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Should they have the same as the men? A unique Aotearoa New Zealand perspective on the issues around female prisoners 14-19 years, mixing with adult prisoners, whilst serving a prison sentence.

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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 segregated. Segregation is often in isolation, with few opportunities for participating in rehabilitative and therapeutic programs or education. Young male prisoners aged 14-19 years have the opportunity to reside in youth units in order to protect them from the perceived negative effects of mixing with adult offenders, and they are provided with age-appropriate services and interventions. This study explores the social context within women’s prisons in order to consider what might be in young female prisoners’ best interests with regards to mixing with adults in prison. Preliminary observations indicate that in Aotearoa New Zealand women’s prisons, a culture of respect for older women exists amongst the young women prisoners. The implications of this, and other observations of the social context that may be relevant to the wellbeing of young female prisoners, are therefore explored. A qualitative Discourse Analysis approach is being used in this study to analyze texts emanating from the transcripts from semi-structured interviews with
young women prisoners. 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.

**Introduction – Age mixing for young women in prison**

Aotearoa New Zealand has a responsibility to ensure that the needs, status and special requirements of young people held in custody be taken into account under Article 37 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). This Article states that any child deprived of liberty should be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child’s best interests not to do so (Dierck & Tyro 2004). UNCROC defines children in this context as those up to the age of 17. The purpose of this paper is to report 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. In New Zealand, young men aged 14-17 are automatically placed in the separate, specialist units known as Youth Offenders Units (YOUs), whilst young men aged 18-19 undergo a Test Of Best Interests (TBI) assessment to determine their vulnerability status (Department of Corrections, 2006). Any 18-19 year old males identified as having a status that is significantly vulnerable will also be placed in a Young Offenders’ Unit.

The Department of Corrections has made some adaptations to the male Test of Best Interests assessment tool, as a result of informal discussions with the Ministry of Youth Development (Department of Corrections, 2007b) and named it the “Female Test of Best Interests (TBI).” This is currently being piloted in the three women’s prisons in Aotearoa New Zealand. A current suggestion by the Department of
Corrections is that only women under 18 will undergo the TBI, and have the opportunity to reside in a special facility, in keeping with UNCROC guidelines. Young women 18-19 years will automatically mix with adults. This does not appear to mirror the opportunities given to young male inmates however. It is possible that such a policy is based on small numbers of women in this age group. I contend that in not investigating what is in young female prisoners’ best interests, on the basis of small numbers, policy makers are neglecting to consider the impact on future generations. Therefore, young women aged 14-19 are included in this study to be in keeping with the target group of young male prisoners who have been identified as potential residents of Young Offender Units.

This introductory paper will explore relevant national and international literature around mixing female youth with adults in a prison environment. This includes information on role modelling, Maori values with respect to older persons, literature on bullying and its effects, and literature on constructions of femininity and female aggression in general. Extracts from interviews with young women held in Christchurch Women’s Prison, and analysis of these will be included in this report. This group of participants comprises the first cohort to be interviewed in a study that will also involve interviewing groups in the other main urban centres in New Zealand. The paper will conclude with a discussion of issues that arise from ongoing analysis of the Christchurch data, and implications for further research. Tania Mataki, a counsellor and programme provider for women in prisons during the last 10 years, and currently manager of Te Puna Oranga Counselling service in Christchurch, will present a Maori perspective in this section, based on her involvement in this Christchurch part of the study.
Road to current situation: youth mixing with adults in women's prisons.

Aotearoa New Zealand has mainstreamed young women prisoners with adults since the 1950s. From 1925 until then, younger women were separated from older “less hopeful cases” (Department of Justice, 1989, p. 156). The success of this was hindered however, by the prevailing attitude of penal administrators who believed that young women were “predominantly an irredeemable class and not a priority for funding” (Taylor, 1996, p. 62). Due to this, the institution designated for young women slowly faded away, as the “illusion of reform faded, muster issues arose, and women from the closed Addington Prison began to fill available space” (Department of Justice, 1989, p. 157).

This history forms the backdrop to the present mainstreaming policy. This policy was further informed by the views cited in Discussion Document on the Future Management of Serious Young Offenders in Custody: Getting Kids out Of Adult Prisons published by the Aotearoa New Zealand Department of Corrections (1998). The document states “victimisation and bullying . . . is a problem in all prisons, although less so in women’s prisons” (p. 2), and that “older women can befriend and ‘mother’ younger women inmates” (p. 8). Further, the writer of this document supports the view that “mixing is a stabilising, rather than a contaminating influence” (p. 6), in women’s prisons.

Current Department of Corrections Policy
As mentioned, there has been a Test Of Best Interests Pilot Assessment introduced recently for young women in prison under the age of 18 (Department of Corrections, 2006), indicating a concern on the part of the Aotearoa New Zealand Department of Corrections, to consider further what may be in the best interests of female youth in prisons alongside their male counterparts. In the absence of a female youth unit, and lack of formal research that specifically identifies the ways young female best interests may differ from males, the female Test of Best Interests (TBI) is non-operational. This means that recommendations emanating from the female TBI assessment tool are not put into practice at this stage.

Dierck & Tyro, two prison officers presenting a paper for the Future Leaders Program in (2004) conducted a review of literature and a study into age-mixing female youth in prisons. They noted that “research has not looked at whether female youth need to be managed separately from adults or managed with adults while receiving a youth specific programme” (Dierck & Tyro, 2004, p. 10). They established however, that there is a clear need for rehabilitative services and programs and associated structured intervention program for young women, which at the time was being developed by Psychological Services (Dierck & Tyro, 2004).

If research and the results of the non-operational pilot indicate that separate facilities would be in young female prisoners’ best interests, the question of how and where to set up such youth facilities would also be a consideration. Cost effectiveness is an issue. According to the Department of Corrections Policy Development, the number of sentenced and remand female youth aged 14-19 years held from 2003-2006 has fluctuated between 10 and 25 by weekly muster (Department of Corrections, 2007a).
With such low numbers, compatibility of young women in any one unit may also be an issue, as young women prisoners are not a homogenous group.

As indicated earlier, the low numbers and resulting issues as described above may arguably be less important when considering what is in the best interests of these young women. The young women incarcerated today will become the mothers of the next 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, p.5). Those working with this population in New Zealand over an extended time witness seeing a young woman, then her daughter, then her daughter’s daughters in the same women’s prison over a number of years (Hutchen, 2007).

Prison psychologists conducting research with youth in prison 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 re offending” (Tie & Waugh, 2007, p. 2). Therefore, in attending to the issue of the safety and wellbeing of young women prisoners, through the process of investigating if age-mixing is in their best interests, I am also considering the wellbeing of existing children and those who may be born to them in the future.
Other Aotearoa New Zealand literature on age mixing in prisons

Two other studies in Aotearoa New Zealand have specifically focussed on mixing young offenders with adults. Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA) provided a report to the United Nations (2003) regarding the conditions for young people in New Zealand Prisons. Their study demonstrated disquieting experiences of age mixing by young people. On the one hand the “majority of youth offenders said they would prefer to be with the mainstream adult population” (ACYA, 2003, p. 4) due to greater privileges, and a certain level of protection being provided for some younger prisoners by some older prisoners. On the other hand, 23/40 (57.5%) of respondents said mixing led to “entirely negative consequences often centred on antisocial/criminal behaviour” (ACYA, 2003, p. 4). Unfortunately, ACYA did not separate the female responses from the male, and only 10% of the sample group was female. Therefore, we can not assume that these findings are applicable to female youth in prison.

Grey Matter Research Ltd (GMRL), contracted by the Ministry of Justice studied age-mixing for both male and female youth, and reported from conducting a focus group with female prisoners that, “all the women thought it was better to mix younger and older women in prison” (GMRL, 1996, p. 26). The researchers did comment however that this was “probably because all had experienced this situation” (GMRL, 1996, p. 26). Furthermore, GMRL also commented that “gang pressures exist in the [male] youth units as well as mixed units” (p. 50), and that all inmates in mixed units stated that they “learnt far more positive than negative things from older inmates” (GMRL, 1996, p. ii). These comments imply that a youth unit may not be safer than mainstream prison environment, and older prisoners provide a more positive influence than a negative one.
Clearly, there are mixed views on the issue. Further, research has not explored the impact of institutionalisation on young female prisoners’ responses to questions around age-mixing. Nor has it been considered how much age-mixing contributes to the negative outcomes described by ACYA above. It is entirely possible that age mixing may have provided a buffer against such negative consequences, and there may have been worse outcomes for youth had they been separated from adults in prison. These issues, amongst others are of interest for this paper.

**International literature on age mixing in women’s prisons**

Looking now to overseas, a number of jurisdictions which are similar to Aotearoa New Zealand continue to mix their young women prisoners with adult prisoners, for similar reasons as those cited by the Aotearoa New Zealand administration. A small number of studies have been conducted around this issue. A study in the UK by Genders & Player found that “vindication of the belief that adult women were either willing and/or able to provide a ‘maternal’ influence inside prison was not apparent” (Genders & Player, 1986, p. 360). Older women were not considered suitably respected or qualified by the young offenders to offer advice, and were often looked upon with pity rather than admiration (Genders & Player, 1986). Regarding criminal contamination, Genders and Player found that “most of the youth custody trainees who said that they had learned new offending skills in prison claimed that they had acquired this information from girls of their own age” (p. 364). There was “no evidence at all to suggest that the youth custody trainees were learning any ‘techniques of violence” (p. 364) from the older women. Whether they learnt any other unhelpful behaviour was not addressed by the Genders & Player study.
A Howard League for Penal Reform study was conducted in the United Kingdom in 1997, and researchers interviewed girls, adult prisoners, staff and governors within the prison service. From their enquiry, the Howard League concluded that despite evidence that “older women had a calming effect” and “did play a mothering role”, “there were too many damaging and negative aspects of prison to warrant mixing the youngsters with adults” (Howard League, 1997, p. 29). Furthermore, older prisoners interviewed in the study warned, “Mothering sometimes hides exploitative relationships where a youngster is in fact being bullied” (Howard League for Penal Reform, 1997, p. 8).

**Debates in the United States**

Gaarder & Belknap conducted a qualitative study specifically looking at age mixing of female youth in women’s prisons in the United States in 2004. They drew similar conclusions to those of the Howard League Study (1997) in the UK. Despite the evidence that some young participants discussed how older women inmates may “play an important part in both . . .healing and coping” (p. 66), they stated it is more appropriate to house female youth separately from adults because of a greater assurance of safety, separate staff trained to work with juvenile populations, the possibility of different rules and programming, and an environment where the needs of girls are recognized as different from women

Gaarder & Belknap, 2004, p.76

Other scholars and practitioners in the United States observe that violent juveniles are “too young and emotionally immature to be incarcerated in adult prisons” (McMillen & Hill, 1997 p.100). Others report on the prevalence of victimisation of youth within prisons (Maitland & Sluder, 1996; Roush & Dunlap, 1997) and that youth are
“difficult to protect in traditional adult correctional settings” (McMillen & Hill, 1997, p. 102).

Scholars observed that young offenders, (as opposed to adults) are “still open to positive influences . . . which might enable their safe and effective return to the community” (McMillen & Hill, 1997, p. 102), and therefore they should not be housed with adults where presumably it is assumed there are no positive influences. Unfortunately, these scholars make no mention of female youth in prison. All the sample groups referred to are male.

**Approach adopted for the study**

The present study adopts a qualitative discourse analysis approach by investigating the ways the issue of mixing with adults is talked about amongst young female prisoners, and what functions such talk serves (Parker, 2004; Potter & Wetherell, 1998). It is assumed that language constructs “versions of social reality and [is used to] achieve social objectives” (Willig, 2001, p. 88, Potter & Wetherell, 1998). 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 & Auburn, 2001). Thus, I look at the linguistic resources used by speakers to discuss the practical ideologies (underpinned by beliefs and ideas regarding what constitutes common sense) used to justify and rationalize participant’s behaviour and relationships in prison. Further, I look at what linguistic resources are used to negotiate any ideological dilemmas or contradictions in beliefs and ideas around these relationships, in their talk (Burman & Parker, 1993; Potter & Wetherall, 1998, Willig, 2001). I am therefore drawing on both the Discursive Psychology and Foucaultian (critical) traditions of discourse analysis. For a more in-depth
explanation of the different intellectual traditions that underpin these two versions of

The use of discourse analysis has been used by feminist scholars as a strategy to
demonstrate a new and more accurate way of understanding complex situations that
women may be involved in, but that the public at large may struggle to understand.
For example, Weatherall & Priestly used this approach to explore the competing and
analysed working women’s talk around the use of violence, and argue that aggression
does make sense in terms of working-class constructions of femininity (2003).

The present study exploring the social world of young women in prison has some
elements in common with the discourse analytical studies described above, in that the
public at large may grapple with the idea that young women commit serious crimes
for which they are imprisoned. It may be difficult to imagine the social context in a
women’s prison, as prisons may not, in general, be associated with femininity.
Scholars have noted that crime is considered a masculine behaviour, so when a
woman commits an offence, she is “punished for the crime and for exceeding the
bounds of gender appropriate behaviour (Bishop & Frazier, 1984 cited in Jeffries,
2001, p. 8). Scholars have also noted that there has been a “resistance to acknowledge
the prevalence of a wide range of young women’s antisocial behaviours” (Matthews,
1999, p. 12). This may be due to a dominant cultural ideology in Aotearoa New
Zealand and elsewhere about femininity which assumes behaviour which is nurturing
and caring, the antithesis of aggressive or anti-social behaviour.
The following sections explore the concept of mothering, prison culture, bullying, victimisation, positive influences and criminal contamination that have been identified in the national and international literature as issues for young female prisoners in adult prisons.
Jail mums

Overseas research on age-mixing young female prisoners, and Aotearoa New Zealand Department of Corrections documents described above, identify that young female prisoners may be “mothered” (Gaarder & Belknap, 2004; Genders & Player, 1986; Howard League, 1997) by older female prisoners. Thus, to explore how relationships with older prisoners are experienced by young women in Aotearoa New Zealand prisons, the analysis in the present study identifies the way participants’ talk supports the metaphor of the older women as mothers. It has been observed that an aspect of metaphors is that they “highlight some aspects of experiences while disguising others” (Weatherall & Walton, 1999 cited in Weatherall & Priestly, 2001, p. 327). Given the contradictory way research to date has presented the mothering relationship in prison, this study aims to provide greater understanding of how such mothering relationships may provide for or hinder the wellbeing of young female prisoners in Aotearoa New Zealand women’s prisons.

Prison culture vs. femininity

Further, a dominant cultural rhetoric has been used in the past to describe women as being by nature, less aggressive than men (Whiting & Edwards, 1973; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Wilson, 1975; Rohner, 1976; Ember 1981, cited in Day, Gough & McFadden, 2003, p. 141). Earlier psychological scholars assumed that women exhibit feminine characteristics such as helpfulness, kindness, and awareness and sensitivity to the feelings of others, and lack of aggression, competitiveness or roughness (Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1973). Prison culture, on the other hand is a place
where “violence between inmates is now so common that it is considered a norm of the convict world” (Tai & Waugh, 2007, p. 2).

Thus, a tension or contradiction exists for women in prison. Traditionally, in men’s prisons, the esteemed prisoners are those who “demonstrate the most machismo attitudes and behaviours” (Tai & Waugh, 2007, p. 3). It is not clear whether there is a similar esteem for machismo attitudes and behaviours in women’s prisons. If the culture in women’s prisons is similar to that of the men’s, then women in prison must negotiate the dilemma of, on the one hand, having the expectation as women to be helpful, kind and sensitive to people’s feelings, and on the other, needing to fit into a masculine oriented culture. This aspect of women’s prisons and any tension that may result has not been explored by research to date.

The Day et al. study discussed above used discourse analysis to investigate the ways participants made sense of various situations through their talk. From the analysis it was clear how violence did make sense within their constructions of femininity. The women’s talk described how violence towards others demonstrated the loyalty and care women held for their loved ones for whom the violence served to protect or avenge. Hence such acts were seen very favourably (Day et al., 2003).

Thus, in the present study, I explore the tension between cultural expectations of femininity, and prison expectations, whatever they may be. I will explore the ways participants use talk to negotiate any resulting dilemma. The assumption is that talk serves a purpose to make sense and justify participants’ positions on such issues, and hence their resulting behaviour.
**Unique Aotearoa New Zealand context**

From the literature, it is evident there are strong feelings against age mixing amongst scholars in the United States and United Kingdom, and some lobby groups such as the Howard League in the United Kingdom. Care needs to be taken when assuming that the findings in other countries will be applicable to our situation in New Zealand however. The impact and opportunity presented by New Zealand’s distinctive values and cultures is useful to explore in relation to this issue of mixing young female prisoners with adult prisoners. We have a unique history. Being a small country built on a partnership agreement between its indigenous peoples and the predominantly European settlers has created opportunities for partnership and learning both for Maori and Pakeha.

Whilst Canada, Australia, and Mexico share a common colonial history, the Aotearoa New Zealand Department of Corrections appears unique in its commitment to incorporating indigenous worldviews into policy and practice. For example, all new facilities have been developed have been designed with consultation and under the guidance of local iwi. This commitment, based on the groundwork laid by the Treaty of Waitangi, and ongoing dialogue with local Maori groups, gives Aotearoa New Zealand a leading edge in developing effective interventions with indigenous peoples.

An International Indigenous Symposium on Corrections drew practitioners and scholars involved in Corrections Departments in colonised countries together in 1999. This forum enabled those from Canada, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand and Mexico to discuss common experiences of colonisation, and how being colonised
affected indigenous people in each country. They shared a common theme of the resulting over-representation of indigenous peoples in their prisons. Speakers were clear that innovations were required to incorporate cultural practices into prisons to enable them to be more effective (Robertson, 1999; Sanchez-Villegas, 1999; Wikiriwhi, 1999).

The Aotearoa New Zealand Department of Corrections shows a commitment to incorporate such cultural practices. For example, it has developed a Tikanga Maori programme for Women Offenders. This program has been drawn from a number of already existing resources and policies, which guide the Department in its responsiveness to Maori in the criminal justice system. These policies include the Treaty of Waitangi Strategic Plan, the Strategic Framework for improving the effectiveness of Inmate Offender Management for Maori, the Framework for Reducing Maori Offending, Maori Culture Related Needs Assessment, Special Maori Cultural Assessment and Cultural supervision (Service Authority document, 2005).

The Tikanga Maori program for women recently purchased and to be provided by contracted Maori Service providers sometime soon is “derived from a Maori value base that used Maori philosophy, knowledge and practices to emphasis the relationship of the individual with their socio cultural environment” (Service Authority document, 2005). These structures and policies already established by the Department of Corrections provides the framework within which further incorporation of Maori values, knowledge and practices may be explored and incorporated into women’s prisons to provide benefit to women of all ethnic groups resident within.
Women in the prison environment in Aotearoa New Zealand

Value youth place on relationships with elders

Discussions with local iwi have enabled me to become more aware of the value and respect afforded to older people within Maori society. Knowledge of traditions and of ancestors is revered and older people are seen as the source of this taonga or treasure even if younger people do not consider themselves connected to Maori culture (Mataki, 2007). Therefore, elders hold a “cherished position in Maori society” (Ka’ai, Moorfield, Reilly & Mosley, 2004). This reverence and respect may introduce a positive dynamic within women’s prisons in Aotearoa New Zealand, which may not be present in similar jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom. As identified by Genders and Player in the UK in their 1986 study, older women in British prisons were not respected sufficiently by the younger prisoners to be able to exert effective or positive control over the behaviour of the young prisoners (Genders & Player, 1986). The impact of respect for elders on the resulting dynamic in women’s prisons in Aotearoa New Zealand prisons is therefore of interest in the present research.

Role modelling

It is well documented that young women require someone to look up to, someone to model herself on as she grow towards adulthood. A key risk area identified for targeting by a review of research on what works to reduce offending by young women was having a lack of pro-social models (McLaren, 2000). Mentoring and Big Buddy programs, and the testified success of these on outcomes for youth at risk have become a global phenomenon (MacCallum & Beltman, 2002; Tierney Grossman & Resch, 2000).
Rhodes & DuBois discuss the need for greater understanding of how to provide effective mentoring for vulnerable youth. They point out that a young person’s involvement with effective mentors can lead to positive developmental outcomes so long as a number of guidelines are followed. Such guidelines include ensuring that mentors can be involved in the youth’s life for multiple years, ensuring connections between the mentor and the youth’s social network, and the mentor needs to be sensitive to the full range of the youth’s developmental needs (Rhodes & Dubois, 2006). With this in mind, questions need to be raised around whether the role modeling provided by women prisoners is able to meet such guidelines.

Further, given the potential positive resource generated from the importance and respect young people have for their elders in prison, consultation with Maori is required to consider culturally appropriate and relevant issues regarding women prisoners providing role modeling for younger prisons in Aotearoa New Zealand women’s prisons.

**Women's violence in prison**

A study in Canada demonstrated that “females are as aggressive as males as far as the motivation to hurt is concerned and that males are not by nature, more aggressive than females” (Bjorkqvist & Niemela, 1992 cited in Matthews, 1999, p. 12). From this it is plausible to assume that some women may behave in an aggressive way towards others in any environment. What is at issue for the present study is the extent that aggression, abuse or bullying occurs in women’s prisons and what effect this has on young female prisoners. It has been documented that previous exposure to inter-parental violence is particularly linked to young women’s subsequent engagement in
bullying behaviours towards others (Baldry, 2003). Given the backgrounds of the majority of this group of young women, it therefore seems likely that a significant number may exhibit bullying behaviours.

**Bullying in women’s prisons and potential effects on victims**

Bullying has been identified by researchers, as introducing greater risk to normal developmental processes in youth (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Nansel et al., 2001 cited in Viljoen et al., 2005, p. 521). The New Zealand Education Centre has observed that bullying and intimidation in the peer group have been implicated in youth suicide (NZ Education Centre, 2007). Researchers have reported that in general females “tend to use indirect (or relational) means of aggression and bullying, such as gossiping and social exclusion (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Lagerspetz et al., 1988 cited in Viljoen et al., 2005, p. 523, Smith & Gross, 2006). Further, research has shown that isolation and exclusion can be one of the more damaging types of bullying in terms of mental health issues and personality development (Baldry, 2004; Newman, Holden & Delville, 2005). The present study therefore seeks to explore what, if any, types of bullying occur in prison, in order to move towards considering how to protect the interests of potential bullies or victims.

A key issue with respect to the present research concerns the age of those who bully, and the age of likely targets. Separating young men from adult men to protect the younger ones implies that adult prisoners are more likely to victimise younger prisoners. However, some scholars have noted that younger offenders are more likely to bully others than adults are (Brookes, 1993; Connell & Farrington, 1996; Ireland & Archer, 1996, cited in Ireland, 1999, p. 173). Research in Aotearoa New Zealand has not explored the dynamics in women’s prisons with respect to age mixing. It is
therefore unclear regarding the nature of bullying that occurs between older-younger prisoners compared with bullying between young women of similar age in Aotearoa New Zealand prisons.

It is also important to explore if bullying is either mediated or exacerbated by mixing youth with adults. Baldry (2004) noted, in a study which looked at indirect bullying on physical and mental health of Italian boys and girls that having a positive relationship with a parent provided a buffer against the negative effects of indirect bullying. This view of the protective influence of supportive relationships with adults has been noted by several other scholars such as Masten & Coatsworth, (1998); Garmezy, (1985), and Werner & Smith, (1982), cited in Rhodes (2001). The nature of the relationships between older and younger women therefore is in need of exploration, to see if the presence of adult women provides such protections against the negative effects of any bullying that may occur in women’s prisons.

**Kaupapa Maori perspectives**

This study is informed by an anti-colonial perspective, which holds that Maori worldviews and methodology need to be used when researching Maori people (Health Research Council of New Zealand, 1998). There are a high proportion of young female prisoners who identify as Maori. In 2004, Dierck & Tyro identified that 54% of female youth prisoners were Maori; whilst the general population of Maori in the community is approximately 13% (Wikiriwhi, 1999). Research has also demonstrated that Maori female offenders have, in line with their Aboriginal counterparts overseas, “more and higher needs in several need domains” (Poels, 2005, p. 6) than Pakeha/European female prisoners. Thus, it is even more important to ensure that an
appropriate and culturally responsive approach is used in this inquiry to avoid misinterpreting or misrepresenting the views of Maori women participants.

Thus, whilst still drawing on a qualitative methodology drawn from western ideas, the intention of this study is in keeping with Kaupapa Maori research, which is concerned with “improving the lives of those who are researched” (Max, 2005, p. 89). Thus, improvement needs to be from participants’ perspectives, not from western ideas of what might be good for them. Therefore, a process of inclusion, consultation and partnership with Maori is undertaken in the design and execution of the research. The interview guide to assist participants to discuss their needs is based on Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994). This paradigm is “being applied to a variety of situations to reveal a Maori perspective on the nature of things” (Golver, 2005, p. 2).

**Feminist Perspectives on young women**

The current research exploring the implications of age mixing for young women in prison is underpinned by a feminist agenda, which, as described by a number of feminist scholars, aims to advance the situation of women (Comack, 1999; Kearney et al., 1994; O’Brien, 2001; Reinharz, 1992; Taylor, 2004). There are a number of debates and tensions within feminist perspectives, however, as to what constitutes advancing their situation or providing a situation which is in their best interests. Earlier feminists such as Gilligan (1982) and Miller (1986) sought to discover the ways that women are of equal value, yet different to men. They noted that women put more emphasis on the details of their relationships with others, and that close connection with others appeared more important to women than it did for men (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986). Miller went as far to say that “for many women, the
threat of disruption of connections is perceived not as just a loss of relationship but as something closer to a total loss of self” (Miller, 1986, p. 83). Providing for best interests in prison therefore, from this perspective, requires such differences to be taken into account.

On the other hand, some feminists influenced by post-structuralism are “concerned to challenge and disrupt discourses that essentialize women (and men) and differences between them” (Day, Gough & McFadden, 2003, p. 143). This is particularly so if such essentialising leads to their disadvantage. Assuming that all women are willing and able to fulfil a role of mother might lead policy makers and administrators to justify and even support mainstreaming youth with adults. This may occur despite lack of investigation into the validity of such an assumption. It could be argued that the lack of a special female youth unit constitutes unequal treatment and loss of rehabilitative opportunities for young women. Thus, as Smith 1993 (cited in Jeffries 2001, p. 168) states, “the question is whether women, being basically similar to men, require equal treatment, or being significantly different from men, require special treatment.”

It is my view that there may be merit on both sides of the debate, and therefore this study embraces both perspectives. I am considering the implications of the social context on the wellbeing of young female prisoners, in order to work towards identifying the most advantageous situation for these young women. I am investigating if an indeed mainstreaming will disadvantage young women prisoners, as research has identified it does for young male prisoners, or if in fact, being mixed with adults is in some young female prisoners’ best interests.
Feminist Standpoint debates

The process to investigate and interpret what are in the best interests of the young women participants in this study is also contentious. It has been noted by scholars that young female prisoners are a particularly marginalised and voiceless group (Gaarder & Belknap, 2004; Adler & Hunter, 1999, cited in Redman & Fisher, 2002). Feminist standpoint theories hold that, “marginalised people have the potential to see political relationships more clearly than those who simply rely on them” (Hundleby, 1997, p. 28). In other words, as these women are in a disadvantaged and marginalised position, they can see relationships that affect them from a more accurate point of view, than say prison administrators or politicians who are powerful, and may have their own vested interests. From this comes the view that interview participants should hold the key role in defining what type of custodial situation will best meet their needs as they see them.

Alongside this view however, it is important to acknowledge the impact that institutionalization and marginalisation may have on participant’s responses in interviews. Studies have shown that housewives in interviews may testify that the place for women is in the home. Furthermore, “[S]ociologists have long cited the example of the slave who claims to be happy” (Sprague and Zimmerman, 2004, p. 48). Studies have shown that the views of those who are dominated may be distorted (Sprague & Zimmerman 2004, Rees, 1991). Thus we cannot necessarily assume that their responses represent what is in their best interests. We are thus reminded that “taking a standpoint requires interpretation” (Sprague and Zimmerman, 2004, p. 48), and to accept interview responses at face value to represent the only perspective of these young women is “naïve” (Sprague & Zimmerman, 2004). Thus during the
analysis phase of the project, responses are interpreted using resources such as knowledge of institutionalization, my own practice knowledge, cultural knowledge and consultation, feminist perspectives, knowledge of gang culture, and peer review from others who have worked with similar groups, in similar settings.

**Politics and the conditions of incarceration**

There are many political debates when discussing punishment, around how much emphasis should be placed on retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation and community safety (Mays & Winfree, 1998; Duff & Garland, 1994). My own inquiry regarding the best interests of young female offenders is located in a rehabilitation and treatment paradigm. I also believe the external factors which may make a young woman at higher risk of offending need to be addressed as part of any rehabilitation and treatment program. Many scholars have observed that the majority of young female offenders are from disadvantaged backgrounds (Carlen & Worrall, 2004; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Zampese, 1997; Gaardner & Belknap, 2004). Whilst prison workers are unable to change the young person’s background, they may be able to help a young person build positive links in the community, and nurture a young person’s goals for employment or study. Appropriate services and programs may also enable a young person to develop positive links with family/whanau, which could provide the support, positive companionship guidance and overall wellbeing for disconnected young people.

Further, researchers have identified a high prevalence of mental health problems, self-harm, trauma, and substance abuse amongst women offenders (Byrne & Howells, 2000; Hart, 2000; Morash, Bynum & Koons, 1998 cited in Poels, 2005). Thus,
treatment for young women is required to target such areas in an age and culturally appropriate way in order to enable her to work towards health and wellbeing. For this study, the necessity of presence of such treatment programs is taken for granted. What is being explored by the present study is the management issue of whether a separate facility would provide a more positive and effective environment for young women to address their issues, and therefore be in their best interests.

The Study

The study on which this report is based involved 11 face-to-face interviews with participants who were able to choose their interviewer (Pakeha or Maori), and two focus groups; one with participants and one with local iwi. Only materials from the interviews have been included in the text, but material from the focus groups has been used as a resource to assist in the ongoing analysis of the texts from interviews. Interviews for the Christchurch study took place between May and June 2006 at Christchurch Women’s Prison.

The sample group.

Of the prisoners, there was one 17 year old, six 18 year olds and four 19 year olds, all of whom identified as Maori, but two the Maori participants also identified with a Pacific nation. Two Maori women also identified with Pakeha ethnicity, although Maori was ethnicity they identified with most strongly. One young woman had a young son, and two were pregnant at the time of the interview. Three had already served in excess of three years in prison, and one had served five years. Seven prisoners had served between five weeks and six months, whilst one was on remand. Out of the group of 11, nine agreed for their files to be consulted. Out of these nine files, it was noted that four had previously been in CYF Youth Justice facilities, two
had been in foster care, four had a history of severe parental abuse and/or neglect, three were reported sexual abuse/rape survivors, four had been brought up in a gang, three had acknowledged significant alcohol and/or drug issues and three had this identified as an issue but did not agree that it alcohol or drugs posed a problem for them. Four had a history of self harm, suicidal ideation or other mental health issues, and three had engaged in sex work from an early age to support a drug habit. These figures are not designed to indicate co-occurrence of any of these background factors amongst any participants.

Research process

Our first visit to Christchurch women’s prison consisted of an initial focus group discussion involving all potential participants, my research assistant Marcia Marriott, her mentor/supervisor Tania Mataki, and me. At the meeting, appropriate protocols such as Karakia (prayer) and mihi (introduction of self and origins) were observed. We discussed who we were, where we were from, and why we were interested in their opinions on age-mixing. We then facilitated an informal discussion on the topic of age mixing, and the themes discussed were jotted down straight after the meeting. After this meeting, all youth were invited to participate in face-to-face interviews. All youth who were able to, agreed to participate in interviews. Five chose Ms Marriott who is of Nga Puhi and Ngati Kahagnunu descent to interview them and five chose me (from Rugby, England). One was interviewed by Ms Mataki, of Kai Tahu, Ngati Mamoe and Whanau Apanui descent. The interviews were based around an open-ended, guided interview based on Te Whare Tapa Wha concept of needs. Other questions included sources of help and support, safety needs and opinions on the pros and cons of having a youth unit for women. The interviews were recorded using audio equipment and then transcribed.
Findings of the Christchurch Study

Willig, a psychologist and academic in the United Kingdom writes that we “should not be surprised to find that people’s expressed attitudes are not necessarily consistent across social contexts” (Willig, 2001, p. 89). This was certainly evident when comparing the groups’ responses to individual responses. Every young woman in the focus group who spoke voiced vigorous opposition to the idea of a separate youth unit for women, similar to the focus group with women conducted by Grey Matter Research Limited in 1996. There might be an accepted way of talking about age mixing amongst female prison inmates, which enables them to explain and justify their present situation. The responses in individual sessions reveal a different picture to that presented by the group. These responses, amongst other interesting ways of talking about age-mixing and the social context in Christchurch Women’s prison will be presented in the analysis below.

Influence of outside experiences

Despite the study participants not being asked about what led them to prison, it seems that asking them about their needs provides the framework within which their general lifestyle prior to imprisonment may be discussed. I believe it is important to be aware of the context from which these women come to prison whilst interpreting their talk, to try to imagine walking a mile in their shoes. Therefore, the following extracts are included to help provide context. The extract from this young woman’s transcript below is taken from a wider conversation initiated by her about her lack of visitors and contact with family:
Interviewer: . . . it must be quite lonely here at times . .?
Participant: Its good for me, honestly um only so because I can find myself. I know it’s a bit late to find myself but you know, its better late than never . and when I was up there I was kind of drifting away from my son so I’m just happy to have a good break from it, from the outside world, its CRAZY out there . .

Readers may be surprised to find a young woman indicating that being in prison is good for them, in comparison to their lifestyle outside prison. A common question may be raised that if their lifestyle is so crazy, why do they not leave it and pursue a healthier and calmer lifestyle. This can be seen more in context when considering the difficulties a number of young people without financial or emotional support and guidance may face:

**Int:** but do you have any thoughts about that for yourself, what would help you like if you were going out tomorrow . what would you need out there?
**Part** What would I need? UM . .a stable base . .um get my ID so I can get my benefit . .stuff like that . .instead of standing on street corners (whispers)
**Int** Your ID?
**Part** Only cos of lack of . .like when I need to go on a benefit I need such and such and I can’t get such and such and such and such so I have to stand on the corner to get such and such and such and such you know what I mean?
**Int** Stand on the corner?
**Part** Only to get the money
**Int** OH, I see. I can see that puts you in a vulnerable position . .for such a young person
**Part** Yeah. I don’t want to be like that on the make . .I have to be a certain age to get the benefit and when I am a certain age I need ID to prove who I was and I didn’t have that so yeah . .those are the things I need to think about . .I’ve always thought about it and I just don’t know how to get it . .you know . .

This young woman’s talk, demonstrates some dilemmas she experiencing during the interview, which may mirror dilemmas she faces in the community. Using euphemisms such as “on the make” may indicate her concern of how her lifestyle is going to be perceived and judged by the interviewer and any unseen ears that could be listening through the door. A desire to be accepted leads to her discomfort in talking about her involvement in sex work hence the whispers. On a practical level, her talk indicates a lack of confidence, knowledge and support to get what she needs, namely the ID and the benefit. It also consists of dichotomies: one is either a sex worker, or on the benefit. She does not discuss acquiring other sorts of employment. This may
be due to her youth, her lack of qualifications, and her lack of experience in the non-criminal world.

**Alienation from non-criminal community**

Other participants discussed the lack of support from the non-criminal community - and how this lack of support may lead them into a cycle of repeat imprisonment.

*Part*  Yep, not jail but like a residential I reckon, young women, yeah I don’t reckon like this, but then its good like this as well, jail, cos it um shocks the system, you know its oh shit, I’ve really fucked up now, I’m in jail, you know maybe its time to slow down, but you still don’t, 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

*Int*  Why would it be upsetting?

*Part*  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. they should all have that (inaudible) no matter what . . .I mean we all make mistakes aye . . .but we can only learn from our mistakes

This young woman appears to be struggling with the complexity of the question of whether young women should be separated from older women. She appears also to be alluding to the fact that having a “residential” may not be harsh enough, since for her, the shock of jail enabled awareness of a problematic lifestyle. She goes further to point out however that awareness is not enough to prevent the cycle happening again. She then mentions a common conversation amongst the women themselves around the mystery of repeat imprisonment, and attributes the absence of deterrent effect of prison to stigma, a judgment from the community, and an absence of “that thing” that feels “nice” which all people need – a feeling of closeness, community and belonging.

A feeling of not being “like” other young people and not accepted by peers in the community causes isolation and alienation, as described by the young woman below:

*Part*  Yeah I do I do for them [other women prisoners] cos they mean heaps to me and they like um like, they’re real, than my mates that I have on the outside, I mean they’re not like there’s you know . . .we did crimes . . .you know we did some crimes but um . . .when we talk with each other its like you see past their crimes and you know they’re a good person and .

*Int*  So people are more judgemental on the outside . . .?

*Part*  Yeah . . .you know and like um they just, you just feel real down and stuff when you know that . .
It is possible that the lack of peer acceptance from the general community facilitates a closer bond, yet more fierce rivalry to be accepted amongst young women in prison.

It is possible that lack of family/whanau and community connections would increase their vulnerability to either positive or negative influences around them. Regarding family/whanau support, a number of young women discussed the lack of support they receive from their family which they believe has contributed to their offending:

*Participant*: “… only cos 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. Given the large percentage of this cohort of young women who suffered severe parental abuse and/or neglect, talk of a supportive parent figure may be common amongst this group. It is therefore of interest to explore how the “jail mum” metaphor discussed in international literature is used in the women’s talk in the New Zealand context.

**Jail mums - Emotional Support, wisdom and understanding**

The metaphor of “jail mum” was used frequently by participants to describe the relationship they had with older women. In a similar way to research participants in the United Kingdom and United States research on age mixing in women’s prisons, many participants described how their jail mums provided support through demonstrating understanding and empathy, derived from their own experience of being imprisoned:
"...who do you turn to when you're ... for awhi and manaaki?"

Part: My jail mum

Int: Yep, your jail mum, is she older?

Part: Yes, yeah I turn to her because she’s been through a lot and she knows what I’m going through you know cos she’s had years of experience with it . . .

Knowledge and understanding of what she’s going through appears highly valued by this young woman in her talk, and it is this anticipation of acceptance and understanding that enables her to describe why she turns to her. Unconditional positive regard, yet ability to provide guidance and correction, as one would expect from a parent, is talked about often by most young women as what they appreciate most about their relationships with older prisoners:

Part: .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 . .

It appears from this extract that mother-daughter relationships are like building blocks of the social landscape (Potter & Wetherell, 1998). Talk of mother-daughter relationships appear as a key linguistic repertoire (Burman & Parker, 1993) or resource to draw upon. The description of parent-like activities in the talk such as being “100%” even when the young woman has “stuffed up” and telling her right from wrong are synonymous with a positive and worthwhile relationship between an older and younger woman, as shown by this young woman’s extract. The lack of a close bond with a biological mother appears to dissuade the youngster from naming the relationship as mother-daughter however.

“Jail mum” and “jail family” seem to metaphors that everyone understands, and talk indicates that perhaps the wise youngsters choose (a high status) one and “stick” to her:
Part (laughter) but after a while you start developing jail family in here so I mean me and xxxxx have got the same jail mum and um she’s been in and out of prison her whole life so . . . .

Int Is she someone who supports you?
Part 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 xxxxx pretty much stick to her

Even if the term “jail mum” is not used, the word “mum” is used to describe relationships with older associates, as shown by the following extract:

Int: Why do you think older women are better to be around?
Part: um, oh cos 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 cos some of the women I’ve looked up to . . . cos one lady has helped me out and I sort of see her as a second mum and yeah . . .

Being familiar with associating with older women also appeared to feature positively in the women’s talk, as is having someone to look up to. In the following extract a young woman indicates that her “other” friend, who is not in prison, is not as able to listen and understand what she is going through, whereas her prison friend (an older lady) is able to both listen, understand and give helpful advice. In considering this it is also important to be mindful of the restricted use of the telephone in prison, the high cost of toll calls and the lack of privacy when using the prisoners’ telephone:

Int: And what does she do?
Part: Um, just like listening to me . . . like when I’m down, like cos one of my mates . . . so it really helps if someone is in the same situation as you, like some people wouldn’t have a clue . . . and um it just makes me feel a bit happier, cos if you don’t have people to talk to you sort of lose it . . . you know . . .

Int: And does she listen?
Part Yep, just gives her advice and it helps
Need for elders in a parent role – to manage behaviour

The way the participants talk about their jail mum is interesting as on the one hand it is nurturing and protective, and on the other, it is one which provides discipline and control. Spending time with adults enables young prisoners to be understood, supported, listened to and chastised in a manner one may expect from a parental or mother figure. The need for a respected elder who could “manage” the behaviour of young people was discussed frequently:

**Int:** Is that like a nanny, you know the nanny?
**Part:** 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 appear to have the respect of the younger ones, and it appears, from the young women’s talk, that older prisoners are quite effective at keeping them in line. This is quite different to the findings in the Genders and Player (1986) UK study already discussed, where older prisoners did not appear to be able to command respect and have control over young people’s behaviour. Another young woman echoes the theme of older prisoners keeping younger ones in line:

**Int:** And um, what do you think of the idea of separating the older from the younger?
**Part:** It SUCKS because we need the older women to keep us in line . . . (laughs) some, and um, cos some younger women find it harder to mix with younger women and um yeah,

Jail mums were able to educate their young jail daughters into how to survive the prison culture. However, such words of advice may be of use in other settings, especially where peer pressure may lead 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 was a word often used in relation to what older women provided for younger women in prison. The wisdom given by older women prisoners is talked about respectfully. It is not belittled. This young woman describes how the wisdom given to her by older prisoners has enabled her to grow personally, learning from the mistakes she has made:

I mean, it’s a privilege to be in a wing with older women cos 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 amongst these young women in prison at least, the knowledge the older women possess is highly esteemed. This is interesting, as traditionally, in wider western society, youth may see older people as having redundant and irrelevant knowledge. The strong presence of Maori within this cohort of young female prisoners may enable 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 .cos 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 Maori scholars have talked about the tradition of respect that young women learn from older women (Te Awekotuku, 1999). This young woman indicates that she wants to “learn the respect and that,” showing a desire to connect with traditional values and beliefs. Her discussion indicates that connection to elders; and respecting
and learning from them are important to her wellbeing and important for her journey into adulthood. Ka’ai et al write: “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 Maori” (Ka’ai et al., 2004, p. 22). Thus, from this world view, such connections with older people are essential for wellbeing. In addition, it appears from this talk that the predominant culture of respecting elders could be a protective and positive resource for young women in prison.

**Role modeling**

One young women talks about how she sees herself as no different from youth anywhere:

*Participant:* everything that a youth would have on the outside we need it in here, we’re no different from the youth on the outside, just the same, the only thing is we’re in prison, but we’re no different, you know, that’s what we need

Further, a number of young women express the need for someone to look up to and to model themselves on. This young woman echoes earlier sentiments of respecting elders, and indicates in her talk that she looks up to them, like a role model. She also echoes other women’s talk in discussing how they provide protection and understanding.

*Part* . . .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 cos for me I look up to my elders and all that and their more understanding and you know, cool, primo

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 are all needing guidance in more effective ways of getting along as a group:
Participant: *ummm its nah its different in here its 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*

Int: *Like a role model. someone who is accessible and you feel you relate?*

Part: *Yeah*

Talk about egos and pride may be 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). From extracts presented earlier it has been apparent that struggles for power and acceptance may be more intense amongst these young women, compared to their peers in the wider community, due to the lack of fit with, and acceptance from, the community.

Nevertheless, the young woman in the extract above indicates that older women prisoners have the power to keep such struggles in check, and to assist young women to make “mature” choices. Such esteemed role models could play a pivotal role in working with these young women provided they are modeling skills and attitudes that will fit with rehabilitative and re-integrative goals.

**Antisocial role models**

Role modeling does become problematic however when the models the young people seek to emulate may be involved in their own difficulties and antisocial/criminal lifestyle. This young person talks about the way older people do provide a role model, but one that models repeat offending and repeat imprisonment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int</th>
<th><em>Is that a young person thinking or is that an older person?</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part</td>
<td><em>Older and young, but they're role models for us young ones. oh yeah, they're going back to jail, lets go back to jail</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Machismo in women’s prisons

Talk about macho attitudes was apparent in the young women’s talk as well, in discussing the pressure to change once in prison, to eliminate femininity or “petite attitudes”, and act “macho” presumably to fit in to the prison culture:

Part: Cos our attitudes will change, its attitudes you know, macho man attitudes and erm got petite attitudes that ends up being macho mans you know, like that, but that’s what I mean, we need like more courses erm, those things, what do they do like anger management and all that teach us, things to keep us occupied, keep our minds off you know, all that kind of stuff, but just yeah, and we can work towards all the things we have to do to get out and change our minds off being in prison.

Other extracts show the pressure to act tough and big (as opposed to sensitive and feminine) was a key part of the culture at Christchurch women’s prison:

Part: Well not me, but there is a lot of people that try to stand over people . . Well I don’t I wont . .well I do say “try to pick on someone your own size . .or shut it. . .but then it comes into that rotation of bullying, you just . . .(.)

Int: Oh well it sounds like its bullying

Part: Yeah it is . . they think they’re tough and walk with this big attitude when really at the end of the day they aint got no form, they just hang around with the big people so that they look tough . .

This young woman’s discussion of the rotation of bullying indicates the dilemma that young people face in prison: sticking up for people and challenging the dominant culture of “stand-overs”, makes a young person likely to become a target of bullying herself. She indicates that she does not want to be a part of such a culture, “well I don’t I wont . . .” and that she wants to challenge the culture. With the long pause after “you just” however, I could speculate that she was going to say: “you just stay out of it and try not to draw attention to yourself”.

Other comments that alluded to the rotation of bullying further indicated the need to act tough and even participate in the bullying, hence acting like “someone else” to avoid being victimised:
Do you think there is a strong reason why they might want to act as if they are someone else?

Yeah...I understand that though, cos, I mean...I used to be like that um...they need to look after themselves...I mean they end up being the bum...a bum...that other people...or people who have been here longer they start...

Could you just tell me about that word bum, sorry?

Well, like, er, a prospect...(laughter)

Right, I understand

So getting them to get things when they need it and stuff like that I mean...I don’t know how people can do that because...people have done that for me but I don’t feel good doing that.

The use of the word “bum” is of interest here. The use of such a word may emanate from male prisons, where sexual victimisation is part of the overall victimisation that occurs to vulnerable prisoners (Taylor, 2007). Using the word “bum” may enable women to further claim an (esteemed) masculine identity whilst feminising and degrading their victims to being a “bum”. The use of laughter here is also of interest when considering how this young woman must negotiate the pressures upon her in prison. Analysis of the use of laughter in participants’ transcripts will be followed up in the “attitudes to violence” section further in this analysis.

“Getting things” for people could mean obtaining a number of sought-after items. I assume, from my knowledge of this group in prisons that such things may include drugs, alcohol, or other contraband. Young people being faced with pressure to obtain such items are in a double bind, as they risk being caught and punished by the prison system. Such dilemmas must place considerable stress upon young women, hence the strong pressure to become part of the group who “do” the stand-overs, as opposed to those that are victim of them.

There appears to be a need to “work” oneself to a “level” where they are no longer victimised, presumably by participating in these group stand-over activities:

Yeah, I feel safe. Now, I feel safe. Before I didn’t feel safe. I made my, put my...like I said I worked myself to the level where I am now so I can just imagine how those new bunnies feel when they come in,
The young woman’s extract above shows that she appears to be struggling with the words needed to express the change she had to make in her behaviour to work herself up to the “safe level.” Perhaps she is struggling for ways she could talk about it to make it sound socially acceptable to her interviewer. Her statements “I made my” and “I put my” appear to be false starts to her statement of “having worked herself up.” Readers can speculate here about what she was going to say but chose not to, and the reasons for her choice of words. Some possibilities include “made myself tough” or “put my feminine side away.”

**Prison culture, stand overs and bullying**

Sometimes during interviews, issues of bullying and stand-overs were talked about furtively and apologetically, as if even speaking about it breached an unseen but powerful boundary:

*Part:*  
I seen though, I seen . . sorry but I seen that um I’ve seen some of the older women, they take advantage of the new the younger ones what I mean is like erm to do things for them buy things off buy ups like stand over tactics more or less what I’m saying . .I’ve seen it, I’ve seen it but I don’t let it get to me but what I’m saying is that I’ve seen it happen and that’s, and it would be good if there was a youth wing, they’ll feel safe, you know what I mean.

The young person in the extract above discusses her opinion that younger people would not be taken advantage as much if they were separated from adults. Her apology could serve a number of purposes. It is most likely that her admission that she has seen women being taken advantage of in prison constitutes breaking a prison code of silence which makes her a “nark”. Another reason for her apology may be that she is stepping outside what she considers accepted talk within the prison regarding older prisoners their relationships with younger or newer prisoners.
Attitudes to violence

Talk in reply to a direct question about their safety needs tended to elicit a negative response from most participants. Most talked about how violence happens to others, and only one said her knowledge of the bullying was because it had happened to her:

Part:  *cos that's how I was when I first came in here I was . .you know (small cowering noises) you know oh yep yep yep I'll do it . . .yep yep yep . . *

Further, participants had way of talking about violent or socially cruel incidents that justified them:

Part  Yeah . .things happen in prison . .they doesn’t happen for no reason . .there’s always a reason why things happen you know but yeah . .
Int  What do you think those reasons are?
Part  Like for instance there’s a girl here and um she’s in here for harming her baby . .things like that . . .there’s always a reason why things happen to her like crime related . .cos we got kids ourselves

Here, a system of “prison justice” similar to that which happens in male prisons is discussed in the young woman’s talk. Male prisoners convicted of crimes against children often are placed in protection units due to the victimisation they will receive from other inmates (Tai & Waugh, 2007). It is interesting that this young woman has used talk around being a mother as justification for “things” happening in prison. Perhaps talk such as “she’s in here for harming her baby . . .we got kids ourselves” reaffirms her femininity and justifies her behaviour in the face the dilemmas inherent in behaving aggressively towards another person, a traditionally masculine domain.

Participants also appear to have a nervous laugh when talking about prison violence or other unpleasant situations in the prison and the laughter could have several functions. On the one hand, it could indicate irony. For example one young woman’s laughter at
the mention of doing “nothing but laze around and beat up new people” is poignant here.

*Part: that’s why they come back to jail, straight up, cos they love it cos its they do nothing but laze around (laughs), beat up new people that come in (laughs)*

The irony of prison enabling a person to have an easier life, act in a violent manner and claim a measure of power and status is not lost on her. Her nervous laughter may be indicative also of how she personally needs to negotiate the contradictions inherent in the prison culture, and the pressures this may place on her to beat up new people.

Needless to say, this young woman was not the only one to laugh nervously when discussing prison violence:

*Part: because sometimes you need the older ones, their company to keep safe from the other older women or other younger ones, cos there’s still young ones here that stand over women . . . (laughs)*

It is possible that laughter is an attempt to minimise in her own mind the unpleasantness of the situation, or her own part in it. Given the pressure to participate in such stand-over tactics another possibility is to try to minimise its seriousness by assuming it is funny, as a way of justifying her own behaviour. Perhaps laughter is a way of expressing the tension which occurs for these young women who have to “change their feminine attitudes” to fit in with the hierarchical masculine prison culture.

Speculations that laughter in talk attempts to make light of violence and other particularly unpleasant situations that participants feel powerless to change are endorsed in the following extract. This young woman discusses the gossiping, rumours, “hitters” and lack of activity that appear part of being in a women’s prison:

*Part: I’ve never seen so much rumours and such gossip go round or um hitting, little hitters . . . cos they’ve got nothing to do here (laughs) honestly I’m just being straight .*
Older prisoners provide protection

In the extract below, the need to “stick” to a jail mum is echoed.

**Part:** 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 xxxxx pretty much stick to her because . . . I mean there’s a lot of rumours that go round in here and um well, I haven’t got any enemies at the moment . . . not that I know of anyway . . .

**Int** Cos that would be scary?

**Part** It would be yeah, cos, I mean I feel sorry for the like younger ones that come in and um . . . and I know how they feel when they come in . . .

Also implied here are the devastating consequences that could occur if you do not “stick” to a jail mum. A young person may then be vulnerable to being the target of rumour and gossip, which in the prison situation could lead to isolation and exclusion. As identified earlier, with the lack of supports elsewhere, such isolation and exclusion could have devastating effects on a young person’s mental health and wellbeing.

Being isolated and hence socially exposed could also make her a target for further victimisation, in the form of stand-overs and coercion to obtain drugs, alcohol or other contraband.

The theme of additional protection and safety being provided by the older women was common as was denying that any victimisation happened to the participant herself:

**Part:** Yeah, I’d hate it because . . . you sort of like, the older ones keep the younger ones in line as well, and also keeps an eye out for us because there are some older women who take advantage of the younger ones and they stand over us and that . . . not saying I’ve had it happen or anything but you know it could, yeah, and um but if we were all put in the same wing, like a youth prison that would SUCK

The talk in this young woman’s extract is a good example of the way participants try to negotiate dilemmas in their situation. Her talk is contradictory; as on the one hand the she indicates the need to have older prisoners for protection, but on the other hand she is identifying that it is the older ones that young people need protection from. The
circularity of talk may be indicative of having been institutionalised for many years from a young age where she is unable to come up with a “new conversation” (O’Connor, 2003, p. 139) about this issue. It is therefore useful to explore further who exactly do the young women need protection from?

Who does the bullying?

A number of young women who had not been in prison long supported the idea of having separate facilities, or at least have some time to be youth, separate from the adults. Participants talked about how young people try to act cool around the older and more experienced prisoners:

*Participant:* nah, but that would be better if we were separated and um just to mingle for a couple of hours or something to be a youth, to act like youth, cos hanging out with the women every single day of your lag makes you think oh yeah, I have to be like them you know, I have to act like them, but if you had your time with the youth, that’s good, you get to hang out with those youth and meet them for who they are, not meet them cos they’re trying to act cool cos of the older women you know what I mean, you get some like that, when you get them on their own, that youth, they aint the person they were with the older women they’re level’s down here, it drops, hard out

They talked about the way the older women set the tone of social relations and culture, and how this can reduce young women’s ability to see another way of being:

*Int:* What do you think of the idea of separating the young women from the adults like having all the young women under 20 in one wing here in prison?

*Part:* I think it’s a good idea, someone said no, but that’s only because this is what they’re used to they’re used to being mixed already, but if you were just new coming into here I think it’s a good opportunity for the young ones to have their own youth unit, to settle in, you know. cos they all think this is just how it is, instead of going in with all the nasties that have been here for ages and getting told what to do kind of what to do, kind of thing, not saying that everyone gets told what to do but there’s the odd person that does

Her use of the phrase “nasties that have been here for ages” may indicate that “being in here” for any length of time makes a person “nasty”. Perhaps one must become so in order to avoid becoming a victim. The extract above implies that the culture may be quite different if “just new” people went into their own unit. Again, the issue may
be more about mixing with institutionalised women as opposed to mixing with “older” women.

Another contradiction is apparent here, as responses from participants indicate that largely, the bullying culture is not the exclusive domain of older female prisoners. Participants discussed how the youth are involved in stand-overs as well:

Part. I mean um, I haven’t seen any problems with us being in with the older ones, and I haven’t found any problems and I don’t reckon they should change it . .if they did . .it would suck, even for the younger ones because sometimes you need the older ones, their company to keep safe from the other older women or other younger ones, cos there’s still young ones here that stand over women . .(laughs)

Int: So it’s not about age when it comes to stand overs its . .
Part: Oh, nah . .its just um who you are really, but nah, everything how it is, it should just stay how it is

Again, the talk in the extract above contains circular concepts: where one needs “older” ones to keep safe from the “other older women”. One possibility for these contradictions is that participants refer to “new prisoners” and “young prisoners” in the same way. Participants discussed frequently how “first timers” were often targets for bullying. This young woman echoes earlier extracts where participants use the word “bunny” to describe new or young prisoners:

Participant 1: I can just imagine how those new bunnies feel when they come in, the same as how I felt, unsafe, you gotta look over your shoulder all the time cos older women and people that have been in here longer you know what I mean . .

Participant 2: Yeah, I feel safe. Now, I feel safe. Before I didn’t feel safe. I made my, put my . . like I said I worked myself to the level where I am now so I can just imagine how those new bunnies feel when they come in,

The word bunny may be used to convey femininity, softness or weakness. This reference to “bunnies” has also been used by pornographers such as Playboy, and it will be useful to explore in future research the purposes of such a term in the women’s
prison context. It is possible that it masculinises the speaker, hence putting them in a more favourable or strong position.

Participants make sense of what is happening to others in their talk by connecting a victim status with their being new and/or young.

*Part* It would be yeah, cos, I mean I feel sorry for the like younger ones that come in and um . . . and I know how they feel when they come in . . .

It is possible that participants are describing the situation described by prison psychologists Tai & Waugh (2007) whose research demonstrate that those most likely to be victimised in men’s prisons are those with a lack of institutional experience, and those who are in prison for the first time. Perhaps these young women are struggling to find the words for it as in this group at least, a large percentage have spent much of their past three years either in prison or a youth justice facility. Thus, institutionalisation appears to have had quite an impact on these women’s talk.

**Impact of institutionalisation on participants’ discussion**

One response that was not expected was how each participant who had experienced the separate “youth in prison” wing designated a number of years ago seemed to associate separate facilities with restriction and lack of privilege:

*Part:* Yep . . .it SUCKED, 23 hour lockdown, um . . . you know, eating in our rooms . . . it was . . . calling us YIPS wherever we go . . .

*Int:* OH, sorry, I did that too. . .

*Part:* Oh, yeah the YIP wing and we were behind Perspex we hardly got anything really you know and it . . . oh . . . it could be if we had our own wing or our own unit or whatever and yeah maybe if it was away from the adults and stuff like that cos I mean . . . on a different side or something . . . you know and have our things going on and you know,

*Int:* So the fear would be really that you would be locked down all the time . . . that’s why everyone said NO WAY the other day . .

*Part:* Yeah . . .

Whilst the young person likes the idea of having a separate unit that has “our things going on,” she indicates that it needs to be quite separate from the adult wings, to
avoid being managed with a 23 hour a day “lockdown.” Another participant describes the extensive lockdowns that occurred in the “YIPS.” Here, mixing with adults is directly related to “time out of her cell”

Part Yeah. Oh, well, there’s no such thing as the YIPS now (PAUSE)
Int Oh, I see, Yeah. Do you think there was some people would like to have that back? 
Part um, I don’t think so. No, Cos um, I mean when you mix with the adults you...its like more time out of your cell ...whereas when you’re in the YIPS there’s hardly any time away...cos...um each wing are supposed to have different times to get locked. 
Int UMM
Part And whereas the YIPS we were in wing three, and it was 8-5 lockdown
Int Ohh ...that’s like a punishment
Part It was ... .

Locks up hours seem to be what is on everyone’s minds when they think of a youth unit.

Part: There could be... depends on the lock hours ...whether ...a youth unit could be good, and have activities that would be alright um ...

Thus, we can see the clear correlation of how previous institutional experience has led to dichotomous thinking: one is both mainstreamed and privileged with more freedom, or kept separate, protected but locked down.

Others expressed skepticism that a youth unit for women would stay as intended, interestingly alluding to what happened in the 1950s:

K Yeah, it was [at CYFS facility] and er there was more supervision really, it wasn’t 24/7 though, it wasn’t all the time, yeah no it was OK but with me I wasn’t er... I wouldn’t bring out a youth wing...nah...I think it would be a waste of time cos someone will fuck it up ...you know for other people and um.
S Do you mean it would go down to more lockdowns again...
K Yeah, lockdowns, and it would just be back ...to how it was and they’d put other people in as well

It appears that prison subcultures and institutionalization have powerful effects on the way women talk about age mixing in the prison environment. Previous negative
experience has brought about an understandably skeptical attitude towards a youth unit being provided for them. It is possible then, that the apparent uniformity of responses, indicating that having a separate facility for young women would “suck” could be influenced by those who have had negative experiences in the now defunct YIPS unit.

Need for a structured day and programs

Discussing how young female prisoners’ physical, mental, spiritual and whanau/social needs around Mason Durie’s Te Whare Tapa Wha (1994), in the mainstream environment, led to a similar conclusion to that made by Dierck and Tyro in their 2004 study of female youth in Aotearoa New Zealand Prisons. All participants expressed a clear need for more structure, more education, clearer and stricter boundaries, more activities and more food to be served more often. They also discussed the extensive lock ups, which the “oldies” did not seem to mind but which were felt to be particularly damaging to younger women. All participants noted that these factors led to damage to their physical and mental health, to trouble making and mischief, and to fights within and between cliques.

Part: yeah, this place drives me mad . . . (laughs) because there’s nothing to do there’s honestly nothing here we need more for us to do and that’s how all those malicious rumours and gossip start and you know all the fights because women have go . . . I’ve seen it since I’ve been in here I’ve been in prison for 10 months I’ve been and I’ve never seen so much rumours and such gossip go round or um hitting, little hitters . . . cos they’ve got nothing to do here (laughs) honestly I’m just being straight .

Discussion

Clearly, in keeping with conclusions drawn by Dierck & Tyro (2004), a situation where young women prisoners are held with extensive lock ups, with a lack of a structured day, rehabilitation or recreation is not in their best interests and is currently being addressed by the Department of Corrections Psychological Services (Dierck &
Tyro, 2004). With regards to whether mixing with adults whilst receiving such programs would be in their best interests however, the situation is far from clear. As shown by the analysis above, participants gave contradictory responses, leading to more questions than answers. The issue of whether age mixing is in young female prisoners’ best interests is clearly a complex one.

As shown by the extracts, the presence of a confidante who understands them appears very important to some of these young women. No doubt, the need for understanding and connection is strong for most people, but it has been identified by scholars that relating and connecting to others is especially important to teenage girls (Miller, 1986, Verlaan, 2005). It is possible that for these young women, a confidante is particularly important to their wellbeing. Extracts have indicated that they may find it difficult to find people who do not judge them. They may feel alienated from their peers in the community due to their experiences of drugs, violence, sexual abuse, prostitution and imprisonment (Watt & Tomnay, 2000). Issues that very few women their age need to deal with. They may have little or no positive contact with their family of origin. Thus, it will be useful to explore further the prevalence and implications of these connections with mature women who understand and care for them when considering policy decisions.

Exploration of the “jail mum” metaphor in the talk has shown that for some of these women in this sample, emotional wellbeing has been more likely, due the mother-daughter type relationships that have been forged. Within these relationships, some young women have described feeling understood, supported and nurtured. It is possible that such support may provide a protective resource, minimizing any damage to the mental health and personality development of young women who are targeted
for isolation and exclusion by the wider “in-group.” The jail mums are also described as providing appropriate and needed guidance and chastisement for wayward youth, keeping them in line and intervening in fights between young people.

The fact that participants refer to a “jail mum” as a prisoner who has authority and power is noteworthy in itself. It may be useful to conduct a similar investigation in men’s prisons to see if young male prisoners have such relationships with adult male prisoners, and what term they use for such a role. In women’s prisons, it is possible that the term “jail mum” is an acceptable justification of the prison hierarchy which conveys accepted status and power to a woman in such a role. Such a justification may be needed in a group of women, where being singled out as having higher status, or having more power, than other women may otherwise lead to the risk of being rejected (Gilligan, 1993).

Participants also alluded to the fact that sticking to a (high status) jail mum could protect them from being the target of victimisation, which in this context was identified by participants as consisting of stand-overs and coercion to obtain contraband. Participants gave contradictory responses regarding whether mixing with adult prisoners made them safer, or less safe from such bullying however. They identified that some older prisoners may have the ability to keep violence and bullying in check between younger prisoners, and provide support and protection to those who need it. They also noted that some older prisoners are perpetrators of prison bullying and stand-overs, and may enlist younger, more vulnerable prisoners into the culture.
This dilemma may be understandable if consideration is given to the context where participants talk about “new” and “young” prisoners interchangeably. It is possible that being institutionalized makes a person “old” and hence not vulnerable, as being old implies the ability to behave according to the rules of the prison culture. As implied by the talk, there may be a “rotation of bullying” which forces people to “get in to the group” to avoid being victimized. A “young” person may not yet have achieved an institutional status which protects her from victimisation. The issue of whether victimisation is perpetrated by “older” women or “institutionalized” women is thus talked about interchangeably, which indicates the need for further inquiry into the issue of who exactly do young people need to be protected from.

Exploration of the tension between prison culture and femininity indicated a pressure to act “macho” and denounce a “feminine” attitude in order to avoid victimisation. Dilemmas inherent in this were expressed through nervous laughter, and talk which provided feminine justification for victimisation in prison by relating it to the perpetrators of the violence (against a prisoner who apparently was in prison for harming her baby) as being “mothers themselves.” Participants also used terms such as “bum” and “bunny” to denote victims in this context, which may elevate the speaker to having a masculine status, whilst degrading victims to a feminine and hence inferior and vulnerable status.

No conclusions can be drawn regarding what might be in young female prisoner’s best interests with regards to mixing with adult prisoners at this stage, as more exploration is needed to identify what characteristics make a female prisoner a likely target for bullying and stand-overs. Extracts in this study give an impression it is a young woman’s willingness and ability to adopt prison (masculine) attitudes and
behaviours that protects her, not her age. This has implications for any operational Test of Best Interests tool that may be adopted to discern a female prisoner’s suitability for any separate unit, should one be established. This is a preliminary and introductory inquiry however. More research is required to get a clearer picture of the issues related to any victimisation in women prisoners, and hence any tool that may assess what may be in young female prisoners’ best interests.

There were also apparent contradictions in participants’ talk regarding the issue of role modeling. Some older prisoners appeared to model anti-social and aggressive behaviours, and repeat imprisonment. Furthermore, whilst 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 supporting adult prisoner role modeling for youth in women’s prisons.

**To Raurau toku Raurau Ka ora te iwi**

*With my knowledge and your knowledge we can grow together.*

The concept and wording of the heading for the following paragraphs was given to me by Mrs. Kiwa Hutchen, Kuia (respected Maori 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 which is not necessarily predominant in a more general group of young women their age, but appears in keeping with Maori values and culture. Further, scholars and local Maori have noted that a connection
with elders is important for wellbeing for Maori 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 Maori cultural and spiritual and wellbeing (Ka’ai et al., 2004).

This observation of respect for elders being present at Christchurch Women’s Prison is a distinctive feature not observed in similar studies in other countries. Should this tendency be present amongst women in other New Zealand prisons, it is possible that this aspect of culture could be acknowledged and utilised in some way 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 the talk serves, and the discursive resources available to participants can made. From this, deeper understanding of the context will be obtained, enabling policy makers to make more informed choices regarding what is in young women prisoners’ best interests.

Further exploration of factors such as power relations and their subjective experience of institutionalization, and how this impacts on 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 institutionalized from a very early age, and over a number of years. 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.

Another factor which limits the ability to generalize the interpretations made here to represent the situation at other women’s prisons is the small sample size of 11 women. Incorporating more talk from more participants will enable a broader picture of the overall context experienced by young women in prison.

The location of Christchurch Women’s Prison is also an issue. All but one participant was many miles from their home and family. Factors such as proximity to family and friends, and unique culture of Christchurch Women’s Prison may also lead participants to have different views from participants in other New Zealand prisons. In addition, no women in this sample identified as Pakeha. Further research with young women in Arohata women’s prison in Wellington and Auckland Region Women’s Corrections Facility will enable us to identify if ethnicity leads to a different experience of age mixing in women’s prisons in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Furthermore, policy decisions affecting Maori in the other women’s prisons need to be made in consultation with Tribal groups in each area, 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, p. 23). Analysis of the data collected in Arohata Women’s prison and Auckland Region Women’s Corrections Facility is required, as is consultation with Maori in the main urban areas where women’s prisons are located. These processes must take place prior to making any recommendations regarding what is in these young women’s best interests.
Kai Tahu perspectives on mixing youth with adults

Christchurch Women’s Prison is located in the Kai Tahu region. Thus by working alongside Elders and other Maori working the area, I have been able to bring Kai Tahu knowledge and worldviews and Pakeha knowledge and worldviews together in the research, to explore what may be in the best interests of young women in Aotearoa New Zealand prisons.

I have been very fortunate to have been able to involve Mrs. Tania Mataki and her mother Mrs. Kiwa Hutchen in the interpretation of the findings discussed above. Mrs. Hutchen, participated in the design of this study and in the analysis of the data. Tania has many years of experience working in CYFS residences and at Christchurch Women’s Prison. She is a regional coordinator for the Maori and Iwi Provider Success (MIPS) project, the manager of Te Puna Oranga counseling service, and has a wealth of experience providing programs and counseling for Maori women in prison. She has also provided mentoring and supervision for my research assistant involved in this project.

It is therefore my pleasure to introduce Tania and enable her to give her perspective on the environment she has observed in women’s prisons.

Tania Mataki

Kai Tahu, Ngati Mamoe, Whanau Apanui

Ma te hau mahana, O te kahui, O te rangi, Me te wairua ,O nga tipuna,Tatou e manaki Tatou e tiaki E nga wa katoa ,Te hei mauri ora
May the warm winds of the heavenly realms
And the spirit of our ancestors guide and care for us always

E nga iwi e nga reo e nga karangatanga maha o nga hau e wha tenei taku mihi atu a koutou tena koutou tena koutou tena koutou katoa.
Whakawhanaungatanga (family relationships) links us to our past, present and future. The concept of Whanau, Hapu, Iwi is that you are part of a whole throughout the life span. The whanau and the practice of whakawhanaungatanga is an integral part of Maori identity and culture. There is a collective responsibility we have to each other. For example, during the powhiri process, how we care for people, there are roles and responsibilities. Within the whanau relationships there is a responsibility to one another, between tuakana, teina, or older and younger siblings. Segregating younger women and older women is not so black and white. Younger woman have different needs. Programmes should reflect activities that are more user friendly to younger woman. Over the years Maori have developed ideas about what does not work for Maori. Initiatives driven by individualistic ideas or western models are often in contrast to Maori values and beliefs. Tikanga Maori has informed practice within the sector area’s education, social development, health, ministry of justice this is unique to Aotearoa. Bullying in prisons has been discussed. I can only draw on my own knowledge of facilitating programmes and counselling within youth justice facilities and the Women’s prison. All forms of violence exists in our society, there seems to be a tendency to focus on physical abuse as the main form of violence, emotional abuse is more about the unseen which has long term damaging effects “divide and rule” spreading gossip stand over tactics, threats, isolating a person. Prison culture is not exempt. Violent behaviours exist in both settings for women whether older or younger. Addressing the issue of violence can only start with us in our own families, within our communities, workplaces and how Government informs change. The ultimate goal is that we reduce the prison population and look at early solutions where young people do not go to prison.
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Acknowledgements
Thanks go to my supervisors Dr Annabel Taylor, and Nikki Evans, and my colleagues Tania Mataki and Marcia Marriott for their review of, and astute feedback on, earlier drafts of this paper. Thanks also to Jane Dugdale, Department of Corrections for providing timely information and constructive feedback on an earlier draft.

A special thanks to my friend Annie Southern who has provided ideas, support and peer review, and my husband Andrew who has done much housework and childcare whilst I have focussed on producing this paper.

This study has been made possible by the support from the SPEaR Linkages programme.