The Prevailing Narratives of Formerly Incarcerated Women Living in Post-Release Communities

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Abstract

Whilst the research into desistance in New Zealand (NZ) has grown steadily over the last 30 years, little has been done on the role of Post-release Communities, particularly as it pertains to formerly incarcerated women. Exploring the prevailing narratives of women in Post-release Communities is important to help understand what formerly incarcerated persons consider relevant in their desistance journeys. Gaining more understanding of this subgroup will help highlight both the similarities and the differences that may exist compared to the findings of most of the current desistance research which has a predominantly male bias. This study investigates the narratives of ten formerly incarcerated women living at the Grace Foundation, a Post-release Community in NZ and how the findings compared to the current literature. That is, are the residents' narratives comparable to well-known desistance narratives. One-on-one interviews were undertaken around how they perceived their desistance journeys with their stage of desistance evaluated by identifying the prevalent scripts - redemption and condemnation. Through the framework of Narrative Criminology and utilising narrative inquiry to collect, analyse and interpret the narratives, their overarching narrative was that of redemption. The residents' predominant focus was on building their pro-social identities, giving back through generativity, and wanting to resort back to their previous roles as mothers, all whilst being cognisant of the need to prioritise their personal development. The residents' identity narratives also reflected the impact of the Grace Foundation and the efficacy of this extrinsic support in their desistance. Overall, the findings of this study confirm results presented in the existing literature while introducing two additional variables – that of the importance of reconnecting with their culture and the importance of their roles as mothers as predictors towards effective desistance. A greater understanding of their narratives offers the chance to establish, consolidate and hone practices and systems suitable for promoting and maintaining desistance, both within, and external to, the Criminal Justice System in NZ.

Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

As the old saying goes, 'a leopard can't change its spots', and society favours this perception of offenders and their abstinence from crime, but is this truly the case? The phenomenon of desistance has garnered significant attention in criminological discourse since the pioneering works of Sampson and Laub (1993) and Moffit (1993). Whilst they laid the groundwork for exploration into desistance, the use of narrative inquiry of formerly incarcerated persons pertaining to desistance has remained limited in the New Zealand (NZ) context, notably within the realm of Post-release Communities. The Liverpool Desistance Study (LDS) by Maruna (2001) highlighted the importance of focusing on learning one's desistance process from the perspective of the individual 'going straight'. Maruna (2001) found discernible narrative patterns between individuals desisting from crime and those who were persisting. These patterns are coined by Maruna (2001) as 'redemptive scripts' and 'condemnation scripts', respectively.

This study provides a platform for women residing at the Post-release Community of the Grace Foundation to share their understanding of this process from the perspective of one directly affecting change. Understanding the factors that play a crucial role in desisting from crime holds immense theoretical and practical importance, including curating pro-social identities, reducing recidivism, and promoting successful reintegration. This study applies narrative inquiry to uncover residents' self-portrayals of their desistance process by analysing whether the participants depict a redemptive or condemnation script, having significant implications for their future trajectories. Therefore, this study will examine the prevailing narratives of formerly incarcerated women living in post-release communities.

Human beings are storytellers, and throughout history and across all cultures, stories have been shared to explain various episodes and periods (McAdams & McLean, 2013). For individuals, creating an autobiographical story by making sense of the past to envision the future is a way in which we make sense of our lives in a unified and purposeful way (McAdams & Mclean, 2013). Correspondingly, narrative identity is the synthesis of episodic memories

from the past and envisioned future goals in an individual's life story, creating a cohesive account of identity. The notion that individuals shape their identities by crafting narratives about their personal experiences has become a widely recognised concept in the social sciences (McAdams, 2001, as cited in McAdams & Mclean, 2013).

To ensure desistance from crime, an individual will go through a psychosocial process and narrate a new, positive identity. This process often starts during incarceration, when an individual's narrative undergoes restructuring (Maruna, Wilson & Curran, 2006). To sustain abstinence from crime, an individual must maintain a redemptive script. Key features include developing individual agency (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009), structural opportunities for change (Sampson & Laub, 1993), and cognitive transformation (Giordano, Cernkovich & Rudolph, 2002), which Post-release Communities provide by applying an interactionist framework, demonstrating how these communities can influence identities. However, without continual support post-release, redefining a positive self-identity can be tarnished due to resorting to previous networks of familiarity and offending patterns.

Post-release Communities take a liberal, compassionate approach to justice by focusing on rehabilitative and reintegrative systems (Vanderplasschen, Colpaert, Autrique, Rapp, Pearce, Broekaert, & Vandevelde, 2013). These communities are ideally miniature societies where formerly incarcerated men and women are housed post-release and are supported by staff who help them transition (Buttle, 2017). In NZ, Post-release Communities are underutilised in correctional policy despite evidence proving that these communities provide effective intervention and reduce re-offending by offering two fundamental components of re-integration: accommodation and employment (Bradley, Oliver, Richardson & Slayter, 2001). However, with 7,000 prisoners released annually (Ministry of Justice, 2019) and 60% without accommodation post-release (Mills, Terry, Latimer & Milne, 2022), the NZ Government continues to pursue NZ-based post-release community groups such as Anglican Action, Odyssey House, and the Salvation Army Bridge Programme to accommodate offender's post-release.

The Grace Foundation Charitable Trust, established in 2007, is a grassroots organisation based on Christian principles and implements the Māori-based framework of Te Whare Tapa

Whā. (The four dimensions of wellbeing - spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing). The foundation houses roughly 100 residents – 70 men and 30 women (10 of the latter are participants of this study) but is continually expanding as the need for occupancy grows (personal communication with Operations Manager, January 2023). The residents living at the Grace Foundation are either ex-prisoners, on remand, or those who have self-referred. Around 70% of the residents at the Grace Foundation identify as Māori and Pasifika, and 80% of the residents are either former prisoners or currently on remand (personal communication with Operations Manager, 2023). In 2022, the Grace Foundation expanded their services to include a 'mums and bubs' facility for mothers who seek a path forward but are restricted due to the lack of adequate facilities able to house both mother and child. Additionally, a youth facility is yet to open (late 2023) to support the academic pursuits of young adolescents in their care (Personal communication with the Operations Manager, January 2023).

This Thesis is composed of seven chapters. The current chapter introduces the topic of desistance and how it pertains to the participants of this study. Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of the known literature to explore the historical and current contexts in which the residents' narratives are influenced, followed by what is known of desistance. Chapters Three and Four focus on the study's methodology and research methods. Chapter Five presents the analysis of the women's narratives, which have been organised into four overarching categories – Redemption, Condemnation, Cultural, and Religious. The potential reasonings behind the residents' narratives are explained in Chapter Six, including reasons for re-offending, cessation of offending, and strategies to combat re-offending. Chapter Six also presents a discussion of the limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research. Finally, Chapter Seven concludes the Thesis by summarising the key findings and final thoughts.

Chapter Two

2.1 Literature Review

Offenders often arrive at Post-release Communities marred by the adverse effects of their prison tenure. The responsibility then typically falls on post-release organisations to help rehabilitate and reintegrate individuals into society. Somewhat alarmingly, researchers and policymakers in NZ have consistently overlooked offenders' narratives and their role in reintegration. The accounts of residents living in these communities, and their self-portrayals of their desistance pathways are noticeably absent from the literature. Though desistance studies have been conducted widely overseas (See Sampson & Laub, 1993 and Maruna, 2001), little has been done in the NZ context, highlighting the need for further NZ-focused research regarding the experiences of residents living in Post-release Communities. While Mortimore's (2016) exploratory study investigated how residents (both men and women) recounted their experiences living in such communities, only a short discourse, carried out by Campbell (2018), specifically focused on the desistance pathways of women. A burgeoning literature suggests there are clear gender differences in desistance which highlights the need for more research to investigate and help identify the best ways to accommodate women in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) (Stone, Morash, Goodson, Smith, & Cobbina, 2018; Sharpe, 2015; Barr, 2019).

This literature review will first explore colonialism and Marxist theory to explain the historical and current contexts in which the residents' narratives are influenced, followed by what is known about desistance, curating a pro-social identity, and factors that contribute internally and externally to one's desistance pathway. It will then proceed to discuss the LDS and the impact it has on narrative identity. Because desistance theories vary in approach, ranging from structural opportunities for change (Giordano et al., 2002), change in identity (Maruna, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 1993), and individual agency (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009), combining them creates an interactional paradigm that emphasises how social institutions like Post-release Communities can influence the unique identities of those living in such facilities.

2.1.1 Social Conflict Theory and Intergenerational Trauma

Social Conflict Theory is based on Marxist paradigms, examining how structural inequality causes classes to be at odds with each other (Quinney & Shelden, 2002). Originally based on the working class ‘proletariat’ and the middle class ‘bourgeoisie’, the theory has explored various dimensions of society, including race, gender, and religion (Quinney & Shelden, 2002). Class and race contribute to major conflicts in NZ, with European hegemony over Māori, who have experienced a long history of marginalisation and social control. Jackson (1987) suggests that Māori were introduced to the CJS through what could be considered institutionally racist political and social policies. Māori imprisonment and their social standing within the CJS were caused by "social, political, and cultural devastation that has resulted from generations of enforced marginalisation of Māori" (Mihaere, 2015, pp. 167–168). The current neo-colonial state continues to enforce extensive criminalisation and social control over Māori (Webb, 2017). Such consequences have led to cumulatively detrimental intergenerational effects, including mass incarceration, which has substantial collateral consequences for whānau and the community.

King's (1983) comprehensive account of Māori law and customs contends that before European influence, NZ was primarily a subsistence economy, producing and consuming resources for its needs. Hapū were self-sufficient, operating through a division of labour. However, colonial processes like the proliferation of new markets, rapid industrialisation, and dispossession of land and resources destroyed the ‘natural economy'. Land dispossession occurred mostly between 1853 and 1919 when the British Colonial Government introduced legislation to control resistance (Buttle, 2017). The Settlements Act of 1863 initiated the confiscation of Māori land if any ‘Iwi engaged in rebellion’ against the crown, and correspondingly, 1.3 million hectares of Māori land in the Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, and Waikato were confiscated (King, 1983). Under the Act, the Crown could detain those who rebelled. The guarantee of a fair trial was revoked, and those who appeared in court were threatened with imprisonment or death. Finally, mass arrests, such as those at Waerenga-a-Hika, Pakakohi, and Parihaka, led to the mass incarceration of Māori (King, 1983).

Van Meijl (2020) and Bedggood (1980) share a similar perspective, arguing that the subjugation of Māori to low social, political, and economic positions resulted directly from the penetration of the capitalist mode of production. The inherent tendency to proliferate new markets for economic gain saw local markets undermined, leading to the loss of Māori social structures and economic systems, which were self-sufficient before colonisation (King, 1983). Further government influence played a pivotal role in urbanisation through integration policies in the Hunn Report (1961), which mostly uttered assimilative parameters to amalgamate Māori into society. Land dispossession was a major factor in the relocation of Māori to urban areas in search of work, with migration rates increasing from 26% in 1945 to 80% by 1986 (Meredith, 2005). The repercussions of the urban shift saw a significant increase in crime rates and lower educational standards in the Māori population due to the loss of traditional and cultural norms, such as elder-led communities by Kaumātua (Meredith, 2005).

In 1977, Macpherson coined the term 'Eth-class' to describe the condition in which low socio-economic status coincides with the minority class. Macpherson (1977) contends that Māori and Pasifika socioeconomic disposition is a by-product of hegemonic regimes leading to intergenerational poverty. Due to the dispossession of land, Māori shifted to urban areas in search of work, relegating them to unskilled, low-paying jobs due to inadequate education (van Meijl, 2020). In the 1980s, 64% of Māori had no qualifications, whereas, by comparison, their European counterparts were unqualified at a rate of only 32% (Maani, 2004). Furthermore, by 2000, all ethnic groups had increased educational attainment levels except for Māori, who still had alarmingly low educational attainment, with 63.5% still having zero qualifications (Maani, 2004). The causal effect of low educational acquisition saw unemployment rates increase dramatically, creating a Māori underclass. Today, the unemployment rate of Māori is twice as high (7.6%) as that of non-Māori (3.1%) (Figure. NZ, 2022) and the accompanying wealth disparity is particularly evident, with the median wage of Māori at $23,000 compared to NZ Europeans at $114,000 (Stats NZ, 2016). This highlights that intergenerational poverty continues to cause significant harm to Māori economically. The disparity between classes is further evident in the overrepresentation of Māori within the CJS. As crime is a social construct and a natural outgrowth of the capitalist system (Bedggood,

1980) the concept along with legislation tailored to punish and 'correct' the behaviour of the 'other', has contributed to the negative representation of Māori in crime statistics.

Before colonisation, Māori addressed wrongdoing within their communities. The centralisation of control that came with colonisation resulted in the assimilation of adversarial, Eurocentric systems like prisons, which worked to negate the traditional restorative approach. Māori currently represent about 54% of the prison population despite only representing 15% of the general population (Department of Corrections, 2022). A bias broadly noted by Morrison (2009) asserts that the likelihood of Māori receiving a custodial sentence is 7.5 times greater than that of their European counterparts and 11 times greater of being kept in custody before trial. Nakhid and Shorter (2014) support such statistics by suggesting that Māori are more likely to be apprehended by police and receive a longer sentence than their European counterparts. Critics of NZ's punitive approaches, like Buttle (2017), contend that prisons are oppressive institutions that reinforce the pre-existing disadvantages of ethnic minorities and people from low socioeconomic backgrounds by perpetuating existing intergenerational trauma and social harm. Evidently, these biases and attitudes towards Māori still exist and contribute to the disproportionate representation of Māori in the CJS (Mills & Webb, 2022). Therefore, to understand the true impact of Marxist theory on one's identity, it is crucial to consider the experiences of post-release residents, their social standing, and to that end, the adversity they continue to overcome.

2.1.2 Colonialisation, Early Māori Imprisonment and Prisons Today

It is widely recognised throughout the literature that racism is entrenched within the NZ CJS through its culture and structure (Jackson, 1987; Tauri, 1999; Cunneen & Tauri, 2019). NZ has a distinct colonial background with an exclusive minority group, and from arrest to adjudication, sentencing, and corrections, entrenched racism remains a persistent problem (Buttle, 2017). The bias has been widely documented, with Jackson's (1987) ground-breaking study formerly revealing the disproportionate representation of Māori in the CJS. Tauri (1999) reinforced the findings of this study by highlighting that colonial and neo-colonial processes and contemporary factors like the radicalisation of Māori political discourse in the 1960s caused systemic issues in the CJS. The continued bias has adversely affected Māori, including

mass incarceration, intergenerational trauma, alienation, institutionalisation, and social harm.

2.1.2.1 Early Māori Imprisonment / Initiation of the Westminster Approach

In traditional Māori society, criminal behaviour was addressed as a collective responsibility appropriated with restorative justice measures (Cunneen & Tauri, 2019; King, 1983). If justice did not prevail, the individual would be exiled to another iwi to be punished (King, 1983). Following the British sovereignty proclamation in 1840, the first prisons were constructed in Auckland, Kororāreka, and Port Nicholson (King, 1983; Pratt, 1992) with the prevailing view that imposing British law and penal policy would hasten Māori assimilation (Pratt, 1992). The imposition of British law concentrated on denying Māori the right to be punished based on their traditions, with incarceration and punitive approaches running counter to traditional Māori approaches. For example, before colonisation, Māori justice focused on restoring relationships and addressing their wrongs by including whānau and hapū to achieve reparation and mediate a settlement that benefited all involved. This approach was not a soft option - Māori society was primarily based on maintaining balance and harmony, and if appropriate, utu was also administered, which could involve forfeiture of resources, public shame, and humiliation, or even death. Despite this, the emphasis was on a collective effort based on reintegrating the individual into their hapū and finding a balance between acknowledging past wrongs whilst moving forward (King, 1983). However, penal administration for the next 30 years was a replication of Eurocentric models, particularly the punitive Westminster approach (Pratt, 1992), which was at odds with Māori notions of justice centred around healing the harm sustained by society rather than solely punishing the individual (Pratt, 1992; Buttle, 2017). From 1853 to 1919, the Government consciously incarcerated Māori whenever they violated Eurocentric laws, setting the precedent that those who threatened the Westminster system would be punished (King, 1983; Pratt, 1992). Therefore, the influence of Eurocentric approaches to justice saw the overhaul of Māori notions and a shift towards individualistic punishment.

2.1.2.2 Prisons Today

Today, NZ has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, with the prison muster totalling 8,665 (8110 men and 545 women) (Department of Corrections, 2021). Most offenders (80.1%) are in minimum to low-medium security classifications, with 64.4% identifying as Māori and Pasifika (Department of Corrections, 2021). Since the 1990s, incarceration rates have continued to increase, which was exacerbated in recent times by the Bail Amendment Act of 2013 that reversed the burden of proof and raised the percentage of remand prisoners from 27% to 40% (Foulds, Monasterio & Young, 2022). An overall prison high occurred in 2018, reaching its peak at 10,820 prisoners, which stretched facilities to their limits (Foulds et al., 2022). The surge in prison occupancy over the past decades has strained NZ's penal system, leading to overcrowding, double occupancy of cells, and the usage of prison amenities like gymnasiums to house the overflow of prisoners (Buttle, 2017). With the ever-increasing population, the government was forced to build more infrastructure and outsource prison operations through public-private partnerships (New Zealand Government, 2016), which meant that most prisoners were not participating in rehabilitation programmes due to the limited selection of courses in an overburdened system.

Several issues with NZ's fundamental penal principles feed the incarceration rates, as highlighted in the Ministry of Justice's He Waka Roimata Report (2019). The report stated that NZ is overly dependent on prisons, indicating a preference for retribution over rehabilitation. In line with other researchers like Buttle (2017) stating that NZ has a draconian attitude towards punishment, the report concluded that current punishment approaches are harsh and ineffective, especially for individuals with mental health or addiction problems. When individuals receive a prison sentence, they often face additional social consequences, such as alienation from family, institutionalisation, and struggle to function independently upon release. Considering these factors, prison makes an inadequate solution if the aim is to produce pro-social formerly incarcerated persons who can function effectively in society after release.

Furthermore, the scope of research that has been carried out on prisons strengthens their unfavourable reputation. The implementation of inhumane, immoral systems and abhorrent practices, both historically and more recently, emphasises how morally incorrect prisons are. The use of prisoners in vaccine trials, behavioural modification studies that violate ethical

principles of medical research, and solitary confinement are a few in-prison events that have effectively stripped individuals of their fundamental human rights (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008). Today, inmates continue to be subjected to harsh conditions, as noted by Manukau District Court Judge David McNaughton, who ruled that at Auckland Women's Correctional Facility, women were exposed to "degrading" and "inhumane" conduct by the guards by soliciting them to perform a humiliating ritual as a precondition to receiving food and being stripped bare of their underwear by male guards to receive clean ones (RNZ, 2021). In addition to Judge McNaughton exposing the indecency of prison guards, in 2022, High Court Judge Rebecca Ellis ruled that the Department of Corrections had been unlawfully using pepper spray to gas prisoners in their cells since 2009 (Stuff, 2022). Judge Ellis ruled that purposefully causing pain to a vulnerable person while confined to their cell was wrong. This incident led to a rare apology to the women involved, and it was promised that they would receive compensation (Stuff, 2022). Hence, these continued incidents add to the unfavourable reputation of prisons, specifically in the NZ context, regarding the incarceration and treatment of incarcerated women.

2.1.2.3 Reformative Measures

Since the peak in the prison populace in 2018, numbers have reduced dramatically by 29% to 7702 as of December 2021 (Foulds et al., 2022). The population decline was due to reformative measures taken by the Labour Coalition Government in 2017, which announced that their objective is to reduce the prison population by 30% over 15 years (Foulds et al., 2022). However, this multi-agency approach embraced by the Police, the Department of Corrections, and the Ministry of Justice has yet to be a complete success. Although reducing the overall prison population, remand prisoner numbers remain the same. The unaltering rates are partly due to court delays in sentencing, which have substantially worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Postponed sentencing extends the period in which defendants are anxious about their legal matters, hindering their preparation for prison release (Foulds et al., 2022). Moreover, the Department of Corrections prison statistics from December 2021 - 2022 show a reduction in all ethnicities except Māori. In 2021, the prison population was 30.2% European, 11.5% Pacific, and 53.2% Māori. In 2022, the prison population comprised 29.6%

Europeans, 11.2% Pacific and Māori remained the same at 53.2%. These statistics imply that recent reformative measures have exacerbated inequality instead of mitigating it.

2.1.3 Women in NZ Prisons

The existing punitive environment from which these post-release residents depart will have a direct or indirect impact on their individual narratives. Therefore, it is crucial to address the present prison circumstances. According to Department of Corrections statistics there were 756 women incarcerated as of June 2017 and 438 as of June 2022, which is a 43% reduction (Department of Corrections, 2022). Unfortunately, compared to their European counterparts, Māori women are at a higher risk of conviction and imprisonment (Quince, 2010). In 1999, the prosecution rate for Māori women within the adult population was more than five and a half times higher than that of non-Māori women (Quince, 2010). Today, Māori women are disproportionately represented and comprise 63% of the prison population (Adair, 2022). As a result, the decreasing overall prison population does not eliminate the evident disproportionate incarceration of Māori women.

International statistical studies show a similar trend with their prison populations. In the United States, African American women are imprisoned at a rate that is 1.7 times higher than their white counterparts and in Australia, Aboriginal women are imprisoned at a rate that is 42% higher than their white counterparts (Kendall, Lighton & Sherwood, 2020). Similarly, in Canada, Black and Aboriginal women are imprisoned at significantly higher rates than white women (Ghandnoosh, 2022). The overinclusion of minority classes is due to an assembly of historical and cultural factors. As Quince (2010) noted, the impact of colonisation and neo-colonial processes has eroded and diminished both the status and roles of Māori women and continues to resonate in contemporary society. It is therefore asserted that the current positioning of Māori women as offenders results in a complex interaction of factors unique to them as a sector of the NZ population (Quince, 2010).

2.1.4 Re-incarceration Rates

Using prisons to control and detain criminals remains the predominant method in contemporary societies. However, the effectiveness of prisons remains a subject of ongoing

debate, particularly as alternative approaches like community-based rehabilitation programmes and re-entry assistance from non-profit organisations gain growing recognition (Mills, Gojkovic, Meek & Mullins, 2013). The principal rationale for utilising prisons is that specific deterrence and the threat of punishment through incapacitation via incarceration will deter and reduce the probability of re-offending (Stafford & Warr, 1993). However, much of the available research points to prisons being ineffective in deterring individuals (Buttle, 2017). Instead of being rehabilitated, prisoners are more likely to re-offend due to coming out more 'damaged' from their immersion in the prison environment (Buttle, 2017; Jones, 2021). The validity of this claim is substantiated by NZ's high recidivism rates, among the highest in the OECD (Mills & Webb, 2022).

Although most empirical evidence suggests prisons are ineffective, the purpose of prison is punishment, deterrence, maintaining social order, reducing association with negative support systems, and, in many ways, stripping away their identity, including their 'criminal identity' (Mackenzie, 2006). Contrary to this view, the "Schools of Crime" perspective contends that prisons encourage criminal behaviour through association with other criminals, thus increasing a prisoner's likelihood of re-offending. This is also based partly on how psychologically destructive imprisonment can be for an individual (Jones, 2021). This perspective suggests that for first-time or low-risk offenders entering such facilities, the adverse effects of incarceration, such as exposure to environments dominated by 'hardcore peers' and their associations, may assimilate them into the system and engrain antisocial behaviours (Jones, 2021). This account allows low-risk offenders to graduate onto other, higher-profile crimes post-release. As Pratt (1992) suggested, the cycle perpetuates itself and has a detrimental impact on young offenders, leading to cumulative and intergenerational disadvantages when they try to reintegrate into society. These negative outcomes include trauma, poverty, increased recidivism rates, and the loss of support networks (Pratt, 1992). Therefore, although prisons aim to protect society by reducing overall harm, their adverse effects exacerbate many social problems.

An additional argument for prisons is that they detain criminals and thus enhance public safety. However, as suggested previously (Buttle, 2017), prisons exacerbate many social problems that stem beyond the individual and have repercussions on their families,

communities, and society. There is a limited amount of research specifically focused on the impact of parental incarceration on children in NZ. However, according to the Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (2015), children with an incarcerated parent are five times more likely to be imprisoned than children of law-abiding parents. As such, Sharpe (2015) suggests that when a parent is incarcerated, their children often experience detrimental outcomes, including housing instability, emotional distress, mental health issues, poor educational outcomes, and a higher risk of involvement and exposure to the CJS.

The Department of Corrections primarily oversees prison management in NZ and aims to lower re-offending by providing reintegrative programmes like drug treatment, employment training, and rehabilitation. Their efforts extend to offering culturally appropriate responses through Māori Focus Units, where by 2014, the Department of Corrections had supplied five new units with the capacity to house 60 prisoners per unit (Department of Corrections, 2014a). This indicates that of the existing Māori population of 4319, only 7% were housed in these facilities, suggesting that 4,000 (93%) were mostly subjected to a Pākehā milieu by default. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of Māori Focus Units has been determined to positively impact the selected Māori offenders, with the Department of Corrections (2014) report concluding that individuals had strengthened cultural knowledge and enhanced cultural identity concerning learning and change. In response to the Department of Corrections report, Mihaere (2015) concluded that prison was not a viable option for Tikanga approaches due to its bi-culturalism and misappropriation of cultural identity, failing to reduce overall recidivism effectively. Despite these efforts towards culturally appropriate responses, recidivism rates remain high. When analysed by ethnicity, the recidivism rates for Māori offenders (55% over 48 months) were significantly higher than the rates for Pacific Islanders (36%) and NZ Europeans (45%) (Department of Corrections, 2021). This rate is echoed by the Ministry of Justice's (2021) report, which states that re-offending rates are exacerbating, with 70% of prisoners reconvicted within two years of release. As such, out of the 8000+ prisoners released, roughly 5600 are re-offending, highlighting that prisons do little to deter criminal behaviour at least in the short term.

Regarding gender, women continue to have lower re-imprisonment rates than men. According to the Department of Corrections (2018:164), within 12 months of release, 23% of

women will be re-imprisoned, compared to 33% of men. The disparity continues to rise with time, as men are 1.5 times more likely to be re-imprisoned than women two years following their release (Department of Corrections, 2018: 166). Despite this, there has been relatively little research on desistance of women and why they appear to desist more quickly and sustainably than men.

The Department of Corrections (2012) reported that as punitive attitudes have decreased and the focus has shifted towards rehabilitation, the Justice Sector and social agencies have broadened their scope to accommodate the increased responsibilities. The 'Reducing Serious Crime Action Plan' (2017) was executed to improve individuals' outcomes and prevent serious crime through active engagement with the social sector (Ministry of Justice, 2017). The Ministry of Justice, the New Zealand Police, and the Department of Corrections collaborated to design this plan, which sought to lower the rate during a four-year period starting in 2017. They attempted to improve this through access to education in prison (at least 1700 offenders participated in Level One and Two certificates) and increased community re-integration support, including Out-of-Gate and Release-to-Work initiatives (Ministry of Justice, 2017). As part of this effort, agencies have implemented several strategies, such as developing an offender employment strategy to align employment readiness with the local job market, establishing more efficient connections with community organisations and government agencies (e.g., Work and Income) that provide support to offenders for their community reintegration, offering the Out-of-Gate reintegration support service, and enhancing case management to direct people to effective interventions (Ministry of Justice, 2017).

2.1.5 Reintegration

The burgeoning international literature on post-release offenders and what factors obstruct one's process of 'going straight' (Maruna, 2001) demonstrates the necessity to better understand the experiences of individuals in the initial weeks following their release. As outlined by several researchers, including Maruna (2001) and King (2013), it is vital to identify factors that help assist or hinder one's attempt to reintegrate successfully during this period. Reintegration is a profound process that involves long-term change and is often described as a continuum. While relapse into criminal behaviour is possible during this

process, illicit behaviours are believed to diminish over time (Piquero, 2004), albeit not necessarily in a straight line (Maruna, 2001; Piquero, 2004). The goal of reintegration is to discourage recidivism by promoting pro-social choices to enable desistance from crime (Maruna, 2001). Reintegration encompasses understanding the many social and environmental factors an individual will be subjected to upon release (Mills & Webb, 2022; Mills et al., 2022). This process involves encouraging an array of factors, including but not limited to establishing positive relationships and circumventing negative ones (Maruna & Roy, 2007), maintaining a crime-free lifestyle (Davis, Bahr & Ward, 2013), committing to long-term abstinence from harmful substance abuse, engaging in education or other purposeful activity, employment pathways (Morrison & Bowman, 2017) and obtaining stable accommodation (McNaughton & Sanders, 2017). There is also general agreement among researchers (Maruna & Roy, 2007; Giordano et al., 2002) that reintegration involves a shift in psychological identity by rediscovering a former sense of being an integrated member of society or envisioning a new law-abiding identity. Other scholars (Bradley et al., 2001; Morrison & Bowman, 2017) suggest that accommodation and employment are dependent variables that hold the reintegration process together.

Prisons are controlled facilities often disconnected from the outside world and, as such, focus on societal reintegration; however, post-release support from within them is often negligible. It is highly recognised in research (Nakhid & Shorter, 2014; Mills et al., 2013; Morrison & Bowman, 2017) that most NZ prisoners lack formal education, have poor access to housing after being released, lack robust social support networks, and have untreated mental health issues. Without support post-release, the likelihood of re-offending increases (Mills et al., 2022). As highlighted by Morrison and Bowman (2017), offenders who have received post-release assistance were of no concern with regard to potential criminal offending, in stark contrast to those who were in desperate need of assistance but typically received very little. Unfortunately, after prison, individuals are often disadvantaged by external factors out of their control, like the stigma of prisons and the continued labelling of prisoners, which has long-term consequences. A further disadvantage is the lack of sufficient financial aid prisoners receive, whereby, on release, ex-prisoners who have served at least 31 days are entitled to the Steps to Freedom payment, a lump sum of $350 (Ministry of Social

Development, 2023). The amount allocated was established in the early 1990s (Ministry of Social Development, 2021) and is grossly inadequate in the current cost-of-living crisis, particularly as one in two New Zealanders worry about financial instability daily (Financial Services Council, 2023).

Despite this initial, albeit meagre financial advantage, most offenders return to broken bonds with society, their community, and their loved ones on release (Mills et al., 2022). Many offenders may struggle to establish stable lives and are at increased risk of reoffending. This bias can be particularly challenging for offenders incarcerated for long periods and have limited support systems to depend on after release. In addition to having no employment due to job loss or employers choosing not to employ applicants with a criminal history, accommodation is often difficult to secure as landlords are reluctant to offer tenancy agreements to those with criminal records (Mills, Thom, Maynard, Meehan, Kidd, Newcombe, & Widdowson, 2015). Additionally, nine out of ten inmates suffer from a history of mental illness or substance abuse, which inhibits their capacity to work and consequently impacts their ability to afford and sustain housing (Department of Corrections, 2016). To combat such shortcomings, the Department of Corrections has launched several initiatives, including hiring Offender Recruitment Consultants who specialise in assisting prisoners in employment. Since its commencement in 2016, 420 individuals have been employed (Morrison and Bowman, 2017). The Department of Corrections has also established partnerships with 113 companies that have offered or employed over 1087 offenders upon release (Morrison and Bowman, 2017). Other pilot programmes include a multi-governmental approach where the Department of Corrections and the Ministry of Social Development have partnered in the 'Supporting Offenders into Employment' scheme. One notable aspect of the scheme is having case managers work with prisoners before release until 12 months post-release to help them acquire and maintain employment.

2.1.6 Post-Release Accommodation

Individuals who have been released from prison face a multitude of obstacles in securing stable accommodation (Morrison & Bowman, 2017; Opsal & Foley, 2013; Mills et al., 2022). These challenges predominantly impact Māori individuals, who must navigate reintegration

into a colonial society where they encounter racism and discrimination, including in rental housing markets where Māori are more likely to live in unstable housing (Mills et al., 2022), as well as prejudice, stigma, and societal intolerance targeted at those who have been incarcerated. According to Morrison and Bowman (2017), most individuals leaving prison will reside with family members, current or former partners, or friends. Nevertheless, while living with family members can provide a supportive environment, it may also lead to substance abuse and reoffending, as anti-social relationships can be further fostered if those environments are less than ideal (Morrison & Bowman, 2017). Similarly, Mills et al. (2022) report that 69% of released prisoners in their study did not receive any support in finding accommodation on release. Even more alarmingly, Māori were 1.7 times more likely to have unstable housing (Mills et al., 2022), exacerbating the risk of re-offending.

Nonetheless, having access to stable housing can assist individuals who have been released from prison to adapt to life on the outside and overcome the feelings brought on by institutionalisation (Lewis, Norris, Heta-Cooper & Tauri, 2020). However, stable housing must offer more than just shelter; it should also provide a sense of ontological security and independence. Without this security, McNaughton and Sanders (2007) suggest that individuals attempting to establish new lifestyles may revert to supportive but possibly harmful "networks of familiarity". Thus, a suitable housing environment can significantly improve an individual's chances of re-establishing their lives positively by enabling them to access benefits, reconnect and foster relationships with their partners and children (a prerequisite of Oranga Tamariki for children to return home), and motivating them to look for stable employment.

Evidence suggesting how beneficial stable housing is on release paired with an extensive prison population indicates a strong need for post-release housing (Morrison & Bowman, 2017; Mills et al., 2022). A viewpoint acknowledged by the Department of Corrections (2017) 'What Works' Report is that community-based rehabilitation post-release is twice as effective than rehabilitation administered in prisons. This perspective is also recognised by Maruna and LeBel (2012), who highlight the importance of community-based reintegration as a critical component of successful ex-offender re-entry. Despite this, where individuals go after being released is not typically the primary concern of prison administration, leading to an

overwhelming strain on post-release communities (Bradley et al., 2001). However, in the past two decades, NZ correctional policy has shifted focus to the reintegration process of offenders, aiming for a seamless transition and reducing the likelihood of their return (Department of Corrections, 2017). The Department of Corrections is collaborating with post-release communities to support this process. Notably, having approved accommodation is a prerequisite for probation and accessing certain support services, such as financial aid from Work and Income. Unfortunately, social housing waitlists and housing shortages pose a significant obstacle to this process.

Furthermore, Hōkai Rangi represents the latest initiative in an extensive series of strategies implemented by the Department of Corrections to integrate elements of Māori bicultural ideology and culture into its operations as highlighted by Tauri (1999). It aims to reduce re-offending by addressing the overrepresentation of Māori in the CJS. It proposes six key strategies to transform the correctional system. These are Partnership and Leadership, Humanising and Healing, Whānau, Inclusion of Te Ao Māori, Whakapapa, and Foundations for Participation. These strategies theoretically represent a culturally-informed framework for reducing re-offending among Māori. The strategy presents strengths including its Māori-first focus, Iwi Partnerships, and Community and Whānau involvement, however, there are also limitations that challenge Hōkai Rangi's efficacy. Although Hōkai Rangi presents a strong foundation in culturally relevant practices, its success depends on overcoming significant barriers in resource allocation, consistent application, and ultimately systematic change.

However, one significant strength implemented by Hōkai Rangi is the Collins Road Settlement Centre. As accommodation and employment are considered the pillars of reintegration (see Morrison & Bowman, 2017; Mills et al., 2015), the Department's strategy addresses this as well, particularly for women, with Strategy 6.9 stating "Procure services of government and community-based agencies to work with people in our care and management and their whānau through reintegration, including access to financial support services, housing services, employment, clothing, and food." (Hōkai Rangi Report pg. 29, 2024). The short-to-medium-term implementation is a collaboration between Corrections, Kiingitanga and Housing New Zealand and serves to provide both accommodation and wrap around services for 24 women post-release to re-establish their lives. Despite their aimed

timeframes for Phase Two in 2019, and setbacks from the surrounding community including a 400 signed petition calling for changes to the development (Stuff NZ, 2021), construction is aimed to start late 2024. This strategy bridges the gap between the challenges of formerly incarcerated persons and the difficulties they face in securing accommodation, particularly as it pertains to landlords in the current housing market (Mills et al., 2015). This approach, however modest, serves as a first step towards ensuring post-release care for all women.

2.1.7 Employment

Evidence within the literature supports a causal relationship between unemployment and crime (See Davis et al., 2013; Cunningham, 2017; McElroy, 2018). This well-established relationship holds that poverty and inequality make it more difficult for individuals to acquire legal ways of making a livelihood, which raises crime rates (Cunningham, 2017). Domestic researcher (Cunningham, 2017) posits that if an individual is offered stable employment upon release, they are relieved of economic stresses and procure law-abiding behaviour by establishing healthy routines. This is indicative of multiple theoretical approaches, including Change in Identity theories (Maruna, 2001; Giordano et al., 2002), Rational Choice Theory, and Social Control Theory (Sampson & Laub, 1993), where the assumption that having a stable source of income has a crime-preventative effect because individuals are preoccupied with routine and responsibility. Thus, as legitimate job opportunities grow and offenders' employability improves, their motivation to commit crimes lessens (Cunningham, 2017). This viewpoint justifies government spending on vocational training and improving job possibilities after release to help offenders reintegrate better and, thus, lower recidivism.

McElroy (2018), and Skardhamar and Telle (2009), assert that transitioning from prison to a legitimate source of income will reduce the likelihood of re-offending; however, employment typically requires a set of qualifications that most offenders have not obtained. International and domestic research by Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders and Miles (2013) and Kim and Clark (2013) demonstrate that investing in prison education dramatically reduces re-offending. Unfortunately, the NZ prison population mirrors international trends (that of the United States and the United Kingdom), with prisoners having lower educational attainment

than the general population. The Department of Corrections (2017) study on investing in prison education indicates that most prisoners have significant to severe deficits in literacy and numeracy, with 60% not achieving NCEA Level One and 25% sitting below the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions. This disparity is further evident amongst Māori and Pasifika prisoners, where 62% sit below the NCEA Level One standard, compared to 48% of their Pakeha counterparts. Without assistance, sustainable employment outcomes are limited.

2.1.8 Liberal Approach to Justice in Norway

Internationally, more liberal techniques of penal policy have reduced recidivism by implementing more rehabilitative and reintegrative policies both in prison and post-release (seen in the penal approaches of Norway, the Netherlands, and Sweden) (Labutta, 2017; Jones, 2021). NZ's penal policy aims to reform individuals and encourage them to become law-abiding citizens. However, compared to more progressive approaches to justice, such as the Scandinavian model, NZ's prison system does not provide inmates with the same accommodations and employment-focused opportunities. In Norway, prisons offer apprenticeships to ensure their prisoners have vital qualifications upon release and to help them acquire and sustain a livelihood afterwards (Labutta, 2017). If NZ penal policy emulated this type of approach, the necessity to rely heavily on post-release communities for rehabilitation and reintegration would drastically diminish.

Norway's increasing recidivism rates were one of the primary drivers for implementing change in its correctional system (Labutta, 2017; Jones, 2021). The Norwegian authorities recognised that breaking the cycle begins with pre-release planning and establishing routines to promote law-abiding behaviour, notably through employment and securing a legitimate source of income. Before the policy reforms, Norway's recidivism rate had reached 70% (Jones, 2021; Labutta, 2017), whilst post-reform recidivism rates dropped to an incredible low of 20% and have remained there for the past 15 years (Jones, 2021). In contrast, NZ has one of the highest incarceration rates in the Western world, housing 219 prisoners per 100,000 (Department of Corrections, 2018), in stark contrast to Norway’s incarceration rates of 54 prisoners per 100,000 (The Norwegian Correctional Service, 2020). While NZ has continued

with a retributive approach, Norway has focused on rehabilitation and reintegration, reducing its prison population and recidivism rates.

Norway's penal system has been historically progressive, pioneering the dismantling and abolition of punitive penal policies and encouraging others to follow. Since 1902, Norway has abolished the death penalty and has continued to counter punitive approaches emulated by other European countries (Labutta, 2017; Benko, 2018). In 1998, around the same period in which NZ's "Tough on Crime'' Referendum led to an increase of 800 prisoners within two years (Roberts, 2003), Norway's Ministry of Justice underwent a thorough overhaul of their system, re-assessing their penal policy and developing reforms that resulted in two phases of transformation. The first phase was focused on rehabilitation, and the second was on reintegration. Interestingly, the "Tough on Crime'' Referendum saw 92% of all New Zealander's overwhelmingly voting in support of imposing minimum sentencing and hard labour for all serious violent offenders (Roberts, 2003). This result suggests that the NZ public are proponents of retribution, and the government followed suit by spending the next 14 years enacting harsher sentencing, parole and bail laws, and building more prisons (Roberts, 2003). In contrast to NZ's continued retributive approaches through the implementation of the Sentencing and Parole Acts (2002), Three Strikes Law (2010), and the Tougher Bail Laws (2014), Norway's initial transformation involved the implementation of sweeping reforms across all its prisons including the construction of prisons that enhance communal living and homely atmospheres (Labutta, 2017).

Holden Maximum Security Prison was Norway's first construction under this new design. It was built to create a positive and welcoming environment emphasising natural living to improve the rehabilitation journey of prisoners, especially as punishment is viewed solely as the loss of freedom. This principle is almost antiquated to the design concept of what a maximum facility should be, which typically involves cold, uninviting materials like concrete walls and a lack of a homely living atmosphere to emphasise incapacitation and detention. Contrastingly the design of Holden Prison is centred around materials that represent rehabilitation, using softer materials, like larch wood. Holden Prison has also included reintegration ideas into the architecture of the facility by building communal kitchens in each hub for their inmates to cook their meals, as well as communal hub lounges with comfortable

couches and a television for the individuals to unwind and relax once they are released from their daily apprenticeships (Labutta, 2017). Overall, rehabilitation and reintegration factors are stressed through the design and practice of Norway prisons.

Norway's focus on rehabilitation is primarily driven by the maximum prison sentence being 21 years and all prisoners eventually being released back into society (a prison term can be extended in five-year increments if individuals are seen as still posing a threat). Therefore, their focus was to start their reintegration from their initiation into prison to improve their well-being by minimising the effects of incarceration and rather shifting focus to being rehabilitated. This initial phase explicitly focused on rehabilitation and revolved around the normality principle, intending to provide prisoners with education, job training, and therapy. While NZ prisons offer some rehabilitative programs, including AOD and parenting skills, most programs are offence-focused (for youth, sex offenders, and high-risk violent offenders). Due to the limited availability and specificity of programmes, most prisoners still need the specific support and education required for reintegration, like vocational programs that assist offenders in training for future employment. In 2016, the Department of Corrections introduced a pilot employment service called “This Way for Work''. At the end of the pilot program, 2,020 prisoners were provided with employment opportunities, whereby the re-offending rate was reduced by 14.2%. An evaluation of the pilot’s successes in 2017 noted that about one-third of placements were not sustained, mainly due to a deficiency in work readiness (Department of Corrections, 2018; McElroy, 2018). The Department recognises that prioritising prisoners’ rehabilitation needs comes before addressing their work readiness. Once their rehabilitation needs are met, they have the same requirements as any other person in the labour market. These include having a stable family life, adequate housing, the necessary education and training, and interpersonal and employability skills (McElroy, 2018; Department of Corrections, 2018).

Prisons, as noted by Cunningham (2017) and reiterated by McElroy (2018), are an appropriate setting for developing employability skills since many prisoners lack job experience or have been out of the labour market for a lengthy period. According to Ministry of Social Development (2016) research, around 80% (nearly 7,000 persons) of those who were reliant on benefits before going to jail return to dependency on benefits following release.

Moreover, within the first month after being released, two-thirds of former prisoners began to receive benefits, resulting in a greater need for support. As a result, developing employability skills offered concurrently with industry-specific training in prisons would provide a good opportunity for prisoners to begin to appreciate what would resemble real-life job experience (McElroy, 2018). As Skardhamar and Telle (2012) demonstrate, prisoner participation in education and vocational pathways during imprisonment is strongly connected to post-release employment.

Following the rehabilitation-focused phase one outlined above, the second transformative phase occurred in 2007 and was focused on reintegration (Labutta, 2017). The Norwegian authorities recognised that effective social policy was necessary to help prisoners reintegrate and reduce recidivism. In doing so, the authorities set up initiatives to provide a "reintegration guarantee" for all prisoners upon release. This reintegration guarantee alleviates the problem of ex-prisoners returning to the streets in search of employment, housing, and food. When they cannot locate any of these resources, individuals are at greater risk of resorting to pathways they are aware of to, at least briefly, provide themselves with money. Thus, this initiative allowed individuals an offer of employment or a vocational pathway, suitable housing, medical services, and treatment of addictions to minimise this risk of falling into re-offending (Labutta, 2017). As mentioned earlier, the implementation of this pioneering approach in Norway has seen a reduction of the overall recidivism rate from 70% pre-implementation to just 20% (Jones, 2021), in stark contrast to NZ's current recidivism rate of approximately 70% (Ministry of Justice, 2019).

2.1.9 Post-Release Communities in New Zealand

Unlike other jurisdictions (the United States, England, Wales, and Canada), Post-release Communities in NZ are limited. Internationally, these communities are well sourced, with countries like Canada being home to over 200 post-release facilities (Goldfinch, 2018), and Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands being known for having extensive halfway transitional housing. Post-release Communities aim to provide a supportive environment that helps individuals address the underlying issues that led to their offending and, in turn, develop a pro-social identity. They are structured living environments in which residents follow a day-

to-day routine that encourages participation in various forms of therapy. Therapies include ongoing counselling, AOD treatment, relapse prevention, and individual therapy, with some communities, particularly the Grace Foundation taking a restorative approach.

These communities can effectively reduce recidivism and promote successful re-entry, with research by Mills et al. (2013) demonstrating that providing adequate housing post-release can reduce recidivism by upwards of 20%. Other international studies detailing the effectiveness include De Leon (2010) and Vanderplasschen et al. (2013), who found that residents living in Post-release Communities reduced their substance abuse and improved their mental health. Abstinence from crime was noted in Vanderplasschen et al.'s (2013) study, with the resident's prevalence of criminal activity reduced by 50% through embarking onto full-time employment after leaving the residence. Furthermore, Mills et al. (2015) also noted similar findings when looking at a UK-based NGO halfway house, Vision Housing, which provides housing for 650 prisoners, seeing an overall decrease in reoffending of 11% among the Vision tenants after release from their care. This success has led to a recommendation by Mills et al. (2015) and Mills et al. (2022) to establish similar post-release housing services in NZ.

In addition to the known benefits of providing access to adequate Post-release Communities, scholars like Hubbard, Craddock and Anderson (2003) have shown that the length of time a person spends in Post-release Communities can significantly impact their success in achieving and maintaining recovery. In general, longer treatment durations are associated with better outcomes, including higher rates of abstinence, improved mental health, more significant reconnection with family members, and a better quality of life. A five-year follow-up study of residents found that those who resided for more than a year continued to show improved attitudes towards substance abuse and criminal activity compared to those whose stay was of shorter duration (Hubbard et al., 2003).

The importance of group counselling also holds many benefits, and its importance is highlighted throughout the literature (Soetanto & McDonald, 2017; Hubbard et al., 2003; Vanderplasschen et al., 2013). Soetanto and McDonald (2017) have found that group counselling allows individuals to attain higher levels of learning and better retention, while

other research has shown that group-based counselling is effective for a range of substance use disorders, mental health issues and shedding criminal identities due to the sharing environment it creates which can be supportive and validating (O'Brien, Sullivan, & Daffern, 2016). The unique environment allows individuals to share experiences, learn coping skills, and receive feedback and support from other group members on the same recovery pathway. This concept is connected to the principles of social learning and differential association theory, which proposes that new behaviours can be obtained that can positively benefit individuals in ceasing criminal identities by seeing the reinforcement of positive pro-social identities. This contrasts with prison environments, where negative behaviours can be modelled and sustained.

Despite Mortimore's (2016) exploratory study on one Post-release Community in NZ, there is a lack of research on these communities and their effectiveness in reducing recidivism and promoting desistance. There is also a need to explore the self-portrayals of the halfway resident(s) and how they narrate their desistance pathways. More specifically, gendered-approach research focusing on the consultation of women residents is particularly scarce, suggesting a greater need to promote such discourse. Currently, in NZ, multiple Post-release Communities exist to support offenders on release. Te Pā (formerly PARS - Prisoners Aid and Rehabilitation Society) is an agency that offers prisoners support on release. As a Kaupapa Māori organisation, Te Pā's fundamental philosophy is to address and support individuals who endure significant barriers post-release, including stigma, lack of resources, social exclusion and judgement that prevent them from reintegrating into their whānau, iwi, and communities (Te Pā, 2023). Like other Post-release Communities this entails firstly providing emergency accommodation and housing services. Their services extend Auckland-wide through to Whangarei and Kaikohe, and have a range of housing options, including live-in staff housing (a maximum of nine residents per stay) and one to two-bedroom apartments (Te Pā, 2023). Their services range from Mātauranga (educational services), Oranga (health services) and Mahi (employment services).

2.1.10 Grace Foundation Charitable Trust

The Grace Foundation offers several services and programmes to assist with rehabilitation and reintegration. Most programmes are group-based, but an individual care plan suitable for each resident's needs is also prioritised (Personal communication with Operations Manager, January 2023). Each programme has a specific focus (based on Te Whare Tapa Whā) but has an all-inclusive and encompassing approach that aids in the residents' recovery. For reference, listed below (Table 1) are a few programmes offered at the Grace Foundation.

Table 1. (Provided by Grace Foundation Management, 2023)

WRAP	The 'Wellness Recovery Action Plan' is an eight-week programme that focuses on understanding the causes of addiction, and relapse, while working towards prevention strategies and overcoming unhelpful behavioural patterns.
Abacus Counselling	NZQA accredited course focused on communication and de-escalation, suicide risk workshop, acceptance and commitment therapy, and cross-addiction training.
Poutiria Te Aroha	10-week parenting programme that draws on Māori cultural values in raising their Tamariki.
IServe	Twice a week, the women are encouraged to give back to the community by participating in serving people experiencing homelessness (in partnership with Auckland City Mission).
Legacy Women's Empowerment	A 15-week programme focused on goal setting and healing of past harm.

Cultural Excursions	Expanding knowledge of one's culture and exposing them to new activities or environments that empower them to experience new learnings of who they are.

2.1.11 Peer Support and Guidance of Post-release Communities

The pro-social environment and peer support that Post-release Communities provide are crucial in fostering desistance. Moving into these communities provides individuals with separation from harmful environments, which is especially crucial following their departure from prison and trying to nurture behavioural transformation moving forward (Goldfinch, 2018). The pro-social environment that these communities provide allows an individual to start over and initiate their reintegration (Goldfinch, 2018). Without the necessary aftercare and support, former prisoners' reintegration into society can be significantly impeded as they lack the resources and assistance needed to shed their criminal identity, thus impacting their ability and motivation to desist effectively. Post-release Communities, on the other hand, can offer the necessary elements for change and can assist in successful identity transformation. This works partly because there are fewer opportunities to interact with perceived negative influences in a pro-social atmosphere.

"Knifing-off" is a term that is used by Maruna and Roy (2007). In essence, it is the process of removing oneself from an environment that helps perpetuate criminal behaviour. Maruna and Roy (2007) relate this process as causative of successful prisoner reintegration and desistance from criminal activity. Although environmental knifing-off can be a legitimate tactic for bringing about self-change, when combined with supportive environments and constructive personal growth, the likelihood of successfully abstaining from crime increases significantly (Maruna & Roy, 2007). Maruna and Roy (2007) connected self-improvement to desistance and determined that it is a response to positive social and environmental circumstances, with these external conditions prompting internal change. Therefore, though self-change through environmental "knifing off" is important, individuals are more likely to abstain from crime when they receive external support and encouragement to make positive adjustments (Maruna & Roy, 2007).

2.1.12 Desistance

Desistance is the process by which an offender attempts to refrain from committing further crimes (Maruna, 2001). Seen as a dichotomous definition of recidivism, research on desistance acknowledges desistance as more of a process than an abrupt event (Barr, 2019; Maruna, 2001; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Laub & Sampson, 2003). Maruna (2001) highlights the difficulties in achieving desistance with the analogy, "Stopping smoking is easy - I do it every week", which effectively demonstrates that conceptually, desistance is a difficult and ongoing process of trying to maintain a crime-free lifestyle despite the setbacks and hindrances an offender may encounter.

Desistance theory focuses on various factors that encourage the cessation of offending while increasing prosocial behaviours that benefit the individual and society (Barr, 2019; Cid & Marti, 2017). Maruna (2001) suggests that one's desistance process involves developing a coherent and sustainable narrative explaining their offending and, more importantly, how they have turned their life around. A strong internalised narrative plays a crucial psychological function in helping individuals stay motivated in the face of temptations and setbacks they will inevitably encounter. For example, desistance is often seen as a process because one does not 'stop' reoffending without going through a process of reform, with theorists suggesting a strong causal link between a change in identity and the decline in re-offending (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Maruna, 2001).

For desistance to occur, an individual will usually undergo cognitive transformation due to structural opportunities like job opportunities or parenthood (Giordano et al., 2002; Sampson & Laub; 1993) and a change in identity (Maruna, 2001; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009) in their endeavour to stop offending. Paternoster and Bushway (2009) coined the term 'Identity theory of desistance', asserting that individuals will stop offending only when they have internalised a pro-social identity. A pro-social identity motivates the individual to appropriate 'hooks for change' (the pro-social features of one's environment) (Giordano et al., 2002), which supports individual efforts to 'go straight' and the seeking out and attainment of bonds, including accruing human, social and cultural capital (Maruna, 2001; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009).

2.1.12.1 Desistance and Aged-Based Maturation

The notion that delinquent behaviour will naturally decrease with age is referred to as the "age-out" or ontogenetic theory. Although desistance is a new concept, the propensity of criminal behaviour across various age groups is not. Studies dating back to the 1800s demonstrates this, with the first large-scale study focusing on the aggregate relationship between age and criminal behaviour in 1831 (US Department of Justice, 1984). Quetelet's findings demonstrate the link between delinquent behaviour and the age at which individuals start desisting from crime is in their late twenties. Since then, the peak age for criminal behaviour has remained stable. This age trend is shown in the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor's 2018 report on youth offending, which suggested that, although the 15-24 age bracket only represents 14% of the general population, they account for 40% of apprehensions annually. The question as to why there is an obvious discrepancy in the age range relative to the undertaking of criminal behaviour is addressed by Bateman and Pitts (2005) and Maruna (2001). Bateman and Pitts (2005) speculate that the disparity could be attributed to older offenders' ability to evade detection and, thus, official statistics. Maruna (2001), on the other hand, suggests that the age curve may be more connected to the type of crime committed and the individual's adoption of less 'risky' behaviour, albeit there is a shift to more sophisticated crime such as white-collar offences. Conversely sociogenic theory describes informal social control whereby certain life events known as turning points (Sampson & Laub, 1993), like finding employment or becoming a parent, directly affects one's desistance.

Similarly, Moffitt's (1993) developmental taxonomy hypothesis suggests that there are two different categories of offenders: *adolescent-limited* and *life-course-persistent*. While the latter continue to act criminally throughout adulthood, the former mostly engage in delinquent behaviour during adolescence before growing out of it. Maruna (2001) analysed a sample of ex-prisoners in the UK with similar findings. There were two distinct groups: those who persisted and those who desisted. Those who persisted were labelled as having engaged in a condemnation script, whereas those who desisted were of a redemptive script. Both studies suggest that the difference between the two groups largely lies in the desistance process.

2.1.12.2 External Desistance Factors

Other criminological theorists supporting the age-out hypothesis include Sampson and Laub (1993), who proposed the concept of 'turning points'. By looking at one thousand males from childhood through to adulthood, their findings showed that, generally, delinquent children continued their antisocial behaviour into adulthood, whilst those who were well-behaved as children turned into prosocial men (Sampson & Laub, 1993). However, the study also produced a subgroup of young delinquent boys who desisted and became pro-social men. The reasoning behind this observation was that these young men experienced a turning point that counteracted and redirected them from criminal behaviour. These turning points typically involved external factors, such as employment, marriage, or military service (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Their findings suggested that any internal psychological change appeared somewhat irrelevant and that desistance from crime was chiefly associated with external turning points that one might encounter. Following Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory, environments that provide positive external experiences post-release are paramount to combating the continuance of antisocial behaviours, making an individual less likely to re-offend. As such, the pro-social environment provided by Post-release Communities, like the Grace Foundation, not only appears integral to promoting desistance from crime but is also a catalyst for residents' self-improvement.

2.1.12.3 Internal Desistance Factors

Whilst external factors contribute to the development of a successful desistance pathway, other theorists (Maruna, 2001; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Giordano et al., 2002) argue that desistance is a much more 'internalised process' that involves a change in identity or a psychological shift. Giordano et al. (2002) criticised Sampson and Laub's (1993) study by suggesting they disregarded the work an individual will go through to transform and sustain a pro-social life. Instead, Giordano et al. (2002) argued that offenders undergo a psychological transformation to seek out environments that enable positive social external events (such as marriage or employment) rather than simply chancing upon these opportunities. Therefore, without an internal psychological shift, an individual will not capitalise on such 'turning points. Thus, Giordano et al. (2002), along with other researchers (Maruna, 2001; Paternoster &

Bushway, 2009), state that the emphasis should be placed on internal factors that promote desistance, such as attaining a pro-social identity, motivation to cease criminal behaviours, and developing self-efficacy and a belief system that one can give up on crime.

2.1.12.4 The Interplay Between Internal and External Factors

Desistance is not considered a one-size-fits-all process but encompasses various factors influencing its occurrence. Dickson and Polaschek (2016) are NZ-based researchers who looked at Sampson and Laub's (1993) and Giordano et al. (2002) theories to understand the role that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors should have in post-release planning and how that impacts the reintegration experiences of high-risk-offenders. Their study acknowledged how internal and external motivations are integral to one's desistance process. This is considered an interactionist approach whereby internalising a pro-social identity and having those external factors like peer support and pro-social environments encourages desistance. Their study favoured the importance of external factors in the initial phases of reintegration, acknowledging that internal desistance processes are easier to address after fulfilling one's basic needs like accommodation and support. Only after these basic needs are met can one turn their attention to developing the internal factors that allow desistance to occur. Their findings are in line with Maslow's theory of human motivation (Maslow, 1943), which suggests that until the first two levels are met (physiological needs such as food, water, and shelter; and personal safety needs), then an individual can move on to obtaining higher-level needs such as self-actualisation, love, and self-esteem.

2.1.12.5 Desistance and Gender

Although abstinence from crime is mostly associated with age, gender is also a factor, but much of the current research on desistance has focused on men (See Maruna, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 1993). There is a need to explore the desistance pathways of women, as there are considerable differences in what they will experience within the CJS compared to men (Cobbina, 2010). While desistance literature has predominantly focused on men, the last two

decades have seen a change in focus as more researchers recognise the importance of gender-responsive approaches to better meet the specific needs across the genders within the CJS (Sharpe, 2015; Cobbina, 2010; McIvor, Murray, & Jaimeson, 2004). There is increasing recognition of desistance as a gendered phenomenon (Cobbina, 2010), where women tend to desist from crime at a younger age and are affected by different 'turning points' compared to men (McIvor et al., 2004). This is seen in the systematic review by Rodermond, Tollenaar and Nieuwbeerta (2016), which looked at 44 studies on women's desistance and found that supportive relationships and children were the key turning points in desistance. According to Rodermond et al. (2016), women who are responsible for raising children are more likely to comprehend the repercussions of their illegal behaviour and be encouraged to participate in work-related programmes, which have been shown to reduce the chance of re-offending.

Contrastingly, Opsal and Foley (2013) depicted how parenting can be a significant stressor that can decrease the likelihood of desistance among women. Their study argues that the loss of a child and the process of regaining custody can take a toll on the mother's well-being as they endure feelings of loss, leading to continued tension with, and inevitably, hatred of and resentment towards the state. A lack of housing and post-release support exacerbates this tension (Opsal & Foley, 2013) and can lead to continuing criminal behaviour and substance abuse.

2.1.12.6 Desistance Studies in NZ

Unfortunately, desistance research is scarce in NZ, with Mills and Webb (2022) recognising the absence. Expanding desistance research is essential to understand an offender's criminal behaviour, how they may abstain from crime, and how to effectively reduce their chances of re-offending. This is particularly important for NZ in the context of Māori women who are disproportionately represented within the CJS. As outlined earlier, women in the CJS face multiple forms of marginalisation and victimisation, specifically Māori women who endure not only sexism but racism as well (Quince, 2010). Therefore, further research into women's desistance in NZ is much needed as it will serve to highlight the structural issues currently in the CJS and, in turn, help to advocate for systematic changes that support successful reintegration and desistance of offenders.

Studies by Bevan and Wehipeihana (2015) and Campbell (2018) offer invaluable insights into the desistance discourse of women offenders in NZ. In the Bevan and Wehipeihana (2015) study, fifty-four one-off interviews were conducted with women who had previously received rehabilitative intervention but had served a subsequent prison sentence. They aimed to understand what factors lead to women's re-offending. They discovered that the pivotal influences leading to re-offending were economic pressures, drug and alcohol abuse, tarnished relationships, and the absence of pro-social support systems. Additionally, the research indicated that factors like trauma, abuse, and poverty hinder the ability of individuals to undergo the fundamental identity adjustments required for desistance. Although their findings offer beneficial insights into why women offenders fail to desist, the study falls short in providing insights into how individuals successfully desist and whether reversing such factors identified as leading to the persistence of crime will in fact result in desistance.

Similarly, Campbell's (2018) study began to explore several crucial aspects that were thought to contribute to the desistance process, including the factors that initiate and maintain it. This study consisted of interviewing twenty women with the same criterion as that of Bevan and Wehipeihana (2015), whose inclusion required that participants had been released from prison and had undertaken some reintegration programme. Campbell's analysis concluded that the leading factors in catalysing desistance included rediscovering faith, detoxing from drugs, and age-based maturation. Reasons for maintaining their desistance typically consisted of a combination of both internal and external factors. Internal elements included having a strong motivation to cease behaviours and take responsibility for past crimes, developing a greater sense of self-agency, and increasing self-esteem through altruistic activities, including feeding the homeless and charity work. External factors included relational desistance and the support of prison guards, peers, and post-release support structures which led to a stronger resolve to desist; of note, the avoidance of antisocial peers was critical to this resolve.

Considering that NZ is a bi-cultural state, Leibrich's' (1993) study follows 48 formally incarcerated men and women of all ethnic backgrounds (Māori, European, Pasifika) and their narratives towards desistance. Twelve participants had their narratives extensively detailed.

Leibrich's research acknowledges that desistance has many facets, notably, reasons for the cessation of offending, but also reasons for offending in the first place. It recognises that powerful motivators behind desistance include both external and internal influences. One source of motivation is having something to lose. This could be a spouse, career, children, or a home, and is reinforced by avoiding the shame and rejection which follows the loss of such key motivators. The interesting part of Leibrich's study is the in-depth insights cutting into 12 individuals' stories to understand their desistance journeys. Specifically, Zerlina's story, a 23-year-old woman that identifies as Māori, and a mother of a seven-year-old. Her story follows a chronological life story which outlines her childhood, adolescence, offending, goals, and ambitions for the future. What separates her story from other participants is her desire and need to learn her Maoritanga as she feels like an outsider within her own community. Despite alluding to this need, it does not go into detail about understanding her Māoritanga and how that may provide a sense of belonging and identity that strengthens her resolve to desist from crime.

Moreover, Low (2023) explores the narratives of 15 formerly incarcerated women, of which 13 are mothers and of Māori decent to examine how motherhood influences their desistance from crime. Her major findings include that for most women, becoming a mother for the first time did not lead to immediate desistance. This is reiterated by Stone (2015) and Giordano et al. (2002) who contend that for most women becoming a mother is not a strong enough motivator to prompt desistance. Instead, socio-structural factors led to the continuation of 11 women re-offending, hindered by the ability to adopt maternal identities. These socio-cultural factors included unstable upbringings, financial strain, the absence of social support, addiction, mental health, and trauma. However, as their lives progressed, motherhood became a key motivator in their desistance journeys. Part of this process was a critical self-reflection on the past and their former 'selves' to reform a new pro-social identity. The narratives of mothers in this research appear to coincide with Maruna's (2001) self-reconstruction via the use of redemptive scripts rather than other self-conception theories (see Paternoster & Bushway., 2009).

2.1.13 Liverpool Desistance Study

This study is an adaptation of Maruna's (2001) research on the Liverpool Desistance Study (LDS). The LDS focused on understanding the factors contributing to the process of desistance. In-depth interviews were conducted with 50 male 'street-crime opportunists' convicted of an array of hardened offences (violent and sexual offences with an average age of 30 years). The in-depth interviews aimed to gather information about the subjects' criminal histories, experiences, and other elements that may have contributed to their desistance. The study emphasised that the stoppage of crime was a complex process influenced by various environmental, societal, and personal factors. The crucial elements the study uncovered were the creation of a good self-identity, the value of social networks, and the investment in education and mental health treatment. The study also discovered that breaking away from crime is a gradual, non-linear process and that those who do often face significant challenges. Therefore, the significance of a holistic and individual approach to offender rehabilitation and reintegration was stressed. Although Maruna's (2001) study provided invaluable insights into the desistance process, it underscored the importance of further research, particularly regarding gendered approaches and other cultural contexts, and highlights the need to study how formerly incarcerated persons portray their desistance pathways within NZ and how women offenders control the narrative of their pathways.

Maruna (2001) employed narrative methodology as he proposed that individuals require a story to comprehend their criminal history and assert their reform convincingly. These self-stories play a crucial role in shaping behaviour, as how individuals interpret situations and perceive themselves influences their responses. Specifically, as narrative identity theory asserts, offenders attempting to cease criminal behaviours will construct a prosocial identity through a process of redemption by "making good" on their wrongdoings and previous life events. Research into this theory has identified redemption as a typical story structure that begins with facing a specific challenge like drug abuse or trauma and leads on to explaining how overcoming that challenge has led to positive identity development (Maruna, 2001).

In his analysis, Maruna (2001) identified discernible patterns between individuals who consciously desisted from crime upon release and tried to 'go straight' and those who were

persistent offenders who resorted back to crime after release (individuals who admitted to actively engaging in criminal behaviour). The active offenders frequently self-narrated sentiments of lack of agency, external locus of control, worthlessness, and a concentration on obtaining happiness through material gain. Maruna coined this behaviour as following a condemnation script, explaining their conduct by citing deprivation, institutionalisation, or peer pressure (Maruna, 2001). Desisting offenders, in contrast, followed a redemptive script that emphasised shedding their criminal identities and looking forward to a better 'redeeming' future. Desisting individuals often made the sharp distinction between their criminal past and their genuine selves by explaining that their criminality was an 'it' rather than a fundamental aspect of who they are. Instead, the respondents believed themselves to be inherently good people, acknowledging the assertion of a good core self and assuming a sense of agency over their past behaviour. For some, rather than adopting a new identity, individuals sought to regain earlier identities as their authentic selves.

According to Maruna's interpretation, the redemption script recognises self-efficacy. Those who were found to have redemptive scripts decided not to give in to their circumstances and feel sorry for themselves. Instead, they decided to take ownership of their lives and encourage self-development. Instead of feeling helpless and blaming others, this involved developing a sense of empowerment and taking responsibility for one's destiny. The redemptive story also considered a person's desire to prove their value and make a meaningful contribution to society, often through generativity by assuming leadership positions as caregivers, volunteers, or support workers. This urge to positively impact the community reflects a sense of accountability and a desire for redemption.

In contrast, the persistent offenders self-narrated stories that outlined a 'condemnation script'. Those with condemnation scripts had three distinguishing characteristics to explain their criminal behaviour. The 'big score' emphasis outlined individuals seeking happiness through financial gain, with multiple individuals expressing a desire to win the lottery as one of their life goals. The second emphasis was an externalisation of blame, whereby individuals lacked self-agency and attributed their criminal behaviour to societal injustices like poverty and lack of opportunity and pointed the blame at peers who had influenced their behaviour.

Lastly, the condemnation script demonstrated a limited outlook on the future, with the re-offenders expressing a sense of worthlessness that led to continuing criminal behaviour. This continuance was mainly due to feelings of hopelessness and disbelief in the possibility of positive change and prospects for their futures. For instance, in Maruna's (2001) findings, a 28-year-old male asserted, "I will never be able to get a decent job... so it looks like I am back to crime, doesn't it?" The respondents who shared this script were described by Maruna as having internalised a narrative in which they have conceded that they cannot pursue a life apart from the illegal activity and, instead, have given in to see themselves as victims of events beyond their control. Their complacency with their circumstances meant that no efforts or intentions of turning their lives around were made. It is further noted that individuals who are labelled for past behaviour face significant social and economic disparities and, upon release, must prove their worth to be accepted. By rejecting these societal labels, Maruna (2001) suggests that individuals find a sense of psychological shelter as their self-esteem is preserved from the constant threat of failure and rejection.

2.1.14 Narrative Identities

The use of a redemptive script can serve as a means for the formerly incarcerated to redefine their narrative identity (Maruna, 2001). Developing a redemptive narrative enables individuals to construct a new pro-social identity that integrates their past experiences with their present objectives. As mentioned earlier, prisons are institutions that affect one's identity negatively (Hoskins & Cobbina, 2020). Hoskins and Cobbina (2020) affirm that abiding in an antisocial context with antisocial peers coupled with the oversight of impersonal prison guards can hinder one's prosocial identity development. Therefore, individuals adapt to fit into these heightened negative environments and adapt accordingly, usually through survival responses (Maruna et al., 2006). Their former known identities as mothers, colleagues, and neighbours are stripped and replaced with labels set by society, including those of prisoners, offenders, and criminals (Hoskins & Cobbina, 2020).

Brown (2020) notes that the individual's self-perception is diminished through oppression, and the harm is compounded when the individual internalises the prisoner identity. Brown (2020) evaluated the narratives of 27 incarcerated men and found that all but

two participants identified prison as directly shaping their identity negatively. The participants were angrier and more frustrated due to the deprivation they were subjected to and their interactions with other prisoners. As such, their narrative identity started to redefine itself as their capacity to adapt to violent and aggressive situations became a natural response.

Fortunately, one's narrative can be restructured in prosocial contexts (Ward and Marshall, 2007), with pro-social environments helping individuals develop a clear and positive narrative identity. This effectively works by reflecting on and evaluating one's own beliefs and goals, which starts the process of narrative change, resulting in changes to identity and behaviour (Ward & Marshall, 2007). These pro-social environments help support individuals with emotional regulation, reconciliation with peers, their cultural identity (particularly in the NZ context and for Māori) and instilling positive attitudes. However, there has been criticism of narrative ownership and the distortion of self-stories as Fleetwood (2015) suggests that narratives do not exist in isolation; narratives are constructed using social and cultural scripts drawn from the individual's environment. Cid and Marti (2017) proffer a similar perspective and suggest identity narratives are impacted by meta-narratives and, as a result, desistance narratives will differ depending on cultural, historical, and demographic factors.

Predominantly in NZ, all post-release programmes are operated under religious influences (i.e., Grace Foundation, The Salvation Army Bridge). The Grace Foundation is primarily Christian-influenced, and although a Christian faith is not a prerequisite in residing, it is important to note the role conversion plays in transforming one's identity. As noted previously, Maruna et al. (2006) assert that narrative change begins within the prison environment as the mortification process starts and self-identity is questioned. This is partly due to the prison environment encompassing a certain amount of psychological anguish, hastening religious transition. The concept of conversion denotes a profound transformation in mid-level personality domains, including self-identity (Maruna et al., 2006). "Converts", explained by Maruna et al. (2006), go through a transformative process characterised by adopting or significantly strengthening belief systems, accompanied by notable shifts in attitudes and self-perceptions. To navigate their path out of identity crises, the "converts'' resolved their psychological anguish through religious conversion, specifically to Christianity

(Maruna et al., 2006). Adopting this self-narrative played a pivotal role in shame management, which included the creation of a new social identity away from stigmatising labels assigned by society for their crimes. Disassociating and creating this new-found self relieves the individual of shame and instead enforces purpose and membership as one becomes a part of a larger community upon release (Maruna et al., 2006). Therefore, conversion narratives are central in shame management during prison and help void the criminal identity upon release. As the conversion narrative helps with shame management and membership, it emphasises the need for Post-release Communities that enable this transformation to continue in a pro-social context.

This literature review has provided insight into the historical and contemporary contexts in which the residents narratives may be influenced. It has considered the journeys in which the women go through from historical factors such as colonialism to incarceration, reintegration with the components of employment and accommodation observed, and to their time at post-release communities in NZ. The efficacy of Post-release Communities outside of NZ has also been considered. This context is tied into how these factors may play on their desistance journeys. Additionally, the LDS, and the impact it has on narrative identity has been addressed. The next chapter will look at this study's methodology, selection, and recruitment of participants, positionality statement, and reasonings for choosing pseudonyms.

Chapter Three

3.1 Methodology

When researching desistance and how residents abstain from crime, narrative criminology is the most appropriate methodology for assessing the prevailing narratives of formerly incarcerated women. The main objective of narrative criminology is to understand how individuals use storytelling to create their identities and make sense of their experiences (Presser & Sandberg, 2015). This approach assumes that individuals are not just passive consumers but active agents in developing their identities based on their social, cultural, and environmental surroundings (Maruna, 2001). Narrative criminology is "any inquiry based on the view of stories as instigating, sustaining, or effecting desistance from harmful action" (Presser & Sandberg, 2015a, p. 1). A comparable interpretation mentioned by Maruna (2001) denotes that individuals do not simply experience crime and its aftermath; instead, they undergo an internalised process of making sense of their experiences that shape their understanding of themselves and society. Narrative criminology entails qualitative research methods that focus on collecting and analysing narratives. This study uses narrative inquiry to collect and analyse the data, aligning with the LDS.

3.1.1 Narrative Criminology and Minority Populations

Whilst previous studies on incarceration have adopted a positivist methodology, a now somewhat antiquated approach when researching formerly incarcerated women, this study is seated within a social constructivist worldview to challenge positivist methodologies imbued with colonialist ideologies and is more reflective of research based on narrative criminology, providing a forum for the personal narratives of those abiding in Post-release Communities (Presser & Sandberg, 2015). Research on rehabilitation for prisoners has increasingly included narrative criminology, as the focus on how individuals narrate their stories can reflect and shape an individual's understanding of criminal behaviour and their experiences of crime (Maruna, 2001). This theoretical framework emerged in the 1990s and is informed by postmodernist notions of the importance of subjectivity rather than objective crime measures (Presser & Sandberg, 2015).

The overarching importance of narrative criminology is that it provides a platform for the stories of individuals directly impacted by crime (perpetrator and victim) to share their experiences. This is practical for the development of both policy and practice, as it broadly explores the implications of individual narratives within the CJS, with the primary objective being to provide a voice to individuals from more marginalised groups like Māori and Pasifika, women, and individuals labelled as criminals. Narrative criminology is also culturally appropriate as it honours the Māori tradition of oral history (Presser & Sandberg, 2015; Metge, 1999). To ensure knowledge and culture are preserved for future generations, Māori have utilised storytelling as a method (Metge, 1999). As most participants in this study are of Māori descent, utilising a culturally responsive research approach seems pertinent and prudent.

3.1.2 Narrative Criminology and its Appropriateness

In the social sciences, narrative criminology has been increasingly used as a theoretical framework to provide a socially informed perspective on crime and recognising that crime is more multifaceted than individualised, and can be shaped through social, cultural, and historical contexts (Presser & Sandberg, 2015). Narrative criminology emphasises the importance of learning from an individual adept at crime to understand their experiences and effect change within the broader setting (Presser & Sandberg, 2015). As such, this framework is appropriate for desistance studies, as it challenges modernist and reductionist approaches to crime that focus solely on micro-level factors and ignore the valuable insights gained from exploring the interdependence of macro-level variables like social, cultural, and environmental contexts (Presser & Sandberg, 2015). It offers insights into the subject matter often diminished by other frameworks, such as reductionism, which has been heavily criticised for oversimplifying the multifaceted reasons why individuals commit crime (Presser & Sandberg, 2015). This points to singular-level dimensions, including biological determinism, rational choice theory, classical criminology, and behaviourism, diminishing the complex reasons one might offend. Thus, narrative criminology is a more all-encompassing and individualised framework that acknowledges how internal cognitive processes and more prominent social, cultural, and environmental aspects combine to contextualise one's narrative (Presser & Sandberg, 2015). Narrative criminology helps to more fully capture the complexities of social processes and human behaviour involved in one’s desistance.

3.1.3 Selection and Recruitment of Participants

The primary researcher was a Grace Foundation intern for six weeks (October and mid-November 2021) as a requirement for her undergraduate degree. Since then, the primary researcher maintained a close, professional relationship with the Grace Foundation. As this was an exploratory study, a relatively small sample size of ten women residents were recruited.

3.1.3.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

A set of inclusion and exclusion criteria was established to compare and analyse the narratives.

Eligible Participants	**Exclusion Criteria**
1. Be a woman	1. Transgender women (The exclusion of transgender participants was due in part to the limited sample size, and limiting the scope allowed the primary researcher to analyse formerly incarcerated women's' narratives specifically. Including formerly incarcerated transgender women would add a level of complexity that was not feasible within the research's time constraints and gender-specific structure. It is important to note that comparing a group of formerly incarcerated transgender women to a group of cis gendered in future research would be considered beneficial).
2. Over the age of 18	2. High-risk offenders (High-risk offenders were excluded primarily for researcher safety. The researcher also selected participants who wanted to "go straight" and sought successful reintegration into society).

3. Living at Grace Foundation	3. Males
4. Sentence type - low-to-medium risk (including but not limited to drug-related offences, intent to injure, and assault).	
5. Released from prison within the past 12 months	

3.1.3.2 Recruitment of Participants

To introduce the study and seek approval from the foundation, the primary researcher contacted the Operations Manager. Following approval, the initial recruitment process was an all-inclusive oral-visual presentation to propose the research and describe the study's objectives in layperson's terms. Following the presentation, the Residence Manager received participant information sheets to display inside the residence should the residents need visual representation or have any additional questions. This method was carefully planned to ensure that the needs of all residents were satisfied, accounting for the low literacy rates of individuals within the prison population and the challenges that this may have presented. Whilst previous studies show that approximately 40% of prisoners possess a low intelligence quotient of 70–85 (Hellenbach et al., 2017), almost all prisoners suffer from an intellectual disability or language impairment (Roberts & Indermaur, 2008). As a result, needlessly complex language might make it more difficult for residents to understand the explicit act of consent. Therefore, criminological lexicons, double negatives, and jargon were excluded from any of the study's communications to mitigate this risk of ineffective acquisition.

The primary researcher then instructed residents to reach out should they wish to participate. Mostly, the primary researcher relied on the snowballing technique as evidenced by the marked increase in uptake in both interest and participant recruitment following the initial interview with Resident A. All individuals who met the criteria were interviewed on a

first-come, first-served basis until data saturation was achieved. Voluntary participation was emphasised, and consent forms were presented at the beginning of each interview. Each interviewee was also given the option to take breaks or terminate the interview at any given time.

3.1.4 Pseudonyms and Ownership of Narratives

The primary researcher also offered each participant the option of having their first name be identifiable within the research or using a pseudonym. A pseudonym was explained, and the potential benefits and risks were discussed. Initially, the primary researcher was set on offering both options, as this sub-population is often silenced within research, and putting their names to their narratives allows for ownership, respect, and autonomy. All ten participants were receptive to either option. However, after further consideration and weighing up the potential drawbacks and risks of publishing these narratives, the primary researcher opted to utilise pseudonyms in the form of Resident A, Resident B, and so forth. This was due to the sensitivity and risk of identifying information that may result in social stigma and unintended harm to the participants. Of particular importance was that each resident's narratives carried considerable personal significance and should be honoured appropriately. Therefore, the primary researcher has chosen to safeguard the confidentiality and welfare of the participants by utilising pseudonyms. Including pseudonyms does not detract from the narratives provided, mainly as they had all personally decided on either option. This research design aimed to culminate in providing a summary of the research findings whilst honouring the principles of reciprocity, collaboration, and partnership that are integral to this type of study.

Chapter Four

4.1 Research Methods and Data Collection

4.1.1 Research Methods

When researching post-release residents, considerations for the most suitable research method are two-fold. Firstly, the participants in this study are predominantly of minority groupings, including members of the prison population, who have previously been subjected to unethical research, and women, who are often overlooked in desistance research. Due to the lack of research within this area on women in particular, this study takes a gendered approach to analyse the desistance narratives of women abiding in Post-release Communities. Therefore, considering these aspects, the most appropriate method to apply is narrative inquiry, especially as these communities are moving away from capitalist approaches to curating non-criminal identities. Since desistance theory highlights how an individual abstains from crime, the significance of this approach is based on looking at one's life story to explore how their life experiences influence criminal behaviour and, from that, see how one narrates their future in relation to crime.

Narrative inquiry into the individuals residing in Post-release Communities can reveal what narratives prevail and the extent to which these communities help in supporting identity transformation. Narrative inquiry entails gathering, interpreting, and analysing narratives. Narratives are self-stories that aim to make sense of a criminal past, while simultaneously highlighting a positively transformed present and future. These narratives aid individuals by making sense of their lives in a way that helps them desist from crime (Maruna, 2001). Maruna's research on redemption and condemnation scripts highlights the significance of narrative regarding desistance by suggesting that when an individual establishes a redemptive script, they can effectively abstain from crime (Maruna, 2001). These scripts start within the prison environment but require continual support post-release (Maruna, 2001). Thus, supporting individuals in developing positive and redeeming narratives post-release is essential in facilitating desistance and fostering transformation. Maruna (2001) also noted that sharing one’s narrative acted as a tool for self-understanding and self-change as the

reflection of experiences helps provide individuals with answers regarding questions of their past actions and/or behaviours and is a key stepping for individuals to 'go straight'.

Through narrative analysis, researchers can examine how individuals construct and convey their stories through structural, thematic, and relational aspects. This helps identify how their narratives shape their identities and subjectivity (Presser, 2009). When analysing the relational aspects of narratives, several dimensions are explored, including identity formation, in which individuals define their roles with societal standards and cultural expectations. Narratives often reflect the social relationships one has with their friends, family, and community. The analysis here typically examines individual dynamics with peers and the power relations involved in those interactions. Also of interest is how individuals position themselves in sociocultural contexts. As seen in the LDS, Maruna (2001) used a three-step approach that included descriptive coding, thematic analysis, and interpretive analysis to provide a detailed account of the participants' experiences of desistance and the factors that facilitated their transition into a crime-free lifestyle. Maruna's LDS was a mixed methods approach but ultimately centred around narrative identity theory and how formerly incarcerated persons' construction of redemption scripts creates a cohesive life story that reinforces their commitment to desistance (Maruna, 2001). Narrating a redemption script allows the formerly incarcerated to construct a cohesive storyline that rationalises their past criminal behaviour and its link to their present and future lawful presence (Maruna, 2001). As such, this theory proposes that our identity is constructed through the stories we tell ourselves and others about our lives.

Narrative identity theory has been applied to explain desistance from crime (Maruna, 2001; McAdams & Mclean, 2013) as storytelling allows individuals to describe events in their lives that they believe to be significant. This reveals how they interpret the outside world and reflects their constantly changing identities through sociality and temporality (Connolly & Clandinin, 1990). Sandberg (2010) agrees by suggesting that narrative identity is an internalised phenomenon that changes over time as the individual gains new and alternative insights and understandings. Through this method, individuals can make sense of continuity and coherence in their lives by constructing a narrative that makes sense of their past,

present, and future (Maruna, 2001). Krosnick and Presser (2010) assert that in determining the causation of criminal behaviour, this theory offers equal significance to the offender's experiences and life story. To provide a comprehensive personological profile, narrative identity theory makes use of a variety of methods, several of which are used in this study, such as in-depth interviews, life-story interviews, and narrative analysis through interpretation and subjectivity.

4.1.2 Data Collection

Due to unforeseen, weather-based circumstances (Auckland's January floods), the interview process took place over three weeks rather than the one-week timetable. Over this period, ten residents' narratives were gathered. Although a sample of 10 residents is too small to be regarded as a complete representation of the prevailing narratives in all Post-release Communities, this study is intended to provide a detailed and evocative description of the desistance pathways of the current sample. Especially as this sample is one-third of the women population currently at the Grace Foundation. Correspondingly, each in-depth interview was scheduled to last 60 minutes but varied depending on how receptive the participants were to share their stories. For instance, Resident B's interview lasted the longest at one hour and fifteen minutes in contrast to Resident F's whose succinct responses contributed to an interview which ended after only twenty minutes. In general, the success of life-story interviews depends on the cooperation of the participant with the researcher; if a good rapport has yet to be established, then the participant may not be entirely receptive to the interviewing process. The primary researcher took measures to establish a reciprocal connection. However, in hindsight, the primary researcher recognised that Resident F was naturally wary of the study process, which likely explains why her narrative was brief. It is evident that the primary researcher should have continued building rapport with this resident, as the interaction is based on trust, but the time constraint made it difficult to spend more time building rapport. Nevertheless, the primary researcher could analyse the brief narrative, which still included pertinent details.

Furthermore, all interviews were on a one-on-one basis, semi-structured and biographical. To facilitate a free and frank conversation, the location of the interview and the

style of interviewing were of vital importance. Semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate method, as the interviews were taking place at the Grace Foundation. According to Adams (2015), semi-structured interviews can be conducted in an informal manner which has multiple benefits, including increased comfort, more natural conversation, and flexibility. An informal approach was suitable to provide a calm and pleasant interview atmosphere in contrast to a more formal interview situation that could put the residents in a state of uneasiness in their home environment. Per the researcher's safety protocol, the Grace Foundation Manager was present in the room next door and was aware of how long each interview should take. The manager did not interfere during the interview but instead checked in on the well-being of the resident and primary researcher at both the commencement of the interview and afterwards.

Semi-structured interviews are important because they offer a platform for participants to express their understanding and exercise independence in narrating their experiences. This is aligned with cultural research methods as it honours the tradition of storytelling (Metge, 1999). Semi-structured interviews provided the researcher with the opportunity to learn more about the way individuals interpret the world to identify the prevailing narratives. This approach permitted probing, which was used sparingly to promote natural and spontaneous storytelling rather than the researcher's requested accounts. Probing was particularly useful with respect to Residents F and E, who typically provided brief responses that often-lacked depth. Here, McAdams' (1993) Life Story Interview Protocol was implemented which encourages individuals to draw specifically on key elements of autobiographical memory such as particular chapters in one's life including childhood, schooling, and adolescence, and looking forward to the residents' futures. Adler et al. (2018) encourage researchers to explain to the interviewee how the interview will progress and that there is a protocol that they must follow. As such, the researcher should refrain from guiding the conversation beyond following the prompts. The primary researcher conformed to this protocol except for directing the conversation towards their time post-release to gauge their desistance, and probing did include asking for clarification or elaboration on any of the events they had described that were unclear or called for further explanation. This is consistent with the practice of being "whāngai'd," which the researcher was not initially aware of but asked for clarification with

Resident A and went on to hear the term in most of the residents' narratives thereafter. Whāngai'd, for reference, is a customary Māori practice where children are fostered out to individuals other than their parents (Te Ara, n.d.). For the most part, the researcher refrained from interfering with the residents' chain of narration.

Whilst the collection of narratives can take both written and oral forms, the use of interviewing can elicit more detailed and comprehensive responses from participants and lead to an increased willingness to share their narratives through the building of rapport (Addler et al., 2018). It is important to note that there can be a fine line between building rapport and controlling the participants' responses (Adler et al., 2018). To underline the established reciprocal relationship, the residents were compensated for their time through Koha but were only made aware of such gifting after the interview. The residents have also opted for a summary report of findings, which will be provided post-study.

Interviews should also be typically hosted in a separate unoccupied room to prioritise the collection of confidential and uncontrived data, and to also offer a comfortable space for unreserved and candid conversation. However, all interviews in this study took place in a communal area at the Grace Foundation, since all participants were subject to post-release conditions, which limited where the interviews could be undertaken. Whilst re-entry theory asserts that individuals may experience anxiety or discomfort while being interviewed in an open environment (Adler et al., 2018), it was essential to address how disclosing life narratives can be re-traumatising. A safe atmosphere was emphasised, and the participants' well-being was at the forefront with provisional counselling offered if needed. To assist with that sense of safety the interviews took place in a common area that was open, full of light, and comfortable. The downside to using this location was that confidentiality was not fully ascertained, as other residents walked by and were aware of which individuals participated. The reasoning behind the location was in part due to the resident’s bail conditions and per the researcher’s safety protocol. To mitigate this risk to the participant’s confidentiality when another resident entered the area, the conversation and recording were stopped momentarily and resumed once the individual left the room.

The interviews began by presenting a broad question to open the scope of narration. An ambiguous question is often recommended, particularly with the nature of narrative inquiry, as it allows an individual to initiate dialogue in a manner they would prefer, rather than being limited to a set of predetermined questions and answers (Krosnick & Presser, 2010). As such, a broad question allows the participant to choose what to disclose and to be selective with their responses. In this instance, the primary researcher initiated the conversation by asking all residents to “tell me a bit about yourself". The rationale for using this opening question is to allow individuals the opportunity to express how they perceive their past and present selves and how that may impact their futures. This is explained by Maruna (2001), who states that how individuals feel about themselves, from their previous selves to their future selves, partly explains why they desist from crime. Hankiss (1981) also asserts that how individuals narrate their self-story tends to follow a dynastic, antithetical, compensatory, or self-absolutory pattern. All these patterns focus on the connection between an individual's past and how they tell their story in the present. For instance, a self-absolution life story would demonstrate a trend of negative experiences in the past and a continuation of opposing views in the present (Hankiss, 1981).

The response to this question (Tell me a bit about yourself?) usually followed a chronological life event where individuals would start with their upbringing, schooling, and family relations before proceeding to their life in prison and current experiences post-release. In most interviews, the opening question allowed for at least a third of the interview time as individuals narrated their life autobiographies. This follows narrative identity theory, where individuals make sense of their lives by constructing a personal life narrative that incorporates their previous experiences, current situations, and desired futures. When people share their autobiographies, they demonstrate how they interpret their experiences and how they have come to create their sense of self (McAdams & Mclean, 2013).

All interviews were recorded, and participants were informed that their narratives would be transcribed verbatim. Adler et al. (2017) promote interviews being recorded and transcribed for the sole reason that audio and video narratives cannot be accurately coded, which skews the data and can disrupt the overall outcome. The primary researcher used

Otter.ai, a professional transcription service. The transcribed data underwent an ensuing manual auditing process, mainly because the residents' discussed places and traditions like "whāngai'd", which the software was unaware of. "Whāngai'd," for point of reference, would be picked up as "fungi," which did not accurately represent what the residents were referring to.

Positionality Statement

As a young researcher originally from the United Kingdom, who has resided in NZ since age five, my background and personal experiences have significantly shaped my understanding of social issues. Growing up in a predominantly white neighbourhood, I had a relatively sheltered upbringing that was insulated from many of the adversities faced by marginalised communities. During my research, I encountered gaps in my understanding including cultural concepts that were not familiar to me. This highlighted the 'experience divide' between myself as the researcher, and the participants, underscoring the importance of addressing positionality more explicitly.

This divide represented not just a language difference but a broader disconnection in cultural knowledge and understanding. It highlighted how my sheltered upbringing and predominantly European background had limited my exposure to, and comprehension of, Māori cultural practices and customs. Though I gained a more thorough understanding of the social, political, and cultural issues Māori and Pasifika face within the CJS, and broader society during my undergraduate degree, and learned basic Te Reo Māori throughout intermediate and college, the terms and customs brought forth by the residents of this study guaranteed ongoing self-reflection to understand how my background and biases may influence my research. This reflective practice included further research and broadening my understanding which has ultimately acted as a transformative learning opportunity.

Furthermore, most of the residents have encountered some form of verbal, physical or sexual abuse, or come from broken homes affected by alcohol or drug misuse. As this study also focuses on broader social issues, it is also important to note my encounters with verbal and physical abuse, which have provided me with a nuanced perspective on vulnerability and resilience. These dual aspects of my identity—privilege tempered by personal trauma—

inform my approach to research in several ways including empathy, sensitivity, and reflective practice.

Overall, much consideration was given to choosing the research method for this study, as well as the best approach for gathering data to ensure the upmost appropriateness towards the population taking part. The relevance of narrative inquiry was to explore the women's narratives to investigate how their life experiences have influenced their criminal behaviour and how they narrate their futures in relation to crime. Narrative analysis was used to examine the residents' narratives and it will be covered in great length in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Resident	Age	Partnership Status	Number of Children	Number of times incarcerated
Resident A	28	Long-term	2	5
Resident B	26	Long-term	0	2
Resident C	28	Single	2	6
Resident D	22	Single	0	2
Resident E	46	Long-term	3	3
Resident F	32	Long-term	1	2
Resident G	41	Single	4	10+
Resident H	39	Long-term (since 15)	7	2
Resident I	37	Single	4	3
Resident J	40	Single	2	10+

5.1 Data Analysis

Narrative analysis was implemented to identify the prevailing narratives among the residents. Descriptive coding through an inductive approach determined how the narratives developed, compared, and became cohesive. When a resident revealed a narrative, such as one about a support system, the direct quote was noted, and the word "support" was underlined as a typical narration. In alignment with the current literature, specifically the LDS, it was anticipated that there would be signs of narrative change through redemption and conversion. This is noted within this study, and emerging narratives were categorised under the narrative frameworks of redemption and condemnation, highlighting the process of ‘making good’.

Further, prevailing narratives were influenced by cultural and religious factors and were classified under these concepts. This contrasted with the LDS, which was devoid of records based on cultural identity, a significant component among the residents of this study. The data analysis outlines the narrative's interpretation, followed by a paired segment of the residents' transcript. This way, it results in an authentic depiction of formerly incarcerated women' reports living in Post-release Communities, as it prevents the insertion of assumptions and expectations about the data itself. It also honours the residents’ ownership over their narratives by taking their experiences as they are rather than re-interpreting them.

The narratives, as set out below, will be discussed in turn. It will then focus on narratives centred around culture and stories heeded on faith and spirituality.

The emergence of four overarching concepts were revealed: redeeming, condemning, cultural, and religious narratives. Under the overarching narrative of redemption, the prevailing narratives included: a desire for change and personal growth; reflection, forgiveness and healing; support systems; education and job prospects; pro-social behaviour and generativity (giving back); motherhood; and appreciation for Grace Foundation and its impact. Under the overarching narrative of condemnation, the sub-narratives included: dependence; institutionalisation and blame (of others); feelings of worthlessness; and material gain. The findings of this study indicate that the overall narratives collectively represent a story of personal growth and redemption. There is a significant shift towards shedding their criminal identities and moving towards a better, more fulfilling future, whereby multiple hooks for change are identified, including external and internal factors. All individuals acknowledge their past criminal behaviours and express a desire to change their lives for the better, highlighting personal identity redemption. Fewer condemnation scripts were found, with only half of the ten residents narrating feelings of worthlessness, material gain, institutionalisation, and dependence. Overall, this suggests that the prevailing narrative held by the post-release resident is of redemption.

5.1.1 Redemption Narratives

5.1.1.1 A Desire for Change and Personal Growth

A desire for change and personal growth was attributed to all ten residents. All respondents sought to change their lifestyles by seeking change away from their destructive and criminal pasts and looking towards a prosperous future. While acknowledging their past wrongs, personal growth was mainly credited to the residents in the present and when expressing their futures, all were realistic with their ambitions. Desistance narratives are usually organised by self-stories on past experiences following naturally to present behaviours (Maruna, 2001). The residents engaged in introspection and self-reflection about what brought them to their circumstances, as well as self-awareness, as they narrated how

they would like their futures to culminate, consistent with Maruna's (2001) redemptive script.

Firstly, **Resident D** began by emphasising how her transient lifestyle, traumatic experiences and incarceration have led her to rely heavily on others for emotional support. Her narrative illustrates vital components of desistance, including a positive self-identity as she depicts self-awareness when reflecting on her weaknesses and recognising a past pattern of co-dependency, followed by personal growth as her locus of control shifts through her ability to address these attachment issues and finding solitude in her own company (building on coping mechanisms).

Resident D: I feel like my biggest problem is that I could never ever be with myself. I always depended, I was very codependent on everybody else to keep my mind at bay, where today I can sit and be by myself and enjoy my own company and, like, I don't get affected by anything when I'm alone.

Furthermore, she emphasises requesting space, indicating both a desire for, and an ability to effect change. This implies a transformative journey in identity as she has a stronger sense of self in dealing with her circumstances. Accordingly, a readiness to make constructive changes indicates progress towards desistance.

Resident D: I've always had that tendency to whoever shows love or affection to me, I'll cling on, I don't want them to go anywhere, I must be with them all the time. And, then when I went to jail this time, I made it a thing that I didn't want any cellmates, that I wanted to be alone and everything got better, I could sit in my own presence, I could be alone, and it was good.

Her continued journey for self-growth is reiterated when she reflects on tough times, but she can now cope with these challenging times on her own.

Resident D: I've found myself again, I love myself today. Even with these hard days, like, I've been on such a high, there was bound to be a day where it's not so easy, but I'm still getting

through the day, I'm still able to sit in these uncomfortable feelings and be alright. In my own space. So, if I can do that here, I can do that out there.

Similarly, **Resident A** showcases self-efficacy and resilience when stipulating that she would continue her desistance journey if her partner did not. This shows a strong internal locus of control as she is not relying on others to make decisions but instead has taken control of her choices. Therefore, her efforts are directly influencing her desistance.

Resident A: I would still be on this; I would still be doing this for myself. My life would still look the same as I see it now. In the future, it would still look the same without him if he wasn't, if he didn't jump on this journey with me, then I will just still carry on doing what we're doing, what I'm doing. To the same goals just without him though.

Resident H is another resident who has had a change in mindset and is effecting change. She mentions, 'I thought I couldn't in the past, but in future - I can, and I will,' implying an identity restructuring as she changes her negative thought processes and fosters a healthier mindset.

Resident H: I've had no structure because my mind was always saying you can't, you can't. But today, it's changing. Today, I wake up and I do affirmations. Got all the presence and the glory. And I wake up, and as I'm doing things that I never thought I could, I'm telling myself, I can, and I will.

Further, she sets out a plan and is realistic about continuing change by listing what is required.

Resident H: I'm gonna make sure that I have all the wraparound services that I need. Gotta lay out a routine for me and my family so that I'm covering all those bases, because it's easy in here, it's hard when you get out there, and I've been constantly reminded of that, so I'm gonna do everything in my power to make sure that I'm better… that I'm connected to a sponsor and if I feel the need to call on somebody for counselling, NA classes, yeah just making sure that there's somebody there in times of need.

Moreover, **Resident B** lists all the courses she has completed and her accomplishments so far; it gives her a sense of pride and motivation to continue. Her narrative reflects a positive shift

in mindset as she seeks self-improvement and enjoys the process. She expresses a time when she would automatically be influenced to steal a car. However, through attending the 'minimising situations course', she is more aware of her actions. She understands the repercussions by stating that now she reflects on that scenario, 'it was all stupid', suggesting a newfound ability to make the right choices.

Resident B: Yeah, so all the courses around here I'm on all the lists. Think I've got 15-16 certificates in my room and that's over 5-6months and that's been hard out. Like've done motivational interviewing, intermediate and beginners, I've done ready, steady, quick, legacy, I've done relapse prevention, I've just passed that one, ah Solutionz, that's a big one, I can see them all my wall right now and it makes me proud. I've never been proud of myself. There are heaps of them! Like yeah, I'm proud as of myself, I haven't had a certificate since school. It motivates me too, and it just goes to show that I can do better, and I am doing better. I really liked the minimising situations course cause for me if we were going to steal a car, we would go and steal that car, there would be no - nah my bro, like minimising it you know, it was always like yeah that's us, let's go now. So um, there was no minimising or trying to talk someone out of things and it was all stupid, just real stupid.

On the other hand, **Resident C** narrates the quintessential 'age-out theory' in which she wants to effect change simply as she grows out of her criminal behaviour with age.

Resident C: This time I want to do it right. My bracelet doesn't hold me here. I've got the decision to pull it off and go out there and go do that and go back to jail and continue to have the same lifestyle and never get anywhere. I'm nearly 30 I don't want to; I don't want to do that anymore.

Resident J also shows signs of the age-out theory by narrating that a turning point in her life was turning 40 and being in prison. She realised that she no longer wanted to continue with this lifestyle at her age. A particular factor in her choosing to affect change was seeing younger peers who are more adept at crime than she was and no longer being able to keep up. She also mentions the 'jail mentality', which can be seen as the criminal identity; moving away from this identity shows her desire for restructuring.

Resident J: My turning point would have to be jail, to be honest, my last stint in jail was I go in there, I'm 40 years old, two years, go to four. I think I was just going on 14. And I went to jail. I guess my turning point was being back in jail and going up on that stupid charge. That was just life that was destroying me. Going up on the stupid charge of being of my age, not being able to keep up with all the young ones I kind of kept could if I really wanted to, I kind of couldn't just click back into that jail mentality, that jail way of living, that jail life. But for some reason, I didn't want to, and I just felt like this is not where I belong.

In saying that, Resident J also mentions that wanting change is a conscious decision that individuals actively embark on. She acknowledges that while external factors like the Grace Foundation and divine support have helped in her transformation, she understands that affecting change is ultimately a personal responsibility. Therefore, her narrative portrays a combination of personal growth and external support, which most desistance studies suggest that the interplay is essential within one's journey.

Resident J: It stems from me wanting to change, it stems from me taking that initial step, raising my hand, and saying, I want to change. Yep, Grace played a big part of it. But it was me. And it's still me. I'm putting in the hard work. It's hard to get up in the morning at 7:30 and be here by eight. It's hard work. But when you're passionate about something, that's what you do, yeah. So, it's all me, and I always give praise and glory to God first, but then I always pat myself on the shoulder because it's all me and Grace Foundation was a pillar and they helped me to get there.

5.1.1.2 Reflection, Forgiveness and Healing

Self-reflective (opposite to self-absolutory) narratives were also found. Developing coping mechanisms, reflecting on past behaviour, and focusing on self-healing were shared among seven of the residents.

Residents C and **H's** primary focus is on self-healing. They explain that it starts with making changes for themselves before rebuilding relationships. Resident H expresses that she has forgiven herself, alleviating guilt about hurting others, and shame. Without this change in mindset, the reinforcement of a negative self-identity continues, and her motivation for positive self-change expires.

Resident H: Seeing their vulnerable hearts break and then me not even being able to look at myself. So today, I can say that I've forgiven myself. And I understand why. That's not enough for me, I want to be genuinely sorry. I want to show them that I'm truly sorry. And I don't want to talk about it, I want to be about it.

Putting action to her words, Resident H has developed healthy coping mechanisms. She mentions how she handles conflict by pausing, and reflecting, which suggests she has found constructive ways to process and regulate her emotions, rather than continuing with impulsive and harmful actions.

Resident H: My future self-pauses, stops. And if my future self does not have an answer, respond by saying, 'Can you give me a moment to think about this? And I'll get back to you.

Resident J is motivated to strengthen and restore the impaired relationships in her life. She is in a phase of reconnecting for her personal growth and the betterment of her children's futures. She mentions leaving a legacy, which she states begins with forgiving and mending her familial connections, a critical aspect she feels is essential in achieving her goal.

Resident J: Restoring, so I'm kind of at this place now where I just want to kind of restore my relationships with whomever and rekindle and build bridges. My goal in life is to leave a legacy for my children and unless I restore these relationships with family, then I'm not leaving much of a legacy for my kids. So, I don't want my kids to turn to people that won't accept them because of my flaws, my shortcomings, and my character defects.

Further, coping mechanisms are reiterated by **Resident D.** Through attending Grace Foundation's programmes, particularly based on conflict management, Resident D reflects on her learnt behaviours including implementing the 'three second rule' which has helped her develop healthier ways of dealing with conflict. In stark contrast of how she states she would normally deal with conflict.

Resident D: I'm normally quite a violent person. When it comes to conflict, normally my first thing is fight or flight… but having the three-second rule... before reacting to a situation, give yourself three seconds to be able to, you know, process what just happened, but that's better

than me doing what I normally would do. But those three seconds, give me time to think what this person is going through. Yeah, have you thought about what they're going through, thought about why it's irritating you.

Resident D is learning to not hold resentment. This is part of introspection as she reflects on the past and does not want the same for her future. Choosing to forgive others has a positive effect on her future because learning to regulate negative emotion will not only help with her overall mental well-being but will also help foster healthy and stable relationships.

Resident D: I still have so much resentment for people in my past, but I don't want it to affect my future. After that, I know I'll be all good. Like things that have happened in the past, yeah. Get rid of that hate. I want to get rid of that anger towards them. That's one thing I've been working on getting rid of that resentment that you have towards people for things that have happened.

Correspondingly, **Resident B** aims to make amends with family and suggests this will help her heal, forgive, and move forward. Choosing to amend and rebuild relationships indicates improved emotional regulation and conflict resolution skills, which will help her foster relationships.

Resident B: That's part of the 12 steps is like making amends with not only my sister but all the people that I've done wrong and that have done me wrong. Like just make amends and don't be sorry or anything but you know, yeah, so that's one of the 12 steps, that's number one actually and yeah, it's something I want to do, that's a must, it's a must to move on, move forward.

Resident G narrates the intergenerational trauma she has endured. Her narrative is centred around her determination to break the cycle of trauma and make positive changes so that her children and grandchildren will not experience the same struggles. In doing so, Resident G is going through a process of personal growth as she recognises a need for emotional, psychological, and cultural healing.

Resident G: Heal. I need to heal, eh? I've had so much shit happen in my life, so much trauma. I was born out of trauma. I mean, it doesn't change the pattern. So, the patterns in my mom's generation. I'll change it for mine.

Resident A expresses determination to avoid harmful influences and instead focuses on healing by giving her partner an ultimatum. She discusses how she is outgrowing her partner's efforts at the Grace Foundation, and how her advancement has inspired her partner to join the Grace Foundation for his own development. They are now both at the Grace Foundation in recovery, remaining clean and healthy-minded.

Resident A: But because I ended up coming here, I ended up really enjoying it, like it saved me and I said oh look, I'm outgrowing you here. And he was still running around on drugs out there. And then I said to him, I've had enough of you, if you're gonna stay on the run and stuff like this, we'll break up. And so, he handed himself in that day. And he went to jail. Now he's out. And now we're on this recovery journey together. And so far, so good.

Resident E also reflects on building stability in her life through routine, in contrast to her previous instability of being an addict. This stability is through curating healthy habits that are good for her overall well-being, including physical exercise, nutrition and continuing to attend drug programmes. Another objective is to reconnect and sustain her relationships with family and friends.

Resident E: Just continuing going to NA, and church. being a part of my sobriety, and family and friends and just keeping well connected. Everything from getting up and going for walks in the morning, brushing my teeth and making my bed having you know, regular meals? Yeah. stability, having a roof over my head, 3 meals a day and showers.

5.1.1.3 Support Systems

Seven out of the ten residents narrate the importance of a support system. Whether it is a family member, friend or community support, a support system is an external factor motivating the residents to desist from crime. Most narrated the positive impact the Grace Foundation has had on them.

For Resident H her narrative is centred around inclusion and the love and sisterhood the residents share. Resident H is expressing that the Grace Foundation is a pro-social environment.

Resident H: Everyone just surrounds you and reaffirms that you are loved. We are here for you… We call each other sisters because Grace Foundation is our family, and we are going through the same struggles but will come out of it together.

Residents I and **J** noted external support systems away from family members. For example, Resident I self-narrates receiving support from a woman she met in prison called 'Haven'. She mentions that Haven heavily influenced her ability to move forward with her Wairua and her sovereign identity journey.

Resident I: I believe coming into Grace was the start of my journey, yeah. Going to jail and meeting Haven was a big part of my wairua journey, like having that support system.

Comparably, **Resident J** discusses how her former employer was instrumental in urging her towards completing her rehabilitation. Her anecdote of when her boss held her accountable for her actions effectively encouraged her to persevere. This signifies how paramount external support for an individual seeking change can be and holds her accountable.

*Resident J: He *boss* found out that at work, I was smashing things around. Kicking shit around and then yelled at all my workers, and then it got back to the boss, and the boss called me in, and he goes, what's happening? And I said they took my kids man, and he goes if you want to have the day off, have the day off. And I said nah I don't, and he goes, well, you can't be here kicking things around, and he said 'Hey, get your head out of the gutter, we're builders, we are built for this shit'. He goes, they took your kids; don't let them take anything else. You complete that fucking program, complete that program. And I was like, oh, they took my kids bro. And he's like, don't cry to me, complete that program. I'm gonna be there at your graduation, and I was like oh, just put my head down and just carried on, went to work, came back to Odyssey, signed in, sat in on groups, did my responsibilities. Shower, sleep. Did the same thing the next day.*

For other residents, support relied heavily on family members. **Resident A's** narrative highlights the significance of familial bonds and their role in her personal growth journey.

Resident A: One thing that's been a big part of my recovery is I have reconnected with so many of my family members. So, like, with addiction, you lose contact with so many people, and you will disconnect yourself from so many people in this. …but since being in recovery, so many of my family have come back into my life.

5.1.1.4 Education and Knowledge

Part of the resident's future goals was education or employment. The prominent career choice was social work, which could be attainable with the right opportunity and direction. For example, at the Grace Foundation, most of the management are past residents who are now employed and are giving back to the current residents. There are also possible opportunities to be house mothers and mentors at the new youth facility. For other residents (G and F), their career choices may not be as easily attainable.

Firstly, **Resident G** focuses on becoming a business owner (questioned and does not explicitly know what she wants to do) and afford her means lawfully, indicating a shift towards law-abiding behaviour.

Resident G: I need to start a business. I need to get legit. I don't need to steal anymore; I haven't got a habit anymore, so now I've got money in my bank. For the last seven years, I've just been hard out robbing to cover up the pain, so it makes me feel good that I'm on the right path forward.

On the other hand, **Resident F** would like to become a truck driver. This goal reflects a positive and forward-thinking mindset through building a more stable future for herself and her family. However, this may not be realistic as Resident F currently has no driver's licence and needs an endorsement on her licence to drive trucks.

Resident F: So, my dream job is being a truck driver, but I have no license. But I've had licences before they just expired, and I don't renew them, or I get disqualified.

Furthermore, **Resident D** is one of the five residents who expressed ambition towards social work. She has the intention and mentions she has family in the industry. Support from her family may help enable her to pursue her efforts towards social work.

*Resident D: I've always wanted to do it *social work*, and I've got family that are in that industry. So, I don't see why there's any reason why I can't do it. It's something I want to do; I've got motivation to do it, and I just have to get out of here and just go and do it.*

On the other hand, **Resident E** has had success in previous careers, but her downfall was her criminal conviction, which has restricted her job prospects. She mentions previously completing studies to be a barista and a beauty therapist and is now moving forward and seeking employment. She is taking proactive steps towards achieving this through completing a CV and is also taking part in job interviews. Additionally, she intends on sitting her driver's licence, which will increase her independence. However, she also associates getting a driver's licence with being able to drive to work, indicating that she has thought about how she would reach her goals.

Resident E: So, I've just completed a CV and cover letter. And I've just got some interviews for a front-of-house job at a restaurant… Getting my licence, just little things, you know, getting a car, getting into a good workplace. Good accommodation.

For **Resident A**, seeking financial stability is essential, and she aspires to get a job and eventually afford her finances. However, she is weary of this process because, being economically disadvantaged, the courses she wants to take are costly, and her housing situation is also limited.

Resident A: But then on the outside, it's a different story. So, learning, like learning how to actually properly manage my own finances, or after getting my own finances, I suppose, like getting a job and stuff like that would help… like, you know, studying where I don't have to pay a lot of money to do it, or whatever. And just housing.

Resident B's future aspiration is also centred around seeking financial stability and working in the farming industry. Her vision of working on a farm also comes with other foundations of reintegration, including accommodation.

Resident B: I'd love to get a job. I'd really love a farming one. That's just how I was brought up, so I would love to get a farming job like in a couple of years anyway. I can see myself on a farm. Because those jobs are good because the job comes with the house and with the house and the job everything falls into place and yeah that's how I want to live within the next year.

5.1.1.5 Generativity and Giving Back

Part of Maruna's (2001) redemptive script is acts of giving back. Most residents are altruistic and talk about how their growth will influence others.

Resident C is using this opportunity to help troubled youth who have experienced drug abuse. Her narrative shifts from seeking monetary gain in the past to bettering herself through helping other troubled youth. This shows a shift towards a pro-social identity. In addition, her urge to be qualified and work towards this shows self-efficacy, a component significant in desisting from crime.

> *Resident C: You know youth work is the only career that I've wanted to be in. I chose youth because that was me when I was younger, I was a very troubled youth. And that's the only thing I want to do, I can finish it here (qualification). And then I can get qualified. I want to be qualified in something I'm sick of being a criminal. You know, I have no value for money. I don't want to be rich. I just want to do something worthwhile.*

Resident C's narrative is comparable to **Resident D**, who aims to give back by inspiring troubled youth. She expresses that being able to give back is a driving force in her desistance and wants to be the role model to youth that she did not have growing up. Saying 'our youth' is significant, as it suggests a sense of connection and a shared responsibility towards young individuals and their well-being.

> *Resident D: Working with kids, like, our youth house or something like that. Even a social worker within the juvenile prisons. It's always been my aspiration, that's my drive. Well, you know, all you ever wanted when you were younger was that person to be able to understand you and be able to help you to be that person to say that's okay. That's the person that I want to be for others.*

Resident A's narrative is dissimilar to Resident D's in that she has been inspired by a youth aid worker. She expresses that 'it's a want and a need to help', which suggests that she has grown personally and developed empathy for those in similar situations.

Resident A: When I was a kid, I was about 11 years old. I was in a bad home, all that sort of stuff. And I had a youth aid advocate come into my home and help me into things like boxing, and he was just amazing. And I've wanted to do that since I met him back way back then. I just want to help where it's needed.

Resident B aims to be employed as a farmer within the next year but has also thought about a backup plan and conveys her interest in giving back to the Grace Foundation and their youth programme. She expresses admiration for the current programme facilitator and acknowledges that her circumstances make her an ideal fit to be a facilitator as well.

Resident B: Yeah, I'd love to give back. If my farming doesn't work, then I'd love to give back. I'd do something for Grace. I'd love to do that because of my own circumstances, and they have just opened a youth unit here and bro I was that youth, like I came from an amazing upbringing to go off the rails and I understand that. Sometimes it's just because you want to, or sometimes it's trauma and actual reasons deep down then, like, I never unpacked all mine until I got here.

Unlike the other residents' desire to give back, **Resident J** is the only resident actively giving back. In doing so, being able to teach gives her a sense of belonging and purpose. Through her healing and knowing her self-worth, she challenges her students to act out their behaviours rather than it being 'head knowledge'. This refers to superficial knowledge and the loss of applied understanding, and in doing so, Resident J is deeply invested in the growth and development of others. It is also important to note that she mentions 'change starts within the classroom', implying that providing an environment where the residents can learn to be pro-social and equip them with the necessary tools.

Resident J: A part of it makes me feel loved, I feel valued. I feel respected and I feel a part of, and I feel love. I always feel Aroha and Awhi in the room every time I'm teaching, you know… so I've managed to bring a few graduates through. Just because their book was mean and aligned. I challenge a lot in class. So, I want them to get it. You know, I don't know want them to just write down on a piece of paper, then it becomes head knowledge, I want them to be walking it out. And I want them to be speaking into their lives. But I want the best for every one of them. You know, Grace is a beautiful platform for change. So, it starts in the classroom.

5.1.1.6 Motherhood

Motherhood as well as a Desire for Change and Personal Growth were the residents' most dominant narratives. Their desire to change was internally and externally motivated but largely focused on benefiting their children. As such, motherhood was a distinguishing feature that encouraged the residents' desistance. Eight out of the ten residents were mothers, and three were grandmothers. Motherhood was a recurring narrative for all eight residents and was pivotal in their desistance journey. Their reports express a commitment to motherhood, which reflects the residents' determination to break the cycle and provide a stable environment for their children.

Firstly, **Resident H** expresses that one of her turning points was experiencing suicidal thoughts and recognising the impact of her actions on her children. Her desistance journey is centred around her children and being a present mother. She intends to shed her criminal identity and, in the next year, see herself as a fit, healthy, and mentally strong mother. She wants to see her children grow in their faith and pursue their passions through her guidance and support.

> *Resident H: Suicidal attempts. Just seeing the effects of the consequences of my actions on my children, and hearing the truth from them, I still struggle with it. I just kept coming to a realisation of what that kind of behaviour does, not just to myself but to the people that I love the most, especially my children. And I can't go through this life living with that anymore. I'm willing to try something new... my children, I see that they are happy doing whatever drives their passion, but also see myself in between that time helping them find their passion and guiding them along to get in there. Whatever they learn at home, they take out into the world and if we can give them the tools to not just survive but thrive. I'm just looking forward to that. That's my number one goal since being here is healing and being the best mum and partner, I can be.*

Similarly, **Resident A** emphasises the importance of the well-being of her children and her desire to provide them with a better upbringing than she experienced. She discusses her role as a mother, her sense of purpose, and the accomplishments of her children in education and sports. Her biggest motivator is her children, and she reflects on a turning point in seeking help at Grace Foundation after seeing her son's potential.

*Resident A: So, he *son* learns Te Reo Māori and Kapa Haka and stuff and I stayed there for the weekend. And I just took a like look, I looked at my life like this, I was running around committing crimes and not focusing on my children. This is where I want to be with my children and like running around watching my boyfriend run around doing crime and doing dumb shit. That was a turning point for me… And I realised, far, this is the only place I want to be is with my children and stuff. I knew that I had to make a change. And yeah, Grace was the first place I turned to'.*

In addition, Resident A acknowledges that life after prison was a challenging experience for her, but having a child gave her a sense of purpose, and she managed to desist for a prolonged period.

Resident A: Yeah, it was just hard outside but I built a life. I got it. I had another baby after this. And like I didn't go back to jail again for another 10 years.

Accordingly**, Resident F**'s biggest motivator is to stop the cycle of criminality to provide a better life for her daughter. She asserts that the time is now to avoid any adverse effects on her daughter's life.

Resident F: My why is my daughter. I don't want my daughter to go through this life, she's only seven years old. The time to change is now and I just want to stop that cycle.

Further, **Residents G, C** and **J** recount their difficult upbringings and challenging environments as contributors to their criminal lifestyles. They express the hardships they faced during their formative years, including all types of abuse, lack of love and support and the absence of a parent due to incarceration. They then proceed to talk about their parental impact on their children and how they were raised has had a detrimental role-on effect.

For instance, **Resident J** narrates how her challenging upbringing has negatively affected her motherhood. She expresses how coming from a prominent gang family has influenced her involvement in crime, which she describes as normal. She describes how this way of life has influenced her children and, in turn, shaped their own criminal identities. She attributes this

to the fact that, due to her lifestyle, they have adversely experienced disruption in their education and, respectively, their involvement with Oranga Tamariki.

> *Resident J: ... and I didn't know how to do the paperwork, so he missed out that year because I went back to jail. Their education is suffering every time I go to jail on these situations.*

On reflection, Resident J expresses regret for not being able to provide better opportunities for her children but expresses great pride in her grandchildren and aims to continue her journey at the Grace Foundation to get clean and provide these opportunities. As she labels herself as the family leader, her journey at the Grace Foundation is to eventually provide support to her sons by encouraging them to earn an honest living. This showcases reflections of her past self and her need to remain at the Grace Foundation to focus on her personal growth and be that support showing them the path forward.

> *Resident J: I need to heal, eh? I've had so much shit happen in my life, so much trauma. I was born out of trauma. I mean, it doesn't change the pattern. So, the patterns in my mom's generation. I'll change it for mine. My grandchildren got two mokos. I'm so proud of them, they are the reason I've just slowly been a part of this process and the reason why I'm getting off the P.*

Resident C is more concerned about how her absence has affected her children. This gives her reason for worry since she does not want her children to have the same generational effect on their lives that she had due to her parents' influence. As such, her future vision focuses on fostering traditional and conservative family structures, which suggests she seeks a safe and stable environment for her children. Therefore, she is determined to change her lifestyle to provide a better future for them.

> *Resident C: They've had so much time without me and that's not fair on them. How I've envisioned my life is me being the stay-at-home 1950s wife, the conservative and there's nothing wrong with it, I want to provide that stable lifestyle for my children.*

On the other hand, **Resident E** discusses her struggles with drug addiction and how this has impacted her ability to be a present mother. She admits that her drug use kept her from being

the kind of mother she wanted to be and that her absence impacted her kids. She adds that she regrets not being a good mother and partner in the past and is determined to change within the next year to reconnect with them. She notes that her recovery and sobriety are important steps towards being a more engaged and responsible mother.

Resident E: "Just continue going to NA, church and being a part of my sobriety. Just keeping well connected, yeah. I want to be a better grandmother, better partner, and better mother".

5.1.1.7 Appreciation for Grace Foundation and its impact

Almost all residents express appreciation for the Grace Foundation in helping with self-discovery and show gratitude for the support they are receiving.

Residents **B, C, G,** and **H** credit their time at the Grace Foundation with helping them transform their lives and look towards breaking the cycle of criminality. They express gratitude for the support of the Grace Foundation and acknowledge how the programmes have provided them with a pathway forward through healing and growth.

Resident H: When I first walked in these doors, I was broken. The love that surrounds you, in being in one of the most vulnerable states being here, was so key to me opening, opening back up again. Everyone just surrounds you and reaffirms that you are loved. We are here for you. And in the classes, the classes I love the classes because they touch base on something and especially the trauma classes Soulutionz, CBT - cognitive behavioural therapy, so they're coming at it from all different angles to help you understand that we're not a shit person. It's just that you didn't know how to deal with things that you're going through. And so, with that understanding comes acceptance and with that acceptance comes healing and with that healing comes growth.

Resident C: Without Grace Foundation, I couldn't because first, what they do is unheard of. It's so unheard of. And it's so great. Opportunities and it's just growing and growing and growing. You know, and the people that are here, most of them, they want to change.

Likewise, **Resident A** finds the Grace Foundation to be a place where she can 'refocus' herself. The Grace Foundation offers the support she did not previously have by offering guidance, structure, and positive reinforcement towards her desistance goals.

> *Resident A: I think without Grace, I wouldn't have even realised, like, I knew that I needed something to refocus my life on where I want to be and what I want and where I want to go, but I didn't have that motivation or that support behind me and coming into Grace is definitely what I needed to help refocus me.*

The Grace Foundation has also influenced **Resident I** to have a voice and speak openly about her identity. Through this process, she has learned to love herself and feel confident in her abilities.

> *Resident I: But Grace has taught me how to love myself and be confident in myself and trust in myself and give myself the mana to speak publicly and openly.*

In contrast, **Residents C** and **J** make a connection between the treatment philosophies of the Grace Foundation and Odyssey House, another Post-release Community that both residents attended previously. Resident J differentiates the two by explaining that Odyssey House provides a behavioural programme that mainly focuses on modification, while Grace Foundation's primary goal is to identify and treat the traumatic experiences and underlying problems that contribute to a person's behaviour. Resident J suggests the Grace Foundation framework and its focus on healing trauma is more in line with her needs. She mentions that the Grace Foundation gives the residents a sense of worth, community and focuses on getting to the root cause than the behaviour.

> *Resident J: We are a place of healing. We do not focus on the behaviour as such. We focus on what's bobbing underneath the behaviour, the bottom of the iceberg. That's what we focus on. The trauma. The unworthy, you know, a lot of our Wahine come in, they don't feel, they don't feel worthy. So, we focus on the sexual abuse, all of that, we focus on because that's what they don't see. That's the bottom of the iceberg. You know, so the difference between Odyssey and Grace Foundation is, that's what we focus on getting to the root cause but that's what they focus on, the behaviour.*

Meanwhile, **Resident C** also expresses her experiences at Grace Foundation and how seeing other residents wanting to make a personal change has guided her to make changes herself rather than being at Odyssey house where she feels individuals are not as willing to participate and are there to fulfil the requirements set by the state. Therefore, Resident C is implying the importance of being ready to make changes and that unlike Odyssey House residents, the resident's at Grace Foundation are willing to embrace change which has had an impact on her choosing to take the same path forward.

Resident C: I'm here for the right reasons. People in here actually want to make a change. Yeah, and that's the difference between other rehabs I've been to. Odyssey House is another one where everyone is there just to get off their charges.

Resident B and **J** share similar perspectives in not having any sense of direction and feeling lost before feeling welcomed by the Grace Foundation. They insist on deciding to change their life around, knowing the support they can receive if they choose to change and better their lifestyles. The feeling of inclusion and seeing the successes of other residents acts a driving force for the residents to desist.

Resident J: *As soon as I walked through the door, I had Pappa Dave and Papa Ula greet me and say a prayer over me. There's just this overwhelming sense that this is where I belong. For a very long time. I've been walking life-like. I've got no sense of direction, I don't know where I'm going, I don't know what I'm doing. I've got nothing, you know, and I've lost all my kids, and I chose drugs over my kids and, you know, in, just walked in here and I felt this, this sense of belonging like this is where I belong. And that was the turning point for me. And from that point on, I'll just put my head forward to refrain from the other and just keep going. And that's where the turning point for me. When I came in these doors two years ago, I made a conscious decision. I'm changing my life around, I'm changing my life around, I'm freaking changing my life around.*

Resident B: Before Grace, I honestly was out there living day by day doing dumb things, and just being here, there is a better way, there are options, it's just clear now. Like, from 15 to 22 I pretty much wasn't even sober. Like I was always up to doing no good. And being here, and watching it first hand, all the successes coming out of Grace, like watching someone like me come in here, like a troubled kid, like I know there are great things to come, I believe in myself, and I want better for myself, and I can't wait for that.

5.1.2 Condemnation Narratives

Out of the ten residents, only half had condemning scripts that followed narratives of dependence (drugs and alcohol), lack of direction and purpose, material gain, and institutionalisation and blame. Consequently, the latter was the most common narrative.

5.1.2.1 Institutionalisation and Blame

Residents A, B, C, G and J all share the same condemning narrative of institutionalisation and blame.

Resident B expresses vexation regarding her time in and out of youth justice residences and prisons. She describes a lack of empathy and support from the authorities. She notes that the lack of empathetic approaches hinders her ability to want to change and succeed in her effort towards desistance.

> *Resident B: There's like no empathy like they say if you do this again, you're going to be spending a longer time in jail, like they'll say that, but they won't say we are here to help you, you can do this this and this, it's just, if you do it again you're going to get another two years in jail and blah blah blah. And if that's all you know, that's all you know, you are walking out of that police station going ah yeah, and going back home and doing the same thing you know.*

She expresses her reasons as to why she feels institutionalised, suggesting penal approaches have not had a crime-preventative effect. Her narrative also draws to the school to prison pipeline as she mentions being in both youth justice facilities and prison suggesting that state institutions have failed her throughout her life.

> *Resident B: I ended up getting breached because I never went back to that, I think I got curfew. Like I have been on curfews my whole life. I think I've had about 47 breaches of curfew, something ridiculous like that anyway and that never ever worked like honestly from all those times I was in juvy and that, I was getting put on curfews, none of that worked. I was sentenced to juvy, that didn't work, I got sentenced to jail, that didn't work like I have been back to jail eight times throughout my life and yeah, instead of getting support you're just*

being punished, we'll lock you up because we can detain you and you can stop committing crime, well that shit doesn't work.

She further expresses a desire for more empathic and supportive approaches to addressing criminal behaviour and, in turn, challenges the efficacy of punitive measures in treating mental health and criminal behaviour.

Resident B: They tried to make me see this counsellor, the judge ordered me, you know told me that one of my conditions was to go to counselling. So, I gave it a go, I just felt like, to be honest, it felt to me like why would I want to talk to this stranger? And at the time, I was only young, and there were stupid questions like, so you see your mother die? and you know I don't want to sit here talking to you about this. Like you already know that's what happened and you're just making me revisit that situation now, like now you're making me mad. Now you just make me want to get drunk and that's how I felt at that age. They could have done better, they could have been more supportive and cared about my needs, if they did better, would I be so damaged now?

However, it should be noted that instead of being embittered and harbouring resentment, she later goes on to express a desire to support youth who are in similar situations so that she may benefit their lives the way she wished the system had supported her. This suggests Resident B's redirection towards a more constructive and pro-social outlook and lifestyle.

Resident B: I always wanted to be a youth worker and give back to the youth. This was my dream when I was a youth when I was sitting in Juvy and stuff like I thought that one day I could give back, be the support I needed. Ah I'd love to give back.

On the other hand, **Residents A** and **C** express their need for prison, perceiving prison as a regular part of their lives. How Resident A and C normalise their circumstances has several negative consequences including hindering the effectiveness of rehabilitation and functioning in the outside world as it discourages their personal growth and minimises their need to seek self-improvement. It creates a dependency on others, and a loss of identity.

Resident C: I liked living in jail, I felt stable. I hated my life outside.

Resident A also needed prison. She states, "*Life was better in jail, it was a good life".* This suggests she found comfort in the routine of prison and having a safe place to live. This perpetuates their likelihood of being involved in criminal acts, as they know that going back to prison will be a benign experience compared to being on the outside.

What differs between these residents is that **Resident G** blames her institutionalisation on the loss of traditional Māori ways of living and attributes this to colonisation. Her narrative highlights a sense of blame towards historical factors and European punitive approaches. Resident G blames her time within the system as a product of colonisation. She expresses resentment to the assimilation of European practices like crime being an individualistic punishment rather than a collective responsibility.

*Resident G: They *colonisers* took away our everything to be dependent on each other my elders they lived off each other, we spend it on each other. We looked after each other. And it was possible, so they took it away, yeah, now you are left with a whole lot of lost people.*

Equally, **Resident I** expresses a sense of frustration and injustice when acknowledging the historical effects of drugs and alcohol on her people and how it continues to negatively affect society. Her anguish is based on not being able to make a change, which has resorted to blame as she sees her community suffering.

Resident I: I'll go for a walk to the shop and there's a whole line of like, Māori, Islanders, all fucking like, working out how they're going to try and crack an earn to get their next hit. How we're going to change that? How are we gonna fix that? We wouldn't have had this problem if you'd just left us alone. And I think, like, yeah, just in like some, some of the things that my people are going to jail for, you know if you kill someone, bro you overs, but drug offences? Nah bro, jail doesn't fix that.

Similarly, to Resident A's need for prison, **Resident C** admits to being a product of institutionalisation. She admits to a loss of independence as she suggests it has hindered her

ability to function independently in the real world. She states she has lived a transient lifestyle, and through her time in and out of prison, she has become reliant on others, especially her mother, to carry out basic tasks such as booking a doctor's appointment. Ultimately, this suggests that Resident C is in a state of learnt helplessness that reduces her self-efficacy and decision-making abilities.

Resident C: I'm pretty institutionalised. I don't even like it when I'm in the real world. I don't even make a doctor's appointment, I've got to ring my mom to do it, you know? I'm just used to having everything done for me. Like, if I'm in jail my mum does it for me, and I started needing things to be done for me and then I started to go to rehab where everything was done for you. When I'm in jail, everything's done for you.

My charges are something that structure me in my life because I kind of need it for some structure in my life because I'm that institutionalised. Because without it, I'm gonna go off the fucking rails. Yeah, when I'm left to my own devices. You know, because I'm always, you know, I don't get much freedom. And when I do, I want to really, I really want to experience everything all at once. So yeah, and even if I'm not doing fraud, I'm doing some other crime. you know.

Notably, **Resident I** expresses that prison did in fact have the intended purpose and had a deterring effect on her. She mentions how she found direction in prison. However, due to the lack of support outside of prison, she fell back into old habits and networks of familiarity. She expresses that after prison she was hoping for a purposeful future but did not have the accommodation and the means to do so.

Resident I: I had direction I knew what my goals were in life, but I had like no stable place to become a better version of me.

5.1.2.2 Feelings of Worthlessness

Out of the ten residents, only three self-narrated feelings of worthlessness. From rejection to insecurity, and then to struggles with identity and belonging, these condemnation scripts are conveyed differently for all three residents.

Resident C narrates uncertainty about her future and a lack of ambition. She admits to being nervous when it comes to branching out and trying new things. She mentions 'keeping herself safe', which can potentially act as one of her coping mechanisms. This stems from her dislike of rejection and her preference for staying within her comfort zone.

Resident C: Because I don't like rejection, so I'll keep myself safe from rejection. I don't like the uncomfortable feeling of it… like being around criminals and this rehab life is comfortable for me, doing the other way isn't, it's not comfortable.

However, her narrative is not entirely condemning, as she later expresses some interest in pursuing youth work and helping other children who have experienced similar circumstances. As such, this suggests a newfound sense of purpose and pro-social narrative.

Resident C: I don't want to do the AOD thing. But like, you know, I chose youth because troubled youth on drugs. Yes. That was me when I was younger… But then this youth thing came up. When I heard the Grace Foundation had this youth department, I realised that this is something I can pursue; it gives me optimism. It gives me purpose. Yeah. So, when I have graduated Soulutionz and all the other programs here, I will look into further studies.

Furthermore, Resident C's narrative exhibits signs that she is emotionally detached and struggles with processing and regulating her emotions. Her tendency to avoid past emotional experiences, such as suppressing her childhood trauma, implies emotional processing difficulties and an overall negative impact on her present emotional well-being. She mentions finding shelter by blocking out anything that would make her sad. However, by harbouring these emotions, there is a lack of self-awareness essential in addressing the underlying issues that contribute to harmful and criminal behaviour.

Resident C: I block out anything that's gonna make me feel sad. I feel like I was very sad as a child. And I suppress that, and I don't acknowledge it.

Primary Researcher: So, you've never really dealt with your childhood trauma?

Resident C: Nah, and then when I did at Higher Ground, that's where, that's the rehab that you're supposed to deal with those things. And couldn't even get, I was too young, I didn't get past the behavioural stage to unpack all that other stuff. So, I left half fixed. And then when I used drugs that's when I start to feel emotional, and I could cry. I can't cry. I was saying this to this girl the other day. I can't cry. I feel like there's something wrong with me… I feel like now my emotional state has really been damaged because I've desensitised myself to a lot of things. I don't get sad about things.

Next, **Resident J'**s narrative suggests struggles with identity and belonging in the past tense. She no longer feels a lack of belonging due to her connection with her family and finding purpose in being a mentor to others at Grace Foundation. Her narrative showcases her search for purpose and acceptance. For Resident J, part of this process was relapsing, which shows that 'going straight' is a non-linear process, but she is making the best out of her outcomes by being a support system for others struggling with feelings of worthlessness and addiction.

Resident J: I didn't know where I belonged and everything I do now is because I've made a conscious decision to change my life around and my intentions are pure and clear. My goals are set, and I kind of walk it out. And so, what I walk, I talk as well, when I talk, I walk as well. And it's kind of that. And so, then they offered me the job at Mums and Bubs. And I went up there and I thought I was doing really well. And so once again, I fell off. Lapsed enough to know that that's not where I want to be and I guess for me and my journey and where I'm going and where I'm heading, I needed to do that. Now I can speak life into that. Before I had no idea what it felt like to relapse and be still, you know, for me to come out the other end and be able to speak now that light into other wahines lives.

5.1.2.3 Dependence

Dependence on alcohol and drugs was a shared narrative among half of the residents. All five residents narrate reliance from an early age and resorting to these substances to suppress their emotions. Still, substance dependence is one of the determining factors in their desistance journeys, but all five are actively resisting relapse and determined to remain clean.

Drugs and alcohol were reported as a coping mechanism for the residents. For example, **Residents B** and **D** suffered loss at a young age. To suppress their grief, they restored to substances.

Resident D: For me, death is a big factor in my life. When I was 14 my brother passed away and I guess that was my turning point in my life after losing so many people then when I lost my brother, I didn't really know what to do. My family are quiet, like you must be strong that kind of thing. So instead of talking about it or whatever when I was younger, I turned to drugs and alcohol. Just when I had that little taste of what alcohol can do to your mind, what weed can do to your mind, what P can do to your mind, it was just my coping mechanism.

Similarly, **Resident B** emphasises how her dependence acted as a coping mechanism to block out the pain of seeing her mother pass away in a car crash. However, she reflects on her life now by stating that sobriety is necessary, but she still struggles with temptation. Her persistence in remaining clean and dealing with her emotions is a step in the right direction towards desistance.

Resident B: We had a car crash and my mum passed away and um, it really did something to me anyway like, I don't know just being that young, just suddenly, I turned into an adult at 15 years old like everything was, nothing was funny anymore, like it was just serious for about four years. I started drinking every day for about four years. So yeah, alcohol was my number one choice you know? I still struggle with alcohol now. Straight up, um but yeah, it's hard, I've been clean for some time now and it's what I need.

This bears a likeness to **Residents D** and **G**'s narratives, who share similar narratives on being clean and dealing with their emotions. They assert that being clean is better than numbing out the pain through drugs and alcohol, allowing themselves to deal with these feelings healthily.

Resident G: We all have thoughts and emotions, but rather learning that those are healthy, and those are normal. But I'm learning all these tools about how to deal with those emotions and allowing them to arise and not fearing them anymore because they used to be really

frightening to me… but mostly just allowing that emotion to come up. And that it's okay. It's not gonna kill me. It's not gonna affect me, allowing these emotions to come to the surface and allow for healing.

It is also important to address that Resident D had cut ties with her partner to focus on recovery. This demonstrates her desire for growth and how important getting clean is for her. It signifies that she has made challenging decisions to concentrate on what is needed for her own growth. Importantly, her success has influenced her partner to start on his own desistance journey.

Resident D: It's complicated. Like you know, because we're both in addiction and we're both quite messed up… So, I shut that down, I shut that relationship off and he's the one that's reached out asking that he wants to recover. And he's somebody that's never ever like, every time I've put it there, he's always been like 'nah, I'm not doing that', 'nah, I don't care'. You know, whatever. We're not together, blah, blah. Yeah, he wants recovery.

Similarly, **Resident B** is realistic about her future and understands that her recovery will not be a success if her partner does not get clean as she will have that continued unhealthy influence. She recognises that although she is taking steps towards her recovery, her success is dependent partly on her partner's decisions to go straight as well. However, she continues by stating that she has had conversations with her partner about seeking rehabilitation together to grow in partnership and as individuals. This suggests that she has reflected on her future self and what she needs to do to achieve her goals. The advantages of the couple recovering together are mutual support and understanding of what is needed in their process, shared goals and a common purpose and learning positive coping mechanisms and routines.

Resident B: Oh, I've got a partner now. I'll try to get her to come to rehab so we can do the journey together otherwise it doesn't really work. Like she's out there doing drugs and I'm in here doing good… Um so yeah, we've already had this talk, at the start I said fuck this isn't going to work if I'm in here doing this shit, we need to go on this journey together, so we are on the same path, to grow together, so we are doing the same programs, you know.

On the contrary, **Resident C**'s reliance on drugs drove her to engage in criminal activity. Her continued involvement was down to the external influence of her partner. She also alludes to

drugs being normalised within her family dynamics and suggests that her family and conversely, her influence on her family are responsible for the setbacks in recovery. Overall, being in a drug-induced environment meant that every time she tried to become clean, she was influenced back into this lifestyle, negatively impacting her desistance efforts.

Resident C: I put it down to the P. I'm all fucked up on the P, do some fraud make some money, get some more, you know, but once I'm inactive, I don't want to smoke P. I don't even know why I got back into the P it's because of my partner. It's always the guy that I'm with. They want to smoke P, and I don't really care for smoking P. Yeah, I get stopped and then I'll be back in the struggle mode. But now that her Dad's out and he's, has its th-the drugs, it's my environment, they're all addicts (She is talking about her immediate family). They're gonna fuck up again in life. Everything will be all good for a bit then someone's going to give, they're all going to fall together. We're all going to fall together. And I can't talk because my mum and my mum and my stepdad they were doing well and then when I bought the meth into the home. I bought the meth at this time and meth made both of their mental illnesses flare up but if it wasn't me, it would be my stepbrother, or it wasn't me it'd be my nana, or one of their friends would bring it in.

Resorting to drugs was in part due to traumatic experiences she has had in her life. In her childhood, she had a brain injury as well as being witness to domestic violence. She mentions having a manic-depressive mother and an alcoholic father, which assumes she is a product of her environment, and there being a lack of positive support systems to promote healthier routines and habits. She places a strong emphasis on the association between managing her trauma and drug use. Rather than recognising and regulating her emotions appropriately, she resorts to drugs to self-medicate and shelter from her trauma.

Resident C: So, I grew up in addiction and like you know, everyone was crooked… my mum suffers from mental health but she's not a drug addict as such, but she uses it occasionally. And because she's a manic depressive, it alters her chemical imbalance and she can't handle it like other people, like she would have manic episodes and would go to the hospital. My Dad was an alcoholic, real prolific.

Breaking free from these harmful environments has been a challenge for Resident C, which leads her to feel hopelessness for the future, as she feels she has nowhere, or no one to help

with her ongoing support. She states, ‘one day when I was ready to go straight… but now that's gone’, suggesting that her motivations towards desisting are not currently her priority nor are attainable, and restoring back to drugs and old habits is therefore likely.

Resident C: I don't really have much family. I've got a brother. He was straight in Napier. And about now, he's 50. He's about 50 years old. But in the last three years, to four years, he started to take up a meth habit. So, I did have some dreams, like, you know, one day when I was ready to go straight, I could go out to Napier for my straight life. But now that's gone. I'll do geographical moves around the country to try and get away from the drugs. But you know, at the end of the day, I'm running from myself, because everywhere I've moved, I've used drugs in that town, or I've jumped into that lifestyle, no matter what's happening I’ll meet someone.

Furthermore, she recognises the challenges and setbacks she has faced in trying to get clean and the difficulty in finding effective solutions to help with her addiction. She mentions she has been in and out of other Post-release Communities. She has also tried to turn her life around through study but has experienced setbacks due to her criminal record. As her record reduces her opportunities for desired careers, she has fallen into a cessation of effort and resistance. Ultimately, this highlights how desistance is not a linear process, and one will go through continued setbacks.

Resident C: Realistically, my criminal history is what brought me down, and I have no hopes and dreams anymore. Whatever I had, of course, I got told that I couldn't. I couldn't complete the program, because I couldn't complete my 200 hours’ worth of experience because of my drug charges. No, there was no workplace with placement for me, they wouldn't accept me. And so that kinda was just like, whoa, what's the point, and that's when I started to give up hope. That's the only time I've decided to study something or wanted to do something. And then I just got back on the drugs because I came to the realisation that no one gives a fuck about you and the world is ugly, and I grew up.

Like Resident B, **Resident A** underlines her journey as a recovering addict. She expresses that being sober is challenging for her, but she remains committed to the cause and has been clean

for the past four months. Her narrative emphasises her determination to stay clean to change her life for the better, and she sees her sobriety as a stepping stone towards this. However, she is also realistic about the challenges she will need to overcome to continue this goal. She speaks about healthy routines like daily exercise, addressing barriers by going to NA meetings and using all the tools learnt at the Grace Foundation.

Resident A: Probably just my addiction. There's some days that are bad, it's always going a battle for me to achieve anything, really. That's what it always has been for my life. So, if I can stay on top of my recovery, and still, like, with anything I do, bear in mind that I am a recovering addict. Also just doing what I'm doing. I'm going to NA meetings, always reaching out. I have, like, so using all the tools that I've learned, I'm learning in Grace to stay with sound mind, you know, going to the gym in the morning and keeping a structured routine and stuff like that those things are also important, I believe, for recovery.

5.1.2.4 Material Gain

Material gain was a concept shared among the individuals of the LDS; however, only one resident possessed intentions for material gain. **Resident C** has a complex relationship with fraud and monetary gain. She admits to this act and sees it as something she is good at. Her efforts have allowed her to buy property, cars, and items for her daughter, ultimately fulfilling her material needs.

Resident C: And money, money is the root of all evil for me, because I used to love doing fraud, but now I hate it, it's not fun, it's become a chore for me, it's become a job. Because it was just a hobby that turned into a job.

Primary Researcher: And that was all for material gain?

Resident C: For the basic things yes, for my daughter or for a new car or a bond for a house. Like in my head, if I can't buy property, there's no point in doing it. You know, I am big. If I can't buy property, there's no point, you know, if we're not going to be able to buy a house, what's the point in doing it?

Resident C: Fraud was a real hobby for me. It was something I did in my free time. That's how I started doing it, that's how I became so good at it. But I just won't be doing it full time. You

know why? This might sound, his is how I pictured my life settling down having kids. My husband goes to work, my kids go to school, I've cleaned the house, and I sit back on my computer and find things. That's what I want to do.

Primary Researcher: Find new things?

Resident C: Just fraud wise. Even if it's not actively making me money. The adrenaline of knowing I can do that Is what drives me.

However, Resident C, on reflection, expresses conflicting emotions, as she feels she has mastered this skill but also knows the consequences of her actions. She acknowledges how her behaviour can indirectly affect others but justifies it by suggesting that insurance companies will cover the cost or that it gives grounds for her to continue as she has had a more unfortunate run-in life. Justifying this behaviour and not wanting to fully desist suggests that she does not fully comprehend the consequences of her actions on herself, the community and society.

Resident C: I focus more because I feel I'm a little bit ADHD like puts me in focus mode and like it's good for sophisticated fraud. But I don't even want to do that anymore. I'll do it if I need too, I feel like I've gained mastery in that aspect of my life, and I don't need to do it anymore… But then in my head, I can make me a new driver's licence so I can make a new ID and I can go get me a house. So, I'm at a crossroads with one foot in and one foot out. So, I've minimised my behaviour to think that is okay. The fraud is okay. Because it doesn't hurt anyone. It's the insurance companies that pay for it and it's not hurting anyone directly. But in the long run it does. That's how I think. And I'm like, well, I've had a harder life or they're just gonna lose their credit rating and then they can just, they can just dispute it and they're fine.

5.1.3 Cultural Narratives

Interestingly, what was not found in the LDS were narratives centred around cultural identity. As NZ is a bi-cultural state with a colonial background, cultural identity is a significant part of the residents' identities. Cultural identity and homage to heritage were dominant concepts in six out of the ten residents' narratives.

Out of all the residents, **Resident I** emphasised her cultural identity the most and identified herself as a Tangata Whenua as opposed to a Māori. Her classification as a Tangata Whenua indicates a strong sense of ownership of her identity and gives her a sense of agency. Being a Tangata Whenua is a consistent aspect of Resident I's identity.

Resident I: "So I am, I classify myself as Tangata Whenua. I used to classify myself as a Māori, but as I come into the hikoi of my purpose, I believe, which is my purpose in life, I've learned that I am truly a Tangata Whenua which is a person of the land. Māori Tangata Whenua were given the title of Māori after the colonisers came. Māori means a wider range of people whereas Tangata Whenua is classed as people of the land. So, I classify myself as a Tangata Whenua now. I'm legally and lawfully registered to the federal government of Te Ika Maui".

Resident I proceeds to say that her sovereign identity is an integral aspect and that she pursues sovereign recognition by reclaiming her identity as a Tangata Whenua. She explains the distinction between being classified as a Māori and identifying as a Tangata Whenua. In doing so, she states she is currently filing legal documents that challenge the court's jurisdiction and assert her rights as a Tangata Whenua. In distinguishing the difference between a Māori and a Tangata Whenua, Resident I specifies her perception of people who classify as Māori and to those who she feels are the real people of the land.

Resident I: "Through sovereignty, I first must claim my identity. There's a process that I must take. I'm not sure what the process is, I just must keep praying for God to keep me on his path. And I started doing that a few years ago. And this is where he led me. When I die, I want the world to know, I want a beautiful legacy that stays in my generations to come forever."

She discusses her Whakapapa and her tribal roots. Her ancestry plays a role in shaping her identity, as it provides her with a sense of belonging, inclusion, and pride.

Resident I: "I'm very proud to be a part of my Whakapapa line to Ngāti Kahungunu, which has been on my mother's side, and my father's Whakapapa bloodline line comes from Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, which is an iwi, a South Auckland iwi, from Maraetai, Kawakawa Bay"

She also reflects on the past and how she would treat other cultures, suggesting a shift in identity and promoting empathy and respect for others due to her cultural journey.

Resident I: "I used to get real quite racist; I was quite racist before. But now, every time a different culture comes by me, it's like I can hear the elders crying, or something, especially around other Indigenous cultures. And I believe they just, they want me to thrive in my spiritual world, and I've got so much support to thrive in my sovereignty because it's all righteousness."

However, by internalising the belief systems and customs of Tangata Whenua, she expresses that she is not ready to expand her networks and meet other members of her hapū without recovering first. This not only suggests personal development and a strong sense of accountability for her past actions and her current position within her desistance journey but also that meeting her hapū acts as an external motivation, as she expects to continue to pursue a deeper comprehension of her cultural heritage and ties to her hapū. It is also important to note that her connection to her hapū is an additional positive support system that she will be able to rely on for guidance when she is ready. Feeling connected to her hapū will positively impact her well-being as it gives her a sense of security and reduces feelings of isolation and alienation, often lost in NZ society with its adversity, cultural divides, and social marginalisation.

Resident I: Yeah, there's a whole hapū waiting for me to get down there. But I don't want to go there until I align myself correctly.

This resident further envisions a future where she and her people can experience freedom and peace in all aspects of life, including spiritual, mental, emotional, and financial freedom. She expresses her passion for achieving these goals and believes it is realistic to do so within the next five years. In her narrative, there was a progression as Resident I spoke about her short-term plans for the next year.

Resident I: A year from now, I see myself, depending on how I go in the courts, my goal is to fully legally and lawfully own the whenua where I'm from and have all my people living there,

under the federal government of Ti Ikau Maui, living in peace. I mean, financial stability, in stability, from the land. Living in whānaungatanga, living together

Resident I went on to speak about her long-term goals, which are for the next five years. Ideally, this lifestyle involves communal living and alludes to how her Tipuna used to live, which shows she places great emphasis on the traditional practices and customs of her ancestors, like living off the land. This contrasts with her previous habits, known to her as 'tactics of survival' which involved stealing to afford food.

Resident I: Five years, that's where I see myself in five years. Only my only, everybody living in peace under God's law and in whānaungatanga, ah practising my mahiki, I'll probably be living the way our Tipuna used to live. Just a bit more updated and a bit more modernised. Yeah, I envision us all attending our Church with our babies. Certain parts of my people like they are good gardening, so they're gonna teach all those, and in kura they are going to be learning how to plant the soil properly and how to make their fishing line and hooks"

Similarly, **Resident J** conveys that part of her personal journey of restoration and growth is reconnecting with her cultural roots. She expresses interest in a documentary that her sister has previously done, which is about discussing the importance of self-empowerment and culture over substance abuse. She intends on taking this journey for her personal growth but also to lay a foundation for her children.

Resident J: Yeah, absolutely. Part of the restoration, part two is me going home. Back to my roots. Yeah. I want to go home and do a bit of a documentary back there, like my sister, my sister has done mana over meth. I want to do something quite similar, you know, quite similar. Yeah. Go back to my roots as part of my restoration to the past part of me restoring and building a foundation for my kids.

Interestingly, Resident J expresses that her passion for Kapa Haka is a coping mechanism. She states that it provides her with an outlet and helps her find solace, especially as she mentions she lost part of her identity when her mother passed away. Through Kapa Haka, Resident J has the means to channel her feelings and regulate her emotions.

Resident J: Kapa haka is a vehicle for me to release. Yes. So, I do it once a week. Yeah. Even kapa haka when I'm here leading kapa haka, and I teach our wahine new songs and in the melodies just clicked. I lost all of that as a kid when my mom died, I lost all that. You know, I was going to Nationals and all that and I lost it all. And now I feel as if a part of me is alive again.

One of her anecdotes tells a story about how her group and mentors showed overwhelming support at her graduation (from Grace Foundation) by honouring her with a Haka. She conveys how meaningful this testament was to her and how it enhanced her self-efficacy as it reinforced positive feelings about her abilities as not only a person and her self-growth but also as a leader, which ultimately strengthened her self-esteem.

Resident J: It was just testament like at my graduation, the whole group they were just coming up to me doing all sorts of different hakas, man it was so wicked. It was so heartfelt and then my boss from Hawkins he stood up he done me a solo haka, Papa Dave stood up and did a solo haka, Papa Ula too, and he just done a mean as like testimony from where I come from and who I was because they know who I was and how far I have come

In addition, **Resident D**, **E** and **A's** narratives suggest they may be interested in learning more about their Māori heritage and reconnecting with their whakapapa.

Resident D stresses the importance of learning about her culture as part of her recovery and journey towards finding her identity and purpose.

Resident D: I really want to reconnect back to my whakapapa and my, you know, my people and know where I come from and who I am. That's a really big thing for me in recovery right now.

Resident E mentions her connection to the Waitaha iwi, while **Resident A** touches on attending a Māori boarding school and her interest in continuing to learn Māori to reconnect with her cultural roots. She mentions her cultural identity being lost through addiction, but since being at Grace Foundation she has realised that culture and Te Reo are a big part of her kids' lives, so she has started learning and embracing her culture more.

Resident A: "I went to Turakina Māori College and that was boarding school. And I was really immersed in my culture then. But it's something with addiction that something that you know, you learn to not It's not cool anymore. It's not cool to learn Māori or to like, embrace your Māori roots and stuff like that. But since being in Grace I have, and I did that for my son because my son he speaks, his first language is Māori. And I've been learning how to speak Māori because I'm like, kind of reconnecting with my own cultural roots because I loved being a Māori and I loved my culture, and even being here I'm starting to reconnect and learning more about it.

As well as her Māori ties, she explores her mother's Rarotongan and Samoan roots, which indicates a growing curiosity about her cultural diversity and her willingness to explore this.

Resident A: My mum was adopted, but my mum was Samoan and Rarotongan. So, like, being at Grace, I've started to learn more about that side of where I come from and stuff too.

5.1.4 Religious Narratives

Conversion can also promote the desire for narrative change. The 'conversion identity' was found in the LDS and was also a shared narrative among the residents.

Before coming to the Grace Foundation, **Residents A, B,** and **D** narrate that being in touch with religion was absent or their spirituality was unknown. After coming to the Grace Foundation, they have found Christianity and are aligning their lifestyles and values with their faith.

Resident D: I never ever thought that I would believe in God, even though I've got only 'God can judge me on my chest' You know it means so much more to me today because I like I have that person to talk to and that belief system.

Resident B: God is good. I didn't ever believe that I never believed in anything. But being in here, and all this structure, and programs and word of the day and seeing that and everyone supports each other. That's papa Dave and Papa Ula but ultimately that's God.

Resident A: My mum's side are all Mormons. I was brought up in a religious-based family. I had to go to church, seminary, all those things in my life. And I never really had a connection with God. I could never understand the scriptures, I didn't know what I was praying to or, didn't know how powerful praying was until I came here. And when you can connect things to your day-to-day life and be able to understand about that you have more of a meaning and more of a connection. When I started doing the word today, every day, I found power in that. And so, when I started praying, I kind of had, like, an idea of what I was praying for, who I was praying too. Then when I started, like, things that I was praying for started happening in my life, then my testimony started to become, like real.

For other residents, reconnecting with religion was of importance in their personal growth journeys and helped with shame management. While **Resident I** and **H** understand the importance of an internal locus of control regarding their self-esteem, it is the external locus of control provided by the Christian religion that relives the burden of shame and provides an additional sense of being supported and held accountable by a non-state authority.

Resident I: Being here has helped me connect with God more and trust in God's process for myself like, and brought me away from being quite a vicious, vicious person. Away from my addiction, I didn't like who I was before releasing my connection to God. I like who I have become now. I no longer feel like I did in my past.

Resident H: I feel that through God anything is possible. He gives me strength. That's the main thing that's changed in me today is my faith, all these classes are awesome they do have useful tools. But the main thing I'm getting out of my stay here is a safe place to heal, and my connection with God.

Overall, through narrative analysis the four overarching concepts of Redemption, Condemnation, Religious and Cultural narratives were revealed. Redemption narratives were seen by all 10 residents, while cultural narratives were seen by six of the residents. Interestingly, the 'Conversion Identity' seen in the LDS was also shared among the residents of this study. Lastly condemnation narratives were only shared among five of the residents, and considerations and underlying reasonings behind this analysis will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

6.1 Discussion

To explore the question 'What are the prevailing narratives of formerly incarcerated women living in post-release communities?', the self-perceptions of ten women residents living at the Grace Foundation were examined. Post-release Communities are a relatively new approach in the NZ context, but their effectiveness overseas for reducing recidivism is well established. As this study is an adaptation of the LDS, which focused mainly on male 'street crime opportunists', there is space in the current literature for inquiry into populations that differ from participants of the LDS. This current study adds to the literature by addressing a few omissions: women residents and their experiences within a post-release community. A greater understanding of their narratives offers the chance to establish or confirm practices and systems suitable for promoting and maintaining desistance. As Quince (2010) points out, the current positioning of Māori women offenders in society results in a complex interaction of factors unique to them as a sector of the NZ population. Or, as Maruna (2001) draws attention to, self-narratives hold a version of subjective truth that may not be aligned with historical or known truths. As such, the varied narratives shed light on the multifaceted reasons influencing desistance and provide insights into the residents' motivations to seek change. The discussion is divided into three segments: self-portrayals of the residents' potential reasons for re-offending, factors they felt would lead to their cessation, and the best approaches to facilitating desistance and mitigating the chances of re-offending.

6.1.1 Reasons for re-offending

In line with LDS, persisting offenders often portrayed a condemnation script - a self-absolutory narrative. They explained their behaviour through sentiments of a lack of agency and external locus of control (Maruna, 2001). Outside of the LDS, current literature suggests that most released NZ prisoners lack formal education, have poor access to housing, lack robust social support networks, and have untreated mental health issues (Nakhid & Shorter, 2014). Unresolved mental health issues exist in over 90% of the prison population, a statistic grossly disproportionate to the approximately 20% suffering issues in the general population

(Department of Corrections, 2016). Without appropriate support to help address these factors post-release, the likelihood of re-offending increases (Mills et al., 2022). Fortunately, the participants of this study are at the Grace Foundation, a Post-release Community that aims to address and overcome a few of these barriers towards reintegration. For the residents of this study, the reasons for re-offending appeared to mirror all the above-mentioned factors. For example, narratives included feelings of worthlessness, institutionalisation, and a loss of (cultural) identity. Some residents blamed their sense of institutionalisation on the loss of traditional cultural approaches and customs. Others cited differential association, dependency, or the causative relationship between networks of familiarity that led them back to dependency.

6.1.1.1 Institutionalisation and Blame

In the LDS, active offenders cited condemnation scripts to explain their behaviour through attribution to institutionalisation and the assignation of blame on others. Feeling institutionalised and blaming others for their re-offending was a self-narrative of five residents in this current study. One of the residents conveyed that she had become accustomed to the prison environment, citing that she 'loved' and found 'stability' in prison. As a result, she does not know how to carry out basic life tasks like booking a doctor's appointment, which ultimately hinders her ability to desist. Perhaps the assumption could be that prison has blanketed her needs, leading to a loss of autonomy and self-efficacy, or that there was a lack of effective rehabilitation, impacting her ability to re-integrate into society. This highlights that the Department of Corrections' 'Out of Gate' initiatives implemented in 2014 (Ministry of Justice, 2017) have been ineffective if individuals lack the basic skills required for re-entry. Irrespective of the driver, internalising this negative self-concept hinders her ability and motivation to make positive decisions for her future (Maruna, 2001). When individuals accept these scripts, they are inherently destined to re-offend and do so as they feel it is their only available identity (Maruna, 2001). As Brown (2020) suggests, when an individual adopts the 'prisoner identity', achieving desistance becomes more challenging to implement as the need to adopt a pro-social identity is not a natural response.

Similarly, another resident narrated that after losing her mum, she would resort to antisocial behaviours to suppress her pain, ultimately leading to her incarceration. Whilst inside, she noted that the environment was toxic, with unsupportive staff and a counselling approach that she felt exacerbated her trauma rather than helping her explore and internalise a pro-social identity. Hoskins and Cobbina (2020) showed that impersonal, unempathetic prison staff often hindered the development or evolution of a prisoner's pro-social identity. Bevan and Wehipeihana's (2015) study demonstrated the value of developing and maintaining good relationships between their participants and the correctional staff charged with their care. In this particular case, prison did nothing to support her journey towards desistance; instead, she expressed that she would come out of prison and resort back to previous habits in an angrier and more 'broken' state. Maruna et al. (2006) explain that when an individual is alienated from positive support systems and environments, they will find difficulty understanding their life story and become dissatisfied with their identity. Not obtaining the mental health support or positive influences that help curate pro-social behaviours meant that the cycle was perpetuated as she would go in and out of prison, still heavily dependent on substances to deal with her trauma. This participants' narrative underscores the limitations of punitive strategies in addressing mental health issues, which ultimately contributes to a higher probability of individuals leaving correctional facilities with increased psychological harm (Buttle, 2017) rather than fostering the development of individuals inclined to adhere to societal norms. This story also sheds light on the underlying concerns about correctional strategies proposed in the He Waka Roimata Report (2019) about mental health.

In contrast, another participant blamed her institutionalisation on losing traditional Māori ways of living, a colonisation-as-causal discourse. Her narrative highlights the traditional way of living through communal inter-dependence while assigning blame towards historical factors and more punitive European approaches that came with being colonised. She expresses resentment not only to the assimilation of European practices like the introduction of alcohol and drugs and the resultant crime but also to the ensuing punishment being individualised rather than being resolved with a collective community-based approach. As such, she mentions that due to this less collective approach and not mending the 'harm

sustained' (King, 1983), the consequential impact on society is a 'whole lot of lost people'. This supports the research conducted by Jackson (1988), whereby his participants expressed their concerns over the theoretical and practical biases of the NZ CJS in favour of European individualised approaches.

6.1.1.2 Loss of self

Prison is an environment where individuals typically go through an identity crisis. The variations in 'loss of self' described by the residents include uncertainty about their direction in life, feeling like they will never amount to anything, fearing rejection or a lack of surety about the place in society they will hold moving forward. Loss of self was a prevalent negative self-narrative among residents, impacting their view on life, and it was classified by feelings of worthlessness and a lack of direction. As Buttle (2017) contends, prisons are oppressive institutions that reinforce the pre-existing disadvantages of ethnic minorities and people from low socioeconomic backgrounds by perpetuating intergenerational trauma and social harm. However, this oppressiveness is somewhat paradoxical as it can strengthen a sense of self within the 'familiar' prison environment but also creates a loss of self through comparative reinforcement of the uncomfortableness that comes with re-integrating into a society that has moral and ethical standards to which they will have to choose to be accountable to. As individuals leave prison, to redeem themselves they must prove their worth (Maruna, 2001). In choosing to reject this narrative, individuals find a sense of psychological shelter as their self-esteem is preserved from the constant threat of failure and rejection (Maruna, 2001). Therefore, the loss of self or maintenance of negative self-concept reinforced by being within the CJS, unfortunately, gives them a comfortableness, as described by two of the participants, to continue their current, unhealthy habits and behaviours that got them into the penal system in the first place.

6.1.1.3 Disconnect from Culture

The residents' narratives are localised to a bicultural NZ in that the loss of self and disconnect to culture was evident, with most residents mentioning the disconnect to their

heritage and an erosion of their sense of belonging. This was a distinct difference between the residents of this study and the participants of the LDS, possibly due to these residents being from a colonised country versus being from a country known for colonisation. Despite no clear literature on the potential role of losing one's cultural identity in women's desistance in NZ, Quince (2010) noted that imprisoned individuals often experience disempowerment and detachment from society. This resonates with Leibrich's (1993) findings in which Zerlina, a Māori woman, felt a detachment from her community. Consequently, when an individual has internalised negative self-concepts that come with imprisonment, feelings of alienation and rejection are exacerbated. This often hinders desistance efforts as the only remaining options can be feelings of worthlessness that lead back to re-offending. In response to this feeling of loss, individuals will seek shelter in a previous identity, albeit criminal, to alleviate the lack of belonging (Maruna, 2001). This prior identity referred to by Maruna (2001) was of positive origins, with the residents reclaiming sovereign identities and identities that they are proud of, with the residents seeking to learn their whakapapa and gain a stronger sense of self.

Within the self-narratives was a recognition of intergenerational trauma and its ongoing adverse effects. Notably, some residents made a connection to the diminishing of culture and identity to the prevalence of addiction and the adverse effects it has on family functionality and the disruption it causes within the community. One resident denoted this perceived loss as a byproduct of addiction. The narratives exemplify colonialism's widespread and ongoing effects that have played a significant role in the denigration of Māori culture, leading to the pervasive and long-lasting consequences of cultural deprivation that shape the Māori way of life (Jackson, 1988). Two residents also depicted the perceived loss as a byproduct of addiction rather than the cause of it, while another resident highlighted the resulting decline of Indigenous practices but remains hopeful to eventually reside back in whānaungatanga and restore practices that her Tipuna used to live by. Her gradual detachment from traditional practices may be attributed to the ongoing efforts to conform to hegemonic norms like individualised housing arrangements, which is not the typical way of living. This was similarly noted by Mills et al. (2021), who state that individualised approaches to housing have been

heavily criticised as it does not prioritise whānau and whānaungatanga, contributing to the disconnect.

6.1.1.4 Substance Dependence

The discourse surrounding addiction and dependence emerged as a dominant concept, with several residents' narratives supporting this as a predictor of re-offending. One resident who was brought up around drugs and crime, normalised this connection and allowed this behaviour to continue with her children, perpetuating the intergenerational impact despite understanding the adverse effects it can lead to. She also confirmed that her dependence has had a detrimental effect on her well-being and acknowledges that it is a determining factor in her likelihood of re-offending. Similarly, another resident highlighted how prevalent these continued effects are through her anecdote of seeing people in her community resorting to often extreme measures to afford drugs. Her anguish is based on seeing her community suffer as Māori and Pasifika communities struggle with addiction and do not have the traditional support necessary to mend the harm endured (King, 1983). The result is a crime-generative environment with Māori negatively responding to the imposition and assimilation (Jackson, 1988).

6.1.1.5 Environment and Familiarity

None of the residents appeared to hold the generalised, highly inappropriate societal belief that being Māori was synonymous with being 'criminal' or made them more likely to re-offend, unfortunately, reinforced by their overrepresentation within the CJS (Adair, 2022). What was obvious in their narratives was that by being Māori, they were more likely to find themselves in disadvantageous situations (e.g., socioeconomically, community, relational) that would enhance their chances of re-offending. One resident found herself resorting back to environments that externally influenced her offending. This finding was similar to Morrison and Bowman (2017), who affirm that individuals will depend heavily on family on release but found that these environments can be less than ideal. Part of this was having family members heavily dependent on substances, which meant she was brought back into those

circumstances by association. Feeling isolated without this association meant she would enter these harmful environments rather than severing ties. In part, this can be described by the differential association theory that through her interaction, she internalised the values and beliefs of her social group.

There are many reasons why formerly incarcerated women choose to re-offend, as was obvious across the narratives of this study's participants. Of note was that whilst the loss of identity, loss of culture and substance dependence can stand alone as a causal factor for re-offending, there is a strong theme within the self-narratives that the residents believe that they are very much intertwined, with each feeding into the other to ultimately lead to the need to re-offend. In addition to the findings of the LDS, disconnection from one's culture appears to have a significant place within the reasons for re-offending in this subgroup of the NZ prison population.

6.1.2 Cessation of Offending

Unlike the proactive approach of Norway's CJS, implementing effective strategies to encourage desistance in NZ appears to rely heavily on Post-release Communities to help shift an offender's locus of control to represent a more internally driven, pro-social paradigm. Whilst the common reasons for re-offending are reflected in the self-portrayals of the participants of this study, so too are the reasons for abstinence from offending. These reasons included factors identified in the LDS such as aged-based maturation, curation of pro-social identities, finding employment and financial security, (re)connecting to faith, generativity, and shifting to pro-social connections. In addition, this study also identified reconnection to culture and motherhood as determining factors in the shift toward desistance.

6.1.2.1 Aged-Based Maturation

Only two residents represent the notion of 'aged-based maturation'. At 30 and 40 years old respectively they can be classified as life-course persistent offenders (Moffit, 1993). Both residents come from dysfunctional backgrounds and have continued offending throughout

their lives. However, as of late, their narratives match the ontogenetic theory that they are naturally growing out of their crime-based lifestyles. Whilst they both imply that their criminality is a choice, and they could return to that lifestyle if they wanted to, the value they place on crime has decreased over time, and they have chosen to remit based simply on no longer wanting to live that lifestyle. A turning point for one resident was being in prison and feeling like an outsider among her younger peers. This suggests that her bonds to prison have lessened. In comparison, the other resident saw her lifestyle as idle and had no growth. However, cessation in offending for these residents was not exclusively ontogenetic based on additional sociogenic factors like both these residents being mothers, actively dissociating from negative peers and reconnecting with their children and culture, which have all played a role in their desistance.

6.1.2.2 Pro-Social Identities

Individuals lacking a coherent narrative identity are more prone to criminal behaviour (Maruna & Roy, 2007). Whilst there were aspects of condemnation within some of the participants' narratives, the overarching pattern among the residents was that of Maruna's (2001) redemption script, whereby most residents self-depicted a positive narrative identity expressing a desire for change and personal growth. These self-stories are instrumental in shaping behaviour, as how individuals respond to situations depends partly on their self-perceptions (Maruna, 2001). What was particularly salient in the residents' narratives was stories centred around personal growth, reflection, forgiveness and healing, and their agency in choosing to change. This is promising as Giordano et al. (2002) found that a shift in the cognitive transformation towards self-efficacy, growth, and resilience was seen in those succeeding in desistance. One resident mentioned that effecting change is a conscious choice, starting with her choosing to make better decisions for herself. Her commitment to change and her agency in doing so was reflected when she mentioned that finding religion and support from the Grace Foundation have been helpful, but ultimately, it is up to her to reach her desired goal. As such, she has taken responsibility for her actions to ensure her abstinence from crime. Having this agency means she is taking control of her circumstances and has the self-determination to strive towards law-abiding behaviours, which is seen to promote

desistance. For another resident, it became evident that she had consciously accepted accountability for her previous actions and, more importantly, for her future development. This occurred through breaking the cycle of intergenerational trauma by 'changing the pattern'. Perhaps changing the pattern is an act of empowered agency. She is taking back control and a sense of ownership over her circumstances through awareness of the effects of intergenerational trauma (both in her family and the system), thus wanting to stress exercising control over her actions and taking accountability for her behaviour in changing the mould. This indicates a desire to commit to living according to her new sense of self, and fulfilling this action gives her a sense of legitimacy and purpose.

Paternoster and Bushway (2009) assert that internally driven motivations to alter one's self-perception significantly impact how people see themselves and behave in ways congruent with the altered self-perception. Many women said their past mindsets were negative and thus inherited the behaviours attributed to those mindsets ('co-dependant', 'fight or flight', 'I can't' and 'never get anywhere'). Change in mindset became more positive, and correspondingly, more positive behaviours followed (self-worth, agency, and motivations to effect change). The residents' narratives were self-reflective and focused on conscious mindset changes. One notable change was building on positive coping mechanisms to mitigate engaging in self-destructive behaviours and reactive tendencies that they felt were learnt throughout their time at the Grace Foundation and the holistic programmes they participated in ('self-pauses, can you give me a moment?', 'three-second rule', or '12 steps'). Through internalising and using these coping mechanisms, the residents find themselves less destructive and have more agency over their actions. Other positive shifts in residents included mentioning 'finding themselves again', which suggests a reconnection with their true identity and reflects Maruna's (2001) assertion of a 'good core self'.

6.1.2.3 Employment and Financial Security

A strong emphasis in the current literature is the role employment plays in relieving economic stresses and procuring law-abiding behaviour through healthy routines (Cunnigham, 2017; McElroy, 2018; Skardhamar & Telle, 2009). It is widely recognised that employment has a crime-preventative effect with several multi-governmental initiatives in

NZ, including the 'Supporting Offenders into Employment' and 'Release-to-Work' programmes (Ministry of Justice, 2017), aiming to help post-release offenders acquire and maintain employment. Despite these initiatives, none of the residents spoke about receiving any assistance on release. While they acknowledge they would like to work as farmers, social workers, and in cafes, employment was not viewed as transformative or acted as a conscious catalyst in the women's desistance in this study. Like Giordano et al. (2002), this research failed to find a strong link between employment and the residents' desistance goals. Instead, employment was a sub-par priority, with only a few residents mentioning employment opportunities as a future goal or adding any significance to improving life prospects. Those that did face various hurdles, like narratives on becoming a business owner without explicitly knowing what they would like to do or intentions to enter vocations like truck driving whilst still being disqualified from driving.

Nonetheless, Cobbina (2010) noted that when women achieve financial independence, it is linked to the cessation of their criminal offending. However, this is of surprise as gendered desistance research has typically shown that employment is more of an influential factor in male desistance (Maruna, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 1993). This study exhibits a greater alignment with the latter perspective due to the lack of residents' financial narratives. In saying that, a few residents mentioned an intent to eventually be financially stable, which necessitated pursuing an educational and employment pathway in combination with other reintegration factors, such as housing. The primary benefit of one resident wanting to work as a farmer appears to have been its inherent stability, as farming not only came with a place of residence, but also a structured routine, financial aid, and a sense of purpose. This combination of factors not only facilitates personal goals but also positively impacts society. Again, this is not surprising as most desistance research (Barr, 2019; Sharpe, 2015; Morrison et al., 2018) has shown that employment is not an immediate concern to women post-release, with its importance more likely to come to light following internal cognitive shifts and building of more pro-social identities. This alludes to Maslow's theory of human motivation (Maslow, 1943) that only when the first two levels of needs (psychological and safety) are met can individuals transpire to align their goals with actions. Some residents found agency in their

personal growth by taking proactive steps (e.g., updating their CV, sitting their driver's license, and attending job interviews) towards employment.

6.1.2.4 (Re)discovery of Faith

Maruna (2001) asserts that identity reconstruction with specific reference to conversion starts within the prison environment. The residents' self-portrayed identity reconstruction while residing at the Grace Foundation, suggesting that the prison environment did not prompt the conversion narrative. On the contrary, the residents' conversion narratives developed after prison, surrounded by the Christian-themed framework and staff that provided substantial assistance. One resident encapsulated this transformative journey by characterising going from a past dominated by addiction to a place of healing and spiritual growth with new capabilities for her to construct a positive narrative identity. This can be explained by Maruna et al. (2006), who assert that conversion is a transformative process encompassing significant alterations in various aspects of an individual's personality, including personal aspirations and self-perception. Essentially, to convert entails reevaluating one's life story or undergoing a shift in subjective experience. This subjectivity was noted in one resident's narrative, who self-perceived the Grace Foundation's role in opening a new belief system she did not have before. For other residents, despite growing up in religious families (e.g., being of Mormon faith), the residents had difficulty understanding or relating to their faith before the Grace Foundation. However, with assistance, their self-concepts changed as they rediscovered their faith, followed by a sense of worth. All the residents who found resonance with faith emphasised that this environment provided a safe place to heal and attributes their transformation to this newfound connection. This contradicts Maruna et al. (2006) assertion that the conversion identity typically occurs in prison under strain, with the convert in desperate need of a framework. Instead, a more appropriate explanation could be that identities can be shaped under more pro-social contexts, as described by Ward and Marshall (2007), who assert that constructing a more adaptive narrative identity includes exposure to fundamental values that help individuals align behaviour with these values.

This study demonstrated that adopting the conversion self-narrative played a pivotal role in the residents' shame management (as noted by Maruna et al., 2006), which included the creation of a new social identity away from stigmatising labels and towards growth. Disassociating and creating this new-found-self relieved the residents of shame and enforced purpose and membership, an integral part of reintegration after prison (Maruna, 2001). Residents found a sense of community through the support from other residents and staff, providing the structure and purpose that they did not have throughout their time in youth justice residences and prisons. On the contrary, one resident acknowledged that while external influences like the Grace Foundation and divine support have helped in her transformation, she recognised that affecting change is ultimately a personal responsibility. Instead, her approach towards shame management shifts as her internal locus of control strengthens. According to Ahmed, Harris, Braithwaite and Braithwaite (2001), this narrative reconstruction happens most successfully within a social context that encompasses the recognition of shame, forgiveness, and reintegration into a moral-social community. Some residents further reinforced this existence of community by referring to the other residents as 'sisters' and likening the organisation to a large family. The inclusiveness and shared values among the residents with similar trajectories towards conversion have positively affected the attainment of self-change. This is akin to one resident who called her mentors 'papa', reaffirming most residents' underlying sense of belongingness and community. Consequently, the respondents have experienced a transformation in their narrative identity, as their worldview and points of reference have shifted towards more optimistic and pro-social outlooks. This process is attributed to the (re)discovery of faith and community. These findings are demonstrative of the positive effect of the Grace Foundation's religious foundations on the residents' identities, particularly with shame management, despite the absence of empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of faith-based frameworks in reducing recidivism.

6.1.2.5 Generativity and Giving Back

One of the critical elements of Maruna's (2001) redemptive narrative was the concept of generativity and giving back, widely seen as crucial aspects of desistance and the

development of a reformed identity. Generativity refers to formerly incarcerated persons addressing the harm caused to society through restitution and making amends to rectify the negative consequences of their criminal actions. These restorative actions assist in personal growth, purpose, and reintegration (Maruna, 2001). There was marked congruity in the results of this study, where the sentiment of 'giving back' was a common self-narrative. The residents made constructive use of their prior experiences, dedicating their efforts towards helping others. This dedication was mainly through social work and supporting troubled youth. As seen in many of the resident's narratives, their need to pass on their learnings is based on their own experiences to help the next generation overcome the harm they may have endured. As noted in Maruna (2001), this narrative pattern helps individuals seek significance and purpose in their lived experiences by putting their shameful pasts to good use.

Furthermore, offenders are often portrayed as 'self-centred' and lacking empathy (Ross & Fabiano, 1983, as cited in Maruna, 2004). This archetypal portrayal was seen by one resident, who admitted that her past behaviour had indirectly affected others but justified the harm by suggesting that she had a more unfortunate "run in life". Justifying this behaviour suggests she does not fully comprehend the consequences of her actions on herself, the community and society. Interestingly, her narrative shifts towards helping other troubled youth who may encounter the same experiences. Maruna and Farrall (2004) see this shift as an inversion of egocentrism and towards themes of restitution and making amends. In doing so, this resident's self-concept shifted from self-interested to a broader and more constructive concern for future generations and therefore, according to Maruna (2001), part of her redemptive narrative indicating effective rehabilitation which invoked a sense of responsibility and accountability for the welfare of the community as well as a dedication to fostering a positive contribution to society.

6.1.2.6 Motherhood

In NZ, there has been limited focus on the relationship between desistance and gender, particularly concerning the role of motherhood and its impact on identity transformation, be

it as a specific ‘turning point’ (Sampson & Laub, 1993) or a catalyst to improve ‘me first’ to facilitate a successful return to their role as a mother. In Sharpe's (2015) study, motherhood was a major catalyst for change, specifically to improve their children's futures. For the 11 mothers in Lows’ (2023) study, motherhood was only a catalyst later in life, and was inhibited by the socio-structural factors that limited their capacity to see motherhood as a chance for change. This study had the same findings of motherhood emerging as a dominant concept, with eight individuals choosing healthier habits to secure improved prospects for their children. The existing body of desistance research relates a change in identity and cognitive transformation to ceasing the ‘offender’ identity and constructing non-offender identities. In this context, the residents adopted the identity role of mothers and acted as both a hook for change and a reinforcement of personal growth.

As researched by Sampson and Laub (1993) and Giordano et al. (2002), parenthood serves as a necessary “turning point” in one’s life. It functions as a mechanism of social control, providing individuals with a sense of purpose and responsibility and establishing daily structure and routine often associated with child-minding. Unfortunately, for most women offenders, just becoming a mother is not a strong enough trigger to achieve or facilitate desistance (Sharpe, 2015; Low, 2023). Becoming a mother was a significant turning point for one resident and acted as a hook for change as she narrated being able to desist from crime for ten years before falling back into criminal acts due to substance abuse. When asked what helped her to go straight, she said that her cessation of offending came down to providing a better future for her child. Her narrative towards becoming a mother is consistent with Giordano et al. (2002) theory that parenthood can trigger an internal cognitive shift, prompting behavioural change.

Although the aforementioned resident had relapsed (desistance is not always linear, as Maruna (2001) discussed), in this case, the structural and pro-social opportunities associated with motherhood did not serve as a strong enough motivation to sustain her abstinence. As explained by Opsal and Foley (2013), when individuals are willing to adopt a pro-social identity, only then can the reclamation of maternal roles reinforce their desired change. This resident’s current turning point was seeing her son thrive in his school commitments and

wanting to be a part of his success. This experience was the catalyst for her to reclaim her previous identities of a 'mother' and 'role model'. This reclamation of prior identities is central to being able to desist, as Maruna (2001) notes that individuals are more likely to desist when they regain earlier identities as their authentic selves and rediscover a former sense of being an integrated member of society. Or, as noted earlier, her determination to be a central part of her son's life and sustain this relationship can be tied to social bond theory; that is, engaging in offending will likely negatively affect her relationship with her son. Therefore, a possible conclusion could be that the interaction of social bonds and identity theories have played a concomitant role in this residents' desistance.

The 'me first' narrative was the residents' want to be better mothers, but only after achieving their desired personal growth and identity transformations. Only then can they mend and restore their relationships with their whānau and children. Motherhood does not inherently result in an internal identity shift (Giordano et al., 2002). Instead, individuals must be receptive to change and see motherhood as a chance for transformation (Low, 2023). Six of the eight mothers from the current study sought to reclaim pro-social maternal identities but noted that this opportunity for change needed to begin with working on themselves first. This notion of change was two-fold. Firstly, for some residents, an internal cognitive shift of overcoming feelings of trauma and mental health was deemed necessary before committing to their maternal roles. One mother mentions that throughout her life, she has experienced continued trauma and has never dealt with or begun to heal. Her identity narrative changes as she has spent her time at the Grace Foundation focusing on self-healing. She notes that her previous motivations for entering programmes were for the wrong reasons, which focused on satisfying others wants rather than her own. Her ability to want to effect change suggests a growth in self-efficacy and agency. The role of self-efficacy is highlighted in Maruna (2001), who states that individuals will abstain from crime when they can construct confidence in their ability to effect change.

The second change was a willingness for the residents to address their addictions. Through introspection on their past behaviours, it became known that the resident's future motivations are to move towards a drug and crime-free identity. By addressing their

addiction, a few of the residents have managed to deal with the suppressed trauma they would numb by using drugs. For other residents, becoming clean reinforced their desire to be a better mother. One resident reflected on previous actions, such as being absent in her son's life and failing to fill out a form enabling his participation in a school programme, had made her feel profound guilt over her absence and inability to foster her son's future. On reflection, she acknowledged the harm her previous criminal identity had caused and expressed a commitment to move away from these actions through participation in AOD courses (currently enrolled in all AOD programmes at the Grace Foundation). Through this undertaking, she sought personal growth and healing, which she felt was necessary to heal and, in turn, positively affect her son's well-being. This aligns with Maruna's (2001) theory, in which this resident established a connection between her former negative identity to construct a more pro-social maternal identity and, in doing so, had the motivation to work on herself to serve as a more stable role model.

6.1.2.7 Severing Antisocial Ties and Restoring Pro-Social Connections

In desistance research, it is commonly recognised that restoring positive relationships can contribute to one's abstinence. What is noticeable in the women's narratives are their self-awareness in knowing the distinction between pro-social and harmful associations and their conscious efforts to sever ties with the latter to facilitate their self-growth. Reconnecting and restoring family connections mentioned by some residents was not a viable option, and their need to dissociate from whānau and friends who continue their substance abuse was necessary for behavioural change. This disassociation can be explained by Maruna and Roy's (2007) 'knifing off process'; and for the residents this process was two-fold. Their decision to be at the Grace Foundation acted as a safety net to environmentally sever ties with antisocial peers, which in turn initiated their self-change as they could start to focus on positive and pro-social narrative development. Second, as the Grace Foundation is a strictly alcohol and drug-free facility, forcing residents to turn away from negative influences and remove temptation. Being in a drug-induced environment meant that every time they tried to become clean, they were drawn back into that lifestyle, negatively impacting their desistance efforts. As some residents expressed, being at the Grace Foundation enabled them to regain a sense

of identity and purpose while refraining from criminal behaviour through disassociation from their peers. Maruna and Roy (2007) relate this process as causative of successful prisoner reintegration and desistance from criminal activity.

This 'knifing-off' process was further demonstrated by some residents who felt it was necessary to cut their partners off as they felt that they had outgrown their previous lives and their partner's offence-oriented behaviours. By choosing to sever past associations, they eliminate access to undesirable opportunities (Maruna & Roy, 2007) and instead focus on positive and pro-social narrative development. Relatedly, McIvor et al. (2004) state that leaving anti-social partners positively impacts women desistance, and they are more likely to move towards more pro-social networks than men. Interestingly, the residents' transformation has influenced their partners to seek rehabilitation, contributing to the advancement of positive desistance outcomes. This may also substantially empower both residents, validating their endeavours to continue pursuing law-abiding lifestyles.

6.1.2.8 Reconnection to Culture

During the interviews, six residents narrated their need to reconnect to their culture for personal growth and restoration. This reclamation was similar to Mihaere's (2015) study, which found that Māori cultural identity is a fundamental component in promoting overall well-being among her participants. Those who felt disconnected from their cultural identity found that reconnecting with their tikanga was a means to build their self-esteem and confidence. For the residents of this study, the notion of feeling connected to their hapū and knowing their whakapapa has positively impacted their well-being as it gives them a sense of security and reduces feelings of isolation, which are often lost in NZ society with its adversity, cultural divides, and continued social marginalisation (Quince, 2010). Getting in touch with their culture was greatly emphasised. For one resident, her reconnection to her cultural identity is seen as a significant part of her present healing and self-concept. Whilst some participants identify a loss of culture as a cause for their substance dependence and subsequent offending, they do not specifically identify, recognise, or verbalise that reconnecting with their culture led to a decrease in their substance dependence. However, it

did serve as a coping mechanism. Another resident was able to regain a sense of identity and belonging through Kapa Haka and would resort to this as an outlet to channel her feelings positively.

Like the reasons for re-offending, there are a multitude of reasons why formerly incarcerated women choose to abstain from re-offending, as reflected in the narratives of this study's participants. Whilst each of the reasons within themselves (e.g., maturation, pro-social identities, employment and financial security, faith, generativity, motherhood, pro-social connections, and culture) can garner a pathway toward desistance, it seems that the more factors that can be addressed by the offenders, the more likely their desistance will endure. Without a doubt, being positioned in a Post-release Community appears significantly more advantageous to facilitating this pathway than being left to their own devices on release from prison (as reflected within the narratives of the participants of this study).

6.1.3 Strategies to Combat Re-Offending

Having a comprehensive understanding of the reasons why formerly incarcerated women choose to re-offend, as well as the factors that will dissuade them from such behaviour, is critical in developing effective strategies to help them achieve desistance. Determining how to support formerly incarcerated women on their pathway to desistance best requires implementing strategies that can minimise their exposure to the reasons known to facilitate re-offending whilst simultaneously encouraging the components that enhance the likelihood of achieving ongoing desistance. A post-release environment rich in pro-social opportunities appears significantly beneficial to achieving this goal, particularly as prisons in NZ do little to cater for these needs.

6.1.3.1 Post-Release Communities

The purpose of a well-structured Post-release Community is to provide pro-social contexts to help develop a pro-social identity and reinforce a positive sense of self within formerly incarcerated persons through various means: including a zero-tolerance to drugs and alcohol;

classes to address negative, self-destructive behaviours; building confidence in their ability to function within society; holding them accountable for their choices; educating them on how to approach difficult situations and relationships more constructively and giving them a positive structure and a place of belonging. Most residents expressed that being at the Grace Foundation gave them a sense of self and support toward the development of a pro-social belonging and purpose that had been missing compared to when they resided in their former environments or within the penal system.

Based on the accounts of the residents, the Grace Foundation has the necessary resources to meet their desistance needs. Notable concepts were that the community fosters a pro-social setting that addresses the external factors influencing desistance, such as peer support, group-based counselling (Soetanto & McDonald, 2017) and secure housing arrangements (Mills et al., 2022). It also offers the cultural and religious aspects that some deemed important in ceasing their offending. Simultaneously, it facilitates interpersonal opportunities leading to desistance through educational sessions and workshops encouraging the residents' personal development (Maruna, 2001) and potential for a psychological transformation that enhances individual agency (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). One residents' narrative includes an account whereby her mentors expressed their appreciation by performing a Haka at her graduation ceremony. She conveys the significance of this testimonial, as it recognises her progress and reaffirms her abilities to overcome her criminal past and thrive. The significance of her narrative becomes evident as it illuminates the interdependent connection between individual agency and societal frameworks, as documented in prior research (Giordano et al., 2002; Maruna & Farrall, 2004; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Furthermore, it supports the contention put forth by Dickson and Polaschek (2016) that an interactionist perspective is most effective in promoting desistance post-release.

Additionally, the positive narrative identity formation and the continuity of this pro-social identity is maintained by the overwhelming recognition of the Grace Foundation's ability to provide them with the needs to better their futures, as reflected by all residents. As explained by Mills et al. (2022), having access to stable housing with ontological security can assist individuals who have been released from prison to adapt to life on the outside and overcome the feelings brought on by institutionalisation. As the Grace Foundation does not have a set

'limit' on how long a resident should stay before urging to self-vacate, it means that the residents are not constricted to build on their reintegration needs and can instead be rehabilitated in their own time. This finding confirms Low's (2023) claim that in addition to the tangible benefits of housing, it should also offer psycho-social advantages of feeling at 'home' including security and safety. This ontological security helps individuals actualise their goals and provides a safe space for self-reflection (Mills et al., 2022) and, correspondingly, the construction of a pro-social identity to be developed. As one resident notes, she self-identifies as being institutionalised but has found agency throughout her time at the Grace Foundation. She narrates that she has been encouraged in her personal growth and her need to seek self-improvement. Through this shift away from relying on others, she is now making decisions for herself and is not relying on others to carry out basic tasks such as booking a doctor's appointment. These outcomes highlight the need for more effective policies, such as moving away from antiquated and ineffective systems within prisons and shifting towards a structure with support systems that can cater to the needs of women within the CJS, thus lessening the current intergenerational impact of imprisonment. Therefore, as described by the residents, Post-release Communities are useful in facilitating their desistance needs. In effect, a larger scale study should determine if this is true for all Post-release Communities in NZ. Yet, the residents of this study embraced this assertion.

6.1.3.2 Accommodation

The Department of Corrections has identified specific needs for reintegration that require immediate attention to encourage individuals to desist from crime. These requirements include acquiring appropriate housing, securing employment, managing finances, and resolving relationship issues (Department of Corrections, 2012). The residents' narratives illustrated an awareness of most of these challenges towards re-entry. The one notable exception was acquiring appropriate housing with no immediate concern or emphasis held on the importance of accommodation by any of the participants. In line with the Department of Corrections (2012) requirements, Maruna (2001) asserts that structural factors like housing play a crucial role in an individual's redemption. Despite the residents expressing a great desire to restore familial relationships, they lacked the perception that acquiring stable accommodation would bring them closer to their desistance goals after the Grace

Foundation. The absence of self-directed pro-active planning for life outside of the Grace Foundation that traversed the participants' narratives poses a substantial challenge to these women's desistance, particularly given that most residents are mothers and identify as Māori or Pasifika. This mirrors the concerns from previous research by Lewis et al. (2020), who contended that Māori women faced more challenges in finding stable accommodation due to continued hardships exacerbated by institutional discrimination. This issue is further exacerbated by the lack of responsibility taken by the Department of Corrections, with Mills et al. (2022) suggesting that almost 70% of released prisoners are not supported in finding stable accommodation on release. This illuminates that the 'Out of Gate' programme by the Department of Corrections is only effective for a small percentage of released prisoners.

Whilst there was discussion around living off the land in whānaungatanga (shared sense of belonging) with one resident, an acknowledgement by another resident of the connection between a job that comes with housing, and a want from a further resident for a traditional housing situation with a 'white picket fence', none of those interviewed spoke about their future housing plans or actualising residential mobility with appropriate networks. Nor did they recognise the importance of stable housing in helping to prevent re-offending. There was acknowledgment within the study participants that whilst direction was found in prison, release back into the wider community lacked the positive support systems and accommodation that would aid their growth, leaving little choice but to resort to networks of familiarity that facilitated reinvolvement in crime. The expression of regret to not being able to provide better opportunities for, and to avoid any adverse on their children by some of the residents would be helped by them securing stable housing. Morrison and Bowman (2017) shed light on the correlation between inadequate accommodation and its potential risks to successful reintegration. Through interviews with previously incarcerated individuals, they discovered that the most significant factor contributing to adverse post-release outcomes was a lack of stable accommodation. This was far less obvious to the participants of this study, with their focus primarily on restoring their roles as mothers, and their own personal growth to help with their desistance, rather than knowing where they would end up after the Grace Foundation. Without stable housing, formerly incarcerated persons are 4.6 times more likely to be reimprisoned within the first year than those with stable housing, emphasising the

crucial role housing has in reintegration (Mills et al., 2022). As such, not having a clear track of their housing plans would likely see the residents resorting to networks of familiarity (Opsal & Foley, 2013). These networks of familiarity, as expressed by most residents, contribute to their involvement in crime, making it vital to ensure accommodation after the Grace Foundation is secured and provides a pro-social environment. It may be that residents who are choosing to move away from harmful partnerships are initially focusing on severing ties and being able to build on their self-worth, reducing the likelihood of relapsing into such circumstances. Even then, if that is the case, securing appropriate accommodation should be a greater priority considering the scarce public housing and the waitlist currently short of 25,000 applicants (Ministry of Social Development, 2023).

6.1.3.3 Culture and Healing

From the residents' narratives, there was recognition of the benefits of (re)discovering spirituality, (re)gaining a sense of cultural identity and (re)finding religion. As explained earlier, the integration of spirituality and/or culture in one's life has been shown to positively affect the process of healing and recovery (Nakhid & Shorter, 2014; Mihaere, 2015) and was also found in the residents' narratives. The Grace Foundation implements the Te Whare Tapa Wha approach, which has a framework that the residents expressed was able to support them in their (re)discovery of faith and help contextualise their offending. The support from the Grace Foundation in assisting and unpacking negative experiences that have influenced their life choices through the Te Whare Tapa Wha framework aligns with Kaupapa approaches (Mihaere, 2015). Furthermore, the importance of community rehabilitation programmes in fostering cultural identity was explained by Mihaere (2015), who viewed the adoption of Tikanga Māori programmes in prisons as an unviable and ineffective option, as reflected in the narratives of this study. Instead, these programmes should be limited to post-release settings, as the Department of Corrections' bi-cultural approaches and misappropriation of cultural identity have done little to reduce overall recidivism (Mihaere, 2015), as seen amongst the residents of this study who entered the Grace Foundation with a need to reconnect to themselves, with whānau and with extended society. As the reconnection to culture was an important element of the residents' futures, be it consciously or

subconsciously, the resident's participation in restorative approaches like giving back to society (through social work or generativity) and their engagement in IServe (the Grace Foundation's charity's component to give back to the community) is highly therapeutic. This is considered 'whakahoki mauri' by which the act of wrongdoing, specifically offending, is addressed, and resolved within their community, restoring the harm endured by the community (Mihaere, 2015). The residents' engagement and choice to work towards giving back to their community facilitates the transformation from their offender identities towards pro-social identities through culturally appropriate responses.

6.1.4 Limitations

As a result of the study's constrained time, only one-off semi-structured interviews were undertaken. This constraint arises from the fact that it would be preferable to conduct a subsequent interview to capture the nuanced and dynamic nature of the residents' desistance journeys down the line. Another constraint pertained to the environment in which the interviews were undertaken. Although the interviews were held at the place of residence, which helped alleviate any anxiety that may have arisen, halting interviews temporarily due to the continued disruption of other residents coming into the communal interview area potentially threatened the continuity of dialogue and thought within the interview process.

Ideally, interviews should be conducted in a peaceful and unoccupied environment. However, per the primary researcher's safety protocol and probation restrictions, this was the only feasible choice. Another drawback of this research is the small sample size. Since it is an exploratory study, having just 10 participants from a Post-release Community in NZ may not provide a truly representative picture of all residents in similar settings. This was also gender-based, so this study only explores the narratives of women residents.

6.1.5 Recommendations

Norway has successfully reduced its recidivism rates drastically by implementing progressive approaches within its prisons. For NZ to have outcomes that would mirror this, more effective rehabilitative and reintegrative approaches like those seen to be effective within the Grace Foundation (creating a pro-social environment, fostering pro-social identities, reconnecting individuals with the right networks) would need to be implemented earlier. Unfortunately, the lack of holistic support from policymakers with the He Waka Roimata Report (2019) findings highlighting the inadequacies of the current penal principles and the general public perception of the need for prison reform has led to the consolidation of the current, ineffective punitive frameworks (Buttle, 2017). Based on the current political climate, a meaningful overhaul of our current punitive approach is seemingly unlikely in the immediate future to accommodate this. Instead, The Department of Corrections Hōkai Rangi strategy is an attempt at again bi-culturalising the prison system to accommodate Māori

offenders, but their initiatives only act as a stepping stone, especially in terms of accommodating and reintegrating Māori women on release. As such, it could be recommended to incorporate mandatory post-release community care into an individual's probation conditions to facilitate supplementary reintegration. Specifically, as Morisson and Bowman (2017) and Maruna and LeBel (2012) assert that post-release care should be individually tailored to address post-release adversity. As described by the residents of this study, such care has assisted them in their efforts towards desisting from criminal behaviour. Furthermore, the guidance provided by the Grace Foundation has proven instrumental in fostering these pro-social identities and ensuring the ongoing maintenance of positive behavioural patterns. Of note, this recommendation may not be feasible in the immediate future as there is a shortage of Post-release Communities in NZ and continued draconian viewpoints and laws favouring incarceration over rehabilitation and reintegration.

For this research to be more authoritative and beneficial to the post-release resident, a larger-scale study involving multiple other Post-release Communities would be beneficial. A longitudinal study involving the participants of this study and their desistance journeys after residing to where they end up a year post could also solidify previous research findings for policymakers. In addition to the need to conduct more research focusing on women in desistance studies, research into the desistance challenges faced by transgender prisoners is another avenue to explore, particularly considering the new-found societal recognition and acceptance of transgender members in NZ society. The recent changes in Trans Prisoner Policies indicate a new awareness of how to facilitate best Trans individuals within the CJS and in all Post-release Communities to address reintegration and effective desistance in this subgroup of the population.

Chapter Seven

7.1 Conclusion

Achieving and maintaining desistance are not without significant challenges for all parties involved; from formerly incarcerated women to policymakers and researchers alike. The current study found that desistance is a multifaceted process that involves both minimising factors that lead to re-offending, and implementing effective strategies that work best to aid desistance both within, and outside of the criminal justice establishment. The results of this study build on the existing research while introducing two novel concepts of motherhood and cultural variables when compared to studies like the LDS. These narratives are influenced by NZ being a bi-cultural state and the gendered nature of parenting. Overall, the residents displayed redemptive scripts necessary to maintain successful desistance (Maruna, 2001). The restructuring of their identities was noted with their desire to put their negative past to good use and move towards helping others. For some of the residents, this redemptive narrative was promoted by conversion.

Of note was the strong link between the extrinsic support offered by the Grace Foundation and the intrinsic pro-social growth that occurred from having that support. The residents were acutely aware of the impact that the Grace Foundation and its environment had in providing ontological security, which enabled their self-growth and allowed them to focus on reasons they felt led to their offending, including institutionalisation, feelings of worthlessness and substance abuse in order to move towards more purposeful futures. Interestingly, the residents' self-portrayals were typically devoid of depicting where they intended to live after the Grace Foundation or their employment plans. This is of concern as all literature points to accommodation and employment being integral factors for successful reintegration but were not the residents' primary concern. Given how important motherhood was to the residents, and their desire to be better mothers, not having concrete plans for employment and accommodation impedes their desistance, and in turn, increases the likelihood of re-offending.

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