JAIL MUMS: THE STATUS OF ADULT FEMALE PRISONERS AMONG YOUNG FEMALE PRISONERS IN CHRISTCHURCH WOMEN'S PRISON

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Abstract

At present in Aotearoa New Zealand, young female prisoners aged 14–19 years are either mixed with adult prisoners, or kept separate from them within the mainstream environment. Due to the practical difficulties of keeping young women separate in this environment, they may have few opportunities for participating in rehabilitative and therapeutic programmes or education, and may face extended lock-up hours. Young male prisoners aged 14–17 are treated differently: for example, they are placed in Young Offender Units, where they are provided with age-appropriate services and interventions. The differences in treatment available to young men and young women have been explained in the past by anecdotal practice wisdom around the mother–daughter nature of the relationships between adult women prisoners and young women prisoners. The current study explores the social context within a women's prison, through in-depth interviews, in order to learn more about the nature of the relationships between adult and young women prisoners. While these are only preliminary observations based on a small number of participants, it appears that in Christchurch Women's Prison a culture of respect for older women may exist among the young women prisoners. Participants indicated that for a number of reasons ongoing close relationships with adults are essential for their wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

The nature of the relationships between adult women prisoners and their youthful counterparts in New Zealand is to a large extent unknown. Some previous anecdotal speculation by New Zealand authorities suggests that adult prisoners mother and befriend younger prisoners, keeping them calm (Department of Corrections 1998). In contrast, overseas studies warn that older women prisoners may manipulate, bully and take advantage of young women prisoners (Gaarder and Belknap 2004, Howard League for Penal Reform 1997).

This paper reports preliminary findings of a larger doctoral project in progress, which explores the needs of young female prisoners in Aotearoa New Zealand and what management arrangements might best meet these needs. A qualitative discourse analysis approach is being used in this study to analyse texts from the transcripts of semi-structured interviews with young women prisoners, in order to explore the social context and subjective experience of young women in prison (Lovering 1995). Analysis of the data from the Christchurch cohort suggest that mother–daughter type relationships predominate, and young women prisoners rely on these relationships for their wellbeing. Should this finding extend to young women prisoners in Arohata Women's Prison and Auckland Region Women's Correctional Facility, it may be of interest to policymakers. The author's own social work practice and research background has contributed to this research being guided by a feminist and anti-colonial agenda. Hence, the author seeks to advance the situation of this group of women and consider what is in their best interests.

Why Investigate Relationships between Older and Younger Women Prisoners?

"Best interests" is a phrase used by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). While the UNCROC guidelines appear to be accepted worldwide, it is my view that there remains a lack of clarity with regard to what constitutes the "best interests" for young women prisoners, particularly in the New Zealand context. New Zealand has been criticised for continuing to mix young female prisoners with adult prisoners (Harre 2001).[2] As a result, collaboration between the Ministry of Youth Development and the Department of Corrections led to a vulnerability assessment tool being produced for young women prisoners called the Test of Best Interests

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2   In contrast, young male prisoners aged 14–17 are placed in Young Offender Units, where they are provided with age-appropriate services and interventions. Males aged 18–19 years are assessed and, if found to be significantly vulnerable to the perceived negative effects of mixing with adult offenders, will also be placed in the same Young Offender Units.

(TBI) (Department of Corrections 2006). This tool is similar to the one used to assess vulnerability among young male prisoners, with some substantive changes, such as an assessment of wellbeing factors, family influence (for location of placement purposes) and gang affiliation (Department of Corrections 2005).

The female TBI is unable to investigate the nature of relationships between adult and young women prisoners, however. Being based largely on the research with young men (Tie and Waugh 2007), it is not able to assess aspects of the social context that may be unique to women's prisons. In the absence of any formal research in New Zealand, it is unclear if there are any social factors unique to women's prisons, especially with regards to age mixing. There are two mixed-gender studies regarding age mixing in prisons conducted in New Zealand to date (see Gray Matter Research Ltd 1996, Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa 2003), but gender differences in social context are not able to be extracted from these studies.

Three overseas studies have investigated age mixing and the nature of the relationships between young and adult women in prison (see Gaarder and Belknap 2004, Genders and Player 1986, Howard League for Penal Reform 1997). However, these international studies are not homogeneous in methodological approach: two adopt a qualitative methodology and the other a quantitative methodology. This diversity may explain the divergence in findings among them regarding the nature of the relationships between young and adult women prisoners. They each conclude, however, that older women prisoners have very little positive influence, respect or control in relation to younger prisoners. It appears that these studies, combined with pressure to conform to UNCROC guidelines, have led to separate youth facilities being established for female prisoners in a number of jurisdictions overseas.

The Social Environment in a Women's Prison

Prison psychologists conducting research with male youths in prison in New Zealand have observed that should prison be a harsh and dangerous place for prisoners, such an experience may "diminish the deterrent effect of imprisonment … lead to further criminal behaviour … and interfere with a prisoner's ability to successfully undertake programmes offered to reduce their likelihood of reoffending" (Tie and Waugh 2007:2).

Therefore, central to this investigation is consideration of whether age mixing does indeed make prison a harsher and more dangerous place for young women, in the same way as research has indicated that it does for young male prisoners. It is possible, as suggested by the anecdotal evidence mentioned above, that age mixing is a protective factor that may lessen some aspects of the negative impact of incarceration

for young female prisoners.[3] Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether young women prisoners are better off with age mixing or by serving their sentence separated from adults.

In New Zealand there are very few young female prisoners (Dierck and Tyro 2004). Census data showed 29 in 1999, 26 in 2003, and a more recent report, from the Department of Corrections Policy Development Unit (2007), counted 35 sentenced female prisoners aged 14–19 years held in custody as of March 2007. As such, young female prisoners are particularly voiceless and marginalised (Adler and Hunter 1999 cited in Redman and Fisher 2002, Gaarder and Belknap 2004). This marginalisation is a concern, especially as these young women incarcerated today are likely to become mothers of another generation. Those who conduct research with female prisoners in Australia have observed, "positive and effective interventions could have significant intergenerational outcomes given the very high proportion of women offenders who are mothers or carers of children" (Salamone 2004:5).

Deciding how to develop positive and effective interventions and management arrangements for young female prisoners is not a simple matter. There are competing discourses around definitions of what is "positive" and "effective" in prison, as evident in policy documents, in the media, and among different professional groups. Interestingly, few interventions or management arrangements have been planned as a result of seeking prisoners' perspectives, and it has been hypothesised that this may be a contributing factor to the successive and pervasive failure of prison interventions (Pratt 1999).

From this I conclude that it is important to study the complexities of the prison experience from the young women prisoners' perspective. Understanding prisoners' perspectives and the social context within a women's prison environment may help policymakers to make more effective decisions regarding mixing young women with adults. In doing this, policy decisions may also influence the wellbeing of women prisoners, ensuring the environment is conducive to addressing their offending. Such decisions may lead to more positive outcomes for the young women themselves, any existing children they may have, and those who may be born to them in the future.

APPROACH ADOPTED FOR THE STUDY

This investigation adopts a qualitative discourse analysis approach. It investigates the ways the issue of mixing with adults is talked about among young female prisoners, and what such talk reveals about the nature of relationships between young and older

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3   Some of these negative effects of incarceration are discussed in the paper, "Bullying: Is it a problem? Exploring the ways young women at Christchurch Women's Prison talk about prison bullying" (Goldingay under review).

female prisoners. I have chosen this approach because I seek primarily to understand the social context in which the young women speak, and I am not investigating their cognitions or motivations (Lea and Auburn 2001). The study draws on both discursive psychology and Foucaultian traditions of discourse analysis. For a more in-depth explanation of the different intellectual traditions that underpin these two versions of discourse analysis, see Willig (2001:90–91).

While I am analysing the young women's responses, a discourse analysis approach enables me to interpret participants' dialogue through a feminist and anti-colonial lens, and hence adopt a "standpoint" (Hundleby 1997). For more details about this technique see Lea and Auburn (2001), or Willott and Griffin (1997). In addition, a discourse analysis approach enables the social and historical context of the participants' situation in prison to be taken into account in the interpretation of participants' dialogue in keeping with a critical theory paradigm (Kincheloe and McLaren 1994).

Feminist Debates

My agenda is specific: I want to raise awareness of what young women experience in prison, in order to improve or advance their situation. This is in keeping with the approach of other feminist scholars (Comack 1999, Kearney et al. 1994, O'Brien 2001, Reinharz 1992, Taylor 2004). There are tensions within the feminist approach, however, which are summarised succinctly by Smith (1993 cited in Jeffries 2001:168): "the question is whether women, being basically similar to men, require equal treatment, or being significantly different from men, require special treatment". One prison psychologist has drawn on "relational theory" in a literature review on what works with women offenders (King 2005). Relational theory indicates that, "Connection is a basic human need, and this need is especially strong in women" (Covington 1995 cited in King 2005). King (2005) suggests that this be taken into account in designing programmes or services for women and that effective intervention with women needs to be different from that provided to men.

Conversely, some feminist writers are "concerned to challenge and disrupt discourses that essentialise women (and men) and differences between them" (Day et al. 2003:143). This is particularly so if such essentialising leads to their disadvantage. Assuming that adult women prisoners are willing and able to fulfil a nurturing role might lead policymakers and administrators to justify and support mainstreaming female youth with adults. This may occur despite a lack of investigation into the validity of such an assumption and into the effect of the imposition of such roles on young and adult women alike. It could be argued that the lack of a special female youth unit constitutes unequal treatment and loss of rehabilitative opportunities for young women. This study embraces both feminist perspectives, and contends that in the absence of formal research, policymakers do not know if adult prisoners willingly and effectively

provide a nurturing role in New Zealand prisons that assists young prisoners. Policymakers also do not know if having a specialist youth unit for young female prisoners will provide the same benefit to young female prisoners that it does for young male prisoners. This research aims to provide such information to policymakers.

Indigenous Perspectives

While the Department of Corrections seeks the views of Māori[4] in the development of a number of treatment programmes and in the development of policies (personal communication, Department of Corrections Policy Development 2007), it is not clear what Māori perspectives there are regarding mixing young women prisoners with adult women prisoners. It is important to seek the views of Māori on this matter because numbers of Māori young female prisoners are disproportionately large with 76% of young female prisoners 14–19 years identifying as Māori in 1999 and 81% in 2003 (Department of Corrections 1999, 2003).

To ensure the voices and views of young Māori women prisoners and relevant iwi are not obscured or misrepresented, this study is informed by an anti-colonial perspective. Such a perspective holds that Māori worldviews and methodology need to be used when conducting research involving Māori (Health Research Council of New Zealand 1998). Therefore, a senior member of the local iwi[5] had input into the design and format of the study. The semi-structured interview guide to assist participants to discuss their needs was based on Te Whare Tapa Wha[6] (Durie 1994). This holistic model of wellbeing is able to capture intangible aspects of life (Tania Mataki personal communication), which otherwise may be lost by Western assessment models. While this paradigm is "being applied to a variety of situations to reveal a Māori perspective on the nature of things" (Golver 2005:2), and is well known, it is not the only perspective adopted by Māori. Tribes in different areas may use alternative models in keeping with their particular perspective and values (Tania Mataki personal communciation). Analysis of the data was made in consultation with members of local and South Island iwi and they have offered feedback and suggestions that have been incorporated into this paper.

METHOD

The study on which this report is based involved 11 face-to-face interviews with participants. Interviews for the Christchurch study took place between May and June 2006 at Christchurch Women's Prison.

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4   Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous peoples.
5   Tribal authority.
6   Te Whare Tapa Wha model of Hauora (wellbeing) incorporates four aspects: physical, mental, whānau and spiritual wellbeing.

Our first visit to Christchurch Women's Prison enabled my research assistant Marcia Marriott, her mentor/supervisor Tania Mataki and me to conduct an informal group discussion with all potential participants. Before beginning this discussion, appropriate protocols such as karakia (prayer) and mihi (introduction of self and origins) were observed. At the end of the discussion, we invited young women prisoners to participate in a one-to-one interview about age mixing in prison, and all youth who were able to agreed to participate. Five chose Marcia Marriott who is of Ngā Puhi and Ngāti Kahungunu descent to interview them and five chose me (from Rugby, England). One was interviewed by Tania Mataki, of Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Mamoe and Whānau Apanui descent.

ANALYSIS

Willig, a psychologist and academic in the United Kingdom, wrote that we "should not be surprised to find that people's expressed attitudes are not necessarily consistent across social contexts" (2001:89). This was certainly evident when comparing the group's responses with individual responses. The individual responses will be presented in the analysis below.

Social Exclusion on the "Outside"

I believe it is important to be aware of the environment from which these women have come to prison while interpreting their talk – to try to imagine walking a mile in their shoes. Participants discussed the lack of support they received from the non-criminal community when they were not in prison:

> "And like you know a lot of people ask other people who keep coming to jail all the time 'why do you keep coming to jail, you know, why can't you stay out of jail?' … You know, a lot of women come to jail because they feel nice … jail, I know that's upsetting to say but – [Interviewer: Why would it be upsetting?] – Because they should have that thing … that family on the outside as well as the inside … they should have that support, regardless of what they've done, where they've been … I mean we all make mistakes aye … but we can only learn from our mistakes."

This young woman recalled a frequent conversation among the women prisoners around the mystery of repeat imprisonment, and their talk focused on stigma, judgement and social exclusion from the community. Such exclusion leads to an absence of "that thing" that feels "nice", which all people need – a feeling of closeness, community and belonging. Further, a number of young women discussed the lack of support they received from their family of origin, which they believed had contributed to their offending:

> "Only 'cause of the crimes that I've committed and the people I harmed out there, like I put that back on my family really, I wouldn't be in the position I'm

in if they'd just give me a little bit of support … Oh well, I'm here now, I'll just
have to make do with what I've got."

One could analyse this extract as an attempt to shift responsibility for criminal behaviour. Another interpretation, however, is that it is a cry for help: a young person expressing a need for effective parenting – guidance, protection, and financial and emotional support. Talk may have a number of functions at the same time (Day et al. 2003), so both interpretations may have some truth to them. Access to some participants' files revealed that almost half of this cohort of young women (four out of nine) suffered severe parental abuse and/or neglect. Given this context, we might expect that talk of a supportive parent figure would be common among this group. It is therefore of interest to explore if mothering or parenting is discussed in the young women's dialogue about their relationships with adult prisoners.

Jail Mums

The metaphor "jail mum" was used frequently by participants to describe the relationship they have with older women. Many participants described how their jail mums provided support through demonstrating understanding and empathy, derived from their own experience of being imprisoned:

> Interviewer: "Who do you turn to … for awhi and manaaki?"
> Participant: "My jail mum."
> Interviewer: "Yep, your jail mum, is she older?"
> Participant: "Yes, yeah I turn to her because she's been through a lot and she knows what I'm going through, you know, 'cause she's had years of experience with it."

Her jail mum's knowledge and understanding of what she was going through appeared highly valued by this young woman in her talk, and it is this anticipation of acceptance and understanding that enabled her to describe why she turned to her. Unconditional positive regard, yet ability to provide guidance and correction, as one would expect from a parent, was talked about often by most young women as what they appreciated most about their relationships with older prisoners:

> "And like one of the adults in here, she's like … she wanted to adopt me … like as her daughter, and I was like real flattered but I don't get along with my own mum you know and I didn't want to start another relationship with someone I hardly know … and if I can't do that with my own mother you know and um she understood that, but she's um, but ever since I got into this prison she's been 100%, even when I've stuffed up, gone to the pound, you know she's not stopped talking to me, she still tells me right from wrong you know."

In spite of a problematic relationship with her own mother, this participant's talk normalised an adult prisoner taking a mothering role with her and, despite not

wishing to name the relationship as such, the participant positioned herself in a role of daughter receiving guidance about "right from wrong", and she received unconditional acceptance and support, as one would have expected from a parent.

"Jail mum" and "jail family" seem to be metaphors that everyone understood, and talk indicated that perhaps the wise youngsters chose a high status jail mum and "stuck" to her:

> "(Laughter) But after a while you start developing jail family in here, so I mean me and [another young woman prisoner] have got the same jail mum and um she's been in and out of prison her whole life so – [Interviewer: Is she someone who supports you?] – Yep, she helps me out a lot in here. I mean she's well known in here because she's been in and out and um … but me and [the other young woman prisoner] pretty much stick to her."

For more information about status issues for women in prison, see Goldingay (under review). Even if the term "jail mum" was not used, the word "mum" was used to describe relationships with older associates, as shown in the following extract:

> Interviewer: "Why do you think older women are better to be around?"
> Participant: "Oh 'cause like I'm just used to older people, like for myself I'm used to just mixing with older people and um I don't know just 'cause some of the women I've looked up to … 'cause one lady has helped me out and I sort of see her as a second mum and yeah."

Being mothered and having someone to look up to was spoken about by all participants in this cohort. It appeared that discourses around mothering were like building blocks of the social landscape (Potter and Wetherell 1998) for these young prisoners.

Need for Elders in a Parent Role – to Manage Behaviour

The way the participants talked about their jail mum was interesting as, on the one hand, the jail mum was nurturing and protective and, on the other hand, she was the one who provided discipline and control. Spending time with adults enabled young prisoners to be chastised in a manner one might have expected from a parental or mother figure. The need for a respected elder who was able to "manage" the behaviour of young people was discussed frequently:

> Interviewer: "Is that like a nanny, you know the nanny?"
> Participant: "Yep, nanny or the mum, the mum figure, one that says "hey cut that out" … The one that'll do that, because we need that … otherwise we'll just run a mile."

Older prisoners appeared to have the respect of the younger ones, and it appeared, from the young women's talk, that older prisoners were quite effective at keeping them in line. This was quite different to the findings from studies overseas, where older

prisoners did not appear to be able to command respect or have control over young people's behaviour (Genders and Player 1986). Another young woman echoed the theme of older prisoners keeping younger ones in line:

> Interviewer: "What do you think of the idea of separating the older from the younger?"
> Participant: "It SUCKS because we need the older women to keep us in line … (laughs) some, and um, 'cause some younger women find it harder to mix with younger women and um yeah."

Jail mums were able to educate their young jail daughters about how to survive the prison culture. However, such words of advice could have been of use in other settings, too, especially where peer pressure might have led a young person into trouble:

> "And I've got these words of wisdom from my mum, in jail, she said don't be a follower, be a leader, you know, you drive yourself, don't listen to nobody else because they're just going to lead you astray and you'll be vulnerable."

Wisdom is a word often used in relation to what older women provided for younger women in prison. The wisdom given by older women prisoners was talked about respectfully; it was not belittled. This young woman described how the wisdom given to her by older prisoners enabled her to grow personally, learning from the mistakes she made:

> "I mean … it's a privilege to be in a wing with older women 'cause they can give us their wisdom, you know, you learn from them, you learn from the mistakes you make, they've got a lot of knowledge and a lot of them are lifers so a lot of them have got experience."

Indigenous Values: Respecting Elders

It appears from the extracts above that among these young women in prison the knowledge the older women possessed was highly esteemed. This provides an interesting contrast to wider western society, where youth sometimes see older people as having redundant and irrelevant knowledge. The strong presence of Māori within this cohort of young female prisoners may have enabled the cultural practice of respecting elders to predominate:

> "Oh, yeah, I don't want to see more young people you know, but instead of putting them in a youth place, let them come out here … 'cause you know, if you leave them with their own age group they're not going to learn … see what its really like … and learn the respect and that … all the older people … being around older people."

Some Māori scholars have talked about the tradition of respect that young women learn from older women (Te Awekotuku 1999). This young woman indicated that she wanted to "learn the respect and that", showing a desire to connect with traditional values and beliefs. Her discussion indicated that connection to elders and respecting and learning from them were important to her wellbeing and important for her journey into adulthood. Ka'ai et al. wrote: "Elders, in their critical role of repositories in relation to the transmission of traditional values, beliefs, knowledge, skills and customary practices, are connected to spirituality and spiritual growth and balance for Māori" (2004:22). Thus, from this worldview, such connections with older people are essential for wellbeing.

Role Modelling

These young women prisoners expressed the need for someone to look up to and to model themselves on:

> "Since I've been in prison they have helped me, like they sort of look out for you, like from the other women, and they sort of take you under their wing, and just look after you and supports you which is good and 'cause for me I look up to my elders and all that and they're more understanding and you know, cool, primo."

This young woman echoed earlier sentiments of respecting elders, and indicated in her talk that she looked up to them, like role models. She also echoed other women's talk in discussing how they provided protection and understanding. The issue of maturity was discussed frequently, and younger people were described as somewhat immature, especially in the way they fought with each other. With the clash of egos, the women discussed how they were all needing guidance in more effective ways of getting along as a group:

> Participant: "Umm it's nah … it's different in here it's just like, like it would be wrong for some of us young ones to be separated from the older women because some girls come in here and egos will clash and pride and stuff and there's no older women there to look up to, to see how to … you know … not just grow up but be mature about it … your decisions and stuff."
> Interviewer: "Like a role model, someone who is accessible and you feel you relate?"
> Participant: "Yeah."

Talk about egos and pride were perhaps alluding to struggles for acceptance and status. It has been documented by other scholars that status and popularity is especially important for teenage girls (Verlaan 2005). Struggles for such social status and popularity may be even fiercer in this group than in a general population of girls, given the lack of fit with, and acceptance from, the community.

Nevertheless, the young woman quoted above indicated that older women prisoners had the power to keep such struggles in check, and to assist young women to make "mature" choices. Such role models could play a pivotal role in working with these young women, provided they model skills and attitudes that fit with rehabilitative and re-integrative goals.

"Contaminatory" Role Modelling

Role modelling became problematic when the models the young people sought to emulate were involved in their own difficulties and antisocial or criminal lifestyle. This young person talked about the way older people provided a role model, but one that modelled repeat offending and repeat imprisonment:

> Interviewer: "Is that a young person thinking or is that an older person?"
> Participant: "Older and young, but they're role models for us young ones … oh yeah, they're going back to jail, let's go back to jail."

Her talk employed a small measure of humour, to demonstrate what she saw as the irony of her role models being repeat offenders and continually in prison. There was a tension for her as she alluded to discourses around staying offence-free and imprisonment-free, in contrast to the discourse of looking up to adults and following in their footsteps. She put into words the inevitable tension and anxiety around the contamination effect of young people mixing with adult offenders, which in part may have led to policies separating youth from adult prisoners since Victorian times (Pratt 1992).

Staff Influence

Despite participants indicating that prisoner discipline may be the most effective method of keeping young prisoners "in line", participants also talked appreciatively about the support and guidance they received from staff. It appears from the extract below that staff were able to adopt mentor and support roles for this young person. She described how she felt understood as a young person and accepted for who she was. Also, her talk indicates a positive improvement in her life as a result of such relationships:

> "Oh, you know the officers, they work with me … they're not judgemental, the ones that um you know are always there for me and um you know they put my age in it and stuff like that and um that's been really good they've taught me heaps. I'll never talk bad about this place, even though it's not a place to be in (smiles), it's hard out, made me grow up a lot and know things I didn't know before."

Stability, especially in relationships, is another issue of concern to these young women and the following extract describes the young woman's close "friendship" not only with other prisoners, whom she considers as "family", but with staff:

> Interviewer: "Is there something that is attracting you here?"
> Participant: "Um, well, when I got transferred first to Arohata, I missed this place, not in the way that I want to spend the rest of my life in prison, but you know, I knew the staff here, I know the staff here, I've got a close friendship with some of the staff in here, and the friends that are in here, my jail family that are here …"

Staff mobility does impact on these young women, however, and it was mentioned that one may get close to an officer, only to have them move to another prison:

> Participant: "I could tell people things, but yeah … not really personal stuff."
> Interviewer: "And some staff you feel maybe you could tell?"
> Participant: "There's one staff that I've got a lot of time for in here, but she's moved from here … across the road."

Such losses may be particularly unhelpful, as some young women in prison may have already suffered considerable loss and instability in their first family.

CONCLUSIONS

Exploration of the "jail mum" metaphor in the young women prisoners' talk has shown that for some of the women in this sample, emotional wellbeing tended to be enhanced by the mother–daughter type relationships that were forged. Within these relationships, some young women described feeling understood, supported and nurtured. It is possible that such relationships provided some protection against victimisation. It is also possible that such support may have minimised damage to the mental health and personality development of young women targeted for bullying in the form of stand-overs, coercion, isolation and exclusion by the wider "in-group" (see Goldingay (under review) for more discussion of the power dynamics among prisoners in a women's prison). The jail mums were also described as providing appropriate and needed guidance and chastisement for wayward youth, keeping them in line and intervening in fights between young people.

There were contradictions in participants' talk regarding the issue of role modelling. Some older prisoners appeared to model repeat imprisonment. Furthermore, while some participants noted how they received useful advice and help to "mature", some adults appeared set in their own criminal behaviour and difficulties. Further exploration is required to generate possibilities for role models for youth in women's prisons.

Participants indicated that staff provided a measure of support and guidance, but perhaps not as reliably as adult prisoners since staff may be moved to another prison. Given the positive way young women talked about their relationships with staff, it is possible that policymakers may want to consider extending the time staff are able to work with youth, to enable long-term, stable relationships to form. Services that link a young person with an adult in a mentoring role that may be continued post-release, may also be useful.

The issue of sexual relationships between adult and young women prisoners has been explored by overseas studies (Pollock 2002 cited in Gaarder and Belknap 2004, Owen 1998 cited in Gaarder and Belknap 2004). However, none of the 11 young women interviewed for the current study mentioned sexual relationships in their discussion about their relationships with adult women prisoners. This may be due to the interview guide not directly addressing participants' sexual behaviour or sexual relations. It was my belief that such questions could be intrusive and embarrassing for young participants. Directly addressing these young women's sexual behaviour appeared to me to be voyeuristic and unnecessary, and focusing on it in research might further contribute to stereotypes about women who offend. Given this, questions around safety in the interview guide might have revealed whether a young woman felt she was being victimised, sexually or otherwise, by an adult female prisoner. There were no such indications among the 11 women in the current study. It will be interesting if analysis of data from the other women's prisons in New Zealand gave the same results.

To Raurau Toku Raurau Ka Ora te Iwi
With My Knowledge and Your Knowledge We Can Grow Together

The concept and wording of this section heading was given to me by Mrs. Kiwa Hutchen, kuia (respected Māori elder), for use in the present study. From analysis of the interviews, women in the Christchurch cohort of the age-mixing study demonstrated a respect for their elders that is not necessarily predominant in a more general group of young women their age, but appears in keeping with Māori values and culture. Further, scholars (Ka'ai et al. 2004, Te Awekotuku 1999) and local and south island Māori (personal communications, Kiwa Hutchen and Tania Mataki 2007) have noted that a connection with elders is important for Māori wellbeing on a spiritual dimension. Reverence is shown to older persons and the sacred knowledge they possess. Connection with the spirits of ancestors, through stories and whakapapa (genealogy) handed down from elders to younger people, is a key dimension in Māori cultural and spiritual wellbeing (Ka'ai et al. 2004).

This observation of respect for elders at Christchurch Women's Prison was a distinctive feature not observed in similar studies in other countries. Should this tendency be present among women in other New Zealand prisons, it is possible that this aspect of culture could be acknowledged and utilised in some way by policymakers in the implementation of a management arrangement that addresses the four dimensions of Durie's (1994) model of Hauora (wellbeing): Te Whare Tapa Wha.

The analysis on which this paper is based is by no means conclusive, however, due to a number of factors. Firstly, this is an introductory paper with limited space. The analysis is in its early stages, and more interpretations of the functions of the talk, and the discursive resources available to participants can be made. From this, deeper understanding of the social environment within women's prisons will be obtained, enabling policymakers to make more informed choices regarding what is in young women prisoners' best interests.

Further exploration of factors such as power relations and young women's subjective experience of institutionalisation, and how these influence the linguistic resources available to young women in prison, is also needed. This cohort may differ significantly from those in Wellington and Auckland, as a significant percentage of participants have been institutionalised from a very early age, and over a number of years, away from whānau and friends. The impact of this needs to be explored for its effect on participants' way of thinking and talking about age mixing and about prison life in general. Incorporating talk from participants in other women's prisons will enable a broader picture of the overall social context experienced by young women in prison.

Most importantly, policy decisions affecting Māori in the other women's prisons need to be made in consultation with tribal groups in the areas that the women's prisons are located, as it is not possible to assume that values and customs for one tribe are applicable to another (Rangihau 1992 cited in Ka'ai et al. 2004:23). These processes must take place prior to making any recommendations regarding what is in these young women's best interests.

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