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Volunteer Perspectives on Working with Imprisoned Mothers in Aotearoa

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Abstract

This study seeks to better understand volunteers' experiences when working with incarcerated mothers. This research explores the challenges and tensions volunteers negotiate doing this work, focusing on the social powers of gender, race, and class. The literature review argues that incarcerated mothers occupy the intersection of social powers; they are usually socioeconomically disadvantaged Māori mothers who represent one of Aotearoa's most marginalised populations. My research seeks to answer the question: How does the unique perspective of the volunteers open up possibilities for change for imprisoned mothers? Reflective thematic analysis informed by feminist standpoint and intersectionality theory positions the volunteers as experts of their lived experience and recognises the complex intersections of social power on individuals' lives. I interviewed 10 prison volunteers who worked with imprisoned mothers seeking to strengthen the connection between mothers and their children. Volunteers were transformed during this work. Perspectives on prisoners, prisons, and society are shifted, turning the volunteers into advocates for imprisoned mothers. Through this work, volunteers become conscientised to their own privilege, which they harnessed to mitigate the disadvantages of imprisoned mothers. By listening to the mothers and being subordinated by the institutional authority of the prison, volunteers developed a shifting trifurcated perspective of the challenges of imprisoned mothers. This unique perspective and situated knowledge allowed the volunteers to witness, describe, and provide practical solutions to some injustices the mothers faced while in prison. While volunteers concluded that prison does not work to keep people safe or rehabilitate, they recognised that transformational changes take time. They offered ameliorative solutions that could immediately alleviate the separation distress of imprisoned mothers and their children. My analysis recognises that prison volunteers' knowledge can positively contribute to their own lives and the lives of imprisoned mothers, their children, and broader society.

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¹ Pay heed to the mana of women.

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Glossary

Aotearoa	Māori name for New Zealand
Ara Poutama	Māori name for the Department of Corrections
Hapū	To be pregnant, kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe, primary political unit in traditional Māori society
Hōkai Rangī	Māori strategy for Corrections
Kaupapa	By Māori for Māori approach
Kōrero	Conversation, speech, narrative, story, news, account, discussion, discourse, statement, information
Mana	Moral authority, prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma – <i>mana</i> is a supernatural force in a person, place or object. <i>Mana</i> goes hand in hand with <i>tapu</i> , one affecting the other. The more prestigious the event, person, or object, the more it is surrounded by <i>tapu</i> and <i>mana</i>
Mahi Aroha	Name for the Corrections' volunteer strategy. Mahi aroha is the term that most closely translates to the concept of voluntary work. Mahi aroha is the unpaid activity performed out of sympathy and caring for others in accordance with the principles of tikanga to maintain mana and rangatiratanga, rather than for financial or personal reward
Manākitanga	Cultural and social responsibility
Me aro ki te hā o Hine-ahu-one	Pay heed to the mana of women
Oranga Tamariki	Ministry for Children – Government agency with legal powers to intervene to protect abused or neglected children. It replaced the Ministry for Vulnerable Children previously known as Child, Youth and Family (CYFS) (McIntosh, 2022b)
Pākehā	Non-Māori person from New Zealand, usually New Zealander of European descent
Rangapū	Partner
Tangata whenua	Local people, hosts, indigenous people - people born of the whenua (that is, of the placenta and of the land where the people's ancestors have lived and where their placenta are buried)
Tangata Tiriti	People in Aotearoa by the right of the Treaty of Waitangi
Tapu	Sacred, prohibited, restricted, set apart, forbidden, under <i>atua</i> protection. <i>Atua</i> is spiritual ancestor, god, supernatural being
Te ao Māori	The Māori world
Te reo Māori	The Māori language

Te Tiriti o Waitangi Tikanga	The Treaty of Waitangi Custom, correct procedure, habit, lore, method, manner, rule, way, code, meaning, plan, practice, convention, protocol. The customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context
Taonga	Prized treasure – considered of value
Utu	Reciprocity, to repay, pay, respond, avenge, reply, answer
Wāhine	Women, woman, females, ladies, wives
Wāhine: E rere ana ki te pae hou	Women rising above a new horizon. The name for Corrections' women's strategy
Whakamaru	Protection
Whakaurunga Whānau	Participation Extended family, family group, a familiar term of address to a number of people - the primary economic unit of traditional Māori society. In the modern context the term is sometimes used to include friends who may not have any kinship ties to other members

Note. Definitions from *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, by J. C Moorfield (ed.), 2022.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Motherhood Devalued

I am interested in social justice for mothers. While being a mother is many things to many people, motherhood status often marginalises and devalues women (Cummins & Brannon, 2022; Dent, 2020; Granja et al., 2015; Rizzo et al., 2013). When I became a mother, despite my many privileges (being Pākehā, able-bodied, university educated, and heteronormative), I experienced being marginalised and devalued as a person. To illustrate, after becoming a mother, I was offered my old job back for less pay. Massey's advanced psychology of women course painfully/wonderfully conscientised me to my internalised gender² oppression. I had given up (with little thought!) my access to the economic world, my community, and my career, to become a full-time stay-at-home mother largely because of gendered norms. This is what my parents and many of my peers also did. Gendered norms further confined my 'choice' to be a stay-at-home mother as I earned significantly less money than my husband despite working in similar roles. Rich (1976) made a useful distinction between the institution of motherhood, which is patriarchal and oppressive, and the experience of motherhood. The experience of motherhood includes relationships of love and care with children, which can be a source of joy, power, and identity. I love being a mother and experience much joy from my relationships with my children, yet I also had internalised gendered norms about who a primary caregiver should be.

Mothers are positioned in Western society as primary caregivers to children, placing the burden of childcare as entirely the mother's responsibility (Jones et al., 2022). This social construction is gendered and naturalised (Kahu & Morgan, 2007). Mothers are subordinated because they are expected to be primary caregivers for children, although this work is devalued by society despite being essential for humankind's survival (England, 2005; Waring, 1999, 2018). Consistent, loving caregiving is vital for a child's flourishing; yet, it does not have to be the biological mother who undertakes this role. Feminist scholars have challenged the gendered assumption of the mother

² I understand gender to be how a person identifies, along with associated roles, behaviors and norms which are socially constructed. This is different to a person's sex which refers to a person's biological and physical attributes of male, female or intersex (Deaux, 1986).

as the primary caregiver, refuting the biological argument that women are natural caretakers and questioning why fathers have little societal expectation to parent their children (Chitayat, 2009; Kahu & Morgan, 2007; Pinho & Gaunt, 2021). Other scholars have challenged why caregiving for children has been socially constructed as women's work and consistently devalued (Arber & Ginn, 1995; Bhandare, 2018; Waring, 1999). Despite these challenges, in practice, the burden of childcare does largely fall on mothers because of these gendered assumptions (Sevilla & Smith, 2020). The current social climate supports women as primary caregivers as 'just the way things are' or the 'norm'. Gendered norms about parenting are reinforced by the intensive mothering discourse which is the dominant ideology of mothering in Aotearoa (Kahu & Morgan, 2007).

The intensive mothering discourse positions mothers as either 'good' or 'bad'. This discourse suggests that 'ideal' mothers should be child-focused, giving children as much time and resources as possible, and that mothers are 'naturally' better parents (Hays, 1996). However, as being constantly available to your children is neither good for families nor possible, almost all women are positioned as 'bad mothers', resulting in increased marginalisation for mothers. Becoming conscious of my subordination and devaluation as a mother (despite all my privileges) made me sensitive to how other women who were socially disadvantaged by race and class were further marginalised by their motherhood status. Impoverished and socially excluded mothers are often associated with social problems such as crime and are judged to be 'bad mothers' (Gillies, 2006).

Volunteers Who Help Mothers

Through my studies, I learnt about the disproportionate number of Māori in prison. Shamefully, I recognised how I had internalised discourses of Māori inferiority and was racist. Once I became aware of these multiple social injustices, I wanted to do research that could help multiply marginalised³ mothers and contribute to social change. These combined interests made me curious if anyone was helping mothers in prison. An online search led me to organisations that help incarcerated mothers. Through talking with the women who volunteered to do this work,

³ Multiple marginalisation refers to overlapping stigmatised identities which result in confinement to the periphery of mainstream society (Rodriguez-Seijas et al., 2019).

my initial interest in the experiences of imprisoned mothers shifted to the volunteers themselves. This was because the volunteers were experts in their field because they had worked with many incarcerated mothers and appeared to have a unique perspective due to being 'outside' the system, in the sense that they are not paid Department of Corrections⁴ staff. I imagined that volunteers may be freer than paid staff or prisoners to talk critically about their work due to their 'outsider' status and their relative privilege compared to imprisoned mothers. Interviewing volunteers instead of prisoners also had an ethical advantage as volunteers could choose freely, without coercion, whether to participate in the research.⁵ Understanding how this work is experienced will likely inform and improve it, ultimately benefiting Corrections, incarcerated mothers, and their whānau. While some research exists on mothers' experiences in Aotearoa prisons, there is no research on volunteers who work with imprisoned mothers. Exploring the experiences of women who work with imprisoned mothers also aligns with my feminist values.

Why Intersectional Feminist Research is Essential

A feminist approach is essential because Aotearoa is gender unequal (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2020; Reilly, 2013; St John, 2022). Feminist research understands the researcher as an active agent in the research process, and my reflective positioning allows the reader an insight into how I understand pertinent social powers and how my understandings may have influenced my work. I am committed to feminist research because I want equitable outcomes for women. A sensitivity to the injustice of social inequalities drives me because I have felt (and continue to feel) powerless, frustrated, and without words in my experience of being a woman and mother, despite being Pāheke and privileged! I hope that by doing feminist work, my children will grow up in a world where women are not second-class citizens. This work is urgent in the context of a reduction in women's rights worldwide; for example, the banning of women's education in Afghanistan (Ahmadi & Ebadi, 2022) and the rollback on women's reproductive rights in the United States of America (Harris, 2022; New Zealand Family Planning, 2022).

⁴ From here onwards, referred to as "Corrections".

⁵ If I interviewed prisoners, my research would need to be approved by Corrections and they would approve who I spoke to.

Despite Aotearoa consistently ranking highly in international gender-equality indexes (United Nations Development Programme, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2021) and over 50 years of feminist advocacy (NZ History, 2019), overt and subtle gender inequalities persist across many domains (Employment New Zealand, 2020; Gattung, 2018; Gender Equal NZ, 2020). For example, women get paid almost 10% less than men in the same jobs (Te Kawa Mataaho, 2022), and over two-thirds of people who became unemployed during the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 were women (Carroll, 2020; Stats NZ, 2020). Sexual harassment and violence towards women are evident in schools (Gordon, 2021), law (RNZ, 2021), music (Mau, 2021), film (Wiltshire & Cornish, 2020), sport (Z. George, 2021), governmental industries (S. Robertson, 2021) and homes. Aotearoa has one of the highest rates of domestic violence against women in the OECD (Hager, 2020; UN Women, 2020). One in three (33%) women report physical abuse and one in two report psychological abuse from an intimate partner across their lifetime; this figure rises to 55% when psychological abuse is included (Fanslow & Robinson, 2011). Anti-women attitudes are held by people with political power. For example, Christopher Luxon, the leader of the National Party, publicly endorsed the reduction of women's reproductive rights (RNZ, 2022). Rates of violence against women and political discourse that denigrates women's reproductive rights are examples of the social conditions which make life difficult for women in Aotearoa. While I engage in feminist research to address certain forms of gender inequity, some types of Eurocentric and heteronormative feminism has prioritised a privileged, White, middle-class agenda (S. Brewer & Dundes, 2018) and silenced other groups of women (Locke et al., 2020). While I am Pākehā and multiply privileged, I hope to reduce the potential for harm and silencing by committing to an intersectional feminist approach which addresses both racism and privilege throughout this work.

Intersectionality is employed as a theoretical foundation throughout this thesis to understand the complexity of how people experience social forces and power relations in particular contexts (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016; Mason & Stubbs, 2012). An intersectional approach acknowledges how overlapping inequalities, compounding social forces, and power relations are experienced differently by individuals who inhabit different social locations, for example, in the intersections of class, race, and gender. Social powers such as class, race, and gender are all inextricably

connected. For example, we cannot separate the experience of being a woman from being a Pākehā woman at the individual level. However, for analysis purposes, it is sometimes helpful to separate subject positions to see what effects they have. The following sections engage with intersectionality theory in two different ways. First, I use intersectional analysis to illustrate both the disproportionality and invisibility of Māori women in prison by looking at the prison population through the filter of both race and gender. Second, I use the compounded intersections of social powers to explain why we have disproportionately imprisoned impoverished Māori mothers.

The Invisible Disproportional Imprisonment of Māori Women

Māori women comprised 57% of the total female prisoner population in 2019 (Department of Corrections, 2019a). However, by December 2021, this figure had grown to 73% (Stats NZ, 2021a) which is grossly disproportional as Māori only comprise 17% of the population in Aotearoa (Stats NZ, 2021b). The increasing disproportional imprisonment of Māori women is invisible due to the lack of published statistics using intersectional analysis. To illustrate how invisible the increasing imprisonment of Māori wāhine⁶ is, when writing this thesis, the horrific statistic of 73% was not published anywhere. To obtain this figure, I contacted the researcher Liz Gordon, who told me to use Stats NZ raw data tables and calculate it myself.⁷

One reason for the invisibility of the disproportional imprisonment of Māori women is that existing prison population statistics are usually viewed through a single analytical lens such as gender. In April 2022, the *NZ Herald* published an article that described the reduction in the prison population under the Labour Government (Cheung, 2022). The article noted that the women's population had reduced by 46% from a peak in 2017. The article failed to mention that Māori disproportionately had increased. An intersectional analysis of prisoners that considers

⁶ Women.

⁷ Calculated from data at:

https://nzdotstat.stats.govt.nz/wbos/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TABLECODE7324&_ga=2.82908822.1099972432.1628561176-1732568544.1628561176

Select sentenced prisoners on this spreadsheet for year 2021, select women- the total is 447. Select women/Māori. Note that the total is 327. Divide Māori by total 327/447 = 73.2%.

factors of race and gender is essential because it reveals that Māori women are significantly over-represented in the prison population across several measures. For example, Māori women are apprehended, convicted, and incarcerated at higher rates than Māori men (Burt, 2011; Kingi, 1999; McIntosh & Mulholland, 2013; McIntosh & Workman, 2017; Morris et al., 2003; Newbold, 2007; Wijesingha, 2019). Intersectional analysis uncovers that Māori women are the fastest-growing population in the prison system (Deckert, 2020a; L. George et al., 2014; McIntosh & Workman, 2017; Quince, 2010). To illustrate, from 2009–2017, there was a 6% rise in prison sentences; the Māori male prison population decreased by 2%, while the Māori women’s population increased by 31% (Deckert, 2020a). It appears we disproportionately imprison a particular sector of society at ever-increasing rates; Māori women.

Impoverished Māori Mothers

The fact that most imprisoned women experience poverty is undisputed in local and global literature (Hayes & Barnhorst, 2020; Lamusse, 2017; McIntosh, 2017, 2022a; McIntosh & Curcic, 2020; Rashbrooke, 2013; R. Smith et al., 2007; Stanley, 2016; Wacquant, 2001; Workman & McIntosh, 2013). Low socio-economic status also disproportionately affects wāhine Māori (New Zealand Law Commission, n.d.; Reilly, 2019). However, an intersectional analysis that includes socioeconomic status is difficult because of a lack of available statistics and difficulties in defining the socioeconomic status of prisoners (C. Edmondson, personal communication, August 30, 2022).⁸ Motherhood is likely to exacerbate the financial situation of women as mothers caring for their children are often unemployed or in part-time work (Cohn et al., 2014; Rohwer, 2014; Waring, 2018). If mothers work, they generally earn less than fathers (Auckland Women Lawyers’ Association, 2022). Most incarcerated women are mothers (Bloom & Brown, 2011; Department of Corrections, 2021d; Gordon, 2009; Lobo & Howard, 2021). In a sample of 137 Aotearoa women prisoners, 87% were mothers (Gordon, 2009). Mothers in prison are also statistically invisible

⁸ If socioeconomic statistics were available for women prisoners, an intersectional analysis of class, gender, and race could illuminate if we are surveilling and imprisoning Māori women who experience poverty in increasing numbers.

because Corrections does not publish statistics regarding parental status.⁹ Asking a prisoner if they are a mother is not a compulsory question at intake (B. Morrison, personal communication, August 5, 2022). The disproportional imprisonment of impoverished Māori mothers remains largely hidden from the public view, statistics, and media. Disproportionate incarceration can be explained by Māori mothers' social location at the intersections of sexism, racism, and classism.

An Intersectional Explanation of the Statistics

The ongoing social powers of colonisation have resulted in the disproportional imprisonment of impoverished Māori mothers. Colonisation brought the social powers of patriarchy, racism, capitalism, and classism to Aotearoa.¹⁰ The interconnected and inextricably bound together colonising powers are central to my research because they are dominant forces of power that maintain inequality and the status quo in Aotearoa and the prison context. Intergenerational inequality is reproduced through an intersection of class, race, and gendered inequality crystallising in imprisonment (Western & Pettit, 2010). However, the high rates of Māori in prison are often framed within an individualised deficit narrative (Ministry of Justice, 2009; Te Karere, 2013). Statistics illustrating that Māori are negatively over-represented in crime, low-education, ill-health, and poverty measures support discourses of cultural inferiority, where the wider social context of a colonised history is ignored (Jackson, 1987; Webb, 2009). The norms of colonial, patriarchal and Eurocentric cultural contexts are so frequently taken for granted within the literature that the strength and courage of wāhine Māori in the face of contemporary social conditions of disadvantage has needed to become a focus of Kaupapa¹¹ Māori research in areas such as violence against women (D. Wilson et al., 2021) and women's incarceration (George et al., 2014; George & Ngamu, 2020). Using intersectionality theory, I can tell a different story that includes the broader social context and social power relations to explain why we have disproportionately surveilled and imprisoned impoverished Māori mothers in Aotearoa.

⁹ The exact number of mothers in Aotearoa prisons is difficult to ascertain because Corrections has not kept comprehensive nor publicly available data since 2013 (J. Johnson, 2019).

¹⁰ This does not mean pre-colonisation Aotearoa was an egalitarian utopia, just that these social forces became dominant after British colonisation.

¹¹ By Māori for Māori.

Colonisation almost destroyed the Māori way of life, culture, language and economic base, resulting in collective and intergenerational trauma (Armstrong, 2016; Ashton-Martyn & Rapira, 2018; Cunneen, 2011; Jackson, 1987; Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019; Mutu, 2019; Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora, 2019a). Colonisation is not a discrete event from the past; Colonisation has ongoing and everyday effects in Aotearoa (Elkington et al., 2020).¹² While Māori are impacted by colonisation to a much greater degree, Pākehā are also harmed by ongoing colonisation. Colonising powers are embedded in the structure of our society and the psychology of our people (Narvaez, 2021). The ongoing multi-dimensional and cumulative damaging (and privileging for some) effects of colonising practices are well documented both here in Aotearoa and overseas (Cunneen & Tauri, 2016; Fergusson et al., 1975; Jackson, 1987; Mikaere, 2013; Pratt, 1992; Samson & Gigoux, 2017; C. Williams, 2001).

The colonising power of racism was necessary to the colonising process because it justified unfairly taking Māori power and resources by rendering Māori as primitive, dangerous and “in need of civilising” (Holmes, 2021, p. 510). Eurocentric knowledge privileges Europeans and positions all non-European humans and their knowledge as inferior (Lander & Past, 2002; Seth, 2014). Racism is deeply embedded in Western thought and the practice of ‘othering’ groups of people has been reinforced over centuries (P. Moloney, 2011). Othering people is dangerous because it translates difference into inferiority and reduces groups to stereotypes (S. Q. Jensen, 2011; Lister, 2021; Riggins, 1997). Stereotypes are devoid of humanity and context (S. Williams, 2021), which allow human rights injustices to be ignored.¹³ Aotearoa’s media frequently associates dangerousness and criminality with Māori ethnicity, reinforcing the dehumanising ‘Māori as criminal’ stereotype (Ashton-Martyn & Rapira, 2018; Barnes et al., 2012; Coxhead, 2005; K. Williams, 2020; Yan et al., 2021). For example, crime statistics have been used within a deficit narrative to illustrate the idea that Indigenous people have inherent dangerousness and criminality (Weatherburn et al., 2003). What Indigenous people have in common is a history of colonisation in which their way of life was almost eradicated, alongside a systemic racist and

¹² “The colonisers come to stay – invasion is a structure, not an event” (Reid et al., 2017, p. 21).

¹³ For example, the South Island was declared ‘terra nullius’ because it was incorrectly believed that the South Island tribes were nomadic, which rendered them sub-human, so the land was ‘uninhabited’ (O’Regan, 1989).

discriminatory criminal justice system which operates as a tool of colonisation (Ashton-Martyn & Rapira, 2018; Cunneen, 2006; Tukaki, 2022). To illustrate the ongoing harm of colonisation to Indigenous peoples, Indigenous people are grossly over-represented in the criminal justice systems of other colonised countries such as Australia, Canada, and the USA (Cunneen, 2006; Mussell, 2021).¹⁴ Despite many studies detailing the devastating impact of colonisation and widespread agreement that our criminal justice system is racist toward Māori (Ashton-Martyn & Rapira, 2018; Department of Corrections, 2019b; Little, 2019; Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora, 2019b), dehumanising stereotypes of Māori still circulate (Brittain & Tuffin, 2017). While colonisation is disastrous for the Māori people, it is worse for Māori women (Mikaere, 2019).

To understand how colonisation is worse for Māori women, we need to understand Māori women's social standing pre-colonisation. Pre-colonisation Māori women held more power and status than their Pākehā counterparts (Mikaere, 1994; Quince, 2010). Māori women were not the property of Māori men like Pākehā women; they had leadership roles and retained names and property upon marriage (Mikaere, 2019).¹⁵ In contrast, the settler society's imported culture was deeply embedded in long-standing patriarchal histories, systems, institutions, and social power relations. Pākehā women were colonised by patriarchal ideals, where men had privileges not accessible to women. Patriarchy was necessary for colonisation because it enabled a subordinate class to come to Aotearoa to work for little or no wages, to cook, clean, teach, care, and breed (Kojo Institute, 2021). The intersection of racist and sexist social forces affected Māori women through the attempted destruction of the whānau system, which further marginalised Māori mothers.¹⁶ Pre-colonisation children were considered to belong to the whānau, so Māori mothers had flexible childcare (Mikaere, 2019). The imposition of the Western nuclear family isolated Māori women from the support of their whānau and rendered traditional Māori

¹⁴ For example, Canada saw a 74% increase in the imprisonment of Indigenous women over the last decade (McGuire & Murdoch, 2021). In Australia, Indigenous women comprise 36% of the prison population despite being 1.29% of the adult population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

¹⁵ Māori language also suggests the cultural importance of women. For example, 'hapū' means to be pregnant and also tribe (Moorfield, 2022). There was no word for "he or she" indicating that gender was less significant than tapu (sacredness, set apart, restricted) and mana (moral authority/supernatural force) to indicate your social status (Quince, 2010).

¹⁶ Feminist writers have drawn attention to how motherhood plays a vital role in women's subordination by the patriarchy (Chodorow, 1978; Rich, 1976; Roberts, 1993).

parenting practices such as *whāngai*¹⁷ primitive and morally inferior (McRae & Nikora, 2006; Pitama, 1997). The introduction of patriarchal values broke the balance between men and women prescribed by *tikanga*¹⁸ (Mikaere, 2013; Mitchell & Olsen-Reeder, 2021; Quince, 2010). While Māori men were also subordinated by racism, they largely internalised patriarchal values making Māori women inferior to them because Māori *wāhine* were oppressed by both their race *and* their gender (Quince, 2010). Colonial systems set on the destruction of the *whānau* and loss of social status for *wāhine* were disastrous for many Māori mothers, who were now devalued, left in isolation to raise children, and had to depend on men for economic survival, yet they displayed remarkable courage and strength surviving in social conditions of intersecting disadvantages (Mikaere, 2019; D. Wilson et al., 2019).¹⁹

Capitalism and class further disenfranchised Māori mothers. As Māori women were increasingly confined to the domestic sphere of the nuclear family, in a capitalist society, mothers who do not earn wages are considered of little worth (Dent, 2020; Waring, 1999, 2018). The original impetus of colonisation was to generate wealth for the United Kingdom (Poata-Smith, 2001). Capitalism required transforming Māori land held in collective guardianship into private ownership. Māori were dispossessed of land in several ways: through government 'sale', confiscation through acts of Parliament, individuation of title, and military conquest (Belich, 2015; Poata-Smith, 1997, 2001). Māori owned less than one-sixth of the land by the 1930s, so they had to sell their labour power to survive in the capitalist economy (Lamusse, 2017). Schools considered Māori women unsuitable for academic work or trade employment; they were designated for domestic servitude (Quince, 2010). The 1970s market collapse disproportionately affected Māori working class, who have since experienced high levels of poverty (Lamusse, 2017; Poata-Smith, 2001). The collective trauma of disenfranchisement was intergenerationally experienced through ongoing social harms and marginalisation creating a lower socioeconomic class for Māori (Pihama et al., 2014; Webb, 2017). Class is a product of the capitalist system, where groups of people share common economic interests. It is understood to be more than socioeconomic status, as class affects a

¹⁷ Māori customary practice of giving a child to other family members to raise. Pre-colonisation this carried no stigma because the child was considered to belong to the *whānau* (Quince, 2010).

¹⁸ Correct and proper practices, values and law.

¹⁹ For a fuller picture of Māori women losses under patriarchy and colonisation, see Mikaere (2019).

person's psychology and how they are perceived by others. The class system is further entrenched by the political and economic dominant ideology of capitalism and individualism.

Capitalism incorporates ideas of individualism, a theory that assumes that individuals can solve their own problems best, rather than the state. Dominant neoliberal discourses argue that free-market economics is the foundation of human flourishing, intensifying the individualism created by capitalist systems. A neoliberal capitalist emphasis on individual responsibility suggests that individuals shape their lives through choices. Neoliberal discourses argue that mothers in prison have freely made bad choices. This locates the cause of criminality and poverty in the individual and ignores the wider sociocultural and political social forces that contribute to imprisonment and impoverishment (Drake, 2011; Kennedy, 2020; Loto et al., 2006). Neoliberal individualism denies differences in access to power, resources, and information for marginalised people. Capitalism further complicates the impacts of patriarchy and gender stereotypes on how Māori and Pākehā mothers are positioned in our settler society in Aotearoa.

Fear the Most Marginal: The Dangerous 'Other'

Prisoners in society are positioned and stereotyped as 'dangerous others' and feared risks that need to be managed (Arrigo, 2013). Imprisoned Māori mothers are othered by their intersection of race, gender, class, and criminal parenting status. Multiply marginalised women who do humanness differently are seen as a threat to the social order because they are understood to present a risk to others. For example, Māori mothers from low socioeconomic backgrounds are framed as risks to long-term welfare assistance and threats to their children (Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012; Todd, 2008; Ware et al., 2017). Fearing society's most marginalised and least powerful people as the most dangerous is now a rational response (McIntosh, 2005). These stereotypes help to hold the social order in place; dangerous others are imagined to be both bad and dangerous, and therefore, removing them from society and punishing them is justified. The fear of the other is normalised and prison is essentialised because *only* prison can remove these 'risky' people from society to keep others safe. This is Arrigo's (2013) concept of "totalizing madness" (p. 674), meaning it is insane to fear people who are the least powerful and most marginalised in society, and that this fear justifies their imprisonment and perpetuates cycles of

harm on families and society itself. Arrigo (2013) argued that we are a ‘society-of-captives’ because by fearing difference and othering people, we fear difference in ourselves, which prevents human flourishing.

Through the dangerous other stereotype, Māori mothers are positioned in society as risky, dangerous, and criminal (Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012; Todd, 2008; Ware et al., 2017). Māori motherhood is surveilled and policed by the state in the form of child welfare, whose actions of removing children from their mothers has damaged a disproportional number of Māori families contributing to the intergenerational and vicious cycle of trauma, damage, and abuse (Abuse in Care – Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2022; Love, 2002; McIntosh, 2022a; Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2020). The state’s disproportionate removal of children from Māori families confirms the negative ‘dangerous’ dehumanising Māori mother stereotype²⁰ reproduced by the media (Breen, 2020; Keddell et al., 2021; Tupaea, 2020). For example, Deckert’s (2020b) research found that the media mentioned the removal of children from an offender more often if the mother was Māori. Compounding the ‘dangerous mother’ stereotype is the stereotype of the welfare mother; single mothers and mothers who receive welfare are demonised (Fineman, 1991; Foster, 2008; Todd, 2008). It is unsurprising that multiply marginalised mothers who are stereotyped as dangerous risks to their children and others are surveilled and filtered towards our criminal justice system. The colonising powers of racism, sexism, and classism and their intersections are major determinants of *who* is captured by our criminal justice system.

Agency

Understanding social forces as drivers of imprisonment does not mean that people do not have some agency and choice. Overlapping structural factors primarily drive the imprisonment of people because people who occupy complex intersections of these social powers of gender, race, and class are more likely to be marginalised and suffer imprisonment disproportionately. However, these structural factors intersect with individual agency and choices confined through

²⁰ In a recent study with Māori mothers who had their babies removed by the state, the mothers asked if their role of mothers could be recognised and if they could be treated with humanity, suggesting that modern state responses to Māori mothers are dehumanising (Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2020).

historical, social, cultural, gender, and racial stereotypes. I do not consider that imprisonment is the result of an individual's 'bad choices' alone. However, the structural drivers of crime are often ignored, partly because of dominant discourses that suggest Aotearoa is an egalitarian society.

The Difficulty Making Social Powers Visible

Everyday discourses assume that Aotearoa is a progressive post-colonial society, in the sense that we are (essentially) not troubled by problems of sexism, racism, or class (Dombroski, 2016). Discourses about our 'benign colonisation' (Huygens, 2011), 'post-feminism' (Martinussen & Wetherell, 2021), and 'our class-less society' (Rashbrooke, 2021) suggest an egalitarian utopia. However, the multiple injustices stemming from colonisation are often subtle, invisible, and hard to identify because the subordination of women, the poor, and Māori has become normalised, everyday, and internalised. The progressive society discourse results in a contradictory cultural and political climate abundant with equality ideals and an inability and reluctance to see seriously entrenched and everyday inequalities (Bilge, 2013). If we cannot see a problem, there is no need to address it. Yet, our criminal justice system is a clear example of modern-day colonial racial, gendered, and class inequalities, where impoverished Māori mothers are disproportionately over-represented. For Māori women of low socioeconomic status, social forces of racism, classism, and sexism collide to produce particular adverse outcomes (Benoit et al., 2019; Cunneen & Tauri, 2016; Mikaere, 2019). An intersectional analysis is vital to understand *who* is implicated in these social forces. As social forces are experienced differently in different contexts, to make sense of the volunteers' experiences, we need to understand something about the context in which they work—the prison.

The Prison Context

Prisons have become a normal and naturalised part of our social landscape (Arrigo, 2013; McIntosh, 2017). It is difficult for most people to imagine a prisonless world (A. Davis, 2003). Arrigo (2013) argued in his society-of-captives thesis that we have normalised and essentialised prisons, so we cannot imagine another way of dealing with human differences. A. Davis (1998) wrote that "imprisonment has become the response of first resort to far too many of the social

problems that burden people who are ensconced in poverty” (para. 1). A. Davis (1998) explained that the ‘prison industrial complex’ portrays certain segments of society as deviant or risks to be managed (such as impoverished Māori mothers). Surveillance then focuses on this group who have little social resources to argue. The prison industrial complex creates a vicious imprisonment cycle, further impoverishing people (A. Davis, 1998).

However, pre-colonisation, there were no prisons in Aotearoa, and Māori concepts of tikanga and utu²¹ sought to restore the balance between those who had harmed and society (Ashton-Martyn & Rapira, 2018; McIntosh, 2022a). Mikaere (2005) noted that “far from acknowledging tikanga as the first law of Aotearoa, the Crown proceeded on the racist assumption that Māori had no “real” law before the British arrived here to provide it” (p. 334).²² Criminal law establishes codes of unacceptable behaviour, and if the state determines a person to have broken this code, they are potentially imprisoned (Lamusse, 2017). Scholars argue that the purpose of prison systems in settler colonies is to guarantee the disappearance of Indigenous people and to crush any decolonial movements (Rāketē et al., 2017; Razack, 2013). However, imprisonment is not a singularly Māori issue, as prisons also capture other marginalised people.

Prisons in Aotearoa first appeared in the 1840s, housing people who were feared to be a risk to the community; the mentally unwell, homeless, and ‘dangerous offenders’ (Clayworth, 2012). Prisons are storehouses for multiply marginalised people that society does not want to deal with, as A. Davis (1998) stated, “prisons do not disappear problems, they disappear human beings” (para. 2). Mental illness, homelessness, unemployment, illiteracy, and addiction issues are only some of the problems that vanish from public view when the people dealing with them are consigned to prison (A. Davis, 2020).

Since the first prisons appeared, women have constituted a tiny fraction of the total prison population (Department of Corrections, 2022; McKenzie, 2005). Aotearoa’s women’s prison population was 5.7% of the total prison population in June 2022 (Department of Corrections, 2022). There are 19 prisons in Aotearoa, and only three are women’s prisons (Department of

²¹ Reciprocity.

²² Māori ideals of justice were virtually ignored by the British settlers (McIntosh, 2022).

Corrections, 2020b). Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility has 286 beds, Arohata Prison in Wellington has 88 beds, and Christchurch Women's Prison has 140 beds (Department of Corrections, 2020b). Worldwide, men are disproportionately imprisoned (Shaw, 2019; Walmsley, 2015).²³ Due to the highly gendered nature of prisons and crime (Booth, 2021; A. Davis & Shaylor, 2001),²⁴ women who commit crimes are doubly 'deviant' because they have allegedly broken the law, and because they have transgressed gender norms by being imprisoned. Women prisoners are othered by deviating from the gendered male norm of criminality.

As prisons are hidden worlds to the general public, only a few people witness the institutions' inner workings (Goffman, 1961). Prisons are peculiar places of work (Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015; Te Pere, 2021) because marginalised people are held in captivity, and security and safety are prioritised in militaristic, authoritarian, and inflexible practices (Te Pere, 2021). In Aotearoa women's prisons, "security trumps everything else" (Gordon & Love, 2022, p. 9). Volunteers must enter and work in the prison environment according to the prison rules (Department of Corrections, 2016). Volunteers are expected to be compliant and unquestioning to prison staff at all times (Wright, 2005). Given the embeddedness of the social power relations in Western society, it is unsurprising that prison is not a neutral environment; an intersectional analysis recognises that race, class, gender, sexual orientation, parenting and offender status are all explicit parts of the power dynamics of prison (Scott, 2013). Prison volunteers may or may not recognise that they are part of the power structure they work within; whichever way, according to Scott (2013), "they cannot escape it, they can only respond within it" (p. 26). A. Davis and Dent (2001) described women's prisons worldwide and through time as "uncannily similar" (p. 1237).

Despite commonalities of women's prisons worldwide, the Aotearoa context makes our women's prisons unique. McIntosh (2017) explained that "prisons are peopled. In Aotearoa/New Zealand,

²³ Prisons are so conflated with masculinity that the disproportional imprisonment of men is rarely discussed in the literature (Cúnico & Lermen, 2020). Theories have used biological differences to explain why men commit more crime suggesting men are more violent, aggressive, and risk taking than women (Day et al., 2021; Villazon, 2022). Environmental theories support gendered norms as the reason men commit more crime than women (Heidensohn & Silvestri, 2012).

²⁴ Since the first establishment of separate prisons for women in Aotearoa, prisons have been highly gendered places policing gender norms and reinforcing patriarchal social power relations (Davidson, 2021; McKenzie, 2005).

they are largely holders of Māori flesh and blood” (p. 114). While the disturbing trend of disproportional imprisonment of Indigenous women is also evidenced in other colonised countries (Mussell, 2021), Māori culture is a distinctive culture. As the specificity of context is critical to understanding a person’s experience, there is a need for research with Aotearoa prison volunteers because Aotearoa prisons are distinctly different from prisons in other countries due to the high rates of Māori incarceration. Research is also necessary because volunteers fulfil vital functions for Corrections.

Ara Poutama Aotearoa: The Department of Corrections

With more than 10,000 staff, Corrections is one of the largest government agencies in Aotearoa (Department of Corrections, 2021a). Corrections engages approximately 1,700–2000 prison volunteers who made about 16,000 visits in 2020 (Department of Corrections, 2021c). Volunteer work is described as “critical” to the work of Corrections (Department of Corrections, 2021c):

Volunteers have a positive impact on the behaviour of people in our care and help reconnect them to their family and community. This helps us greatly to reach our goal of keeping our communities safe and changing the lives of people in our care. (Department of Corrections, 2021b, para. 1)

Despite being critical to the goals of Corrections, very little is known about the prison volunteers due to a lack of research. In this thesis, a volunteer is defined as:

A person who seeks to engage in specified, unpaid activities (voluntary work) within the Department of Corrections for the benefit of offenders, their whānau and the wider community. (Department of Corrections, 2016, para. 4)

While Corrections approximately count the number of volunteer visits by scanning authorised provider prison entry cards, no official data is kept on volunteer gender, age, or ethnicity (Department of Corrections, 2018a). I assumed that most volunteers working with incarcerated mothers would be Pākehā women. In general, women are more likely to volunteer than men, particularly in health and wellbeing (Stats NZ, 2017; Volunteering Australia, 2021). Corrections surveyed 2,088 volunteers in 2020 and found that 81% of volunteers were Pākehā and 71% were over 55 (Hefford, 2020). The survey findings are limited as only 389 volunteers completed the

survey (an 18.6% response rate). In an Otago study, out of 15 prison volunteers, 14 were women, and 14 were Pākehā (Gilmour & Alessi, 2022). Some prison volunteer organisations only employ women, and others note that some women’s prison environments are unsuitable for male volunteers (New Zealand Howard League, n.d.). While little is known about who the volunteers are, we do know that Corrections engage with volunteers to help reach their institutional goals.

Corrections have two primary goals: to keep the public safe and to rehabilitate prisoners (Department of Corrections, 2018b).²⁵ However, scholars argue that prisons cannot rehabilitate prisoners, do not deter crime, and as a result, communities are not safer (Buttle, 2017; Crime Museum, 2021; D. J. Harding, 2019; Jordan et al., 2021; JustSpeak, 2018; Law, 2021; PAPA, 2022). To illustrate, reoffending on release is a significant problem. For example, within 24 months of being released from prison, 52.9% of Aotearoa women will be re-sentenced and 29.9% will be reimprisoned (Department of Corrections, 2020a). Recently, the call for transformational change regarding the treatment of women prisoners (particularly Māori women) with the goal of becoming increasingly rehabilitative has come from Corrections as well as external institutions and groups (Gordon & Love, 2022).

The Call for Transformational Change

Corrections, the Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Inspectorate, and other groups have called for transformational and urgent changes in women’s imprisonment (Adair, 2021; Department of Corrections, 2019b; Gordon & Love, 2022; Shalev, 2021). Correction’s policy documents lay out road maps for significant transformation in women’s incarceration. The *Hōkai Rangī* (2019–2024) strategy aims to incorporate te ao Māori across all staff and sectors and reduce Māori prisoners to proportionate population levels (Department of Corrections, 2019b). However, Corrections has been criticised for not being able to deliver the promise of *Hōkai Rangī*

²⁵ Aotearoa prison’s purpose is to both punish and rehabilitate. Rehabilitation is the idea of applying training and treatment to an offender, so they can return to the community and desist from crime. Punishment is the infliction of a penalty as retribution for an offence, and the punishment acts as a deterrent to future crime. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine how prison can punish and rehabilitate simultaneously (Arrigo, 2013; Polizzi & Braswell, 2009).

(Johnsen, 2020; JustSpeak, 2021; M. Smith, 2021).²⁶ Implementation has barely begun in women's prisons after five years (Gordon & Love, 2022). *Wāhine: E Rere Ana Ki Te Pae Hou: The Women's Strategy (2021–2025)* aims to apply a gendered, trauma-informed, whānau-focused approach to managing imprisoned women. This is the second women's strategy with similar aspirations. It is difficult to understand how the care of imprisoned women can be whānau informed when Corrections does not ask women if they have children at intake. Recently, the Office of the Inspectorate produced a report on women's lived experiences in prison and made 43 recommendations for significant change, including intake, whānau relationships, staff, and wellbeing (Adair, 2021). The Human Rights Commission has investigated human rights abuses in Auckland women's prison, specifically concerning segregation, restraint, and use of pepper spray (Shalev, 2021). Shalev's (2021) report found that human rights abuses were concentrated among Māori prisoners in a punitive prison culture. The Waitangi Tribunal is undertaking an extensive justice kaupapa inquiry alongside an inquiry into mana wāhine Treaty violations (Waitangi Tribunal, 2018). Since Corrections' women's strategy has been in effect for six years, these reports suggest little has changed in the treatment of women in prison. Researchers question whether the transformational changes needed in women's prisons can be delivered within existing institutions and colonial ideas of imprisonment. New and distinctive voices are joining Correction's call for urgent women's imprisonment transformation. For example, Gordon and Love (2022) proposed an open prison model for women in Aotearoa. Other groups have called for decolonising the criminal justice system (JustSpeak & Popsock Media, 2022).

This chapter outlined the setting and context of volunteer work. I argue that the ongoing colonising forces position impoverished Māori mothers as subhuman and dangerous risks that must be managed. To understand better the experience of volunteers working with imprisoned mothers, we need to know the context of the mothers' lives. In the literature review that follows I discuss what is known about the circumstances of imprisoned mothers. As volunteers seek to work to connect women and children, what is known about the impact of mother and child separation during imprisonment is discussed. I then outline what is known about prison

²⁶ Corrections has neglected their previous Māori strategies, resulting in a Te Tiriti o Waitangi Tribunal breach claim against them (Te Pere, 2021; Waitangi Tribunal, 2017).

volunteers. Prison volunteer work is scarcely paid attention in research despite global evidence of the value of volunteers. I review the beneficial and harmful aspects of volunteering before discussing the current project's methodology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Imprisoned Mothers

Circumstances

The paradox of women's prisons is that although women prisoners comprise a small proportion of overall prisoners, the effects of a woman's imprisonment are large because of the immense impact on children, families, and societies. In Aotearoa, most women prisoners are mothers and primary caregivers (Gordon, 2009; Shalev, 2021), yet we separate them from their children for mostly non-violent and less serious crimes for short periods (Gordon, 2022). Consequently, due to their status as primary caregivers, a mother's imprisonment has damaging consequences for herself, her children, her whānau, and the wider community (Kruttschnitt, 2010). Imprisoning mothers compounds intergenerational cycles of trauma and marginalisation through the disadvantage of children. Most mothers in prison are Māori and come from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations in society (Shalev, 2021).

Women in prison are not a homogenous population. However, they often share several circumstances that intertwine and compound to make life exceedingly difficult. As well as being Māori and impoverished, imprisoned women generally come from the most disadvantaged and marginalised sections of society (McIntosh, 2017; National Health Committee, 2008). Incarcerated women are likely to have experienced both mental illness and substance abuse (Collier & Friedman, 2016; Indig et al., 2016; Taylor, 2004). They are likely to be socially isolated (McIntosh & Workman, 2017) with poor health and low education and employment (Agnew, 2001; Goldingay, 2007; Kingi, 1999; National Health Committee, 2008; O'Neill, 1989; Richards, 2014; Taylor, 2008). For example, 67% of imprisoned women had literacy levels that would limit their ability to cope with everyday life (Adair, 2021). Thirty years of research suggest that women in Aotearoa prisons are likely to have experienced trauma and abuse in the form of gendered violence (Agnew, 2001; Bentley, 2014; Bevan, 2017; Department of Corrections, 2017; Goldingay, 2007; Indig et al., 2016; Kingi, 1999; McIntosh, 2017, 2022a; Morrison & Bevan, 2018; Quince, 2010). In a study of 38 women from a Christchurch women's prison, 94.7% had a history of

traumatic brain injury (Woolhouse et al., 2018). According to Carlton and Segrave (2011), prison is merely an extension of the existing trauma that has already pervaded women's lives. International research suggests that for women prisoners, the prevalence and pervasiveness of victimisation far exceeds levels in the general population (Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2003; K. P. Moloney et al., 2009; Mouzos & Makkai, 2004). For Māori prisoners, research paints an even bleaker picture. For example, at the time of arrest, Māori women are disproportionately likely to have experienced state care (RNZ, 2015) and young Māori women are the most likely to be repeat victims of sexual victimisation and domestic violence (McIntosh, 2022a). McIntosh has researched and visited women in prison for over a decade, and her work highlights the confined lives of women inside and outside prison (McIntosh, 2017, 2022a; McIntosh & Curcic, 2020). In the context of multiple disadvantage, these women often taking care of children (Shalev, 2021).

Most women in prison are primary caregivers and solo mothers (Agnew, 2001; Bayse, 1993; Bentley, 2014; Beresford et al., 2020; Codd, 2013; Department of Corrections, 2003; Glaze & Maruschak, 2010; Kingi, 1999; Lord Farmer, 2019; O. Robertson, 2012; Stone et al., 2017). For example, in the 2001 prison census of 88 women, 84% were solo mothers (Department of Corrections, 2003). Another common situation of imprisoned mothers is loss of control over the circumstances of their reproductive lives (Bloom & Brown, 2011). Teen pregnancy and involvement with government agencies are common (Bentley, 2014; Bloom & Brown, 2011). In a study of 23 mothers in Arohata Prison, half of the women had their first child when they were teenagers (McLean, 2019). Another study of 67 mothers found that Oranga Tamariki²⁷ had been involved in more than one-quarter of cases (Collier & Friedman, 2016). Imprisoned mothers have often had multiple partners and children but often do not reside with the fathers of their children (Gordon, 2009; McLean, 2019). A study of 113 Aotearoa women prisoners found that three-quarters had experienced family and sexual violence; half of the women in the study had experienced rape; and two-thirds had suffered from intimate partner violence (Bevan, 2017). Shockingly, these multiply marginalised mothers are mostly imprisoned for crimes that do not pose a risk to others (Gordon & Love, 2022).

²⁷ Ministry for Children.

Crimes

Women are imprisoned for less serious and less violent crimes than men. Corrections states that “in general, women commit less serious crime and pose a lower risk to the community than men” (Department of Corrections, 2021d, p. 6). If women’s crime does not pose a risk to the community, then why are these women imprisoned at all? ‘Women specific’ factors that influence a woman’s entry into crime include “physical and sexual victimisation; intimate partner relationships with offenders; tension associated with parenting and child custody processes; mental health issues; substance abuse; and financial pressures” (Bevan, 2015, para. 1). Coercive control and abuse within intimate relationships are significant factors in women’s crime (Isaac & Haami, 2007; Mackenzie, 2009; Ortiz, 2018; Swan et al., 2008). In 2020, women were most likely to go to prison for “theft, offences against justice (often breaching community sentences), burglary, intent to injure and drug offences” (Gordon & Love, 2022, p. 11) (see Table 1). Reviewing the crimes women are sentenced for confirms the strong link between poverty and imprisonment; (see Figure 1). For example, from 1980–2020, benefit fraud was the main crime attracting a prison sentence.²⁸ Offences against justice procedures (for example, not paying a fine) comprised approximately 25% of prison sentences in 2020 (Gordon, 2022).²⁹ It appears that women experiencing poverty and coercive violent relationships are more likely to be imprisoned.

²⁸ In 2004, 200 women were imprisoned for benefit fraud.

²⁹ Caution must be taken when reviewing index crimes as they do not tell a wholistic story. For example, while the main crime attracting a prison sentence may have been theft, drug addiction may also be present.

Table 1*2021 Women's Offences that Attracted a Prison Term*

Theft and related offences	93
Offences against justice procedures, etc (e.g., breaches of bail conditions)	57
Unlawful entry with intent/burglary, break and enter	57
Acts intended to cause injury	75
Illicit drug offences	36
Fraud, deception and related offences	39
Traffic and vehicle regulatory offences	33
Robbery, extortion and related offences	15
Prohibited and regulated weapons and explosives offences	9
Homicide, abduction, property damage, dangerous acts, other (total)	33

Note. From *Can an Open Prison Model Solve the Problems of Women's Imprisonment in Aotearoa?* (p. 10), by L. Gordon & C. Love, 2022, Pukeko Research.

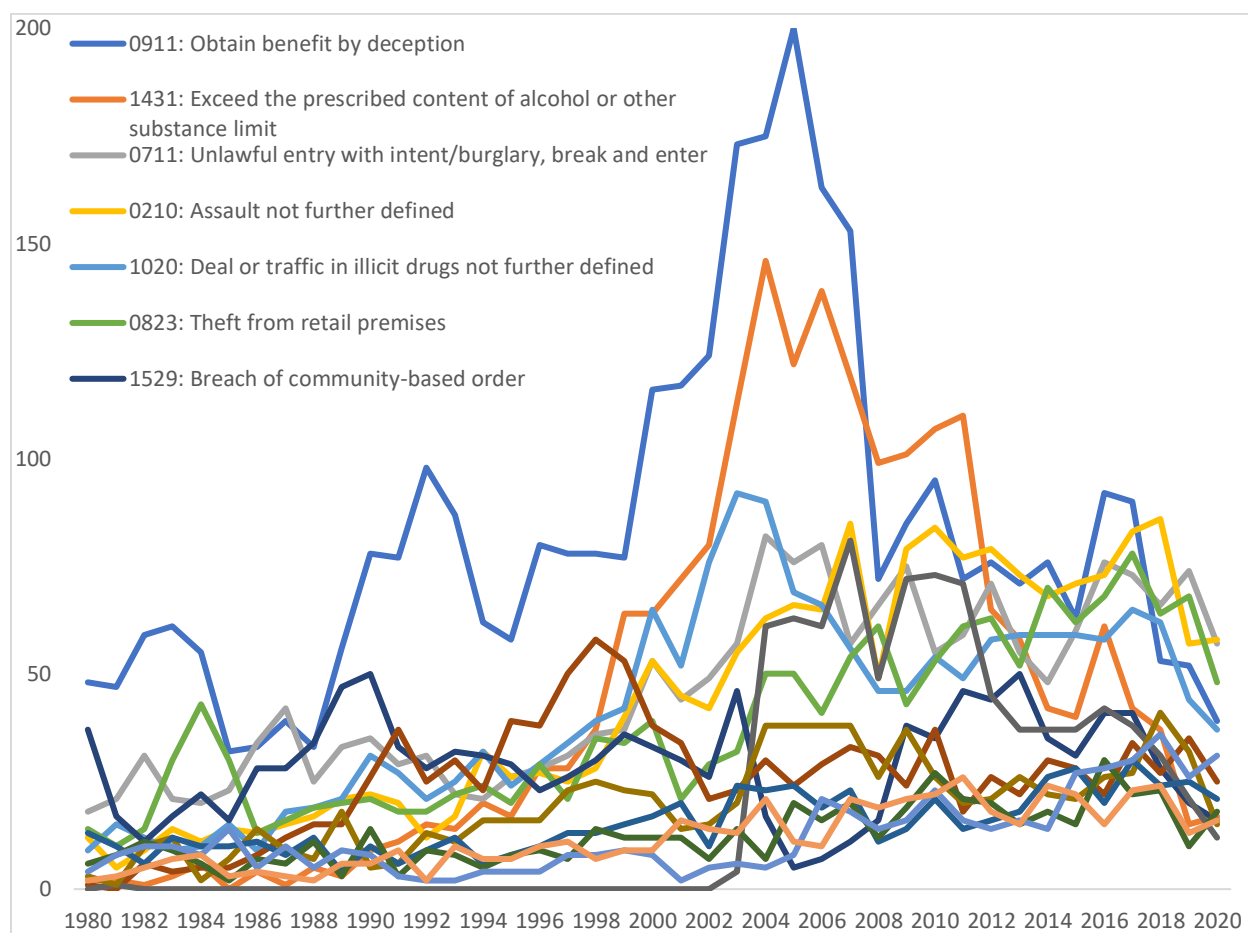
Motherhood also contributes to a mother's incarceration. Gordon and Love (2022) observed that one in five women were imprisoned due to breaches of non-prison sentences, and noted that "conditions were often breached as a result of complex and contradictory demands on women from their whānau" (p. 10). Despite research evidence showing that short sentences are damaging to both mother and child (Baldwin & Epstein, 2017; Penal Reform International, 2022), around 40% of sentenced women prisoners spend less than six months in prison and the median period is 6–12 months which indicates the level of seriousness of the crimes they are charged with (Gordon, 2022). The number of women separated from their families and held on remand (pre-trial detention) has risen dramatically over the last 20 years (Gordon & Love, 2022). In 1998, the number of women in remand was 249, and in 2020 it was almost 2,000. During this timeframe, the number of Māori on remand increased by 807% (Gordon, 2022). Remand is supposed to be used for people who are a flight risk or a danger to others. Considering the crimes the mothers are accused of, it appears that remand is being used unjustly. Remand is a significant area of injustice that requires urgent research, as it is unjust that so many mothers are removed from their homes *before* they have been found guilty. Being imprisoned on remand further

impacts the complexities and marginalisation experienced by incarcerated mothers and their families.

Considering the circumstances of imprisoned mothers and the less serious crimes they are imprisoned for, I now discuss the impacts of separating a mother from her children in the context of poverty, instabilities of family life, and multiple marginalisation.

Figure 1

Sentenced Women Prisoners by Main Offence 1980–2020



Note. From *Can an Open Prison Model Solve the Problems of Women’s Imprisonment in Aotearoa?* (p. 8), by L. Gordon & C. Love, 2022, Pukeko Research.

Global studies conclude that the harshest single aspect of being in prison is a mother’s separation from her children (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Hairston, 1991; Lobo & Howard, 2021; Lord Farmer, 2019; Rasche, 2000). Researchers describe the distress of being separated from their children as

a 'double punishment' or one of the 'gendered pains of imprisonment' (Aiello, 2016; Chesney-lind, & Pollock, 1995; Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Fithian, 1983; Geiger & Fischer, 2005; Rafter, 1990; Tadič, 2018; Teather et al., 1997; P. Young, 1993). The first punishment is the prison sentence; the second punishment is separation from their children. Incarcerated mothers report that separation from their children is their primary concern (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Henriques, 1996). Adverse psychological outcomes such as grief (V. Jensen & DuDeck-Biondo, 2005; Melander, 2020), anger (De Claire & Dixon, 2017), depression (American Correctional Association, 1990; Pinese et al., 2010), anxiety (Hairston, 1991; Owen, 1998), guilt (Baldwin, 2018, 2020; Baunach, 1985; Enos, 2001; Lockwood, 2013), and stress (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Houck & Loper, 2002; Tuerk & Loper, 2006) have been associated with incarcerated mothers separation from their children.

Mother-child separation in the context of women's prisons in Aotearoa mostly happens to Māori mothers. Separating mother and child within Māori families continues colonising practices of the destruction of whānau and reproduces harmful stereotypes that Māori mothers are 'bad' mothers. This devastation compounds the multiple disadvantages some Māori families are already experiencing. Research into abuse in state care by the Royal Commission of Inquiry and the work by the Children's Commissioner illustrates the pain, trauma, distress, and deep emotional scars Māori mothers endure when their children are removed from their care (Abuse in Care – Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2022; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2020). This separation trauma is also intergenerational as it affects imprisoned mothers' children.

Imprisoning a mother significantly impacts her children (Baunach, 1985; Codd, 2013; Enos, 2001; Gordon, 2009; V. Jensen & DuDeck-Biondo, 2005; Kingi, 1999; Melander, 2020; Poehlmann, 2005; Siegel, 2011; VanBaalen, 1992). Research consistently shows that having a parent in prison has a range of negative impacts on their children, including educational, health, financial, behavioural, and mental health problems (Arditti, 2012; Gordon, 2015; Melander, 2020; Murray, 2014; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Shamaï & Kochal, 2008). The imprisonment of a mother can result in more negative consequences compared to incarcerated fathers (Dallaire, 2007; Murray & Murray, 2010). Children of incarcerated mothers are more likely to experience increased grief, fear,

shame, stigma, trauma, and changes in home, school, and caregivers than children of incarcerated fathers (Beckerman, 1991; Beresford et al., 2020; Lockwood, 2013; Minson, 2017; Poehlmann, 2005; Thompson & Harm, 2000). As Māori women are disproportionately represented in prison, the majority of these children and communities impacted are Māori (Gordon & MacGibbon, 2011; McIntosh, 2022a).

A mother's imprisonment also impacts the community. For example, due to the displacement of children, a mother's imprisonment can impact the quality of life for caregivers and strain social services (Arditti, 2012; Bowers & Myers, 1999; Codd, 2013; Gordon, 2009; Mackintosh et al., 2006; McIntosh & Curcic, 2020; Siegel, 2011; Stringer & Barnes, 2012; D. S. Young & Smith, 2000). Children of prisoners are seven to nine times more likely to end up in prison themselves, and the children of incarcerated mothers are even more likely than the children of incarcerated fathers to be imprisoned (Ashton-Martyn & Rapira, 2018; Burgess-Proctor et al., 2016; Dallaire, 2007; Gordon, 2011; Tasca et al., 2011). The intergenerational impact of imprisonment appears to be worse for Māori. Gordon's research with 217 Māori prisoners found that two-thirds of the prisoners had previously lived with someone who had been sent to prison when they were a child, compared to one-third of Pākehā participants (Gordon & MacGibbon, 2011).³⁰ Widespread acknowledgement of the negative consequences of imprisoning mothers has led to researchers calling for alternatives to incarcerating mothers for decades (Chesney-Lind, 1991; Dolan, 2016; Lord Farmer, 2019; Rathmell, 2021). U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch (2018) stated that "put simply, we know that when we incarcerate a woman, we often are truly incarcerating a family, in terms of the far-reaching effect on her children, her community, and her entire family network" (as cited in Linder, 2018, p. 3). Considering the loss of 'everything' in marginalised communities that had little to lose in the first place, the vicious cycle of imprisonment and impoverishment is clear. One of the reasons a mother's imprisonment has such a devastating effect is due to gendered norms that position the mother as the primary caregiver.

³⁰ The National Health committee (2010) concluded that the "most vulnerable communities are more susceptible to the cycle of imprisonment. High imprisonment rates can erode the stability and cohesion of the whole community. The large proportion of Māori in New Zealand prisons means the impacts of imprisonment fall disproportionately on Māori whānau and communities, and result in many living on the verge of crisis" (p. 112).

The gendered assumption that all childcare is the mother's responsibility (as discussed in Chapter 1) does not seem affected by the mother's imprisonment (Kingi, 1999; McIntosh, 2022a; P. Young, 1993). When a father is imprisoned, his children are typically looked after by the mother (Kinship, 2022). The reverse is not the case; fathers do not typically assume the sole caregiver role when mothers are imprisoned. Government reports have long observed that "women do not leave their families at the prison gate; rather they endeavour to manage their families from inside the prison walls" (Lashlie & Pivac, 2000, p. 25). In McLean's (2019) study of 23 mothers in Aotearoa, the mother's imprisonment meant changed care arrangements for most dependent children in the study, and one-third were placed with a maternal family member. In a study of approximately 539 children of prisoners, all but one caregiver was a woman (Gordon & MacGibbon, 2011). It appears that other women or government agencies care for the children when mothers are in prison as opposed to fathers; fathers do not seem to be considered as possible caregivers or responsible for their children (Bentley, 2014; Gordon, 2009; Kingi, 1999; McIntosh & Curcic, 2020). As the concept of children being the responsibility of the whānau has been marginalised by colonisation, whānau support does not appear to be a readily available option for many imprisoned mothers. Due to most imprisoned mothers being unable to rely on their children's fathers, or have whānau support, imprisoned mothers are at risk of losing everything—their homes, adult relationships, and access to their children (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Mignon & Ransford, 2012). The stress of managing families from inside prison (Enos, 2001) is compounded due to the stigma that imprisoned mothers are 'bad mothers'.

Incarcerated mothers are more stigmatised than imprisoned fathers due to gendered norms about crime and the societal view that women in prison are 'bad' mothers (Kauffman, 2001; Mignon & Ransford, 2012; Teather et al., 1997). Motherhood is often a primary part of a woman's identity (Baldwin, 2017, 2020; Easterling et al., 2019). Dominant discourses suggest that to be a 'good' woman is to be a 'good mother'. An imprisoned mother is not considered a 'good woman' because criminal activity is antithetical to cultured gender norms (Bloom & Brown, 2011). Neither is she considered a good mother, as she is separated from her children in opposition to the intensive mothering discourse (Hays, 1996; Kahu & Morgan, 2007). In a society dominated by western values which emphasises intensive mothering and women as the primary caregiver,

there are severe consequences when separating a mother and child (Aiello, 2016). For example, imprisonment may result in the mother losing access to her children or being considered unworthy of help because she is a 'bad mother' (Walker et al., 2021). However, the desire to be a 'good mother' is sometimes why women end up in prison. An ex-inmate reported:

When I was growing up I had nothing, like, we were poor. I didn't want that my children would live like that. And everything that I have done was to survive and provide for my children, which is really no excuse, but I did it. (McIntosh & Curcic, 2020, p. 231)

Despite some evidence that women are imprisoned for being 'good' mothers, the 'bad' mother stigma further marginalises imprisoned mothers.

Imprisoned mothers represent some of Aotearoa's most marginalised and disadvantaged populations. Shalev (2021) noted that "the women incarcerated in New Zealand's prisons are a vulnerable population, with high levels of deprivation, trauma, and multiple and complex needs. Many are mothers, some with sole responsibility for the entire family" (p. 19). They often have histories of victimisation and trauma and suffer from poor health, poverty, addictions, and mental distress. They are mothers and usually primary caregivers to children. Shockingly, 73% of these women are Māori. They are being imprisoned and separated from their children for mostly less serious and less dangerous crimes for short periods. Imprisonment contributes another difficulty to their already complex lives. The harshest aspect of imprisonment for mothers is separation from their children. This separation predominately happens to Māori mothers, acting as an ongoing consequence of colonisation to destroy whānau support. A prison sentence for a mother who is a primary caregiver punishes the mother disproportionately, and also her children, whānau, and community. Intergenerational incarceration compounds disadvantages and continues to feed the criminal justice system through the disadvantage of children. As of June 2022, approximately 438³¹ women remained in Aotearoa prisons (Department of Corrections, 2022). The impacts on these women have reverberations that extend far beyond the prisoner

³¹ Prison statistics generally refer to the population on a given day as people come into prison and are released every day. McIntosh (2022a) and Gordon and Love (2022) argue that a far greater number of people are imprisoned than the static daily statistics convey.

herself. The mothers represented in the literature are women worthy of our attention and support. In the next section, I detail what we know about the volunteers who seek to help these mothers connect with their whānau from prison though the limited research available.

The Volunteers

Limited Research

Research is needed on the experiences of volunteers working with incarcerated mothers, as no research on this population currently exists. Corrections, non-governmental organisations and researchers have highlighted the importance and increased reliance on prison volunteers and called for research on volunteers' perspectives and experiences (Abrams et al., 2016; Hefford, 2020; Sinclair, 2017; Tewksbury & Dabney, 2004). Despite research illustrating the significant contributions of volunteers within prisons and the sheer size of the sector, there is limited research on prison volunteers globally (Abrams et al., 2016; Buck, 2018; Considine, 2003; Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015; Quinn & Tomczak, 2021; Rath, 2008; Robison, 2016; Teicher & Liang, 2019; Tewksbury & Dabney, 2004; Tomczak & Buck, 2019b). Volunteering, in general, is under-researched (Lup & Booth, 2019; Rodell et al., 2015; J. Wilson & Musick, 1997). Work research tends to split work into unpaid domestic labour and paid work, rendering volunteer work socially invisible (Venter, 2022). This lack of research may also be because unpaid work is understood as of little value in a capitalist society, despite the large economic contributions of unpaid labour (Abrams et al., 2016; Oppenheimer, 2004; Tomczak & Buck, 2019b). Alternatively, people may be unmotivated to explore the value of volunteer work because they are unable (or unwilling) to value it for what it is worth. Arguments have been made that the economic system is propped up by volunteer work and could not exist without it (Waring, 1999, 2018). Volunteer work is intertwined with neo-liberal economic policy and gender stereotypes about who undertakes this work (Daniels, 1985). As volunteering is undertaken mainly by women, research on women's interests is generally sparse (Vechery, 2021). The available research on prison volunteers is further hampered by varying nomenclature (Rochester, 2013), scholars' differing focus, and the sheer variety of organisations and roles (Tomczak & Buck, 2019a). Prison services provided by the state or community are in constant flux (Oppenheimer, 2004). The only research on Aotearoa

prison volunteers is a recent study that evaluates a student programme in a men's prison that found that volunteering transformed students' ideas about prisons and prisoners (Gilmour & Alessi, 2022).³² Unsurprisingly, I could not find any research exploring volunteers' experiences working with imprisoned mothers. As incarcerated mothers are a distinct population, understanding more about the volunteers' experiences may offer insights into the challenges that mothers in prison face.

Existing research tends to be less relevant to understanding the experiences of Aotearoa prison volunteers who work with predominately Māori mothers. This is because most research comes from the USA, has a religious focus, and is concerned with men's imprisonment, reflecting that religious North-American volunteers who work in men's prisons are the biggest group worldwide (Abrams et al., 2016; Camp et al., 2006; Gilmour & Alessi, 2022; Hefford, 2020; Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015; Tewksbury & Collins, 2005; Tewksbury & Dabney, 2004). We know little about volunteer experiences as the voices of volunteers are often missing from prison volunteer research (Quinn & Tomczak, 2021). Research tends to focus on descriptive or evaluative accounts of programmes (Camp et al., 2006; Frost & Clear, 2012; Mills et al., 2011) or fails to include volunteers' voices (Tewksbury & Dabney, 2004). Up to this time, research has not enabled volunteers to speak freely about their experiences working with incarcerated mothers. Despite limited research in this area, there is much written about how Corrections considers volunteers important.

Volunteer Benefits

Volunteers donate hours of free labour to prisons, filling essential service gaps, saving correctional institutions millions of dollars worldwide (Campbell, 2018; Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015; Mills et al., 2011; O'Connor et al., 2006). Due to insufficient resources, USA federal prisons depend on thousands of volunteers (Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015) and in England and Wales, the voluntary workforce is larger than the probation and prison services combined (Mullen, 2018;

³² Unfortunately, this study was published after I concluded my interviews.

Quinn & Tomczak, 2020).³³ Without volunteers, many services offered in prison would not be possible due to financial restraints (Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015; Warburton & Oppenheimer, 2000). In Aotearoa, the Corrections' Volunteer Strategy projected savings of NZD\$1.02 million per year for 40,000 hours of volunteer work and called for a significant increase in volunteers (Department of Corrections, 2018a). Volunteers can increase human resources without raising budgets (B. R. Johnson, 2013; Verhoeven & Van Bochove, 2018). Corrections' annual report for 2020/2021 stated that their operating expenditure was NZD\$1.8 billion, which was NZD\$74.7 million higher than the previous year: increases in employment accounted for most of the increased expenditure.³⁴ Almost half of the budget (47% or NZD\$847.1 million) was spent on personnel (Department of Corrections, 2021a). In under-resourced prisons, volunteers can complement the work of paid staff, bringing vital additional elements that allow successful rehabilitative work to proceed (Sinclair, 2017).

Corrections understand volunteers as invaluable to their goal of reducing reoffending through rehabilitation (Department of Corrections, 2018a). Volunteers encourage prisoners to desist from offending by connecting them with support in the community, teaching skills, and developing pro-social relationships. As previously noted, reoffending is a significant problem. High recidivism rates suggest that Corrections are not successful in rehabilitating people and reducing crime (Nadesu, 2008). Rehabilitation is also a problematic concept, as it is an individualistic solution to the problem of crime which ignores the contributing contextual and structural factors. Understanding the problems of crime as primarily structural means that the goal of integrating a person into a society they were not integrated into in the first place can appear counter-productive (Wacquant, 2010).³⁵ An underlying assumption that most existing

³³ Sinclair (2017) notes that some volunteer organisations have considered withdrawing their services out of fear that it enables the prison system to continue with inadequate resources.

³⁴ While Aotearoa does not have the same large-scale prison-industrial complex as the USA where prisoners not only generate jobs but also create sellable products and have privatised prisons, an argument could be made that the 10,000 staff that rely on prisons for their livelihoods and expenditure of NZD\$1.8 billion contributes to a capitalist argument for the essentialisation of prison.

³⁵ For example, volunteers are engaged to assist in the 'correction' of a person's behaviour, without consideration that on release, multiply marginalised mothers may return to the same impoverished environment that filtered them towards prison in the first place, without addressing any of the structural issues that initially led to imprisonment.

volunteer research makes is that the cause of crime is in the individual's choices and that the solution (delivered partly by volunteers) is also individualistic—rehabilitation. The intersection of social forces that contribute to the confinement of choices is not considered. Scholars argue rehabilitation is not possible within prisons (Feinman, 1983; Stender, 1974) and local scholars question how rehabilitation can occur in a colonised society where prison operates as a tool of colonisation (Ashton-Martyn & Rapira, 2018).

However, overseas research explicitly studying the effects of prison volunteers on reoffending indicates that prison volunteers *do* contribute to a reduction in recidivism (Bales & Mears, 2008; Celinska, 2000; Duwe & Johnson, 2016; Lewis et al., 2007; Mears et al., 2012; Schuhmann et al., 2018; Sharkey et al., 2017; M. C. Young et al., 1995). Duwe and Johnson's (2016) study of 836 American prisoners found that clergy visits reduced recidivism by 25% for rearrest, 20% for reconviction, and 31% for re-incarceration. A 13-year study of over 300 American women prisoners concluded that volunteers make an invaluable contribution to correctional services, providing social support that aids desistance (J. Duncan et al., 2018). This suggests that volunteer relationships can contribute to changing a prisoner's social context. As the drivers of crime are complex intersections of societal and individual factors, volunteer pro-social relationships and efforts may influence an individual's choices. A thorough literature search failed to find any research on prison volunteers' impact on desistance in Aotearoa. However, Taylor's (2004) study found that pro-social relationships and consistent social support were desistance factors in her study of 26 women released from Christchurch prison.

Another similar argument that Corrections provides for engaging volunteers is that volunteers act as role models, actively modelling pro-social lives and healthy relationships, which contributes to desistance (Department of Corrections, 2018a, 2021c; J. Duncan et al., 2018; Opata, 2001; Sinclair, 2017). While role modelling does not change the structural drivers of crime, it may create positive relationships. Sinclair (2017) argued that positive relationships are critical in a genuinely rehabilitative prison, as volunteers model healthy relationships, which are essential to maintaining and restoring (White middle-class understandings) of positive family connections. Positive relationships can be essential in creating a new experience for a person. A.

Johnson (2013), a multiply marginalised American woman, described how powerful listening and hearing women who have been victimised and traumatised can be because it opened up a new experience for her:

People like me, we are killers and rapists, we are socio-paths and zombies, we are addicts and alcoholics. We are killers for a reason. And when you stop and listen to my pain for real, it works in your favour, it creates a new experience for me, one with a loving person, with someone who cares, and it helps deflate the rage that would otherwise have me kill. (p. 667)

By listening to prisoners and hearing their pain, volunteers can provide social support to marginalised communities (Clinks, 2016; Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015; L. Liu & Chui, 2013; Quinn & Tomczak, 2021). Volunteers bring the outside world into the prison, providing a vital link between the prison, community, and resources (Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015; Opata, 2001; Sinclair, 2017). Prison volunteers also provide “local flavour”, making the prison reflect the community (Sinclair, 2017, p. 8). However, as research indicates that volunteers tend to be relatively privileged White women, only a particular segment of the community is reflected. However, listening to marginalised mothers may open possibilities for both volunteers and mothers.

Prison work is rewarding for volunteers (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013; H. E. Duncan & Balbar, 2008; Jacobi & Roberts, 2016; Madison-Bell, 2014; Rath, 2008). Trickey’s (2020) auto-ethnographic account of volunteering in an American women’s prison concluded that volunteers get more benefits than prisoners and explained how this work allowed her to personally and professionally advance, significantly impacting her wellbeing. This suggests that privileged White women benefit from prison volunteering in many ways. For example, prison volunteering can create social networks and friendships (Shelton, 2007). The *Corrections Aotearoa Volunteer Survey* concluded that volunteers felt well supported and rewarded and 96% of respondents would recommend volunteering at Corrections to others (Hefford, 2020). One respondent described why they would recommend volunteering to others by saying “it is very worthwhile and rewarding, feels like we are making a difference” (Hefford, 2020, p. 14). The transformational possibilities of volunteering are another significant benefit.

Volunteering can transform perspectives of the self, society, crime, and prisoners and make fundamental shifts in how the world is viewed (Jacobi & Roberts, 2016). Canadian prison volunteers reported increased tolerance, empathy, and appreciation for their quality of life (H. E. Duncan & Balbar, 2008). In criminology studies, prison visiting often allows students to reflect on negative stereotypes of prisoners and instead recognise prisoners as individuals who face social issues and challenges (Gilmour & Alessi, 2022). Volunteering can alter people's perceptions of prisoners by experiencing them as individuals instead of being 'othered' (Calaway et al., 2016; Helfgott, 2003; Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015; Stacer et al., 2017). However, Gilmour and Alessi (2022) found that prisoner stereotypes were not destroyed through this work but shifted onto further marginalised groups.

Volunteering has the potential to transform the prison's status quo through volunteer critique. When volunteers recognise similarities and differences between themselves and the prisoners, they can start to question the fairness of the criminal justice system (Gilmour & Alessi, 2022). Volunteers' experiences are valuable because they are in a relatively strong position (compared to prisoners) to criticise correctional practices because they are not under the authority of Corrections. They are also freer than staff to critique correctional practices because volunteers are not reliant on this work for their income. For example, volunteers in Kort-Butler and Malone's (2015) study were vocal about issues in the prison system. These volunteers concluded that prison was not a solution to crime and essentially became criminal justice reform advocates. As volunteers are free citizens, they are powerful because they can go into prison, come out, and speak freely about what they experienced. Due to their power to speak out, volunteers can contribute to ameliorative and transformative prison changes.³⁶ For example, volunteers working with women in prison may contribute to legal changes within the criminal justice system and public discourse. However, because volunteer organisations rely on the correctional facilities allowing them to do this work, they are also motivated to be uncritical of correctional practices (Fine & Torre, 2006). Quinn and Tomczak's (2021) study of prison volunteers noted that volunteer

³⁶ Transformational change looks at the larger systems including political, economic, and cultural perspectives, whereas ameliorative change refers to individualistic small changes to make something better (Kottai, 2020). While ameliorative change does not directly address the wider problems of the criminal justice system, such change can lead to transformative change.

organisations bent to the will of the prisons as they feared access would be denied. Taking a middle ground, Sinclair (2017) noted that volunteers might provide valuable informal feedback for improving practice while simultaneously understanding why correctional practices are in place due to their experience of prisons. Gilmour and Alessi (2022) found that while students in their study recognised that prisoners were just like them, it did not translate into a broader criminal justice system critique. Given the racist and gendered stereotypes and the power relations of the women's prison, research is needed to understand if volunteers provide a critique of correctional practices. Part of the transformational aspect of this work is the unique relationships that volunteers have with prisoners and the potential of their relationships to effect change.

Volunteers have unique relationships with prisoners as volunteers are neither paid professionals nor prison authorities but sit outside the correctional system (Clinks, 2016; Te Pere, 2021). As volunteers are not part of the system, they can reach prisoners in ways staff cannot (Bayse, 1993; Clinks, 2016; Sinclair, 2017). For example, a Netherlands study found that inmates viewed volunteers as trusted confidants who were not part of the prison system (Schuhmann et al., 2018). This study found that due to being 'outsiders' to the correctional system, volunteers treated inmates as fellow human beings (Schuhmann et al., 2018). As volunteers are not in authority positions, relationships between prisoners and volunteers are perceived to be based on more humanistic and caring dynamics (Clinks, 2016). Prisoners view volunteers as approachable, independent, genuinely motivated to help others, and trustworthy (Clinks, 2016; Mills et al., 2011). This unique relationship enables volunteers to act as advocates representing the offender to other agencies (Clinks, 2016). A study that examined women's experiences in Aotearoa prisons noted that the women found the volunteers non-threatening and wondered why they did this work (O'Neill, 1989). The "no-strings-attached" relationship between volunteers and inmates can provide opportunities for change (Sinclair, 2017).

Volunteer Challenges

Despite the possibilities volunteer relationships bring for change, their work negotiating the tensions between themselves, staff, and institutional policies and protocols is difficult. A UK study

found that unsupportive corrections staff could frustrate volunteers' work and increase safety risks (Clinks, 2016). Aotearoa prison volunteers' major criticism in the Corrections volunteer survey was their relationship with Corrections staff (Hefford, 2020). Volunteers reported annoyance at the lack of communication and felt their experience would be enhanced by a change in "staff attitudes" and better volunteer management (Hefford, 2020, p. 4). A volunteer stated, "The number of times we prepare, arrive, wait and are then told we cannot gain access. That is somewhat annoying" (Hefford, 2020, p. 11). However, the same survey reported that 72% of volunteers felt valued by Corrections staff, and 81% were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the volunteer coordinator. These opposing reports suggest that staff attitudes toward volunteer work can have a large impact because of the power imbalance between volunteers and staff. How Aotearoa prison volunteers navigate the power relations within prisons is yet to be explored by research.

The intersections of race, gender, class, and subsequent power relations play a large role in who is imprisoned worldwide, yet are mostly ignored within volunteer scholarship. As the racial divide between prisoners and volunteers (Madison-Bell, 2014) is so stark in the prison system, it is surprising that the social force of racism is ignored by almost all volunteer research.³⁷ When describing the experiences of volunteers (who are almost always White), racism, its intersections, and its effects are usually ignored. Most volunteer research is undertaken in an apparently 'colour blind' world, where individual 'bad choices' are the sole reason for imprisonment in a post-racial society. This maintains the invisibility of racism and its intersections with class, gender, and imprisonment and keeps the focus on individualistic understandings of crime. Even research that considers the shifting stereotypes of prisoners' and volunteers' experiences (such as Kort-Butler and Malone's 2015 study) ignores racism as a contributing factor to how volunteers understand their experiences. Exceptions to ignoring racism are the works of Lawston (2009) and

³⁷ Most volunteer research comes from North-America, which mass imprisons people of colour. In North-America, one in every eight Black men between the ages of 25 and 34 is imprisoned. Approximately 50% of all prisoners are Black, 30% are White, and 17% are Hispanic. During the past 20 years, the male prison population has tripled and the women's population (overwhelming comprising women of colour) has increased ten-fold (R. M. Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008). Indigenous women represented 2.5% of the total women's prison population despite comprising only 0.7% of the total women's population in 2010 in the USA (Wang, 2021).

Tilton (2016) in the USA. Lawston explored the tensions that arise when predominately White, middle-class, well-educated women advocate for mostly disadvantaged women of colour. Lawston found that volunteers seldom talked about race but put these issues aside to minimise differences. This 'colour blind' approach perpetuates racism, as ignoring the lived experience of prisoners minimises their significant structural barriers which remain unaddressed. Tilton's (2016) study of prison volunteers' reflections on race and identity found significant differences in how White and coloured volunteers understood their volunteer experience. White people saw volunteering as an opportunity to learn from and help people who were radically different from themselves. Black volunteers saw it as a chance to give back to their community or reconnect with a shared racial identity. Tilton (2016) concluded that volunteer organisations must consider supporting diversity in their volunteers and develop the knowledge required to work effectively inside prisons. As racism is such a huge factor in who is imprisoned in Aotearoa and how mothers are treated in prison, research is needed that explores how racism is understood within this work. The cultural, contextual, and socioeconomic differences between prisoners and volunteers in Aotearoa prisons likely present a myriad of challenges and contribute to the emotional complexity of this work.

The emotional labour required of prison volunteers is complex and challenging (Department of Corrections, 2021b; Donnelly, 2016; Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015; Lawston, 2009; Quinn & Tomczak, 2020; Tilton, 2016). Prison volunteers work directly with socially excluded and multiply marginalised people who often have complex psychological problems and traumatic histories. In Kort-Butler and Malone's (2015) study, volunteers reported being challenged by prisoners' emotional anger, defensiveness, and feelings of worthlessness and stigma. In a Canadian and English study, prison volunteers experienced stress, burnout, depression, and cynicism (Quinn & Tomczak, 2020). Quinn and Tomczak (2020) noted that volunteers would start their work enthusiastically and become overwhelmed by prisoners' severe and complex needs. Helplessness and trauma were two themes that emerged when volunteers worked with women prisoners. Quinn and Tomczak (2020) concluded that volunteers were attuned to the complex needs of the prisoners to the detriment of their own health. Due to the emotional impact of this work, training and self-care are essential components to keep volunteers safe from ongoing harm (Tilton, 2016).

Volunteers risk secondary trauma from working with prisoners (Jacobi & Roberts, 2016; Quinn & Tomczak, 2020).³⁸ Yet, prison volunteers receive little preparatory training for working in prisons (Jacobi & Roberts, 2016; Quinn & Tomczak, 2020; Tewksbury & Collins, 2005). In Jacobi and Roberts' (2016) study, a volunteer reported they had "no preparation or expectation about how awful being locked up is" (p. 331). Similarly, supporting the lack of training and support for prison volunteers, the Corrections volunteer survey found that volunteers wanted more training and peer support (Hefford, 2020). As women mainly undertake this difficult (yet undervalued) work, some feminists have argued that volunteer work is exploitative to women.

Feminists, such as Baldock (1998), Kaminer (1984), Mitra (2013) and Overgaard (2015, 2016) have challenged volunteering in general as exploitative because it is unpaid care work carried out mainly by women. Volunteering is associated with women's work and caring work which is often invisible and given no value, despite the work being essential (Baldock, 1998; Daniels, 1985; Waring, 1999, 2018). Globally, women volunteer more than men (UN Volunteers, 2022) and volunteering can be another expected job of women due to gendered norms that inform our social expectations of care and whose responsibility it is to perform it (Ferrant et al., 2014). Men do not have the same societal expectation because social norms construct men's primary role as 'work'. Volunteering, therefore, can add another 'thing' women must do to be seen as socially aware, generous, caring, and kind. In a capitalist society where money indicates the value of commodities such as care, unpaid work further financially disadvantages women and undervalues the work itself (Mitra, 2013).³⁹ Women often take unpaid leave to care for family members meaning that their lifetime earnings are significantly lower than men's, resulting in more women being in poverty (Forsman, 2022). Waring (2018) argues that this work should be valued because it is associated with costs such as time, opportunity, and effort and is essential to human wellbeing and the whole economic system. Kaminer (1984) wrote, "from the

³⁸ Sometimes called 'vicarious' trauma, this is a form of distress that is experienced by hearing details or witnessing the aftermath of a traumatic experience by another person.

³⁹ The intersection between gender, race, and motherhood is important because women consistently earn less money than men. For example, the gender pay gap is 9.1% for Pākehā and 14% for wāhine Māori (Ministry for Women, 2020) and mothers in the workforce earns less than fathers (Auckland Women Lawyers' Association, 2022).

beginning, volunteering has both liberated women and kept them in their place” (p. 11), suggesting that volunteering can be both empowering and exploitative.

Volunteer work can empower, transform and shape feminist practices (Blackstone, 2004; Mitra, 2013). It can be values-led, putting feminist ethics of care, such as a high value for caring and relationships, at the centre of the work. Human compassion and the need for social change can drive the organisation forward rather than neoliberal financial goals or governmental restrictions (Kaminer, 1984). Scholars have noted feminists’ silence about volunteering after the 1970s (Baldock, 1998; Oppenheimer, 2004). This silence may stem from the discomfort of knowing that organisations that do crucial caring work for women and children cannot survive without donated labour; if volunteer efforts are withdrawn, women and children will lose support (Warburton & Oppenheimer, 2000).

Another critique of volunteering is that it is elitist and can perpetuate the status quo (Baldock, 1998). This argument assumes that volunteers are elite because only wealthy people who do not have to work have the luxury to volunteer. However, many volunteers also work (Mitra, 2013; Taniguchi, 2006). Volunteers belonging to dominant groups in society can also perpetuate class and race inequalities (intentionally or otherwise). Higher-class women seeking to improve the lives of other women has a long and ambivalent tradition (de Jong, 2017) because volunteer work may support the status quo and mask the interests of the dominant group (Fernando & Heston, 1997; Gilmour & Alessi, 2022). To illustrate, Gilmour and Alessi’s (2022) study found that interactions with prisoners sometimes reinforced ideas about individual accountability, which supports the current punitive prison model. However, as discussed, volunteers ask critical questions about the status quo of the prison, as seen in Kort-Butler and Malone’s (2015) study where participants refuted the idea that prison was a solution to crime. While women volunteers may share some gendered experiences with women in prison (being a woman and mother), their identities (typically White and privileged) and positions are intertwined with the power relations and inequalities that their work often hopes to address (de Jong, 2017).

Volunteer work is contradictory in both challenging and supporting the normative assumptions underlying social injustice in the criminal justice system, while simultaneously being valued by

the system incarcerating women. Despite research supporting the value of volunteers in correctional settings, volunteers remain an under-researched group. Research is needed to understand the specific challenges that volunteers working with mothers in Aotearoa prisons face. A portion of the literature describes prison volunteer work as beneficial; they save money, reduce offending, and volunteers have unique relationships with prisoners. Volunteer work can transform views on the self, society, and the criminal justice system. However, there are negative ramifications in undertaking this work. Volunteer work can be complex, emotionally challenging, reproduce the status quo, and be harmful. Lack of training and support for volunteers working with Aotearoa's most vulnerable citizens can be dangerous. Volunteers are positioned in the literature as either helpful or harmful, ignoring the possibility that they might be both. The existing literature poses several tensions yet to be explored in an Aotearoa context. How do volunteers navigate the unique relationships and negative stereotypes of imprisoned mothers? How do volunteers operate in a power imbalanced system with Corrections staff? How are the differences between the volunteers and prisoners understood? How does working with imprisoned mothers transform volunteer perspectives? Do they ask critical questions about the status quo of the prison and criminal justice system? The volunteers work with women who occupy specific intersections of sexism, racism, classism and marginalised motherhoods in an institution that seeks to 'correct' these women. How does volunteer work open up possibilities for change for imprisoned mothers? Chapter 3 discusses the epistemology, methodology, method, ethics, and research design suited to research that seeks to explore women's lived experiences and contribute to social change.

Chapter 3: Methodology

An Intersectional Feminist Standpoint Approach

My epistemological and methodological framework is underpinned by feminist standpoint and intersectionality theory, informing a reflective thematic analysis. An intersectional feminist standpoint approach provides a theoretical base to explain the complex social positioning of the volunteers within complicated hierarchical systems of privilege and power within the prison context (S. Harding, 2009; Hill Collins, 2019). Volunteers are legitimised as experts of their lived experience through this approach. Informed by intersectional feminist standpoint theory, I argue that because volunteers are subordinate to Corrections staff, they have a bifurcated perspective to understand the prison context and the social power relations involved in volunteering. A dual perspective enables the volunteers to flexibly consider the limitations and partiality of each perspective, instead of a single viewpoint to understand the power relations of the prison. I chose feminist standpoint theory as my epistemology and methodology because it provides an epistemological framework for researching the volunteers' experiences from their perspectives. Feminist standpoint theory draws upon phenomenological and Marxist ideas that people's lived experiences influence how they make sense of their social worlds and contribute to knowledge (S. Harding, 2012).⁴⁰ The voices, perspectives, and lived experiences of women have been mainly excluded in traditional research, favouring men to represent the experience of all humans. Following Harding's (2012) advocacy for respecting the expertise of lived experience, I position the volunteers as experts in the work they undertake in prisons. The mothers in prison are also experts of *their* lived experience of multiple marginalisation and incarceration.

The knowledge produced through the lived experience of doing the work, and by me, the researcher, is situated contextual knowledge. According to feminist standpoint theory, all knowledge is socially situated. All knowledge is affected by the specific time, place, context, and by the person who created it (Haraway, 1988). The positivist notion that science can be value-

⁴⁰ Feminist standpoint theory emerged during the 1970s and 1980s as an alternative approach to knowledge to traditional positivist research paradigms. Traditional research is dominated and informed by androcentric ideologies producing knowledge that can harm women and their interests (Eagly & Riger, 2014; Haraway, 1988; S. Harding, 2004a; Hartsock, 2004; Magnusson & Marecek, 2012; Wigginton & Lafrance, 2019).

free and that knowledge of the world must be objective and neutral is rejected. Research is always viewed from somewhere, so knowledge is always partial (S.Harding, 1991). The “God Trick” (Haraway, 1988, p. 88) practice of traditional positivist research, which presents research as an authoritative, disinterested, impartial view coming from nowhere, is rebuffed (S. Harding, 2004b). Instead, feminist standpoint theory contends that the researcher must acknowledge the perspectives and situatedness in which they understand the world to make knowledge claims. For this reason, reflexivity is crucial and my research begins with my positioning in relation to the project and its content. An intersectional feminist standpoint epistemology positions me as someone who, through my lived experiences of being oppressed as a woman and privileged as a Pākehā, can produce thought that can rise to the status of ‘knowledge’. Volunteers possess context-specific knowledge of the experience of working with mothers in prison in Aotearoa. The volunteers and I are considered to be co-constructing knowledge through our shared experiences from various standpoints (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017). My research does not claim to make generalisations about the volunteer’s experiences. Instead, it is concentrated on the meaning-making of particular participants within this specific context from their various sociocultural locations. This is my story of my interpretation of their stories, so every interpretation carries assumptions and traces of my cultural, social, and historical location.

As previously introduced, intersectionality is used throughout my thesis as a helpful frame to analyse how intersecting social forces and power relations are experienced differently by individuals inhabiting different social locations. Intersectionality can be conceptualised as a prism for viewing how various forms of inequality often operate together, compound, and exacerbate each other (Steinmetz, 2020). An essential tenet of intersectionality theory is that social forces of oppression and privilege are not additive but indivisible and cumulative (Crenshaw, 1991). Oppressions and privileges are not simply experienced as the sum of gender + class + race, but different social forces interacting in complex ways to reinforce and compound disadvantage and privilege, which varies across different contexts (Crenshaw, 1991; Daly, 2010).

Feminist standpoint theory and intersectionality are compatible political theories that aim to create social change by drawing attention to social positioning and power relations. Informed by

intersectionality theory, I argue that while volunteers occupy complex and varying positions of privilege and power, they are largely devalued within the prison context. A person can be privileged and oppressed simultaneously (Dill et al., 2007). Outside the prison, volunteers are privileged in several ways, they are Pākehā, professionals, and free citizens, yet they are devalued as women. Inside the prison, they are devalued compared to Corrections staff. Volunteers are devalued because of their gender (Dent, 2020), because they are doing care work (which is considered women's work) (Bigo, 2010; Rogerson et al., 2011) and because they are unpaid volunteers seeking to help 'bad women'.⁴¹ In prison, volunteers are subordinated by Corrections staff because they must obey the staff directives in a similar manner to prisoners. As a result, volunteers have less power, authority, and voice than paid staff within the prison context. However, the social location of volunteers is complex because sometimes they have *more* voice than Corrections staff, given they are not part of Correctional institutions, they do not risk their livelihoods by criticising correctional practices. Despite this complex positioning, volunteers enter the prison context largely devalued in relation to Corrections staff.

A central principle of feminist standpoint theory is that subordinated groups inhabit dominated situations. Subordinated groups must possess knowledge of the dominant group to survive, but the reverse is not the case (McClish & Bacon, 2002). To carry out volunteer work, volunteers must possess a bifurcated vision of their working world. The volunteers must know about the volunteer world (their work, responsibilities, and how the volunteer organisation works). They are also required to know the world of paid Corrections staff (they must know the rules of the prison, how to stay safe within the prison, how to work with Corrections staff, and what will enable them access to the prison itself or jeopardise their work). Corrections staff do not need to understand the world of the volunteers. Having two perspectives to understand the prisons' social power relations gives the volunteers epistemological insight because volunteer perspectives are multiple, flexible and can consider the limitation of each perspective. Proponents of feminist standpoint theory argue that we should always start research from the lives of those

⁴¹ The prisoners are considered 'bad' because they have (supposedly) broken the law and violated gendered expectations of mothering (Easterling et al., 2019).

subordinated because the knowledge produced will be critical and distinct from the dominant group (S. Harding, 2004c; D. E. Smith, 1987).

Feminist standpoint theory emphasises listening to insiders' perspectives because these 'insiders' are uniquely positioned to suggest change (Sosulski, 2009). Volunteers hold unique social positions in prison as 'insiders/outsideers'. They are outsiders because they are not paid staff or imprisoned women and they visit the prison from their outside lives. Volunteers are also 'insiders' within the prison system. Volunteers enter prisons and see correctional institutions at work. Through direct 'insider' experience of subordination, people are better situated to understand social power relationships and the capacity for change (S. Harding, 2004b). Subordinated groups can be critical of the status quo and social order because it does not benefit them. This heightened awareness to critique and perceive the current social order is what feminist standpoint theory refers to as 'strong objectivity' (S. Harding, 1991). Volunteer perspectives have characteristics of 'strong objectivity' due to their insider perspective and experience of subordination. The unique position of insider/outsider means that volunteers are freer to talk about the prison experience than staff or prisoners. Prisoners have little voice and limited opportunities to share their experiences. As previously noted, to talk to Corrections staff officially in a research undertaking, Corrections must approve the project. The unique perspective of the insider/outsider and the increased ability to speak freely about the experience may open up new possibilities for imprisoned mothers.

The intersectional standpoints of the volunteers and incarcerated mothers are not homogenous. For example, volunteers will experience the work differently depending on the intersectional complexities of their own lives. However, recognising common structural barriers within lived experiences can have political power and be a starting point for social change, ultimately improving the lives of imprisoned mothers and their children. Methodologies that draw attention to shared structural barriers are well suited to the social justice goals of my research. Reflexive thematic analysis allows researchers to identify shared understandings of problems which can open possibilities for social change.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

I chose reflexive thematic analysis as my research method because it is compatible with an intersectional feminist standpoint approach to generating knowledge. Reflexive thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, organise, analyse, describe, and report shared patterns of meaning or themes within participants' stories (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Reflexive thematic analysis shares the feminist standpoint epistemological assumption that the researcher is active within the constructions of knowledge within the project. Engaging in reflexivity throughout the project is vital. Being reflective allows us to ask how our situatedness, intersections of privilege, experiences, and power may shape the research project and possible constructions of knowledge. Being explicit about my worldview and the assumptions I bring to the project allows readers to better assess my research conclusions. I have influenced all parts of this research. The volunteer stories were told to, transcribed, coded, analysed, and interpreted by me. My choices and interpretations were continuously shifting in discussions with my supervisors and through my evolving knowledge about the criminal justice sector. Both feminist standpoint and reflexive thematic analysis understand researcher subjectivity as useful for interpretation and to guide analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). For example, my shifting understanding of who was in prison was guided by the volunteers' transforming understandings.

As I was interested in how the volunteers understood and made meaning of their experiences, reflexive thematic analysis was a suitable method because it can be used to identify shared patterns of meaning across participants' stories allowing for subjective understandings (Braun & Clarke, n.d.). Using reflexive thematic analysis allows participants to tell their stories and is compatible with feminist standpoint theory, which understands lived experience as knowledge. Including participants' voices in the research aligns with the feminist standpoint research goals of making spaces for other people's voices to be heard. Reflexive thematic analysis allows for the messiness, multiplicity, complexity and contradictions of stories and encourages looking for "both/and" moments.

Intersectionality theory is also compatible with reflexive thematic analysis because of the focus on context. Meaning-making is always contextual. The stories I am telling about the volunteer stories are only meaningful in the specific context of women's prison work in Aotearoa. Reflexivity is used as a tool to engage in deeper thinking about themes of gender, racism, and class and their intersections throughout the project. Throughout this research, I became increasingly aware of how strongly these forces operate in our everyday lives historically, socially, and culturally embedded in our psychology. Reflection allows consideration of possible boundaries, marginalisation, and silences in the project. For example, what was not said by the participants about racism is important because racism has devastating effects on individuals caught up in our criminal justice institutions. Significant missing voices in this research are incarcerated mothers and Māori volunteers. Reflexive thematic analysis is also compatible with the social justice political aims of the research because shared patterns of meaning have the power to challenge the status quo at structural levels. Identifying shared experiences is compatible with ideas from intersectionality theory, which acknowledges the different experiences of particular people while simultaneously acknowledging that making visible shared structural barriers can be a way forward for social change.

Research Aim and Research Question

My research aims to better understand volunteers' experiences when working with incarcerated mothers. This research will explore the challenges and tensions that volunteers negotiate as they do their work. In my research project, I specifically ask: How does understanding the unique perspective of volunteers open up possibilities for change for imprisoned mothers?

Ethical Considerations and Method

As my project has ethical foundations concerned with social justice for women and Māori, ethical considerations run throughout this project. I have combined describing my method and ethics section because ethical issues informed each step of the research process. While feminist ethics of care and Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations are vital to this project, I was also required to meet Massey University's Code of Ethics. Procedurally, I used the code of ethics to reflect upon how

my research could be harmful and beneficial. Possible ethical issues were discussed and reviewed throughout the research with Professor Mandy Morgan, Dr Ann Rogerson, and my cultural supervisors. I was fortunate to engage Nan Walden (Te Aitanga a Mahaaki) as my Māori cultural supervisor. Nan Walden provided regular cultural guidance, support, and ongoing education regarding te ao Māori throughout this project (see Appendix A). I also engaged with Jen Margaret and Victoria Owen, who are Pākehā Te Tiriti o Waitangi activists from Groundwork, for advice on Tiriti obligations (see Appendix B). The project was evaluated by peer review by Massey's Hearth research cluster as low risk.⁴² The potential harms and benefits of the research are discussed through each stage of the method.

A feminist ethics of care envelops this entire project. Employing a feminist ethics of care means that relationships throughout the project are valued, and caring is understood as essential to all humans. For example, two volunteers unexpectedly requested to be interviewed together. They had worked closely together for many years, both held advanced research qualifications, and being interviewed together would suit their childcare responsibilities. Being interviewed together may have prevented the participants from speaking as freely as they might have if they had been interviewed separately. However, informed by a feminist ethics of care towards my participants which valued their relationship, and the importance of their care work for others, I interviewed them simultaneously.

A feminist ethics of care has meant developing respectful relationships with everyone involved in this project. I connected strongly with some of the participants as colleagues with mutual interests. Our communication continued through Zoom calls, emails, and advocacy work. Being reflexive allowed me to notice how power operates between women in this project. I reflected on the ethics of these continuing relationships. In their professional lives, most volunteers were significantly more high-status than me. Most of them held professional jobs, and I was a reasonably low-status adult psychology student/stay-at-home mother. We were all also relatively socioeconomically privileged and Pākehā. Collegial relationships developed from an easy rapport and a shared interest in addressing the injustices experienced by mothers. I

⁴² Ethics Notification #4000024387.

understood that the volunteers had given me a gift (Oakley, 2016) in the form of their stories. The ongoing relationships were an unexpected additional gift and benefit of this research, where I learned more about the volunteer experience. I wondered if I could ethically include anything I had learnt from my ‘volunteer colleagues’ in this thesis. I concluded that if I had obtained the individual’s permission and noted it was learnt outside of the formal interviews, this would be a transparent, respectful, and ethical approach. These connections resulted in introductions, collaborations, and networking between different groups working towards addressing injustices for women in prison.⁴³

Te Tiriti o Waitangi Responsibilities, Cultural Safety, and Sensitivity

New Zealanders all have ethical obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. My supervisors and I discussed how to be an ethical Tiriti rangapū⁴⁴ at all stages of the research. For example, at the beginning of the research, I considered interviewing women prisoners as part of the study. It would be unethical for me to research incarcerated mothers’ experiences because I am a Pākehā, and would ultimately filter Māori experiences through a Pākehā perspective. This type of research has been damaging to Māori aspirations and communities (L. T. Smith, 1999).⁴⁵ Even after realising the volunteers were more like me in terms of race and higher economic status and would have expertise on the issues based on their experience, I grappled with the ethics of conducting research that touched upon the lives of women in prison. I questioned whether a Pākehā researcher should be doing this research when I am not Māori, nor have I been in prison. I engaged in ongoing reflection throughout the project about my Pākehā identity and its relationship to the research. Uncomfortably, I realised that colonisation is one of the factors that allowed me to do this research. For example, my education has been in Pākehā-dominated

⁴³ Some of these groups were not aware of each other’s work, hence the benefits of joining forces between research groups and people who were working inside prisons meant that stronger opportunities for collective action were created.

⁴⁴ Partner.

⁴⁵ Only interviewing Pākehā women in prison is also unethical because it minimises the critical issue of Māori over-representation.

institutions where I am comfortable and I only need to speak one language. However, because of my privileges, I can engage with work that can open possibilities for imprisoned mothers.

By further understanding my racism, I bring to the project a conscientisation of this process which opens possibilities for change. Recently, my 4-year-old pointed out, “Look, a Black person!” and appeared to be afraid. I was embarrassed and shushed him. Reading DiAngelo’s (2019) *White Fragility*, I realised he learnt two things at that moment. One, there is something inherently ‘bad’ about being coloured (I would not have reacted that way if he was pointing out a blonde person). Two, race is something we pretend not to see and should not talk about. Reflecting on how I maintain silence and invisibility about racism was eye-opening. I tell this story to illustrate how we, as Pākehā are unconscious of the many everyday actions we do that maintain racial inequality. Pākehā do need to engage in anti-racism work because just as feminism cannot progress without the support of men who are predominately privileged by patriarchy, ending racism cannot progress without the support of Pākehā. My struggle with differences of power and privilege in the prison population transformed into questions for the volunteers. I was curious how the volunteers approached, experienced, and understood the disproportionate Māori female prison population. How do they address their race’s inherent power and privilege and role as free citizens? Are they making spaces for Māori people to join them in their work? Did they have cultural training and support?

Given the scarcity of research and the research premise that volunteers are experts of their own experiences, I did not know where the interviews would lead based on past research. It was probable that the volunteers would comment upon Māori women because Māori women are the majority of prisoners. Through conversations with my supervisors, we concluded that I (as Pākehā) could do this research under certain conditions. Firstly, I must focus on the volunteers and their experiences rather than a second-hand version of the mothers’ experiences as told by volunteers. Secondly, if volunteers told me about Māori mothers, I needed to engage with ongoing cultural supervision throughout this project on how to treat my participants’ experiences in a culturally sensitive manner. All relevant stories were discussed in cultural supervision to

avoid a Pākehā rendering that could harm Māori aspirations or damage the Tiriti obligation of whakamaru.^{46 47}

At the project's outset, we discussed the practicalities of allowing participants to respond in te reo⁴⁸ to honour the language of tangata whenua.⁴⁹ Responding in te reo raised issues of cost and confidentiality as I do not speak te reo. At master's level, it was not currently financially possible to engage a te reo speaker. However, on the advice of cultural supervisors, we got the information sheet translated into te reo with the hope of encouraging Māori participation (see Appendix C).⁵⁰ Being a good Tiriti partner means that the volunteers' stories are taonga⁵¹ and must be protected and managed well. How this research could potentially contribute to decolonisation was discussed with Nan Walden. Through our allied partnerships of tangata Tiriti and tangata whenua⁵² (kōrero⁵³, listening, and learning), Nan and I could see a path forward to an allied Aotearoa. This alliance is a crucial step to decolonising Aotearoa. I continue my life-long decolonisation education journey by attending te reo courses, learning about tikanga and te ao Māori⁵⁴ by reading and engaging in kōrero. The volunteers seek to mitigate injustices for marginalised Māori women in prison, further contributing to decolonisation. Manākitanga⁵⁵ is also of critical importance. Is it the responsibility of the volunteer organisations to ensure volunteers are given cultural support and training on Tiriti obligations and the ongoing effects of

⁴⁶ Protection.

⁴⁷ I wanted to include research about gangs. My cultural supervisor gave me some material which problematised gangs as a negative 'dangerous' Māori stereotype. I realised I had internalised these stereotypes uncritically. However, research by Māori scholars suggests gang affiliation can be a common experience for women in prison (McIntosh, 2022a). After discussing this with my supervisors, we concluded that it was beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the different cultural understandings and stereotypes of gangs. Instead, I would draw attention to the work of the Māori researchers in this field (yMāori Television, 2021; McIntosh, 2022a; McIntosh & Curcic, 2020).

⁴⁸ Māori language.

⁴⁹ Local people, hosts, indigenous people - people born of the whenua.

⁵⁰ While this unfortunately did not result in Māori participation, an unexpected benefit was the increasing of mana for a high-school student fluent in te reo.

⁵¹ Prized treasure -considered of value.

⁵² Tangata Tiriti are people in Aotearoa by right of the Treaty, Tangata Whenua are people of Māori descent.

⁵³ Talking, discussions.

⁵⁴ The Māori world.

⁵⁵ Cultural and social responsibility.

colonisation, considering the ethnic make-up of the prison? Or is this unrealistic for a volunteer organisation to deliver, and does this further associate crime and ethnicity?

Recruiting Participants: Informed and Voluntary Consent

Purposive sampling is an appropriate approach to use with feminist standpoint research methodology. As someone who had not previously volunteered within a women's prison, I did not have key contacts through which I could recruit potential participants. Because of this, I contacted the head volunteers in two different organisations via email which resulted in phone calls and Zoom sessions to discuss the project. Once they both agreed to the project, they provided me with a letter of support for my ethics application (see Appendix D). The contacts then distributed my information sheet (see Appendix E), and anyone interested in participating could contact me directly. I checked that volunteers had read the information sheet to ensure that participants' autonomy was respected. Hence, they could make an informed decision to participate in the research. Volunteers also knew they could withdraw from the research at any stage until they approved their transcripts for inclusion in my analysis.

Research Participants

The participants in this study all volunteered for not-for-profit organisations that aim to help mothers in Aotearoa prisons connect with their children and whānau. People were invited to participate in the research if they had over six-months of experience as a volunteer. Participants could be either former or current volunteers. Former volunteers must have worked in this role within the last five years. A five-year cut-off was chosen to ensure recent experience because changes in government can affect Corrections' policies and consequently the prison context in which volunteers work. To ensure confidentiality, volunteers did not have to let the organisation know they were participating. Volunteer organisations involved in this study had been operating for over five years. Supporting organisations are not explicitly named, described, or differentiated throughout the thesis to help retain participant confidentiality. All participants in this study were Pākehā women who spoke fluent English. All were professionals, some were mothers, and some had legal backgrounds. Volunteers came from all three women's prisons in Aotearoa: six from

Auckland, four from Wellington, and one from Christchurch. Volunteer experience varied from one year to over five years.

Interviews

I received emails expressing interest in the study from 11 women who were all interviewed. Three elected to be interviewed face to face, and eight interviews were over Zoom for primarily geographical reasons. As a feminist researcher, reflecting upon the power relationships between yourself and the participants is essential. Participants were offered a pre-interview chat to ask questions about the research, signal any cultural or diversity needs, and sign the consent form (see Appendix F). Permission to record the interview was requested in the consent form and before the interview. Semi-structured interviews (see Appendix G) were used to encourage the volunteers to freely tell their stories (Hydén, 2014) while ensuring that relevant topics were explored. I did not follow the interview guide strictly, as stories spontaneously covered many questions I had considered as prompts for discussion. However, most of the questions were usually asked. Interviews were just over one hour long, with two exceptions: one interview was 38 minutes, and one interview was two hours. After each interview, I recorded field notes of what stood out to me (see Appendix H).

Transcription – Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality

As I was concerned that volunteers might be critical of Corrections which could potentially result in them being denied access to prison if they were identified and ultimately deny mothers' support, confidentiality was considered even more important than might be the case for other low-risk studies. Avoiding offence to either organisations or people working within them was mitigated by discussing criticisms with my supervisors. Stories of injustice tend to be critical of the status quo, so with my supervisors, we thought about how to write so people could listen rather than writing critically and not being heard. I removed all names and identifying features from the transcripts to protect participants' identities. I gave each participant a pseudonym, except for one participant who chose to supply her own. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were further protected by storing digital audio recordings of interviews on password-protected

devices. Any video files were deleted immediately after the interview, and audio files were deleted once the interviews were transcribed. All participants were sent their transcript alongside a transcript release form (see Appendix I). One participant did not respond to my request to use her transcript, so excerpts of her transcript are not included in illustrating my analysis. Two participants asked for specific stories to be omitted from the analysis due to concerns that these stories would breach confidentiality or be perceived as too critical of Corrections. These requests were taken very seriously, as I was concerned that people could be identified due to the small volunteer sector working with imprisoned mothers. Informed consent forms were stored in locked locations in the Massey University School of Psychology, Palmerston North. My supervisors and I were responsible for maintaining the security and confidentiality of the transcripts. I also considered my privacy and safety by using my Massey University email address and a non-personal phone number on the information sheet.

All the interviews were transcribed using oTranscribe, a free-to-use software that allowed me to slow down and rewind the recordings for ease of transcription. Transcribing was a time-intensive process that ensured familiarisation with the transcripts. Close and repeated listening to the interviews produced different perspectives and opened up a multiplicity of understandings. A feminist ethics of care means that it is crucial that everyone has a voice and is listened to carefully and with respect. I initially had a strong reaction to one particular interview. Through the careful listening of the transcribing process, I learned to 'think with the participant' and try to understand and listen to her worldview. Strong reactions were discussed in supervision for other possible readings. My strong reactions sometimes facilitated reflection that my thinking about where crime was located, who was in prison, and why had significantly shifted throughout this research.

Story Analysis

Women's recollection of their experience was collected in the form of stories. The stories in the analysis are presented as distinct topics when, in reality, stories are inherently messy, overlapping, and contradictory. Stories are how we understand the world and ourselves. The story analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage process. This approach allowed patterns of meaning and themes to be recognised in the women's recollection of their

experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Story familiarisation was achieved by transcribing and re-reading the transcripts and writing ‘story summaries’ of each transcript. I created initial thematic codes, which were used to identify common patterns of meaning across the interviews. For ease of searching, I organised these 787 quotes into a Microsoft Excel database based on shared themes. In the somewhat artificial process of placing stories together and removing them from the exact context they were shared, I worried I may have (unintentionally) distorted the participants intended meaning. I addressed this possibility by sending my analysis chapters to participants so they had an opportunity to provide feedback on my interpretations. While they provided helpful editing advice, they did not question my understandings or request any significant changes. One volunteer felt that Corrections did not devalue volunteers from her perspective. Correctional documents on volunteers do emphasise that volunteers provide valuable contributions to achieving correctional goals. Sometimes my analysis generated more questions than it addressed, reflecting the possibilities opened up by participants’ stories.

Figure 2

Initial Codes Used to Sort the Stories

Quick code reminder
Relationships
Mother and Child - Relationships
Volunteer and Corrections - Relationships
Volunteers and each other - Relationships
Prisoner- Volunteer relationships
Community -Volunteer relationships
Experiences of Volunteering
Motivations
Prep for prison work
Qualities of the Volunteer
Emotionally challenging difficult work
Transformational
Valued, devalued and questioned
Critical of CJS

Broad themes of ‘getting into prison’, ‘how the work is experienced’, and ‘relationships’ were initially devised. Codes collated into broad themes were constantly revised and changed (for example, motivations for doing this work primarily seemed to be about sharing privilege, so the theme of motivations changed into ‘recognising privilege’). I used a mixture of spreadsheets, interview summaries, mind-maps and Post-it Note boards to become further familiar with the stories and develop and refine themes. Interview summaries were extremely helpful to focus on stories that were supported across participants. The process was not linear, and I moved back and forward from the women’s quotes and initial themes several times before I could ask, “What is the story I want to tell people from the stories I have been told?”. A story about transforming perspectives, witnessing injustices, and opening possibilities for mothers in prison began to form through the process of thematic analysis.

Figure 3

Mindmap About Injustices for Mothers

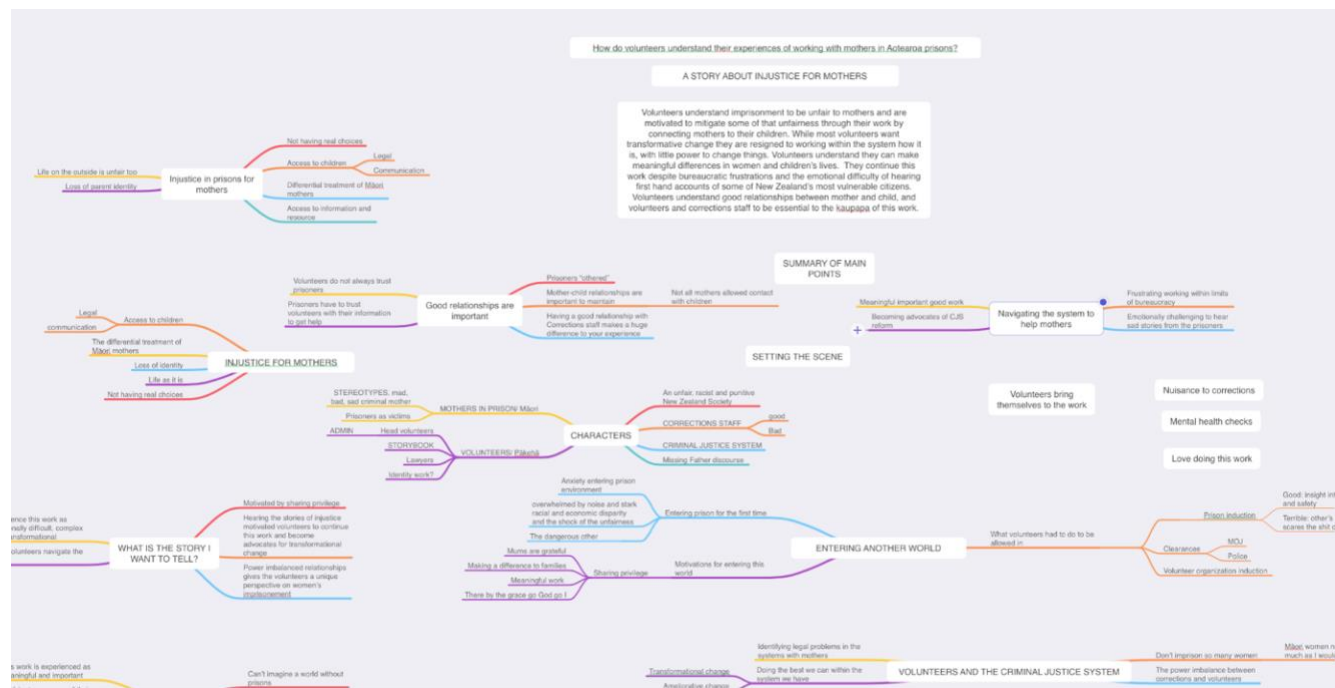


Figure 4

Post-It Note Analysis Stage

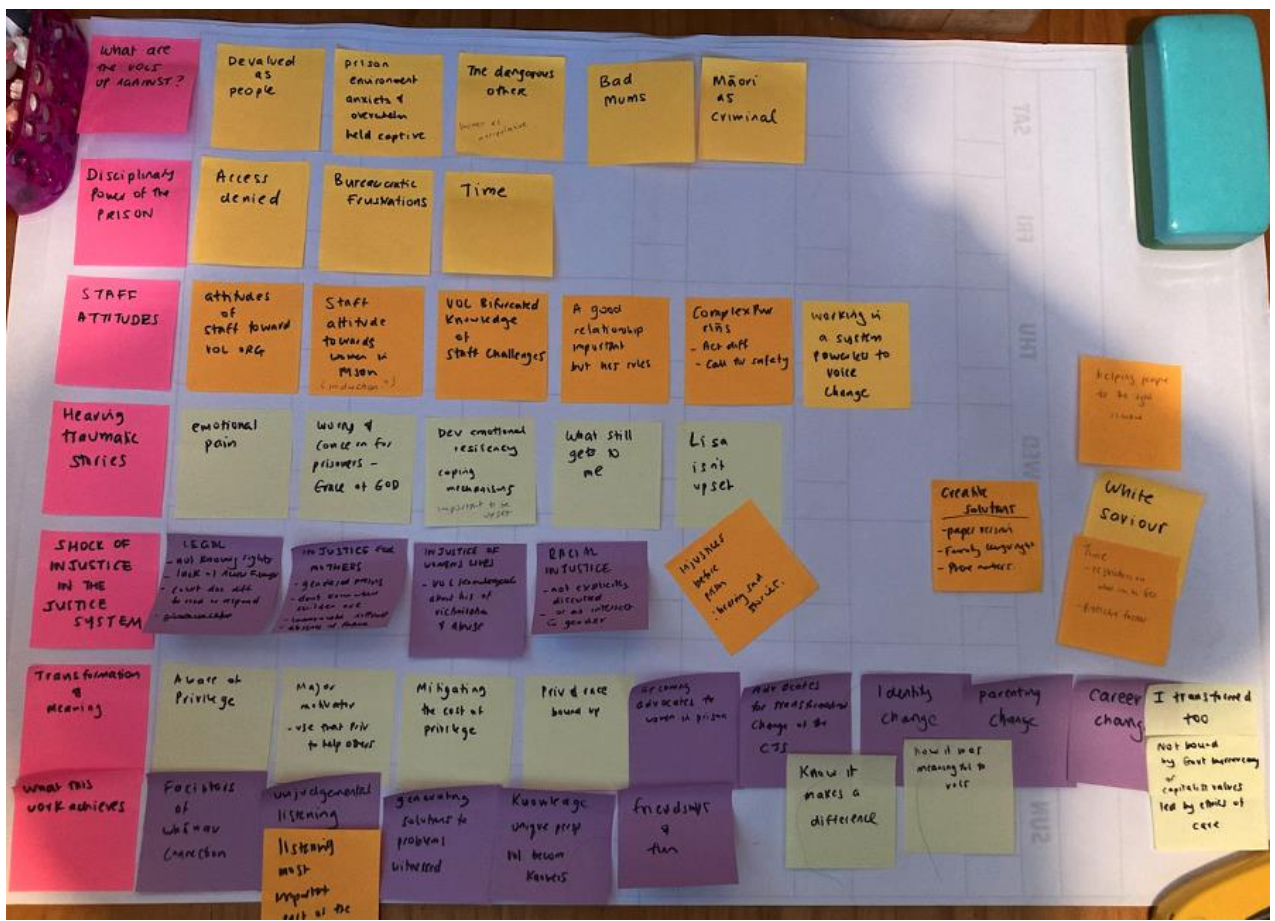


Figure 5

Database of Volunteer Stories Coded by Themes

Row	Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F	Column G	Column H	Column I	Column J	Column K	Column L	Column M	Column N	Column O	Column P	Column Q
1																	
2																	
3																	
4	Prep for prison work	Going into prison	How they got involved														
5	coming into the prison for the first time	Going into prison	coming to prison for the first time														
6	What they had to do to be allowed in	Going into prison	What they had to do to be allowed in														
7	why they did this work	Going into prison	motivations														
8																	
9	Emotionally challenging work	The work	emotionally challenging														
10	difficult or transactional work	the work	difficult work														
11	Transformational	the work	transformational														
12	Valued, devalued and questioned- rewarding	the work	valued, devalued and questioned	interesting, fun, rewarding													
13	what we do																
14																	
15	Prisoner- Volunteer relationships	relationships	Prisoner- Volunteer relationships														
16	Volunteers and corrections personal	relationships	Volunteers and corrections personal														
17	Volunteers and systems	relationships	Volunteers and systems														
18	Volunteers and each other - Relationships	relationships	Volunteers and each other - Relationships														
19	Mother and Child - Relationships	relationships	Mother and Child - Relationships														
20	Community- Volunteer relationships	relationships	Community- Volunteer relationships														
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Beneficence

The benefits of this research include giving voice and respect to the volunteers for their work and providing research that supports and enhances the continuation of volunteer support. This research was made available to all volunteers to honour the participants' and organisations' mana. An unexpected benefit was my transformation throughout the research. Through listening to the volunteers' stories, my stereotypes about prisoners shifted, and I became an advocate for women in prison. In April 2022, I gave a talk at the request of one of the participating volunteer organisations about the common circumstances of incarcerated women and why they are imprisoned. I told the story that in Aotearoa, we imprison impoverished, multiply disadvantaged Māori mothers for petty crimes and create an intergenerational cycle of harm to children. After the talk, some of the audience wanted to share my presentation with the judiciary and the media to prevent more marginalised women from being imprisoned. I did not expect action and was

excited about the possibilities for real social change for imprisoned mothers. At the time of writing, meetings are scheduled connecting researchers, volunteers, and people in the legal system with the shared goal of reducing the number of wāhine in prison. The joining of the groups working towards addressing injustices for women in prison is a really exciting prospect for change.

The following chapters tell stories about how the volunteers transformed into advocates for mothers in prison through doing this work. Their stories of transformation became part of my transforming understanding of prisoners, prisons, the criminal justice system, and broader society. Through listening to the mothers inside, volunteers' stereotypes of prisoners were changed. By witnessing multiple injustices for imprisoned mothers, the volunteers reflected on themselves and the unspoken privileges they possessed. They then used this privilege to mitigate disadvantages for imprisoned mothers and transformed into advocates for mothers in prison, opening possibilities for incarcerated mothers. By listening to the stories of the volunteers, I realised that I had also been transformed into an advocate for imprisoned mothers.

Chapter 4: Analysis

Volunteer stories were rich and complex, and I could have told many stories supported by the interviews. I tell stories about transformation, recognising privilege, witnessing injustice, and volunteer knowledge because they opened possibilities for imprisoned mothers. Improving the lives of imprisoned mothers was important for me *and* the volunteers. The analysis section is split into four chapters. Chapter 4 describes how volunteer work transformed the stereotypes of prisoners and enabled the volunteers to listen to the mothers' stories and learn about the context of their lives. Chapter 5 details the injustices volunteers bore witness to in prison. Chapter 6 discusses how this work facilitated the volunteers to reflect on and recognise their privilege and how sharing it became a significant motivator to mitigate the injustices the incarcerated mothers faced, transforming them into advocates for mothers in prison. Chapter 7 argues that volunteers have unique shifting trifurcated perspectives of the prison, which enables volunteers to generate solutions to the injustices the incarcerated mothers faced, alongside a critique of the prison system and the wider social structure.

A Transforming Perspective

The 'Dangerous Other' and 'Manipulative Women' Stereotype

As Jacobi and Roberts (2016) found, volunteer perspectives were transformed through their work. Volunteer prison work opens possibilities for mothers in prison by understanding them beyond stereotypes because mothers are humanised and contextualised. However, volunteers initially reported feeling fearful and overwhelmed on entering the prison primarily because of stereotypes about prisoners. A. Davis (2014) argued that because prisons are hidden worlds, our collective imagination casts prisoners as 'evildoers', violent people of colour. These simplistic stereotypes distance us from the nuanced reality of prisoners and their lives. The first prison visit was a significant challenge for most volunteers, with most reporting feeling anxious, fearful or overwhelmed. While participants reported a range of reasons for these feelings, several described feeling fearful because of the image they had of prisoners from the media:

Vanessa: I was quite anxious and not quite a sleepless night, but I definitely went to bed thinking “What’s this going to be like?”. And woke up kind of quite wired in the morning and pretty much everyone I’ve spoken to has the same sort of thing. Even though you’ve talked through what’s involved and you know you’re going to be with a group of people and someone’s going to be looking after you. I think it’s unnerving ‘cause you don’t really know what? Yeah...It’s just the uncertainty. You have all that kind of stereotype of... orange is the new black or you probably have watched quite a few TV shows and see that kind of stereotype of what it might be like. I think it’s quite scary ...it gets more straightforward still each time we go.

Heather: I think before I started this work I had this really preconceived idea. As much as I think I’m quite open-minded...

Caroline: It’s crazy noisy and it’s very echoey and they’ll be a lot of women around wanting to know what’s going on. And you’ve also [got] to be aware of ...safety stuff as well, so it can be quite full on, like all your senses feel like they’re massively hyped up ...the first few times I went back and just sat in my car and I was like, “Wow, ...that’s full on”, ‘cause it’s not only what you’re hearing from the women, but also the noise. The fact that you’re locked in... the fact that you’re aware of maybe stuff going on, and just gonna keep being on guard all the time...And you have a radio in your ear and like an earpiece that’s giving you safety stuff and updates and you are trying to give advice, listening to everything and have this thing in your ear you’re like, “Oh my God, this is way too much...”.

Amy: It was pretty scary to start just because it’s all new.

All volunteers told stories invoking stereotypes of prisoners as ‘dangerous others’. Prisoners were sometimes described as “dangerous”, “onerous”, “naughty”, “scary”, “risky”, among other forms of othering. Safety for volunteers (presumably from the dangerous others) was frequently considered important. While individuals may not personally endorse these stereotypes, negative stereotypes can set up biased expectations, foster discrimination and reinforce prejudiced attitudes (Ghavami & Peplau, 2012). Some volunteers remembered feeling like “anything can happen”, suggesting an out-of-control environment where volunteers are potentially in danger from unpredictable ‘others’. For example, several volunteers reported being anxious because

they were locked in a room with prisoners. A few volunteers also hoped Corrections staff would protect them from ‘the dangerous others’:

Lisa: ...they let about six or seven prisoners in the room with us. So we had a reasonable-sized roomand there are quite a few in there with us, I felt. That’s a little nerve-wracking because there was so many of them and only three of us.

Grace: We’re locked in with the [prisoners] then realising...you’re like, oh, anything could happen here (laughs).

Kristina: ...we would be in the cafeteria with some pretty onerous prisoners (laughs) and the guard would not be in there or you’d sort of be hoping that they would be keeping an eye on but ...you wouldn’t quite know how much observation there was...

Grace: ...because at times the prison [is] so busy that you can call if you like. I mean you’ve got a radio, but actually. Who knows how long it’s going to take for someone to respond?

Contributing to the idea that women prisoners were dangerous was the gendered construction that women prisoners were manipulative and distrustful that filtered through some volunteers’ stories. Women, in general, are stereotyped as manipulative (Muehlenhard & Hollabaugh, 1988). Negative stereotypes of women prisoners being manipulative have a long history (Schram et al., 2004). Women who breach femininity norms by imprisonment are positioned as “unnatural, monstrous and manipulative” (Mackie, 2016, p. 1). Volunteers told stories about the Corrections induction, which presented women prisoners as ‘dangerous, manipulative people’ that you should always be wary of. The idea that women in prison can use manipulation tactics to gain power and control is slightly absurd because they possess neither in the prison environment. Fearing prisoners connects to the idea that we are encouraged to fear the most powerless in society, so imprisonment of marginalised people is justified (Arrigo, 2013; McIntosh, 2005).⁵⁶ Kristina, Heather, and Gemma appeared to accept Corrections’ view of women prisoners as manipulative and dangerous, illustrating how gender bias against women is so naturalised,

⁵⁶ According to Arrigo (2013), the punitive treatment of the most vulnerable people in society is a form of insanity, a “totalizing madness”(p. 674).

normalised, everyday, and unquestioned. Intersectionality is useful to understand how when stereotypes of prisoners (dangerous) and women (manipulative) intersect, the responses from people to women prisoners are distinctive. The compulsory Corrections induction reinforces and confirms the stereotypes of women prisoners as dangerous, untrustworthy, and manipulative by explicitly warning the volunteers about the dangerous women inside that they must protect themselves from:

Kristina: They train you basically to look... to be aware of the manipulation tactics that prisoners will use ... they [Corrections staff] scare the living daylights out of you. They make you ...aware of the rules, which are that you cannot ...if the prisoners says to you ... “Can you please take this piece of paper or this card out to so and so and drop it off to them?”. You need to be really aware of that and things like not giving personal details away because they’re ...very perceptive and they notice everythingthey’re good at manipulating guards and stuff like that so that’s the training again.

Heather: You do this whole thing before you go, you do this induction and it’s called “Getting got” ... it talks about manipulation...and about how ...all the different ways...

Gemma: I really like your jumper. And your earrings. How many kids do you have? Sort of ...befriending until it goes beyond befriending.

Corrections presenting women prisoners as dangerous and manipulative is concerning because it ‘others’ a very vulnerable population. It gives the incarcerated women perceived power and agency when they have so little power in prison. It is also opposed to Corrections’ stated goals of trauma-informed care. Shalev (2021) points out that the “particular vulnerabilities and needs of women in prison are known to, and accepted by, Corrections” (p. 14). Nevertheless, Corrections presents women in prison as dangerous, manipulative, and othered to volunteer groups who have come into the prison to *help* these women. Gendered stereotypes of women prisoners make volunteers afraid and distrustful of the marginalised population they are seeking to help. Until recently, this induction for volunteers was called “Getting got”. “Getting got” is slang for a hostile action done to a person, which strongly suggests that volunteers are in danger when working with prisoners. If volunteers cannot (or should not?) trust the women inside, how can

they advocate or help them? Do unconscious biases against women affect the way the volunteers relate to the prisoners?

Due to these harmful gendered stereotypes, volunteers sometimes indicated they did not trust the mother's stories. In Amy's day job, she is "lied to constantly", which makes it "really difficult to ever really believe someone". Amy related this distrust to listening to the women's stories in prison:

But it doesn't mean that I sit there and I'm like "I think you're lying", but I don't take it as everything... I act as if I believe it because that's respectful to them, but it doesn't mean I necessarily take it on too much.

Volunteers sometimes check the mothers' stories with government agencies in family connection work. Vanessa explained that the women they help are encouraged to disclose if Oranga Tamariki is involved with their children. The volunteers then call Oranga Tamariki to get their version of the story:

Vanessa: [Oranga Tamariki] That's the first call I make because you'll get a mother who gives her view of the world. And then that might or might not be. It's not the only view of the world, and it might...be that they've forgotten to tell you that actually, there's this violence involved. All these complex issues that we need to know about if we're gonna be supporting her.

Similarly, Caroline warns that you must be "careful" when believing an imprisoned mother's story. When Caroline did take a mother's story at face value, she felt she had caused harm to the family on the outside:

...but one that got to me was someone that ...she killed her partner and abused the kids and then she wanted help trying to find out... what's happening with the kids? And then when I rang the [grand]mother and said "What's happening with the kids?". She said "I don't know because I'm dealing with my son's funeral". So I was like, OK...sometimes you don't get the full story. So you gotta be very careful around that. That you are not gonna cause harm on the outside as well. ...She hadn't told me the full story of why she was in prison. We never ask and therefore I felt like I'd just caused massive damage to the woman

outside...that's where it went wrong ...'cause if I'd heard that I would never have rung her.

Caroline's story illustrates that a holistic picture is essential when families and children are involved. However, distrust of the mothers' stories is problematic because, for multiply marginalised incarcerated mothers, unconscious bias and discrimination may affect how their stories are received and understood. Research illustrates that women victims are frequently not listened to, taken seriously, or believed (Humphreys & Mandel, 2021; McDonald, 1997; Murphy-Oikonen et al., 2022). Checking women's stories with government agencies is problematic because the prison population is predominately Māori. Governmental agencies, specifically Oranga Tamariki, are prejudiced against Māori and significantly harmful to Māori whānau (Waitangi Tribunal, 2021). I also wondered about the extreme case example 'single' stories that we tell, because women who kill their partners and abuse their children to an extreme level are relatively rare (Gordon & Love, 2022). However, extreme case stories are often the ones that get retold. How does the retelling of this story reify for Caroline that prisoners are 'bad mums' and should not be trusted? Does Caroline take her singular experience of distrust and "be careful" with the other mothers she sees who do not abuse their children? If some women who come to help this vulnerable population do not believe the mothers' stories, how can they help the women inside?

Contributing to the sense of danger and distrust is the fact that the prison population is culturally 'othered'. While volunteers did not explicitly mention race/racism when discussing the 'dangerous other', they described bringing media-influenced prisoner stereotypes into prison and being fearful and overwhelmed. Intersectionality theory offers a framework for examining how stereotypes of prisoners and ethnicity intersect (Ghavami & Peplau, 2012). Volunteers are predominately Pāhekā, and prisoners predominately Māori. As discussed, Māori have been stereotyped as criminals. Scholars point out that the link between indigeneity and criminality are so dominant in mainstream discourses, that when people conjure images of criminals they are racially othered automatically (Bull, 2017; A. Davis, 1998; hooks, 1981; Norris & Billings, 2017). It is possible that when volunteers talk about being overwhelmed and anxious, part of this is due

to the cultural ‘otherness’ of the prison population. Samara and Sonia’s quotes below suggest that racial differences contribute to feelings of overwhelm and distrust:

Samara: There’s so many things that are so overwhelming,it feels like the ... volunteer group is predominantly White and then in prison it’s predominantly people of colour. It’s just in terms of that stark contrast it’s quite overwhelming for people.

Sonia: The majority of women that we deal with are Māori right? So ...it’s just as much [that] we need the woman to trust our volunteers. We need volunteers to trust the women.

It is unsurprising that fear, anxiety, and overwhelm were prominent in volunteer recollections about beginning this work, as the mothers had been positioned as ‘risky’ and ‘dangerous’ by the media and Corrections. However, through their work, volunteers’ perceptions of incarcerated mothers transformed.

Negative Stereotypes Challenged

Volunteer stereotypes were transformed by listening to the mothers, learning about the context of their lives, and having positive interactions with them. Through listening to the mothers’ stories, the volunteers understood them as complex individuals facing significant structural barriers. All volunteers told stories that explicitly contested the ‘dangerous other’ stereotype. Volunteers described mothers in prison positively using a range of terms such as “smart”, “articulate”, “delightful”, “funny”, “gorgeous”, and “positive”:

Gemma: I think I now see those women as women, rather than some sort of something I’ve pictured in my mind or through media... so I feel like that shifted quite quickly into OK.

Heather: You do... have preconceptions. And then you go in and you start to do this work and you go ... OMG, it’s so nuanced and the people...and it sounds cliched but actually just being in there and doing it.....

As Schuhmann et al. (2018) found, volunteers reported positive experiences when working with incarcerated mothers, and were able to form positive relationships. Most volunteers

remembered the mothers as extremely grateful for the work the volunteers did to connect the mothers with their children:

Grace: ...the women are so grateful generally and so appreciative of it that it does make you feel like it's something worth doing.

Lisa: She [a prisoner] laughed her head off...It was so funny. It was one of my highlights. I just laughed for a long time...

Kristina: You'd be surprised... a lot of them are very able to articulate things very clearly, and they are very smart.

Kristina's quote indicates that I would find the idea of prisoners being intelligent surprising, which indicates how she understands the negative stereotypes and how they differ from her lived experience with imprisoned mothers. As well as challenging negative stereotypes about women prisoners, volunteers specifically told stories that contested women in prison were automatically 'bad mothers'.

Volunteer stories illustrated an acute awareness that some people did not think helping mothers in prison was a good thing to be doing. This discourse suggests that you should not help incarcerated mothers because they are triply deviant. They have (allegedly) broken the law, gone against femininity norms, *and* are not with their children. Therefore, they are criminals and 'bad mums'. Helping prisoners is generally not popular with Aotearoa's punitive public (Mills, 2018). Deckert (2020b) notes that in the media, the 'bad woman' narrative becomes "particularly apparent when discussing mothers who commit crime" (p. 340). Due to this triple deviance, 'bad mothers' are considered unworthy of help and harmful to their children.⁵⁷ Volunteer stories indicated an acute understanding of public attitudes against helping incarcerated mothers. However, they continued to do this work despite the negative feedback from friends, family, colleagues, and the public:

⁵⁷ Especially so if they are also impoverished and Māori, as the work by Strickett and Moewaka-Barnes (2012), Todd (2008), and Ware et al. (2017) suggests.

Heather: ...the old trolls start with the old “Why would you even help them in prison? You know, they are criminals and what are you doing? They should be just left to rot in there”. You are just like (deep breath) “Wow”.

Vanessa: Some people say “Why are you doing that? Like they shouldn’t be allowed to have anything to do with their children”. I was quite interested in some of the attitudes that came up.

Caroline: Why are you wasting your time? And my husband would go “Why is she doing that?”.

These stories reveal the low value the public has for women who occupy intersections of mother and prisoner. Sonia, aware of the public distaste for helping imprisoned mothers and the need for some capital to keep the volunteer organisation running, reframes her volunteer work as ‘helping children’ to make it more palatable to the public:

Sonia: We are a volunteer project...so, we need funding. When I talk about the project ... not everyone wants to help imprisoned women (laughs). But most people want to help kids. So ...if we talk about the project through the lens of this is the objective is actually to help kids then people kind of will soften into it a little bit. ...We go in and we help incarcerated mums. Not everyone ...thinks that’s necessarily such a good thing to be doing. That’s alright. ...I’m not judging it, it’s interesting because actually [when] you help those women you’ll help the kids so that’s the most effective way to help those children, but people find it harder to digest.

Sonia understands the best way to help children is to help their mothers. However, volunteer organisations must be careful about whom they *talk* about helping. Helping children is fine, but helping imprisoned mothers is not. Sonia illustrated how we have enormous empathy for children, but not for mothers and their difficult life histories. However, not helping these mothers means their children are also denied help.

While it is unsurprising that volunteers (that sought to help mothers in prison) actively challenged and were critically aware of the ‘bad mother’ stereotype, it is interesting that they seemed surprised to find ‘good mothers’ in prison. This suggests that some volunteers assumed that mothers in prison could *not* be good mothers:

Kristina: ...And so she was in prison all of a sudden. And she was a woman, literally that I used to chat to in the schoolyard. And her son was still playing [sport] with my [child], but she hadn't seen him for three years or whatever. So...it's quite incredible how you realise that just because they're in this position, they are in prison and they may have done some bad things, doesn't mean they're not... a good mother.

Heather told a story where a mother obtained money illegally to help further her child's education and was subsequently imprisoned. This story greatly impacted Heather because it was about a woman who was imprisoned for helping her child. Perhaps Heather wanted to tell people this story because it challenges the stereotype that mothers in prison are fundamentally bad mothers and supports the volunteer work as doing 'good' work with 'good' people:

For me, it was such a gut punch ...that is a confidential story but at the same time it's one I sorta tell because you sort of go, oh right, God...she's in here for being a good mum! Right?...I mean it really really just hit me. And I thought far out you try and do your best for your kids and this was her way ... she was going I am going to do everything I can to get my [child this educational opportunity]. And that's what got her in prison. ...for me that was really like wow so there is this big link with motherhood and there is this big link with ... some of these mums are in here not for being a bad mother but for being a *good* mother.

Some women are filtered into prison due to mothering pressures and ideals, as McIntosh and Curcic (2020), Gordon and Love (2022), and Bevan (2015) illustrate. Heather's idea of why mothers were in prison has transformed from thinking that if you go to prison, you are a bad mother to considering that mothers trying to assist their children (for example, to get out of poverty) sometimes break the law to help their children. Heather notes that only "some" of the mothers are in prison for being 'good' mothers. Presumably, this meant that some imprisoned mothers were 'bad mothers'.

Subset Othered – 'The Dangerous Few' and 'Really Bad Mums'

Similar to what Gilmour and Alessi (2022) found, volunteers also appeared to shift stereotypes onto a smaller, more marginalised subset of imprisoned mothers rather than dissolve them

completely. While this work challenged and shifted some stereotypes, others remained intact. Despite challenging the 'dangerous other' stereotype, all volunteers held onto ideas that *some* prisoners were dangerous. The 'dangerous few' was exemplified in stories about prison being necessary for a small group of risky individuals:

Samara: ...there are some prisoners that just through different aspects of my work I think are so dangerous. They probably shouldn't be around for other people so. But that's such a small group of people...

Sonia: So then you would only actually put in really high need, most risky people into our prisons.

Grace: I can't think of many people at all who would need to be in prison. Maybe occasionally forensic psych units... Maybe there are times where people really are not safe for themselves and others.

Volunteers understood that prison was necessary for a few people who were considered a 'risk' to others or themselves. Samara says in another excerpt that she does not think "almost any of the women I met are actually dangerous people", yet on the other hand, she understands some prisoners are "so dangerous". Prison is necessary and essentialised for these few 'risky' individuals. As volunteers did not believe prison could rehabilitate or keep the community safe (discussed further in Chapter 6), the essentialisation of prison for the 'dangerous few' suggests the volunteers could not imagine a prisonless world.⁵⁸

The stereotype subset shift also happened to the 'bad mum' stereotype, despite the volunteers going into prison with the explicit aim of helping mothers. The 'bad' mum stereotype was shifted onto a subset of 'really bad mums'. These 'really bad mums' were those who hurt others, particularly children. Women who are violent to others go against cultural norms of femininity and are often labelled either 'mad/sad' or 'bad'. The bad women discourse is evoked when a women's criminal offence is considered in opposition to cultured gendered norms and cannot be ascribed to mental illness (Mackie, 2016). The mad/sad dichotomy focuses on feminine⁵⁹ parts

⁵⁸ The very act of volunteering in a prison works to essentialise 'prison' as an embedded naturalised part of our society.

⁵⁹ What is understood to be feminine. I do not think mental distress is gendered!

of the woman's offending, such as mental distress. This simplistic duality has dangerous connotations, as women labelled as 'bad' are not seen as worthy of help, even for volunteers who seek to help mothers. It seemed that killing your partner, hurting children, and being "so dangerous" created a fear of risk and the only solution offered for these "really bad mums" was prison. This suggests that these prisoners are "beyond help", meaning that all rehabilitation efforts would be futile and punishment and removal from society are the purposes of imprisonment for these women:

Caroline: You get the ones... that killed her partner. Yeah, absolutely, you need to be in there...

Heather: I really don't think that young children should be taken away from their mums unless its...they are abusive I think.

Lisa:...a bit of a shock that even the [gift] might not go home because... whatever's happened has meant that she's [the imprisoned mother] not supposed to have any connection with them [her children].

Samara: So some women we can't help if they've got any sort of history of violence towards their children.

Samara noted that volunteers are not allowed to help women with histories of violence toward their children. A violent mother has transgressed societal norms of motherhood and will not be helped. However, a mother who is violent towards her children is perhaps in the *greatest* need of help to restore whānau relationships. Through conversations with 'volunteer colleagues', I learnt that according to Corrections, mothers with histories of offending against children were not supposed to ask volunteers for help. However, some mothers with histories of violence did ask for help and *were* helped. For example, in the instance where a mother was worried that the children were in the custody of a violent ex-partner. While Samara knew she was not to help women with violent histories against children, she had never actually encountered a woman with such a history in her two years of service. The power of the stereotype of 'bad mums' is evidenced by its ability to survive despite direct contact with the stereotyped group and understanding more of the mothers' context:

Samara:...We provide a list of who we've talked to...to I think the volunteer coordinator. And I'm a bit murky what goes on from that point, but I think they will let us know if there's anyone on that list that we shouldn't be talking to... I've never run into a problem like that before.

In contrast to the stereotypes that shifted onto a subset, the stereotype of manipulative/distrustful women was essentially not challenged, with few exceptions. One exception is Vanessa's story, where she was troubled by Corrections' view of women in the induction, which lacked compassion or understanding:

It was quite unpleasant. It was very untrusting. I know they've got reason, they will have had experiences where they have reason to not be trusting, but the vibe it gave out was a very suspicious, untrusting, sort of view of the woman which I found a little bit disturbing.

While the volunteers sometimes contested the 'dangerous other' stereotype, gendered stereotypes are so ordinary, everyday, and accepted that they are almost invisible and go largely unchallenged. Have we uncritically internalised ideas about women being distrustful and manipulative as 'just the way things are?' How do volunteers create positive relationships with women they cannot trust or befriend? However, the volunteers did have positive relationships with prisoners. They did trust the women and their stories. Through practicing an ethics of care, volunteers could transcend stereotypes of distrust and work positively with the women to connect them with their whānau.

Ethics of Care

Volunteers reported developing human and caring relationships with the mothers in prison. Their stories detailed empathy, concern, and caring for incarcerated mothers. The pain of separation from children was prominent in all volunteer interviews, supporting the global literature that concludes that separation from children is the hardest part of a prison sentence for mothers (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Hairston, 1991; Lobo & Howard, 2021; Lord Farmer, 2019; Rasche, 2000):

Lisa: I could understand as a mum how they'd be feeling. I'm not sure if I could imagine being taken away from my children. Particularly at little ages.

Heather: It was that overwhelming feeling of being locked away from your children and not being able to connect with them nightly I find ...found quite emotional. I couldn't imagine not being able to *do that*... I quite often feel quite emotionally affected by some of their stories.

Vanessa: The one that made me so sad a few months back, this really young woman. Maybe she was in her late 20s. She had four children. They'd all been taken away from her and she was just like sadness, grief was just kind of pouring out from her...the tears were coming down... It just struck me, it's just so emotional. I said "Oh what can I do for her?". But I again went away with such a heavy heart.

Heather: I remember a [young] girl being in there. And she wasn't meant to be in there, but there was nowhere else to put her. And she had a baby... And she was in prison and she was going to be in prison for a long time. When she came to us, she had her hair in braids and she looked about 12. And she didn't know where her child was and you just ...I mean you can't not be affected by that.

Amy: That mother that told me about wanting to commit suicide. That was one that I was quite worried about how she was going to go in those following weeks...[I'm concerned about] all of them really. Like they're all in such an awful position...

Most volunteers reported being emotionally affected by the mothers' stories suggesting that they connected with, related to, and deeply cared about the women in prison. The emotional complexity of this work is supported throughout the analysis by participant quotes and the literature (Quinn & Tomczak, 2020). Most volunteers understood that the emotional intensity of the work was unavoidable, despite developing some resiliency from gaining experience in this work. A major element that allowed the volunteers to take on this highly emotional complex work was their support for each other.

The volunteer organisations were centred on an ethics of care which informed their relationships with prisoners and each other. Relationships, caring, motherhood, and women were valued. They structured their organisations according to their values rather than for profit. Despite the

emotionally difficult work, all volunteers reported it was enjoyable because they liked and respected whom they worked with and felt well supported by their organisations. Women working together to help other women⁶⁰ created a sense of camaraderie and care. This was evidenced by how they positively talked about each other and their organisations. This work was experienced very differently from their paid jobs:

Gemma: I like the people I'm working with when I come in.

Vanessa: I've tried to put out a message [to volunteers] to say "Let us know, I'm here to talk..."

Kristina: So I'm just conscious of making sure that it's not only do they [other volunteers] feel valued, but they feel ...it's worth their time.

Caroline: She's amazing 'cause she is a [person with a legal background] and she's a really good one. And when she's in there, me and [the head volunteer] sit back and go, "Wow".

Kristina: I think the organisation is really great at emphasising the value of the work. There's nothing [I would change] within the organisation itself.

Samara: A lot of the people who do the volunteering are really amazing people.

As well as being enjoyable because the work was valued and respected, volunteer work was important, rewarding, and meaningful to all the volunteers, as research by Hefford (2020) and Trickey (2020) found. Most volunteers understood this work as meaningful because it made a difference in other people's lives. Some volunteers wished they could do more of this work; others reported being disappointed to miss prison visits:

Vanessa: This is hard, but there's something very rewarding about this and very engaging.

Amy: It's so important it gets me through, really.

Samara: Ideally, I would like to go part-time and be able to volunteer way more.

Grace: It does make a difference for people.

⁶⁰ Some men were involved in the volunteer organisations, but the majority of volunteers were women.

Kristina: It's just the benefit that you provided for one mother really... If you can keep that connection going... between them... the difference it will make for that kid ...even one kid.

Making meaningful differences for others and working in ethics-of-care-led organisations contributed to a transformational process for the volunteers. Experiencing this work changed their standpoints as they were able to practice valuing care work and caring relationships. Through relationships with imprisoned mothers, they learnt the benefits of listening to people different from themselves.

Learning Through Listening

Volunteers learnt a lot about the context of mothers' traumatic lives outside of prison through the transformative act of listening to the mothers' stories. Learning about the difficult lives of incarcerated mothers enabled the volunteers to witness the structural barriers and injustices the mothers endured. One of the reasons prisoner stereotypes are so harmful is that by considering people in prison as bad and subhuman, we do not consider the wider social issues that prison seeks to 'disappear'.⁶¹ Simplistic stereotypes can allow us to ignore human rights violations and make prisoners vulnerable to abuse (Potier, 2003). However, as the volunteers transcended stereotypes, they did not ignore the social problems that contributed to the difficulty of incarcerated mothers' lives but described them in detail:

Amy: ...these women are all victims of something. Most violence, ...a lot of them have been sexually abused. There's so much trauma that they've all lived.

Sonia: ...you are seeing some of the most vulnerable people in our country without in any way excusing their offending. I understand that they have created victims and have a huge amount of empathy for people who've been impacted by their offending. But many of the women who are in our prisons are victims of violence, sexual assault, crime themselves. Some of them may not realise that ... which in and of itself is challenging. The incidence of mental

⁶¹ Prisons function ideologically to abstractly hide 'undesirables' relieving us of having to address the real issues affecting communities which prisoners are drawn from disproportionately (Potier, 2003).

health challenges, illness, literacy challenges, physical wealth challenges, I mean, these are very vulnerable people.

Samara: There's that element that these are potentially dangerous people and you're suddenly faced with being in a room with someone who's potentially dangerous, and in my mind, I don't think almost any of the women I met, are actually dangerous people. I think most of the crimes committed are probably crimes of desperation, and probably many of the women I've met have some sort of mental illness and or drug addiction that they're trying to recover from.

As Samara has learnt more about the context of imprisoned women, she no longer considers them dangerous people. Samara positions incarcerated mothers as 'sad/mad' rather than bad, therefore deserving empathy and help. Volunteers fluctuated between a politics of pity versus a politics of risk (Brown, 2013) to describe the women prisoners. A politics of pity can deny women in prison agency and artificially homogenise their experiences. However, volunteers often used the word 'empathy' in their stories to highlight that they did not just feel sorry for the women in prison, but worked to understand why they would be in this situation:

Gemma: I don't think it's particularly helpful for the women to see us really upset but we are able to express sympathy...

Heather: Empathy really ah?

Gemma: Empathy yeah.

Learning about the imprisoned mother's context is transformational, as this learning humanises the mothers inside, which challenges prisoner stereotypes.

Through the experience of volunteer work, negative stereotypes of imprisoned mothers were transformed. The 'dangerous other' and 'bad mum' stereotype did not disappear entirely but shifted onto a smaller, more marginalised subset. Stereotypes about women prisoners being manipulative and distrustful were rarely contested. However, volunteers could transcend stereotypes by practising ethics of care toward imprisoned mothers and each other. By developing empathic relationships and listening to the imprisoned mothers' stories, the volunteers learned about the context of their lives. Learning about imprisoned mothers' contexts humanised the prisoners and transformed stereotypes. Volunteers moved from simplistic

stereotypes to complex and nuanced understandings of the mothers' lives and the structural barriers they faced. Transcending prisoner stereotypes opened possibilities for the mothers in prison to be genuinely listened to and advocated for, creating opportunities for social change. Understanding incarcerated mothers as women embedded within different and complex contexts in their lives outside of prison allowed the volunteers to witness the multiple injustices mothers faced. The volunteers did not ignore the injustices they saw as 'just the ways things are', but actively sought to describe them and address them, which is discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 5: Witnessing Injustices

Samara: I think at first...it's a bit of a shock that you have to process just being in the prison environment and just seeing so much unfairness.

A prominent theme in almost all volunteers' stories was a deep sense of injustice for incarcerated mothers. Volunteers detailed injustices in the mothers' lives before prison and their treatment inside. While volunteers recognised gendered violence as a significant factor in women's lives, the gendered construction of mothers as primary caregivers was not problematised. Mothers' lack of access to legal justice has severe implications; mothers can lose relationships with their children. A prison sentence was considered harder if you were a mother, Māori, or impoverished. How the disproportional Māori prisoner population is understood contributed to how volunteers understood the fairness of the criminal justice system. By understanding the injustice of the imprisonment cycle, volunteers concluded that prison does not work to keep people safe or rehabilitate. Volunteers understood that transformations were needed in the criminal justice system and wider society to address these injustices. By witnessing and describing the multiple injustices mothers experienced in prison, volunteers opened possibilities for these injustices to be addressed.

Gendered Injustices Before Imprisonment

As discussed in Chapter 4, from listening to stories from the mothers, the volunteers became knowledgeable about the multiple injustices in women's lives before imprisonment. Most volunteers recognised violence and sexual trauma as being all too common in the lives of mothers. Several volunteers recounted how difficult it was to hear women talking matter-of-factly about their own sexual assaults, accepting rape as a part of their everyday lives and blaming themselves:

Vanessa: I've heard too many stories of women casually talking about how they were raped or assaulted and blaming themselves. And that's really hard to hear.

Domestic violence is gendered violence,⁶² but there was little explicit recognition that gender played a significant role in the injustices that mothers experienced. The exception was Vanessa, who described that one of the biggest challenges for mothers in prison is their pre-prison life. She described her answer as “strange” because it is unusual to describe gender and motherhood as contributing factors to a difficult life. Vanessa demonstrated her knowledge that being released from prison will not solve the women’s problems because the biggest challenge for women in prison is their life pre-prison, as a mother can return to the same environment on release:

...so I think [it] might sound like a strange answer, but I think it’s just for them as both women and mothers that their life has got to the desperate point that they have and so it’s not easy. Like maybe a guy he’ll do his rehab or he’ll do this or that and then he’ll step out of the prison going on with his life but for her. She suffered so many things that have led to getting there and then she’s got to pick up the pieces and probably go back into the community that’s led to... [imprisonment].

However, not all volunteers knew the common circumstances of women’s lives or the common criminal charges. During one interview, a volunteer asked me why women were in prison. In an ideal world, to fulfil Treaty obligations of *whakamaru*,⁶³ volunteer organisations could provide materials that explained the typical circumstances of women in prison and why they were there. Providing volunteers with information about this vulnerable population may help volunteers relate to prisoners and possibly mitigate unintentional harm. For example, being aware of the high number of prisoners who are victims of gendered violence (Indig et al., 2017; McIntosh, 2022a) or have a traumatic brain injury (Woolhouse et al., 2018) could help volunteers understand the women. On the other hand, prisoners are not homogenous, and this could run the risk of reinforcing stereotypes. Not knowing a mother’s specific offences may enable volunteers to help everyone similarly. However, knowing that most offences are not severe or dangerous could lessen anxiety about working with prisoners. While volunteers were mostly

⁶² As the majority of domestic violence is committed by men, and gender is the most significant factor in being a victim of domestic violence (Respect, 2008).

⁶³ Protection.

knowledgeable about the injustices of women's lives before imprisonment, there was a notable absence of a discussion about fathers.

The Social Construction of Childcare as Gendered

An injustice that remained unproblematised was the social construction of childcare as gendered. Throughout the interviews, there was a notable absence of discussion about fathers and their childcare responsibilities. Participants' stories did not challenge the assumption that all the responsibility for children was attributed to mothers, or mention fathers as possible primary caregivers. The absence of the responsibilities of fathers may be partly due to the volunteer organisations' focus on helping mothers. However, if a group of volunteers assisted fathers in prison to connect with their children, I would imagine mothers as possible caregivers would (at the very least) be mentioned. Volunteers understood mothering as something that did not stop, even after imprisonment, as supported by the findings of Lashlie and Pivac (2000).

Grace: ...people don't stop being a mum just because they don't get to see their child.

Caroline: Just 'cause you've gone into prison doesn't mean you've given up all your caregiving responsibilities and are no longer a mother.

It is unjust that mothering is something that does not stop, but fathering appears to be something that never started. The missing 'responsible father' discourse reveals an unjust social order and illustrates how gendered injustice is constructed and maintained as 'just the way things are'. If responsible fathers were part of the picture, perhaps mothers would not have to lose 'everything' upon imprisonment. However, a disproportional number of women and children experience violence, abuse, and control by men. It can be dangerous for children and women to have fathers around. However, if these fathers were responsible fathers, non-violent and caring, some of the gendered pains of imprisonment for families could reduce. A non-Eurocentric solution to the temporary absence of a primary parent and the fact that some people are harmful would be whānau-styled child raising as opposed to the individualistic, isolated practices of the nuclear

family.⁶⁴ Due to their status as mothers and the 'taken-for-granted' position of being primary caregivers, a prison sentence can disrupt a mother and child relationship with devastating consequences.

Gendered Legal Injustices

Volunteers reported a range of gendered legal injustices that could result in mothers losing access to their children. Some volunteers recounted that mothers were generally not aware of their legal rights concerning their children. This suggests the idea that imprisoned women should not have anything to do with their children was accepted as 'the way things were' for some prisoners and families. Amy believed that access to information, alongside the mistruths mothers believe regarding their rights concerning their children, is an imprisoned mother's greatest challenge. The idea that mothers are the natural guardians of their children is enshrined in law (Care of Children Act, 2004) and should not change when a mother goes into prison. However, Sonia's experience suggested that incarcerated mothers were not included in how their children can be best supported, which overlooks an essential relationship for both mother and child:

Sonia: OK, let's just make sure everyone understands what their rights are. Everyone understands that the focus here is on what's in the best interests of kids? Mums can be a really important part of that. Notwithstanding that they are behind the wire. You know government agencies, caregivers, schools. How best do we kind of wrap as much support as we can around kids and let mums be part of that? So I was just surprised at the extent to which that wasn't happening.

Amy: A lot of the questions coming from the mothers were family law related, there's a real gap in education on what their rights are as mothers. When you go to prison, that means that you've got no guardianship rights anymore, which is the decisions about the upbringing of children like where they live, what school they go to, what their religion is, what language they speak. And, other family members will be like, "Oh well, we've got them now so your loss, your fault" kind of thing and a lot of women believe that, when that's completely not true...They are people who have who have made bad decisions, but they

⁶⁴ Colonisation is responsible for the destruction of whānau style parenting practices *and* the implementation of prisons, so decolonisation of the nuclear family and the criminal justice system would be a good start.

still deserve just as much as everyone else to get legal advice to understand their rights between them and their children.

Volunteers also recounted mothers in prison being served court documents about their children that the mothers could not fully understand nor easily respond to. Court documents are challenging to understand for most people, so for distressed, multiply marginalised mothers, the chances of complete comprehension are limited. These legal documents had the potential to deny mothers access to their children:

Sonia: They [imprisoned mothers] were receiving copies of court papers relating to their children. They couldn't really make much sense of, because ...often the court papers would relate to a specific part of a larger process and sometimes the mums, according to [Corrections] staff, didn't really have the full context or story around that.

Amy: I remember trying to read one [legal document] and I was like I don't even really know what this is saying and I [have extensive experience in this area]. So someone who can't really read and write properly, how the heck are they supposed to know what to do?

Amy: ...they basically just get served with documents and if they don't reply they eventually get cut off. They cut off the proceedings. They haven't tried to respond and it's actually really, really hard for them to do it.

Incarcerated mothers who are served a without notice parenting order have seven days to respond or they can be cut off from all future proceedings to do with their children, and other people will get guardianship rights. Amy explained why responding to the documents is sometimes impossible for a mother in prison:

So this situation happens a lot for women in prison. So they'll be served this 20-page document that says this person applied for your child here's their affidavit setting out, why. Here's a temporary order that's been made that says they've got care of your child and you have seven days to respond. And they just get given this document and they have *no way of responding*. They don't get given the document to fill in themselves. They don't get given an automatic lawyer. They basically rely on volunteers who are there once a month. *If we go into*

their wing, which we don't get to all of the wings ...such lack of access to justice that I get *so passionate about*.

A mother in prison can wrongfully be excluded from all parenting decisions because if she fails to respond, she can be cut off from court proceedings. An inability to respond is likely to have long-term consequences for the mother and child relationship. For example, it may be difficult for the mother to regain day-to-day care of her children on release. When we consider the short sentences for mostly petty crimes that many women are imprisoned for, the punishment is extremely disproportionate to both mother and child:

Amy: ...So for her to apply to have them back is so difficult because she's had no relationship with them, so it's yet another confirmation for them that the system doesn't give a shit about them. And we'll railroad them, especially when they're at their at rock bottom, which is when they're in prison ...So their children are a really big motivation for them while they're in there to turn their lives around and for them to basically be shat on by the court while they're in there is like. Why do I? Why would I try? Why would I try and contribute to society if it's gonna just treat me like this?

Another injustice acutely felt by some volunteers was the inability to get legal representation for family matters while in prison. One of the reasons it is challenging for incarcerated mothers to respond to court documents is the difficulty in obtaining a family lawyer. For impoverished mothers, gaining a family lawyer who worked for legal aid was even more difficult. Few family lawyers work for legal aid because the work is complex and poorly paid:⁶⁵

Caroline: They may not have seen a lawyer since they've got in there and if they have seen a criminal lawyer, they're certainly not giving them family law advice and help for them to find their kids.

Kristina: We are trying to sort out a family legal aid lawyer as well so that process can be difficult... So what you find is that it's very difficult to get decent representation ...there are very few willing to do it because it's so time-consuming, bureaucratic, and their remuneration rates are just ridiculous.

⁶⁵ Complex issues with the legal aid system and family law would be another valuable area of future inquiry that could open possibilities for incarcerated mothers.

For volunteers with legal backgrounds, these injustices were difficult to witness as they firmly believed that going to prison should not affect a person's legal rights. However, inside prison, they saw the multiple ways mothers did not get access to justice and the harsh way they were treated.

The Harshly Punitive Women's Prison

Supporting the Human Rights Commission's findings that women's prisons are harshly punitive and need urgent transformation (Shalev, 2021), volunteers recounted a range of extremely punitive prison practices. Examples included feeding women dinner in the afternoon to the limited time they are allowed out of their cells. Considering the injustices marginalised mothers experience in their lives outside of prison and the petty crimes they are mostly imprisoned for, these practices unfairly compound their suffering:

Gemma: So the women were apparently spending lots of money on food, because they are starving in the evening... imagine?

Vanessa: They basically have like an hour and a half to two hours out of their cells. And other than that, they're locked up the whole day. It's just...

Another injustice reported by volunteers was negative responses from staff regarding women in prison. Some volunteers expressed concern with those staff who did not want to help women in prison and had taken their jobs for the "wrong reasons". This sometimes upset the volunteers as they recognised the enormous power imbalance between staff and prisoners:

Heather: I get quite affected ...with attitudes of the Corrections staff... I reckon there are two real schools of staff. There is just some really fabulous Corrections officers who are totally there to support the women... They are like a firm parent. They've got that "No, don't mess around with me". But... "I'm going to call you by your name, and I'm going to treat you like a human being. And I'm going to be there for you". And there are some that are just like "You volunteers are wasting your time in here, what are you doing? They should be locked up forever" sorta thing. And THAT I find hard.

Caroline remembered an incident where she understood that a Corrections staff member did not want volunteers to help women. Caroline pointed out that staff working in a women's prison are supposed to contribute to women's rehabilitation and care:

...what's your problem? We're just doing our job, we'll be gone, we'll be out of your face in an hour ...but he had a real issue with us helping women. And I'm like, "You're in the women's prison. Your fundamental job is to look after women and you don't. You're against that. Then you need to go and get yourself another job".

It is challenging to reconcile Caroline's experience with the fact that Corrections knows it has a highly vulnerable and traumatised population. Caroline's opinion of what draws Corrections officers to their job is gaining power over people and money rather than helping women. This suggests that when the environment is a prison, with overt power over people, some people drawn to power and control may be attracted to these jobs. This would make the delivery of whānau focused trauma-informed care policy challenging at best. Staff have enormous power and discretion to be punitive or kind. How do these same staff responses affect the women inside, who cannot leave and are in a much lower position of power? How are these staff trauma-informed and whānau-friendly? How do marginalised women experiencing sexism, racism, and classism experience these responses? Many punitive prison practices were understood to be even more unjust for mothers as they compounded the gendered pains of separation.

Gendered Pains of Imprisonment

Volunteers recalled prison injustices that particularly affected mothers. For example, spending months on remand separated from your children without being sentenced was understood as grossly unfair:

Lisa: ...some of these women have been on remand for over a year, so they are away long-term ...I find [it] quite shocking how long people are on remand for.

Vanessa: ...but sometimes they can be there for months and months and months, which is what's concerning because as we understand it, they're not

eligible to be part of programmes or be involved in anything much, so they can be there 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 months before they actually engage in anything fruitful.

Adding to the pain of separation, communication problems were particularly challenging for imprisoned mothers. If mothers did not memorise family phone numbers, they could not contact anyone as their phones were removed from them on imprisonment. Volunteers recalled mothers going for weeks without knowing where their children were. Participants expressed strong emotions at the injustice of mothers being unable to contact their children, know where they were, if they were safe, or if their basic health needs were being met:

Amy: ...if they don't memorise their phone numbers of their family, 'cause they get their phone and everything taken from them when they first come in, then they need to submit [phone numbers which] need to get processed which can take five weeks. So they go for this whole period of time, not knowing some of them, not knowing where their children are. Who's looking after them? Or thinking they might be with one person who's really dangerous? Or they might have taken them somewhere and they don't know and... it just isn't fair.

Caroline: ...they've been in there up to a month and just have no clue. 'Cause when we go in... they're like "Please tell – try to find out what's happening with my kids", especially if the kids have got health issues as well and they want to know if they've been to a hospital appointment or...just their safety...They're just desperately wanting to know that they're not with their ex or something that's just been beating the crap out of them. It's really sad and what's really hard is when you're trying to do the follow-up ...and you can't get hold of anyone. And then you've got to email the prison back. So unfortunately, I've been unable to find anyone you know, that's really, really difficult.

Lisa: And lots of those mums in there [are] desperate... they ask us, "You know where my kids are? Do you know anything, have you heard anything about my kids?". They're all very anxious about communication with their children.

Gemma: Just sort of sensed the gravity of that separation between parent and child and then realising that there was some people who didn't know where their children were.

A prison sentence is a disproportional punishment for both mothers and children. Not knowing where your children are (or if they are safe) for weeks is an unimaginable torture. When you

consider the type of crime most mothers are accused of (non-violent, non-serious) and the short sentences served, on top of the traumatic lives these women have led, to then be removed from your children and not know where they are is counter to basic human rights. Imprisoning mothers for short periods of time for non-serious offences does not consider the psychological impact on children from being suddenly cut off from their primary caregiver for an unknown period of time. It is extremely difficult to reconcile the description from the volunteers of distressed mothers not knowing the whereabouts of their children, with a trauma-informed, whānau-focused approach to the management of women prisoners as outlined in Corrections' women's strategy policy document.⁶⁶ The volunteers told stories that indicated that if prisoners were Māori or impoverished, the gendered pains of separation were worse.

Injustices of Class and Race

Volunteers also recognised that when mothers occupied intersections of gender, class, and race, their prison sentence and treatment were compounded. For example, Kristina recognised that communicating with their families from prison was a lot more difficult for impoverished mothers because, in addition to phone restrictions is the barrier of cost. Phone calls are expensive, and phone cards and 0800 numbers cost money. Kristina explained that any cell phone number prisoners call must be approved by Corrections which can take weeks:

Communication's difficult. I mean they literally have to have a phone card and they need money to buy a phone card. So sometimes it can just be really difficult to get hold of whoever they need to get hold of, and any cell phone number that they call has to be approved...

Who gets to decide what numbers are approved or not will likely be affected by an unconscious bias towards mothers who inhabit multiply marginalised identities along the intersections of race, class, and gender. Some volunteers told stories suggesting that Māori mothers received differential treatment to Pākehā prisoners. Heather contrasted the story of a Pākehā mother who

⁶⁶ This echoes the gulf between Correctional policy and practice highlighted by Gordon and Love (2022), The Office of the Inspectorate (Adair, 2021), and the Human Rights Commission (Shalev, 2021).

committed fraud and was released early on compassionate leave (because she had children) with a dying Māori mother who was not granted compassionate early release.

Heather: And I was enraged about that because... at the same time there was a Māori woman who had cancer who was dying and couldn't get out of prison. I was like this system is so fucked.

Caroline: ...but she had a very different experience as a very White wealthy middle-class person than the average prisoner would have. ...They made her work in the library. She was always on low side literally, actually from 12 hours in she was put on the low side... Whereas it would have been interesting to see if she was Māori, whether she would have had the same experience...?

These extracts illustrate how the intersection of the social powers of gender, race, and class has real effects on imprisoned mothers. Mothers who occupy intersections of the colonising forces race, gender and class are treated differently by Corrections staff. Another striking example of the adverse outcomes of the colonising forces is the prison population itself.

Differing Responses to an Unjust Population

Surprisingly, only a few volunteers discussed the disproportional Māori population unprompted (reasons for this absence are discussed in Chapter 7). While Samara, Heather, Caroline, and Amy all referred to colonisation as a major reason for the disproportional number of Māori women in prison, Heather and Samara expressed explicit dismay at bearing witness to an inherently racist criminal justice system:

Heather: I think *really* understanding that poverty cycle more and the drug and alcohol cycle and *colonisation* (whispered) like really the amount of Māori or Pacifica women in there actually just blows my mind ... you just look at it and you go "This is really *stuffed*".

Samara: It's also definitely a product of colonisation and all of that, on a personal level, I really liked the women I met and on all sort of wider level I feel a sense of defeat and heartbrokenness...

Samara was the only volunteer to comment on the striking racial disparities between the volunteer group and the women in prison:

Almost all the woman I've met volunteering are Pākehā. I'm pretty sure of that ...almost all ... and that feels really weird because it's just... such a visual contrast in terms Pākehā [volunteers] than people of colour in prison and you're just like "Oh ...this is the result of systematic racism and oppression ... like all of that" ...oh here it's just so obvious.

For Samara, the striking visual difference between the Pākehā volunteer group and the Māori prisoners is an obvious example of a structurally racist criminal justice system. How the ethnic make-up of the prison population is understood can determine whether the volunteers understand the criminal justice system as being just or unfair. For example, Samara understood mass imprisonment of poor Māori women to illustrate the targeted injustices of the criminal justice system towards certain groups. However, Lisa, who presumably entered prison work assuming *all* prisoners were Māori, was pleased to find that this was not the case. For Lisa, doing this work challenged her stereotypes about all prisoners being homogenous, Māori, illiterate, and from a particular area of Aotearoa:

I've been able to tell other people ... one of the things I like is *not all prisoners are Māori*... which is such a common concept. And yes, I know the stats are very high in it, but every time we've been there we've seen a complete range of people... So I can tell people they're not all locked up in here, because they can't read or write ... [or] because they come from a particular ethnic group or anything like that. What amazes me about it ...is that that they come from all over New Zealand that ...these women are *from all kinds* of places... It's important to tell people that they're not from [poor city suburb], they're not all from [regional town] which is these common perceptions that many middle-class White New Zealanders have.

Lisa's understanding and experience that not all prisoners are Māori has more resonance than the statistics that point out the disproportionality. While I agree with Lisa that not all prisoners are Māori, this statement could suggest that the justice system is racially fair because everyone is imprisoned if they break the law, regardless of ethnicity. A racially fair justice system suggests that crime is located in the individual's poor choices to break the law of the land, which applies to everyone fairly. By telling people that not all prisoners are Māori, Lisa dismisses the injustice of mass imprisonment of Māori women (and the contributing issues of colonisation, poverty,

disadvantage and marginalisation) as problems that need addressing. Volunteer work can support the status quo because Lisa's understanding supports the idea of an egalitarian Aotearoa and a fair criminal justice system. However, as the literature review showed, a particular sector of society resides in our women's prisons. While not all prisoners are Māori, 73% of them currently are, which is horrifically disproportional. As Lisa had been volunteering for just one year, I wondered if her understanding of the prison population would change over time. Lisa was interested in finding out more about the criminal justice system and asked critical questions about the status quo (for example, Lisa wondered why prisoners did not know who their case workers were). As Lisa's understanding of the disproportional prison population is so different to Samara's, there may be many other interpretations. What is striking is how the disproportions can be so easily dismissed as acceptable because *some* Pākehā are also imprisoned. The assumption of equality without attention to the disproportionate representation or the colonial structures of the criminal justice system was not shared by some volunteers who considered colonisation to be the reason for an unjust prison population which contributed to their understanding that prison does not work.

Prison Does Not Work

Filtering through all but one of the participants' stories was the concept that prison did not keep people safe or rehabilitate. One of the reasons volunteers understood that prison did not work to keep communities safe was their understanding of the intergenerational cycle of crime. Volunteers understood that removing the primary caregiver entrenched intergenerational disadvantage through children, as the work of McIntosh (2022a) and Gordon (2009, 2011) illustrated.⁶⁷ When children lose their primary parent, the effect on them is enormous. When you consider the type of crime most women are sentenced for (non-serious, non-violent), the harm of imprisonment appears grossly disproportional:

Sonia: Government statistics tell us that ...if you have a parent who's in prison, (this isn't specific to a mother), you are five times more likely than someone

⁶⁷ Gordon's (2011) and McIntosh's (2022) research details how parental imprisonment can lead to an intergenerational cycle of imprisonment.

who doesn't have a parent in prison to go to prison yourself. NGOs would say it's more like double that... like 10 times. There's lots of children of incarcerated parents who never go to prison. Who do really well and contribute and function. I don't want to suggest anything otherwise, but if you think about those stats. I mean surely everyone wants to do everything they can to avoid any adverse outcomes for kids of imprisoned mums?

Heather: ...really understanding that you come from an underprivileged background and you come from poverty and you are stuck in this cycle. How hard it is to get out. And that story about that mum... Trying to raise that money for her child... you are desperately wanting to get your children out of that cycle.

Sonia: This wasn't a surprise, it's confronting ...the intergenerational experiences of our criminal justice system. So, and I have encountered this ... where you've got ...grandmothers, mothers and daughters in the same women's prison.

One of the reasons prisons did not keep people safe was that separating mothers from children was understood to have adverse effects on children, mothers, and society. Caroline, Kristina, Grace, and Sonia described how imprisoning mothers causes another set of problems for both mothers, children and the community:

Caroline: A lot of the women don't need to be there ... they're there for drug issues or they've got stupid things round bail. Just sort that out...And then you don't have to take the kids off them and put them in OT⁶⁸ and start the whole thing again. ...Putting them with OT, it's not a fix. It causes chaos.

Grace: What do we know about disrupted attachment and the impact of that? What do we know about what it's like to lose a parent? What do we know about the pressure that goes on a family when you add four extra kids to their already under-stress household?

Kristina: ...people are sort of shut out from their children because they are perceived to be incapable, or it's inappropriate, but I think often that will be the thing that will drive the person further into a hole is removing contact with their kids ... she actually just needed to have some access to her son and that

⁶⁸ Oranga Tamariki.

would have probably been the kind of the inspiration she needed to actually sort out her problem so it was a real downward spiral...

Kristina reminds us that separating mothers from children further compounds a mother's problems and makes her difficult life even worse, which has ramifications for the family and society.

Another reason the prison did not keep the community safe was because prison could not 'rehabilitate' women, as imprisonment did not address the issues that had led to prison in the first place: ⁶⁹

Kristina: You know the solution of prison as we know is so not gonna help many types of offending where the underlying issues are not the criminal offending at all, but other issues, addiction or mental health or whatever.

Grace: Guess it strengthened my sense 'cause now it's not just theory, it's lived experience that prison is not a helpful place in general to achieve whatever aims it thinks it might be achieving.

The volunteers understood that prison did not rehabilitate or keep the community safe, but that it did punish. It punishes mothers and children and us all, as all wider society is affected by the outward ripples of these punishments.⁷⁰ As a result, almost all volunteers wanted alternative sentencing for mothers. A critical idea voiced by volunteers was that people needed help within their families (and not to be separated). Removing mothers from children only created new problems for the entire family and the wider community:

Sonia: I would look at the development of alternatives to incarceration at a community base, that keep people closer to their whānau and that could be controversial because some people think they should... You need to kind of pull people away from the environments where there might be poor influences on them, but frankly, that's where they're from. That's a huge part of their identity

⁶⁹ This suggests, as Wacquant (2010) argued, that rehabilitation contributes to the cycling between confinement in their communities and the confinement in prisons for marginalised peoples.

⁷⁰ Arrigo (2013) outlined how punishing marginalised people makes captives of us all because we all fear doing humanness differently, due to the risk of marginalisation and its social costs.

and I think most forced extraction initiatives over the course of history have gone poorly, ultimately (laughs).

Heather: I think disconnecting people from their whānau is not a great thing.

Grace: It would be so much more about wrap-around support for families.

Unlike the student prison volunteers in Gilmour and Alessi's (2022) study, who did not reflect upon the need for changes in the broader criminal justice system, volunteers understood the interconnected nature of the justice system. Most volunteers understood that to make fundamental changes for incarcerated mothers, transformational changes were needed in the wider criminal justice system. This was primarily because volunteers understood that Corrections must accommodate who is sentenced. Sonia recognised that Corrections takes whom it is given through sentencing and acknowledged that the judiciary is a key point of intervention to reduce mothers going to prison. Sonia pointed to a promising line of further inquiry that could affect real possibilities for change for imprisoned women. Research could explore what constraints the judiciary operates under, who the judiciary are and what types of unconscious bias they perpetuate:

Sonia: ...if it could become unnecessary (laughs). ...Putting mums behind bars... That's one of the greatest challenges, and that's not a Corrections issue. That's a much broader...justice system. It's criminal justice in the way our judiciary is available to them in terms of sentencing, so it's a bigger reform.

Sonia: If you think about it through sort of a ... university-type model....there's the intake and then there's the outflow sides of it. Where ... we need to put attention to. We sort of focus on what's going on within our prisons and seeking to modernise our prisons, but actually one of the most effective things to do would be to change who comes in.

Volunteers also understood that the prison's capacity for change was connected to the broader social system. Some volunteers discussed how widespread social transformation is needed to change who ends up in prison:

Samara: Because one aspect of me is just destroy all prisons and create a whole new system (laughs) for helping people, because I think a lot of the issues that

people in prison are dealing with should be dealt with in different ways, such as through intensive therapy counselling. Being provided with adequate resources and housing and all of that other stuff ... Even making sure people have ... access to food and good schooling ... not necessarily Western models of schooling, but ones that cater for their respective cultures and values.

Heather: I do think there needs to be complete rethinking around why we've got so many Māori and Pacifica women. Its systemic right? It's not just ...it's all to do with the poverty and education and all of those things along the way it's not just changing the prisons, it's how do we change the systems so that these people don't end up in prison?

Feminist standpoint theory contends that subordinated insiders can understand the capacity for change. As the volunteers understood how the prison system is interwoven into the fabric of society, they recognised that to make significant changes for imprisoned mothers, there would need to be societal changes:

Samara: I would change the whole system if there's infinite amounts of money, but you couldn't change it in a day. Obviously, that would be havoc.

Due to the interconnectedness of prison and society, transformational changes will be slow. As the colonising social forces of racism, sexism and classism are so deeply embedded in our society, we need to address these social forces explicitly to make any real changes in our criminal justice system. This is because our criminal justice system consists of people who are colonised by these same forces, who carry gender and racial stereotypes and perpetuate harms both unintentionally and intentionally.

Volunteer understandings of the mothers, the criminal justice system, and society were transformed by bearing witness to multiple injustices experienced by imprisoned mothers. Through volunteer work, volunteers witnessed, experienced, and recounted multiple injustices experienced by incarcerated women. Volunteers were shocked, enraged, and saddened by the injustices they witnessed. This detailed knowledge of injustices is critical because so few people get to go into prison, come out, and speak freely about their experiences. This knowledge opens possibilities for imprisoned mothers because once injustices are articulated, they can be

addressed. Systematic gender stereotypes and multiple marginalisation play a large role in the surveillance, capture and imprisonment for impoverished, disadvantaged Māori mothers. Once inside prison, they were treated even more punitively in the context of intersectional marginalisation. Volunteers recalled how prison sentences were harder for mothers, Māori women, and women with low incomes. As many women in prison inhabit all these identity locations, informed by intersectionality theory we can understand how these injustices are further compounded. Imprisoned mothers faced the injustice of losing access to their children for short imprisonments for petty crimes. Prison practices were excessively punitive for mothers, with mothers going for weeks without knowing where their children were or if they were safe. The imprisonment of mothers does not consider the welfare of children. Understanding the injustices of a mother's imprisonment led to most volunteers concluding that prison does not work and that transformational changes in the broader justice system and society are needed. Understanding the injustices mothers in prison faced led to a reflection and recognising the many privileges that the volunteers possessed.

Chapter 6: The Power in Recognising Privilege: Becoming Advocates for Mothers in Prison

Volunteers opened possibilities for incarcerated mothers by reflecting, recognising, and harnessing the power of their privilege to mitigate injustices for mothers. All participants recounted becoming explicitly conscientised of their privilege through this work. Being privileged was a significant way volunteers differed from the mothers inside. Prison work made visible how privileged people can remain ignorant of the lives of others, perpetuating inequality. Volunteers recognised that because of their privileges, they could not fully understand the lives of incarcerated mothers. This understanding enabled them to listen to the mothers as experts of their lived experience. The recognition of privilege had significant transformational benefits for the volunteers as they reflected upon their own lives and made significant changes. The discomfit volunteers experienced recognising the cost of privilege translated to motivation to mitigate the disadvantages of the mothers. Through this work, volunteers transformed into advocates for the mothers in prison, using their power from privilege to mitigate injustices and open possibilities for mothers in the future.

Becoming Conscientised to Privilege

Working with incarcerated mothers explicitly conscientised all the volunteers to their privilege through reflection. Working with disadvantaged mothers highlighted the many taken-for-granted privileges middle-class Pākehā possess. Privilege among dominant groups is often unnoticed or invisible to those who hold it (McIntosh, 1989). Recognising privilege can be an essential step in addressing societal inequity. Remaining blind to your advantages means you are less likely to acknowledge or even see systemic barriers for others, which can perpetuate inequality (National Association of School Psychologists, 2016). It is vital that, as Pākehā, we explicitly acknowledge how social forces of racism, capitalism, and Eurocentrism maintain our advantages. Recognising how these social powers operate together to maintain advantages and disadvantages is important to make visible if we want to change things to achieve equitable outcomes for people. Volunteers reflected on being privileged in their childhoods and life experiences:

Samara: ...it's just a bit heart-breaking because if they've been given the same opportunities as me and had the same sort of safety and resource growing up, they definitely wouldn't be in prison, and they would probably be thriving.

Sonia: [Volunteering has] made me acutely aware of how fortunate I am.

Caroline: I'm in a privileged position because I've got a [professional] degree...

Grace: I guess it just takes me back to remembering "Hey I'm lucky to get to do this [parenting]". Not everyone gets to do this.

Lisa: I've ...had a really good life.

Working with marginalised people facilitated reflection on many aspects of volunteer privilege, which is usually taken-for-granted as 'just the way things are'. This led to volunteers recognising many unspoken advantages that middle-class Pākehā possess.

Recognising the Unspoken Advantages

Volunteers recognised that being ignorant of other people's lives is a middle-class privilege. Samara, Kristina, and Amy noted that privileged middle-class people could be completely ignorant of people's lives that differ from their own. Privileged people can maintain discourses on an egalitarian Aotearoa because, in their daily lives, they can avoid knowing about or experiencing economically and culturally disadvantaged people. Samara noted that encountering impoverished Māori mothers is something many middle-class Pākehā have no experience of:

Samara: With the [Volunteer] group. All of them are [professionals] and I think for a lot of [professionals] including myself, we come from privilege and sort of live and work [in the] kind of the upper, well sort of the White collar world and are not used to diversity, especially diversity in terms of economic disparity and just facing that full on ...in the prison environment...

Kristina: It's just really important because it's such an eye-opener....what's actually going on in the prisons? And in society because I think we can get really removed from it otherwise.

Amy: It also ...has made me realise how ignorant New Zealanders are to the lives of other people, especially those who end up in prison.

Kristina: It gives a window into that side of society which others in my position had forgotten about or don't see.

A major unspoken privilege is that Pākehā middle-class people do not need to worry about imprisonment. This suggests an unfair criminal justice system which punishes marginalised people. As a result, most volunteers understood privilege to be a significant factor in who was imprisoned and who was not.

The Role of Privilege in Imprisonment

Most volunteer stories indicated that they understood there was little difference between the women in prison and themselves; the difference seemed to be one of privilege. Several volunteers told stories indicating they would also be in prison if their life circumstances had been different. Three volunteers used the phrase "there, but for the grace of God, go I", acknowledging that circumstances beyond an individual's control are reasons why people are imprisoned. This contrasts with simply encountering bad luck or making poor individual choices:

Sonia: I often sit with women who will describe their circumstances and decisions that they have made or being made for them, and I use that instead of choices, and I'm not so convinced that had my circumstances been materially different from theirs, that my decisions would have been materially different, ... so I think it's really important to reflect on that. That ... be but for the grace of God. Sometimes I do think that, and that's an old cliched expression, but it's worth keeping in mind.

Vanessa: It's just like a great sense of kind of compassion and thinking "Oh my God, your life has been so hard". I always have that sort of ...there, but for the grace of God go I (laughs).

However, not all volunteers recognised how privilege played a role in who was in prison and who was not. A few volunteers indicated that individual choices were partly responsible for women being imprisoned. In this quote, Lisa understood that when imprisoned mothers get upset about being separated from their children, this will motivate them to desist from crime.

A number of them [imprisoned mothers] get very emotional, but personally, I don't feel emotional about it, but it enhances for me that what I'm doing is a

good thing because it allows them to have this emotion and to realise “Well, maybe I shouldn’t be doing this. I should be home with my kid, or my children”. That’s making them feel strongly like that. Then it’s hopefully that connection... I want to try and keep a family bond ... when it’s there. ‘Cause yeah, some of them are really sad that they’re away from their children. Well, then don’t do whatever you’ve done. And I don’t know what that is.

Lisa’s understanding lacks awareness of women’s confined and disadvantaged lives before imprisonment and the numerous structural barriers they face. While all volunteers recognised their advantages, it did not always result in recognising prisoners’ disadvantages. However, volunteers who recognised both their advantages and others’ disadvantages, were led to making transformational changes in their own lives.

Reconsidering Their Lives

As suggested in the work of Jacobi and Roberts (2016), experiencing volunteer work encouraged reflection, reassessment, and transformational changes in participants’ lives. Gemma, Sonia, Heather, and Grace recounted how volunteer work made them reflect on their parenting. Amy and Vanessa told stories of reassessment of their careers and made significant changes so they could further assist women in prison. Samara was considering a career change based on her volunteering experience. Other volunteers engaged in research on the subject:

Sonia: I think it gives you a perspective, the importance of security and routine and predictability. ...The importance of and ensuring that children have a strong sense of who they are and their identity and their self-worth and you know that you’re really alive to that. And watching for that as a parent... because I think a number of the woman that we deal with perhaps didn’t have some sort of a parenting experience, like at least that I got to have...

Amy: It changed my motivations in terms of work ...our clients were really wealthy clients.... And so I’d be going to prison meeting with women who have very serious issues on their hands. And then I’d be going back to work and [giving money to wealthy people]. I was like “Is this why I [chose my justice career]?”. I don’t think it is (laughs).

Vanessa: So this is [now] one of the main things I do.

Samara: And after five years working in [my career], I'm definitely reconsidering things, and I have loved the volunteering. [The volunteering] will be a part of whatever I reckon I go into.

Grace: It's also led me academically..., 'cause I did lots of background research and I feel like I chose that topic ...directly building on the experiences that I've had with the volunteer organisation.

The participants experienced volunteer work as transformative, making changes in many different areas of their lives. Working with people so different to themselves encouraged a deeper reflection on one's place in society, a more nuanced understanding of privilege and a reevaluation of values, goals and lifestyles.

Partial Knowledge and Reflexive Listening

While learning about incarcerated women's lives gave the volunteers a new perspective, recognising their privilege also made them realise that this perspective is different, partial, and situated. For example, Kristina recognised that she had a partial perspective on women in prison *because* she is privileged. Kristina was aware that she could not judge mothers in prison because she could not fully understand their lives and challenges as she had not experienced them herself. Kristina recognised that bearing witness to, and understanding the stories of the mothers in prison, is not the same as actually experiencing what it is like to be underprivileged:

Actually, when you come from privilege, you really can't judge.

Kristina was aware that she is viewing the world from the perspective of privilege; she is conscious that she cannot see the world through the eyes of the underprivileged. She acknowledges her knowledge is contextual, situated in her own experience of the prison, and different to the mothers. As a result, she was open to listening to the mothers and learning from them as experts of their own lives. Kristina is aware of multiple perspectives to understand the prison context and its social power relations, which gives her a different, situated and contextual standpoint because she can understand the limitations of each perspective. This understanding that the volunteers could not fully understand the prisoners' lives meant the volunteers were open to listening and hearing the mothers. This transformative act of reflexive listening enriched

the lives of the volunteers because they began to learn about the experiences of imprisoned mothers:

Samara: It feels quite powerful just to sit there and listen to someone's story and just be a kind of a non-judgemental figure in that person's life for a brief moment and in that way I also feel like my life is getting enriched by this person. A person sharing their story with me.

In contrast to the idea that negative stereotypes prevented volunteers from trusting and believing the mothers, volunteers' stories suggested that they did listen and hear, and understood the power of doing so. Or, in A. Johnson's (2013) words, volunteers were able to "stop and listen to my pain for real" (p. 667).

Vanessa: At a minimum you can have that human-to-human engagement, which I think it's really, really powerful. They might not have that. They might very rarely get that 'cause they're all kind of keeping to themselves. ...so the chance of them actually having someone neutral listen to them and be supportive... I imagine that's quite precious.

Heather: Sometimes I even think OK if the children don't even get these [gifts] actually this 10 minutes we've just spent in this space talking about your children or talking about you or actually for them to see someone ... a team of people come in ... and go hey! We just think you are worthy of this ... you are worthy of this! We really think ... this is enough.

For marginalised mothers, to be heard opens up all sorts of possibilities for empowerment, growth, and change. By engaging in reflexive listening to mothers' stories, the volunteers were transformed by learning about the complexity of the women's lives and the importance of their relationships with their children. However, hearing the mothers' stories and reflecting on their privilege was also recalled as uncomfortable.

Discomfit and Motivation

Discomfit arises from the understanding that your privilege costs others. Privilege means that you have some advantages in relation to others. Other people must be disadvantaged for your privilege to exist. Some ways privileges are experienced are through race, gender, and class.

While most volunteers did not describe privilege explicitly through these lenses, privilege appeared to translate into being Pākehā and middle-class in the participants' stories. An exception is how Heather and Samara explicitly recognised how being Pākehā is one of the significant ways they are privileged. In the extract below, Heather struggled with her discomfit being Pākehā in the prison context:

...and I really feel my Whiteness in there. Very much so. And I struggle with that, at times. Because I really hate the idea that I have got this White saviour complex which is not at all where I am coming from.

Being uncomfortable to be Pākehā is an unusual experience for people in the dominant culture. Usually, being Pākehā is taken-for-granted and the norm. As Heather noticed and reflected on her race, discomfit arose from the intersection of being a 'White women' and what that meant for Heather in this context. Heather invoked the 'White saviour' stereotype, which refers to wealthy White women who seek to help poor coloured women. This stereotype has negative connotations because it denies women of colour agency and supports Eurocentric knowledge and ways of doing things.

The 'White saviour' stereotype suggests that Pākehā engage in volunteer work to make themselves feel better about the discomfit of racial inequality but perpetuate the status quo through reinforcing Pākehā 'colonial' 'ways of doing things'. While Heather actively distanced herself from the 'White saviour' stereotype, she still struggled with her Whiteness because, in the Aotearoa context, Pākehā are advantaged by the oppression of Māori. This is an uncomfortable idea because while individuals do not (usually) seek to oppress others, our institutions of power in Aotearoa are all Pākehā. These institutions are embedded in Eurocentric knowledge and colonising, capitalist systems, which work together to concentrate Pākehā advantage at the cost of Māori disadvantage. Māori disadvantage is visibly apparent in the criminal justice system, where who decides who is a risk to others at every step of our justice system results in a concentrated inequality for Māori in surveillance, arrests, and imprisonment. Recognising how complicit we are in the continuation and participation of White supremacy is

seriously uncomfortable. Recognising that something you have no control over (your race) gives you multiple advantages, but these advantages seriously cost others is *really painful*.

For volunteers, the discomfit at recognising their privilege appeared to transform into a deep commitment to mitigate disadvantages for imprisoned mothers. Caroline recognised the power of the volunteers to harness their privilege to address injustices for mothers:

But we can do something about it, whereas these women can't do something about it.

Recognising privilege and wanting to 'share' it was commonly recalled as a motivator for doing this work:

Samara: I think I have such privilege and I guess one of the ways of sort of sharing that around is to try and give my time for free and be helpful.

Heather: So there's a real sense of gratitude and a real sense of ...sometimes it feels like ... "Why would you do this?"... You don't want to get into privilege, colonisation all of those things ... you know paying it forward (laughs), but at the same time you want to go "I'm doing it cos I can and I believe in it and ... because you've had a really shit deal".

Heather: I think for me the reason why I wanted to do this... I have quite a sense that I'm quite privileged right? I think as a middle-class, White, middle-aged female I really feel that I've been able to have this amazing university experience and all of that, I really want to give back...

Heather elaborated on what she meant by privilege—an intersectional mix of race, class, age, and gender. Heather included gender as one of the ways she was privileged, suggesting that injustices against women are unrecognised. While all volunteers recognised they were privileged, there was no explicit recognition of how their gender disadvantaged them in the prison context. The discomfit and harnessing of privilege led participants to transform into advocates for imprisoned mothers.

Becoming Advocates for Mothers in Prison

By explicitly recognising some of their advantages, volunteers harnessed their privilege to help mothers in prison. As Kort-Butler and Malone (2015) found, most volunteers behaved as advocates for incarcerated mothers. Armed with the knowledge of the lived experience of incarcerated mothers' lives, the injustices they faced, and understanding prisoners' limited social power, volunteers were transformed into advocates for women in prison. Embodying an ethics of care, they attended conferences on women in prison and talked about incarcerated women with their friends and communities. Two volunteers significantly changed their working lives so they could be more helpful to the women in prison. Volunteers worked on multiple additional projects to improve the lives of incarcerated mothers. Examples include setting up an 0800 number for women sentenced in the community, undertaking research, and creating written packages for imprisoned women. Volunteers engaged with the media to get the issues of mothers in prison into public discourse. They actively sought assistance for women in prison beyond the scope of family connections. For example, Caroline sought hospital care for a mother, and Amy sought mental health support when a mother disclosed she was suicidal:

Caroline: So the woman came over to me. And what was happening was she'd miscarried, but ...some of the baby was still in her... They haven't organised that procedure for her to go to [Hospital] and get it all sorted and so when she came to me it was because one of the prison officers and a couple of the other women said, "Can you speak to her?" because they saw that she was in such a bad need, she was desperate. So what I did was I rang her mother. There wasn't a lot I could do... and I said "What you need to do is speak to the prison now and don't get off the phone just keep going until you get that woman taken to hospital, you need to get her taken now". I said to the guards, "I'm going out of here and I'm going to go and try and work out what's going on with this woman, because this is not right". So I emailed the volunteer manager ...and I emailed the governor and then I emailed an MP...

Amy: ...and she disclosed to me that she was suicidal ...she was talking about the shame she's brought on her family as a result of going to prison... and then she sort of just broke down and then started talking about the fact that she wants to end her life and things like that so that was quite intense... I urgently got in touch with her social worker at the prison.

Caroline: It's hard because like even me I'd be a full-time [researcher in this area] if I didn't have a mortgage to pay...

Samara: Last year I suggested to [Volunteer organisation] that a lot more research needs to be done. So during the lockdowns last year we started compiling all the information that we could...

Volunteers often expressed wishes that if they were not constrained by the need to earn money, they could do much more to help imprisoned women. This suggests that volunteers were limited by their own socioeconomic privilege in their capacity to help mothers, yet the volunteers relative socioeconomic privilege compared to prisoners, entwined with their different histories, contexts and perspectives also furthered the divide between the two groups.

Reflecting on privilege transformed the volunteers into advocates for imprisoned mothers. Working with imprisoned mothers conscientised the volunteers to many hidden aspects of privilege. This work facilitated reflection on their own lives and many volunteers made significant changes. The recognition of privilege was uncomfortable, as volunteers recognised that the privilege they had cost others. This discomfit transformed into a commitment to mitigate the disadvantages of incarcerated mothers. Volunteers harnessed their privilege to help imprisoned mothers' in multiple ways. A deeper understanding of their own privilege allowed the volunteers to recognise they could not fully understand the lives of mothers in prison. As a result, volunteers became open to listening to the incarcerated women as experts of their own lives. This opens possibilities for a marginalised population's voice to be heard through their more privileged advocates. Hearing the mothers gave the volunteers another perspective through which to understand the power relations of the prison.

Chapter 7: Volunteer Knowledges

Through analysis I developed a more enriched understanding of how volunteer knowledges are shaped by their lived experience of the work and the prison context. I argue that volunteers develop a trifurcated view of the prison context and social power relations within it. Volunteers can view the prison from the unique perspectives of themselves, the staff, and imprisoned mothers. As volunteers are subordinated by the institutional authority of the prison, they can understand the prison through the standpoint of Corrections staff. By reflexively recognising and addressing their privilege, volunteers' understandings of the mothers is transformed, allowing volunteers to listen, hear and learn from the mothers as experts of their own lives. This listening and learning allows volunteers to also understand the perspective of the mothers. This shifting trifurcated view provides a significant epistemological insight, through volunteers' flexibility in considering multiple perspectives and their limitations. From S. Harding's (2004c) feminist standpoint position, I argue that volunteer knowledge has characteristics of 'strong objectivity' because volunteers have heightened awareness of the social relations of the prison, with respect to their multiple perspectives to understand these power relations, and their subordination by staff and their situated knowledges. This 'strong objectivity' allows volunteer knowledge to be critical and distinct to staff and prisoner knowledges. Combining this knowledge insight and their working knowledge of prison generated practical solutions to alleviate some injustices of imprisonment for mothers and families. However, these solutions were not often shared due to volunteer subordination by Corrections staff. What possibilities for mothers could be opened if volunteers could freely share their knowledge with Corrections? While volunteer knowledge is critical, grounded in the reality of the prison context and distinct, it is not without limitations. Volunteers' solutions were confined by their Eurocentric thinking, prison essentialisation, and an absence of a critical discussion about race and its intersections with gender and class. However, despite these limitations, volunteer work produced ameliorative changes and offered hope and perspective for imprisoned mothers and their families.

Volunteer Subordination Through the Institutional Authority of the Prison

As anticipated in Chapter 3, volunteers were devalued by prison staff in the prison context.⁷¹ Volunteers were subordinated overtly in the prison context by the prison's institutional authority. This is a specific form of power that controls access to the prison. Power is usually invisible, naturalised, and often seen as unquestionable, unchangeable, and the natural order of things. Institutional authority is a naturalised power, with prisons having taken-for-granted state power over citizens. However, it is also a visible power, exercised in denying and allowing volunteers access to the prison. Volunteers recognise that Corrections facilitate the work, so it is allowed to be done. If volunteers are not allowed prison access, they cannot help the mothers. The subordination of the volunteers was prominent in volunteer stories. Access to the prison can be denied to volunteers at any point for any reason. For example, access had been denied due to COVID-19 restrictions, because of other activities at the prison, and Corrections being short-staffed. Volunteers expressed powerlessness and frustration by being regularly denied access, particularly for long periods due to COVID restrictions. At the time of writing (October, 2022), volunteers had not been allowed into prison since August 2021:

Vanessa: Last year we were locked out of the prisons for months and so we think, "Oh what can we do?"

Heather: You have to be really flexible within Corrections, so you never know what you are going to hit with Corrections. So some days you get there and they might be doing a raid or whatever with the dogs so you can't come in. You don't know what you are going to get. Or they go "Oh actually the Minister's coming through today so we've locked everyone in their cells." I'm like "Really?". It would have been cool for the Minister to have seen this programme in action but *whatever!*

Amy: ...unfortunately over the last two years with COVID, it's been really hard to get in there.

⁷¹ To recap, women prison volunteers are devalued because of their intersecting identity of devalued groups; they are volunteers (Baldock, 1998; Daniels, 1985), women (Dent, 2020), doing care work (Rogerson et al., 2011; Waring, 1999, 2018) for 'criminal' women.

Grace: We've had quite a few years where it's been really frustrating, like we will turn up and they're not expecting us, or they haven't organised the people who are coming to see us, or there will be big, long gaps. Or "Oh no, sorry it clashes with this programme today", so I think you have to have quite a bit of determination as a volunteer to keep going because ...it can be tedious and it can be annoying ... just waiting around. There's a lot of downtime. Which is frustrating 'cause we totally could be there doing a lot more. I think those of us have hung at it for a long time, we're pretty resigned to the fact that's how Corrections is and we still want to do what we can for who we can.

Women wanting to do unpaid care work to support other women and their whānau (despite Corrections' aspirational documents) are not viewed by the institution as important. This treatment of volunteers as people of low value and disregard for their work is supported by the findings of the Corrections volunteer survey (Hefford, 2020). Volunteer accounts recalled a weary acceptance of how things are with Corrections and being relatively powerless to change things. As the power exercised within the prison context is overt, the volunteers could easily see their position in the social order. Volunteers recognised that in prison, Corrections staff had the most power, volunteers had small amounts of power, and prisoners had the least. Despite their frustrations, volunteers were still motivated to do what they could for imprisoned mothers within a seemingly unchangeable system. The ability to see the social order of the prison meant that volunteers understood that if they withdrew their services, multiply marginalised mothers (the prisoners with the least social power) would lose support.

Corrections also exercised power over volunteers by controlling the processes of getting inside the prison and the volunteers' movements within. A strong theme in all but one of the participant stories was the significant frustrations volunteers described encountering prison bureaucracy. Volunteers had to adhere to specific protocols before entering prison, including a Police check, Ministry of Justice clearances, and a prison induction. Corrections control these processes and decides who can and cannot come into prisons as a volunteer. Long delays in gaining admission to the prison were frequently reported. Several volunteers described how much of the volunteers' time and energy is taken up with bureaucracy, which takes away from their ability to

help mothers in prison. Once inside, the volunteers were restricted in the time allowed and had to obey the orders of Corrections staff:⁷²

Kristina: So when we do get in there and make progress and actually deal with the prisoners, it can be really rewarding, but sometimes it feels like there's 60% bureaucracy and 40% substance to it ...so that's the ongoing frustration.

Samara: ...and I don't know if you've had much experience with Corrections, but everything takes so long (laughs) ... I just could not get in contact with anyone to organise the induction for months. So that's kind of a big aspect of the volunteering is just delay and following up and waiting around.

Lisa: You're just ... sitting here waiting, hoping something is going to happen. I'm thinking it was never going to actually happen....So that all took probably six months in total ...there was quite a long process to get started.

Vanessa: So maximum we will have an hour and a half to actually get in there and meet the mothers and do our thing. So it's really a very short period of time.

Amy: There's a whole other half of a prison sitting there that we don't see.

To continue their work with imprisoned mothers, volunteers had to obey the orders and protocols of Corrections staff or access would be denied. As a result, volunteers developed knowledge of the rules of the prison and the perspectives of Corrections staff, contributing to their bifurcated view of the prison.

A Bifurcated View

As theorised in the methodology chapter underpinned by intersectional feminist standpoint theory, because volunteers were subordinated by Corrections staff, they developed a bifurcated view to understand the prison context and the social power relations within it. Volunteers could understand the prison from both their unique position as an insider/outsider⁷³ and from the perspectives of staff. This understanding and experience produced a dual perspective of the

⁷² The negative responses of staff to the volunteers and their work (as discussed in Chapter 5) also illustrated how volunteers were subordinated in the prison context.

⁷³ As described in Chapter 3.

prison, where the volunteers could shift between their own standpoint and the perspectives of the staff. Several volunteers illustrated their bifurcated views of the prison by telling stories that acknowledged Corrections staff perspectives. For example, volunteers acknowledged that a significant reason why Corrections staff jobs are difficult comes from being under-resourced and lacking sufficient government funding. Similar to staff, volunteers are also under-resourced and also seek to help women in prison achieve specific outcomes. This understanding made the volunteers empathetic towards the difficult work undertaken by prison staff:

Vanessa: I mean they just have a very, very hard job because my overall impression is they don't have enough resources for what they need to do really. What the guards do is really hard. Because of the practical constraints of keeping different women apart, and the fact that things can be really tense.

Caroline: ...they are all so short-staffed. They've got no money... this is the other political thing. No one wants to put money into Corrections.

Samara: ...the volunteer coordinator always seemed so overworked and exhausted and the one that we previously dealt with resigned...

Perhaps because of the ability to view the prison from a staff perspective, volunteers could develop positive working relationships with staff, despite the power imbalance. For example, volunteers worked with Corrections staff to achieve shared goals of assisting women in prison:

Sonia: I've found Corrections both on the ground, the staff at the facility, level management and at the national headquarters level... very willing and open to suggestions on how women... mums ...can be supported, and just ...let us do our thing.

Lisa: I love the volunteer coordinator!

Amy: I've sort of linked up with a [prison] social worker.

However, the power relations between volunteers and staff were complex because of the volunteers' complex intersectional positions inside and outside the prison. Volunteers were subordinated by staff, yet volunteers had more voice to criticise the criminal justice system as their livelihoods did not depend on this work. While volunteer and staff relationships were power imbalanced, it appeared that this imbalance could shift depending on who the volunteers were

outside the prison. For example, Caroline observed that staff acted differently when volunteers with legal backgrounds were present, suggesting that the volunteer's day jobs may have mitigated some of the power imbalance between them and staff:^{74 75}

Caroline: So I think the guards are on edge as well because ... they know we're [legal professionals]. All the guards are on best behaviour. And it's such crap.

Despite good working relationships and an ability to see the prison context from their perspectives, volunteers also remained critical of the staff and the status quo of the prison. This was exemplified by volunteers who were both critical of Corrections staff while simultaneously understanding the difficult challenges staff face:

Heather: It's not an easy job being a Corrections officer but it's ... pretty interesting the way that some are pretty awful, ah?

According to feminist standpoint theory, subordinated people are more critical of the status quo because it does not benefit them. An intersectional standpoint approach acknowledges that due to shifting power relations in different contexts, volunteers can be *both* understanding and critical of correctional practices, as the work of Sinclair (2017) suggested. This combination of understanding and critique produces a distinct knowledge of the prison context.

A Trifurcated View

A surprising outcome of my analysis is that through this work, volunteers not only developed a bifurcated view of the prison but developed a shifting trifurcated perspective. Volunteers could understand the prison from the perspectives of themselves, staff, *and* mothers. Compared to prisoners, the volunteers are more privileged both in and out of prison. Sometimes, the staff treated volunteers like prisoners, giving them a sense of what a prisoner's experience would be like. Volunteers do not develop a dual perspective of the prison from the prisoner's point of view

⁷⁴ The idea of staff acting differently around volunteers is supported in the work of Mantilla and O'Leary (2001), who concluded that staff acted differently around volunteers because they were being 'watched'. This is concerning because some of the staff behaviour that was observed with volunteers present was very negative towards imprisoned women.

⁷⁵ The power relations are complex. As noted in Chapter 4, volunteers hoped that staff would protect them from 'dangerous' prisoners inside.

because they are not subordinated by prisoners. The continuance of volunteer work is not contingent on understanding the mothers' world. However, through recognising their privilege through reflexivity, volunteers acknowledged that their knowledge is partial and contextually situated. Volunteers became open to listening and learning from the mothers who are experts of their own lives. Understanding more about a mother's world allows volunteers to consider the mother's perspectives and shift their thinking through three flexible perspectives:

Vanessa: So, we were only there for a bit over an hour. And then we got thrown out. Because I'm just gonna lock everyone in their cells until... maybe there's someone missing or there was a violent incident, but they just locked the whole thing down. So even though I don't think it was in the unit that we were in. That's just protocol, so it's really really frustrating. But luckily we had... I think that was the time that we saw 12 mothers, four of us and that felt really frustrating to be thrown out early, 'cause we might have been able to see more. ...It's completely out of our control. Sometimes it can take a long time getting into prison because there is a whole queue of other people coming through or ...it gives us some sense of what it must be like for the mothers themselves. Being in a system where they have so little control over their ...over everything... even when they can eat...

Vanessa's comment illustrates how she shifts from her own perspective where she experiences a lack of control, to a small understanding of what the imprisoned mothers' experience might be like. Vanessa tells us this experience gives volunteers "*some* sense of what it might be like for the mothers", indicating she understands that this experience of powerlessness is not the same as actually experiencing imprisonment. Vanessa demonstrates characteristics of feminist standpoint's 'strong objectivity' (S.Harding, 2004c), as she acknowledges that her knowledge of the mothers' experience is limited and partial from her position as a free citizen and volunteer.

Volunteer knowledge is distinct because they can understand the prison and its social power relations from multiple subject positions; volunteers can understand the prison from their own perspective, but also the perspectives of Corrections staff and prisoners. As they understood there were multiple ways to understand the prison, they recognised that each perspective is partial and could consider the limitations of each perspective. This flexible and multiple

perspective produced a distinctive epistemological insight into the prison and its social relations. This unique understanding demonstrated situated knowledge, as volunteer knowledges were grounded in the current context of the prison. As the volunteers had multiple subjectivities and situated knowledges to consider the prison and its social power relations, volunteer knowledge has characteristics of S. Harding's (2004c) feminist standpoint 'strong objectivity.' This flexibility and multiplicity in understanding allowed the volunteers to generate practical solutions for mothers in prison that could work from the perspectives of mothers and Corrections staff.

Practical Solutions

Volunteers' unique shifting perspectives enabled them to generate solutions to the injustices they witnessed in prison. They suggested practical solutions as they possessed situated knowledge about the constraints of the prison from both the prisoners' and staff members' perspectives. These solutions have enormous potential to reduce some of the stress of separation for mothers and whānau. However, due to their volunteer status and the power imbalance between themselves and staff, volunteers understood they had to be careful about sharing ideas because they did not want to appear critical of Correction's practices as they feared access would be denied.

Their unique perspectives and ability to understand the challenges of mothers in prison led to volunteers creatively generating solutions to the problems they witnessed. Volunteers did not just witness and describe injustices; they actively sought to address them through their work. Volunteers proposed several creative ameliorative solutions to the problems they witnessed inside prisons to make the current system less damaging to mothers. Many of these ideas did not cost any money and would make an enormous difference to the pains of separation. Volunteers' ideas were detailed and context-specific. Importantly, some of the volunteers' ideas could be implemented *today*. These ideas have enormous potential to help Corrections reach their policy aspirations outlined in the women's strategy (Department of Corrections, 2021c). Examples of low-cost solutions include increasing the time volunteers are allowed inside prison, Saturday visits, and an 0800 number prisoners could use to access the volunteers.

One example of a simple ameliorative idea produced by volunteers was Amy's idea of allowing mothers to write down three numbers from their mobile phone on intake. The Inspectorate report called for a review of the telephone system and how women are processed when they first enter prison that acknowledges women's roles as mothers (Adair, 2021). The report does not suggest how this can be achieved. Amy outlined *exactly* what should happen to lessen the stress on mothers and families on intake. She suggested that mothers should be able to take three phone numbers directly off their phone when they are first processed. This would take the unimaginable stress of not knowing where your children are and if they are safe:

Amy: ...when they are first processed, they submit three numbers that they can get directly off their phone to start being processed straight away.

The Inspectorate report noted that some staff "went out of their way" on prison intake to allow a mother an extra phone call to make arrangements for their children (Adair, 2021, p. 23). If this can happen for some prisoners, then why not all? Why not make this policy? This simple solution that would alleviate distress for children, families, and mothers is important because it is so easy to change. What would it cost Corrections to allow mothers, when processed into prison, a few phone calls to arrange care for their children? Vanessa illustrated how subordinated people are less likely to be invested in protecting the dominant group's (Correction's) interests which enables them to ask critical questions like Vanessa's questioning of the mindset towards change:

Vanessa: Is it a resource issue or an attitude issue?

Volunteers also proposed larger ideas, such as using the volunteer model to provide support in other areas for mothers in prison. Amy and Caroline felt strongly that a family lawyer should automatically be allocated to mothers in prison as a right. While women in prison have the legal right to a family lawyer, they are difficult to obtain because so few work on legal aid. Caroline and Amy's solution requires the resourcing of family lawyers, so Caroline is doubtful that this will change as mothers in prison are not seen as worthy of capital resources. Vanessa had calculated how much it costs to imprison mothers and considered how supporting mothers could be done more cheaply and effectively in the community with social workers:

Caroline: I think not only should each prisoner be given a criminal lawyer, they should be given a family lawyer if they're a mother, and that should be paid through legal aid, so it should just be a default. So you go into prison, you've got your lawyer to help you navigate the prison system. Your criminal lawyer. But if you're a mother, you've also got a family lawyer allocated to you to navigate your children issues that you're trying to do ... But whether that would ever get changed by government because of the money involved...

Amy: ...that's what's so frustrating. It should not be up to volunteers who come in once a month to be doing this. It should be similar to criminal proceedings. If you are accused of a crime, you have an automatic lawyer if you are eligible for legal aid allocated to you, how that's not the same in family law especially for people who are in prison...

Vanessa: I would like that a lot of those women were just not imprisoned at all, that they were getting support in the community. That would be my dream and I don't think it would cost more 'cause ...I think it costs roughly 100 grand per prisoner in New Zealand.... Even if you had one social worker working with each prisoner...⁷⁶

Sonia: There's scope for our model to be used more broadly. I mean, in its most simplistic form we provide a human being that goes in and sits and listens to mums talk once a month [to help connect them with their children] ...you could wrap that same model around lots of other barriers that women have in terms of, their self-esteem and self-worth and their educational position and their likelihood of getting jobs and their understanding of predatory lending and their understandings of ...violence and healthy relationships with the same model...

However, despite the potential of these ideas to open possibilities for imprisoned mothers, solutions were not always shared with Corrections.

Sharing Knowledge

Volunteers' stories suggested there were limited opportunities for volunteers to provide feedback to Corrections primarily due to the power imbalance. As Quinn and Tomczak (2021)

⁷⁶ It currently costs approximately \$188,000 per year per women in prison (L. Gordon, personal communication, October 21, 2022).

found, volunteers were wary about appearing critical of Corrections because they knew Corrections could prevent prison access, which ultimately meant that the mothers would lose support. Some volunteers expressed that they were acutely aware that access could be denied. Thus, they were cautious about giving Corrections feedback. This carefulness was evidenced by some participants not wanting particular stories about interactions with Corrections included in the analysis. Amy described her frustration with her powerlessness to be critical of Corrections:

It's so frustrating, and it's hard to not ...get like pissed off at it because again, you need those people, we're still volunteers. They are still the ones that are in Corrections... It's really hard for someone like [particular volunteer] because she's built a really good relationship with [Corrections] and you have to be really careful that you're not becoming political... we're a volunteer organisation and they are allowing us to go and do that...

Amy acknowledged the unspoken rules within this relationship to not become critical of correctional practices. Becoming political is dangerous because it is outside the scope of what Corrections have sanctioned the volunteers to come into prison for. Corrections has approved the volunteers to come into prison to connect mothers with their families. Care work supports traditional gender norms about what work women are allowed to do. Perhaps another unspoken rule is that for women to operate outside of traditional women's spheres (in this case, politics/power), they would be disciplined by having prison access denied:

Amy: It's so hard. There's so many issues. And that's not our role, our role is there with the women, but I think we are in a unique position to be able to give that feedback because we're in there.

Despite knowing the potential costs of providing feedback, Amy recognised that volunteers are in a unique position to give feedback on correctional practices because of their situated knowledge from working with many mothers and their unique perspective as volunteers.

Another possible reason solutions were not shared is because they went against the 'imprisoned mothers must be punished' discourse. This is the idea that the fundamental role of prison is to punish. Aotearoa is considered a punitive society (Barretto et al., 2018; McCrone, 2020). The

volunteers directly witnessed the “punitive culture” (Espiner, 2020) of the prison. This environment does not sound receptive to ideas about how mothers in prison can be helped.

However, sometimes volunteers did share their ideas. These ideas were often met with further bureaucracy. For example, another idea Amy had was to do volunteer visits on Saturdays so more volunteers could attend:

Amy: I always thought Saturdays would be really good. But, that wasn't really able to be pushed through because of capacity at the prison...

Amy: ...we created a whole written package ('cause they were like no volunteers can come in until [COVID] level 1) so that the woman could ...answer the questions and write out what their issue was and then it can get scanned to a volunteer who can do their work for them and then just update them by email or call them. But we made those in April last year [2020] and they've only just starting to get through now [October 2021]. It's really interesting because it's really different between prisons... [one prison] has just been impossible to get through. And so that's been really frustrating...

Vanessa: ...the whole Corrections thing is a world unto itself, and so we can't change that. We can make suggestions and we can hope, but we can't actually change it, we just have to adjust to the system that is there.

Despite making suggestions to Corrections, Vanessa was not hopeful of making any changes and was resigned to working in the existing system. Accepting a system as unchangeable suggests that volunteer voices are not considered worth listening to in the larger Corrections environment. Perhaps this explains the low response rate in the Corrections volunteer survey. The volunteers, acutely aware of their status in prison, knew that any recommendations or critiques they made would not be taken seriously or result in any changes.

However, if the volunteers' voices could be heard within the correctional system, it could offer some real possibilities to alleviate separation distress quickly and cost-effectively for mothers and children. The introduction outlined the growing appetite for justice reform, and *Hōkai Rangi* acknowledged that transformational changes would take time. Volunteer knowledge can offer short-term solutions to help meet correctional goals as outlined in *Hōkai Rangi* that seek to

achieve “wellness and wellbeing of people” (Department of Corrections, 2019b, p. 2). When the volunteers could talk openly and safely about possible solutions, they offered many ameliorative and transformational ideas. I was struck by their detailed knowledge of incarcerated mothers’ challenges. The proposed solutions were practical and rooted in their knowledge of the current prison context and its constraints. Volunteers offer ameliorative practical solutions that could be implemented today to lessen the gendered pains of imprisonment. Mothers being able to call their children and know where they were would make an enormous difference to the injustices mothers and families face while in prison. While volunteers’ knowledge is distinct, it is not without limitations.

Limitations on Volunteer Knowledge

Eurocentric Barbed Wire Thinking

As volunteers had first-hand knowledge about the multiple ways prison harms mothers, families, and societies, it is surprising that none of the volunteers advocated for abolition. Through their experiences, they understood how prison did not rehabilitate mothers nor keep the community safe, yet they could not imagine a prisonless world. As discussed, they believed prisons were still necessary for the ‘dangerous few’. Needing to imprison a subset of prisoners suggests that the fear of the risk from the ‘dangerous few’ is so great that prisons and all their harms are still necessary. Being unable to imagine a prisonless world prevents us from considering alternatives (Arrigo, 2013; A. Davis, 2003). Liz Gordon refers to this as “barbed wire thinking” (L. Gordon, personal communication, June 22, 2022). Unable to conceive of a prisonless world suggests that another constraint on volunteer knowledge is a Eurocentric worldview, as pre-colonisation, there were no prisons in Aotearoa.

Eurocentrism constrains our thinking about how to solve societal problems that form at the intersections of colonising social forces. The volunteers did not discuss Māori justice systems beyond a few volunteers briefly mentioning a kaupapa approach. While volunteer organisations did seek Māori input and advice, there was an absence of discussion around Tiriti- led solutions or devolution of power from Pākehā failed colonial justice systems. This was probably the result

of the people who had the time and ability to volunteer⁷⁷ being predominately middle-class Pākehā, therefore situated in Eurocentric knowledge systems and ways of doing things. There was no mention of restorative justice practices or therapeutic jurisprudence that can incorporate Māori justice concepts (JustSpeak & Popsock Media, 2022). Scores of research repeat the multiple ways prison harms families and communities (Baldwin, 2020; Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004; Codd, 2013; Minson & Flynn, 2021; Siegel, 2011; Woodward, 2003), yet we persist with this solution. Do we weigh up the fear of ‘possible’ harm from dangerous others who might hurt ‘us’ against the known harms against a marginalised population, which our privilege protects us from even knowing about? Do we turn a blind eye because of *who* prison is hurting? Research paints a clear picture of whom women’s prisons hurt in Aotearoa: poor, marginalised, disadvantaged Māori mothers, yet Eurocentric thinking essentialises prison as necessary to provide safety in our settler society.

However, despite being unable to imagine a world without prisons, volunteers described prison alternatives. One of the arguments put forward by some volunteers that essentialised prison was that prison could be a place of safety for mothers in relation to their homes.⁷⁸ According to Richards (2014), Aotearoa women’s prisons can be the safest or most dangerous place you have ever been, depending on your pre-prison life. Volunteers considered ways of providing safety, rehabilitation, and respite for mothers that were *not* prison.:

Grace: ...that’s also an interesting aspect to prison for women that for many women, it actually is a break, and it may be the safest place they’ve been. And that is a really shocking reality. But we have to be aware of that. Like actually, this might be the only time and the only way that you could have a break. From being beaten or from 24/7 household duties or from control, well, you are still completely controlled (laughs)... It just it needs to be *rehab and not prison*.

Caroline: If you ask women why they like being in prison, it’s for *safety* and it’s to get off drugs and so that then when they come out of prison they’re better mothers as well because they’re off drugs... they get a bit of respite in prison,

⁷⁷ Or participate in this research.

⁷⁸ The idea that women’s homes are the second choice to prison for their safety is alarming (and needs to be considered in relation to community sentencing for women).

so why can't they have rest? Why can't we find safe places for them to live where they can do drug rehabilitation and they can have their children there? ...it seems crazy that we're putting people ...in an institution that's locking them in. It's such a false environment.

Caroline: What I do like about [halfway houses] is the fact that you are a bit more in the real world. It's a halfway position. You're getting a lot of support to get off drugs and everything else...

Volunteers *did* think beyond the solution of prison for the 'undangerous' mothers in forms such as rehabilitation and supporting people in whānau communities. Could we provide alternative options for *all* women prisoners, including 'the dangerous few' and the 'really bad mums?' Surely this subset deemed not worthy of help was in the greatest need of strengthening whānau relationships. Are the 'dangerous few' the most victimised and traumatised? If a person has been violent to others, how does not helping provide any possibilities for change or restoration? Arrigo (2013) asked in his society-of-captives thesis how does the solution of prison "exhibit courage, compassion, and generosity? ...for whom is dignity affirmed, stigma averted, and healing advanced?" (p. 687). While the volunteers described the gendered violence the women in prison had experienced, they did not explicitly connect gendered violence and the good/bad mother stereotypes as contributors to the intersectional social power relationships that created the intersecting subject positions of the 'dangerous few' and the 'really bad mums'. While volunteers commented on the impacts of the intersections of class, race and gender on the mother's lives, they did not explicitly acknowledge the social powers that perpetuate marginality and disadvantage.

The Absence of a Critical Discussion About Racism and its Intersections with Gender and Class

The absence of a critical discussion about racism and its intersections with gender and class is a serious limitation to volunteer knowledge because it denies the power of how these intersections affect incarcerated women's lives. Volunteers did not explicitly discuss the social forces of racial, gendered and class oppressions that caused the injustices they recounted with few exceptions. A few volunteers were outraged by the injustice of the mass imprisonment of Māori wāhine, however most volunteers mentioned racism indirectly and briefly, for example, quickly

mentioning the importance of having a te ao⁷⁹ lens across the volunteer organisation. What initially drew me to this subject was the intersection of blatant and extreme racism and sexism in our criminal justice system. As racism appears to be more 'visible' than sexism (Thomas, 1980), I was surprised that only a few volunteers explicitly discussed racism. I did not specifically ask about racism or its intersections with class and gender during the main body of the interview. Perhaps because racism is such an obvious problem in the prison system, volunteers assumed I knew this, and it was not worth discussing. Sometimes I explicitly asked about racism at the end of the interview, and I found that the volunteers had considered racism deeply and held strong views. One of the volunteers had stopped working to take an immersion te reo course! I know from a volunteer-colleague that the disproportionately of Māori women is one of the first things they usually talk about when talking about this work to others. However, it seldom surfaced in the interviews unprompted. Perhaps racism was not explicitly discussed because the volunteers saw the prisoners as complex individuals, rather than in homogenised racialised categories. As the volunteers had largely transcended media stereotypes of prisoners, it is possible that separating race from other aspects of the prisoners' identities was impossible. One 'volunteer colleague' who I asked post-interview why racism had not come up told me that the shock of hearing women's horrific life stories eclipses any other facts about them. Conversely, as volunteers were all going to help mothers, "mothers" may have been the main category in which the volunteers considered the women.

Some of the answer to why racism was not explicitly discussed lies in the stereotypes of Māori criminals discussed earlier. Encountering a Māori prison population may be taken-for-granted as 'just the way things are'. Perhaps volunteers were not surprised to encounter a Māori prison population because Māori ethnicity had been connected to criminality through stereotypes. McIntosh (2022a) argued that the mass imprisonment of Māori is one of Aotearoa's most widely known social statistics. The alarming statistics of Māori imprisonment have become normalised and naturalised, as if prison is a natural destination for Māori (McIntosh, 2022a). Volunteers are prepared by a media diet of stereotypes that constructs prisoners as 'dangerous others', cultural

⁷⁹ Māori worldview.

outsiders that have been locked away. Corrections induction confirms this view that they have imprisoned dangerous women, who are considered 'risks to be managed'. The prison population itself—Māori women with low socioeconomic status, mental health issues, and addiction problems can reconfirm stereotyped ideas about who prisoners are expected to be. Alternatively, perhaps volunteers had been initially surprised by the racial and economic disparity, but now it had become normalised. However, we must struggle against what is constituted as 'normal' (A. Davis, 2016). This is because it is unjust to imprison a specific segment of society, especially a group continuously disenfranchised by the Pākehā state since colonisation.

Another possible reason racism was not explicitly discussed is that Pākehā have internalised a culture of colour blindness. The ideology of colour blindness suggests that we can end racial discrimination by treating everyone equally. Colour blindness supports racism because by treating everyone equally, we are dismissive of people's lived experiences and compounding inequities. Appearing colour blind denies the prevalence and power of racism as a social force. Perhaps because volunteers are not subordinated by prisoners and share being culturally privileged as Pākehā with the prison staff, this is why volunteers struggled to see racism as a dominant social force in the mothers' lives. Their racial and economic privilege may limit their understanding of this aspect of the mothers' experiences. However, understanding racism is crucial because it plays such a significant role in marginalisation, inequity, imprisonment and treatment once inside the system. Ignoring racism in the injustice experience of incarcerated mothers (acting 'colour blind') makes talking about racism difficult.

It is uncomfortable for White people to talk about racism (DiAngelo, 2019). Being uncomfortable talking about race is a serious limitation to volunteer knowledge because structural racism plays such a significant role in who is imprisoned. Pākehā are the dominant culture of Aotearoa, and as a result, we view ourselves as race-less, just the norm, and ordinary (Black & Huygens, 2016). Pākehā middle-class people have the luxury of not having to talk about race. Middle-class ideas about what is appropriate to talk about in polite society often mean that race, gender, and class are not brought up in conversation for fear of offending. Being the dominant culture means that racism does not affect our everyday lives negatively. There is no need for Pākehā to engage in

discussions about racism because racism largely (and invisibly) works in our favour. Our Pākehā privilege has a history rooted in colonisation:

Amy: It's not like people have purposefully not wanted to learn the history of New Zealand. But they've never had and so their ignorance is there. But it's not like a purposeful one. It's like you need to know this. But you don't really have a drive to know this, because there are no issues for you.

Understanding that Pākehā privilege comes at the cost of Māori disadvantage is very uncomfortable. However, we cannot end structural racism if we 'don't see it' or pretend racism does not exist or refuse to talk about it. A. Davis (2016) stated that, "If we do not know how to meaningfully talk about racism, our actions will move in misleading directions" (p. 88). It is crucial for Pākehā to acknowledge our distinctive culture, to understand its history, and the power that a Pākehā identity confers (Black & Huygens, 2016). Without understanding how Pākehā privilege, and Māori disadvantage work together, we cannot realistically hope to change the mass imprisonment of Māori wāhine.

A critical discussion on how gender intersects with race was also absent from the interviews. While the volunteers also suffered oppression under patriarchy (in a different way to the imprisoned mothers due to their various intersections with socioeconomic privilege), volunteers did not discuss their own gender oppression⁸⁰, which suggests that the social force of sexism was even more invisible than the social force of racism. It appears that gender inequity is even more normalised, internalised and acceptable than racial inequity (Thomas, 1980). While the volunteers recounted stories of domestic violence, they did not explicitly recognise it as gendered violence, and the volunteers reproduced misogynist attitudes when they recalled their distrust of women's stories and the uncritical acceptance that women prisoners were manipulative and dangerous. As the volunteers could not see their own gender oppression, it is unlikely they would recognise the imprisoned mother's gender oppression and its intersection with race and class as further compounding disadvantages and marginalisation for the mothers.

⁸⁰ With the exception of Grace who made a joke about her own gender oppression as a mother.

While it is not the role of the volunteers to address power inequities in the prison context, the social forces of race, gender and class and their intersections do need to be explicitly discussed and conscientised in this work because it is a huge factor in why mothers are surveilled, imprisoned and treated differently once inside prison. If we want to affect change, we need to begin by acknowledging that racism, sexism and classism are interlocking and overlapping forms of oppression and inequity which share the same colonised, culturally embedded history. Doing prison work and not highlighting the problem of who we are imprisoning and why is turning a blind eye to a racist, classist and sexist society. Our prison population shouts about how increasingly racist, classist and sexist Aotearoa is. However, volunteers' stories indicated that they recognised in varying degrees these social forces, but did not name them or talk about them explicitly. It is important to ensure that people working with imprisoned mothers have some understanding of the colonial forces to mitigate any unintentional harm through this work.⁸¹

The Power of Little Things

Despite these limitations, the volunteers used their knowledge to change things for imprisoned mothers. Volunteers recognised that prison did not work, yet they understood that the prisons' capacity for transformational change would be slow (at best). This is because they understood that the social power relations of the prison were interwoven with our societal fabric. While volunteers wanted the larger structural issues to be addressed, they would not wait. The volunteer experience offers a way to help mothers and children *right now*. Volunteer action did not need governmental permission to go ahead and did not require much capital. Volunteers could start helping now. The volunteer experience is a positive story about the power of ameliorative action. Ameliorative change has the potential to be transformational. The volunteers understood the power of the seemingly small actions they undertook to help mothers in prison:

Heather: I've also got a really strong philosophy that if everyone just did a little thing to help in the world, just one thing, right? And this is my one thing. This

⁸¹ To honour the Treaty principle of *whakamaru* (protection), further study is needed to explore how racism and its effects are understood within this work.

is my one little thing that I can do free. Once or twice a month or whatever. That I can just make a little bit of change for one person somewhere maybe at some time...well if everyone did that ...that was in my position instead of going "Argh, just leave them alone to rot ... cos they made their choices" ... if everyone could understand that slightly then it might be a better society [rather than] expect[ing] the government to fix it all the time right?

Sonia: This probably comes if you've done it for long enough, then you know that it works ... even though it can seem hopeless and people's lives are so challenging, that you know that some will come through this and you can play a small part in helping that. Just gotta remember that.

Sonia: ...it's the sort of thing that really matters to mums. They've got a photo in their cell of their child. ... So it's actually quite small things that make a difference, or they've managed to get a letter or a card or had a call with the child, just really basic contact. It's not actually the big things, it's the small things or just getting confirmation that siblings are together when the mother may have thought that they've been split up. So when we just provide very basic information and photos ...women will be visibly moved by that and delighted.

Sonia: The other thing that it [volunteer work] has done is show me... we talk often in New Zealand about these really intractable issues around inequality and poverty and violence which is so endemic and drugs... Yes, they seem like really big, challenging, almost overwhelming, intractable problems. But actually they impact individuals' lives... And if we just think about that through the lens, I know we have to fix the issue. We should just start with people (laughs) and focus on well, how could I improve this person's life and wrap more supporting care around them, especially if we start thinking about those people as children. And then you can really start to move the dial on that.

Addressing the multiple and complex problems that mothers in prison face can seem overwhelming. However, the volunteer experience offers hope and perspective. Small changes make differences, and these small changes can lead to bigger, more transformational ones:

Sonia: We should be able to land this for our women. Like at the moment what have we got? Like 423-odd women? That's like a school, a small school auditorium, right? So yeah, we should be able to do this. This isn't so hard.

There are less than 500 women in prison right now (Department of Corrections, 2022). With so many people pushing hard for transformational change, both within and outside of Corrections, changes are possible.

Due to volunteer subordination by Corrections staff and the volunteers' ability to listen reflexively to the mothers, the volunteers have three perspectives to understand the prison and the social power relations within which it is embedded. Volunteer perspectives are multiple and flexible, and in many cases, they are able consider the limitations and partiality of a particular perspective. In this way, their perspectives are distinctively different from a singular perspective to understand the prison. Due to this unique knowledge grounded in their lived experience of the prison, volunteers could generate practical, cost-efficient solutions to injustices they witnessed that would alleviate some separation distress for mothers and children. However, these solutions were not always shared because volunteers feared appearing critical of Corrections in case prison access was denied. What possibilities for imprisoned mothers could be opened if there was a safe way for volunteers to share their knowledge? Volunteer knowledge was limited by an inability to imagine a prisonless world, a Eurocentric perspective, and an absence of a critical discussion about racism and its intersections with gender and class. Despite these limitations, while we wait patiently for transformational change, the volunteer experience offers us possibilities to make ameliorative changes for mothers and children today.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

My research was motivated by my interest in social justice for mothers. It aimed to better understand volunteers' experiences working with incarcerated mothers by exploring the challenges and tensions that volunteers negotiated through this work. The research question was: How does understanding the unique perspective of the volunteers open up possibilities for change for imprisoned mothers? To address the research question, I interviewed 10 prison volunteers who sought to connect incarcerated mothers with their children. I wanted to gain insights into the volunteer experience that may provide possibilities to improve the lives of mothers in prison and their families. The literature review highlighted that the inequality of imprisonment is concentrated in intersections of specific groups: imprisoned, impoverished, Māori mothers. It also drew attention to the dearth of research on volunteer experiences. Epistemologically, I drew upon intersectional feminist standpoint theory to position the volunteers and mothers as experts in their fields and to draw attention to the complex social power and position of the volunteers in the prison context.

My analysis found that volunteering in prison broke down harmful prisoner stereotypes, enabling the volunteers to understand incarcerated mothers as people. Instead of 'othering' and marginalising imprisoned mothers, the volunteers largely transcended stereotypes and offered relationships of care, dignity, and respect to imprisoned mothers. Restoring dignity and whānau relationships enables women's agency and empowerment and offers possibilities to be opened for imprisoned mothers because the outward ripples of this care work in families can be huge. While volunteer work draws attention to how mothers in prison are devalued by society, it also highlights the potential and possibilities of mothers and the importance of mother and child relationships in terms of the ongoing impact on children across generations.

Because volunteers saw the prisoners as people, they recognised the injustices they faced. Volunteer work opens up possibilities for incarcerated mothers because it offers hope that some of the injustices mothers experience will be addressed. However, gendered, racial and socio-economic injustice were rarely explicitly named and discussed. If we want to challenge injustice, we need to acknowledge the social forces that contribute to and perpetuate inequality. While it

is not the volunteers role to explicitly describe the social powers that underscore women's incarceration, if we do not address the root causes of inequality then practices of stereotyping, marginalisation and imprisonment are unlikely to change. As volunteers did not explicitly discuss the intersections of gender, race and class as dominant social forces that resulted in the marginalisation of imprisoned women's lives, there is a danger that volunteer work can perpetuate the status quo and may cause further damage to a vulnerable community. As gender was unrecognised as a dominant social force within the participants lives, and harmful gender stereotypes were largely uncontested, it appears we as a society still have a lot of work to do in gender inequality conscious raising. To mitigate the potential harm of prison volunteers, volunteer organisations could develop materials to help prison volunteers work culturally safely inside prisons. The main reason volunteers were able to generate solutions to injustices they witnessed was because of their unique trifurcated perspective of the prison.

Volunteers can view the prison experience from the position of 'insider/outsider' as well as from staff and prisoner perspectives. This unique shifting perspective allows volunteers to reflexively describe, address, mitigate injustices and generate practical solutions grounded in the reality of current prison life for incarcerated mothers. These ameliorative changes that would greatly reduce separation distress for imprisoned mothers and their whānau were not always shared with Corrections due to an imbalance of power and the confinement of the volunteer role. However, if volunteers could be safely listened to, volunteer knowledge could be enormously helpful in assisting Corrections to reach its policy goals outlined in *Hōkai Rangi* and the women's strategy. However, volunteers sought to make ameliorative changes wherever possible to improve the lives of imprisoned women and they asked critical questions about the status quo of the prison. Volunteer knowledge should be taken seriously and included in the expertise working towards transformational change in the imprisonment of women and more specifically incarcerated mothers.

Volunteer work was transformational for participants where they reassessed and reflected on their privilege, lives, and values. Participants described changing careers, parenting philosophies and understandings of prisoners, justice, and society to become advocates for imprisoned

mothers. I transformed also. From listening to the volunteers, my views on prisoners, prison, the criminal justice system, and society significantly shifted. Four years ago, I thought that ‘bad people’ were in prison and ‘good people’ were not. Now, I am an abolitionist seeking decolonisation for our wider society. This is what the prison volunteer experience offers, a truly transformational experience, where you learn about Aotearoa and our treatment of our most marginalised women. However, more research is needed to understand if volunteer work is transformational or even helpful for the mothers in prison, who will return to the same society and the same environment that filtered them toward prison in the first place.

Limitations and Future Research

The most significant missing voice in this research is the incarcerated mothers because they are experts of their own lived experiences. Future research that explores how mothers experience volunteer services would be beneficial to understand the impact of the volunteers on mothers and whānau. In a broader research undertaking, the voices of Corrections staff (social workers, guards, psychologists, volunteer coordinators) and victims would also be important to get different perspectives on the challenges of imprisoned mothers. Fathers and children are other missing voices. As this research made injustices to mothers in prison visible, and the complexities of their lives and lived experiences, many areas require more research. The remand population needs urgent attention as a site of multiple injustices, particularly for Māori women (Gordon, 2022). Research that explores the constraints and unconscious bias of the judiciary in sentencing, the legal aid system or how racism and its effects are understood by people working in the criminal justice system could open up more possibilities for imprisoned mothers. Given that the disproportion of imprisoned Māori women is increasing and the Māori men’s population is decreasing, future intersectional research that explores Māori womens’ experiences in the criminal justice system may reveal why we are increasingly imprisoning Māori women in greater numbers. Research that explores how the patriarchy maintains colonising domestic practices could illuminate how child care responsibilities are understood by women.

A potential limitation of this research is that up-to-date statistical information on imprisoned women is not publicly available. Except for a few scholars such as Tracey McIntosh and Liz

Gordon, researchers rarely regularly publish in this area. Much of Liz Gordon's research is gathered through Official Information Act requests that often require six months for the request to be processed. These requests are generally not feasible for smaller research projects. Once the information is finally published, it is out-of-date. Other information sourced was calculated using raw data from Stats New Zealand. Self-calculating statistics from raw data requires sophisticated research knowledge and experience. When research or public data was unavailable, I contacted people working or researching in the area or used media articles to fill in gaps in my understanding. Another possible limitation was that an intersectional analysis that largely focuses on race and gender risks conflating multiple intersections, marginalisation and differences in experiences. For example, some prisoners are Pacifica, Asian and Pākehā, other prisoners suffer from poor health and mental distress and other forms of marginalisation. While the ongoing effects of colonisation such as poverty, poor health and mental distress are touched upon in my thesis, there is opportunities for future research to focus on specific impacts of social forces that impact incarcerated mothers lives such as addiction and mental distress.

Volunteer voices are important to the growing chorus of voices calling for transformational change in women's imprisonment, specifically incarcerated mothers. The unique knowledge of volunteers provides hope that ameliorative changes can make big differences for incarcerated mothers and has the potential to lead to transformational change. The volunteering experience is transformational, as listening to Aotearoa's most marginalised women facilitates reflection on society as a whole. It is our responsibility to the Tiriti and each other to restore relationships: Volunteers practising an ethics of care valuing women, motherhood and caring relationships provides an opportunity to start decolonising ourselves, prisons and society.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Cultural Support Letter: Nan Walden Ko Te Aitanga a Mahaaki te iwi

April 12th 2021,

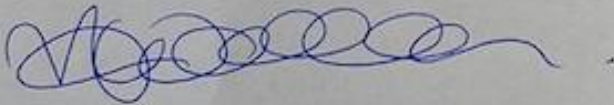
To the Ethics committee,

RE: Jennifer Loughnan's proposed master's thesis

I am writing to confirm that I have discussed with Jennifer Loughnan her proposed master's thesis project "How do volunteers understand the experience of working with mothers in New Zealand prisons?" We have discussed honouring the Treaty of Waitangi through research, how to honour the Māori language (by getting the information sheet translated), improving tikanga knowledge and pronunciation, manākitanga (cultural and social responsibility), whakamaru (protection from harm from a pākehā lens) and rangapū (partnership) in addressing the research from both a pākehā and Māori perspective.

I am willing to be her cultural advisor to provide cultural advice, input and support regarding Māori aspects of the research. I am supported in this mahi by the Te Reo teacher Daveda Wainohu at St Mary's College.

Ngā mihi,



Nan Walden
Head of Creative Technologies at St Marys College, Whanganui-a-Tara
Ko Te Aitanga a Mahaaki te iwi
Ko Takipu Tekaraka Te Marae

Appendix B: Cultural Support letter Groundwork

8th April 2021

Tēnā koutou,

Jen Margaret and Victoria Owen from Groundwork have agreed to be cultural advisors regarding Jennifer Loughnan's proposed master's thesis project "How do volunteers understand the experience of working with mothers in New Zealand prisons?"

Ngā mihi nui,



Victoria Owen

Jen Margaret and Victoria Owen
Groundwork
<https://groundwork.org.nz/>

Appendix C: Te Reo Information sheet

Te Kura Hinengaro Tangata,
Te Whare Wānanga o Massey,
Paraiweti Peke 11-222,
Papaioea, 4442

Pehea te māramatanga o ngā kaimahi tūao i nā wheako mahi i te taha o ngā whaea i roto i te whare herehere?

Pārongo me te tono whakaurunga.

Whakatakinga

Tēnā koe. Ko Jennifer Loughnan tōku ingoa. Ko tāku mahi rangahau, ka tirohia au ngā whakaaro mō ngā kaimahi tūao i mahi ana mō ngā whaea i roto i te whare herehere. Ko tāku hiahia ki tēnei kaupapa i ahu mai i te wheako ko ahau hei whaea me tētahi kaiāwhina i roto i te umanga mātua. Ko te tūmanako ka waiho ahau hei tohunga hinengaro kia taea ai e au te āwhina i ngā whaea me tāku hiahia ki te āhuetanga katoa o tēnei tūmomo mahi. He tono tēnei ki a koutou, kia u mai ki roto i tēnei rangahau kia torohē o koutou wheako i roto i tēnei mahi.

He aha te kaupapa mō tēnei mahi rangahau?

Ka tirohia tāku kaupapa i te mārama o ngā tūao ki o rātau wheako mahi me ngā whaea i roto o ngā whare herehere o Aotearoa. He mea nui tēnei rangahau nā te mea ko te nuinga o ngā mauhere wāhine he whaea, me te Tari Whakatika e kaha whakawhirinaki ana ki ngā tūao ki te tuku ratonga taumaha ki ngā mauhere. Heoi, ko tēnei kaupapa kāore anō kia rangahauhia i mua atu.

Ko tāku rangahau e tū ana hei tūao hei tohunga mō o rātau wheako e mahi ana me ngā whaea mauherea. Kei te hiahia ahau ki ngā tirohanga, ngā wero me ngā take o ngā tūao. He ahurei ngā tirohanga o ngā tūao nā te mea e mahi ana rātau i waho me i roto i te pūnaha whakatikatika, kāore i rite ki ngā kaimahi. Nā te mahi tahi me te taupori whakaraerae o ngā whaea mauhere, akene he tirohanga mngainui tā ngā tūao mō ngā wero ā ngā whaea, ngā ngoi me ngā matea.

Ko te kaupapa o tēnei rangahau ko te whakarato mai he rauemi hei āwhina ki ngā tūao, kia pai ai a rātau mahi kia pai ake ai te ora o ngā whaea mauhere.

Kei te whakahaerehia e au tēnei rangahau hei wāhanga mo tāku tohu Paerua Paetahi Toi, i raro i te tiro tiro o te Ahorangi Mandy Morgan me Tākuta Ann Rogerson nō te kura o Hinengaro ki te Whare Wananga o Massey.

Ngā Kaiuru

Te Kaupapa o Ngā Whaea, Ngā Korero mo te Moenga kua tuku tō rātau tautoko mo tēnei rangahau me mo tēnei pārongo pepa kia hoatu ki a koe hei kaiuru pea i roto i tēnei rangahau. Ko te whai wāhi he tūao. Pērā ki te hiahia koe ki te whakauru, ka taea e koe te whakapiri mai ki ahau (Jennifer) horipū.

Kāore he tikanga mō koe hei kōrero ki taua tangata/ranei te whakahaere na wai i pāhitia tēnei pārongo pepa, ahakoa kāore ranei kia hiahia koe te whakapiri ki ahau. Mēnā ka kōwhiri koe kia kaua e uru atu, tō whakaurunga ki te whakahaere kāore e raru.

He mea karanga koe kia uru ki te rangahau mēnā kei te mahi koe i mahi rānei koe i mua hei kaiāwhina mō ngā whaea i te whare herehere me

- Kua neke atu i te ono marama o tō wheako hei tūao
- He tūao koe i tenei wa, he tūao ranei o mua i mahi i tenei mahi i roto i tēnei āheitanga i roto i ngā tau e rima kua hipa
- He matatau koe ki te reo Pākehā

Ngā mea ka uru o te rangahau

Mēnā ka kōhiti e koe te whakauru, ka whakapā atu ahau ki a koe mō tētahi kōrerorero mō te rangahau, whakapumautia ngā hiahia ahurea rereketanga rānei kei a koe, whiwhi i tō whakaaetanga tuhituhi tuhituhi, me ka whakautu i ētahi pātai kei a koe.

Ko te kawatau ka 30 mineti pea te roa o tēnei kōrerorero.

Tae atu ki te 12 ngā kaiwhakauru ka uru ki tēnei rangahau. Ko te hui he hui kōrerorero ki ahau. Ka taea ngā hui ki runga i te Zoom. Mēnā kei te rohe o Te Whanganui-a-tara koe e noho ana, ka taea e koe te whiriwhiri kia uiui ā kanohi, i roto i te wāhi pai i whiriwhiria e koe. I roto i te uiui, ka uia koe ētahi pātai tuwhera me te whai wāhi ki te kōrero mō o wheako hei tūao ki ngā whaea i te whare herehere.

Ko te tūmanako ka 1-1.5 hāora pea te roa o ngā uiui, engari ka wātea ahau ki te hiahia koe ki te whakaroa i te uiui. Whai muri i te uiui, ka hoatu e ahau ki a koe he kape o te tuhinga hei arotake, hei whakarerekē mēnā e hiahia ana koe. Ka oti ana te rangahau, ki te kōwhiri koe, he whakarāpopototanga o ngā kitenga ka tohaina atu ki a koe, kua manakohia o urupare.

Hei mihi ki a koe mō tō wā nui, ka whiwhi ngā kaiuru katoa i te tohu \$20 mō te kai. I te katoa, ko tō whakauru ki tēnei kaua e neke ake i te toru hāora te roa o tō wā. Kāore e mātou i te whakaaro ko tēnei hui ka raru koe. Heoi, mēnā i mamate koe, ka taea e au te whakarato i ngā ratonga tautoko kia uru mai koe.

Matatapu

Mēnā he uiui kei runga i te Zoom, ka tangohia te kōnae oro ka huri hei tuhinga, ā ka muku tonu te kōnae ataata i muri tonu o te uiui. Ka tuhi au i ngā rīpene oro o ngā uiui katoa me ka muku i ngā kōrero mō tō tuakiri. Ka whakamahia e au i tētahi ingoa tupurangi hei tiaki i tō tuakiri. Ka tiakina ngā kōnae oro ki roto i te taputapu pāroru kupuhipa me ka oti te tuhituhi ki runga i te

pepa; ka ngaro ngā kōnae katoa. Ko au anake ka uru ki ngā tuhinga me aku kaiarotake rangahau, Ahorangi Mandy Morgan me Tākuta Ann Rogerson.

Te Hoahoa Rangahau

He kounga te kaupapa rangahau, i runga i ngā tirohanga o ngā wāhine me te wetewete kōrero. Kua tohua e au tēnei hoahoa hei whakanui i ngā tirohanga o ngā kaiuru me te uaratanga i o rātau mōhio, wheako, me ā rātau kōrero.

Tika o Ngā Kaiuru

Kāore koe e here ki te whakaae ki tēnei tono. Ki te whakatau koe ki te whakauru, kei a koe te tika ki te:

- Whakakāhore ki te whakautu i tētahi pātai;
- Maunu mai i te rangahau tae atu ki te waitohu o te tuku tuhinga;
- Pātaihia ngā pātai mō te rangahau i ngā wā katoa ka uru ana koe;
- Whakarato kōrero mō tō mārāma kāore e whakamahia tō ingoa me ētahi atu kōrero tūturu;
- Tono kia whakamutua te hopu kōrero i ngā wā katoa i te wā e uiui ana.
- Ka uru ki te whakarāpopototanga o ngā kitenga o te kaupapa ka mutu ana.

Mēnā kei te hiahia koe ki te whakaurunga, ki te whai pātai rānei, ka whakapā mai ki ahau (Jennifer). Kia ora mō tō wā whai wāhi ki te whakaarohia ki tāku kaupapa.

Ngā mihi,

Hoapā Kaupapa
Kairangahau
 Jennifer Loughnan
 [REDACTED]

Ngā Kaitirotiro
 Ahorangi Mandy Morgan

Tākuta Ann Rogerson
 [REDACTED]

Appendix D: Letter of Support from Participating Organisations

Letter of Support Organisation one:

5 May 2021

RE: Letter of support: Jennifer Loughnan

Tēnā koutou,

I am writing this letter of support for Jennifer Loughnan. We intend to support Jennifer Loughnan's research as described below.

Research overview:

1. Project Summary

This project explores how volunteers understand their experiences of working with mothers in Aotearoa/New Zealand prisons. This study positions volunteers as experts of their experiences of working with many incarcerated mothers and is interested in volunteer's perspectives, challenges and issues. The volunteer perspective is unique because they work both outside and inside the correctional system, unlike paid staff (Schuhmann et al., 2018). Through their lived experience, volunteers may have a broad overview of imprisoned mothers' challenges, strengths, and needs.

2. Objectives

This research aims to provide a resource that is helpful to volunteers of imprisoned mothers so they can be increasingly effective in their work and ultimately improve the lives of imprisoned mothers.

3. Background & Rationale

Professor Mandy Morgan and Dr Ann Rogerson are supervising this qualitative study. The research will be grounded in feminist standpoint epistemology, which can value the volunteers as experts in this field. Using narrative methodology, I intend to interview up to twelve individual volunteers using semi-structured one-to-one interviews. I plan to use purposive sampling by asking permission from contacts within organisations to disseminate my information sheet within their companies. Anyone willing to volunteer can contact me directly. The data will be analysed using narrative thematic analysis to produce overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

This research is significant because most imprisoned women in Aotearoa/New Zealand are mothers who are the primary caretakers of their children (Department of Corrections, 2020, Gordon, 2009). Furthermore, the Department of Corrections relies heavily on volunteers to deliver critical services to prisoners (Department of Corrections, 2020), yet the experiences of the volunteers have never been studied before.

Letter of Support Organisation two

5 May 2021

RE: Letter of support: Jennifer Loughnan

Tēnā koutou,

I am writing this letter of support for Jennifer Loughnan. We intend to support Jennifer Loughnan's research as described below.

Research overview:

1. Project Summary

This project explores how volunteers understand their experiences of working with mothers in Aotearoa/New Zealand prisons. This study positions volunteers as experts of their experiences of working with many incarcerated mothers and is interested in volunteer's perspectives, challenges and issues. The volunteer perspective is unique because they work both outside and inside the correctional system, unlike paid staff (Schuhmann et al., 2018). Through their lived experience, volunteers may have a broad overview of imprisoned mothers' challenges, strengths, and needs.

2. Objectives

This research aims to provide a resource that is helpful to volunteers of imprisoned mothers so they can be increasingly effective in their work and ultimately improve the lives of imprisoned mothers.

3. Background & Rationale

Professor Mandy Morgan and Dr Ann Rogerson are supervising this qualitative study. The research will be grounded in feminist standpoint epistemology, which can value the volunteers as experts in this field. Using narrative methodology, I intend to interview up to twelve individual volunteers using semi-structured one-to-one interviews. I plan to use purposive sampling by asking permission from contacts within organisations to disseminate my information sheet within their companies.

Anyone willing to volunteer can contact me directly. The data will be analysed using narrative thematic analysis to produce overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

This research is significant because most imprisoned women in Aotearoa/New Zealand are mothers who are the primary caretakers of their children (Department of Corrections, 2020, Gordon, 2009). Furthermore, the Department of Corrections relies heavily on volunteers to deliver critical services to prisoners (Department of Corrections, 2020), yet the experiences of the volunteers have never been studied before.

Sincerely,



Appendix E: English Information Sheet

School of Psychology,
Massey University,
Private Bag 11-222,
Palmerston North, 4442

How do volunteers understand the experience of working with mothers in Aotearoa/New Zealand prisons?

INFORMATION SHEET & INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Introduction

Tēnā koe. My name is Jennifer Loughnan, and my research aims to explore how volunteers understand the experience of working with mothers in Aotearoa/New Zealand prisons. I would like to invite you to take part in this research project to explore your experience of volunteering in this field.

What is the research about?

This project explores how volunteers understand the experience of working with mothers in Aotearoa/New Zealand prisons. This research is significant because most imprisoned women are mothers (Department of Corrections, 2020, Gordon, 2009) and the Department of Corrections relies heavily on volunteers to deliver critical services to prisoners (Department of Corrections, 2020). However, this subject has not been researched before. This study positions volunteers as experts from their experience of working with many incarcerated mothers and is interested in volunteer's perspectives, challenges and issues. The volunteer perspective is unique because they work both outside and inside the correctional system, unlike paid staff (Schuhmann et al., 2018). Through working with a vulnerable population of imprisoned mothers, volunteers may have a broad overview of the mothers challenges, strengths, and needs. This research aims to provide a resource that is helpful to volunteers so they can be increasingly effective in their work and ultimately improve the lives of incarcerated mothers. I became interested in the topic of motherhood when I became a mother myself. I am conducting this research as the thesis component of my Master of Arts degree, under the supervision of Professor Mandy Morgan and Dr Ann Rogerson from the school of Psychology, Massey University.

Participants

The Mother's Project, Bedtime Stories and Home Ground have offered their support for this research and for this information sheet to be distributed to you as a potential participant in the study. Participation is voluntary. If you wish to participate, you can contact me (Jennifer) directly. You do not need to tell the person/or organisation who passed on this information sheet whether

or not you intend to contact me. Should you choose not to participate, your volunteering with the organisation will not be affected.

You are invited to participate in the research if you are or have been a volunteer to mothers in prison and

- You have over six months of experience as a volunteer.
- You are a current volunteer or former volunteer who has worked in this capacity within the last five years.
- You are proficient in English.

What the study will involve

If you choose to participate, I will contact you for a pre-interview conversation to discuss the research, establish any cultural or diversity needs you may have, obtain your written informed consent, and answer any questions you might have. I expect this conversation to take around 30 minutes. Up to 12 participants will be involved in the study. The interview itself will be a conversational interview with me. Interviews can take place over Zoom. If you live in the Wellington area, you can choose to be interviewed in person, in a suitable place of your choosing. In the interview, you will be asked some open-ended questions and have the opportunity to talk about your experiences as a volunteer to mothers in prison.

I anticipate that interviews will take approximately 1-1.5 hours, but I will be available should you wish to extend the interview. After the interview, I will provide you with a copy of the transcript to review and to make changes if you wish. Once the research is complete, if you choose, a summary of the findings will be shared with you, and your feedback is welcomed. To thank you for your valuable time, all participants will receive a \$20 grocery voucher. In total, participation should not take more than three hours of your time. We do not anticipate this interview would cause you any distress. However, if you did feel distressed, I can provide a range of support services for you to access.

Confidentiality

If interviews are held over zoom, the audio file will be extracted for transcription (turned into text), and the video file will be destroyed immediately after the interview. I will transcribe the audiotapes of all interviews, and remove any identifying details. I will use a pseudonym to protect your identity. The audio files will be kept in a password protected device and once transcribed; all files will be destroyed. Transcripts will only be accessible to me and my research supervisors, Professor Mandy Morgan and Dr Ann Rogerson.

Research Design

The research project is qualitative, based on feminist standpoint epistemologies and narrative analysis methodologies. I have selected this design to emphasise participants' perspectives and value their knowledge, understandings, and stories.

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- *decline to answer any particular question;*
- *withdraw from the study up to the point of signing the transcript release;*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name and other identifying information will not be used;*
- *ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;*
- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.*

If you would like to participate, or have any questions, please feel free to contact me (Jennifer). Thank you for taking the time to consider my project.

Ngā mihi,

Project Contacts

Researcher

Jennifer Loughnan



Supervisors

Professor Mandy Morgan

Dr Ann Rogerson



Appendix F: Consent Form

School of Psychology,
Massey University,
Private Bag 11-222,
Palmerston North, 4442

How do volunteers understand the experience of working with mothers in Aotearoa/New Zealand prisons?

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Information Sheet attached as Appendix I. I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time, up until signing the Authority for the Release of Transcripts form (attached as Appendix II).

1. I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.
2. If I agree to the interview being sound recorded, I understand that the recording of my interview will be destroyed after transcription and it will not be returned to me.
3. I agree/do not agree to the interview being image recorded.
4. If I agree to the interview being image recorded, I understand that the video recording of my interview will be destroyed after the interview and it will not be returned to me.
5. I understand that I will have the opportunity to make changes to the transcript or notes of my interview if I wish to do so.
6. I understand that I can elect to receive a summary of the findings when the research is completed.
7. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Declaration by Participant:

I, [print full name] _____, hereby consent to take part in this study as described in the information sheet.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix G: Interview Schedule

The interviews will be semi-structured. I will use an introduction and opening questions to begin the conversation and develop rapport; however, I hope that the participants' stories and perspectives will lead the interview. If required, further open-ended questions will be used to deepen and/or refocus the conversation.

*The questions in **bold** will be asked (if time allows). The questions are in italics are ideas to prompt discussion.*

Introduction

“Tēnā koe. Thank you for taking part in my research and for giving your valuable time to be interviewed today. It is greatly appreciated. To begin the conversation, I will ask you some open-ended questions about your experience as a volunteer. I hope you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts, stories, feelings, and perspectives with me. There are no wrong answers! The central objective of the interview is to allow you to tell your story. My job is to listen. Please feel free to ask any questions or take a break at any time. Before we begin, do you have any questions?”

1. **To start, can you tell me a little bit about how you came into this type of work?** *When did you start working with mothers in prison? Have you worked in this area in any other capacity? Why did you begin this work?*
2. **How does your organisation provide for mothers in prison?** *What do you do in your role? What training in this role do you have? Was this training useful? Does your work help mothers in prison? Why? Why not? How do prisoners find out about your services?*
3. **How do you experience doing this work and how does this work affect you?** *How do you cope with this work? What supports do you have? Would you recommend this work for others? If so, who? Can you describe what going into/working in a prison is like for you?*
4. **Can you describe a time when the work did/didn't go so well?**
5. **Can you remember a time you worked with someone you were particularly concerned for?**
6. **Has this work changed anything for you?** *(The way you parent/see the world?)*
7. **How do you feel about the mothers you help?** *How do you work with clients that are different to you?*
8. **What do you think are the biggest challenges to mothering in prison?**
9. **What would make you more effective/further supported in your role?** *Is there anything you would like to see changed in the work you do?*
10. **If you could change the prison system (and money is no object) how would you change it for mothers?**

Conclusion

“We seem to be coming to the end of the interview, but I would like to check if there are any more stories or thoughts you would like to share? Thank you for your time”.

Appendix H: Field Notes Excerpt

- Interview one 14th July 2021
- Anticapitalism warriors: Can't believe that you do this for free
- They really want to help
- If we can't be White saviours how can we help without harming?
- Women can empathise with the oppressed : can imagine that one or two things go wrong and can be in jail, because they have experienced the unfairness of repression and know we do not have a meritocracy.
- Same for me: I can empathise with Māori women even though I am not one because of my small experience of oppression reduced me in such ways that I am able to see that an intersecting forces of race must make that oppression, intolerable, sad and the limiting of potential
- 53:38 . One or two things can change in your life and you can end up you know....here. 53:45
- Not real choices – also understand the limits of choices
- Upset about the glamourisation of prison- why? Reality is different.
- *There's quite a thing in prison - it can be quite glamorous from the outside. 09:40 to go in and go in and do an arts project and that really leaves me cold.*
- Must be volunteering for the right reasons. Aware that need to justify the work is good, which means awareness that this work can be harmful
- Connection as mothers – empathy for the relational bond of children
- *" It was that overwhelming feeling of being locked away from your children 13:32 and not being able to connect with them nightly I find -found-quite emotional 13:39"*
- And you're just like...we are - we are doing a good thing. 28:33= justification of the work being good
- *I mean you can't not be affected by that 15:52*
- Separation from children upsetting
- *You bring yourself into prison 34:10*
- The act of caring by outsiders who aren't paid – that's enough
- You aren't forgotten by the outside world
- The programme doesn't matter it's the talking/listening

Appendix I: Transcript Release Form

How do volunteers understand the experience of working with mothers in Aotearoa New Zealand prisons?

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript or notes of the interview conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript or notes of the interview and extracts from either of these may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature:

.....

Date:

.....

Full Name - printed

.....