with the participants being asked to provide deeper insights into the issues, themes and theories which had emerged in Phases 1 and 2 of the study. Triangulation of data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 136) was used to obtain relevant research themes, to which the spatial theories of Hall's Proxemics (1966), Foucault's Heterotopia (1967) and Soja's Thirdspace (1996) were selectively applied to uncover key findings from the data.

The participant sample for each phase of the study was drawn from volunteers in the first year undergraduate, mainly Bachelor of Education, students at Flinders University, South Australia.

The retrospective data collection strategy was used to investigate the secondary school library experiences of incoming first year university students because:

- University undergraduates represent a high achieving group, likely including a higher population of gifted individuals (Mendaglio, 2013) because, according to Grayson (2001), at the conclusion of secondary education gifted students are reported to achieve higher marks compared to peers.

- First year undergraduate students provide an accessible, wide-ranging population, representative of all secondary school sectors, regions and SES groups.

- Students sampled from different university faculties represent various aspirational academic pathways, providing additional, potentially significant rich data.

- New undergraduate students who recently graduated from secondary schools may display a degree of maturity that younger secondary students may lack.

- The undergraduate students' secondary school library experience was considered complete after finishing their final high school year, eliminating any highly relevant, final school year's experiences missing from data collection.

Both of the qualitative study in Phases 1 and 3, using focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, were audio-recorded, transcribed, coded manually and analysed by the researcher using TA. This approach was used because, as Joffe (2012, p. 212) suggested, "TA is best suited to elucidating the specific nature of a given group's conceptualization of the phenomenon under study". In addition, Braun and Clarke (2006) discussed two distinct but connected ways in which themes develop: these are inductive, where themes are identified from the data, and deductive, where pre-existing theories are used to aid theme development. Pre-existing and new findings enhance each other when these approaches are used in tandem. The use of combined inductive and deductive theme development has been termed a hybrid approach, which introduces rigour into analysis, reaching the second level of interpretive understanding (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) also discussed two levels of identifying themes and referred to these as latent and semantic. The semantic level is where themes are descriptive because they are derived directly from data, while the latent level requires interpretation and deeper consideration to occur as themes are identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis of qualitative data as used by Braun and Clarke (2006) and

discussed above, was selected for this study as an approach that was comprehensive, accessible and deeply embedded in qualitative subjectivity, being shaped by the perspectives, interests, professional background and biography of the researcher. The information on each phase of the study, including participant details, measures and instruments, as well as data collection and analysis, are provided in this Chapter.

Validity and reliability are used sometimes interchangeably in quantitative and qualitative studies, though the context and focus for quantitative and qualitative studies may differ slightly (Burns, 2000; Bryman, 2008). Consequently, in qualitative studies validity and reliability may be replaced with trustworthiness, which includes parallel concepts of credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity) (Bryman, 2008). Subjective bias represents a susceptibility of the researcher to allow personal views and assumptions to influence the study. In this study, the potential for subjective bias to influence the research design and study outcomes was minimised by using pilot studies, multiple data sources and repeated analyses of data. Credibility, or examination for the consistency of qualitative study measures, was assured by the line of questioning used in the pilot data collection sessions, the researcher-practitioner's (teacher) background and professional library-based experience, comprehensive skills in interacting with young adults, and using participants who were genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely (Shenton, 2004).

## 3.2 Research Phase 1 - Focus Group Discussions

### 3.2.1 Participants and recruitment

Focus group participants comprised six undergraduate university students. Participants' ages were not considered relevant to the research question so they were not asked to disclose their age and this data were not collected. Although the study set out to include only participants who had recently graduated from high school, some participants were more than one year out of school. Focus group participants were four females and two males: five had attended public schools, one of which was in a rural location. One female participant had attended an independent school in an urban location. In this research the six focus group participants were coded as (Focus Group Participant - FGP), FGP1 to FGP6.

Focus group participants were sampled from incoming first year Bachelor of Education students at Flinders University in week 5 of semester 1 in the academic year 2014. The sampling procedure involved inviting students to volunteer to participate in the research. The principal researcher spoke to a large group of students (approximately 350) after two of their compulsory university lectures and invited students to participate. Eleven students expressed interest in participating; all were contacted and six attended the focus group discussions. Participants who

did not show up for the agreed sessions were contacted and asked to participate in an additional session but all declined.

### 3.2.2 Measures and instruments

Unlike interviews, focus group discussions allow for identification and exploration of a problem interactively and dynamically across a group of participants, creating a bank of knowledge about an issue (Gillis & Jackson, 2002). Focus groups allow participants to add to, exchange and reconsider their standpoints through discussions with others in the group so each may enrich another's contributions and create an expanded data set (Gillis & Jackson, 2002; Gillham, 2000). Focus group discussions allow the 'what' and the 'why' to be uncovered in ways that other research methods do not explore (Grow & Christopher, 2008). In this research, the focus group methodology was selected as it provided an opportunity for participants to explore their own answers to research questions comprehensively, to consider responses in the context of other participants' views, and to access cues aiding better recall of experiences. The inclusion of the focus group discussions was dictated by the need to explore in depth the possible research constructs for the survey research phase of the study. Several alternative methodologies were considered but focus group discussion was chosen because it provided an open-ended approach allowing for thick descriptions of personal experiences and their interpretation. The development of the focus group discussion questions on school libraries was guided by several factors including:

- the practitioner researcher's experience of working in and running secondary school libraries,

- the literature review related to school libraries, giftedness and belonging,

- two separate pilot round-table discussions with senior (year 12) secondary students, and

- the conversational input on school libraries from new 'first year out' teachers and student teacher 'on practicum' at the researcher's school.

Additionally, in order to uncover the potentially diverse perspectives on the research focussed issues of interest, discussions with other secondary school Teacher Librarians (TLs) in charge of school libraries were undertaken at two secondary teacher-librarian professional network hub meetings. The outcomes of all input sources were mapped, and major issues were identified and translated to open-ended questions in the focus group discussion instrument (Appendix 3). The refinement of the final research protocol was aided by reference to texts including Puchta and Potter (2004), Bryman (2008) and Creswell and Creswell (2005), which provided additional guidance on the development of the script, responsibilities of the moderator, choice of the focus group location and materials needed, as well as insights into conducting the session.

### 3.2.3 Data collection

The researcher conducted two separate focus group discussions to collect data for Phase 1 of the study. The first group included four participants (three female, one male) and the researcher, while the second group included two participants (one female, one male) and the researcher. Both focus groups took place in a quiet, bookable room in the Flinders University Central Library one week apart in semester 1, 2014. Standard research practice was followed in the running of the focus group discussions (Bryman, 2008; Creswell & Creswell, 2005).

During the group discussions, the researcher remained sensitive to the needs of the participants, providing opportunities for them to talk freely, while also encouraging participants not to dwell on issues unrelated to the research topic, gently re-focussing and guiding the discussion (Hunt, et al., 2000). An unstructured method, using open ended questioning, was employed in order to acquire qualitative descriptions of the life-world of the research participants (Kvale, 1996). To aid participants' school library recollections and provide the open-ended feel to the conversations, each focus group discussion started with the approximated question: "what was your school library like?" The focus group discussions were audio recorded and additional written notes on non-verbal cues were made. Both audio recordings were transcribed and a de-identified transcription was emailed to each participant (of the relevant discussion session), allowing the opportunity to provide any amendments within a period of two weeks after receiving the email. Of the six participants, two contacted the researcher within the time provided stating they were happy with the accuracy of the transcripts. The transcripts were then manually coded and analysed using TA.

### 3.2.4 Data analysis

Thematic Analysis was used to identify emergent thematic patterns, organize them, and attempt to capture specific phenomena (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In TA, six phases allow themes to be explored across data. These phases involve: 1) becoming familiar with data; 2) generating codes; 3) searching for and 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6) reporting on the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcribed data were analysed for emergent themes by continuous reading and re-reading of the transcripts, manually identifying, highlighting and naming distinct themes in each transcript, followed by comparing and aligning parallel themes across both transcripts. The emergent data were tabulated according to theme in a new document, where only participant comments were included under each theme. Each theme was then separately analysed for meaning, with supporting participant quotes included as evidence. The process of analysis using TA was performed twice, several weeks apart, each time independent from the other. The two data analyses outcomes were compared and scrutinized for similarities and differences. The emergent themes were subsequently organized into specific concepts and used to inform the development of the survey research questionnaire

for Phase 2 of the study. The major focus group discussion themes used for the questionnaire development included: school library as place of refuge, school library and academic achievement, school library resourcing, student perceptions of school library staff, and other enablers and inhibitors of school library use. Side by side examples of thematic analysis relating to the theme school library as place of refuge, and the more specific subtheme school library as a place of welcome are provided below:

| School library *not* perceived as a place of welcome | School library perceived as a place of welcome |
|---|---|
| *…we had our computer rooms that we did most of our research on, we didn't physically use books a lot… in my experience. …so it [the library] wasn't a place of welcoming at all. …it was really just as I said before like a place that the school needed to have, I think to tick a box. Yeah, that's how I feel.* FG4<br><br>*The bigger school [library] wasn't as welcoming and 'cos it was such a big school. …it was more… primary and the younger students rather than the high school students… I got to walk all the way to the library! Oh nah… it would take five minutes of our own time just to walk to the library.* FG2 | *Well, I had no problem being welcome in there. I was… quite chatty [in the library], having a chat with the librarians… I don't know what it is about school libraries, but they are always right out of the way.* FG6<br><br>*Well, yeah… I always felt welcome when I went into the library.* FG5<br><br>*I thought it was… kind of yes and kind of no. it was a welcoming place and like… you won't be disturbed in there at all.* FG1 |

The focus group phase of the study did not seek to provide transferability or generalizability of themes, only aiming to explore themes related to school library perception and use. These themes were used in the design of the questionnaire for Phase 2 of the study. Dependability was addressed by careful record keeping which aimed to describe in accessible and clear language: the research plan, the conditions under which it was executed, and details of data collection procedures (Bryman, 2008; Shenton, 2004). Confirmability was assured by the researcher declaring potential areas of bias and ensuring the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and inclinations of the researcher, were the focus of the group interview process, data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2008; Shenton, 2004).

## 3.3  Research Phase 2 – Survey Research

### 3.3.1 Participants and recruitment

The use of survey research was selected as the best method available for collecting original data describing a population too large to observe directly (Babbie, 1995). In this study, the use of TA to analyse the data generated through the focus groups provided themes which were then used to inform the design of the survey instrument for Phase 2 of the study. A much smaller than anticipated, total of 155 participants (*N*=155) took part in completing the 2015 paper or electronic questionnaire. Of the participants who provided demographic data (*N*=148), male

participants were 54 (36.5%) and female 94 (63.5%). The research targeted incoming first year university students who had very recently completed high school, such that their recollection of using their school libraries would be as immediate as possible. This was reflected in the invitation to participate in the research and the written information provided at the beginning of the questionnaire. Of the participants who reported this measure (*N*=145), just under half, 70 participants finished secondary school in 2014 (which was the year prior to data collection), while the total of 130 participants (90%) reported finishing high school in the last 5 years. Survey participants included 78 (52.7%) from public schools, 38 (25.7%) from private independent schools and 32 (21.6%) from Catholic schools. Of the 146 participants reporting on university faculty enrolment, 141 (97%) reported enrolment in the faculty of Education, Humanities and Law, with the remaining participants being enrolled in double degree studies with Science and Engineering, and Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. In reporting English as first language (*N*=145), native English speakers represented 139 (95.9%) while 6 (4.1%) participants reported first language other than English. Participants were asked to provide their ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) scores (Table 1). The results show that 53.7% of participants obtained an ATAR score of 80% or higher. Participant Socio-economic status data based on participant postcodes was collected, but not deemed useful as there was a misunderstanding detected between participants' secondary school time postcode of residence and their high school suburb postcode.

Survey research participants were sampled by the researcher who with the permission of the university topic coordinator but without prior student notification, on two separate occasions after a lecture, verbally and with the aid of the lecture theatre screen display, invited first year university students to participate in the survey research. The topic lecturer was not present during the researcher's address to the students. The total number of students sampled was approximately 280. An example of data collected is provided in Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Participants' ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) score range after completing Year 12.**

|  | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Not Applicable | 15 | 10.20 |
| Less than 50% | 4 | 2.73 |
| 50-59% | 8 | 5.44 |
| 60-69% | 11 | 7.48 |
| 70-79% | 30 | 20.41 |
| 80-89% | 54 | 36.73 |
| 90-99% | 25 | 17.01 |
| Total | 147 | 100.0 |

### 3.3.2 Measures and instruments

An extensive literature review did not identify an existing survey instrument which could be used in this research, necessitating the development of a study specific instrument. The first / pilot version of the questionnaire, based on an initial review of literature and the practitioner researcher experience of running secondary school libraries, was piloted with 141 undergraduate Bachelor of Education students at Flinders University. The data were analysed to test reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The 'library as help in academic achievement' subscale consisted of 7 items ($α= .771$) and the 'library as a welcoming place' subscale consisted of 5 items ($α= .736$). The questionnaire was further refined using findings of the Phase 1 focus group discussions and relevant information found in the literature related to school libraries and gifted education. The literature review provided further narrowing of research constructs to include heightened socio-emotional vulnerability and an intense need for belonging among many intellectually gifted students (Reis & McCoach, 2002; Walton & Cohen, 2007). The development of the survey instrument (Appendix 1) was also influenced by findings of the studies on school libraries which included concepts like: libraries as agents of help in academic achievement and libraries' input in personal agency for learning (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005; Lonsdale, 2003; Hay, 2010). The development of the belonging and relationship to school instrument sections were modelled on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2000 student questionnaire (Ray & Margaret, 2003; Adams & Wu, 2003).

Drawing from a number of themes which emerged from focus group discussions, the following instrument scales were developed: (a) school library as a place of refuge, (b) school library as a welcoming place, (c) school library as a place of belonging, and (d) enablers and inhibitors of school library use. The survey questions were set on a six-point Likert scale. The five section, 44 question questionnaire also collected data on academic giftedness, genre reading preferences, use of libraries other than school libraries, academic achievement and demographics data. Prior to final research deployment, the questionnaire was piloted with two groups (of approximately 10 students each) of year 12 high school students at the practitioner researcher's school. The post-pilot revisions included improved clarity of language used, addition of examples which clarified question aims and the use of bold text for key words in more complex questions. The amended questionnaire was piloted for the final time with yet another group of year 12 students (of approximately 10 students) to check for clarity of language and concepts but no further changes were suggested. The instrument's overall reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) was within acceptable range with subscale coefficients of .88 (library as a place of welcome), .89 (library as a place of safety / safe-haven), .76 (enablers of library use), and a marginal .702 (library as a place of belonging).

Content validity of the instrument was assured by inclusion of the findings from Phase 1 of the study. Generalisability is not claimed in this study, beyond potentially generalizing to the

sampled student population at Flinders University. Reliability, or the extent to which the survey research phase of the study may be replicated, is briefly discussed in Chapter 4. Internal measure of consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for each of the factors, as a measure of reliability, is also provided in Chapter 4.

### 3.3.3  Data collection

The survey data were collected at the Flinders University School of Education after a compulsory subject / topic lecture. Survey research participants were sampled in week 7 of semester 1, April 2015. The sampling procedure involved the researcher speaking to two large student lecture groups on two occasions (approximately 130 and then 150 students), inviting students to participate in the research and distributing paper questionnaires (Appendix 1) for completion. Participants were provided with two options for completing the questionnaire. Option one was completing the paper version of the questionnaire and option two was to complete an online version of the questionnaire, using ACSPRI (Australian Consortium for Social and Political Research Incorporated) online survey service. A web link address to the online version of the questionnaire was projected on a lecture theatre screen for those participants wishing to complete the online version. The paper format questionnaire was completed by 124 (80.6%) participants while 31 (19.4%) participants completed the electronic version. The researcher collected paper questionnaires from participants outside the lecture theatre and safely kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office at Flinders University. The electronic version of the questionnaire was kept live for 3 weeks after the start of the data collection process. The paper questionnaire data was carefully transferred to electronic format by the researcher with each individual data entry checked twice for accuracy. At the end of the data collection period all the data was transferred from the online ACSPRI survey tool and stored safely on researcher's password protected computer at Flinders University.

### 3.3.4  Data analysis

Item level responses were scrutinised for underlying patterns via factor analytic procedures. The prime goal of factor analysis is to identity simple factors that are interpretable. Once clearly defined and interpretable factors were identified, responses related to these factors were saved in the form of factor scores. Factor analysis was used on subscales, providing reliability and validity scores as coherent measures for each of the constructs (DeVellis, 2003).

The issue of participant giftedness categorisation was addressed in Phase 2 of the study. Because in the state of South Australia giftedness identification of school students is not mandatory, homogeneous or consistent in approach, additional steps in determining giftedness categorization were undertaken. Section 2 of the questionnaire aimed at giftedness categorization included: a clear introductory paragraph stating the intention to collect information about participants' "understanding and / or experience of academic giftedness"

while a definition of giftedness was also provided (Appendix 1). In the first instance four categories of giftedness were identified based on a 'Yes' or 'No' answers to questions 19 to 24 (see below) and assigned with research codes:

- students who were Not Identified as Gifted (NIG)
- students perceived as gifted based on giftedness indicators (Q20 to Q23): Indicator based - Perceived as Gifted (IPG)
- students who, based on the giftedness definition and their life experience, Self-Perceived themselves as Gifted (SPG)
- students who were officially / formally, at school or elsewhere Identified as Gifted (IG).

The following survey instrument questions were used for giftedness categorisation:

Q19.    At school you were officially identified as an academically gifted student.

Q20.    While at school you were selected for an academically advanced class or program (e.g. advanced class or program in Mathematics, Music, Languages, Science).

Q21.    In your school years you have progressed ahead of your year level peers in one or more subjects as a result of your high academic achievement and / or aptitude.

Q22.    While at high school you have been invited to enrol in a subject / topic run by a university (e.g. first ear topic in Biology, Psychology, French, Mathematics, Music).

Q23.    You enrolled at Flinders University through the "Enhanced Program for High Achievers"?

Q24.    You perceive yourself to be an academically gifted student.

The initial analysis for categorisation of giftedness provided the following outcomes:

- Participants who answered 'Yes' to Q19 were labelled as officially Identified as Gifted (IG), irrespective of any additional answers to Q20 to Q24.
- Participants who answered 'Yes' to one or more *indicators of giftedness* questions from Q20 to Q23 and 'No' to Q24 were labelled as: (giftedness) Indicator based Perceived as Gifted (IPG).
- Participants who answered 'Yes' to one or more *indicators of giftedness* questions from Q20 to Q23 and 'Yes' to Q24 were labelled as Self Perceived as Gifted (SPG).

- Participants who answered 'No' to all questions from Q19 to Q24 were labelled as Not Identified as Gifted (NIG), (Table 2).

**Table 2. Initial categorisation of research participant giftedness.**

| Participant giftedness category | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Not identified as gifted (NIG) | 67 | 43.2 |
| Indicator based Perceived as Gifted (IPG) | 39 | 25.2 |
| Self-Perceived as Gifted (SPG) | 11 | 7.1 |
| Officially Identified as Gifted (IG) | 38 | 24.5 |
| Total | 155 | 100.0 |

However, based on senior statistician's advice at Flinders University, due to the IPG participant category being too low for statistical analysis, the two Perceived as Gifted groups (IPG and SPG) were collapsed into a single Perceived as Gifted (PG) group. This allowed for creation of three giftedness categories with the following participant numbers: 67 NIG (43.2%), 50 PG (32.3%) and 38 IG (24.5%).

Next, statistical tests were undertaken to find out whether items and dimensions differed between the three participant groups categorised on the giftedness measure. When applicable, the two gifted groups (PG and IG) were collapsed into a single gifted group for statistical analysis. Chi square tests (Moore, 1976) were used for stand-out single survey questions and ANOVAs (Lakens, 2013) were utilised for measures established in the factorial validity phase. The relationships which emerged from survey data informed aspects of the discussion and the development of questions for the Phase 3 of the research, comprising semi-structured interviews.

## 3.4 Research Phase 3 – Semi-structured Interviews

### 3.4.1 Participants and recruitment

A total of eight participants (four females and four males) took part in semi-structured interviews, all of whom self-nominated by completing the relevant section in the Phase 2 research questionnaire. The target sample were incoming first year students in the Bachelor of Education (BEd) program at Flinders University, and while the majority of participants were enrolled at university for the first time, two participants later reported having completed and attempted a prior undergraduate degree. Of the eight participants, five were new high school graduates, while one male participant attempted a different undergraduate degree before

transferring to the BEd, one recently completed a 3-year degree and one male participant was a mature age student who graduated high school in 1995. To aid recollection of school libraries by participants who weren't new high school graduates, an added initial interview questioning was dedicated to prompting memory recall of the use and perceptions of their school library experiences.

In the survey research, participants provided demographic data which included scaled ATAR scores. Of the eight participants, five achieved ATAR between 80 and 85% (IP1, IP3, IP4, IP5, IP8), one achieved ATAR between 85 and 90% (IP2) and one participants' ATAR was 96.3% (IP7). One participant did not provide ATAR (IP6) but reported in the interview as not being a high achiever. Self-reported measures of giftedness from the questionnaire were used for participant categorization into giftedness groups. Four participants were categorised as gifted while the other four participants did not self-report as gifted (Table 3) below. The participants received research coding of (Interview Participant) IP1 to IP8. The interviews took place in May, 2015. The sampling procedure was embedded in the questionnaire and involved agreeing to participate in semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1). The information about the interviews and instructions to participate were also provided on the first year BEd topic's website, after an agreement from the university topic coordinator. Of all the undergraduate students approached, 13 students expressed interest in participating, with nine willing to take part during the times provided. Of the nine potential interviewees eight participants took part in the interviews.

**Table 3. Phase 3, semi-structured interviews participant demographic data and research coding.**

|  | Giftedness category | | | School sector in Year 12 | Research code |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | IG | PG | NIG |  |  |
| 1 |  |  | ✓ | Catholic | IP1(NIG) |
| 2 | ✓ |  |  | Public | IP2(IG) |
| 3 |  |  | ✓ | Public, then Independent | IP3(NIG) |
| 4 |  | ✓ |  | Public | IP4(PG) |
| 5 |  | ✓ |  | Public | IP5(PG) |
| 6 |  |  | ✓ | Catholic | IP6(NIG) |
| 7 | ✓ |  |  | Catholic | IP7(IG) |
| 8 |  |  | ✓ | Public | IP8(NIG) |

### 3.4.2 Measures and instruments

Semi-structured interviews were used for the third, explanatory phase of the study. According to Babbie (2007) interviewing is integral to field research, being an effective way to understand the activities and lives of individuals (Fontana & Frey, 2000) and a way of delving into the un-observable (Patton, 2002). Interviews represent a common form of data collection for qualitative research, as individualised semi-structured interviews can act as rapport-building activities, useful in gaining deeper personal insights into a phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Various themes and constructs which emerged from the focus group discussions and the survey research data were selected for further exploration in the semi-structured interviews, as these would allow open ended and direct questioning to elicit detailed narratives and stories in response to questions (Kvale, 1996; Whiting, 2008).

In this research the interviews were used to explore individual attitudes, values, beliefs, and motivations in a one-on-one setting with the moderator and the interviewee present, further enriching the study data set. The use of interviews provided opportunities to delve deeper into various areas of research interest by in-depth, successive questioning (Kvale, 1996; Whiting, 2008). The inclusion of the semi-structured interviews was dictated by the need to further explore the occasionally contradictory research outcomes of Phases 1 and 2.

Phase 1 focus group discussion findings pointed to specific issues and relationships requiring statistical exploration with a larger participant sample. Statistical analysis of the survey data provided the opportunity to use descriptive and inferential statistics to organize and interpret numerical data, and make inferences from the population sample, while the qualitative data collected enriched the quantitative outcomes. Semi-structured interview questions further explored the outcomes of the survey and focus group data, aiming to uncover reasons, motivations and perspectives influencing these findings. The design of the interview protocol focussed on research outcomes identified as requiring further exploration. Pilot semi-structured interviews were run with two student teachers on their practicum at the researcher's school and one newly graduated teacher in their first months of teaching employment. As a result of the pilot interviews the sequence of questions was altered, the language of the questions refined, and examples aiding the understanding of explored concepts were added. Additional guidance on the development of the script and the responsibilities of the facilitator aided the refinement of the final protocol (Puchta & Potter 2004, Bryman, 2008; Creswell & Creswell, 2005).

### 3.4.3  Data collection

The semi-structured interviews took place in a bookable room in the Flinders University Central Library, over a period of 3 weeks during semester 1 (May) 2015. During the interviews, the researcher guided the conversation making sure the issues discussed remained relevant to the aims of the research, while at the same time allowing participants the freedom to explore their thought and ideas (Hunt, et al., 2000). The interviews were audio recorded and written notes on potentially relevant additional aspects of the interview (e.g. distractions, atmosphere, participant mood, room furniture arrangement and lighting) as well as body language were also made. The audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher and a de-identified transcript was emailed to each participant. This provided the participants with the opportunity to provide additional insights and comment on any amendments needed in the transcripts. A period of two weeks was given to make comments, from the day of receiving the transcript. Of the eight participants, no-one contacted the researcher requesting clarifications, providing additional comments or requesting amendments in the transcripts. All transcripts were then manually coded and analysed using TA.

### 3.4.4  Data analysis

Thematic Analysis was used again to identify emergent thematic patterns, organize them and attempt to capture specific phenomena across the interviews (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The transcribed data were analysed for emergent themes by in the first instance continuously reading and re-reading the transcripts, manually identifying, highlighting and naming distinct themes in each transcript and then compiling and categorising themes from all transcripts. Additionally, based on participant responses in the questionnaire each transcript was categorised for giftedness grouping. Next, the data were tabulated according to theme and giftedness category with only the relevant participant comments included. Each theme was separately analysed for developing meanings using appropriate participant quotes for evidence.

The analysis of the eight interview transcripts identified five major themes and a number of secondary relevance themes. The major themes included: school library as place of refuge, school library and academic achievement, school library resourcing, student perceptions of school library staff, school library user stereotypes and other enablers and inhibitors of school library use. The secondary level themes for example included: school library as place of welcome and school library as place of safety. Participants were also asked to provide their own definitions of what is a school library. The analysed data were left for a period of approximately two months, and then the process of data analysis was independently repeated. The two data analyses outcomes were compared and scrutinized but no significant differences between the two sets of findings were identified. The emergent themes were organized into three key findings (Table 19, Discussion chapter, p. 107), based on applicability and relevance to the

findings. Individual spatial theoretical tool of Hall's Proxemics (1966), Foucault's Heterotopia (1967) and Soja's Thirdspace (1996) was applied to each finding to illuminate deeper meanings as well as concerns and discussed in thesis' Chapter 5. Examples of the spatial theories usage and the analysis process with links to literature are included in the Discussion chapter.

### 3.4.5  Validity and reliability

In Phase 3, trustworthiness of acquired inferences was ensured by multiple coding, audit trail and member checking, along with the doctoral research supervisors reviewing the themes for validity. The potential for subjective bias was minimised with the use of pilot studies, multiple data sources and repeated analyses of data. Credibility or the examination for the congruence between study measures and observations was reinforced by following the guidelines of good research practice, member checking, and triangulation (Bryman, 2008; Shenton, 2004). To mitigate bias and improve reaching data saturation both Methodological and Data Triangulation were applied (Denzin, 2006; Bryman, 2008). Triangulation is a research procedure where the application and amalgamation of different research approaches in the study of the same phenomenon are applied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). As this is a mixed methods study, the between-method Methodological Triangulation was applied which "combined both quantitative and qualitative methods" (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018, p. 24). Denzin (1989) states that "data triangulation has three subtypes: (a) time, (b) space, and (c) persons," (p. 237). The data in this research represented different points of the same event collected across time, from various spaces and participants. This in turn facilitated data triangulation which resulted in greater accuracy in cross examining and developing of emerging themes and subsequent research findings.

As Phase 3 involved a qualitative study method, no transferability or generalizability could be inferred, aiming instead to provide explanatory concepts and later findings that were relevant to study participants. Dependability was addressed by careful record keeping and use of accessible and clear language (Bryman, 2008; Shenton, 2004). Confirmability was reinforced by the researcher's statement declaring any professional and personal bias and ensuring the experiences, perceptions and ideas of the participants were the focus of the interview process and data analysis (Bryman, 2008; Shenton, 2004).

## 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was received from Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC), with the project deemed as low risk (Project Approval Number: 6360). Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the research. Consent implied that participation was voluntary, based on sufficient information provided about the study and adequate understanding of the research and its implications for participants.

Patton (2002) was used to outline the key ethical issues related to research projects such as including explanation of purpose, promises and reciprocity, risk assessment, confidentiality, informed consent, data access, collection boundaries, storage and ownership, advice provided, interviewer's mental health, and ethical versus legal. These issues are addressed individually below.

At every phase of the study the purpose of the research was clearly explained using appropriate and accessible language. Throughout the study it was clearly stated in written and verbal form that participants may be unable to directly benefit from the study. All participants were informed that they were free to cease their participation in the study and withdraw freely at any stage, with the exception of the Phase 2 completed questionnaire, as consented data provided could not be identified for a specific participant and be withdrawn from the data set. Prior to conducting the study, the researcher ensured that relevant contact for counselling and debriefing was available upon request. Participants were informed that de-identification of participants' details and confidentiality was assured in the study. All participants were allocated individual research codes. All identities voluntarily provided by participants were stored safely in a locked, secure location, including electronic data which were stored on a password-protected computer. For every phase of the study, an information sheet was provided to participants and a signed consent form obtained where applicable. For Phase 2 of the study, completion of the questionnaire was deemed as being informed consent. Mental health of the interviewer / moderator was not considered a critical issue for the study. Issues of ethical versus legal were addressed through the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee's (SBREC) permission to conduct the study.

## 3.6 Summary

Chapter 3 has provided detailed explanation of the research design and the methods used to obtain data, including details about the participants and their recruitment, the measures and instruments employed in the study and the processes of data collection and analysis. The justification for the use of mixed methods approach and the specific methodologies selected to answer the research question were provided. The use of qualitative exploratory Phase 1 research employing focus group discussions was outlined in the context of providing thematic data for the development of the survey research instrument for the quantitative (and qualitative) Phase 2 of the study. The explanatory Phase 3 of the study employed semi-structured interviews. The use of triangulation aided in aligning the main themes of the study into three key findings, which through the strategic application of each of the three spatial theories, provided deeper insights to the revealed findings. Issues of research validity and reliability as well as ethical considerations were discussed at the end of the chapter. The following Chapter 4 outlines in detail the results of the study.

# CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS

## 4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides details of the selected, most relevant research data collected in the three phases of the study: 1. focus group discussions, 2. survey research, and 3. semi structured interviews. To help improve flow and accessibility of the data presented in this chapter, in line with the consecutively presented study phases, the diagram presented below (Figure 3) aims to help guide the reader as a roadmap to this chapter.
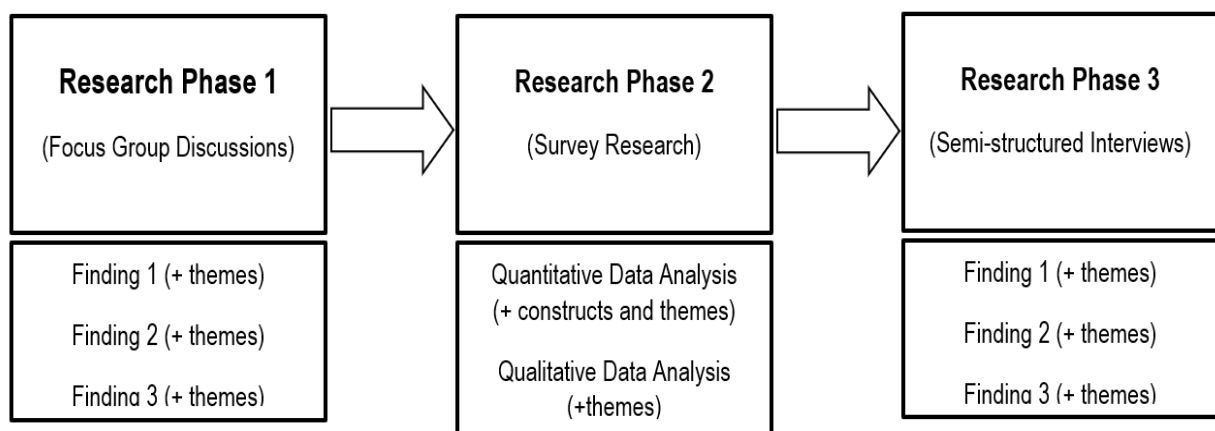


**Figure 3. Data presentation roadmap**

## 4.2 Research Phase 1 – Focus Group Discussions

Six volunteer participants (2 male and 4 female) were involved in Phase 1 data collection which employed focus group discussions. The purpose of using focus group discussions was to collect exploratory data necessary to develop the survey instrument for Phase 2 of the study. Thematic Analysis (TA) revealed many themes, some of which in turn illuminated the three key research findings, and these are explored in this chapter. Where possible, individual themes within each finding have been considered separately. The data from focus group discussion showed commonalities and differences expressed in the views, experiences and perceptions of the participants.

### 4.2.1  Finding 1: School library as a place of refuge

Finding 1 encompasses the following themes:

   - *school library as safe-haven*, related to the concept of personal safety and security,

- *school library as a place of welcome*, related to the perception of a welcoming environment in the school library,

- *school library as a place of belonging*, related to having a dependable place for personal, social and institutional belonging,

- *school library atmosphere*, related to the school library having a unique, positive ambiance, mood or feel,

- *school library user stereotypes*, related to the idea that students who frequently use school libraries are typecast into specific stereotypes in the eyes of the student community.

**4.2.1.1 Theme: school library as safe-haven**

When discussing the theme *school library as safe-haven*, two participants (FG5 and FG6) agreed that the school library can act as a place of security and safety from undesirable behaviours of other students.

> …during recess and lunch for a lot of kids, especially myself… I didn't have very many friends… I used to go there [school library] purely just to escape from… bullies and… people fighting and things like that. FG6

> …it [school library] felt like a more… safer, more welcoming… place than any of the other areas, any of the other shadier areas of the school. …it was a state school… and it had a… it had a bad reputation for violence and drugs and, and… other things… FG6

> [Students who are] Perhaps not so good with… social skills… [unpopular] for these people it [school library] is a safe haven and that's great. Why shouldn't it be, but… I personally feel that libraries get a bit of a bad rap these days... FG5

Here, participant FG6 spoke of the school library as being a place of safety for students who have few friends, allowing it to become a place to escape from bullies and undesirable behaviours of other students. Participant FG5 also spoke of the school library as being a place where students who find relating to other students difficult could go to, while also explicitly naming the school library as a safe-haven and stating that school libraries are unfairly judged.

**4.2.1.2 Theme: school library as place of welcome**

In discussing the theme *school libraries as places of welcome*, participants FG5 and FG6 agreed that the school library was a welcoming place, as illustrated in their comments below.

Well, I had no problem being welcome in there. I was… quite chatty [in the library], having a chat with the librarians… I don't know what it is about school libraries, but they are always right out of the way. FG6

Well, yeah… I always felt welcome when I went into the library. …it was a welcoming place and like… you won't be disturbed in there at all. It was a good place to study. FG5

Participants FG5 and FG6 thought of the school library as a welcoming space where one could have a conversation with the school librarians or study without being disturbed. Participant FG6 considered the library a place of welcome despite it being 'out of the way'.

At the same time, for participants FG2 and FG4 school libraries were not places of welcome.

…we had our computer rooms that we did most of our research on, we didn't physically use books a lot… in my experience. …so it wasn't a place of welcoming at all. …it was really just as I said before, like a place that the school needed to have, I think to tick a box. Yeah, that's how I feel. FG4

The bigger school [library] wasn't as welcoming and 'cos it was such a big school. …it was more …primary and the younger students [in there] rather than the high school students… I got to walk all the way to the library!? Oh nah… it would take 5 minutes of our own time just to walk to the library. FG2

Participants FG2 and FG4 thought the school library was not a place of welcome for them because of the low relevance of library resources, extensive physical distance to the library within the school and the presence of younger students which was a distraction.

### 4.2.1.3 Theme: school library as a place of belonging

When discussing the theme *school libraries as a place of belonging*, several participants expressed their views.

Yeah there was definitely a sense of belonging in the library. Especially if you actually got chatting to the librarians. …if you had regular chats with them or they were your teachers for other subjects 'cos that happened a lot, we had a lot of teacher librarians, …  if you had the right conversation with the right one you'd end up getting recommended books… FG5

…it's a high school, you get a lot of …like social anxiety and things like that… a fear of conversation? [It]…is a very frightening concept. So, perhaps for those [types of students in the library] there might not be that sense of belonging. FG5

…you just had some other friends, so it's different cliques coming into one zone, more random …and just a place where you can do it. FG1

I think the biggest one that… it probably doesn't feel like it's belonging to [the library] are other people that might actually be struggling with reading themselves? I know that if someone is not a very strong reader they tend not to… and if they don't have to, they won't… …if the librarian might be not as friendly as the others, might feel that …you know I don't want to go in there, …that librarian is a bit of you know… any other group… I find would [feel a sense of belonging], would go, …would find they could go there and find what they need. FG6

Participants FG5 and FG1 spoke of the school library as a place of belonging or a space where groups of friends could depend on being able to meet or have contact with library staff. However, participants FG5 and FG6 commented that such sense of belonging might not exist for all students, especially those with social anxieties or learning difficulties.

#### 4.2.1.4 Theme: school library atmosphere

Fewer comments were offered by participants when discussing school library atmosphere. One participant spoke of a good library atmosphere when linked to events held there, while another equated good atmosphere with physical space of an open plan library design.

…like we had the university sort of open day and there were… [was the] introduction that was held in the library and that had a good atmosphere and just made the best of the resources. FG3

…they [libraries] are quiet places, there are people in there who need it to be quiet. I think… quite open sort of a feel at our library, we didn't have any major walls… no floor to ceiling walls! And that gave it quite an open feel, so you didn't feel shut in. …as for stuff on the walls and what not, they usually used kids' artwork and projects… and learning about the culture … it is interesting if you actually stop and look at it. FG5

Here participant FG3 commented on having an event held in the school library where the university representatives visited the school to speak to students, commenting that this was an example of making good use of library resources and provided a good atmosphere in the library. Participant FG5 when referring to library atmosphere spoke of the quiet nature of the library, open plan design, and student work displayed in the library.

#### 4.2.1.5 Theme: school library user stereotypes

When describing their school libraries, participants spoke about different student groups and student types who were most likely (or unlikely) to be found in a school library, signalling the theme *school library user stereotypes* and describing *non-regular* school library users. Three participants provided descriptions of student types who are *not* likely to be regularly seen in the library, while one participant brought the issue of gender identity into the discussion.

…the people that were into... drug use, or sport… or skipping school were on the oval…. FG4

…the kids who did volleyball, and they were ultra-sporty, stereotypical 'jock type' people. FG5

…particular areas favoured one gender over the other. …the oval and the gymnasium that was kind of neutral 'cos both girls and boys were playing sports. …basketball court, also tennis court had girls over there. The engineering workshop had boys mostly or girls that just wanted to be you know, one of the boys. …music room was also a little bit split. FG6

For these participants the generalised 'non library user' student characterisation was associated with a preference for not staying indoors, commitment to other non-library related activities or low motivation to achieve academically.

In describing *regular* school library users, the participants indicated some highly stereotyped student descriptions, included gender, but differed in the way they chose to describe these students.

…the regular few, the ones who normally would want to play chess, or play on the computers or something, but it wasn't a popular spot. …a few more boys than girls. FG3

…there [in the school library] were a person in there who was an attentive student… FG4

Ours [our school library] had more boys, they tend to come in, just play computer games. FG2

Participants FG2, FG3 and FG4 provided responses describing regular library users in which they spoke in the context of detachment from these students as 'those other students'. Participant FG3 also made a negative value judgement about the school library space.

Participants FG1, FG5 and FG6 offered a view of the regular school library users using self-descriptive words like "we", "me" or "I" in their comments.

I never had a problem going into libraries and stuff… we used to go there and study in our frees. I've always been a bookworm so… it was never an issue for me. I suppose the bookish nerd stereotype... you don't have friends… that's the only place you can go. The kids that would just sit at the back reading… they were happy… I don't think anyone really bugged them. …sort of a stereotypical loner, teenage guy… would find his way into the library, [a person who] perhaps doesn't have the expected social skill [set]… FG5

…people that were often found in the library were… dedicated students or… [those with] complete disregard for school. There was never really any in-between people. …you've got the people who would sit in there to avoid class… they knew that the librarians were not going to dob them in for skipping class because they [students] were technically still at school… FG5

…there was a whole bunch of different people that went into the library. …the tech heads, the ones that were all into computers …the computer geek. …friends who happened to study together. …they were alright, they were fine… And then you'd always have you know, couple

of the rowdy people come in and cause a bit of ruckus and then leave. And some who wanted to read just plainly for fun. …dedicated students were… that particular group was very small. FG6

I think it was more random 'cos we weren't really a community, just a couple of friends and you just had some other friends of… doing other stuff… computer games… people like… that like more maths and stuff like that… FG1

The above comments provide a specific perspective on the regular school library users with two insights: first, that there is no single, easily defined, overarching library user archetype; secondly, that there is also something of an anti-stereotyped library user, the type of student who regularly uses the library only to temporarily create havoc through disruptive behaviour and / or skips classes by hiding in the library.

In the context of the school library expectations influencing the type of users who choose to come inside the library, the participants provided comments which spoke of the character and purpose of the school library being directly influenced by the type of management and supervision provided by the school library staff.

…because it [the school library] wasn't really regulated as a place to be quiet and do serious study. ...it was a place for social hangs… And there were rarely boys in the library, unless it was a class project or you know there were a person in there who was an attentive student. FG4

…this is what librarians are... [responsible for] and therefore… this is [influences] who goes to the library. Especially with the females, with the guys though, they were the guys that play chess… FG5

Participant FG4 described the school library, where its traditional purpose linked to reading, research and study became relaxed, leading to a change in the type of students and their reasons for using the library. Participant FG5 spoke more directly of the influence and responsibility of library staff in prompting the type of students who used the library, also highlighting gender as one of the outcomes.

One participant provided an account of how the 'regular' academically high achieving library users were able over time to influence other students to also use the school library more.

And the kids that you found in the library… especially in the early years, like year 8, 9 and 10… were often the kids that were loners …originally. Per se… So they did really well, but they formed a group… But then toward the… end of year 12 because there was a big emphasis on graduating in our school, like a lot of pressure to actually graduate, towards the year 11 and 12 you started [seeing] a lot more of the people from the volleyball, from the… more artsy groups, the people that original perhaps wouldn't have been in the library made

their way in… started doing extra research, started doing all this, 'cos there was this extra pressure to do well so some of them went… hang on a second I might actually have to go do this. So at the start it was primarily the kids who were perhaps what seemed like a lower social skill base [popularity], but… not by the end. FG5

This comment speaks of the school library being a catalyst for forming groups or friendships in middle school and early years of senior school by the less popular students, who were also high achieving students and regular users of the library. Participant FG5 also reported that these friendships groups later influenced the change in attitude and motivation toward study as well as academic achievement for other non-regular library users.

### 4.2.2 Finding 2: school library and academic achievement

Finding 2 comprises the following themes:

- *school library resourcing,* related to library resource acquisition strategies and resources management,

- *school library and student grades,* related to student academic achievement with and without the help of school libraries,

- *school library and student motivation,* related to participant motivations to appreciate the advantages of using their school libraries.

#### 4.2.2.1 Theme: school library resourcing

The issue of school library resourcing was discussed by most participants. Participants FG2 and FG3 provided views which were mostly positive about resourcing and school libraries.

[We]…just made the best of the resources and even the staff were generally quite good. FG3

…so [in primary school] it [school library] wasn't used as much whereas in high school you know… you need more resources and references and stuff like that. FG2

But I feel like that [if] the library had more resources and gave you more information about what was actually in the library then that would probably motivate you to come and study. FG2

In sharing their experiences, participant FG3 provided a comment suggesting they were happy with their secondary school library resourcing and could make the best of what was on offer. Participant FG2 recognized the need to use library resources in high school but highlighted the necessity to expand and advertise the resources to students to motivate them to study.

By contrast, participants FG5 and FG6 told a different story of their experience with school library resourcing.

> I found that… any time I went in there [to the library] to look for anything, there wasn't really much there that was relevant and I had to… go after school or during my study breaks across the road to the [de-identified: Technical College] library. I found that they actually had more of a selection… a lot more relevant material… I found that a lot of it [in school library] might've been toned down for people who… might not have been able to handle the heavy literature and… when, I was reading it, it didn't, feel like… there was enough, sort of detail enough to read from… [not] a lot of depth. I had to apply for a separate library card… I would then go over there [Technical College library] to go and get those sort of books. The reason why I went to a library that was across the road was that some of the stuff that I needed to know… [in the school library] …there was no real up and down, it was all… plain Jane. No, bells and whistles, no extra stuff. …it almost seemed the school library was… like playing you know, little brother to big brother.  FG6

> I think, our library definitely catered to, like the lower… main stream and the high achievers…I mean we had a lot of students who were really smart and studying the year 9 text book in year 8. …like I know a lot of classes these days work on classic material or really modern material… And there are lot of things in those novels that perhaps maybe dumbed down… [participants' answer:] …maybe finding… some kind of book that had a mid-point? Just some kind of not dumbed down literature… for children… [that] still has a degree of that intellectual thought. FG5

These two participants showed awareness of the need for varied depth of resourcing to cater to all levels of intellectual and academic student needs. They were critical of the school library resourcing, complaining that the level and depth of resources provided didn't always match the needs of the students, forcing participant FG6 to instead join and use a non-school library to access more appropriate resources. However, these participants also acknowledged that some school libraries at least attempt to address the issue of resourcing for different intellectual needs of students.

### 4.2.2.2 Theme: School library and student grades

The participants differed in their views with regard to the use of the school library in connection to attainment of better school grades or improved academic achievement. For participants FG2, FG3 and FG4 there was no connection between using a school library and improvement of academic achievement.

> I think the libraries had zero effect on where I am now… yep. The library wasn't [a] spot that I… went often, but I remember going there in my later years in high school… it was the place to socialise with my friends… I think our school culture wasn't focussed around going to university. So I don't think so.  FG4

I don't think that [the school library] it's made a difference because there… in school in year 12 they [school staff] emphasise that you've got to pass year 12, like you've got to get good ATAR to go to uni and you're more focussed on pleasing [de-identified: Certificate of Education] [requirements] and focussing on [de-identified: Certificate of Education] rather than the library and stuff like that. FG2

…it was more year 12 teachers and home group teachers at the end… It was more the staff of the school [teachers] who… what's the word… who encouraged uni, more than the library. FG3

For participants FG1, FG5 and FG6 there was more of a connection between school library use and study to improve academic outcomes, which in the eyes of some participants was in turn connected to a goal of future study at university.

…the ones [students] that were actually going for the books [in the library] and actually you know, reading and stuff, were the dedicated people that actually wanted to graduate, wanted to do, you know… well. FG6

…they [students in the library] didn't have a large social group, they'd go into the library and there would be a bunch of them, and by the end of year 12, I'm pretty sure one of them was the *DUX. …it was the library, and certain specific classes because, only they took because they had it [ability for high achievement], because they were the only ones they had interest in it. By the end they did fantastically in their… academic subjects, and they actually found a… friend base through similar… people with similar interests. Who… actually met in the library. FG5

*DUX: school's highest academically achieving student in an academic year.

…in my school there was quite a lot of people who liked to read books. And my brother was definitely one of them …usually after school, maybe a little bit before school. It [school library] was a good place to study. FG1

It wasn't very much that the library really motivated me to come to university. It was very much more other, outside sources. …but way before [historical context], [school] libraries used to make you want to come to university. FG1

Participants FG1 and FG6 made a connection between the use of the library to read books, study and wanting to graduate. Participant FG5 commented about like-minded, motivated, high ability students using the library and subsequently attaining high academic achievement. For participant FG1, from an historical perspective, libraries used to be a motivating factor in aspiring for university studies.

**4.2.2.3 Theme: school library and student motivation**

There were relatively few comments related to student motivations to use the school library but, when offered, the participants' views differed.

> …the librarians they'd help you out whenever you needed a bit of help and stuff like that or if there was any technical difficulties they'd call an IT guy to come down straight away and help you out. FG2

> [Needing]…shelter when it's cold and rainy and... library is like the place.  FG2

> A place to do your project, catching up on class time. Our classes, we would go to the library and we would go in there like… you gonna go and get some books… do a bit of research online and you know, gather that as a group or what not. And discuss that. FG3

In the above comments the participants pointed to more pragmatic issues of motivation to use the school library including getting help from library or IT staff, catching up with school work, using the library and its facilities as shelter from poor weather outside or during times when the teacher booked the class for a lesson in the library.

Other participants' comments related to motivations to use the school library were:

> …[reading] the traditional books… more like, the tablet I guess… the e-book thing. They would go to the library to do that. A meeting place. Place to focus. …lots of computers at the front of it, so that was used for like… research purposes… usually gaming purposes at like… lunch time… FG1

> …but the lack of motivation to do so [go into the library], …how is a library to be able to cater to people with low motivation? Like the door's there, you've gotta walk through it but you may not… want to. FG6

> I personally think that the location has quite a lot to do with the… who actually goes [in]… FG5

The comments above speak of participants' motivating factors as reading and e-reading in the library, a place to focus and to use computers for study and leisure. When thinking about motivation, participant FG6 questioned if the library itself could influence low motivation of students to use the library, suggesting it is an issue of free choice. Participant FG5 provided a perspective on the library location within the school as a catalyst that can act as something of a motivational filter of who has the determination to use the library or not.

### 4.2.3 Finding 3: student experience of school library staff

Finding 3 comprises the following themes:

*- school library staff unfriendliness*, related to participants' experience of unfriendly behaviours toward students,

*- school library staff unhelpfulness*, related to library staff being unhelpful toward student needs,

*- library staff are nice, but...*, related to the behaviour of library staff, seen as generally nice people, while not very pleasant toward students due to their tough jobs.

*- library staff are not nice, but…*, related to library staff being generally unpleasant people, while justifying their behaviour as a type of self-protection in their jobs.

**4.2.3.1 Theme: school library staff unfriendliness, and Theme: school library staff unhelpfulness**

The participants shared views of the school library staff and their work. The somewhat connected themes of *library staff unfriendliness* and *library staff unhelpfulness* emerged from the data as evidenced in the following comments.

> …in my experience they [library staff] weren't very nice people I suppose… It was the job to them, like they were there to do a job, and it wasn't really to help the students or anything like that, it was just… you know… to do their bit. …they don't care if you read that book or not, it's nothing to them… Are they even qualified at high school? Like… like I don't mean even…, I just mean are they qualified?  FG4

> …the [library] staff, they weren't very friendly or approachable. …if [only] they had like that knowledge and if they did spend time reading and stuff in the library rather than just being as a librarian maybe you know read books and articles…[they] Scan books and basically, re-shelve them or stuff like that you know. It's always been like, here's Harvard, here's a document online, like reference Harvard… FG2

> It was nothing against their personalities, I suppose it's just you know going to the fact that being tech savvy or when it came to looking for books, I think that's when they were most useful. FG3

The participants spoke of library staff negative qualities, their emotional detachment at work, their unfriendliness and unhelpfulness. The participants also questioned library staff qualifications in context of their un-professional approach to the job and participants' views of the simplistic, repetitive nature of their work. Participant FG3 re-framed their professional usefulness to students in terms of their strengths in finding books or helping with technology-based problems rather than positive personal qualities.

Somewhat different comments came from participants FG1, FG5 and FG6, generating the themes: *library staff are nice, but…* and *library staff are not nice, but…*which came with negative behaviour justifications for staff.

**4.2.3.2 Theme: library staff are nice, but…**

> …they weren't the worst people… but like… they are not particularly good at I suppose… just socializing in general. They weren't particularly computer savvy as well, which is something that I think that they probably should've needed since there were more computers than say… than books. So, they were ok people.  FG1

**4.2.3.3 Theme: library staff are not nice, but…**

> I think they should be approachable, but… perhaps it's a fine line with stuff like that 'cos it's not a normal teacher–student balance. Because you're not up the front [of the class] talking to them [students], or helping them out with something. …some were rather consistently tetchy. …in that respect I think the approachability and friendliness of them… there should be a degree of it, otherwise it's too difficult for the students who struggle… I can see it being a very obvious barrier. … if they're perpetually upset they [students] are not going to be inclined to wanna ask them for help. …'cos you don't wanna get barked at.  FG5

> …yeah, [being] a bit more approachable… would help. …but I think in a way that was their way of protecting themselves because if they were too friendly and they were offering help to every single student they'd get overwhelmed by too many of them all asking stuff all at the same time. Or encouraging them [students] to search for the answers themselves… I don't know what they were thinking but all I know is that I never asked them for anything. FG6

The above participant comments attempted to provide an ethical dimension to the reasons behind library staff conduct, trying to justify the reasons why library staff may be unapproachable or unfriendly. Participant FG5 contrasted the difference in the potential for relationship development between a teacher and a student, and library staff and a student, and highlighted the issue of comparable relationship expectations of library staff by the students. This participant also spoke of the disadvantage this situation may impose on the most vulnerable, struggling students who need the library staff help the most. Participant FG6 attempted to provide an explanation and justification for the library staff unfriendliness and unhelpfulness, framing it as self-protective behaviour.

Focus group discussion data provided rich lived-in insights into what participants experienced, thought of, and what mattered to them the most in context of their school library use. The data was invaluable in creating a highly focussed survey instrument. Although the focus group discussions phase of the study did not aim to establish informant giftedness, as this wasn't the purpose of this part of the research, the discussions revealed that some focus group participants showed characteristics and indicators consistent with giftedness. These were noted

and a number of them were later applied to the development of the giftedness focus measure in the questionnaire for Phase 2 of the study, along with the research-based giftedness assessment indicators. Any potential focus group discussion participant's giftedness was not considered for further exploration.

## 4.3 Research Phase 2 – Survey Research

The survey instrument was developed by using focus group discussions data from Phase 1 of the research. Several identified themes were used to create scales and individual items within the survey instrument. These included: *school library as place of refuge*, *school library as a place of belonging*, and *the school library usage patterns*. Additionally, data concerning participant giftedness, school library atmosphere, student reading patterns, academic achievement as well as demographic data were collected. The questionnaire (Appendix 1) was distributed to participants in electronic and paper forms (according to preference).

Data on participant giftedness was analysed and divided into three participant giftedness groups and assigned group acronyms. These were: Participants Officially / Formally Identified as Gifted (IG), Participants who Self Perceived themselves as Gifted (PG), and Participants not Officially / Formally Identified as Gifted who also did not Self Perceive themselves as Gifted (NIG). Data collection commenced in week 8 of semester 1, 2015 and was closed after three weeks. Paper questionnaire data were carefully added to the electronic survey data, then re-checked for accuracy and SPSS software was used for data analysis.

The targeted, anticipated survey research informant sample size was estimated between 400–450 university students, however due to last minute organizational issues at the university which were beyond the researcher's influence, this number became impossible to reach. A total of 155 (*N*=155) participants took part in the Phase 2 survey research. This likely impacted the overall results and necessitated a different approach to certain statistical analyses including collapsing or amalgamation of categories, based on the advice of a Flinders University statistical research expert.

### 4.3.1 Quantitative Data analysis

Survey instrument data analyses were comprehensive. This section of the Results chapter includes selected data deemed as most relevant, presented in context of the research question and key findings of the study. The use of the term 'library' in the data analyses denotes a 'school library'.

#### 4.3.1.1  Library as a place of welcome and library as safe-haven

Factor analysis was applied to the *school library as place of refuge* scale. The result showed a divergence in the scale structure into two highly correlated but separate factors. Subsequently,

using a regression model, regression scores were generated for the two newly identified factors which were: *library as a place of welcome* and *library as safe-haven*. The correlation between the two factors was a high 0.841 (Table 4). The two factors, though highly related, showed different points of focus within the 'school library as place of refuge' construct. Where the *library as a place of welcome* related to a sense of welcome and peaceful environment, the *library as a safe-haven* related to a sense of security and safety of the library space.

**Table 4. Correlation analysis of factors (school) *library as a place of welcome* and (school) *library as a safe-haven*.**

|  |  | Library as a place of welcome | Library as safe haven |
|---|---|---|---|
| Library as a place of welcome | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .841 |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) |  | .000 |
|  | N | 145 | 145 |
| Library as a safe haven | Pearson Correlation | .841 | 1 |
|  | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |  |
|  | N | 145 | 145 |

Next, descriptive statistics were applied to transform the data into standard variable, to re-check *N* and the range for both factors (Table 5). For the total value of *N*=145 below, the missing data are not on the giftedness label but rather on the *library as a place of refuge* construct.

**Table 5. Descriptive statistics of factors: library as a place of welcome and library as safe-haven.**

|  | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Library as a place of welcome | 145 | -1.77 | 3.18 | .000 | .896 |
| Library as a safe haven | 145 | -1.77 | 2.78050 | .000 | .890 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 145 |  |  |  |  |

In response to these results, further analysis of *library as a place of welcome* and *library as safe-haven* was performed. In order to find out whether the three giftedness participant groups (IG, PG and NIG) differed in their perceptions of the school library as a place of welcome, first descriptive statistics and then one-way ANOVA analysis was applied (Tables 6 and 7).

**Table 6. Table of descriptive statistics for library as a place of welcome factor.**

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean Upper Bound | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non-identified as gifted (NIG) | 57 | -.0753 | .87086 | .11535 | -.3064 | .1558 | -1.77 | 2.40 |
| Perceived as gifted (PG) | 50 | .0118 | .91825 | .12986 | -.2492 | .2727 | -1.77 | 3.18 |
| Identified as gifted (IG) | 38 | .0974 | .91603 | .14860 | -.2037 | .3985 | -1.55 | 2.42 |
| Total | 145 | .0000 | .89568 | .07438 | -.1470 | .1470 | -1.77 | 3.18 |

**Table 7. One-way between subjects ANOVA comparing the effect of library as a place of welcome and giftedness categories conditions.**

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | .691 | 2 | .345 | .427 | .653 |
| Within Groups | 114.833 | 142 | .809 | | |
| Total | 115.524 | 144 | | | |

An effect of *library as a place welcome* was not detected on gifted groups at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 142) = 0.43, p = 0.653]. The results show that all three participant groups (IG, PG, NIG) perceived the school library as a place of welcome in the same way. The value of p=0.653 was significantly above the value of 0.05 and therefore was not statistically significant. The null hypothesis of 'there is no difference in the way that students perceive the school library as a place of welcome' could not be rejected. There was no evidence for a difference in the perception of *school library as a place of welcome* among the three giftedness categories (IG, PG, NIG).

In order to find out whether the three giftedness participant groups (IG, PG and NIG) differed in their perceptions of the school *library as safe-haven*, (Tables 8 and 9) descriptive statistical analysis and a one-way between subjects ANOVA were conducted to compare the effect of *library as safe-haven* and giftedness categories conditions.

**Table 8. Library as safe-haven: descriptive statistics.**

| | | | Std. | | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | | | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | |
| | N | Mean | Deviation | Std. Error | Bound | Bound | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non-identified as gifted (NIG) | 57 | -.00617 | .85211336 | .11287 | -.2322698 | .2199224 | -1.76526 | 2.47534 |
| Perceived as gifted (PG) | 50 | -.05184 | .89519693 | .12659 | -.3062516 | .2025727 | -1.76526 | 2.78050 |
| Identified as gifted (IG) | 38 | .07747 | .95489467 | .15490 | -.2363957 | .3913365 | -1.57725 | 2.33716 |
| Total | 145 | .00000 | .88987759 | .07390 | -.1460695 | .1460695 | -1.76526 | 2.78050 |

**4.3.1.2  Library as safe-haven vs giftedness categories analysis**

**Table 9. One-way between subjects ANOVA comparing the effect of library as safe-haven and giftedness categories conditions.**

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | .365 | 2 | .182 | .228 | .797 |
| Within Groups | 113.666 | 142 | .800 | | |
| Total | 114.031 | 144 | | | |

There was not a significant effect of welcome on gifted groups at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 142) = 0.23, p = 0.979]. The results show that all three participant groups (IG, PG, NIG) perceived the school library as safe-haven in the same way. The value of p=0.797 was not statistically significant. The null hypothesis of 'there is no difference in the way that students perceive the school library as a safe-haven' could not be rejected. There was no

evidence for the difference in the perception school library as safe-haven between the three giftedness categories (IG, PG, NIG).

**4.3.1.3 Academic achievement vs giftedness categories analysis**

In order to answer the question about school library use and academic achievement, descriptive statistics were applied to a single item (Q30) within Section 3 (Appendix 1) of the instrument, which asked about specific reasons for using the library, i.e.:

Q30.    Wanting to achieve better grades.  ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

(column headings, top to bottom reading: Strongly discouraged | Discouraged | Somewhat discouraged | Somewhat encouraged | Encouraged | Strongly encouraged)

Unfortunately, due to the lower-than-expected sample size, further analysis was required based on the advice of a Flinders University statistical research expert. The descriptive statistics for the six categories were collapsed into three due to low frequencies at the extremes of the frequency spectrum. As a result, "strongly encouraged" and "encouraged" became one **encouraged** category, "somewhat encouraged" became a second: **somewhat encouraged** category and "somewhat discouraged", "discouraged" and "strongly discouraged" became the final **discouraged** category. The results are provided in Table 10, followed by analysis of giftedness categories, Table 11.

**Table 10. Analysis, using the *high school library helped you to get better grades* (recoded)**

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Agree | 39 | 25.2 | 26.2 | 26.2 |
|  | Somewhat agree | 61 | 39.4 | 40.9 | 67.1 |
|  | Disagree | 49 | 31.6 | 32.9 | 100.0 |
|  | Total | 149 | 96.1 | 100.0 |  |
| Missing | Missing | 6 | 3.9 |  |  |
| Total |  | 155 | 100.0 |  |  |

**Table 11. Giftedness category versus 'using the high school library helped you to get better grades' (recoded)**

| Giftedness status | Agree (%) | Somewhat agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Total (%) | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NIG | 31 | 44 | 25 | 100 | 64 |
| PG | 19 | 42 | 40 | 100 | 48 |
| IG | 26 | 41 | 33 | 100 | 37 |
| Total | | | | | 144 |

The results show that across the three giftedness groups (NIG, PG and IG) there was no difference in wanting to use the school library in order to get better grades. A subsequent Chi square test also showed no effect $X2$ (4, $N$ = 149) = 4.22, $p$ =.38. In asking the question about giftedness groups and academic achievement, the null hypothesis of 'there is no difference in the way that students perceive the school library as a place helping to get better grades' could not be rejected. There was no evidence for the difference between the three giftedness groups (IG, PG, NIG) in the perception of school library as a place helping students to get better grades.

**4.3.1.4 Library resourcing vs giftedness categories analysis**

Descriptive statistics were applied to a single item (Q1) within Section 3 (Appendix 1) of the instrument, which asked about reasons for using the library, i.e.:

Q1.   Your high school library was well resourced for your needs.

Strongly Disagree ☐   Disagree ☐   Somewhat Disagree ☐   Somewhat agree ☐   Agree ☐   Strongly agree ☐

Again, due to lower than anticipated sample size, in the descriptive statistics the six categories were collapsed into three due to low frequencies at the extreme sides of the frequency spectrum. As a result, "strongly agree" and "agree" became the **agree** category, "somewhat

82

agree" became a **somewhat agree** category, and "somewhat disagree", "disagree" and "strongly disagree" became the final **disagree** category. The results of school library resourcing against giftedness categories are provided in Tables 12 and 13 below.

**Table 12. Your high school library was well resourced for your needs (recoded)**

|  |  | Your high school library was well resourced for your needs (recoded) | | | |
|  |  | Agree | Somewhat agree | Disagree | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Giftedness category | Non-identified as gifted (NIG) | 43 | 15 | 6 | 64 |
|  | Perceived as gifted (PG) | 32 | 9 | 9 | 50 |
|  | Identified as gifted (IG) | 18 | 18 | 2 | 38 |
| Total |  | 93 | 42 | 17 | 152 |

**Table 13. Giftedness category versus school library was well resourced for your needs (%)**

| Giftedness status | Agree (%) | Somewhat agree (%) | Disagree (%) | Total (%) | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NIG | 67 | 23 | 10 | 100 | 64 |
| PG | 64 | 18 | 18 | 100 | 50 |
| IG | 47 | 47 | 6 | 100 | 38 |
| Total |  |  |  |  | 152 |

The above results show that across the three groups (NIG, PG and IG) there was no difference in the perception of the high school library being well resourced for student needs. A subsequent Chi square test also showed no effect $X2$ (4, $N$ = 152) = 12.53, $p$ =.14. In asking the question about school library resourcing, the null hypothesis of 'there is no difference in the way that students perceive the high school library being well resourced for student needs' could not be rejected. There was no evidence for the difference between the three giftedness groups (IG, PG, NIG) in the perception of the school library being well resourced for student needs.

**4.2.1.5 School type vs library as place of welcome analysis**

In order to answer the question about participants' potential difference in perceptions of 'school library as place of welcome', other factors needed to be identified within the survey research data set. The first of these factors concerned the school type of the participant groups and the way it impacted on the perceptions and use of the school library.

Running descriptive statistics, the numbers of students from the three giftedness groups (IG, PG, NIG) against school type are as follows:

**Table 14. Giftedness category of participants vs. school type**

| | | Giftedness category | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Non-identified gifted (NIG) | Perceived as gifted (PG) | Identified as gifted (IG) | Total |
| School sector most representative of your final years of high school | Government, State or Public school | 30 | 25 | 23 | 78 |
| | Catholic school | 12 | 12 | 8 | 32 |
| | Independent / Private school | 19 | 13 | 6 | 38 |
| Total | | 61 | 50 | 37 | 148 |

To answer the question whether there was a difference in the perception of the library as a place of welcome in terms of the 'school type' participants had attended, the means plot and then one-way ANOVA (Table 15) analyses were used. While there was a trend shown as seen in Figure 4 below, the value of $p = .289$ was not statistically significant.
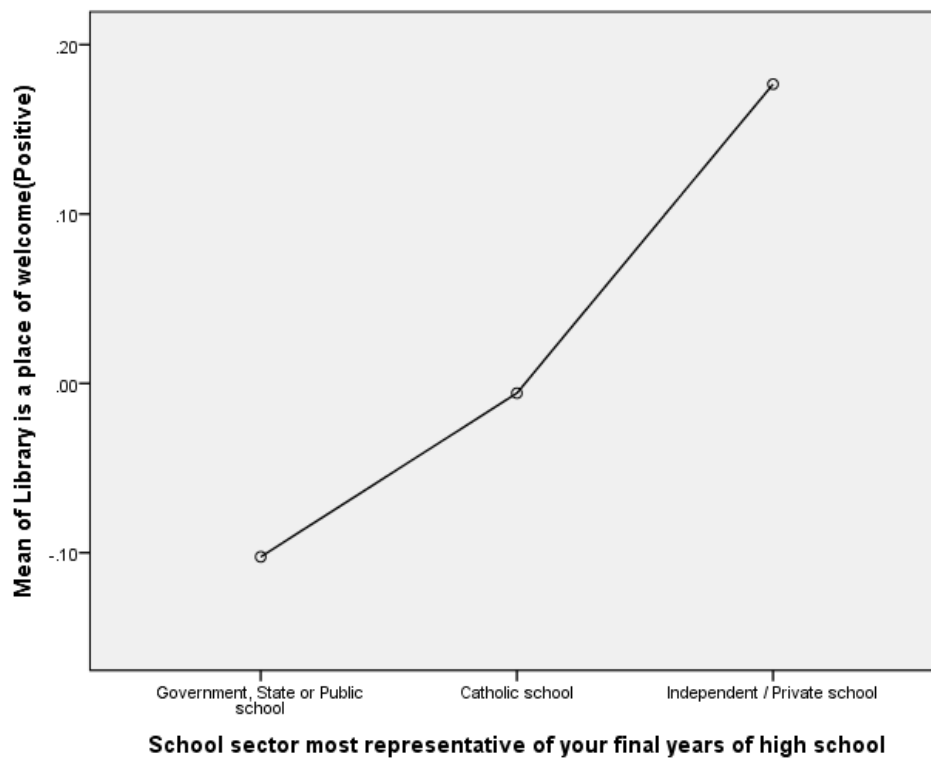
**Figure 4. School type vs. means of the library as a place of welcome**

**Table 15. One-way between subjects ANOVA comparing the effect of 'library as place of welcome' and school type categories conditions.**

|  | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 1.983 | 2 | .991 | 1.251 | .289 |
| Within Groups | 111.740 | 141 | .792 | | |
| Total | 113.722 | 143 | | | |

Although there was some evidence of a weak trend shown, the value of p =.289 was not statistically significant. The results show that there was no significant effect detected of 'library as a place welcome' on school type groups at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 141) = 0.99, p = 0.289]. The value of $p$ =.289 was above the value of 0.05 and therefore was not statistically significant. There was no statistically valid evidence for the difference in the perception of school library as a place of welcome among the different school type groups.

**4.3.1.6 School type vs library as safe-haven analysis**

Running descriptive statistics, the analysis for numbers of students against school type and perception of school library as safe-haven were as follows:
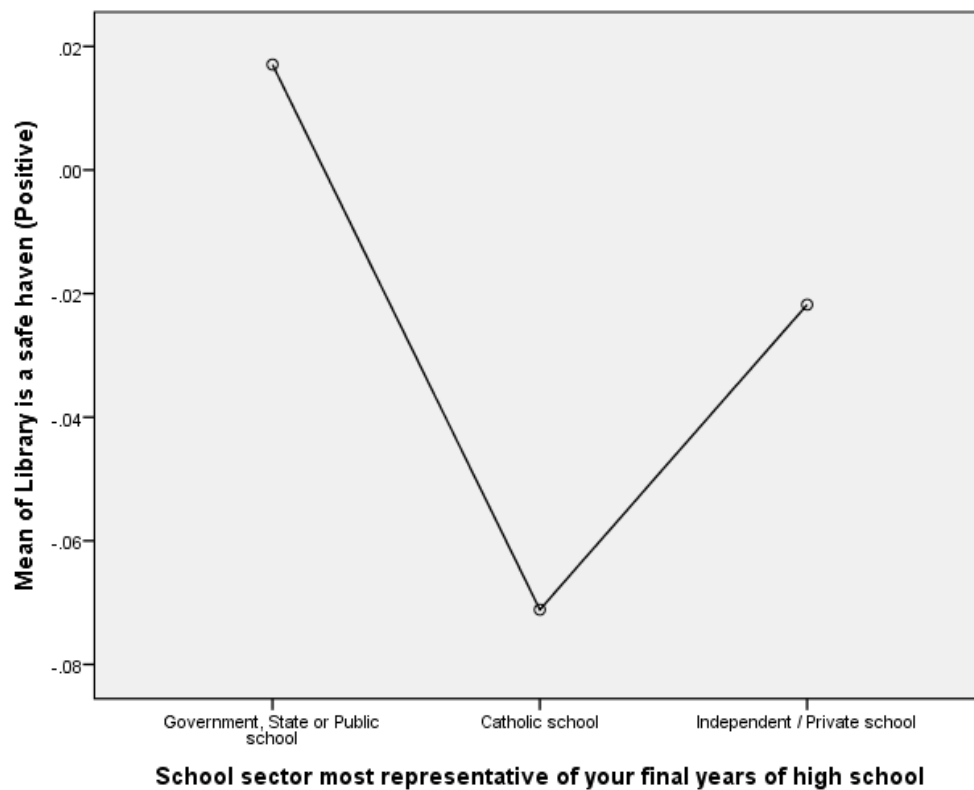
**Figure 5. School library sector vs. means of the library as safe-haven.**

**Table 16. One-way between subjects ANOVA comparing the effect of library as a safe-haven and school type categories conditions.**

|  | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | .170 | 2 | .085 | .108 | .898 |
| Within Groups | 111.356 | 141 | .790 |  |  |
| Total | 111.526 | 143 |  |  |  |

While there was a very weak trend shown as seen in Figure 5, the value of $p$ =.898 was not statistically significant. There was no significant effect detected of library as a safe-haven on school type groups at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 141) = 0.11, p = 0.898]. The value of $p$ =.898 was above the value of 0.05 and therefore was not statistically significant. There was no evidence for the difference in the perception school library as a safe-haven among the different school type groups.

### 4.3.2  Participant gender vs school library as a place of welcome analysis

Running descriptive statistics, participant gender against school library as a place of welcome followed by One-way between subjects ANOVA were as follows:
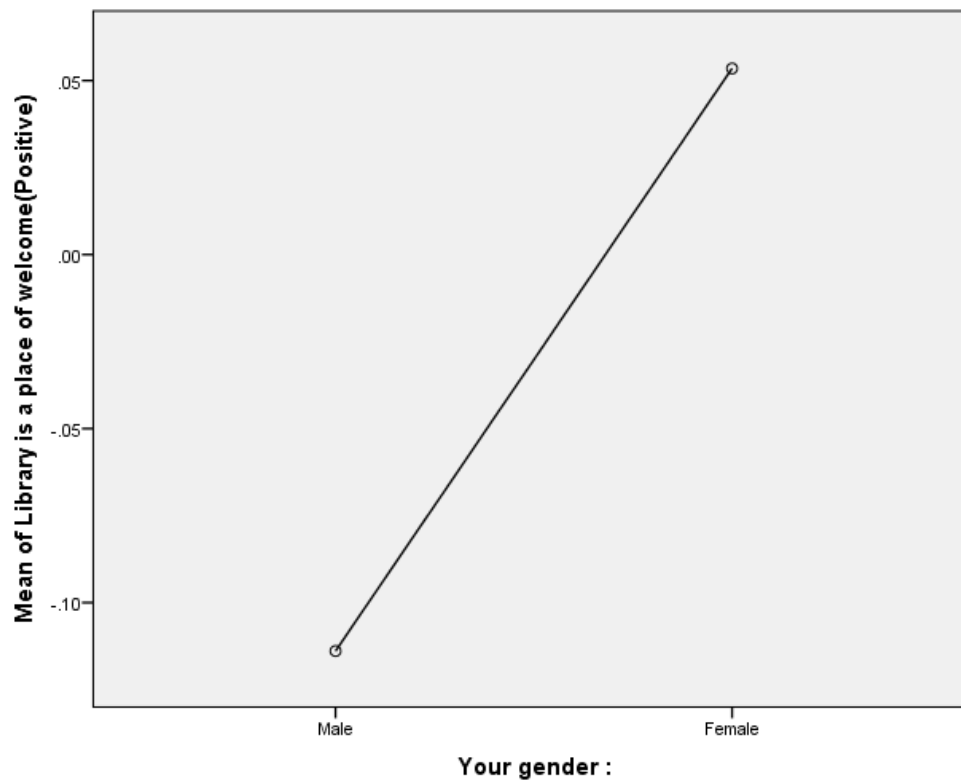


**Figure 6. Participant gender vs. means of the library as a place of welcome.**

**Table 17. One-way between subjects ANOVA comparing the effect of library as a place of welcome and participant gender categories conditions.**

|  | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | .946 | 1 | .946 | 1.191 | .277 |
| Within Groups | 112.776 | 142 | .794 |  |  |
| Total | 113.722 | 143 |  |  |  |

While there was some evidence of a weak trend shown, the value of p =.277 was not statistically significant. There was no significant effect detected of 'library as a place of welcome' on gender groups at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(1, 142) = 1.11, p = 0. 277]. The value of $p$ =0. 277 was above the value of 0.05 and therefore was not statistically significant. While there was evidence of a weak trend shown, the value of $p$ =.277 was not statistically

significant. There was no evidence for the difference in the perception 'school library as a place of welcome' between the gender groups.

### 4.3.2.1 Participant gender vs library as safe-haven analysis

Running descriptive statistics, the participant gender against school library as safe-haven followed by One-way between subjects ANOVA were as follows:
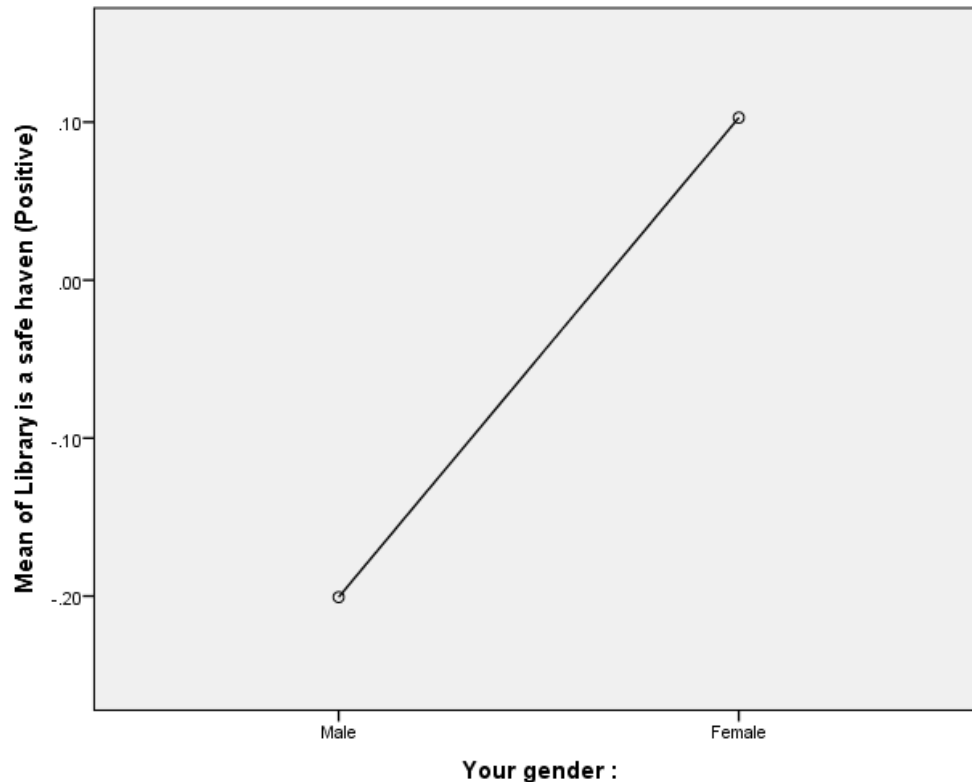


**Figure 7. Participant gender vs. means of the library as safe-haven.**

**Table 18. One-way between subjects ANOVA comparing the effect of 'library as safe-haven' and participant gender categories conditions.**

|  | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 3.109 | 1 | 3.109 | 4.072 | .045 |
| Within Groups | 108.417 | 142 | .764 |  |  |
| Total | 111.526 | 143 |  |  |  |

There was a statistically significant effect detected of library as a safe-haven on gender groups at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(1, 142) = 4.07, p = 0. 045]. The value of $p$ =.045 was below the value of 0.05 and therefore was statistically significant. While there was a trend

shown and the value of $p =. 045$ was statistically significant, the significance was small. Therefore, there was some evidence for the difference in the perception 'school library as a safe-haven' among the two gender groups, with female students perceiving school libraries as safe-havens more strongly than male students.

## 4.4    Survey Research – Qualitative Analysis

Section 5 of the questionnaire (Appendix 1) contained qualitative, open ended comment space for participants to voice their 'personal opinions, ideas and views'. A total of 36 respondents provided comments. One participant's response was provided on the paper questionnaire outside the qualitative section, potentially triggered by the survey questions on giftedness. It was included within the 36 comments. All 36 informants also responded to the giftedness category. Participant comments were analysed using TA and the emergent themes are explored below.

### 4.4.1  Finding 1: School library as a place of refuge

One participant provided a comment, referring to the school library as place of refuge for students.

> Hard for me to personally reflect upon on this issue as I was more 'sport' oriented student. However, I did notice throughout my schooling journey that those students who did not necessarily find school a hospitable place found refuge & safety in the library. I wish these social divisions didn't occur but they are a sad reality :( (NIG)

Here the participant spoke of the library being a refuge and a place of safety for those students who found being at school difficult or challenging. The participant also expressed a feeling of sadness in response to this situation.

### 4.4.2 Finding 2: School library and academic achievement

Five participants provided comments related to school libraries as places for learning. The participants commented:

> think I went into the library more often in the senior school taking control of my own learning. (PG)

> Although I was there for the right reasons, to use the library resources and benefit myself, I felt as though there were a lot of people there for the wrong reasons. (PG)

> My school library did not have much technology but I did a lot of research there alone and with friends. Especially I liked having a quiet space to study and meeting friends to work on projects. (PG)

The next two participants commented:

Teachers from different subject areas volunteered to help students after school in the library and there was a roster for this which was extremely helpful. (NIG)

Mainly, I valued the library as a place that I could do quiet study, but still talk to a friend quietly-studying with company. (NIG)

In the first three comments by (PG) participants, they spoke of using the school library for quiet study and study with friends. They emphasised their self-efficacy toward learning by taking control, being there for the right reason and learning alone. In the next two (NIG) comments, one participant commented on the importance of teachers being rostered in the library as a helpful resource for learning and the other spoke of quiet study in the library with a companion or friend to talk to and study with.

### 4.4.2.1 Theme: School library resourcing

NIG participants provided their views on school library resourcing, seen in the comments below.

My high school library had many useful resources and up to date technology. (NIG)

My high school library was great to catch up on work and could find resources easily. (NIG)

Not enough computers. (NIG)

OUR HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY WAS OLD FASHIONED. /NO TECHNOLOGY AND A PLACE ONLY HIGH ACHIEVING STUDENTS VISITED. (NIG) *(in caps as per original comment provided)

These NIG participants spoke either positively or negatively about library resourcing and their views centred on the quality and quantity of resources available. The comments of PG / IG participants were:

I do however feel that during my later years I did find it hard to find more in-depth sources needed for my assignments and other homework. (PG)

The books were out of date and provided little context to my subjects. I only used the library for printing and minor study attempts… I found it to be more successful using internet resources even in my younger years of high school due to the lack of quality and quantity of resources in my school library. (PG)

My high school library was a public library and [I] got resources from other libraries around the state. (IG)

High school libraries should have a larger selection of books targeted for adults, for readers who are more advanced. (IG)

You didn't need the library. Assignments were too easy and teachers preferred internet resources. (IG)

These four participants spoke of the quality of the school library resources as not suitable to their needs, being learners who required more advanced or in-depth resources, with some participants opting to get resources from other libraries or using the internet to source their information.

### 4.4.3  Finding 3: Students' experiences of school library staff

Participants' perceptions of school library staff varied, but most views reported were negative.

I loved High School but the librarians were rude and discouraging. (IG)

We had this one librarian who was for the lack of a better word, a bitch. If she wasn't there it would have been better. (IG)

I was a little intimidated by the library staff, as they often seemed unhappy and unwilling to help. (NIG)

The staff scared me and were not very accessible for students. (NIG)

If you were there outside of class [in the library] it was assumed you were "up to something". (NIG)

These comments spoke of library staff who in the eyes of the students were rude, unfriendly, intimidating and unhelpful. However, other participants reported their perceptions of library staff differently.

The staff were welcoming. (IG)

Great librarians who were always helpful made the experience better. Also allowed time for us to meet as class groups in the library to help us resource essays. (PG)

My library staff were very bad [good] and did everything they could to make me study hard. (NIG)

One librarian was highly knowledgeable which was very helpful but another librarian wasn't and we found it difficult to find books/info on her working days. More highly educated librarians would be great. (NIG)

The majority of the above comments speak of library staff who were welcoming, helpful, knowledgeable and encouraging of study. However, in addition to providing a positive comment, one participant also commented on an unhelpful library staff member, questioning their competency and wishing for more, better educated staff in libraries.

# 4.5 Research Phase 3. Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were employed for Phase 3 of the study. This phase consisted of individually interviewing four male and four female volunteer participants. The informant equal gender divide was a coincidence. Through the Phase 2 survey instrument, four participants self-assessed as IG (identified as gifted) or PG (self-perceived gifted) while the other four participants self-assessed as NIG (non-identified as gifted), an equal distribution which was unplanned. The 8 participants were assigned specific abbreviations, e.g. Interview Participant 1 (IP1). All interviews were conducted within the first eight weeks of the university academic year 2015. Thematic Analysis (TA) of the data in the eight interview transcripts identified the following relevant themes: *school library as safe-haven, school library and academic achievement, school library resourcing, student perceptions of school library staff* and *stereotyped school library user*. Two participants also provided their own definitions / explanations of who are gifted students. TA uncovered many viewpoint overlaps between the IG and PG participants, which often contrasted with the views of the NIG participant group. In order to present these commonalities and contrasts more clearly, where possible the comments provided by participants have been offered side by side, in a tabulated format.

### 4.5.1 Finding 1: School libraries as places of refuge

### 4.5.1.1 Theme: School library as safe-haven

The theme *school library as safe-haven* was explored through participants' comments, starting with the concept of nomenclature, or terminology.

The NIG participants when discussing school libraries referred to school library differently to the PG / IG participants. Without the provision of any verbal prompts during the interviews, the PG / IG participants used the term 'safe-haven' to describe the school library, while the NIG participants used the term 'refuge' in the comments below.

| PG / IG | NIG |
|---|---|
| *…and I think, part of the influence in fact of the library being a safe haven was, that the library was my safe haven…* IP7(IG) | *I would say it's more like a refuge, because… that has less of an implication that the rest of the school is unsafe.* IP8(NIG) |
| *And you… if you were to come into the library you should have been able to expect that to be… a safe haven…* IP4(PG) | *…a lot of them* [students in the library] *found refuge in the quiet… the quietness of a library.* IP3(NIG) |
| | *…but if you're particularly introverted or a shy person then you would feel most comfortable in that sort of a refuge.* IP8(NIG) |

While the implications of using different descriptors of school libraries i.e., safe-haven versus refuge is discussed in the following chapter, it is important to illustrate how the two participant groups varied in their reasons for using school libraries in addition to the use of different naming descriptors, as shown in the comments below.

| PG / IG | NIG |
|---|---|
| *Once you are in the safe zone* [inside the library] *you're fine!* IP7(IG) <br><br> *… I guess as a student if you're… insecure or anything like that… having that seniority* [staff supervision] *above you, watching you over, creates that bit of security I think.* IP5(PG) | *I think some libraries can offer a really good place for students who maybe don't have a group of friends or, don't feel like they fit in with playing football on the oval or sitting with the girls gossiping.* IP3(NIG) <br><br> *…but also there might be people* [in the library] *who prefer just to stay indoors and in quiet, warm spaces as well…* IP8(NIG) <br><br> *…when you see a library, it's always a quiet place.* IP6(NIG) |

Where PG / IG participants attached reasons of safety and security to their school library use, the NIG participants thought of the library use in context of the lack of friends outside of the library or using it for the physical comfort and the quiet environment it could provide.

Next, the two participant groups views were explored in context of school libraries as places which can shield certain students from bullying behaviours of other students.

| PG / IG | NIG |
|---|---|
| *Well, it gets you out of the playground… there is less kids that are gonna pick on you… So, less chance of bullying… Probably like physical and verbal... just to get them away from their peers kind of thing.* IP2(IG) <br><br> *…the fact of the matter is, if you were bullied or… you could go in there* [into the library] *knowing that if… anything was to arise, you know… it'd be dealt with* [by staff] *quickly.* IP4(PG) | *…typically I suppose the type of students who would typically often be bullies would also probably be the kind of students who would not go to the library.* IP8(NIG) <br><br> *…that* [school library] *sort of automatically sort of… keeps away a lot of the big mouths… sort of people who do make life difficult for a lot of the people who do struggle at school.* IP6(NIG) <br><br> *They would probably be the type of students who wouldn't want to go to the library, probably wanna be out say kicking the football in the yard or socializing in groups with other people. …they already associated the fact that the library is for nerds or for people who play chess and therefore I'm not one of those, why would I go to the library, that's uncool.* IP8(NIG) |

While the PG / IG participants made references in their comments about the issue of bullying from the perspective of the victim, the NIG students commented about the people who were potential bullies, speaking of how the school library was not a place for bullies.

The participants commented on the issue of 'what' or 'who' had the responsibility for making the school library function as a place of refuge for students.

| PG / IG | NIG |
|---|---|
| *…the sense of security relates to the librarians and the atmosphere* [in the library] *that was created because of them.* IP7(IG) | *Well, I think that because there is always supervision in the library if some students feel particularly vulnerable or socially uncomfortable with their peers or I guess even fearful of interactions then they can see the library as a place that you can go knowing that there'll always be staff present…* IP8(NIG) |
| *…there's a teacher there* [in the library] *that will be able to see* [be aware of] *you.* IP2(IG) | |
| *…and there was always teachers on duty… in the library as well to help out the librarians. And, I couldn't imagine any major problem arising in that sort of environment – the way it was run then.* IP4(PG) | |
| [you]…*have a view of direct supervision* [staff member]*, you have that view of direct supervision - whereas compared to out on the oval or out in the yard you might not even have that supervision.* IP5(PG) | |

The PG / IG participants provided comments pointing to the staff present in the library as being responsible for creating a sense of safety, while only one NIG participant provided a similar assessment.

Next, the students' school library use was discussed from the perspective of the library end user.

| PG / IG | NIG |
|---|---|
| *…I tended to spend a lot of time in the library building…, but it sort of… it definitely got me through my year 12 exams.* IP7(IG) | *…what I found, it* [the library] *was more useful for people who actually found… the day to day struggles of school, like… just… confidence levels, their social, …ability or lack thereof, or the… just… their not fitting in I suppose with the general school.* IP6(NIG) |
| *It was a really good place you could go in the school so… most of the time, you would always be welcome.* IP4(PG) | *I think there are groups of students who could… having a friendly environment open at lunch time* [the school library]*, I feel it could really benefit them in those type of ways.* IP6(NIG) |

Here, the PG / IG informants commented about use of the library space from a personal perspective, using words like "I" and "you". The NIG participants spoke of the library users not as so much themselves, but as 'other' students, using terms like "them", "for people who", while also applying stereotyped descriptors.

Both NIG and PG / IG participants commented on the school library as 'a place of escape', however their views differed on what the concept of escape meant:

| PG / IG | NIG |
|---|---|
| *…I think it can be used as a really good escape. …I knew that in my corner there was 1 or 2 students who would study with me and we would just… we would just focus…* IP7(IG) | *So it* [the library] *was more of a… either a place to bludge for people who… sort of wanted to leave the lesson and jump into the library, or for students who probably felt safer in the library than they did in the school yard.* IP6(NIG) |
| *…but if you just needed to, just take some time out and to relax to get away from it all, go… yeah… it would be, it would be a good place to just kind of stay for the day… study.* IP4(PG) | *I did find the library sort of, definitely more a place for people to actually probably escape rather than actually work…* IP6(NIG) |
| | *…like I said* [for] *the academic students,* [the library] *gives them a place to go to study, without being distracted and disrupted.* IP3(NIG) |

The PG / IG participants saw the library space and the time spent there as a personal opportunity to focus and study, while for the NIG participants 'escape' was about *other* students' study or a place to stay safe.

The concept of 'respect' inside the library was also perceived differently by the PG / IG and NIG participants as shown below.

| PG / IG | NIG |
|---|---|
| *…you would always be welcome in that library and everyone seemed to respect each other in the library so… it was good.* IP4(PG) | *A place where you sort of have respect for… for obviously the… the resources available.* IP6(NIG) |
| *Ah, then there aren't many places around the school that you can find your own space and have that space completely respected.* IP4(PG) | |

When the two PG / IG informants spoke of respect, they associated it with people inside the library and the personal space. The NIG participant spoke instead of respecting the physical resources in the library.

### 4.5.2 Finding 2: School library and academic achievement

### 4.5.2.1 Theme: School library resourcing

The participants were asked to comment on their school library resourcing and whether the resources available adequately supported various needs of students at their school. While the participants did not provide exhaustive accounts of the school library resourcing situation, there was a discernible difference between the PG / IG versus NIG participants in *what* they discussed and *how* they chose to comment on the issue:

| PG / IG | NIG |
|---|---|
| *The resources were quite good, and if they didn't have it there, like… 'cos it was a* [joint school and public] *state library… so that then they could order in a heap of books for us and that way we got more of the resources that we needed.* IP2(IG) | *Just access to the internet, no there was no access to the electronic…* [databases] *in there….it was quite good* [internet] *access but it was just desktop computers, there was no laptops or anything like that… you could hire out.* IP1(NIG) |
| [The school library had] *… resources from DVDs, online stuff, and then there was the books – hard copies and everything like that. I think a lot of it was dated, quite… quite old… Yeah, it was that – limited resources. …there was that one book that I needed… I got…* [had to] *to go over to this public library. But, the majority* [of students] *wouldn't take that interest* [step], *they'd stay at that standard* [of using school library resources]. IP5(PG) | *…if you said: does it meet all of the wide range of the potential needs of the students I probably couldn't answer that, because I couldn't know everyone's potential needs. But, in terms of a more traditional… library… I would say that… yes, it did …yes, I think it was quite good at supporting the students all around* [of various needs]. IP8(NIG) |
| | *…there was a lot of dramas I suppose, in terms of having… access to a resource I suppose. …when you've got you know like 30 to 60 children sort of doing the same project, it's obviously… using resources is obviously not easy. I don't think a lot of students actually would've gone out of their way to use the resources available in the school. I think just… just time…* IP6(NIG) |

96

Participants IP8(NIG) and IP1(NIG) spoke about the acceptable quality of resources available, while participant IP6(NIG) spoke of low willingness of students to access library resources. The PG / IG participants commented on poor quality / poor availability of resources not meeting their needs and their personal agency in willingness to obtain resources elsewhere when unavailable in the school library.

The interview data showed that for all participant groups (IG, PG and NIG) the use of the school library was associated with attainment of better school grades. When the participants were asked if in their view school libraries helped with academic achievement in context of students getting better grades, all participants agreed.

> When used appropriately …yes. I think they definitely are. IP7(IG)

> I'd say they [school libraries] probably would [help in getting better grades]. IP2(IG)

> I think [school] libraries help but only if students help themselves. IP4(PG)

> Yes! If they use them in the right way, I think. IP3(NIG)

> Yes. I do. …it's probably down to the students choosing to access the library in the first place, to be able to get that benefit. IP8(NIG)

> …it certainly did [help with getting better grades] with Legal Studies.  IP6(NIG)

> Not really… Yeah just a tiny bit... IP1(NIG)

All participants agreed that school libraries helped with getting better grades, however many added that for that to happen the library must be actually used by students to begin with and used in an appropriate manner. One NIG participant (IP1) was unconvinced about the idea to begin with, but after some thinking changed her mind.

When the participants were asked to explore the question of *how* school libraries help students to get better grades, contrasting answers were provided by the PG / IG versus the NIG participants.

| PG / IG | NIG |
|---|---|
| *…the people who spend more time in the library, they… they have been higher achievers 'cos they, they are like more engaged in like finding out the information,* [and] *not just accepting it. …they are challenging what's being taught to them. …if they did go to the library they'd probably find that they would've pushed themselves a lot further.* IP2(IG) | *Like the staff were really helpful there* [in the library]. *If they couldn't find a book they could show you to a website that's about that online knowledge as well as the book knowledge.* IP1(NIG) |
| [Being in the library] *…It's an opportunity for you to sit and reflect…* IP7(IG) | *…like homework club is used in the school library.* *…it gives the chance* [to] *a teacher to sit one on one with a student and really go through and explain it with them, which will result in better grades.* IP3(NIG) |
| *I've got that research done… that actual understanding and the unpacking of it,* [producing] *new knowledge.* IP5(PG) | *…when students are studying alone in the library, they may not be learning new material as much. I think that probably in a library - that's more about the students working on their own or in small groups… to generate their own knowledge.* [The library]*…might be also beneficial to students whose teachers take the whole class over there.* IP8(NIG) |

The comments from the PG / IG informants show that for them the *how* relates to self-efficacy or personal agency in wanting to use the school library. Secondly, the comments speak to the perception of how school library facilities and resources need to be best used, in order to attain better grades. The PG / IG participants saw the library as a space to use the resources and to engage in deeper, self-driven independent thinking and learning. The NIG participants' comments indicate that they thought of the library as one part of a larger network of learning supports within the school. To them the library was an extra study support scaffold providing help in the form of resources, teachers, librarians and peers.

When the PG / IG participants were asked to explain *why* some students might not believe that school libraries can help with getting better school grades, they offered the following views, which were similar to the explored PG / IG survey research qualitative data.

They [some students], might… not have, that knowledge [ability] to go that far. …understanding and the unpacking of it, new knowledge, they might not have the ability to do [it]. IP5(PG)

…maybe [when] the people… think [of] the library - not so much [of] the space of the library. But what's in the library. …what the library offers. …you know… solid facts and information. IP5(PG)

…because they are gifted, …they gonna like be able to study at home and stuff like that. And so, they like not gonna need all the resources which the library has. IP2(IG)

> …we have teachers …like [on] staff duty, they would be on patrol in the library… subject teacher in the library. …if you were out on the handball courts your conversation with them probably wouldn't be in the same context as if you were in the library. IP7(IG)

Participant IP5(PG) spoke of some students not having the experience, ability or personal agency to think more deeply about knowledge and information, which requires the 'thinking space' the school library can provide, as this could translate to better quality schoolwork and ultimately better grades. Additionally, the participant highlighted the fact that some students may not fully understand or have a superficial understanding of what the school library has to offer. Participant IP2(IG) spoke of gifted students potentially having an ability and personal agency for finding information at home and thus effectively completing their study, while IP7(IG) thought that some students did not appreciate that the library often has 'specialist' subject teachers on duty, which can be a valuable resource.

When the same *why* question was asked of the NIG participants, the following views were provided.

> [Staff were] …just a bit supportive sometimes.  IP1(NIG)

> …they [the library] had the class sets of textbooks that we checked out at the start of every year. I guess they came from the library…  IP8(NIG)

> I think that… possibly if they [students] are reading textbooks …so I would say without doubt that libraries do support learning. IP8(NIG)

The NIG participant comments spoke of students not taking into account the library staff and teachers available in the library and that textbooks came from the school library.

Next, two participants provided their own definition of a school library.

> I think a place to support your learning, study. …the library might be a place where I might discuss resources with other teachers, with my teachers or… the library staff. …it was a support network for my studies. Yeah, it can be a place where students support each other, so study as well. IP8(NIG)

> It's a place where you can surround yourself in learning and different ways of learning. IP5(PG)

The two comments significantly differ from one another and reflect previously highlighted viewpoint differences between PG / IG vs NIG groups. Participant IP8(NIG) defined the school library in the context of study supports available, describing it as a part of a larger network for help with study, while participant IP5(PG) spoke of surrounding or immersion of oneself in a personal world of learning.

### 4.5.3 Finding 3: Students' experiences of school library staff

The interview data showed that different participants thought of library staff and their work in contradictory ways. The emergent themes were associated with either positive or negative participant views of the school library staff. While the PG / IG participants offered more detailed opinions on the library staff, there was no substantive difference in the nature of participants' perceptions of library staff between the PG / IG and NIG groups. Several themes emerged from the data including *library staff are nice, but…* and the *library staff are not nice, but…* which are presented first. Additionally, participants provided reasons why such negative participant perceptions existed and the consequences of these perceptions on student use of school libraries.

In the theme, *the library staff are not nice, but…* participants spoke of library staff as not being pleasant or friendly to students, while at the same time attempting to justify the library staff negative behaviour with sympathetic excuses.

> …you can get the odd one [library staff member] that is a bit, …like rude and stuff like that… but telling everyone to be quiet all the time is probably a bit hard. IP7(IG)

> I'd say… they were very strict… But, overall they were great. Absolutely approachable. IP4(PG)

> …one person [library staff]... I don't think she enjoyed what she was doing. She was never smiling and it wasn't just to me, it was to everyone. I just don't think she was enjoying it. I generalize,…but maybe she was at that point where she has had enough. IP1(NIG)

> …they [library staff] were more introverted sort of personalities… [but] you could see they had a strong affinity for their work and the books and obviously they were quite protective of their resources because I guess they deal with damaged books. IP8(NIG)

> They [library staff]… there was always a bit of fear that you know… that they were quite protective of the books to an extent. [But] … one librarian, I remember she was actually quite welcoming. IP8(NIG)

In the above comments, participants provided excuses for unfriendly staff behaviour which included the difficult job of keeping the library quiet, being tired and jaded, and being protective of the resources.

The interview data also uncovered an inverted version of the previous theme i.e., *library staff are nice, but…* where participants first made a positive statement about library staff, but then contrasted that statement with a follow on, more negative comment.

…usually they are all very nice and willing to help you find what you are looking for [but] …they probably see it [the library] as a place where you are meant to be quiet all the time… IP2(IG)

…the librarians were very friendly, they would always help, [but] you would never, you know [misbehave] … they were very, very effective at making sure that if you were in the library, you were using the library for a positive purpose. IP4(PG)

[Library staff were] …very helpful, very well knowing, like they had a lot of knowledge… [but] very good in terms of their behaviour management [disciplining]. IP4(PG)

I think they are lovely people. [But] You need to ask the right questions… and they get a lot of the same, simple questions all the time, they get a little bit over it maybe. IP1(NIG)

Here the participants commented positively about library staff, but then provided negative descriptions of their conduct including implementation of rules and proper use of the library, insisting on appropriate behaviours, and being tired of repetitive questions.

The theme: *consequences of strict library staff and library rules* illustrates the impact of the library staff 'tough' approach to running the school library on library use by students.

I just didn't find them [library staff] very nice... they had some really strict rules. The way they were implemented… [as a result] I was a bit hesitant to seek help or seek advice from them. IP7(IG)

…a library can't necessary always be a place where it's got to be quiet. You gotta have people talking sometimes 'cos otherwise it doesn't work… Yeah, and if they [students] are in the library and the librarian is telling them to be quiet, it doesn't work… IP2(IG)

Like one thing I can say for the work that the librarians did – the way it was run [strict rules]… I think it did come at the expense of maybe some good quality conversations, group work, that may have occurred in that library. …sometimes I think they maybe didn't pick their battles that well. IP4(PG)

So it [the library] was quite strict, and… [as a result] I don't think I ever asked for help from them… IP3(NIG)

…the staff at the school library were… I guess all quite… book orientated and scholarly… maybe a keen sport student… probably wouldn't feel a great deal of connection with them. IP8(NIG)

In their comments the participants spoke of the unfriendly library staff and their implementation of strict rules as a barrier to students using the school library effectively, resulting in not wanting to seek help from the library staff and not being able to engage in group work. The quality of student – library staff relationship framed as a "connection" was also reported as being poor.

In the theme: *library staff age as a barrier* the participants voiced a concern that the age of the library staff played a role in how library staff interacted with students.

> …a lot of the librarians were older ladies and they didn't like me very much. I don't know… whether it's the age factor or... IP7(IG)

> …the ladies who run our library are probably in their… 60s? And there is a younger girl who, she would be… 21 I think and she has been employed by the school to do some after-hours work… And, I almost felt more welcomed when she was around, we developed quite a good relationship. I think the age thing makes a bit of a difference as well… but not a huge difference… IP7(IG)

> I generalize, but she [school library staff] was quite a bit older so she was really nearing retirement so… she had enough [of us]. IP1(NIG)

> …they're all female first up. No, not [an issue] for me. IP8(NIG)

Participant IP7(IG) commented that older female library staff did not like her, while at the same time she reported developing a good relationship with a much younger library staff member. Participant IP1(NIG) made a connection between library staff being older and nearing retirement and no longer having much patience in dealing with students. The gender of library staff was also mentioned by participant IP8(NIG), but it was not deemed an issue of concern.

TA showed school library staff – student interactions as a critical factor influencing the way that students perceived and subsequently chose to use the library. At the core of this influence was the way that library staff related to students, through behaviour modelling and expectations of positive behaviour reciprocity. The participants referred to this interaction in the context of a positive or negative 'relationship' that library staff developed with students. This relationship was perceived as vital in creating a welcoming and well-functioning school library.

The theme *library staff – student relationships* highlights the nature of these relationships using the following participant comments across all three participant groups, as tabulated for better clarity below (and continued on the following page).

| IG | PG | NIG |
|---|---|---|
| *…they* [library staff] *were lovely individuals it was just… yeah, they didn't nurture that relationship* [with students] *so… yeah.* [As a result I] *Didn't really utilise it* [the library] *to its full extent.* IP7(IG) | …the librarians knew who everyone was and we knew the librarians so that was the most important thing I think. IP4(PG)<br><br>*And, you'd always approach them and they were very lovely and… as I said, …if they weren't* | *Like the staff were really helpful there. If they couldn't find a book they could show you to a website that's about that online knowledge as well as the book knowledge. And* [they were] *just a bit supportive sometimes.* IP1(NIG) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Relationships are really important to me. And I think they lacked… they seemed like wonderful people… So it's no doubt they were nice, it's just that... I just think they* [library staff] *lacked the student connections.* IP7(IG) | *approachable, I don't think that library would've worked as well as it did.* IP4(PG) | *…you always feel more comfortable with people such as teachers and* [library] *staff you can relate to.* IP8(NIG) |
| *I think the sense of security relates to the librarians and the atmosphere that was created because of them.* IP7(IG) | *…if you go looking for help* [from library staff] *with respect and kindness they are obviously going to be different to others that come in and expect to be sort of helped straight away, almost demand…* IP5(PG) | *…well I don't really remember them* [library staff]. *Couldn't tell you their names so obviously… Yeah, they didn't make a very big impact on me. I just remember being told to get out of the library for talking.* IP3(NIG) |

Participant IP7(IG) spoke of library staff not nurturing relationships and connections with students, which resulted in underutilization of the library by students, and pointed to the library staff being responsible for the creation of a sense of security and atmosphere in the library. Participant IP4(PG) spoke of a relationship with students expressed through knowing the students and being approachable, which resulted in effective library functioning, while participant IP5(PG) spoke of the value of expressing reciprocal respect and kindness. Participant IP1(NIG) highlighted the importance of staff helpfulness and support, while participant IP8(NIG) spoke of students' ability to relate to library staff as being essential to feeling comfortable around them. An example of library staff not developing a positive relationship and making a positive impact on a participant was reported by them telling participant IP3(NIG) to get out of the library for talking.

Participant comments below provide insights into the construction and endurance of the negative school library staff – student relationships, which can start during early years of education, and once created, continue into senior years of schooling.

> I can think back to my primary years and our library wasn't the nicest, and when you're that young, and I've heard… kids [say]: I don't want to go to the library. The library ladies are scary, so… I think that with students… bad memories stick in their mind more than good memories. A hundred percent, and if they had one bad experience with the library, kids are often: Now, they don't want to have ever anything to do with that [library] again. And if they can't be shown they [the libraries] can be used in a positive way or that there is positive environment here, then they are not gonna bother. And it just goes on throughout their life I think. And no kid …little kid …like back in reception gets yelled at… it's kind of like… Oh my God! IP3(NIG)

> I hired a book… in year 12 for my English Studies assignment. And you had a two-week library deadline or something like that, and you receive an email from an automatic online system... And because it's an automatic reply I ignored all of them. I was still using the book… I received

'x' number of warnings, haven't responded and haven't returned the book… the fee for the book will be charged to my school account. I had the book, but I didn't wanna face the librarian because she scared me… I emailed her saying that I was really sorry and I'd lost it and they [should] like... just charge it… 30 bucks or something…I don't care… I've still got it on my book shelf. She was a very scary lady. I feel… I'm still a little bit intimidated by her when I see her around. …I don't really think it really helped our relationship. IP7(IG)

Some participants provided comments which spoke of negative vs. positive relationships between the library staff and students in the context of being able to differentiate among the different school library staff professional positions and responsibilities.

…you had yeah… teachers who were… librarians who were more interested in what you were doing individually… Rather than being… so focussed on rules. IP7(IG)

…and one of them [library staff] was a home room teacher so they also had that sort of you know… [connection] they were like an actual… teaching staff as well. IP4(PG)

Here the participants connected the idea of having Teacher Librarians working in the school library to being able to develop more of a connection with students in contrast to non-teacher school library staff.

### 4.5.3.1 Theme: Stereotyped school library user

When describing their school libraries, participants discussed the types of students who would be most likely found in the school library. In expressing their views, the participants engaged in the recall of experiences and observations and then made references to specific 'student types'. The nature of the stereotype was mostly characterised by negative inferences in participant comments. This negativity centred on the physical appearance of the stereotyped library users, their perceived low "social skills" (popularity with peers), low confidence levels, loneliness and pursuing less socially accepted activities. Again, PG / IG participants' views of the stereotyped library user differed from NIG participants' views as per comments below.

| PG / IG | NIG |
|---|---|
| *Thick glasses and… social outcasts… the people who wouldn't really fit into the… the year level groups.* IP7(IG) | *…you'd get students that play chess at lunch or those that were distant from their peers and not very well connected…* [those who] *use the library as a place of solace at lunch time. …more nerdier stereotypes,* |
| I think some may have some… *lower levels of social intelligence* [social skills] *I guess…* [lower levels of] *being able to blend with groups… maybe a bit awkward in situations, just because they don't seem to fit in.* IP5(PG) | *certainly the musos... seen as nerdy or as an offshoot of nerdy, more musically orientated than say your computer nerds.* IP8(NIG) |
| | *…kids who had confidence issues. They'd be the way they looked, their sexuality* [gender |

| | |
|---|---|
| | stereotypes], *obviously lacked confidence… whether it was weight issues you know, things like acne… you associate the word nerd… they are the sort of people who you sort of saw in the library, because of their lack of social ability to get it… across to the classroom* [relate to peers]. *…a lot of loners… a lot of them sort of found it difficult… actually…* [to] *involve themselves in class.* IP6(NIG) |

The above PG / IG comments referring to the *stereotyped school library user* were negative in the language used, focussing on inability to engage socially with peers. The NIG participants' comments were more detailed in their description and included the derogatory label of "nerd".

The comments below provide further evidence on the different ways and depths of understanding the participant groups had regarding the regular, stereotyped school library users.

| PG / IG | NIG |
|---|---|
| *Funnily enough, you get a good mix. …you know, they come from wide variety of backgrounds. …again it just depends on the time of the year, whether or not there is assignment to be handed up, or … just wanting to do very well… and then sometimes you'd meet people* [in the library] *that that you know wasn't regular to the library… you've never met before. You know, there wasn't one particular type of person that was a 'hard core' library user.* IP4(PG) | *…people that are more interested in books than being on computers or playing outside. I wouldn't say more academic people but just people that want to read… novels in general.* IP1(NIG) |
| *…there was, two mixes. There would be the ones that don't always achieve well at school… trying to get out of the classroom somewhere where they can… hide from their …teachers' direct view. And there is the other…* [who] *always try to improve their learning and go to that next level. …that can improve their learning, so I think the academically gifted students want to improve themselves and want to improve their learning…* IP5(PG) | *Probably the people who were more academic, it was pretty much the same group… doing their work before school even, recess, lunch time and after school. Yeah, so the academic students.* IP3(NIG) |
| | *…the more… the highly motivated students. …and those that would typically be the ones that would be getting academic awards. High achievers.* IP8(NIG) |
| *It's not just a place for…, you know book-heads or whatever… book-worms…* IP5(PG) | *…there is that sort of minority, the kids were… were loners and social awkwards I would say. They'd have a lot of their friends meeting in the library. Without having the distraction from the courtyard* [school yard] *I suppose.* IP6(NIG) |
| *There may have been 1 or 2 people from each year level, who might spend a lot of time in the library. …social outcasts… which is a bit sad.* IP7(IG) | |

The NIG participants' comments spoke to a more homogeneous, typecast student category: lonely, motivated, academic, awkward, book or computer use focussed. The PG / IG participants IP4(PG) and IP5(PG) spoke of 'knowing' the regular library user differently, as less homogeneous student types who could come from variety of backgrounds or be either a high or low academically achieving student.

The NIG participants spoke about the *stereotyped school library users* as the *other* people, distancing themselves from them and describing them using negative language. The PG / IG participants provided a different point of view.

| PG / IG | NIG |
|---|---|
| *And going into the library you could actually achieve that motivation and those* [academic] *goals.* IP5(PG) | *…like I said* [for] *the academic students…* [the library] *gives them a place to go to study, without being distracted and disrupted.* IP3(NIG) |
| *…it was common for you to go to the library at lunch and that wasn't seen as a bad thing at all, like it was done all the time. …they* [library regulars] *would you know, maybe go into the library and read if that's what they were interested in… like I didn't see it as being a major issue. …many students who'd be interested in reading the Quarterly Essay I think that's probably stereotypically very cool, or a productive use of time.* IP7(IG) | *…so that would be a stereotype… that many of them* [library regulars] *fitted into. Yes.* IP8(NIG) |
| *And wanting to do well… I used the library for those purposes.* IP4(PG) | |

Where the NIG participants used the word "them" to describe the library regulars, the PG / IG participants seemed more at ease with personally relating to the stereotyped students, commenting more positively about them, showing empathy and admitting to being similar to them.

In the context of student stereotyping, two participants also provided comments on how they perceived, described and defined who was a gifted student.

…to be considered gifted or… talented, is that student has talents in multiple areas and typically they are able to learn things much faster than their peers and with less preparation, to pick things up quickly …so, to be honest I can't think of any peers who… who would've been considered gifted by definition. I suppose that, if a student is gifted, they might not have a great deal of homework because they might be able to complete their work very quickly. So, they may not necessarily use the library at all if they don't see a need to. IP8(NIG)

106

> Someone who [is gifted] has a naturally… naturally academic mind. I think that if you are identified as gifted, maybe you will have… I think it's potentially something that can relate to all areas of study. …a student or a child that they are gifted, I feel like they are going to be more motivated. …they're more likely to… in viewing themselves that way …make full access of the resources and stuff that is given to them, so… our school library has, and from what I'm aware school libraries really do have fantastic resources.  IP7(IG)

Both participants provided convincingly accurate definitions of a gifted student. The NIG participant commented on not knowing any gifted school peers and that such students, due to their abilities, don't need to use libraries, while the IG participant considered gifted students as those who were motivated and did use library resources to a high extent.

A unique, lived perspective on 'stereotyped' perception of student giftedness was illuminated by a comment from an NIG participant who was in a position to have a rare insight into this matter. The comment came from personal experience of a female participant attending the same school as the identified gifted student commented on below (and his gifted peers), who years later became her life-partner.

> My partner… was in the… gifted, students… [program]. He was a few years above me, I didn't know him at the time. But, from me looking… as a year 8/9 student… they were a lot more interested in school… than I was at the time. Yeah, focussed. Ah! they got better resources! Yes, they had… the best teachers! That's probably one of the reasons why I didn't really like (school name de-identified). They [gifted students] go on extra camps, excursions and things like that… And I just felt that…I'm one… I like equality, I know that it's like…, you need to recognize those gifted students, 100%, but I think it can be done in a more equal way. Yeah, I wasn't friends with anyone [from the gifted program student group]. It's just a group of friends I hung around with… So, there is no social mix with… [gifted student group]. So that… at recess and lunch we're not gonna go off and find them… and the group of friends I hung around with were probably the polar opposite of the… kids in (gifted program de-identified). OK. Yeah, which isn't really a good thing... IP3(NIG)

In the above comment the NIG participant spoke of a social divide between students who were gifted and those not identified as gifted at her school, as well as commenting on the perceived inequality of the school's approach to resourcing between the two groups – which led to her dislike for the school.

## 4.6 Summary

Chapter 4 has provided detailed exploration of the purposefully selected data relevant to the research question, collected from the three phases of the study. The data were sequentially presented across each of the research phases using uncovered themes that formed the key research findings, in order to help guide the reader through the research.

Categories of giftedness were assigned to participants from the survey instrument and used to explore Phase 2 and 3 data. In the research, noteworthy differences were uncovered between the views of the PG / IG and the NIG participants, the significance of which is discussed in the following chapter. Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to reveal themes and insights for the qualitative Phases 1 and 3, as well as the qualitative part of the survey research. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed for the quantitative data in the questionnaire. The next chapter presents an in-depth discussion of the three key findings of the research.

# CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the three major findings of the research on intellectually gifted students and school libraries in South Australia, which emerged from 21 themes revealed from the analysis of the data (Table 19 below and Appendix 7). In particular, the chapter explores the meaning and significance of the findings in relation to the research question, namely:

How do intellectually gifted students (a) describe their experiences of using a secondary school library, and (b) differ from other students in the perceptions of those experiences?

In this research, there were three participant groupings (PG, IG and NIG), corresponding to the assessment of their intellectual giftedness. However, for the purpose of the Discussion chapter exploration, where applicable the gifted participants have been placed into a single group (Group 1). The explanation of the giftedness grouping strategy was discussed in detail in Chapter 3, but Table 19 below provides a reminder on the composition of the groups.

**Table 19. Giftedness grouping - participant giftedness grouping in the research.**

|  | Group 1 | | Group 2 |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Acronym | PG | IG | NIG |
| Meaning | Participants (self) Perceived as Gifted | Participants (officially) Identified as Gifted | Participants Not Identified as Gifted |

The three findings of the study, the themes which contributed to their emergence, as well as the alignment of the themes toward individual findings are provided in Table 20 below. A targeted selection of the themes as they pertained to the overall findings to "demonstrate the information richness of the cases selected" (Patton, 2002, p. 245) was undertaken to generate a sufficient range and diversity necessary to help answer the research question.

For this discussion chapter I have used a particular structure so that the significance of the findings can be best illuminated. The structure is as follows:

- Each of the three findings is discussed separately employing the themes that contributed to the emergence of the finding.

- Some themes are discussed in greater detail than others depending on theme applicability and relevance to the finding (Table 20).

- Each finding is discussed separately and in context of the individual spatial theory applied.

- A summary paragraph is provided at the end of the chapter, followed by the introduction to the following chapter.

**Table 20. Research findings organisation. Tabulated representation of research findings, as organized for the Discussion chapter.**

| Finding | Finding name | Themes: High application in the discussion chapter | Themes: Lower application in the discussion chapter | Theoretical Framework applied |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | School libraries as places of refuge | 1. School library as a safe-haven<br>2. School library as a refuge<br>6. School library as a place of library user stereotypes | 3. School library as a place of welcome<br>4. School library as a place of belonging<br>5. School library atmosphere | Soja's Thirdspace (1996) |
| 2 | School library and academic achievement | 2. School library and student grades<br>3. School library and student motivation<br>4. School library and student use of other libraries (resourcing) | 1. School library resourcing | Foucault's (1984) Heterotopia |
| 3 | Students' experiences of school library staff | 1. Library staff unfriendliness<br>2. Library staff unhelpfulness<br>3. Library staff are nice, but…<br>4. The library staff are not nice, but…<br>6. Library staff age as a barrier | 5. Consequences of strict library staff and library rules<br>7. Library staff – student relationships | Hall's Proxemics (1966) |

In this study, the research findings have been derived from the data using the theoretical work of Hall's Proxemics (1966), Foucault's Heterotopia (1967) and Soja's Thirdspace (1996).

Targeted application of a particular spatial theory to each individual finding has been used to enhance data analysis, consistency and depth. The three theoretical frameworks selected for this research combine to provide a perceived concentric, cascading effect on individual (and group) experiences of spatiality, from the somewhat physical, tangible experience of space(s) through the Proxemics effect, to the more abstract spatial impacts of Thirdspace and Heterotopia (Figure 8). This approach introduces a fresh, nuanced type of thinking to the consideration of space and uncovers the idea of human spatial responses actioned through time, due to their long term, dynamic, interactive nature, to generally static theories of spatiality.
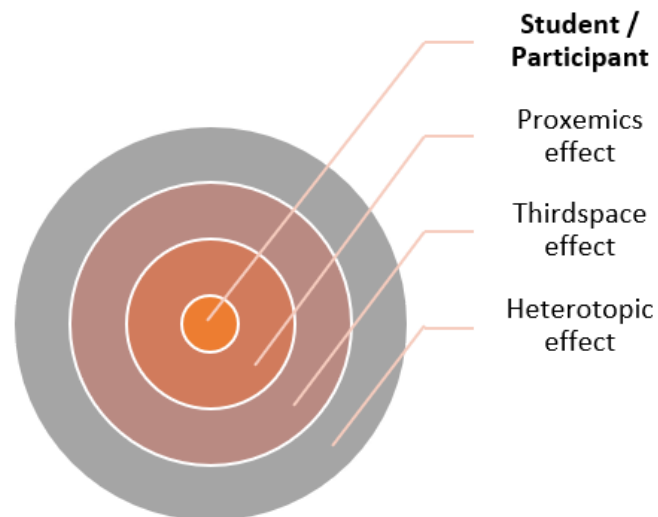


**Figure 8. Approximated underlying effect of spatial theories of Proxemics, Thirdspace and Heterotopia on students / research participants.**

While the effect of the three spatial theories of Proxemics, Thirdspace and Heterotopia on individuals (and groups) might range from close physical proximity to more conceptual influences of space, these spatial effects are unlikely to coexist in real life with well-defined adjacent boundaries. Subsequently, Figure 9 below shows graphically the likely overlaps of influence on spatial perception or experience of individuals.

Proxemics
effect

**student**

Heterotopic
effect
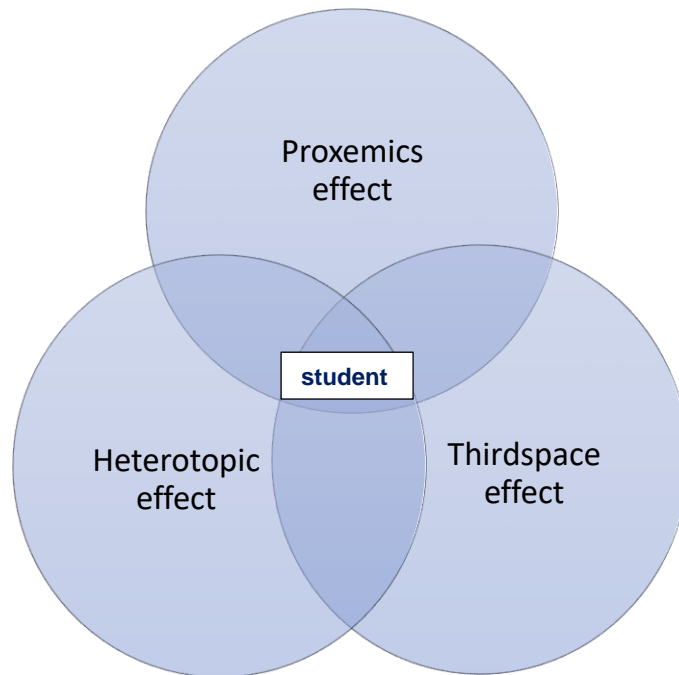
Thirdspace
effect

**Figure 9. Differentiated overlap effect of spatial theories of Proxemics, Thirdspace and Heterotopia on students / research participants.**

In the context of addressing the study's research question, three key findings that comprise the essence of this discussion are:

1. school libraries as places of refuge,

2. school library and academic achievement,

3. students' experiences of school library staff.

## 5.2 Finding 1: School libraries as places of refuge

This finding emerged as an amalgam of themes which identified the school library as:

1) a safe-haven, 2) a refuge 3) a place of welcome, 4) place of belonging, 5) a place of library user stereotypes, and 6) a place with a unique atmosphere.

This first finding is discussed in the context of Soja's Thirdspace (1996) spatial theory.

The complexities and applicability of Soja's (1996) Thirdspace theory were discussed in detail in the Literature review (Chapter 2), however a short recap of its main ideas is given here to provide context to the discussion of participants' responses. Thirdspace is a unique way of thinking about places and spaces as products of social construction. Thirdspace theory

identifies spaces as physically, rationally, historically, communally, conceptually or imaginatively defined, and spaces that are dynamic and in the state of adjustment. In other words, space has meaning and substantiveness resulting from its continually socially constructed nuances and qualities.

The 'refuge' theme was first uncovered in the Phase 1 of the study (Focus Group Discussions) and continued to re-emerge in research Phases 2 and 3. It is noteworthy, that even in the initial Phase 1 data, there was a clear, socially derived spatial construct in participants' thinking, i.e., connection to spaces and / or places and the school library. Furthermore, the participants through their responses appeared to create something of an emotive 'geographical school map of welcome and peril' connected to student population power dynamics and control of socially dominant student groups over the rest of the student population (Results chapter p. 64). For example:

> I didn't have very many friends, I used to go there [school library] purely just to escape from bullies and people fighting and things like that. FG6

> It [school library] felt like a more, safer, more welcoming place than any of the other areas, any of the other shadier [disreputable] areas of the school. FG6

The concept of a school library becoming a student refuge ties closely with the second theme of Finding 1 'School library as safe-haven', i.e.,

> [Students who are] Perhaps not so good with social skills [unpopular], for these people it [school library] is a safe haven and that's great. Why shouldn't it be? FG5

Using Soja's Thirdspace (1996) theorising and the associated Emancipatory Spatial Justice concept is very illuminating in terms of gaining deeper and more nuanced understandings of the roles and relationships school libraries had in the lives of the research informants.

Thirdspace provides a unique way of thinking about how officially identified (IG) and self-identified (PG) gifted students understand, relate to and use school libraries through the lens of socially produced space. Here, Thirdspace opens possibilities for making visible the meanings and substantiveness ascribed to the social qualities, nuances and dynamics of spaces that might otherwise remain hidden.

Typically, *school libraries* are recognized in context of ages and grades of students enrolled in a school; library size and location in relation to other buildings; the staff who work in them; the kinds of books and resources in their collections; the chosen cultural signifiers on display and the furniture and fixtures that evoke a sense of 'this is not a conventional classroom'. These conceptions are what Soja refers to as First Space, i.e., features which are "fixed mainly on the materiality of spatial forms, on things that can be empirically mapped" (1996, p. 10), which

connect with Second Space characteristics that are "thoughtful representations of human spatiality in mental and cognitive forms" (1996, p. 10).

Continuing into Soja's Thirdspace considerations, and in particular tapping into the fertility of spatiality linked with marginalisation, facilitates and challenges thinking and understandings arising from the social construction and therefore the non-immutability of school libraries. Put another way, spatiality opens up possibilities and opportunities for considering libraries in visceral, formative, provisional and open to negotiation terms; that is, the givenness, the fixedness is rendered problematic through human uniqueness, experience and agency.

Conceptually also, space foregrounds but is not constrained by location as a variable for analysing and understanding what is happening in the complex processes associated with constructing a role or purpose in different contexts. The tensions between centre and periphery, and margins and marginalisation, as they might illuminate how a school library role is constructed by an individual, are capacities of Thirdspace as a theoretical toolkit for interpreting and making meaning of what students or research participants said and thus illuminating the hidden dimensions of school libraries.

Delving deeper into the participant comments above and Soja's framework, First Space is represented by identified, real, quantifiable parts of the school and the school library, as these are the student experienced, existing, physical, planned and created spaces (e.g., *there, it, place, area*). Second Space is represented by the ideologized, perceived and imagined participants' considerations of safe versus less safe areas of the school (e.g., *safer, welcoming, shadier*), with one participant, unprompted, even calling the school library a *safe-haven*. Thirdspace is represented by the alternative, institutionally unplanned, the other, the lived, socially conceived and personally experienced school library space as an emancipatory place from friendlessness and loneliness; a *safe-haven* from bullies and violence, a liberation place of belonging and welcome, especially for the 'socially awkward' and 'unpopular'. The school library becomes the students' refuge within the larger physical, geographical, social, imagined and institutional construct of the school. The importance of safe-haven for the gifted in a school environment becomes particularly poignant and sobering in light of a participant reflection such as this:

> [I felt] gifted for the first 2 years [of high school] till bullying crashed me. (IG)

Bringing these insights together, for some participants the school library represented a welcoming place of safety and security where students could hide from bullying, drugs and violence. Other participants also saw safety or security as a significant function of the school library but the reason was the perceived lack of friendships, poor social skills or low peer

popularity of some students. Those students either experienced a metaphorical 'pull' towards, or were socially, figuratively 'pushed' into their school library for their safety or security.

While the quantitative data in Phase 2 (survey research) did not provide an outright distinction in participant perceptions of school libraries as safe-havens, the data showed that participants discerned the school library into a 'place of refuge' construct, which was made up of two separate sub-constructs: 'a place of welcome' and 'a safe-haven' (Results chapter, pp. 84-88). The school library as a place of welcome reflects a sense of a welcome and peaceful environment, the school library as safe-haven relates to a sense of security and safety of the library space. This appears logical as even though these two themes fit quantitatively into a place of refuge construct, they are independent of one another.

In the construct of a 'place of refuge', a weak gender-based trend was detected in the perception of the school library as a safe-haven ($p$=.277). Here, female students reported school libraries as a safe-haven at a slightly higher rate than did male students. The reasons for the trend cannot be fully known but may be connected to the threat of perceived male students' verbal and / or physical / sexualized aggression toward female students in the staff-unsupervised / poorly supervised and male student dominated areas of the school. Alternatively, with reported female educational success eclipsing that of male students (Delaney & Devereux, 2021), the school library could be perceived as a safe space for improving academic progress with minimised negative peer judgement. Finally, this trend could even be a result of the physical comfort (quiet, temperature-controlled environment, comfortable furniture) in the school library.

In the qualitative comment section of Phase 2 (survey research), one NIG participant referred to the school library as the place of refuge for some students.

> I did notice throughout my schooling journey that those students who did not necessarily find school a hospitable place found refuge & safety in the library. (NIG)

The hidden meaning behind the above statement can again be constructed in the context of Soja's concept of Spatial Justice. As the dominant geographical / physical school spaces are perceived as inhospitable places of potential oppression for some students, the ideologized, re-imagined school library becomes a lived, socially constructed place of emancipation for the needs of the unjustly oppressed. Here, this type of liberation and emancipation does not need to rely on the weight of social, hierarchical, cultural and historical construction or the contents of the library as an institution. It assumes there is another way, a space that is lived, independently socially constructed or re-constructed by the oppressed for the oppressed.

The qualitative data from the third phase of the study (semi-structured interviews) showed that there is a curious between group 1 and 2 (PG / IG vs NIG) contrast in perceiving the school library as a place of refuge (Results chapter, p. 92). This uncovered contrast, and multiple others in this chapter, in fact validates the overall approach toward the participant giftedness assessment applied in this study. For example, here Group 1 (IG / PG) participants explicitly used the term safe haven to describe the school library, while Group 2 (NIG) participants used the term refuge.

…the library being a safe haven was, that the library was my safe haven. IP7(IG)

…[students in the library] found refuge in… the quietness of a library. IP3(NIG)

Using different descriptors for school libraries, i.e., safe-haven versus refuge, is important to illustrate how the gifted versus non-identified as gifted participant groups differed in their perspectives and reasons for describing a school library's purpose and use. In examining many definitions and explanations of the terms refuge vs. safe-haven, while detecting some meaning overlaps, there are two major differences that are relevant to this research. Safe-havens are seen as places allocated for *minorities*, while a refuge is a designated space or part of a building used *temporarily* for *protection* in an event of a disaster or catastrophe.

Using Thirdspace, it could be argued that Group 1's (PG / IG) use of the term "my safe haven" reflects personal experience of longer term, lived oppression which many minority groups deal with and the subsequent wish for emancipation from that external oppression to experience life beyond institutionally or socially imposed boundaries (that is, inside the school library). Group 2's (NIG) use of the term refuge represents an observationally derived implicit expectation, that unpleasant things may happen to those who are not part of the dominant, mainstream student group and these students (shy, introverted library users) may need to seek *temporary protection* in a refuge space that is the school library.

The divergence between the two groups' views on the school library are present again in the data (Results chapter p. 93). The notion of the library being a place of safety and security is shown by the Group 1 comments, while Group 2 participants saw it as a consequence of being friendless and in need of physical comfort, with its potential implication of weakness for not being able to endure an outside environment tolerated by others. For example:

Once you are in the safe zone [inside the school library] you're fine! IP7(IG)

…libraries can offer a really good place for students who maybe don't have a group of friends or, don't feel like they fit in. IP3(NIG)

Where Group 1 (PG / IG) participants saw the school library as a positive place to go to, to feel safe in the space supervised by staff, where students would feel a sense of welcome and belonging, Group 2 (NIG) participants, while glad that the school library existed for the needs of the friendless, the less 'tough', shy and studious, did not seem to value the school library to the same extent.

In the context of a safe-haven, the concept of the school library functioning as a spatially constructed 'shield' against student bullying was found in the comments of both groups. However, again a critical between–groups difference was evidenced through the victim vs perpetrator, or the oppressor vs oppressed social constructions. Group 1 participants reflected on the situation from the personalized victim-based perspective while Group 2 participants did not reflect the perspective or experiences of self, instead observationally portraying the school library as a space that is off limits to 'the other', the bullies, a place for those who are uncool:

> …if you were bullied, you could go in there [into the library] IP4(PG)

> They [the bullies] would probably be the type of students who wouldn't want to go to the library. IP8(NIG)

The school library can be portrayed as a socially constructed space capable of interrupting the power and influence status quo, as a duality space of permissiveness and restraint, or permission and refusal. The experience of school library as an entry point into a feeling of safety ties in with Theme 3 of Finding 1, which deals with the concept of welcome, i.e., 'School library as a place of welcome'.

In terms of the school libraries being welcoming places, in Phase 1 of the study (focus group discussions) some participants positively connected this to the value of relationships with staff / teacher librarians and quiet, undisturbed study opportunities, while other participants did not think of libraries as welcoming places as the resourcing wasn't relevant to them and the libraries were not close enough to want to visit. This points to the concept of 'welcome' being seen here through the lenses of personal relationships, the internal usefulness of library space, and the geographical accessibility space.

Examples related to a sense of welcome in the school libraries in the survey research phase were found in the qualitative section. Again, a difference in the perception of 'welcome' was detected between the two groups.

> Overall I felt my high school library was a welcoming place that encouraged learning. (PG)

> If you were there [in the school library] outside of class, it was assumed you were "up to something". NIG

The two participant groups' views clashed in terms of seeing the school library as a welcoming place, especially in context of the purpose of the school library. While the PG participant thought of being inside the library space as a precursor for learning, the NIG participant (experientially) equated that with the opposite – a way to avoid learning. Paradoxically, both perceptions symbolize opposing spatial emancipation from the school's hegemony: 1) a welcoming space to learn and be away from others and 2) a space to avoid learning and be away from others. This speaks to the way the same spaces exist in the human minds to be re-imagined, re-shaped and re-purposed, and how a space becomes a consequence of human thought.

In the third research phase (semi-structured interviews), one PG participant referenced the school library as a place of welcome.

> It [the school library] was a really good place you could go in the school, you would always be welcome. IP4(PG)

The relevance of this response centres on the school library being a place that is "really good" and the "always", which speaks of stability, dependability and consistency of welcome perception in a spatial experience of entering a place of acceptance. However, it is the comment's spatial / geographical construction of the library, "…in the school", that provides insights to the duality of spatial perception: the disempowerment of the outside and empowerment of being inside the school library. Ideas of dependability and consistency of welcome and acceptance connect well with the concept of belonging, which features in Theme 4, i.e., School library as a place of belonging.

The school library as a place of belonging theme emerged in the context of students' social interactions (Results chapter, pp. 67, 68). For some participants, belonging was important in the context of having friendship groups inside the library, the ability to connect with / chat to staff / teacher librarians, and valuing school libraries as places where students with "social anxieties" would feel welcome to meet. Participants FG5 and FG1 spoke of the school library as a place that had social interactions at its core. The participants described the library as the building blocks of creating a 'community of belonging', emerging from an existing space and the sub-spaces within it, to serve as a scaffold for social interactions and in some cases friendships that were regular, dependable and expansive of membership. A safe space fills the void of mutual need for human interaction and acceptance that may not have come into existence in its specific form if the school library space did not exist. However, as per comments from participants FG5 and FG6 (Results chapter, pp. 67, 68), it must also be pointed out that such sense of belonging in the school library might not exist for all students. Thirdspace provides here a particularly salient context and connection between social production of space and the tension of physical / social centre vs periphery and marginalization. Existence of belonging assumes at least equal possibility of not belonging, but what matters is the permissiveness to

belong, to hostility, rejection or acceptance. Whilst socially (re)constructed library space for belonging may suit some of the marginalized, it concurrently creates new forces of marginalization for those who do not accept or delight in the new social / spatial order. The paradoxical duality of spatial emancipation and marginalization within a school library does exist and while useful to some, can unfairly impact vulnerable individuals and groups.

A sense of welcome, or for that matter un-welcome, usually is connected to the atmosphere that epitomizes a place. In this research, the concept of a library's sense of welcome is linked with Theme 5 'School library atmosphere'.

Through all phases of this study, the concept of a school library being perceived as a welcoming space appeared infrequently but in circumstances and contexts which were highly significant. In the survey research quantitative analysis, the construct 'school library atmosphere' was closely associated with 'school library as a place of welcome' (Results chapter, p. 85). This appears to be a rational association as good, positive atmosphere should coincide with a place that feels welcoming. In the qualitative data related to school library atmosphere, participants directly or indirectly assigned library atmosphere focus to various aspects: 1) a consequence of the library's spatial design, 2) the symbolic relevance of student work displayed, and 3) the events held in the school library (Results chapter, p. 66). The three understandings of the school library atmosphere could in theory coexist across space as well as time. For example, number 3) reflects *temporary* emotional experience, a consequence of an intentionally generated atmosphere of welcome toward outside guests. Numbers 1) and 2) reflect a *permanent* deliberately constructed emotional connection of feeling welcome resulting from specific spatial and physical designs, cultural signifier-based additions of student work, and the enforced quietness of the space. Participant IP7(IG) equated the school library atmosphere to another intentionally library staff-curated concept, a consequence of rule-based order implemented by library staff.

> …the sense of security relates to the librarians and the atmosphere [in the library] that was created because of them. IP7(IG)

The experience of a school library dwells between students' feeling of security, safety and the resulting atmosphere of feeling a sense of calm that comes from that. Here, the true fluidity of spatial experience is on display. The question thus arises, does space influence a sense of atmosphere or does the experience of an atmosphere make the space? The multidimensional nature of space is permissive of either, however what comes through strongly is the intentionality of manipulating space that elicits 'an' experience. This does not mean that intention alone creates desired emotional outcomes only that, yet again, 'space has consequences'. This idea extends to the final theme of Finding 1 concerning student stereotypes. In other words, do specific spaces extend a 'gravitational' pull to attract certain type

of people, or do people come to inhabit a space through choice or circumstance and make it unique? Theme 6, School library user stereotypes, attempts to provide answers to this question in the context of school libraries.

In Phase 1 of the study some participants unexpectedly attempted to describe the "typical school library user" by reversing this concept, instead providing a description of a student or group of students who were less likely to frequent a school library. In the discussion there was a consensus that this person would be likely to be into sports and staying outdoors. One participant also mentioned students who were into "drug use" and "skipping school", thus not prioritising academic achievement (Results chapter, p. 68). More 'non-user' student groups included those who used other places: technical studies workshop, or music and drama rooms.

Participant descriptions of real, regular school library users differed depending on personal perceived attachment / detachment to the student groups they described. Some participants chose to speak of these students as "the other", using language like "they", "a person in there [the library]", while also attaching a negative value judgement to the school library space as "not a popular spot" (Results chapter, p. 69). Other participants used inclusive words: "we", "me" or "I" and showed a deeper awareness of the issue by dismissing the simplistic typecast stereotype of a library user (Results chapter, p. 69). One participant provided a highly reflective, emotive, experiential 'time journey' connected to students' library use, which focussed on the friendship groups developing within the library space and how this impacted the influx of new individuals into the library which in turn improved their academic achievement (Results chapter, pp. 70-71).

While no 'library user stereotypes' survey research data was available for analysis, the interview, phase 3 of the study produced unique data. Although both Group 1 (PG, IG) and Group 2 (NIG) participants provided somewhat offensive descriptions of stereotypical library users, focussing on negative physical and social characteristics, Group 2 informants shared more detailed though superficial physical descriptions, reinforced with insulting labels like "nerds". This suggests a more detached, 'curious outsider' observation-based recollections for Group 2 participants (Results chapter, p. 104) who also saw regular school library users as a homogeneous group, though made up of individuals different to themselves. Group 1 participants shared a more insightful, nuanced view, seeing regular school library users as a less homogeneous group with individuals coming from various backgrounds, while also personally identifying with this group and showing empathy for such individuals (Results chapter, p. 105). Representative participant comments below show a contrast in the assessments.

> Probably the people [library users] who were more academic, it was pretty much the same group… IP3(NIG)

...you get a good mix. … they come from wide variety of backgrounds. …there wasn't one particular type of person that was a 'hard core' library user.  IP4(PG)

When discussing the concept of stereotypes, the Phase 3 interview participants were invited to describe their vision of a *gifted student* in order to uncover participant perceptions of giftedness connected to school library use. In response, Group 2 IP8(NIG) interview participant (Results chapter, pp. 106, 107) described a gifted student as one who already had very high natural academic ability and knowledge, and as a result did not need to use libraries. Group 1 IP7(IG) interview participant (abbreviated below / full text - Results chapter, p. 107) on the other hand thought of a gifted student as one who had a very high level of motivation and was likely to use library resources a great deal. This mirrors the classic contrast in thinking approaches between individuals with a fixed versus growth mindset, as described by Dweck (2006):

Someone who [is gifted] has a naturally… academic mind. …more motivated. …make full access of the resources and stuff that is given to them...  IP7(IG)

School library user stereotypes, although appearing superficially well defined by participants in this research, on a deeper level are less about a representation of a shallow, attached label, and more about an emancipatory stereotyped student's journey of empowerment through places, spaces and time. For students, school libraries in their predetermined spatial, historical, social, institutional and hierarchical constructions appear in their lives in the earliest years of primary schooling, continuing to exist in one form or another through to the end of senior school years. While many factors determine an individual student's developmental affinity for school library use, including the type and quality of resourcing, library space(s) and atmosphere, quality and professionalism of staff, physical comfort or student over-crowding, the most critical factor is the student's empowered choice to enter and stay, or to leave. Upon staying, the risk of getting a label associated with stereotypes of school library users from those students who are the school library 'outsiders' becomes a confronting possibility.

Applying Soja's Thirdspace (1996) Spatial Justice theory, the students' time journey across their school libraries continues through:

- First Space, physical spaces of libraries which are more or less accurate duplicates of historically and socially predetermined ideals of what a school library should look like.

- Second Space, that predetermines what those school libraries are imagined to feel like and what they are offering to students (and staff).

- But finally, it is the Thirdspace that delivers a force for empowerment of the stereotyped students in the library to create their own reality through space and time, to reshape in their imaginations and then in real life their school libraries, into what the 'outsiders' may not see and

understand. Here in the lived, socially created library Third - space, students' labels don't need to dominate. Here individuals can exist in their own empowered social realities, in mentally, physically recreated and renamed library spaces, in social groups, alone, or both. In personalised universes of interests, friendships, laughter or silence. Liberated to be away from derogatory peer labels, bullying, and empowered to aim high academically. In Thirdspace, across time and school libraries, appears the empowering opportunity to accept the identity of the stereotyped 'nerdy' high achiever to ultimately own and wear this label with pride. For many typical school library users, the stereotype labels given to them over time became an important and welcome part of their adolescent identity, closely connected to their sense of self, learning agency and high academic achievement. School libraries perform the role of a binding imagined, physical, social space where these students develop friendships, a sense of shared identity, welcome and belonging, and can thrive in their school environments. Critically, many of these individuals could be labelled as intellectually gifted students.

## 5.3 Finding 2: School libraries: academic achievement and resourcing

This finding emerged from a combination of connected themes which included: 1) School library resourcing, 2) School library and student grades, 3) School library and student motivation, and 4) School library and student use of other libraries (resourcing). This finding is discussed in the context of Foucault's (1984) Heterotopia and sociological contexts of community formation.

### 5.3.1 Establishing a theoretical context: School libraries as Heterotopic spaces

Foucault posits that in life we can experience the existence of spaces that are not what they may seem at first glance, as these are "outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality" (1984, p. 24). He states that such spaces have an infusion of 'otherness' as, although they are in society, they are also outside of society. Such spaces with qualities of otherness impact our experience of them and function in relation to cultural, social and historical contexts (Tamboukou, 2004). In this research, the 'otherness' of school library spaces is revealed as an enabler for the creation and empowerment of student sub-communities within the library's physical and social boundaries.

Foucault calls the spaces of perceived 'otherness' Heterotopias and posits six principles to determine if a space can described as Heterotopic. To demonstrate that school libraries are indeed Heterotopic spaces, a brief test based on Foucault's (1984) six principles was applied and discussed (Appendix 8).

In this research, school libraries have been revealed as places with hidden worlds within them, hidden spaces within places, with meanings hidden within meanings. School libraries have been uncovered as spaces superficially mirroring lived social reality of the outside world while, in their 'otherness', maintaining concealed, subversive struggles against repression and hierarchy.

School libraries show a contradictory dualism of purpose vs anti–purpose. For example, they are institutionally and socially constructed places of invitation, while also being spaces of forced emplacement for socially vulnerable students. They are places of temporary visitation, that for some individuals become spaces of longstanding emplacement. School libraries are heterotopic sites that are "simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault, 1984, p. 3). It is the 'otherness' of the school library that illuminates its ongoing, hidden power relations struggles, which surface from its contradictory make-up of simultaneity and heterogeneity (Tamboukou, 2004).

To illuminate the study's second finding, I argue that school libraries are Heterotopic spaces resulting from their heterotopology, or the ability to convey qualities that reveal them as hidden worlds, spaces of otherness, accessible only to some through their hidden traits, attributes and symbolisms. I assert that school libraries represent a Heterotopia of 'communal empowerment', as their concealed qualities and ways of being drive the process of community creation of the disempowered and oppressed, leading to their eventual (if contestable) liberation.

While the perceived 'otherness' quality of school libraries is at first felt on an individual level, library spaces become occupied by student groups that become mini-communities, united through the shared awareness of library space 'otherness'. The perception of 'otherness' then is enacted into real life by students within those sub-communities who become empowered through membership, community change and evolution, commonality of experience, search for shared identity and immediate and long-term goals. In other words, the heterotopic 'otherness' of school library becomes actioned through tangible, observable sub-community engagement.

### 5.3.2 School libraries as community spaces – Sociological perspective

Childers (2009) argues there can be no school without a school community and the sub communities within it. A community is a superorganic entity which transcends the sum of its parts (Kelly, 2006; Peck, 1987). It is the opposite of emptiness; it is a goal, a purpose without a clear end point, a reactionary response to emptiness, which encourages and reinforces the sense of belonging, driven by the community building process (Hampton, 2004). It is a process of semi-enforced choices, surrender of personal habitual behaviours, a journey of discovery through the longing for the perceived safe place (Hampton, 2004). Schools can be classified as communities as they are socially driven organisations made up of cooperatively (and subversively) interacting individuals and, as organisations, are characterised by a complex system of systems, sub-communities and micro-communities (Bryk & Driscoll, 1988), competing for relevance, attention, recognition and resources (Childers, 2009; Bryk & Driscoll, 1988). A community in its search for common identity is an ever-changing set of relationships, an entity paradoxically committed to diversity while expecting and reinforcing sameness (Peck, 1988). Community, while striving for social harmony, cannot be described as continually harmonious

as it is on a trajectory of a relentless response to power struggle, occasionally locked into creating conflict and division. It is also fluid, chaotic, in constant motion, divided, unstable, and incomplete (Brent, 2004; Gusfield, 1975). Understanding community is an exercise in understanding dualisms. A community is a construction of unity vs. disunity, power vs. powerlessness, individuality vs. conformity, or difference vs. sameness (Brent, 2004; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Above all else, community is not a 'thing', an entity or a concept, it is a process, it's an emergence.

In this research, the Heterotopic dualistic nature of the school library space and the contested power relations of schools reveal themselves as forces enabling the creation and shaping of student sub-communities. The emergence of the sub or micro communities within the library space is a student response to the perceived incompatible wider school community priorities and identity, and the invitational empty void of 'otherness' a school library space represents.

### 5.3.3 Discussion of Finding 2. School libraries: academic achievement and resourcing

The discussion of the second finding begins by providing a context for the potential impact of school libraries for improving academic achievement of students. To accomplish this, Theme 2 'School library and student motivation' and 3 'School library and student grades' are discussed simultaneously.

In terms of the link between students' use of school libraries and an attainment of high academic achievement, a divergence in the perceptions of participants was noted in the qualitative data. In the focus group discussions data, some participants agreed with the presence of such an academic achievement link while others did not.

In participant comments (Results chapter, p. 73), school libraries are represented as 'other spaces' where the motivation for academic achievement, better grades and a better future is a trait of the hidden symbolic, heterotopic and communal otherness, and where the library is revealed as a *spatial enabler* of success that is perceptible to some but not all. The heterotopic otherness school library experience, missed by some participants, is particularly relevant to individuals who are in a state of crisis from personal, social and community rejection.

For some participants, the school library was seen as a place for students to socialize rather than study in a "school culture that wasn't focussed on going to university (FG4)". For other participants there was a clear connection between using the school library resources, studying, and being part of a *social group* who wanted to succeed academically and ultimately did succeed. The school library was also seen as a place where academically aspiring, motivated students could find like-minded friends to study with, socialize together and achieve high academic outcomes. The outcome bonuses were social interactions leading to creation of friendships.

The invitational school library otherness, the physical and communal emptiness, a circumstance that could not be easily replicated elsewhere within the school, becomes a driver for social gathering of the disempowered – the school's 'socio-emotional refugees' who in the school library become liberated, empowered and eventually imitated by other students who initially were not part of their micro community (full comments, Results chapter, pp. 70, 73).

> …they [students in the library] didn't have a large social group, they'd go into the library and there would be a bunch of them, and by the end of year 12, I'm pretty sure one of them was the DUX. … people with similar interests. Who… actually met in the library. FG5

> And the kids that you found in the library… especially in the early years, were often the kids that were loners …originally. …So at the start it was primarily the kids who were perhaps what seemed like a lower social skill base [popularity], but… not by the end. FG5

In the survey research qualitative comment section, several participants shared their perspectives on the school library's connection to study and improved academic achievement (Results chapter, pp. 98-99). The participants' comments speak of feeling empowered to take control of their learning, to be in the school library for the right reasons – to improve academic achievement outcomes. In the participants' perceptions, the library space through its heterotopic dualistic qualities of otherness and a safe place for the non-school-normative 'deviants', becomes a space of emancipation that facilitates individual and communal self-empowerment. That process enables a state of high motivation, a communal and individual shared goal to succeed and control one's future destiny. The participants spoke of using the school library for quiet study and study with friends, as a community experience, which for some appeared to intensify during senior years of high school and the increasing pressure to achieve. This intensification represents the real connection in the minds of participants of the empowering quality of their communal, heterotopic library space to the lived experience in the outside world, where academic success will be transferred to futures yet to play out.

Semi-structured interview data showed that for both participant groups (IG / PG and NIG) the use of the school library was connected to academic success and better school grades. However, the level of agreement on just how important the school library was differed between groups. In answering the question, *if* school libraries help in improving academic achievement, the participants shared their views (Results chapter, p. 97), for e.g.:

> When used appropriately …yes. I think they definitely are. IP7(IG)

> Not really… Yeah just a tiny bit... IP1(NIG)

Where the Group 1 participants seemed sure of the connection of high academic achievement to school library use, Group 2 participants were less sure. This is likely a function of Group 1's

level of familiarity and emotional comfort resulting from knowing the library space well and what it can offer as their communal space of choice, versus Group 2's experience of occasional library use.

In response to the question of *how* school libraries help students to get better grades, different perspectives were provided by the two groups (Results chapter, pp. 97, 98). Group 1 (PG / IG) participants' views show that the *how* relates to self-efficacy or personal agency in wanting to use the school library, and how the facilities and resources need to be best used in order to attain better grades. They saw the library as a space to engage in deeper, self-driven independent thinking and learning, where their time spent in the library equated thinking on par with doing. The NIG participants' comments show that to them the library existed as part of a larger network of *learning supports* within the school, a valuable 'helping hand' in the form of resources, teachers, librarians and peers.

When asked to explain *why* some students might not believe that school libraries can help with getting better school grades, Group 1 (PG / IG) interview participants shared the following views (Results chapter, p. 98), e.g.:

> They [some students], might… not have, that knowledge [ability] to go that far. … the ability to do [it]. IP5(PG)

Group 1 participants alluded to some students not having the experience, ability or personal agency to think more deeply about knowledge and information, which required the 'thinking space' the school library could provide, and the fact that some students may not fully understand or perhaps have a superficial understanding of what the school library has to offer. One participant referred to gifted students having an ability and personal agency for finding necessary information at home and thus completing their study differently. The comment speaks of the agency of the gifted to access relevant information outside the physical confines of the school library. This poses the larger question: if not for its informational resources, what is the purpose of the school library for the gifted? The answer may indeed come from the overlap of the school library as a dualistic heterotopic space of knowledge / information and a space of sub-community creation – for safety, social engagement and communal empowerment.

In answering the same *why* question, Group 2 (NIG) participants shared more simplistic comments (Results chapter, p. 99), referring to certain students not taking into account the library staff and teachers available in the library and thinking that textbooks come from the library. These answers present a fundamentally different cognitive construction of the school library space compared to Group 1 participants. Group 2 informants did not express the experience of being socially oppressed, in need of a school library as a social, emotional and physical refuge, and a place to connect with disempowered like-minded others in need of

communal connection and support. Group 2 participants seemed to perceive the school library as yet another available geographic option, like many within the school, one that just offered support networks for learning and academic achievement.

In trying to offer a big picture analysis of 'if', 'how' and 'why' school libraries can help (or hinder) students to improve academic outcomes, it is first important to point out that this research shows that high academic achievement is not a prioritised goal for all students, not all of the time, and not to the same high academic standard. While there are some overlaps, the participants' perception of school libraries being an enabling force for higher academic achievement differed between the two groups (PG / IG vs NIG). Where Group 1 participants thought of school libraries as selectively communal places conducive to deeper thought and reflection for improving quality of work, Group 2 participants considered school libraries as yet another educational scaffold in the overall school network designed to help students with schoolwork. Where Group 1 informants seemed to prioritise study and some socialization in school libraries, Group 2 informants seemed to prioritise socializing with some study added. While Group 1 participants appeared to have a deeper, more informed understanding of what their school libraries could offer to improve academic outcomes, Group 2 participants had a more superficial understanding of what was on offer.

However, the more insightful finding outcome embedded in this part of research is that students' school academic achievement is not solely to be understood as a transient concept punctuated with obtaining school grades, but as a school library-mediated 'journey', the length of which differed for Group 1 and 2 participants. For Group 1 (PG / IG) participants it was a long, self-directed, but also uniquely communal journey experienced in and through the school library, which came with 'fringe benefits' (e.g., security, belonging, friendships, resources, adult supervision, comfort and social emancipation). Many Group 2 (NIG) participants, who had countless geographically wide school options available to them, appeared to be resistant or ambiguous to the school library potential at first and only joined in on the library use journey in its latter stages, after they missed out on much the journey itself offered earlier on. For many Group 1 participants, through choice or circumstance early in their schooling, the school library became a base, a heterotopic place of otherness within schools to experience freedom to spend non-instructional time and, through boredom or dedication, a place to study, learn and do better academically. In particular, the more intellectually and academically minded students tended to naturally gravitate toward the school library than to other school spaces. The library's quality of otherness invites with physical spaces which, in the minds of these students, evolve from being there, needed, experienced, to being re-imagined, to re-created, 'owned' and communally shared with like-minded others. These students were often socially isolated but highly motivated. They found the school library to be a welcoming safe-haven, a place of authentic belonging, where they began befriending library staff, teachers and like-peers. Over time, they

created strong friendship groups within the library with like peers, while continuing to achieve very well academically. They began to accept the identity of the stereotyped "bookish" (FG5), high achiever. They started demanding more advanced library resources. Their school library journey continued and, as these students entered senior school years, the others, the 'outsiders' or non-library users began to notice the school library benefits and the 'bookish' students' high academic achievements. They attempted to get into the friendship circle of the stereotyped school library users to improve their own academic achievement. Accepted, the 'outsiders' were included, guided, helped to gain the study skills and motivation, succeeding alongside the Group 1 participants. In addition to other school spaces, the school library also became their safe-haven and a place of belonging. Many of these friendships continued even post high school into university years (Results chapter, p. 73).

### 5.3.4 School library resource collections – an overview

The discussion of the school library resourcing part of the second finding begins with a short overview of the resourcing aspect of library functioning, followed by merging of Theme 1 (School library resourcing) and 4 (School library and student use of other libraries – resourcing) into the discussion narrative.

A school library's main function is to support teaching and learning at the school through targeted resource purchase strategy, management and delivery. The scope of a school library's resource acquisition and delivery to learners, staff and wider community is normally prioritised for the individual school's needs, which is dependent on the school type, specialization(s), and community needs. However, in the lived experience, the school library resourcing is also set against tough financial demands, library staffing pressures and competencies, school leadership views on the importance and relevance of a school library and the student end users' regard for the resources provided. While the school library becomes significant to groups of students who through circumstance or choice make it their own communal space, it is the quality of resources and professional help on offer that impacts students' ability to thrive academically and therefore, by extension, emotionally and socially. The lack of well-matched resources to academic and cognitive needs of some students can create a problematic layer to school library – student relations.

### 5.3.5 School library resourcing – discussion

In the context of the school library resourcing, the views of participants diverged considerably. This disparity was evident in the context of the quality, quantity, availability and usefulness of the resources. This difference in viewpoints was apparent from the first phase of the research where in focus group discussions the participants shared the following:

> [We]…just made the best of the resources...  FG3

By contrast, other participants shared a significantly different, highly illuminating experience (full comments - Results chapter, p. 72).

> I found that… any time I went in there [school library], there wasn't really much there that was relevant and I had to… go after school or during my study breaks across the road to the [de-identified: Tertiary Technical College] library. I found that they actually had more of a selection… a lot more relevant material… I found that a lot of it [in school library] might've been toned down for people who… might not have been able to handle the heavy literature… [not] a lot of depth. I had to apply for a separate library card… I would then go over there [Technical College library] to go and get those sort of books. [in the school library] …there was no real up and down, it was all… plain Jane. No, bells and whistles, no extra stuff. …the school library was… like playing you know, little brother to big brother. FG6

While some participants were generally happy with the resources their high school libraries provided, other participants who also reported a clear connection between using school libraries and high academic achievement provided a different point of view. These participants expressed a disappointment with the selection of the library materials available as catering predominantly to the mainstream, average ability student needs, while lamenting the lack of more sophisticated, complex and in-depth resources for students who might benefit from using them. This insight provides an unexpected viewpoint and an important lesson for school library resource managers, as the lower abilities resourcing strategy drove one participant, who saw himself as a frequent, long-term school library user, to regularly break the school rules, taking the risk to sneak out during the school day to a technical college library nearby to access higher grade resources which intellectually and academically better matched his needs. Another participant bemoaned the use of "dumbed-down" reading texts for students instead of literature that at least had a "degree… of intellectual thought" (participant FG5, Results chapter, p. 72).

This theme and finding provides a significant insight into the resource needs of high ability students for whom the library may remain an important safe place within the school yet, paradoxically, also become frustratingly ineffective in the context of resources poorly matched to their unique intellectual / cognitive needs.

The qualitative section comments of the survey research also provided contrasting views between PG and NIG participants on library resourcing (Results chapter, pp. 90, 91). While the Group 2 (NIG) participants were fine with library resourcing, the Group 1 (PG) informants wished for greater depth and complexity of resources available, referring to the quality of the school library resources as not being suitable to their needs, being learners who required more advanced resources.

In the Phase 3 interviews, participants shared their views when asked to comment on whether their school library resourcing adequately supported various needs of students at their school

(Results chapter, pp. 96 - 98). While the participants did not provide exhaustive accounts of the school library resourcing situation, there was a discernible difference between the Group 1 versus 2 participants in *what* they discussed and *how* they chose to comment on the issue (Results chapter, pp. 98, 99). The NIG participant referred to the acceptable quality of resources available for varying needs of students while the PG participant, in a similar way to the previously discussed Phase 2 (PG) participant comments, reported on poor resources not meeting their needs, along with their personal agency for academic achievement and the determination for obtaining resources elsewhere when unavailable in the school library.

As heterotopic spaces are characterised through symbolic meanings of otherness, the duality of the school library as a space being *for* and *against* knowledge, or leisure vs learning, comes across thorough contrasting Group 1 and 2 participant experiences. This heterotopic effect evokes the idea of a spatial distance paradox for the school library user, a type of 'experiential heterotopic myopia'. From afar or from the 'symbolic distance of singular reality', the school library looks and functions just like a school library. However, that is the effect of the distant spatial blurring of reality, because the closer one gets to the library and its collection, multiple equal competing truths begin to emerge. At an experiential, perhaps tactile distance, the same functional school library space appears as a well-resourced library collection to some and an utterly inadequate collection to others: a heterotopic dual reality, a two-fold proximal (close and personal) experience of space and truth mediated by place and distance.

## 5.4 Finding 3: Students' experiences of school library staff

"Virtually everything that man [sic] is and does is associated with space. Man's [sic] sense of space is a synthesis of many sensory inputs: visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, olfactory, and thermal." E.T. Hall (Hall, et al., 1968, p. 95)

The third finding emerged from reported students' interactions with school library staff and was based on the following themes: 1) library staff unfriendliness, 2) library staff unhelpfulness, 3) library staff are nice, but…, 4) the library staff are not nice, but…, 5) consequences of strict library staff and library rules, 6) library staff age as a barrier, and 7) library staff – student relationships.

### 5.4.1 Who are the library staff? Context for the research.

In order to better appreciate the specifics of this finding focussed on library employees and their interactions with students, it is useful to first gain some context connected to the varied types of

school staff members working in school libraries. While school library staff were discussed in detail in previous chapters, it is useful to re-establish some fundamental ideas.

Many schools employ a teacher librarian in charge of operational responsibilities of running a school library and its auxiliary or technical library staff, although some schools, especially primary schools, do not follow this model. In teacher librarian professional circles it is known that increasing numbers of schools in South Australia choose not to employ teacher librarians, with qualified librarians (non-teachers) instead becoming employed in this role. Some schools do not even have qualified (non-teacher) librarians running school libraries. This can have consequences for curriculum resourcing, as well as potentially impacting student wellbeing as demonstrated later in this chapter. A teacher librarian, in addition to having postgraduate librarianship qualifications, is a qualified, practising teacher who understands students and their complex needs. In this practitioner researcher's experience, it is the focus on students and an awareness of their complex needs which is critical for a deeper philosophical and pragmatic understanding of: what a school is for, what a school library is for, and to whom does the school library really belong? These are all questions that are highly relevant for this research.

Although in this study the participants revealed a limited understanding of school library staff work hierarchy, as discussed further on in this chapter, the data showed that at least some participants (Group 1, PG / IG) did understand the distinction between teacher librarians and other library staff:

> …you had teachers who were… librarians who were more interested in what you were doing individually… Rather than being… so focussed on rules. IP7(IG)

> …and one of them [library staff] was a home room teacher so they also had that sort of you know… [connection to students] they were like an actual… teaching staff as well. IP4(PG)

While this research did not set out to specifically interrogate the complexities of student – library staff interactions, the data point to an unexpectedly complex and rich finding. However, before delving into the discussion of the finding, it is important to provide some additional context connected to research participants' perceptions of who were school library staff. The data revealed that most participants had a limited understanding of the professional roles and responsibilities various school library staff members held. Generally, participants were not able to distinguish between a teacher librarian, circulation desk and book reshelving staff or library volunteers, nor be aware of any prior study or training needed for those roles. Subsequently, when participants shared their views on (school) librarians in this research, they generalized their responses by commonly referring to: 'school library staff'. For example:

> Are they [school library staff] even qualified [to work] at high school? Like… I don't mean even…, I just mean are they qualified? FG4

…if [only] they [library staff] …did spend time reading and stuff in the library rather than just being as a librarian. …[they] Scan books and basically, re-shelve them or stuff like that, you know. FG2

### 5.4.2 The theoretical basis of Proxemics

In order to uncover the deeper complexities, reasons and meanings hidden behind the often negative-in-nature interactions between school library staff and students, the theoretical work of Hall's Proxemics (1966) or the spatial zone theory, was applied to the uncovered themes.

Human behaviour is highly complex and can be dissected and understood in many ways, but the theory of Proxemics, a form of non-verbal communication and a study of how humans use space in two dimensions (*distance* and *territoriality*) to influence situational and emotional states of others, lends itself well to this research. Hall (1966) posits that the region surrounding a person forms a space which they regard as being psychologically theirs, and they feel anxiety, anger or discomfort when this personal space is infringed upon. This personal space is carried to wherever the person chooses to go (Richmond, McCroskey & Hickson, 2008, p. 130). The *distance* aspect of Hall's theory deals with four proximity zones used by humans as expressions of non-verbal communication, with the first three being relevant to this research. These are: intimate distance (six to eighteen inches); personal distance (one and a half to two and a half feet); and social distance (four to seven feet) (Hall, 1966). The fourth, public distance (twelve to twenty-five feet), was less applicable here and excluded from analysis and theorizing. These proximity 'distances' mediate the level of potential threat to an individual and influence one's reaction toward those who infiltrate those distances. For example, Hall states (1966, p. 117) that when someone's *personal distance* is encroached on by another individual, "the head is enlarged in size and its features are distorted" – a close encounter that could make the interpersonal interaction confronting and uncomfortable, in turn forcing a potential counter reaction.

Hall's proximity measures in the *distance* aspect of Proxemics were based on research on human behaviour in the USA so the provided proximity lengths are simply an approximation and these can vary depending on geographical location, climates, cultural backgrounds, age and gender (Sorokowska, et al., 2017). For example, women and the elderly showed a preference for larger distances in social proximity to others; most young people have a fully developed sense of personal space by the time they are 12 years of age (Aiello & Aiello, 1974; Sorokowska, et al., 2017): and children younger than 12 were reported to prefer larger proximity spaces than adults (Iachini, et al., 2016). Personal space preference is also highly variable due to individual or personal spatial proximity preferences (Sorokowska, et al., 2017). Of note is the variability in individual's spatial behaviour within cultures: consider, for example, high population densities like Hong Kong versus lower population densities like Adelaide, South Australia.

Sorokowska, et al. (2017) found that cultures characterised by high population densities (e.g., Middle Eastern) are more accustomed to close proximity human interactions, whereas in the case of South Australia that would likely translate to preference for extended person to person distances.

Hall's (1966) work on Proxemics captures social interactions based on use of horizontal spaces, however a separate consideration might be needed for impacts of occupying vertical spaces in the context of spatial zone theory. While no credible studies could be found on this phenomenon in the context of conventional Proxemics research, a number of online sources did inquire if "vertical distance between communicators may indicate the dominance and subordinacy within an interaction" (Nonverbal Communication for Educators n.d.), i.e., if looking up or looking down on another person, in addition to horizontal space proximity, can also have an effect on power relations? This question may be relevant to this research as high school library staff, who are predominantly female and older, regularly interact with students who are in their late teens and are usually taller than library staff.

In addition to Hall's (1966) *distance* theory, the *territorial* aspect of Proxemics refers to the way humans use spaces to mark their ownership of areas and possessions, with three types of territories being described: primary, secondary and public. Of the three, the secondary territory is a concept relevant to this research as it considers spaces in contexts of perceived ownership that don't belong to but are associated with a person (like a classroom or a school library). Primary territory refers to a person's house and property, and public territory spaces can be streets, parks, or other public spaces. Finally, aspects of Hall's (1966) Proxemics theory focussing on the use of (selected) biometric concepts were applied in this research to help categorise, explore and explain various ways people choose to make connections in school library spaces. Of particular interest are the visual code (extent of eye contact between individuals), olfactory code (use and detection of odour between individuals) and voice loudness (vocal strength used in speech communication).

### 5.4.3 Discussion of Finding 3

The overarching idea related to this finding is that some school library staff through their interactions with students have created a perception of not caring about them, their needs and wellbeing. However, it is plausible to assert that those interactions were likely a consequence of self-protection and self-preservation mechanisms that the library staff were unaware of adopting. While the consequences of the perceived negative library staff conduct can have significant and long-lasting effects on students, as shown in this study, the aim of this discussion is not to assign blame or make excuses but to reveal findings, illuminate consequences of those findings, and find ways to improve the situation in the context of refining policy and practice.

The discussion of the third finding (Students' experiences of school library staff) commences by combining Theme 1 (Library staff unfriendliness) and 2 (Library staff unhelpfulness) into the discussion narrative.

Even though a concept of feeling welcome in the school library was uncovered as a theme in this research, relatively minimal indication of this theme was found in the data. The reason for this might not be that surprising, as a sense of welcome is usually intentionally created by the management and staff of various institutions in context of creating positive relationships with visitors or guests. In context of this study this would translate to school leadership and then librarians and auxiliary library staff interacting with / relating to patrons (or students). Therefore, the fact that limited data were collected on school libraries being welcoming places is of relevance alone, but more to the point, it might be a consequence of the school library staff not behaving in a positive manner toward students and, as a result, not being perceived by the study participants in a positive way.

To illustrate this, in the themes *library staff unfriendliness* and *library staff unhelpfulness*, the school library team received mostly negative responses from participants in relation to their attitudes, helpfulness, professionalism and approachability. For example:

> …librarians [library staff] were rude and discouraging. FG4

> I was a little intimidated by the library staff, as they often seemed unhappy and unwilling to help. FG1

> …some [library staff] were rather consistently tetchy. FG5

> The [library] staff scared me and were not very accessible to students. FG2

While as a long serving teacher librarian, this researcher knows from experience how complex and challenging the work of running a busy school library full of teenagers can be, student perceptions like these still remain confronting - though perhaps unsurprising. Drawing directly on my personal practitioner researcher's observations and experience, over the years I have noticed that when non-teacher library staff are asked for help or assistance by students, they often appear anxious, stressed and show signs of physically recoiling from the student(s). Additionally, because school libraries are less spatially regimented compared to for example classrooms, students are free to wander, congregate, socialize, move furnishings, physically access various resources and feel a greater freedom for interactive human experiences.

The above participants' comments illuminate the idea that school library staff, through their behaviour, skew the power relations balance in their favour as they may feel threatened by students in many ways. This conduct is particularly challenging in the context of Finding 1 of this

research, where students, especially those who are gifted and potentially more emotionally vulnerable, see the school library as a place of refuge, belonging or as their safe-haven.

Using the lens of Proxemics, for a non-teacher school library staff member who already may feel undervalued, vulnerable and threatened because of a school's professional hierarchy, a potential lack of training in child psychology and development, and behaviour management training gaps, dealing with high student density and noise or fear of looking incompetent is a heavy burden to carry. Then, having students come up close to her (or him), into the zone of personal or even intimate distance, asking for help or for conversation may trigger a reaction similar to a self-protection response. Such encounters represent an infringement on the adult's space as students are rarely conscious of respecting personal spaces and commonly come in pairs or groups to talk to library staff members. This can be perceived as hostile behaviour and result in a library staff member's discomfort and / or anxiety. Furthermore, based on my practitioner's personal observation and experience, such close quarters interactions are often compounded by the fact that many school libraries are in smaller spaces that receive large student crowds during busy periods (recess, lunch time), forcing even closer distance student – staff interactions.

Adding to the mix Hall's (1966) biometric aspects of Proxemics theory, such as the visual code characterised by potential intense eye contact(s), the olfactory code (body odour(s) or strong deodorant spray) and high voice loudness (or cumulative loudness of more than one voice), the library staff – student encounter can have a negative impact on the adult, especially if it gets repeated continually with many different students. Then adding the fact that most library staff are older females ('vertically' shorter than many high school students) who according to research prefer even larger zones of personal space, the cumulative effect can trigger a negative response toward students by the staff member. This may manifest itself in a clear, visible, and intentionally publicly transmitted negative retort and interaction with a student(s) in order to provide a public cue to others, designed to show that asking questions will bring on negative consequences. In essence, the library staff member creates a highly problematic communication and interaction barrier to protect her / him self from future unwelcome student contact. As a result, student perceptions of school library staff become negative and are reflected in insightful participant comments such as these:

> We had this one librarian [library staff] who was for the lack of a better word, a bitch. If she wasn't there it would have been better. (IG)

> …one person [library staff]... I don't think she enjoyed what she was doing. She was never smiling and it wasn't just to me, it was to everyone. IP1(NIG)

Hall's (1966) territorial aspect of Proxemics theory can provide a parallel or complementary explanation to the confrontational nature detected in the conduct of school library staff – student interactions. When looking at school libraries through the prism of Proxemics' secondary territory concept, where the school library perceived ownership is associated with a person like a library employee, the territoriality of this aspect of Proxemics theory would also translate into a skewed power relations perception between library staff and students, again favouring library staff through assertion of their dominance. Here, Proxemics frames the library space as a 'territory' where library staff mark their (perceived) ownership of artefacts and spaces through their imagined and then actioned physical arrangements. Student manipulation of these artefacts and spaces interferes with this predetermined, imposed order and threatens their idea of ownership. This translates into further stress and anxiety for library staff and eventuates in poor behavioural conduct toward the offenders – the students.

The concept of territoriality may also be closely associated with library staff feeling the pressure of responsibility for the integrity of the library space, the resources within that space, and the safety of the individuals in the library space. In a broader sense, from the perspective of the school library staff, the students are encroaching not only into their personal space but also their professional space.

School library staff members' confused sense of duty impacting on their behaviours, in the eyes of participants, translate into certain behaviour rationalizations, which are discussed here by employing Theme 3 (Library staff are nice, but…) and 4 (Library staff are not nice, but…).

The concept of broadly understood territorial responsibility of the school library staff was highlighted by the participants in the two themes: *library staff are not nice, but…* and *the library staff are nice, but…* (Results chapter, pp. 76, 100 - 102). Here the participants, though unhappy with the nature of school library staff interactions with students, showed a level of empathy, excusing and justifying some of the staff behaviours due to the pressures and responsibilities of their job.

In this context, by applying the territorial aspect of Proxemics theory, a fundamental question arises: to whom does the school library belong? As a practitioner teacher librarian, it is a difficult question I had to face personally on a number of occasions with the library staff. The answer is something of a paradox as it is complex and yet deceptively simple. The answer pivots between the concepts of spatial responsibility and spatial belonging. In the context of spatial responsibility, the school library belongs to institutions and leadership hierarchies, though certainly not directly to the school library staff as some of them may imagine it does. In terms of spatial belonging, the school library belongs to the people at the centre of the service delivery, the patrons, i.e., above all else the students but also the whole school community. Based on

this finding, if the existing student – library staff power relations reported in this research mirror those of majority of South Australian school libraries, this rather serious issue must be addressed as a matter of priority for more effective student use of libraries and potentially an improvement in their wellbeing.

Despite the reported negativity of the library staff conduct impacting on the school library as a welcoming place, what is surprising is the lack of detection in the data of strong ownership expressed through the personal / group agency of student voice in the 'welcome' theme, especially as students often themselves create and infuse a welcoming atmosphere into sections of school libraries they permanently stake as their own and persistently use. The lack of clear participant voice statements in the library welcome theme could be a consequence of the overpowering library staff negative attitudes and behaviours creating an uninviting atmosphere or may be a result of a narrowed understanding of who is responsible for creating a welcoming atmosphere in a school library space in the eyes of research participants (Results chapter, p. 94). The school library staff creating personal barriers to interacting with students was directly acknowledged in participants' comments, some of whom also recognized it as a successful form of self-protection strategy:

> I can see it being a very obvious barrier. … if they're [library staff] perpetually upset, they [students] are not going to be inclined to wanna ask them for help. …cos' you don't wanna get barked at.  FG5

> …yeah, [being] a bit more approachable… would help. …but I think in a way that was their way of protecting themselves… all I know is that I never asked them for anything. FG6

While some library staff were reported as being friendly, approachable and knowledgeable (Results chapter, p. 101), more participants reported negative interactions with library staff. In the context of this research and the thesis word length limitations, it would be redundant to discuss participants' positive library staff experiences and perceptions (which are a professional expectation) other than to acknowledge that these do exist in the data and that some library staff found ways to positively deal with student–staff close proximity interactions that were confronting to others. This creates hope that perhaps once provided with a level of awareness and practical strategies emerging from this research, other library staff can follow suit.

The participants reported that, regrettably, some of the negative student – library staff interactions started very early in the students' schooling years and had a long-lasting impact, in some cases reaching all the way into senior school. For example, in the following abridged comments (full version, Results chapter p. 103) the participants said:

> I can think back to my primary years and our library wasn't the nicest, and when you're that young, and I've heard… kids [say]: I don't want to go to the library. The library ladies are scary,

so… I think that with students… bad memories stick in their mind more than good memories. A hundred percent, and if they had one bad experience with the library… Now, they don't want to have ever anything to do with that [the library] again. And no kid …little kid …like back in reception gets yelled at… it's kind of like… Oh my God! IP3(NIG)

I hired a book… in year 12 for my English Studies assignment. And you had a two-week library deadline... I was still using the book… I received 'x' number of warnings... I had the book, but I didn't wanna face the librarian because she scared me… I emailed her saying that I was really sorry and I'd lost it… I've still got it on my bookshelf. She was a very scary lady. I feel… I'm still a little bit intimidated by her when I see her around. IP7(IG)

The approach of projecting negativity and annoyance toward students by library staff for self-protection, intentional or not, appears to be a powerful and successful 'survival strategy'. Sommer (1967) refers to dehumanization as a technique used for dealing with violations of personal space, where the intruder is imagined or considered as inanimate, which may allow for easier denigration of the offending party. Based on participant feedback in this research, it is a method that appears to be employed in South Australian school libraries:

…you can get the odd one [library staff member] that is a bit, …like rude and stuff like that… IP7(IG)

### 5.4.5 Group 1 vs 2 participants' perceptions of school library staff – student interactions

Through the research phases, limited difference was detected in terms of Group 1 participants' (PG, IG) and Group 2 participants' (NIG) recollections of the often negative student – school library staff interactions. What emerged however was that most students wanted a genuine, positive interpersonal connection with library staff. The interview data in particular showed that to the participants the idea of having a relationship or connection between students and school library staff was very important. This yearning for a connection featured more prominently in the Group 1 (PG, IG) comments (Results chapter, p. 103).

Both Group 1 and 2 participants expressed a desire for positive library staff – student relationships. The detected difference between groups was related to Group 1 (PG / IG) participants who on the whole offered more detailed descriptions and opinions in their comments, which might be related to greater observational ability and enhanced literary output applied to commentary. Participants' desire for better student – library staff connections is also evidenced in the previously discussed theme of *library staff are not nice, but…,* where students who craved such positive relationships were even prepared to excuse certain negative staff behaviours by describing the behaviour(s) followed by the *but…* and a positive justification.

Participants reported several potential barriers to better interactions or relationships with school library staff, one of which is discussed here using Theme 6 (Library staff age as a barrier). One Group 1 participant contrasted the older female staff – student interaction with a much more positive interaction with new, younger library staff, while another participant made a statement on older library staff with more advanced age being a barrier (Results chapter, p. 102). In the context of Proxemics and the effect of space on human behaviour, theorizing about the older age of school library staff being a barrier for interactions and development of a connection with students, the following might be considered. As older female school library staff require larger intimate and personal spatial zones (Aiello, 1974; Sorokowska, et al., 2017) compared to the younger library employee, it stands to reason that the ability to accept closer spatial proximity to student(s) may play a role in inviting and enabling a more authentic connection and relationship. The closer proximity 'invitation' part of the spatial behaviour is highly relevant as Proxemics deals with the non-verbal communication system expressed through spatial zones of acceptance and rejection. In turn, increased communication can add to a feeling of identification with another person, and then more positive attribution about that person (O'Leary et al., 2008), as expressed by the participant about the younger library staff member (Results chapter, p. 102).

## 5.5 Summary

The Discussion Chapter has provided meaning and explanation for the findings of this study. Application of the theoretical works of Hall's Proxemics (1966), Foucault's Heterotopia (1967) and Soja's Thirdspace (1996) to the research data enabled the emergence of deeper insights to the revealed knowledge, concepts and phenomena. Assessment of school libraries as places and spaces in context of space as well as time has provided a unique approach to interpreting student perceptions and experiences. The application of three separate spatial theories allowed a differentiated approach to understanding lived library spaces from the proximal and immediate to highly theoretical and abstract, while the overlaps between theoretical approaches were also acknowledged.

Although the study's focus on intellectual giftedness reveals forms of liberation and emancipation of the schools' 'spatial refugee' students, the role of school libraries' resourcing on academic achievement and the contested space of student – library staff interactions highlight additional layers of understanding for vulnerable individuals and groups. However, an equally important contribution to knowledge stemming from this study lies not in what was said, analysed, understood and communicated outright, but in the three 'silences' present within this research, which also need to be considered at depth.

First, while it is highly appropriate to discuss and frame the existing critical role of the school library as a safe-haven for gifted students and others with particular vulnerabilities, the

'unspoken' reality is that school libraries and their significance continue to be devalued at national tiers of educational systems, or even at school levels. In the absence of an Australian equivalent data set, for example according to a 2018 report from the National Center for Education Statistics (USA) (McFarland, at al., 2018) only 44% of public schools had a full-time certified librarian on staff. As school libraries continue to fade away, or at best become a spatial 'add on' in school corridors or open halls, the concept of school libraries operating as viable forms of spatial refuge for students will likely be under ever increasing threat.

The second 'silence' in this research relates to the data-driven singularly defined understanding of student vulnerability and the resulting need for the school library to become a student refuge or a safe-haven. While this study's focus was on vulnerable gifted / highly intellectually able students and their response through social construction of the school library spaces, the data were silent on other, non-represented vulnerable students who may for example be non-neurotypical, twice-exceptional, physically or intellectually disabled / differently-abled, from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious groups or LGBTQI+. Though not targeted and subsequently revealed in this research, it is highly probable that the school library has a specific refuge role to play for at least some of these student groups as well.

The third 'silence' in this research centres on a more global issue of student inclusion strategies and practices in education. Ideally, all schools should be environments where students, especially those considered vulnerable, do not need a library refuge or safe-haven because the entire school geography is deemed safe for all. School libraries should not need to become forcibly inhabited places of student freedom and emancipation, but just exist as well-functioning libraries.

Chapter 6, i.e. Some implications for educational policy formation and practice, will discuss the real-world implications of the study findings for policy design and recommendations for practice.

# CHAPTER 6. SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL POLICY FORMATION AND PRACTICE

This chapter provides a reframing of the three research findings in context of their implications for educational policy design and recommendations for practice. Considerations of the findings also take into account the study's limitations which are briefly recounted in this chapter. The spatial theoretical tools used in data analysis point to the influence of educational space construction and understandings on socio-relational and academic success experiences of students. Looking at school libraries as particular places and spaces provides a unique insight into what happens for gifted and not identified as gifted students within the libraries' physical and social confines and, to a lesser extent, the wider geographies of schools. The global message of the study signals concerns about the systemic design of the schooling experience in terms of inclusivity for students who are gifted, highly intellectually able or vulnerable, as well as the nature of student-staff social interactions within school libraries.

Before providing recommendations arising from this research, it is important to briefly re-state the potential limitations of this study. These included: the geographical location of the research and the specific South Australian context, the retrospective, pioneering and exploratory nature of the research area, limited participant numbers and targeted sampling of university students, and finally the constraints of the EdD research timelines and the dissertation length requirements.

The three recommendations are offered for each of the three levels of educational operational governance and practice, i.e.:

| 1. Macro level | Educational system (e.g., Government, Catholic, Independent School Systems) |
|---|---|
| 2. Intermediate level | Individual schools |
| 3. Micro level | Individual school library |

Additionally, the study findings highlight strategic opportunities for further research for universities and other tertiary educational institutions.

Following the research goals, aspirations and objectives, three main recommendations arise from the study outcomes.

**Recommendation 1.** School libraries should be recognised, valued and supported in their role as safe-havens for gifted, vulnerable and excluded students.

This research has found that many students who struggle with normative student social interactions are often rejected, excluded and ridiculed by other students, and this becomes a further source of their stress and anxiety. These students, many of whom can be labelled as intellectually gifted, are vulnerable to the negative consequences of interactions with others and need a safe place to escape from these sources of anxiety. For many such vulnerable students the school library becomes their place of safety, their refuge or a safe-haven.

School libraries should recognize, understand and accept their role within schools as places of refuge or safe-havens for students who do not fit the social norms of the student community, have socio-emotional vulnerabilities or / and are highly intellectually able or gifted. The hidden social exclusion of certain students or student groups from the mainstream school community needs to be addressed on the macro, intermediate and micro levels.

At the macro or educational systems level (e.g., Government, Catholic, Independent School Systems), policy development or adjustment should reflect this additional role and responsibility of school libraries that is beyond their traditional educational practice. This supplementary function should be institutionally recognised and appropriately supported in terms of professional development for staff, extra financial support and suitable school library staffing strategies.

Furthermore, tertiary undergraduate and postgraduate teacher training and library information studies courses should consider including course material highlighting the role of school libraries as safe-havens for certain student groups, providing awareness of that fact for current and future school teachers and librarians. The context of spatial and geographical understanding of schools, and the influence of spaces and places within school campuses on student power relations and exclusion, should also be considered as part of the course work to provide a deeper socio-relational student community perspective and insights into the role school libraries play in this context.

At the intermediate (individual school) level, stakeholders including school leadership and management teams, school board, teacher, student and parent community representatives should be made aware of role the school library plays as a safe-haven for certain individual students and student groups. Then, they should be encouraged to provide input / advice / strategies aimed at improving the functioning of the school library in the context of the needs of their specific school and its community, to provide best possible outcomes for students. A periodic review aimed at auditing, re-evaluating, and providing even better focussed follow up strategies should be implemented at school-appropriate time intervals.

At the micro (individual school library) level, the library staff should be made aware of the role a school library plays as a safe-haven for students who do not fit the social norms of the wider

student community, exhibit socio-emotional vulnerabilities or / and are highly intellectually able or gifted. School library staff (as well as student and adult volunteers), in addition to becoming aware of the issue, should consider co-creating their library-focussed strategies and engage in implementing practical approaches to support such students and their needs. Where applicable, the concept of the school library as a safe-haven should be included in the school library's Mission and Values Statement, Staff Conduct and Policy documents and provide prescriptive, pragmatic 'doing' guidelines or advice rather than general statements of intent. At school library staff meetings, the school library as safe-haven concept should become a permanent agenda item, to discuss pragmatic issues related to its successful implementation. Additionally, strategies from the (intermediate level) school wide periodic review should be made available to school library staff for discussion, evaluation, recommendation and practical implementation.

**Recommendation 2.** Schools should be made aware of the role school libraries play in improving student academic achievement.

In this research the connection between student academic achievement and the school library was found to be a function of the use of the school library space(s) and the quality of resourcing on offer. The latter was found to have an impact on student motivation for attainment of higher school grades, which in the secondary school context translated to various levels of academic achievement. This study revealed that in the context of a school library, for some students the concept of academic achievement was not about school time being occasionally punctuated by getting grades but an academic achievement journey mediated through the use of the school library.

At the macro (educational system level), school libraries should be recognized as 'spatial enablers of high academic achievement', as the spatiality and resourcing of school libraries impact student academic achievement. Appropriate system wide planning and policy development or adjustment should take this finding into account as it can impact short and long term development, operational strategies and outcomes of schools. Relevant changes to aspects of educational practices should also be replicated in the overarching systemic policy documents.

Physical positioning of school libraries within the wider geographies of schools should be carefully considered, as centrality of school library placement within campuses can lead to greater school library patronage, which in turn can lead to improved academic outcomes for students. The recent observed push in Education to reduce the relevance of school libraries and their work within schools should be reconsidered across educational sectors in light of this study's findings.

In terms of the tertiary education sector, this new knowledge on school libraries should be considered as an addition into course materials for under- and post-graduate courses preparing future librarians and teacher librarians for service, and into coursework for future teachers. Finally, there may be a potential for knowledge transferability into other educational sectors and institutions (e.g., tertiary technical colleges and universities), which could consider the level of adaptability of this finding on school libraries to their organizations or engage in research to test the relevance of the finding in their specific domains.

At the intermediate (individual school) level, stakeholders including school leadership and management teams, school board, teachers', students' and parents' representatives should be made aware of role of the school library as an enabler of student academic achievement. The stakeholder groups should be afforded an opportunity to provide feedback based on their unique perspectives on how the school library could be further supported to advance student academic achievement even more.

Furthermore, this research revealed that a school's overall culture of valuing academic achievement dictates how effectively a school library can function as an enabler of higher student academic success. Therefore, schools should consider creating (or upholding) a school-wide culture of high academic success, which by proxy would positively impact the library, or at the very least should directly support school libraries with greater educational autonomy to become a school space that values high academic achievement in school environments that might be less inclined to do so.

Schools should be made aware that school libraries, as enablers of academic achievement, have an impact not only on student groups but also on individual students, as enablers of personal empowerment and agency for control of their own learning and as enablers of future destinies.

School libraries can improve student achievement to greater levels when their potential is better understood and promoted to students by the whole school community. Therefore, schools and wider school communities should take measures to better understand what school libraries can offer students and subsequently positively promote school libraries to the whole school community.

Schools should support school libraries in creating a more complex, layered approach to resourcing which will suitably reflect the cognitive, intellectual and academic interests of different student groups and improve the student patronage of school libraries. Schools should aim to provide easily accessible materials on what school libraries offer as this will also provide some students with an alternative place of use, instead of frequenting school spaces that place less value on academic achievement.

At the micro (individual school library) level, the library staff should not solely rely on the school to promote to students what the library has to offer. School library staff should engage at every opportunity (in formal and informal ways) in the promotion of its facilities, spaces, resources or the professional competencies of individual library staff members to create an understanding among students of its power as an enabler of higher academic achievement.

School libraries should recognize different student needs and subsequently provide spaces, facilities and a level of student autonomy to 'inhabit' library spaces for quiet study, reading, reflection and low noise groupwork, or for quiet socializing and limited capacity study.

School libraries also should provide an opportunity for students, especially at senior high school year levels, to have to autonomy to create and 'own' spaces where like-minded students can build a community of learners, which will empower them to achieve better academically.

**Recommendation 3.** Schools should carefully manage school library staffing approaches to prioritise positive school library staff – student interactions.

This research shows that the nature of school library staff – student interactions are often problematic and should be addressed as a matter of priority for the benefit of all parties involved. The negative nature of said interactions has the capacity to diminish much of the work school libraries do to attract, retain and help students, especially those who may be considered vulnerable. The research showed that not all library staff members behave negatively toward students in the same library environments, which means that certain negative behaviours could be modified or changed with in-service, support, training in areas such as an understanding of Proxemics and the effect of space on human behaviour, and positive behaviour modelling by teacher librarians or other professionals. Encouragingly, the research shows that students do want positive interactions with school library staff, and through showing empathy and understanding are even willing to excuse some negative behaviours. There may also be a potential for knowledge transferability of this finding into other libraries (e.g., tertiary technical colleges, public library networks and universities), which should consider the potential relevance of this concern.

The implications and recommendations stemming from the findings should again be addressed on the macro, intermediate and micro levels.

At the macro (educational system) level, school authorities should be made aware of the problematic issue of school library staff – student interactions. It would be advisable to illuminate the existence of this issue as a problem that can be fixed, in order to avoid a stop-gap reaction that would negatively impact some school libraries that may already be under existential threat.

At the tertiary educational level, undergraduate and postgraduate Library and Information Studies courses should consider inclusion of material raising this issue plus theoretical and practical solutions for future librarians and teacher librarians.

At the intermediate (individual school) level, stakeholders, including school leadership and management teams should ensure that school libraries are run by teacher librarians who have the training, experience and understanding of students and empathy for their needs, and who can model positive student–staff interaction behaviours to the other library staff. Schools should become more aware of the potential issues of school library staff – student negative interactions and apply a more considered methodology to their library staff hiring approaches.

At the micro (individual school library) level, all existing (and future) library staff should be provided with professional development, advice and support on how to avoid negative library staff – student interactions and the theoretical spatially embedded reasons for certain human response behaviours. School library specific mission and vision statement should include a code of conduct paragraph on expected professional, positive interactions with students by library staff. It might be beneficial to publicly display critical fragments of the positive interaction expectations in places of high visibility within the library space as a constant reminder to all concerned. Teacher librarians / library managers should be encouraged to lead in modelling positive student – library staff interactions and behaviours.

All school library staff should be given opportunities to provide input into the design or re-design of library spaces for student use, to decrease the possibility of over-personalizing library space 'ownership' and highlight the concept of communal library space 'ownership'.

# REFERENCES

Adams, R., & Wu, M. (2003). *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) PISA 2000 Technical Report*. OECD Publishing.

Adams-Byers, J., Whitsell, S. S., & Moon, S. M. (2004). Gifted students' perceptions of the academic and social/emotional effects of homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping. *Gifted child quarterly*, *48*(1), 7-20.

Adkins, D., & Brendler, B. M. (2015). Libraries and reading motivation: A review of the Programme for International Student Assessment reading results. *IFLA journal*, *41*(2), 129-139.

Aiello, J. R., & De Carlo Aiello, T. (1974). The development of personal space: Proxemic behavior of children 6 through 16. *Human ecology*, *2*, 177-189.

Allen, K. A., Kern, M. L., Rozek, C. S., McInerney, D. M., & Slavich, G. M. (2021). Belonging: A review of conceptual issues, an integrative framework, and directions for future research. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, *73*(1), 87-102.

Alodat, A., Abu, G., Moawyah, M., & Al-Hamouri, F. A. (2020). Perfectionism and academic self-handicapped among gifted students: An explanatory mode. *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, *9*(2), 195–222.

Antonsich, M. (2010). Searching for belonging–an analytical framework. *Geography compass*, *4*(6), 644-659.

Australia. Parliament. House of Representatives. Standing Committee on Education and Employment. (2011). School libraries and teacher librarians in 21st century Australia. *House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Education and Employment, Commonwealth of Australia.,* 2011, 15–16.

Babbie, E. (1995). *The practice of social research* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA.

Bailey, C. L. (2011). An examination of the relationships between ego development, Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration, and the behavioral characteristics of gifted adolescents. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *55*(3), 208-222.

Bain, S. K., & Bell, S. M. (2004). Social self-concept, social attributions, and peer relationships in fourth, fifth, and sixth graders who are gifted compared to high achievers. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *48*(3), 167-178.

Bandura, A. (1978). Reflections on self-efficacy. *Advances in behaviour research and therapy*, *1*(4), 237-269.

Barrett, L. (2010). Effective school libraries: Evidence of impact on student achievement. *The School Librarian*, *58*(3), 136.

Barry, G. (2021). Overexcitabilities and Openness to Experience Are Not the Same: A Critique of a Study and Reflections on Theory, Ethics, and Truth. *Roeper Review, 43:2*, 128-138, DOI: 10.1080/02783193.2021.1881852

Betts, G. T., & Neihart, M. (2010). Revised profiles of the gifted and talented. Retrieved from [Revised profiles of the Gifted and Talented - Neihart and Betts.pdf](Revised profiles of the Gifted and Talented - Neihart and Betts.pdf)

Blackett, J. (2006). *Investigating Best Practice in Guidance and Counselling for Gifted Students in New Zealand Schools: Completed in Partial Fulfillment of the Master of Counselling Degree* (Doctoral dissertation, Massey University, Palmerston North).

Bland, L. C., Sowa, C. J., & Callahan, C. M. (1994). An overview of resilience in gifted children. *Roeper Review*, *17*(2), 77-80.

Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (2006). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and methods.* Allyn & Bacon.

Borland, J. H. (1989). *Planning and implementing programs for the gifted.* New York: Teachers College Press

Borland, J. H. (2005). Gifted Education Without Gifted Children: The Case for No Conception of Giftedness. In R. J. Sternberg & J. E. Davidson (Eds.), Conceptions of giftedness (pp. 1–19). Cambridge University Press.

Borland, J. H. (2006) *Gifted Education without Gifted Children, The case for no conception of giftedness. Conception of Giftedness* (2nd Ed). Cambridge, England.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Brent, J. (2004). The desire for community: Illusion, confusion and paradox. *Community development journal*, *39*(3), 213-223.

Brown, W., & Rogan, J. (1983). Reading and young gifted children. *Roeper Review*, *5*(3), 6-9.

Bryk, A. S. & Driscoll, M. E. (1988). *The High School as a Community: Contextual Influences and Consequences for Students and Teachers*. Madison, W.I.

Bryman, A. (2008). Why do researchers integrate/combine/mesh/blend/mix/merge/fuse quantitative and qualitative research. *Advances in mixed methods research*, *21*(8), 87-100.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press.

Burke, C., & Grosvenor, I. (2008). *School*. Reaktion Books.

Burns, R. B. (2000). *Introduction to research methods*. Frenchs Forest.

Callahan, C.M. (2007). *Program Evaluation in Gifted Education*. Corwin Press.

Ceci, S. J. (1991). How much does schooling influence general intelligence and its cognitive components? A reassessment of the evidence. *Developmental psychology*, *27*(5), 703-722.

Cianciolo, A. T., Grigorenko, E. L., Jarvin, L., Gil, G., Drebot, M. E., & Sternberg, R. J. (2006). Practical intelligence and tacit knowledge: Advancements in the measurement of developing expertise. *Learning and individual differences*, *16*(3), 235-253.

Childers, D. M. (2009). The Academic Communities' Perception of Gifted Education. Ed.D Thesis. University of Phoenix.

Chu, S., Chow, K., Tse, S., Kuhlthau, C. C. (2008). Grade 4 students' development of research skills through inquiry-based learning projects. *School Libraries Worldwide, 14*(1), 10-37.

Clark, B. (1992). *Growing up gifted*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.

Clark, B. (2008). *Growing up gifted* (7th ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.

Cockerham, D., Lin, L., Ndolo, S., & Schwartz, M. (2021). Voices of the students: Adolescent well-being and social interactions during the emergent shift to online learning environments. *Education and Information Technologies*, *26*(6), 7523-7541.

Colangelo, N., & Davis, G. A. (2003). Introduction and overview. In N. Colangelo & G.A. Davis (Eds.), *Handbook of gifted education* (pp. 3-10). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Collins, J. (Chair). (2001). *The education of gifted children: Inquiry into the education of gifted children*. Canberra, ACT: Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee.

Coleman, L. J., & Cross, T. L. (1988). Is being gifted a social handicap? *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, *11*(4), 41-56.

Coleman, L. J., Micko, K. J., & Cross, T. L. (2015). Twenty-five years of research on the lived experience of being gifted in school: Capturing the students' voices. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, *38*(4), 358-376.

Connell, J. P., & Wellborn, J. G. (1991). Competence, autonomy and relatedness: A motivational analysis of self-system processes. In M. Gunnar & L. A. Sroufe (Eds.), *Minnesota Symposium of Child Psychology* (Vol. 22, pp. 43-77). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Craven, R. G., & Marsh, H. W. (2008). The centrality of the self-concept construct for psychological wellbeing and unlocking human potential: Implications for child and educational psychologists. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 25(2), 104-118.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2005). *Mixed methods research: Developments, debates, and dilemma*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Cross, T. L. (1997). Psychological and social aspects of educating gifted students. *Peabody Journal of Education, 72*(3), 180–200.

Churchill, S. (2020). Left to Chance: Gifted Students & Independent Reading. *Knowledge quest, 48*(5), 24-3.

Dabrowski, K. (1964). *Positive disintegration.* Bassett, Maurice.

Dalzell, H. J. (1998). Giftedness: Infancy to adolescence-a developmental perspective. *Roeper Review*, 20(4), 259-264.

Davis, K. (2012). Friendship 2.0: Adolescents' experiences of belonging and self-disclosure online. *Journal of adolescence*, 35(6), 1527-1536.

Deci, E. L., Vallerand, R. J., Pelletier, L. G., & Ryan, R. M. (1991). Motivation and education: The self-determination perspective. *Educational psychologist*, 26(3-4), 325-346.

Delaney, J. M., & Devereux, P. J. (2021). Gender differences in college applications: Aspiration and risk management. *Economics of Education Review*, 80, 102077–. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2020.102077

Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretive biography* (Vol. 17). Sage.

Denzin, N. (2006). *Sociological Methods: A Sourcebook.* Aldine Transaction.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1–32). Sage Publications Ltd.

De Vellis, R. F. (2003). *Scale Development: Theory and Applications* (2nd ed., Vol. 26). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Dunn, S. E., Putallaz, M., Sheppard, B. H., & Lindstrom, R. (1987). Social support and adjustment in gifted adolescents. *Journal of educational psychology*, 79(4), 467.

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House.

Ericsson, K. A. (1998). Basic capacities can be modified or circumvented by deliberate practice: A rejection of talent accounts of expert performance. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *21*(3), 413-414.

Ericsson, K. A. (2001). Attaining excellence through deliberate practice: Insights from the study of expert performance. In Ferrari, M. (Ed.), *The pursuit of excellence through education* (pp. 21-56). Routledge.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American journal of theoretical and applied statistics*, *5*(1), 1-4.

Feldman, D. H. (1982). A developmental framework for research with gifted children. In D. H. Feldman (Ed.), *Developmental approaches to giftedness and creativity* (pp. 31–45). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers.

Feilzer, Y. M. (2010). Doing mixed methods research pragmatically: Implications for the rediscovery of pragmatism as a research paradigm. *Journal of mixed methods research*, *4*(1), 6-16.

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International journal of qualitative methods*, *5*(1), 80-92.

Fonseca, C. (2011). Emotional coaching: A lesson in intensity. *Parenting for High Potential*, 24-27.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2000). The interview: From structured questions to negotiated text. *Handbook of qualitative research*, *2*(6), 645-672.

Foucault, M. (1967). La grammaire générale de Port-Royal. *Langages*, (7), 7-15.

Foucault, M. (1971). Orders of discourse. *Social science information*, *10*(2), 7-30.

Foucault, M. (1984). Of other spaces. *Diacritics, 16*(1), 22-27.

Foucault, M. (2008). Of other spaces*(1967). In Dehaene M. & De Cauter, L. (Eds.), *Heterotopia and the City* (pp. 25-42). Routledge.

Frasier, M. M., Garcia, J. H., & Passow, A. H. (1998). *A review of assessment issues in gifted education and their implications for identifying gifted minority students*. University of Connecticut, CT.

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The qualitative report*, *20*(9), 1408-1416.

Fusch, P., Fusch, G. E., & Ness, L. R. (2018). Denzin's paradigm shift: Revisiting triangulation in qualitative research. *Journal of Sustainable Social Change*, *10*(1), 2.

Gagné, F. (1998). A proposal for subcategories within gifted or talented populations. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *42*(2), 87-95.

Gagné, F. (2003). Transforming gifts into talents: The DMGT as a developmental theory. In N. Colangelo & G.A. Davis (Eds.), *Handbook of gifted education* (3rd ed.) (pp. 60-74). Boston: Pearson Education.

Galton, F., & Okamoto, S. (1874). *On men of science, their nature and their nurture*. Royal Institution of Great Britain.

Gardner, H. (1994). Intelligences in theory and practice: A response to Elliot W. Eisner, Robert J. Sternberg, and Henry M. Levin. *Teachers College Record*, *95*(4), 576-583.

Gardner, H., & Hatch, T. (1989). Educational implications of the theory of multiple intelligences. *Educational researcher*, *18*(8), 4-10.

Gillham, B. (2000). *Case study research methods*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Gillham, B. (2008). *Developing a questionnaire*. A&C Black.

Gillis, A., & Jackson, W. (2002). *Research for nurses: Methods and interpretation*. FA Davis Company.

Godor, B. P., & Szymanski, A. (2017). Sense of belonging or feeling marginalized? Using PISA 2012 to assess the state of academically gifted students within the EU. *High Ability Studies*, *28*(2), 181-197.

Goodenow, C. (1993). The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. *Psychology in the Schools*, *30*(1), 79-90.

Grant, B. (2021). Overexcitabilities and openness to experience are not the same: A critique of a study and reflections on theory, ethics, and truth. *Roeper Review*, *43*(2), 128-138.

Grayson, J. P. (2001). The Performance of "Gifted" High School Students in University. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, *31*(1), 121-39.

Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a conceptual framework for mixed-method evaluation designs. *Educational evaluation and policy analysis*, *11*(3), 255-274.

Griffin, P. (2015). Submission 20, The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy by Professor Patrick Griffin, to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee. Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment, printed by the Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House, Canberra.

Gross, M. U. (1989). The pursuit of excellence or the search for intimacy? The forced-choice dilemma of gifted youth. *Roeper Review*, *11*(4), 189-194.

Gross, M. U. (1994). Responding to the social and emotional needs of gifted children. Paper presented as the 1994 Eminent Australian Address at the National Conference for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (5th: 1994: Perth). *Australasian Journal of Gifted Education*, *3*(2), 4-10.

Gross, M. U. (2003). *Exceptionally gifted children*. Routledge.

Gross, M. U. M. (2004). Exceptionally gifted children (2nd ed.). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Gross, M. U. (2006). Exceptionally gifted children: Long-term outcomes of academic acceleration and nonacceleration. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, *29*(4), 404-429.

Gross, M. U. (2009). Highly gifted young people: Development from childhood to adulthood. *International handbook on giftedness*, 337-351.

Grow, J. M., & Christopher, S. A. (2008). Breaking the silence surrounding hepatitis C by promoting self-efficacy: hepatitis C public service announcements. *Qualitative Health Research*, *18*(10), 1401-1412.

Gulson, K. N., & Symes, C. (2007). Knowing one's place: Space, theory, education. *Critical studies in education*, *48*(1), 97-110.

Gusfield, K. (1975). *Community: A Critical Response*. McMillan

Hall, E. T. (1966). *The hidden dimension*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Hall, E. T., Birdwhistell, R. L., Bock, B., Bohannan, P., Diebold, A. R., Durbin, M., Edmonson, M. S., Fischer, J. L., Hymes, D., Kimball, S. T., La Barre, W., Frank Lynch, S. J., McClellan, J. E., Marshall, D. S., Milner, G. B., Sarles, H. B., Trager, G. L., & Vayda, A. P. (1968). Proxemics [and Comments and Replies]. *Current Anthropology*, *9*(2/3), 83–108.

Halsey, R. (2013). Space, spatiality and educational leadership formation for rural contexts. *Leading and Managing*, *19*(2), 78-87.

Hampton, J. (2004) *Group Dynamics and Community Building: Seven Community Definitions*. New York Press.

Hartzell, G. (2002). The principal's perceptions of school libraries and teacher-librarians. *School Libraries Worldwide, 8*(1), 92-110.

Hascher, T., & Hadjar, A. (2018). School alienation–Theoretical approaches and educational research. *Educational Research*, *60*(2), 171-188.

Hay, L. (2010). Student Learning Through Australian School Libraries: Part 1: A Statistical Analysis of Student Perceptions. *Synergy*, *3*(2), 17-30.

Hebert, T. P., & Kent, R. (2000). Nurturing social and emotional development in gifted teenagers through young adult literature. *Roeper Review*, *22*(3), 167-171.

Hennink, M. M., Kaiser, B. N., & Marconi, V. C. (2017). Code saturation versus meaning saturation: how many interviews are enough? *Qualitative health research*, *27*(4), 591-608.

Hesse-Biber, S. (2015). Mixed methods research: The "thing-ness" problem. *Qualitative health research*, *25*(6), 775-788.

Horn, J. L., & McArdle, J. J. (2007). Understanding human intelligence since Spearman. In *Factor analysis at 100* (pp. 219-262). Routledge.

House of Representatives, House Standing Committee on Education and Employment 2010, *Inquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians in Australian schools*, The Parliament of Australia, Canberra. http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Commit tees?url=ee/schoollibraries/subs.htm

Hughes, G. (2010). Identity and belonging in social learning groups: The importance of distinguishing social, operational and knowledge-related identity congruence. *British Educational Research Journal*, *36*(1), 47-63.

Hughes, H. (2013). School libraries, teacher-librarians and their contribution to student literacy in Gold Coast schools. School Library Association of Queensland – QUT. http://www.slaq.org.au/research

Hunt, K., Davison, C., Emslie, C., & Ford, G. (2000). Are perceptions of a family history of heart disease related to health-related attitudes and behaviour? *Health Education Research*, *15*(2), 131-143.

Iachini, T., Coello, Y., Frassinetti, F., Senese, V. P., Galante, F., & Ruggiero, G. (2016). Peripersonal and interpersonal space in virtual and real environments: Effects of gender and age. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 45*, 154–164. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2016.01.004

Jackson, P. S., & Peterson, J. (2003). Depressive disorder in highly gifted adolescents. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, *14*(3), 175-186.

Jansen, W. S., Otten, S., van der Zee, K. I., & Jans, L. (2014). Inclusion: Conceptualization and measurement. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 44*(4), 370–385.

Jarvis, J. M. & Henderson, L. (2012). Current practices in the education of gifted and advanced learners in South Australian schools. *Australasian Journal of Gifted Education, 21*(1), 5-22.

Jarvis, J. M. & Henderson, L. C. (2014). Defining a coordinated approach to gifted education. *Australasian Journal of Gifted Education, 23*(1), 5-14.

Joffe, H. (2012). Thematic analysis. In D. Harper & A. R. Thompson (Eds.), *Qualitative methods in mental health and psychotherapy: A guide for students and practitioners* (pp. 209-223). Wiley.

Jolly, J. L., & Robins, J. H. (2021). Australian gifted and talented education: An analysis of government policies. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, *46*(8), 70-95.

Jones, T. W. (2013). Equally cursed and blessed: Do gifted and talented children experience poorer mental health and psychological well-being? *Educational and Child Psychology*. *30*(2), 44–66.

Jung, J. Y., Barnett, K., Gross, M. U., & McCormick, J. (2011). Levels of intellectual giftedness, culture, and the forced-choice dilemma. *Roeper Review*, *33*(3), 182-197.

Kalina, C., & Powell, K. C. (2009). Cognitive and social constructivism: Developing tools for an effective classroom. *Education*, *130*(2), 241-250.

Kanevsky, L. (2011). Deferential differentiation: What types of differentiation do students want? *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *55*(4), 279-299.

Keating, D. P. (1990). Adolescent thinking. In S. S. Feldman & G. R. Elliott (Eds.), *At the threshold: The developing adolescent* (pp. 54–89). Harvard University Press.

Kelemen, M., & Rumens, N. (2012). Pragmatism and heterodoxy in organization research: Going beyond the quantitative/qualitative divide. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, *20*(1), 5-12.

Kelly, J. G. (2006). *Becoming ecological: An expedition into community psychology*. Oxford University Press.

Kelly, L. M., & Cordeiro, M. (2020). Three principles of pragmatism for research on organizational processes. *Methodological Innovations*, *13*(2), 205979912093724–. https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799120937242

Kenny, R., Dooley, B., & Fitzgerald, A. (2013). Interpersonal relationships and emotional distress in adolescence. *Journal of adolescence*, *36*(2), 351-360.

Kincheloe, J., & Steinberg, S. (1993). A tentative description of post-formal thinking: The critical confrontation with cognitive theory. *Harvard Educational Review*, *63*(3), 296-321.

King, E. W. (2005). Addressing the social and emotional needs of twice-exceptional students. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *38*(1), 16-21.

Kitano, M. K., & Lewis, R. B. (2005). Resilience and coping: Implications for gifted children and youth at risk. *Roeper review*, *27*(4), 200-205.

Kvale, S. (1996). The 1,000-page question. *Qualitative inquiry*, *2*(3), 275-284.

Lakens, D. (2013). Calculating and reporting effect sizes to facilitate cumulative science : a practical primer for t-tests and ANOVAs. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *4*, 1–12.

Lamb, S., Rumberger, R. W., Jesson, D., & Teese, R. (2004). School performance in Australia: Results from analyses of school effectiveness. Report for the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet. *Melbourne, Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning, University of Melbourne.*

Lance, K. C. (2002). Impact of school library media programs on academic achievement. *Teacher librarian*, *29*(3), 29-34.

Lefebvre, H. (1974). La production de l'espace. *L'Homme et la société*, *31*(1), 15-32.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. Original work published in 1974.

Levine, M. P., & Cox, D. (2005). Teaching war and violence to the like-minded. *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, *17*(2-3), 247-259.

Loh, C. E. (2017). *The space and practice of reading: A case study of reading and social class in Singapore*. Taylor & Francis.

Loh, C. E., Ellis, M., Paculdar, A. & Wan, Z. (2017). Building a successful reading culture through the school library: a case study from Singapore. *IFLA Journal 43*(4), 335-347.

Lonsdale, M. (2003). *Impact of school libraries on student achievement: A review of the research*. Camberwell, Victoria, Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Lysy, K. Z., & Piechowski, M. M. (1983). Personal growth: An empirical study using Jungian and Dabrowskian measures. *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, *108*(2), 267-320.

McBee, M. T., & Makel, M. C. (2019). The quantitative implications of definitions of giftedness. *AERA Open*, *5*(1), 1-13.

McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of community psychology*, *14*(1), 6-23.

Maehr, M. L., & Midgley, C. (1996). *Transforming school cultures*. Westview Press.

Maker, C. J. (1996). Identification of gifted minority students: A national problem, needed changes and a promising solution. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *40*(1), 41-50.

Maker, C. J., & Nielson, A. B. (1995). *Teaching models in education of the gifted* (2nd ed.). Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd ed.). Harper & Row.

Mason, J. & Au, K. (1990). *Reading instruction for today.* New York: Harper Collins.

Masters, G. (2015). *Understanding and addressing the learning needs of our highest-performing students*. Keynote paper presented at the AAEGT/IRATDE international conference in Brisbane, March 19-21.

McFarland, J., Hussar, B., Wang, X., Zhang, J., Wang, K., Rathbun, A., ... & Mann, F. B. (2018). The Condition of Education 2018. NCES 2018-144. *National Center for Education Statistics*.

Mendaglio, S. (2008). *Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration*. Great Potential Press, Inc.

Mendaglio, S. (2013). Gifted students' transition to university. *Gifted Education International*, *29*(1), 3-12.

Meredith, C. (2016). Taking Issue with Thirdspace: Reading Soja, Lefebvre and the Bible. In Økland, J, Cornelis de Vos, J. & Wenell K. (Eds.), *Constructions of Space III: Biblical Spatiality and the Sacred*, (pp.75-103). Bloomsbury T&T Clark.

Mondani, H., Holme, P., & Liljeros, F. (2014). Fat-tailed fluctuations in the size of organizations: the role of social influence. *PLoS One*, *9*(7), e100527.

Mofield, E. L., & Parker Peters, M. (2018b). Shifting the perfectionistic mindset: Moving to mindful excellence. *Gifted Child Today, 41*(4), 177–185.

Moon, S. M. (2009). Myth 15: High-ability students don't face problems and challenges. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *53*(4), 274-276.

Moon, S. M., & Dixon, F. A. (2006). Conceptions of Giftedness in Adolescence. In F. A. Dixon & S. M. Moon (Eds.), *The handbook of secondary gifted education* (pp. 7–33). Prufrock Press Inc.

Moore, D. S. (1976). *Chi-Square Tests*. Purdue Univ Lafayette Ind Dept of Statistics.

Morgan, D. L. (2014). Pragmatism as a paradigm for social research. *Qualitative inquiry*, *20*(8), 1045-1053.

Morris, B. J. (2004). *Administering the school library media center*. Libraries Unlimited Inc.

Mueller, C. E. (2009). Protective factors as barriers to depression in gifted and nongifted adolescents. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *53*(1), 3-14.

Myers, K. K., & Oetzel, J. G. (2003). Exploring the dimensions of organizational assimilation: Creating and validating a measure. *Communication Quarterly*, *51*(4), 438-457.

Napier, R. D., & Halsey, R. J. (2022). Wicked problems abound: It's time to harness the power of transformationally gifted girls' education. *Australasian Journal of Gifted Education*, *31*(2), 36-45.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). *Characteristics of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in the United States: Results From the 2017-18 National Teacher and Principal Survey*. U.S. Department of Education.

Neihart, M. (1999). The impact of giftedness on psychological well-being: What does the empirical literature say? *Roeper Review*, *22*(1), 10-17.

Neuman, S. B., & Celano, D. C. (2012). Worlds Apart: One City, Two Libraries, and Ten Years of Watching Inequality Grow. *American Educator*, *36*(3), 13-23.

Nonverbal Communication for Educators n.d., *Proxemics - Noting Your Distance*, accessed 19 January 2023, <https://www.creducation.net/resources/nonverbal_communication/proxemics.html>.

Nugent, S. A. (2000). Perfectionism: Its manifestations and classroom-based interventions. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, *11*(4), 215-221.

O'Leary, M. B., Wilson, J. M., Metiu, A., & Jett, Q. R. (2008). Perceived Proximity in Virtual Work: Explaining the Paradox of Far-but-Close. *Organization Studies. 29*(7), 979–1002.

Osterman, K. F. (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of educational research*, *70*(3), 323-367.

Parekh, G., Brown, R. S., & Robson, K. (2018). The social construction of giftedness: The intersectional relationship between whiteness, economic privilege, and the identification of gifted. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, *7*(2), 1-32.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative social work*, *1*(3), 261-283.

Patton M. (2005). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Peck, M.S. (1987). *The Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace*. New York, Simon and Schuster.

Peterson, J., Duncan, N., & Canady, K. (2009). A longitudinal study of negative life events, stress, and school experiences of gifted youth. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *53*(1), 34-49.

Phelps, V., & Lewis, K. (2022). *Strength-Based Goal Setting in Gifted Education: Addressing Social-Emotional Awareness, Self-Advocacy, and Underachievement in Gifted Education*. Taylor & Francis.

Piechowski, M. M. (1986). The concept of developmental potential. *Roeper Review*, *8*(3), 190-197.

Piechowski, M. M. (2006). *Mellow out, they say. If I only could: Intensities and sensitivities of the young and bright*. Yunasa Books.

Piechowski, M. M., & Miller, N. B. (1995). Assessing developmental potential in gifted children: A comparison of methods. *Roeper Review*, *17*(3), 176-180.

Piechowski, M. M. (1997). Emotional Giftedness: An Expanded View. *Apex, 10*(1), 37-47.

Plunkett, M., & Kronborg, L. (2011). Learning to be a teacher of the gifted: The importance of examining opinions and challenging misconceptions. *Gifted and Talented International*, *26*(1-2), 31-46.

Puchta, C. & Potter, J. (2004). *Focus group practice*. India: Sage Publications

Radich, J. (2012). Being, belonging and becoming in the physical environment. *Every Child*, *18*(3), 36-37.

Rakow, S. (2020). *Educating gifted students in middle school*. Routledge.

Ray, A., & Margaret, W. (Eds.). (2003). *PISA Programme for international student assessment (PISA) PISA 2000 technical report: PISA 2000 technical report*. oecd Publishing.

Reis, S. M., & McCoach, D. B. (2002). Underachievement in gifted and talented students with special needs. *Exceptionality*, *10*(2), 113-125.

Reis, S. M., & Renzulli, J. S. (2003). Research related to the schoolwide enrichment triad model. *Gifted Education International*, *18*(1), 15-39.

Repinc, U., & Juznic, P. (2013). Guided inquiry projects: Enrichment for gifted pupils. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 114-127.

Resnick, M. D., Bearman, P. S., Blum, R. W., Bauman, K. E., Harris, K. M., Jones, J., Tabor, J., Beuhring, T., Sieving, R. E., Shew, M., Ireland, M., Bearinger, L. H., & Udry, J. R. (1997). Protecting adolescent's from harm: Findings from the national longitudinal study on adolescent health. *JAMA : the Journal of the American Medical Association*, *278*(10), 823–832.

Richmond, V. P., McCroskey, J. C., & Hickson, M. (2008). *Nonverbal behavior in interpersonal relations* (6th ed.). Pearson Education/Allyn & Bacon.

Riley, T., & White, V. (2016). Developing a sense of belonging through engagement with like-minded peers: A matter of equity. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, *51*(2), 211-225.

Robinson, N. M., Lanzi, R. G., Weinberg, R. A., Ramey, S. L., & Ramey, C. T. (2002). Family factors associated with high academic competence in former Head Start children at third grade. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *46*(4), 278-290.

Robinson, S., & Notara, D. (2015). Building belonging and connection for children with disability and their families: a co-designed research and community development project in a regional community. *Community Development Journal*, *50*(4), 724-741.

Roeper, A. M. (1982). How the gifted cope with their emotions. *Roeper Review 5*(2), 21-24.

Ryan, R. M. (1995). Psychological needs and the facilitation of integrative processes. *Journal of personality*, *63*(3), 397-427.

Sarouphim, K. M. (1999). DISCOVER: A promising alternative assessment for the identification of gifted minorities. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *43*(4), 244-251.

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information*, *22*(2), 63-75.

Shore, B. M., & Kanevsky, L. S. (1993). Thinking processes: Being and becoming gifted. *International handbook of research and development of giftedness and talent*, *1*, 133-147.

Silverman, L. K. (1993). *Counseling the gifted and talented*. Love Publishing Co., 1777 South Bellaire St., Denver, CO 80222.

Silverman, L. K. (1994). The moral sensitivity of gifted children and the evolution of society. *Roeper Review*, *17*(2), 110-116.

Silverman, L. K. (1997). The construct of asynchronous development. *Peabody journal of education*, *72*(3-4), 36-58.

Soja, E. (1989). *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. Verso.

Soja, E., & Thirdspace, W. (1996). *Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Sommer, R. (1967). Sociofugal space. *American Journal of Sociology*, *72*(6), 654-660.

Sorokowska, A., Sorokowski, P., Hilpert, P., Cantarero, K., Frackowiak, T., Ahmadi, K., ... & Pierce Jr, J. D. (2017). Preferred interpersonal distances: A global comparison. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *48*(4), 577-592.

Sowa, C. J., McIntire, J., May, K. M., & Bland, L. (1994). Social and emotional adjustment themes across gifted children. *Roeper Review*, *17*(2), 95-98.

Sternberg, R. J. (1999). The theory of successful intelligence. *Review of General psychology*, *3*(4), 292-316.

Sternberg, R. J. (2010). Teaching for creativity. In R. A. Beghetto & J. C. Kaufman (Eds.), *Nurturing creativity in the classroom* (pp. 394–414). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511781629.020

Sternberg R J. (2017). ACCEL: A new model for identifying the gifted. *Roeper Review 39*(3): 139–152. http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/kSvRMFf9R8tAJPDRfXrJ/full

Sternberg, R. J. (2018). Creative giftedness is not just what creativity tests test: Implications of a triangular theory of creativity for understanding creative giftedness. *Roeper Review*, *40*(3), 158-165.

Sternberg, R. J. (2018). *The triarchic theory of successful intelligence*. The Guilford Press.

Sternberg R. J. (2019). Why people often prefer wise guys to guys who are wise: An augmented balance theory of the production and reception of wisdom. In R J Sternberg and J Glück (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of wisdom* (pp. 162–181). Cambridge University Press.

Sternberg R. J. (2020). Transformational giftedness: Rethinking our paradigm for gifted education. *Roeper Review, 42*(4), 230–240. https://doi.org/10.1080/02783193.2020.1815266

Sternberg R. J. (2021a). *Adaptive intelligence: Surviving and thriving in a world of uncertainty*. Cambridge University Press.

Sternberg R. J. (2021b). Transformational vs. transactional deployment of intelligence. *Journal of Intelligence, 9*(1), 15-21. https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence9010015

Sternberg R. J. (2022a). Identify transformational, not just transactional giftedness! *Gifted Child Quarterly, 66*(2), 159–160. https://doi.org/10.1177/001698622110379
Sternberg, R. J. (2022b). Identification for utilization, not merely possession, of gifts: What matters is not gifts but rather deployment of gifts. *Gifted Education International*, *38*(3), 354-361.

Sternberg R. J. & Ambrose D. (Eds.). (2021). *Conceptions of giftedness and talent*. Palgrave-Macmillan.

Sternberg R. J., Ambrose D. & Karami S. (Eds.). (2022). *Palgrave handbook of transformational giftedness*. Palgrave-Macmillan.

Sternberg R. J., Chowkase A., Desmet O., Karami S., Landy J. & Lu J. (2021). Beyond transformational giftedness. *Educational Sciences, 11*(5), 192-203. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11050192

Sternberg, R. J., & Davidson, J. E. (Eds.). (2005). *Conceptions of giftedness* (Vol. 2). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Sternberg, R. J., & Grigorenko, E. L. (2002). *Dynamic testing: The nature and measurement of learning potential*. Cambridge University Press.

Sternberg, R. J., Grigorenko, E. L., & Ferrari, M. (2002). Fostering intellectual excellence through developing expertise. In Ferrari M. (Ed.), *The pursuit of excellence through education* (pp. 57-84). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Subotnik, R. F., Olszewski-Kubilius, P., & Worrell, F. C. (2011). Rethinking giftedness and gifted education: A proposed direction forward based on psychological science. *Psychological science in the public interest, 12*(1), 3-54.

Swanton, S. I. (1984). Minds Alive—What and Why Gifted Students Read for Pleasure. *School Library Journal*, *30*(7), 99-102.

Tamboukou, M. (2004). Educational heterotopias and the self. *Pedagogy, Culture and morganSociety*, *12*(3), 399-414.

Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. *International Journal of Medical Education*, *2*, 53–55.

Terman, L. M. (1922). A new approach to the study of genius. *Psychological Review*, *29*(4), 310.

Terman, L. M. (1925). *Genetic studies of genius: Vol. 1. Mental and physical traits of a thousand gifted children.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Testa, M., Livingston, J. A., & VanZile-Tamsen, C. (2011). Advancing the study of violence against women using mixed methods: Integrating qualitative methods into a quantitative research program. *Violence against women*, *17*(2), 236-250.

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2013) Australian Curriculum. Sydney: ACARA.

Tillery, A. D., Varjas, K., Roach, A. T., Kuperminc, G. P., & Meyers, J. (2013). The importance of adult connections in adolescents' sense of school belonging: Implications for schools and practitioners. *Journal of School Violence*, *12*(2), 134-155.

Todd, R. J., & Kuhlthau, C. C. (2004). *Student learning through Ohio school libraries*. Columbus, OH: OELMA.

Todd, R., & Kuhlthau, C. C. (2005). Student learning through Ohio school libraries, Part 1: How effective school libraries help students. *School Libraries Worldwide*, *11*(1), 63-88.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2005). Grading and differentiation: Paradox or good practice? *Theory into practice*, *44*(3), 262-269.

VanTassel-Baska, J. (2005). Domain-Specific Giftedness: Applications in School and Life. In, Sternberg, R. J., & Davidson, J. E. (Eds). *Conceptions of Giftedness* (pp. 358–376). Cambridge University.

VanTassel-Baska, J. (2010). The history of urban gifted education. *Gifted Child Today*, *33*(4), 18-27.

Von Károlyi, C., & Winner, E. (2005). Extreme giftedness. In, Sternberg, R. J., & Davidson, J. E. (Eds). *Conceptions of Giftedness* (pp. 377-394). Cambridge University.

Vuyk, M. A., Kerr, B. A., & Krieshok, T. S. (2016). From overexcitabilities to openness: Informing gifted education with psychological science. *Gifted and Talented International*, *31*(1), 59-71.

Vuyk, M. A., Krieshok, T. S., & Kerr, B. A. (2016). Openness to experience rather than overexcitabilities: Call it like it is. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *60*(3), 192-211.

Vuyk, M. A., & Kerr, B. (2021). Openness to Experience and Overexcitabilities, a Jangle Fallacy With Ethical Implications: A Response to Barry Grant. *Roeper Review*, *43*(2), 139-141.

Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2007). A question of belonging: race, social fit, and achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *92*(1), 82.

Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2011). A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes of minority students. *Science*, *331*(6023), 1447-1451.

White, S. L., Graham, L. J., & Blaas, S. (2018). Why do we know so little about the factors associated with gifted underachievement? A systematic literature review. *Educational Research Review, 24*, 55- 6.

Whiting, L. S. (2008). Semi-structured interviews: guidance for novice researchers. *Nursing Standard*, *22*(23), 35-40.

Wittmann, P., & Fisher-Allison, N. (2020). Intentionally Creating a Safe Space for All: The School Library as Refuge. *Knowledge Quest*, *48*(3), 40-49.

Wood, S. (2010). Best practices in counseling the gifted in schools: What's really happening? *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *54*(1), 42-58.

Zeidner, M., & Shani-Zinovich, I. (2011). Do academically gifted and nongifted students differ on the Big-Five and adaptive status? Some recent data and conclusions. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *51*(5), 566-570.

Zedan, R., & Bitar, J. (2017). Mathematically gifted students: Their characteristics and unique needs. *European Journal of Education Studies*, *3*(4), 236-260.

# APPENDICES

164

## Appendix 1. Survey instrument.

Hello.

I'd like to invite you to participate in the following survey.
This research seeks to understand how secondary school libraries are being used by students (both regular and occasional users) and how the effectiveness of school libraries might be improved in the future.
**Obtaining feedback from you is vital to this process. Your voice matters - let it be heard. The survey should take less than 8 minutes to complete.**
Your participation is voluntary and your responses will be confidential. The study has been approved by Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee.
I ask you to answer the questions **honestly** as this is critical for the quality of the research outcomes.
Thank you very much for your time.

---

### Section 1 – About your high school library

When thinking **BACK** about **your** time in **senior high school**…

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Your high school library was well resourced for your needs. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Your high school library was a peaceful place. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. Your high school library was accessible when you needed it. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. Inside the high school library you felt accepted. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. Using the high school library helped you to get better grades. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. You felt like you did NOT really belong in your school community. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. Your high school library was a safe haven from undesirable behaviours of others (e.g. bullying, racism, sexism, violence). | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

165

8. In the high school library you experienced a feeling of belonging. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

| | ☐ Strongly Disagree | ☐ Disagree | ☐ Somewhat Disagree | ☐ Somewhat Agree | ☐ Agree | ☐ Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. You are NOT an avid reader. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 10. Your high school library was a welcoming place. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 11. You considered the high school library to be a place of refuge. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 12. You frequently used your high school library for private study. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 13. You used your high school library mainly during bad weather. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 14. Inside the high school library other students seemed to like you. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 15. Inside the high school library you felt a sense of security. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 16. Inside the high school library you felt out of place and awkward. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| | Every day | A few times per week | Once a week | Once or twice per month | A few times per year | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. You used the high school library: | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

18. Your preferred reading interests include the following:

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Drama / Tragedy. | ☐ | ☐ |
| Romance. | ☐ | ☐ |
| Comedy / Humour. | ☐ | ☐ |
| Science-fiction / Fantasy. | ☐ | ☐ |
| Adventure / Mystery. | ☐ | ☐ |
| History / War. | ☐ | ☐ |
| Horror. | ☐ | ☐ |
| Non-fiction. | ☐ | ☐ |

### Section 2 – About giftedness

This short section asks about your understanding and / or experience of **academic giftedness**. The questions below refer to both your high school and primary school years.

**\*Definition of giftedness:**

*"Gifted individuals are those who show remarkable levels of ability (to reason, remember and learn) or capacity (to perform or achieve) in one or more disciplines, (e.g. mathematics, music, language, painting, dance), often combined with personality traits including unusually high level of curiosity, sensitivity, perfectionism, emotional intensity, concern for social justice and a distinctive sense of humour".*

19. At school you were **officially** identified as an academically gifted student.

    Yes ☐
    No  ☐

20. While at school you were selected for an **academically advanced class or program** (e.g. advanced class or program in Mathematics, Music, Languages, Science).

    Yes ☐
    No  ☐

21. In your school years you have progressed ahead of your year level peers in one or more subjects as a result of your high academic achievement and / or aptitude.

    Yes ☐
    No  ☐

22. While at high school you have been invited to enrol in a subject / topic **run by a university** (e.g. first year topic in Biology, Psychology, French, Mathematics, Music).

    Yes ☐
    No  ☐

23. You enrolled at Flinders University through the *"Enhanced Program for High Achievers"*?

    Yes ☐
    No  ☐

24. You **perceive yourself** to be an academically gifted student.

    Yes ☐
    No  ☐

## Section 3 - About reasons for using the library

This section asks about: The kinds of things that **have** (or **would have**) *encouraged <u>or</u> discouraged you* from using your high school library:

| | Strongly discouraged | Discouraged | Somewhat discouraged | Somewhat encouraged | Encouraged | Strongly encouraged |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25. Access to technology. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 26. Accessible space for **studying** with other like-minded students in the school library. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 27. Help and advice provided by the school library staff. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 28. Accessible space for **socialising** with other like-minded students in the school library. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 29. A friendly atmosphere in the school library. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 30. Wanting to achieve better grades. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 31. Modern design of the school library space. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

32. In senior high school years you used libraries other than your high school library.

Yes ☐
No ☐

If **YES**, please specify which library(s) you have used:

Public library ☐
Another school library ☐
TAFE library ☐
University library ☐
Other – please specify ☐

_____

## Section 4 – About you

This section asks about information collected as simple **demographic data**.

33. Your gender :

Male      ☐
Female    ☐

34. School sector most representative of **your final years of high school**.

        Government, State or Public school     ☐
        Catholic school                         ☐
        Independent / Private school       ☐
        Other                                ☐

35. In what year did you
graduate from <u>or</u> leave
high school:

36. The **suburb** (or **postcode**) of your residence
**while in your final year of high school** in
Australia:

**Suburb**:

  **postcode**:

*Please note that the above information will be **generalised** to local government regions only.

37. Your **ATAR** (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) score after completing
Year 12,

(Tick the matriculation % score box **most accurately** reflecting your ATAR score).

| Not Applicable | Less than 44% | 45-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | 65-69 | 70-74 | 75-79 | 80-84 | 85-89 | 90-94 | 95-100 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

38. Your current university studies are best described as:

First undergraduate degree ☐

Another undergraduate degree ☐

Other – please specify ☐

_____

39. You enrolled in your current university course **directly from**:

|  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| High School | ☐ | ☐ |
| Gap year / deferral | ☐ | ☐ |
| Foundation course | ☐ | ☐ |
| TAFE (or similar) | ☐ | ☐ |
| Work | ☐ | ☐ |
| Transfer from another University program | ☐ | ☐ |
| Other | ☐ | ☐ |

40. Your current university course specialization is predominantly in the faculty of:

**Education, Humanities and Law** ☐

171

*(e.g. Teaching, Australian Studies, History, Archaeology, Linguistics, Drama, Tourism, Philosophy)*

**Social and Behavioural Sciences** ☐

*(e.g. Business, Psychology, International Studies, Labour Studies, Social and Policy Studies)*

**Science and Engineering** ☐

*(e.g. Biology, Chemistry, Earth and Computer Sciences, Physics, Environmental Science, Mathematics, Engineering)*

**Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences** ☐

*(e.g. Disability Studies, Nutrition, Medicine, Occupational Therapy Physiotherapy, Nursing, Midwifery, Public Health, Speech pathology)*

41. You were born in Australia:

Yes ☐

No ☐

42. Is English your first language?

Yes ☐

No ☐

**Section 5 – About YOUR personal opinions, ideas and views**

43. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences of high school libraries, or provide any additional thoughts? Please feel free to write anything you wish to add.

**\*Your views matter a great deal. This final question asks about your willingness to further expand on your views, opinions and ideas in a short, friendly and confidential follow up interview.**

44. Would you consider participating in a friendly, confidential follow-up interview which is expected to last about 30 minutes, is strictly related to expanding on your answers in this survey and will help to collect information on how to improve school libraries in the future:

Yes ☐
(A researcher will contact you)


No ☐


If you have answered **<u>Yes</u>** – **please provide your contact details below**:

First Name …………………………….

Email address…………….. ………….

Mobile number……………. ………….

**Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this research.**

# Appendix 2. Profiles of the gifted and talented

## Revised Profiles of the Gifted and Talented

Types 1-5 are profiles of gifted underachievers; an important goal of gifted programs is to assist all gifted students to become Type 6: Autonomous Learners.

| Type | Feelings/Attitudes | Behaviours/Characteristics | Needs (at school and at home) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Type 1: The Successful** (Gifted Underachievers) | Type 1 students are bright, motivated achievers. However, their motivation may be directed mainly towards teacher acceptance rather than towards the full development of their high abilities. | Well behaved, conformist; Achieve in schoolwork; Seek approval from teachers and other adults; May be perfectionists; Seek order and structure; Like clear instructions; Do not take risks; May 'achieve' - but at levels significantly below their true ability - at university or in adult life. | Self knowledge; Independent learning skills; Assertiveness skills; Creativity development; To be challenged; To see deficiencies; To take risks; To develop an incremental view of intelligence (that intelligence can be increased through effort). Risk-taking experiences; Affirmation of their ability to cope with challenges; Independence; Freedom to make choices. |
| **Type 2: The Creative** (Gifted Underachievers) | Type 2 students feel frustrated because the school system does not recognise their high abilities. These students are often overlooked as their impatience can mask their giftedness. They may be bored, angry and resentful and they may 'take it out' on their teachers and other students. This can then further decrease the likelihood of their being identified as gifted. | Can be obstinate, tactless and sarcastic; Question and challenge authority; Can be rude, arrogant; Can be unpopular with peers; Sometimes will buy acceptance as class clown; Do not 'suffer fools gladly'. | To connect with others; To learn tact, flexibility, self awareness and self-control; Support for creativity; Contractual systems; Less pressure to conform; Interpersonal skills; Strategies to cope with potential psychological vulnerabilities. Affirmation of their strengths; Confidence in their abilities communicated to them; Appropriate behaviour modelled to them; Their goals to be respected. |
| **Type 3: The Underground** (Gifted Underachievers) | Type 3 students have responded to the 'forced-choice dilemma' – the choice between excelling academically and being accepted by the peer group – by choosing peer acceptance. Unfortunately, they may then become afraid that they will lose this acceptance if they drop their camouflage. They can feel conflicted, guilty and insecure. They can have a diminished sense of self. | Conceal ability for peer acceptance; Strong belonging needs; May be insecure and anxious; May feel guilty for denying their gifts. | Freedom to make choices; Conflicts to be made explicit; Support for abilities; Role models who cross cultures; Self-understanding and acceptance; An audience to listen to what they have to say (to be heard); College and career planning; Lifelong learning modelled; Gifted role models provided; Freedom to make choices; Reassurance. |
| **Type 4: The At-Risk** (Gifted Underachievers) | Type 4 students may be physically present in the classroom but intellectually and emotionally have become quite divorced from what is going on in it. They are angry with adults and with themselves because the system has not met their needs and they feel rejected. They may express this resentment through withdrawing into themselves and refusing to participate or by acting out and responding defensively. | Can be depressed and withdrawn or angry and defensive; Interests may lie outside curriculum and are not perceived to be valued by teachers or classmates; Extremely low self-esteem; Low performance. | Safety and structure; Professional counselling; An 'alternative' environment; An individualised program; Confrontation and accountability; Direction and short term goals; Counselling for family; Avoidance of power struggles; To be held accountable but with minimal punishments; Confidence conveyed about their ability to overcome obstacles; To have relationships preserved. |
| **Type 5: The Twice-Multi Exceptional** (Gifted Underachievers) | Type 5 students are gifted students who also have a disability (physical, emotional, learning); for example, a gifted student who is also hearing or visually impaired; a gifted student with Asperger's Syndrome or a gifted student who also has a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia. Often, the focus is on the disability rather than on the whole child. | May display disruptive behaviours through frustration; May be confused about their ability to perform; Can become very frustrated when teachers ignore their gifts and focus only on their disabilities. | Emphasis on strengths; Coping strategies; Skill development; To develop resilience; An environment that develops strengths; To learn to self-advocate; A focus on strengths while accommodating the disability; To develop the will to succeed; To have gifted abilities recognised and affirmed; Risk-taking opportunities provided; Self-control nurtured. |
| **Type 6: The Autonomous Learner** (Gifted and Talented) | Type 6 students have learned how to work effectively in the school system. They are academically successful, but may not view academics as one of their highest priorities. They show tolerance and respect for others. They have strong, positive self-concepts and they are able to work cooperatively with teachers to design their personal learning goals. They are willing to fail and learn from it. | Use the system to succeed; Can be confident enough to express their needs and do so in ways that teachers and peers will accept; Independent; Self-directed; Respected and liked by teachers and peers. | More support not less; Advocacy for new directions and increasing independence; Feedback about strengths and possibilities; Facilitation of continuing growth; Support for risk-taking; Ongoing, facilitative relationships; Opportunities related to passion areas; Friends of all ages; No time and space restrictions; Help to build a support team; Inclusion in family decision making. |

Betts, G. T. & Neilhart, M. (2010) Revised profiles of gifted and talented. Retrieved from Ingeniosus, Revised profiles of the Gifted and Talented - Neilhart and Betts.pdf

**Appendix 3. Focus group discussions**

<div style="text-align:center">**Focus Group Discussion Invitation**</div>

_____

Dear student,

You are invited to participate in a focus group discussion exploring student perceptions of secondary school libraries. The focus group will be held at Flinders University Library during the next two weeks.

This focus group is being conducted as part of a Doctor of Education research project. The aim of this research is to investigate *the role that secondary school libraries play in the lives of students in South Australian schools.* Obtaining feedback from students like you is vital to the process. Your voice matters, let it be heard.

We would appreciate your participation in the focus group which will be made up of other students like yourself and the researcher. The discussion is anticipated to be 60 to 90 minutes in duration. Your participation is voluntary and your responses will be confidential.

If you would consider participating, please provide the following contact details:

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Your attendance at this discussion would be greatly appreciated.

## Appendix 3. Focus Group Questions

**Stage 1**

**The introductory stage questions**: participant introductions - providing a snapshot of the relevant life facts about the respondents and paving the path toward the primary objective of secondary library perceptions and experiences.

1.  Which undergraduate course are you enrolled in?
2.  How would you describe your high school library?

**Stage 2.**

**The rapport building stage questions**: setting the basic foundations for the critical issues to be explored on an in-depth level.

3.  Tell me about a time when your high school library made you or someone you know feel happy or unhappy or to feel welcome, or unwelcome.

**Stage 3.**

**The investigative stage questions**: the in-depth level investigation, specifically directed at the study objectives and building upon prior questions and answers.

4.  What role do high school libraries play in the lives of students?
5.  In your opinion, what kind of things are missing from the work that high school libraries are doing?
6.  If you were in charge of your high school library for just one week what would you change and what would you leave the same?

**Section 4.**

**The closure stage questions**: closing down the conversation.

7.      Is there was anything anyone would like to add to their comments?

**Thank you for your participation.**

# Appendix 4. Semi-structured interview questions.

**Interview Outline and Questions**

**Section 1.**

**Section 1 Quantitative Context**: Broad retrospective *high school experience* focus and located within that context, the general *experience of the high school library* - predominantly framed as "library as a help" concept.

**Qualitative follow up interview questions:**

1. Tell me about your high school library experiences in senior high school. (What was it like to use your high school library as a senior student?)
2. What motivated you to use your high school library as a senior student?

**Section 2.**

**Section 2 Quantitative Context:** Detailed, varied and separate *points of influence potentially impacting the patterns of high school library use* by secondary students.

**Qualitative follow up interview questions:**

3. Tell me about a time when your high school library helped you or hindered your academic achievement in some way.
4. Tell me about a time when your high school library helped you to feel welcome and safe or unwelcome and unsafe.
5. Tell me about the things in senior high school which encouraged or discouraged you from using your high school library.

**Section 3.**

**Section 3 Quantitative Context:** Personalized, *people based* and detailed, ***encouraging*** separate points of influence potentially impacting the patterns of high school library use by secondary students.

**Qualitative follow up interview questions:**

6.  Tell me about the people who encouraged or discouraged you from using your high school library.

## Section 4.

**Quantitative Context:** Issues related to identification, conceptions and self-perception of *giftedness*, academic achievement and cognitive development.

**\*Qualitative follow up semi-structure interview questions:**

7.  What is your definition of a gifted individual? What does it mean to be gifted?

8.  How do you feel about having a different curriculum and school library resources for gifted students compared to those not identified as gifted?

_____

\*Questions for gifted or self-perceived gifted participants:

9.  Tell me about your senior high school library experience as a gifted or self-identified gifted individual. As a gifted student, what was it like to use your high school library?

10. In senior high school, how did other students use the high school library compared to you?

## Section 5.

**Quantitative Context:** *Demographic data* collection and invitation to an interview based qualitative follow-up of the survey research study.

**Qualitative follow up interview questions:**

11. Tell me about how you learned or studied in your high school library compared to the way you learned or studied at home?

12. How do you feel about the types of resources that were available in your high school library?

13. How do you feel about the opening hours of your high school library?

**\*Examples of follow-up phone questions to clarify answers obtained in the semi-structured interview questions**

1. Could you please explain further your answer to question \_\_\_\_\_ which read:

   "_____"?

2. Could you please provide some examples to your answers to question \_\_\_\_\_ which read:

   "_____"?

3. So to make sure I have understood your explanation is this is what you mean:

   "_____"?

4. And to make absolutely sure I have understood this correctly, my example to support this explanation would be:

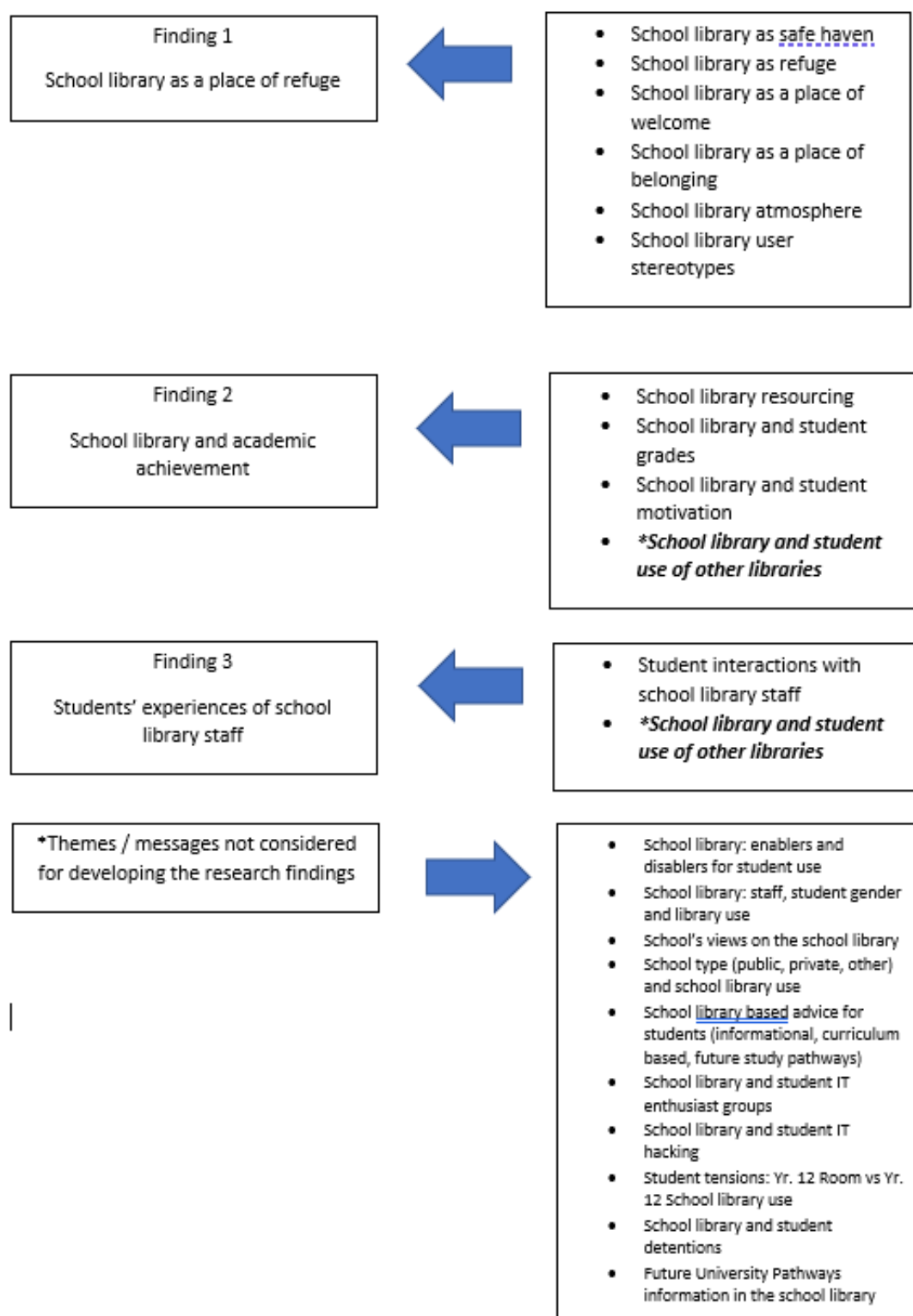   "_____"?

   Have I got an accurate understanding of this?

**Thank you for your clarification.**

# Appendix 5. Emergence of themes and development of findings - 21 themes revealed from the analysis of the data.

Emergence of themes and development of findings

In the 3 phases of this research, 21 themes or messages have emerged from the data. The unexpected large number of themes provided a challenge, i.e. how to arrange the emergent information by connecting and analysing the themes with viable meaning overlaps into research findings, while excluding the themes or messages which were less relevant, less prevalent and ones that would not effectively enrich the future practice and policy recommendations arising from this study? In order to achieve this aim, several approaches have been used in the process of theme clustering and elimination. Firstly, rounds of consideration and refinement process has been used to look at the data, which included reading, re-reading, mapping and re-thinking of the theme significance and connections to the research question and its aims. Secondly, the grouping of reasons for and against the inclusion of themes or messages into the larger findings helped to eliminate or include emergent messages. Thirdly, each theme or message level of data saturation throughout the 3 phases of this research was considered, with themes low in data saturation eliminated. While understanding that there is no "one size fits all" approach when it comes to obtaining data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1409), the comprehensive 3 phase mixed-methods research design in this study should've gone some way to insuring at least an adequate data saturation level for the main themes uncovered (Hennink, Kaiser, Marconi, 2016). Alternatively, for emergent themes which did not appear to reach an adequate level of data saturation in spite of this study's research design, the rational approach was to eliminate them from the analysis attempting to uncover the overall research findings. While recognizing that there are some elements in the process of prioritising and rejecting sections of data in this research could be considered somewhat problematic, arriving at robust findings is challenging in most research analysis. Nevertheless, the judgements made here based on the process outlined above, which included rounds of analysis, refinement and consideration, the practitioner researcher's personal, professional and place-based experience, the focus on policy and practice associated outcomes and the limitations of the Doctor of Education dissertation length - the findings this research arrived at should be considered as robust and worthy of wider consideration. However, the themes and messages excluded in the final research analysis may still generate questions and impetus for further research.

Below is a graphical representation of the main study findings, which were uncovered in this research and the themes or messages which were uncovered in this research.

| Finding 1 | | |
|---|---|---|
| School library as a place of refuge | ⬅ | • School library as safe haven<br>• School library as refuge<br>• School library as a place of welcome<br>• School library as a place of belonging<br>• School library atmosphere<br>• School library user stereotypes |
| **Finding 2** | | |
| School library and academic achievement | ⬅ | • School library resourcing<br>• School library and student grades<br>• School library and student motivation<br>• *School library and student use of other libraries* |
| **Finding 3** | | |
| Students' experiences of school library staff | ⬅ | • Student interactions with school library staff<br>• *School library and student use of other libraries* |
| *Themes / messages not considered for developing the research findings | ➡ | • School library: enablers and disablers for student use<br>• School library: staff, student gender and library use<br>• School's views on the school library<br>• School type (public, private, other) and school library use<br>• School library based advice for students (informational, curriculum based, future study pathways)<br>• School library and student IT enthusiast groups<br>• School library and student IT hacking<br>• Student tensions: Yr. 12 Room vs Yr. 12 School library use<br>• School library and student detentions<br>• Future University Pathways information in the school library |

## Appendix 6. Foucault's (1984) six principles of Heterotopia – as applied to the school library.

1. Heterotopias of crisis or deviance (in context to social norms).

School libraries as places of refuge are spaces where students who struggle with school social norms and behave in ways that deviate from peer norms, find safety, solace, comfort and belonging. These students are in the state of crisis but find their special way of existing inside a school library, which becomes their heterotopia of deviation, a place where behaviours of deviants set against many school norms are accepted.

2. Heterotopias as places of Emplacement and Displacement (effected by change as history unfolds upon them).

School libraries display transient characteristics as they are constantly evolving (or devolving) in response to societal pressures, financial circumstances, changing curriculum, hierarchies of leadership, environmental priorities or technology.

3. Heterotopias are created from juxtaposing spaces.

School libraries contain dualistic spaces within one place, where some of the purpose designed spaces exist in contrast or incompatible emplacement and don't sit comfortably together. For example, spaces for: older and younger students, library staff and students, resources for teachers or students, literary works for mature vs young students, old literature vs new experimental works, or Science and Arts, Theology and Atheism resources. The perceived incompatibility of the juxtaposed emplacements contests the original purpose of the library as a place of serene neutrality of knowledge storage and distribution.

4. Heterotopia of Time.

School libraries are closely linked to periods or 'slices of time' (Foucault, 1984, p. 26). What happens in school libraries can be described as periodical or even generational. The periods that

influence (school) libraries can be framed on a larger scale as for example, the 'pen' and paper age, printing press - typewriter age, the internet age, the digital and the emerging virtual age. On smaller scale intervals, there are instructional times (lessons, meetings, presentations) or non-instructional periods (before/after school, lunch/recess times). Heterotopic nature of school libraries breaks with the traditional concepts of time, as they accumulate the past (e.g. school yearbooks, diaries), the present that becomes the past or future (e.g. school notices, futurist literature) and the future (e.g. development plans, timetables or science-fiction books).

5. Heterotopia of Opening and Closing.

School libraries are non-public places of selective entry that are characterised by enforced opening and closing time barriers. These can be chosen weekdays, hours of functioning, semesters or a school year - but always available to a selective or privileged group connected to the school or community (e.g. school-community libraries), and critically, willing to follow relevant rules, to be allowed entry or exit.

6. Heterotopia of Illusion and Compensation.

School libraries are 'other places' that have links or relationship to the outside world(s). School libraries are enclosed places full of resources that provide more or less accurate representations of the 'real' world. Students who choose to spend time in the school library spaces, but live in the outside world(s), gain knowledge and skills, learn about social norms,

hierarchies and accepted ways of being within boundaries of school libraries, to experiment with this knowledge on the outside, in the 'real' world.