

Ex-offender Narratives: Revealing the Experience and Success of a Halfway House in Aotearoa
New Zealand

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Abstract

In Aotearoa New Zealand, consultation of the halfway house resident is absent from the literature, omitting the true experience of resettling in this environment upon release from prison. Halfway housing as a solution to the difficulty ex-prisoners have attaining accommodation has been historically operated by community groups in Aotearoa New Zealand. Narratives are often dismissed as academic data and are undervalued in Criminology. Narrative in an Aotearoa New Zealand context is particularly relevant as the indigenous population value storytelling as *taonga*. Kaupapa aligned narrative criminology ensures protection of the participant, while eliciting a rich and empowered narrative. This is particular to the vulnerable residents of a halfway home. While it ensures protection, it also allows them to have ownership of their story and narrative identity. Using this methodology; six residents of a halfway house were interviewed and their narratives documented. From these narratives, it was determined how the experience residing in a halfway house influenced their narrative identity and encouraged their desistance from crime. Initial results found that participant conversion to a religious narrative identity assisted in shame management, while providing the framework for forgiveness and redemption. The halfway house organisation provided opportunity for the participants to earn their redemption, and to practise 'giving back' to the community they were once removed from. Finally, the house environment provided them constant prosocial and peer support, which allowed participants to cut ties with their criminal past, share lived experiences and exist without being isolated or judged. This is significant when considering reintegrative policy. It has shown that supported accommodation needs to be more than providing an ex-prisoner with shelter where they are easily supervised. Successful supported accommodation has the potential to reduce the reoffending rate and increase safety in the community.

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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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Introduction

The voice of the ex-offender residing in a halfway house has been omitted in research, and the true experience of the residency and resettlement process remains unclear. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the Government looks increasingly to community groups to house prisoners post release. They aim to reduce the reoffending rate, and mitigate the accommodation shortages ex-offenders face, without a clear picture of the needs of those going through the resettlement process. Community groups operating these halfway houses as part of reintegration strategy in Aotearoa New Zealand struggle to meet the needs of the nearly 15,000 prisoners released from prison each year.

To ensure desistance from crime, an offender needs to develop a positive narrative identity. This often occurs under in an environment of extreme stress or crisis. Prison is an environment where narratives are likely to undergo a restructure. Redemptive script developed within prison walls require continual support upon release from prison to successfully demonstrate desistance from crime. Narrative inquiry into those who reside in a halfway home reveals the extent of this change within a half-way house environment post-release. Resettling into the community without continual support reduces the opportunity for the individual to shed their criminal worldview and redefine their self-identity.

The purpose of this study was to use narrative and life-story to uncover the true experience of reintegration through halfway housing. Consultation of the resident and documentation of their experience helps to provide a complete understanding of the process of resettling into the community, why some ex-prisoners succeed and desist from and crime, and why some fail. This study adopts a narrative approach. Narrative criminology can offer unique insight into the subject matter often invisible to other research methods. The use of narrative inquiry is a tool for storytelling, and revealing the richness of lived experiences in commonplaces of temporality and sociality (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Storytelling is a tool deeply entrenched in Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous population. This unique space signifies an opportunity which warrants exploration in Aotearoa New Zealand; an offender's experience of reintegration through halfway housing, which this study aimed to satisfy.

Literature Review

Imprisonment strips social, cultural and financial resources of individuals, who often belong to already marginalised communities. Removing such fundamental resources from disadvantaged communities only deepens the poverty trap. In New Zealand, the mass imprisonment of Māori has depleted Māori communities and families. Once incarcerated, most offenders continue an inescapable cycle of release and reimprisonment. There is no intervention to break this cycle. Life after prison is trying. Ex-prisoners often fail to resettle in a world from which they have been locked away. Insufficient post-imprisonment support sets those released up for failure. The cycle keeps prison beds full, families apart, and communities broken. International research suggests that stable and supportive housing post-release is an effective intervention and reduces the risk of reoffending (Ogloff, 2009). Community-based reintegration programs which provide accommodation support is a response to the increase in demand and escalating barriers an ex-prisoner faces when returning to the community (Allen, Carlson, Parks & Seiter, 1978). This strategy was labelled a 'halfway house', derived from the idea that the offender was 'halfway' to independence (Bonta & Motuik, 1987). Despite the evidence that this alleviates the transition and reduces reoffending, halfway housing has been under-utilized and under-resourced in New Zealand Correctional policy (Conradson, 2008). New Zealand research into this area is also scarce. In particular, research consulting ex-prisoners on their experience of supported accommodation is absent from the academic discourse.

A high prison population means a high demand for ex-offender accommodation. Over 20,000 people spend time in New Zealand's prison system each year (JustSpeak, 2014). New Zealand has the second highest imprisonment rate in the OECD, next only to the United States (JustSpeak, 2014). Out of every 100,000, 188 find themselves in the prison system in their lifetime (JustSpeak, 2014). Despite crime rates steadily decreasing in the last 20 years, the prison population has increased by almost 300% (JustSpeak, 2014). From 1986 to 1996, the average sentence length increased by 75 per cent (Nakhid & Shorter, 2013). Māori are particularly affected. Although Māori count for just 15% of the general population, 50.7% of all prisoners are Māori (JustSpeak, 2014). A bias exists within the criminal justice system against Māori, as they are disproportionately represented at every stage of the justice system

(JustSpeak, 2014). Māori are more likely to be apprehended by police, and are more likely to receive a harsher sentence than their Pākeha counterparts (Nakhid & Shorter, 2013). The increase in imprisonment population has forced the Government to build more prisons, and outsource operations to privately operated entities. New Zealand prisons have the capacity to hold 9,600 prisoners. In February 2016, the prison population reached an all-time high of 9,320 inmates, stretching facilities to their limits.

Imprisonment costs

Beyond the social, cultural and economic damage imprisonment causes prisoners, their whānau and the wider community, prisons cause a huge financial cost to society. Each prisoner costs \$97,090 per year (JustSpeak, 2014). The Department of Corrections has allocated \$727.6 million of the 2014/15 budget to prison-based custodial services (Department of Corrections, 2014). This figure accounts for the everyday costs of maintaining a prison and excludes the capital cost of buildings and their maintenance and administration of the Department. In comparison, the budget allows only \$178.7 million for intervention measures to address the underlying causes of crime and prisoner reintegration (Department of Corrections, 2014). Hence, it has been argued that incarceration costs divert resources from socially beneficial programmes and services that have the potential to ease the social conditions that generate criminality and social harm (JustSpeak, 2014).

Re-incarceration rates

Prisons are often viewed as disconnected silos, rather than as part of the community. Because of this, attention immediately upon release is often negligible, and support can be hard to come by. Without support and access to services and resources, the likelihood of reoffending is increased. Recidivism rates in New Zealand are high; 52 per cent of those released from prison are imprisoned within 5 years (Department of Corrections, 2012). Of these, 51 per cent had reoffended within the first year of release (Department of Corrections, 2012). When analysed by ethnicity, 77 per cent of Māori had been reconvicted after 5 years, compared to 66.2 per cent of Pākeha. Of these reconvictions, 58 per cent of Māori had been re-imprisoned compared to 47.3 per cent of Pākeha (Department of Corrections, 2012). Most recidivist offenders commit non-violent crimes. The most common offenses that lead to a subsequent

prison sentence are burglary, followed by car conversion and theft (Department of Corrections, 2012).

Reintegration and post -release

Crime prevention research also focusses on strategies that address factors which contribute to factors contributing to the large number of crimes that are committed by individuals who have already been imprisoned, and failed to reintegrate into the community upon release (Pratt, 2006). Reintegration relates to all social and environmental challenges and problems facing an offender immediately and directly upon release (Roman, 2004). The goal of reintegration is to prevent recidivism, and support ex-offenders in making pro-social choices to enable desistance from criminality to occur (Roman, 2004). Most factors which act as a barrier to this lifestyle are often out of the ex-offenders control, such as employment, accommodation, support and pro-social peer networks (Roman, 2004). For a returning prisoner, attaining suitable housing is one of the most critical barriers to successful re-entry. Accommodation is the cornerstone which holds the reintegration process together (Bradley, Oliver, Richardson & Slayter, 2001). Without stable accommodation, continuity in substance abuse and mental health treatment is jeopardised. Employment is often dependent on a fixed abode. The challenge of managing the return to society overwhelms current post release resources provided for an offender's critical transition by both the Government and community groups (Bradley et al., 2001). What happens after an offender is discharged from prison is not the primary concern of prison administrators; however, correction policy has begun to focus on the reintegration process hoping for a smooth transition when offenders leave custody, with the anticipation that they do not return (Department of Corrections, 2014).

Reducing reoffending and reintegration share the same goal – desistance from criminality. However, reintegration is the context and process where this is achieved, and desistance is the resolution of the identified issues (Roman, 2004). Correctional policy assumes that individuals can rehabilitate while serving their sentence (Department of Corrections, 2014). The Department of Corrections seeks to address offending by providing prison-based programmes according to risk. This includes parental skills programmes, offence-focussed courses that target sex offenders and violent offenders, and drug and alcohol courses. They also offer basic work and living skills programmes that teach budgeting, literacy, numeracy and

basic job skills such as CV and cover letter writing. As the prison population and reoffending rate has increasingly revealed mass imprisonment of Māori, reintegration and rehabilitation programmes within the prison walls reflected a culturally targeted approach, and tikanga Māori courses were also developed (Nahkid & Shorter, 2013).

The emergence of the targeted approach came in unison with an increased emphasis of the importance of cultural identity when changing behaviour and attitudes of Māori. This followed the New Zealand Sentencing Act 2002, which was a response from the populist calls for harsher sentencing. The court was now allowed to consider the impact of an individual's personal, whanau, community and cultural background when sentencing. Prison waiting rooms reflected a 'Māori aesthetic', and Corrections developed a *kaitiaki* programme, which aimed to strengthen ties with local *runanga* and involve them in the operations of the prison (Nahkid & Shorter, 2013). Programmes were established to meet the needs of Māori offenders who had lost contact with their culture and identity, hoping this would assist Māori in reconnecting with their cultural identity. These programmes mixed western methods and traditional Māori custom to change the thinking and behaviour of Māori offenders. Māori Therapeutic Programmes have received mixed responses. The increased visibility of Māori design and custom within prisons has been criticised by McIntosh (2014), who states that prison is not a 'Māori place'. Bryers (2002) found that Māori inmates gained a sense of pride, identity and increased respect for others, and Nahkid & Shorter (2013) assessed Māori focus units and involvement of *kaupapa* and *tikanga* within prisons as instilling a sense of pride within male Māori inmates, and recommended that the needs of these offenders must be broadened into the community. Nahkid & Shorter (2013) noted that this applies particularly in areas of employment and accommodation, and doing this would help to ensure any rehabilitation that had occurred within prison programmes was preserved upon release.

Reducing Crime and Reoffending Action Plan 2012

In 2012, the New Zealand Government announced their Reducing Crime and Reoffending Action Plan to combat the increased incarceration rate and cost to house the increased prison population. This plan aspires to reduce the reoffending rate by 25% by 2017 through collaboration with community groups and 'wrap-around' reintegrative service approaches post-release. The Department identified reintegrative needs and barriers to

reintegration, which warrant immediate attention post-release to promote desistance from crime. These barriers are the acquisition of suitable accommodation, employment, finance management, resolving relationship issues, cultivation of a positive community support base, prevention of victim-related issues and maintenance of good health post-release (Department of Corrections, 2012). These needs accompany a target of reducing the reoffending rate by 25 per cent before 2017, which they forecast will result in 600 fewer re-imprisonments, 4000 fewer community reconvictions and approximately 18,500 fewer victims each year (Department of Corrections, 2012). The number of offenders released to Corrections-funded halfway house programmes is not publically available, though just over 15,000 are released from prison each year (this is not including those completing community-based sentences) (Department of Corrections, 2014).

The Department also acknowledged that service delivery through existing ex-prisoner support organisations within the community such as Prisoner Aid and Rehabilitation Society (PARS) would be more successful than a prison-based initiative (Department of Corrections, 2014). This is in accordance with Maruna (2006), who states that reintegration that is not community-based is not reintegration at all. PARS has been providing supported accommodation in Auckland for over a decade, with safe, self-care environments immediately following release and support to help released prisoners eventually find independent, long-term solutions (Prisoners Aid and Rehabilitation Society, n.d)

As part of the Reducing Reoffending Action plan, Justice Sector and social agencies have expanded to account for the increased responsibility as punitive attitudes ease and aims become more rehabilitative (Department of Corrections, 2012). Corrections now account for reintegrative issues once the duty of families, iwi and the wider community, and have aimed to collaborate with these groups to support released offenders (Department of Corrections, 2012). These groups are largely relied on to provide the pro-social support needed to keep them from reoffending (Roman, 2004). This support is crucial in the process of finding suitable accommodation and employment, which are the two most difficult factors to attain post-release (Roman, 2004). The recent Christchurch earthquake has resulted in a further shortage of social housing, a situation where ex-offenders are already at the bottom of a long waiting list (Mills, Thom, Maynard, Kidd, Newcombe & Widdowson 2015). This situation is echoed around other areas of New Zealand where economic hardship has increased the demand for social housing

(Mills, et al. 2015). There, the Department provides some facilities for offenders to be referred to before they are released (Department of Corrections, 2012). This service is reserved for those who are regarded as high-risk, having high-level reintegrative needs, and requiring further supervision (Office of the Auditor General, 2013). Should the offender be accepted, the intensity and nature of support of the service is assessed on a case by case basis. This assessment of offender needs occurs before they enter accommodation, and should they be successful, they receive furnished accommodation limited to the first 13 weeks, help with the moving process after the 13 weeks is over and help for the offender to meet conditions of their release (Office of the Auditor General, 2013). The services available at Corrections contracted facilities include employment assistance, personal finance training and training to develop basic living skills such as grocery shopping and organising a home (Office of the Auditor General, 2013). The Department aims to create an environment for change to encourage the offender to adopt self-care and healthy behaviour patterns (Office of the Auditor General, 2013). Corrections work closely with community agencies that support the reintegration process, and prefer to contract the facilities to external providers rather than operate them directly (Office of the Auditor General, 2013). External providers who received funding exist regionally, with locations in Auckland (12 facilities), Hawke's Bay (5), Christchurch (11), Waikato (10), Wellington (10) and Otago (5). In addition to the 53 Corrections funded facilities, the Salisbury Street Foundation in Christchurch are exclusively funded by the Department (Office of the Auditor General, 2013). The Foundation provides accommodation and onsite reintegration support for up to ten recently released prisoners at a time (Office of the Auditor General, 2013). The Department's total budget for funding for halfway housing for 2013/14 including the Salisbury Street Foundation was just \$2,180,286 (Department of Corrections, 2014). Again, to put this into perspective, the budget for custodial services for 2014/15 was \$727.636 million (Department of Corrections, 2014). To divide the Supported Accommodation budget amongst the 54 providers comes to just \$40,375.67 annually. If each halfway house accommodated only 20 of the 15,000 offenders released each year, the Department affords just \$2,018.75 per resident per year. As the programmes in these halfway houses are only 13 weeks long, it is likely they house much more than this, further demonstrating the strain and underfunding the service provider's experience. Evidence has demonstrated that for reintegration to be a success, after-care initiatives and community resources need to be accessible (Ogloff, 2009).

Existing accommodation post-release research in New Zealand

Suitable accommodation is the first priority for many of these offenders. Possessing approved suitable accommodation is a prerequisite for probation, as is having an address to access certain support services, namely financial support from Work and Income. Social housing waitlists and housing shortages represent an additional hurdle. Landlords may be discriminatory and be less likely to let their property to people who have a history of imprisonment (Ogloff, 2009). Australian research by Baldry, McDonnell, Maplestone and Peeters (2003) determined that changing their abode more than once in the few months following release and highly transient and unstable accommodation were main predictors of returning to prison. For the New Zealand context, Mills, Gojkovic, Meek and Mullins (2013) established that providing housing for ex-prisoners could reduce recidivism by up to 20 per cent. Recently, Mills, Thom, Maynard, Kidd, Newcombe and Widdowson (2015) prepared a paper on meeting the housing needs of vulnerable populations in New Zealand. This paper acknowledged that more research on housing the ex-prisoner population is required, and a long-term housing policy needs to be implemented to amend an urgent situation. Solutions were generally focussed on the existing homeless population, but also included a description of Vision Housing in the UK - an NGO halfway house network, which has housed 650 ex-prisoners and found an overall 11 per cent reduction in reoffending for Vision Housing tenants. A recommendation was made to establish a similar system in New Zealand. Though primarily focussed on the more general 'vulnerable population', this research seems to be the most recent detailing any information on ex-prisoner housing needs in New Zealand. However, it fails to consult ex-prisoners; explore the experience of the resident or those directly operating community run facilities. Disregarding offender experiences in research fails to provide a 360-degree perspective to determine, if current facilities or policy are meeting needs. The offender perspective has been systematically neglected by both researchers and policy makers in New Zealand.

Housing is a basic need and right, regardless of status or offending history. As a remedy to accommodation issues facing ex-prisoners, supported accommodation or 'halfway houses' provide a space where practitioners can address more than one reintegrative need

within the crucial few months immediately after release, addressing several of the barriers while relieving the stress of homelessness or family separation and ultimately, reducing the likelihood of recurring criminal behaviour. Since, those stigmatised as ex-prisoners are competing for housing with the general population, halfway houses are often established in rural areas and the outskirts of town.

In 2009, Ogloff discussed the isolated locations that halfway house services in New Zealand, Australia and North America often occupy, and the influence of this factor on reintegrative success. Ogloff (2009) advocates for halfway houses in realistic community settings, where offenders would be confronted with confusion, uncertainty and stress while receiving ongoing support. This support alleviates these confrontations while allowing for a rational period of resettlement. In order to achieve this, Ogloff (2009) states that New Zealand halfway house facilities must move away from occupying the outskirts, industrial areas or rural communities. The lack of exposure to everyday stressors provides an artificial environment, more akin to a prison than an actual community. The location of halfway housing in rural positions in New Zealand is to pander to the safety concerns of the wider community. Ogloff (2009), however, reports this as short-sightedness further perpetuating the stigma associated with ex-offenders, and hindering their progress towards a crime-free lifestyle by restricting access to community resources and after-care services. In addition to recommending situating half-way houses in close proximity to resources within residential neighbourhoods, Ogloff (2009) proposes educating the public and the media on the success of halfway houses.

As little is known about supported accommodation and halfway houses in New Zealand, international research serves in understanding the halfway house experience.

Half-way housing internationally

Most international research focusses on the facilities themselves, and the success rates of individual housing services. The methodology adopted is predominantly quantitative.

Halfway housing is used with great success by the Correctional Services Canada (CSC), which funds over 400 halfway house facilities, attaining a reoffending rate two times less than the rate in New Zealand (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). The CSC has a long history of involving human service organisations in the delivery of residential services upon prisoner release (Bell &

Trevethan, 2004). The first CSC halfway house facilities opened in the late 1940s and since then, there has been an increase in the number of voluntary organisations and faith based organisations operating accommodation facilities dedicated to ex-offenders (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). The CSC and human service organisations established the facilities with the belief that a supportive home environment provides not only the basic needs of food and shelter, but also assistance in gaining employment, treatment and counselling, education to facilitate successful community reintegration (Allen, et al., 1978). This holistic approach became widely adopted by the CSC during the 1970s (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). Latessa & Allen (1982) found that Canadian halfway houses acted as the important bridge between institutional care and the community, and often provide the crucial 'after care' required to prevent recidivism. They detail the models and processes which are used to refer offenders to halfway houses. No further research on the Canadian halfway house system was undertaken for two decades, despite continual use and success of the residency programmes to reintegrate offenders into the community.

Canada and New Zealand compare in their population composition and colonial history. Both countries feature a marginalised Indigenous population that has faced oppression, assimilation policies and geographical relocation after the arrival of British colonists. Indigenous communities are suffering due to the mass incarceration of their peoples (LaPrairie, 1997). Nearly half of all indigenous offenders are under 30 when they enter the system, they are more likely to serve two thirds longer sentence than their White counterparts. Furthermore, they are seriously overrepresented in the statistics; 21 per cent of the prison population are Indigenous men and women, whereas only 4.3 per cent of the total population are Indigenous (Statistics Canada, 2015). And, like Māori, they are more likely to receive a harsher sentence, or be classified as high risk for the same crime as white offenders. This strain on communities has forced the CSC to recognise the direct need for housing amongst the offender population and have responded accordingly. The CSC have provided a well-resourced Community Residential Facility service targeted at those re-entering the community (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). Their adoption of wrap-around support for prisoner's post-release has produced a consistently low recidivism rate of 35 per cent for men and 20 percent for women (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). When compared to other nations, such as United States (67.5 per cent), Australia (60 per cent)

and New Zealand (52 per cent), it suggests investing into reintegrative services can significantly reduce reoffending (JustSpeak, 2014).

Bell and Trevethan (2004) conducted the first evaluation of CSC halfway house facilities, and the first Canadian research into halfway housing in 20 years. Their research provided in-depth descriptions of 79 Community Residential Facilities (CRF), their structure and operations, in addition to profiling the residents over a six-year period. This investigation was limited to descriptions, did not expand on best practices of halfway house operations, and failed to address operational and management approaches. It also stopped short of addressing any policy implications or consulting residents. Bell and Trevethan (2004) discovered that 56 per cent of all released offenders entered a CRF (CSC operated facilities and independent facilities) both immediately or shortly after their release, 5 per cent entered a treatment centre, and the remaining 39 per cent are released without any residency. The total number of offenders released into CRF care had increased since 1999 (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). Most residents left the halfway house programme within three months. The average length of stay in the facility was 83 days. (Bell & Trevethan, 2004).

Importantly, Bell & Trevethan's (2004) research provided an understanding of who is receiving halfway house care, and how much funding is required for this care. Largely, residents in halfway houses were male, White and around 35 years old. The offence profile of residents was generally for a non-violent opportunity crime such as burglary and property crimes or drug offenses. They were labelled as 'medium' risk for reoffending, reintegration potential or motivation to desist from crime (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). They are more likely to enter the halfway house with unresolved and lasting substance abuse dependencies, mental health issues and emotional and attitude problems (Bell & Trevethan, 2004).

Resources and funding across the facilities ranged, and revealed the dependence on external funding sources for operation. Most facilities named funding as their main concern, and stated they always faced uncertainty in funding levels and meeting resource needs (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). A lack of funding means they were unable to adequately operate their services and programme delivery and sustain the property to an acceptable standard (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). As most of the halfway houses retained a contract with the CSC, they

received a daily rate for occupancy which was not always consistent and further strained the funding levels (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). Occupancy issues were irregularities in client flow which led to a constant shift from large vacancies to overcrowding (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). The daily rate received for accommodating a resident ranged from \$4 a day to \$210, and averaged \$96 per resident (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). The total capacity of each facility ranged from just 4 beds to 82 beds, averaging 12 beds across the sample (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). The number of occupants suggests overcrowding and high demand for the facilities, as the number of beds occupied ranged from 2 to 84 beds, with an average of 18 beds occupied in 2002 (Bell & Trevethan, 2004). The annual operational budget ranged from just \$8,000 to \$2,000,000, a difference which was attributed to external funding sources, which include church groups, charitable trusts and NGOs. The average operational budget was \$227,000. Staff were often lowly paid and underqualified; facilities were understaffed or lacked specialised staff. Low wages in this sector was the prime contributor to issues faced by halfway housing operators which, in turn, affected the quality of support received by the residents and their success in reintegration (Bell & Trevethan, 2004).

The Canadian experience helps to understand reintegration strategies in an under-researched area of corrections but neglects the pro-social and peer support residents receive during their stay. Achieving a pro-social network is a barrier identified by the Department of Corrections within their Reducing Reoffending Action Plan (Department of Corrections, 2012). Arguably, this abstract aim is more difficult to measure than the acquisition of shelter. Yet, it is intrinsically linked to self-change and narrative change which occurs when an individual is desisting from crime (Maruna, 2001; Presser, 2009; Sandberg, 2010). Hence, the pro-social and peer support halfway house residents receive is significant to their desistance from crime.

Pro-social and peer support

Central to the ex-offender's stay is the pro-social environment and peer support received during their stay in a halfway house, which is central to promoting desistance from crime. Residing in a halfway house directly post-release enables for the severing of harmful

environments and former negative social groups necessary for behavioural change. Duffee and Duffee (1981) identified 28 problems or needs residents have. These included concrete needs with specific solutions such as money, clothing, transportation, and health care including dental care. Additionally, receiving appropriate legal assistance and employment support, access to education or training was noted as particularly difficult to access. More abstract problems - which are more difficult to address - included strained relationships with family, desistance from substance use and difficulty feeling as if they belong in the community, and cutting ties to their criminal past. These require a more individualised, case-by-case treatment and support, which can be achieved through closer supervision and a more personalised service, such as that received within quality supported accommodation (Ogloff, 2009). Halfway houses can allow for practitioners to target these abstract needs, and be the catalyst for self-change (Ogloff, 2009).

A fundamental element to desistance is the severing of those causes and environments which would eventually lead to their offending. Removing an individual from the hardened environment of prison also removes the pressure of having to conform and maintain an identity. The pro-social environment, with reduced access to possible influencers, allows an individual to start a new. This process is called 'knifing off', a metaphor which is commonplace in criminology and other disciplines where sobriety from addictive behaviour is explored (Maruna, 2006). The opportunity that halfway houses allow for the knifing off process is under explored, however Maruna (2006) applies the process to prisoner reintegration and as a cause of desistance. Maruna (2006) explains that 'knifing off' has been used in literature as the severing of one's past, social roles, associates, disadvantage and stigma, but the most precise usage of knifing off applies to the knifing off of opportunities, and eliminating old options. New circumstances no longer feature the old opportunities or choices which could lead to further offending. This is a form of social control, and the imposition of limiting freedom. Forced knifing off through imprisonment or another agency and self-imposed knifing off is debated as to which is more successful, though an environmental change is not imperative for this process to occur, it can also be propelled by the motivation for self-change, or positive influences such as marriage or employment (Maruna, 2006). Such self-change has been linked to desistance in Maruna's (2001) past narrative inquiries, and he concludes it as a reaction to positive social and environments, and that change on the outside triggers a change on the inside. Environmental knifing off is a legitimate route to self-change, though when supported with positive narrative

development it is more likely to lead to desistance. The halfway house environment supports this, as the change is sufficient enough, and pro-social support from constant supervision implies the social control needed for this process to occur. A small scale exploration into Supported Accommodation users in Scotland revealed their lack of confidence in living crime free lives without the structure, positive encouragement, role-modelling, good advice, and increase in self-confidence and self-belief that peers and pro-social support within the homes provided them. They were given a greater degree of security, self-purpose and direction than when they were left to their own resources (Kirkwood, 2009). The halfway house environment also aims to be drug and alcohol free, and has the ingredients for this lasting change to occur. The aspect of narrative change within a halfway house environment has not been explored in a New Zealand context.

An unsupported return to the community denies the ex-prisoner of the crucial aftercare and support required to successfully desist from a criminal lifestyle, and shred their criminal identity and worldview. A halfway house provides this, and supports effective identity change.

Methodology

Within the social sciences, the concept and meaning of the narrative has become increasingly valued as a scientific research method. Narrative criminology can offer unique insight into the subject matter often invisible to other research methods. The use of narrative inquiry is a tool for storytelling, and revealing the richness of lived experiences in commonplaces of temporality and sociality (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry can highlight ethical matters, while shaping new theoretical understandings of individuals lived experiences (Sandelowski, 1991). This occurs by following a recursive and reflective process between field research of storytelling and field text and existing research which creates a conceptual framework whereby different analyses can be used (Sandelowski, 1991).

This technique has also been recognised as valuable by criminological scholars such as Presser (2009), Maruna (2001), and Sandberg (2010). Presser (2009) states previous criminological inquiry has excluded offender narratives and has relied on statistical data on criminal behaviour and its causes for narrative inquiry. This implies that telling the narrative from the perspective of the offender could be inauthentic because offenders have motive to misrepresent events (Presser, 2009). Criminologists often fail to view narrative inquiry as being able to explain criminal behaviour, as narrative and storytelling is often perceived as a means to affect others rather than explaining actions (Presser, 2004). The narrative comes from the offender, a labelled ascribed by society which the individual may not recognise themselves to be, reflected by which actions they choose to describe and whether they classify them as good or bad (Presser, 2009). If the narrator distances themselves from past wrongdoing, they aim to seek appraisal in retelling their story and to be received positively by the listener indicating openness to changing their behaviour (Presser, 2009). Therefore, the question of authenticity is not relevant. The self-selective nature of the narrative is what makes the inquiry useful (Presser, 2009). Truth, trust and accuracy in the information are displaced by the fact that stories are social relics and a valuable insight into deviancy (Presser, 2009). Interpretation and subjectivity are analysed to understand an individual's reading of their world, as Presser states people act based on their perception of things that concern them (Presser, 2009). The social sciences should not be concerned about the accuracy of the event, rather the reactions to the event. This is exactly what a narrative provides the researcher, an insight into the offender's perspective. Furthermore, the retelling of experience is often loaded with emotion which can also stir emotion

in the reader, prompting empathy and a keenness to understand the hardships often experienced by those committing crime (Presser, 2004). This element is frequently lacking in criminology, a discipline which Presser (2009) claims struggles to convey emotion and so it is left ignored when analysing criminal behaviour. Essentially, narrative inquiry holds the offender's emotive experience and life-story as equally important in determining causation of criminal behaviour (Presser, 2009).

Narrative criminology has particularly increased in the research area of prisoner rehabilitation. There, it is not only used as a research method but also a tool to improve offenders' mental and emotional wellbeing and to assist in identity restructuring while understanding past behaviour (Ward & Marshall, 2007). Rehabilitation should be concerned with equipping individuals with the capabilities and values to live prosocial and meaningful lives. This is reliant on the acquirement of knowledge of the social and physical world, the development of a comprehensive understanding of an individual's own values and standards and the ability to utilise resources to overcome everyday obstacles and challenging environments (Ward & Marshall, 2007). These sets of capabilities are embedded in narrative identity which reflects a person's commitments, goals and subsequent activities. Narratives are the stories of past and present sets of expectations and future experiences and for offenders, a guide allowing successful navigation beyond prisons gates. Maruna (2001) describes offender narratives as a redemptive script, that is, the exchange of a story or narrative which supports integration into the community. Narratives are coherent autobiographical stories which aim to make sense of a criminal past in the context of a reformed present and future, within which offenders make sense of their lives in such a way which encourages desistance from crime (Colvin, 2015).

Narrative criminology emerged during the Chicago School period, notably in Shaw's (1930) study into youth delinquency *The Jack Roller*. In *The Jack Roller*, Shaw (1930) builds a relationship with fifteen-year-old Stanley for over six years, acting as his social worker aiming to turn his life around. Shaw demonstrated the value of Stanley's life-story, remarking on the value of using the life-story as evidence of his behavioural difficulties, and his understanding of his own place and identity in his environment, social and cultural context (Shaw, 1930). Stanley's conceptualisation of his reality provided Shaw with a timeline for significant developmental events and the roots of behaviour patterns, which would influence his delinquency (Shaw,

1930). Shaw revered the narrative's ability to isolate and rely on the information in the language, emotional attitudes and expressions of the narrator, and completely remove the interpretation of the researcher. The subjective nature of the 'life-story' and narrative was not considered conventional social science data, instead simply a new sociological method. However, in Shaw's (1930) research, critics recognised that its aim was not to be an accurate and objective record, but rather the value was in the interpretations by the boy. Shaw (1930) claimed that this method of research possesses both theoretical and therapeutic properties. The link between theory and therapy is in the intrinsic relationship between narrative and self-identity. Narratives that are voiced become truth. Storytelling forces the narrator to integrate the narrative into the self. Hence, the narrative becomes part of his or her identity-narrative. The narrator is thus a variable of an agreed and factual cultural context.

Narrative identity is an internalised and ever evolving process as the narrator develops alternative and new understandings with age (Sandberg, 2010). As identity narratives continually change, they become increasingly complex and fluid. A narrative identity is constructed through the pursuit and attainment of personal goals, with the motivation to achieve a set goal exposing who an individual is and who they wish to become (Sandberg, 2010). All individuals aim to achieve personal set goals, and the realisation of these goals manifests through different activities, associations, environments and lifestyles (Ward & Marshall, 2007). Successfully achieving set goals is dependent on having specific capabilities, access to essential resources or opportunities to secure personally valued goods or achieving a desired status under specific circumstances. This is true for offenders. By reducing offending to merely the motivation to achieve a goal, we humanise and simplify crime which indicates that by providing alternative and legitimate means to achieve the desired goal as treatment could effectively target offending behaviour and see a reduction in the desire to offend (Ward & Marshall, 2007). Maruna's 2001 inquiry into narrative identity and rehabilitation is so far, one of the most significant studies in narrative criminology and the remedial benefits of this method of research. Maruna (2001) explored the association between the narrative and recidivism. He noted that those who have desisted from crime are open to sharing their narrative and life-story which detailed their life goals and gained empowerment from revealing their life-story (Maruna, 2001). The shared narrative becomes a vehicle for self-understanding and self-change (Maruna, 2001). It is a source of answers for the offender, while demonstrating to the

community they are ready to accept their wrong doing and re-enter (Maruna, 2001). It is not only a tool for explaining criminal behaviour, but also a tool for crime prevention (Maruna, 2001).

For narrative to be a successful rehabilitative tool and encourage desistance from crime, it must be under a prosocial context (McCurran & Ward, 2004). Narrative identity is malleable. Once a narrative is constructed in an antisocial context, it can be responsive to circumstance and restructured under a prosocial context (Ward & Marshall, 2007). The process of narrative identity change occurs when an individual is exposed to new experiences and new environments. For the ex-prisoner, redemptive script can be redefined narrative identity. Prison as an environment is extreme. The social and physical context is heightened and prisoners adapt themselves accordingly to cope. Everyday social interactions often become survival responses due to the hyper-violent, isolated and restrictive nature of incarceration (Maruna, 2006). Prison is a marginal situation (Maruna, 2001). Inhabitants experience losses which extend beyond their liberty, and beyond the incarcerated period. The total institution removes them from their home, their belongings, their community and their whanau, and replaces their known identity with a number, bare cell and neighbours experiencing the same severe situation and loss (Maruna, 2006). Their identity is removed and redefined into a classification according to their offending (prisoner, murderer, criminal). Basic parameters of everyday life are emphasised with increased vigilance and emotion control as their adaptation to violence and aggression ensues (Maruna, 2006). The prisoner narrative identity evolves to manage their prison experience as they have no control over their environment. These extremes merge into a social context where self and narrative identity is likely to be questioned and redefined. This stigmatising process and marginal situation causes a 'crisis of narrative', and a pursuit of redemption and new narrative identity (Maruna, 2006). In addition to cultural resources which an individual references such myths, folklore, art, music, technology and the values which reinforce social institutions and the structure of everyday activities, their biological resources such as perceptive and cognitive abilities, problem solving abilities, conflict resolution skills and behavioural and cognitive functioning all contribute to the narrative change which communicates how to live in their environment and who they fundamentally are (Ward & Marshall, 2007). Narrative Change can occur through a process of self-reflection and evaluation of life commitments, altering what a person does, and what or who they become. In a prison setting, an individual's primary master attribution often replaces the attribution which existed prior to

incarceration. Adults in general attempt to organise realisations in their lives to find meaning, cohesiveness and clarity to maintain a sense of self-worth and purpose (Maruna, 2006). For prisoners, this process is exacerbated and even more difficult to achieve. When alienated from their usual support networks and comforts and confronted by a situation outside of their cognitive processing ability, it can produce a tension in the individuals understanding of their life-story, dissatisfaction in one self-identity, self-loathing and the desire for a new framework and set of references for them to shape their identity from (Maruna, 2006). This desire for narrative change can also prompt a 'conversion' narrative, that is, the adoption of a Christian framework of which to find redemption in and pave a new identity for themselves to live by. Conversion narratives occur in unison with a turning around in the direction of life, and consequently converts substitute one worldview for a new one (Rigsby, 2014). Adopting a Christian framework or self-narrative successfully creates a new social identity for the individual which replaces the identity assigned by society for their crime, relieves the individual of shame and gives a sense of purpose to the imprisonment period and also provides a sense of empowerment (Maruna, 2006). Additionally, Christianity provides a strong foundation for forgiveness than any other narrative in western society (Maruna, 2006). Many agents within Christian literature have broken agreed mores, values, norms and laws and to gain forgiveness and are relieved of their wrong-doing upon once succumbing to God. Conversion narratives and redemptive scripts can help a prisoner cope with shame and stigma which comes with imprisonment, and also upon release into the community. The Christian narrative is widely accepted by western society, and provides a valid path for exiting their criminal identity. Many supported accommodation services in New Zealand are operated by religious organisations, and though a Christian narrative identity is not compulsory for residing, the pro-social contact and new environment the ex-prisoner is submerged in is predominately Christian themed.

Whether an individual reforms their narrative identity by conversion or redemption, the desire to make use of a shameful past and put experience into good use by helping or influencing others distinguishes likelihood of a prisoner's successful desistance from crime (Maruna, 2006). Offenders who lack a clear narrative identity are more likely to offend, or similarly, those with a negative narrative identity, for example "I am a bad person therefore I do bad things" (Yardley, Wilson, Kemp & Brookes, 2015). This narrative reveals someone who does not have the necessary skills, resources or capabilities to achieve a prosocial narrative. In

a rehabilitative context, assisting offenders in developing a clear narrative identity, through skill training, instilling appropriate attitudes, reconnection with cultural identity (particularly for Māori) and effective emotional regulation and responses will help to accomplish development of a useful and positive narrative identity. Successfully remodelling offender narrative should address specific criminogenic needs, and allow for successful reintegration when re-entering the community upon release.

In the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, honouring the story of the offender inserts itself in the Māori tradition of oral history and the importance of pūrākau, or storytelling, to Kaupapa Māori and contributes to culturally responsive research practices (Lee, 2008). Māori have used storytelling as a strategy to preserve knowledge so it endures through generations (Metge, 1998). The use of narrative and storytelling within a postmodernist approach challenges the need for absolute truth within scientific research methods and problem solving (Lee, 2008). Postmodernism challenges this by proposing that reality is subjective and based on the interactions between people. Lee (2008) asserts that context within the social construction of reality can clarify the ambiguities and dynamics of the individual's life-story. Pūrākau is a form of Māori narrative that originates from oral literature traditions (Metge, 1998). Māori narratives are highly respected, carefully constructed, expertly delivered and central to the self (Metge, 1998). Retaining the respect of pūrākau in contemporary research encourages cultural ideology and enables Māori to express their stories, embody lived experiences and express messages within the scope of Kaupapa Māori framework, while considering what 'being Māori' is like in a system dominated by Pākeha models and British law (Lee, 2008). This is important in New Zealand, as Māori as the marginal group in their own land are over-represented in the criminal justice system at every stage (JustSpeak, 2014). Kaupapa Māori methodology provides a space from which Māori are able express their own reality and experience, their own personal truth rather than submit to assimilation and silence that is required of them within Pākeha dominated New Zealand society (Mahuika, 2008).

By adopting the pūrākau approach in narrative inquiry, researchers are provided with some guiding principles for portraying and politicising a vulnerable individual's life-story (Lee, 2008). The pūrākau approach is married with a movement toward decolonisation of indigenous peoples, particular to the typical western approach to social science research methodologies. Decolonising methodology movements emerge from a desire to resist traditional

positivist approaches littered with imperialist and colonialist ideologies and discard the exclusive nature of western scientific research (Mahuika, 2008). In utilising approaches such as pūrākau, aims to reclaim Māori worldviews, information and practice offer a meaningful and respectful representation of the experience of Māori. For the last century, Māori frequent more so as the subjects of westernised research, observed by Pākeha researchers using colonial methodology, rather than as occupiers of the research role (Mahuika, 2008). Māori are, conveniently for Pākeha, in the marginalised position and therefore are unable to challenge the findings of the academic elite (Walker, 1985). Advocating decolonisation of Māori narratives simultaneously returns ownership over *taonga* (which includes intellectual property and the intangible such as memories and life-story) and assists in restoring the power inequity caused by colonisation and neo-colonialism. Western academia adopts explicit analytical techniques and conventional writing styles with little room for indigenous subtleties which sit outside the demands of academic discipline. The expectations of what is and what is not academic language or academia have limited, controlled and defined academia, deliberately excluding indigenous interpretations (Tuhivai Smith, 2000). Eurocentric research practice has been used to devalue and discourage indigenous input, and as a colonising device creating epistemological disarray and falsities of Māori, which have resulted in unbalanced social structures and limited Māori contribution to academia and research. Narrative and pūrākau challenges the dominant academic language, and by engaging in this focus of story-telling and revival as a legitimate qualitative research methodology moves toward decolonisation within indigenous communities and represents Māori life and stories in a legitimate and true way.

Movement toward using traditional narrative to represent Māori life by Māori academics, writers and artists has seen a revival in recent times, through the concept of language as technology. Lee (2008) embarked on a methodological journey, applying the traditional form of pūrākau to her research into the life-story of Māori teachers. Lee (2008) created a methodological space for pūrākau, transforming the usage to a tool for narrative inquiry, and extended use of pūrākau beyond the traditional. Lee (2008) discovered the adaptive nature of pūrākau, and several instances where Māori have adapted its use to satisfy audience and context when necessary. Māori have adapted the use of narrative or pūrākau in environments such as in the Native Land Courts, which were established by Pākeha to rush the sale of Māori land. Pūrākau was used to emphasise *iwi* and *hapu* affiliation and the deep historical ties to the

land, and the value of this connection to Māori. This demonstrates the adaptability of pūrākau, as emphasis of pūrākau can be adjusted to the context and audience to which the narrative is being told. Experimentation and exploration of pūrākau and potential application of its forms is also evident in other fields by Māori practitioners, artists and writers incorporating traditional means to explain contemporary Māori life. Lee (2008) emphasises the power and strength reaffirmed by the use of pūrākau, asserting its exposition in reinforcing Māori identity, culture, self-esteem and self-worth and most importantly, the empowerment understanding self-narrative identity brings. This technology and relationship Māori possess with life-story and narrative identity existed long before western intervention in Māori life, and continues to exist as a culturally specific process as it is adapted and recreated for contemporary Māori life (Nepe, 1991). Since colonisation, Pākeha anthropologists have documented Māori pūrākau, though incorrectly. Pākeha have inserted themselves and their understanding of worldview into pūrākau when documenting, deliberately producing incorrect accounts to improve readability of the story, and thereby sanitising, simplifying and commodifying Māori knowledge for Pākeha consumption. This white-washing denigrated Māori knowledge to appease the Pākeha inadequacy to understand the intricacies and diversity of ancestral nature and intergenerational oral history. Through manufacturing stories or 'Māori myths and legends' prevalent in a New Zealand primary school classroom, published in mass-produced children's books and recognizable by New Zealand school children for decades, Pākeha have subtly established racial superiority by illustrating that Māori knowledge was inferior, needing 'improving' and a colonisers touch in order to be digested by the general population (Lee, 2008). Reasoning for this has been the need to transform pūrākau into straightforward reading and easy reference. Clearly, this reshaping made by Pākeha for Pākeha aims to broaden the audience of pūrākau, while making it more inaccessible to Māori. The mistreatment of pūrākau has failed to identify a key trait, which is its accessibility; pūrākau transports the message within the narrative beyond an academic elitist audience. To further accessibility, Bishop (1998) emphasises the need for a shift away from the 'euroversity', and advocates for the establishment of a '*whanau* of interest' around Māori research. This *whanau* is responsible for role distribution and decision making while adhering to ethical and familial principals to guide research projects to benefit their community. This means the goal of *tino-rangitiratanga* or self-determination is privileged over traditional methodology and research technique. Though Pākeha may be involved in the

research process, their role is determined by the '*whānau* of interest', Māori, and not by Pākeha academic elite (Bishop, 1998). By changing the paradigm of traditional research methodologies, the key issues raised within the narrative become accessible and approachable to all Māori, promoting the decolonising objective by creating a space for the legitimacy of all Māori knowledge to be as valuable as its Pākeha counterpart (Zavala, 2013). As a researcher, by using a framework beyond conventional research methods aids in eliciting a genuine and true representation of Māori, while rejecting and challenging the hegemonic practise of Māori as subjects presented in Pākeha framework.

A Māori aligned approach or Kaupapa methodology aligns itself with ethical and moral issues in research, in particular, instances where power relations need to be considered (Lee, 2008). Research and participant relationships and the complexities are considered and prioritised to protect the participant. Using this approach, the storyteller has ownership of the story and the researcher must treat access to the narrative as a gift. The participant's voice is central, though Lee (2008) clarifies that in the presentation of the life-story, the researcher is able to include their beliefs, knowledge, partisanship and politics in order to occupy a unique space. This unique space represents an opportunity which needs to be explored in New Zealand; an offender's experience of reintegration through halfway housing. Through combining research techniques and the careful use of 'voice', this particular use of narrative inquiry, a pūrākau approach, can make the meaning in both the participant and researcher's experience clear (Lee, 2008).

Research method

The aim of this study was to collect and analyse the narratives of six residents from a half-way house, to identify aspects of supported accommodation post-release that residents feel have been most successful in their journey to desistance from crime. Life-story interviews were used to achieve this. The interview process occurred over the course of two days, with three participants interviewed each day, and each interview lasting between 60-80 minutes. The interviews were recorded. The interviews took place in a community house in Manukau, and lunch was provided by the researcher.

Life-story interview begins with presenting the initial central topic to the participant. In this instance, a proposal was presented to potential participants at an earlier date and participants were provided with a participant information sheet. The main narration then commences, often with an opening question posed by the interviewer to initiate spontaneous narration. Presser (2010) recommends an open question such as: "How did you get here?". The researcher opened the interview with the question: "How did you get to the Grace Foundation?". Initially, each participant began with detailing their journey into the criminal justice system but one, who decided to begin her narrative detailing her journey with the Grace Foundation. Few prompts were required, and some sections of the narrative developed into conversations between the researcher and participant when the participant directed it that way. Generic prompts were adopted when needed, and were used sparingly to ensure natural and impulsive storytelling rather than researcher solicited stories. Occasionally, the researcher sought clarification or elaboration if some experiences narrated were unclear or warranted further exploration, though refrained from intruding on a chain of narration or interrupting the participant's train of thought. Generally, the participant narratives trailed chronologically and distinctly discussed life before prison, life during prison and life after prison.

Narrative inquiry and life-story interview as a research method provided a rich insight into the life of the participants, a community which is often hard for policy makers to reach. The use of narrative also honours *tangata whenua* by practising kaupapa Māori aligned methodology, and ensuring an equality and respect between researcher and participant. Life-story has been used by the participants to make sense of their past, present and future experiences and the environments and cultural contexts which have been central to shaping

their lives. Narrative change and redemptive scripts developed within prison require continual support upon release from prison to successfully demonstrate desistance from crime, and narrative inquiry reveals the extent of this change within a half-way house environment post-release.

Participant recruitment

The sample was recruited from residents of a supported accommodation facility operated by the Grace Foundation Charitable Trust (the Grace Foundation Charitable Trust, 2016). The researcher had already established a relationship with the operators of the Grace Foundation Charitable Trust from work external to the university. The Grace Foundation was established in 2007, and operates 21 supported accommodation facilities in the South Auckland region. In addition to accommodation facilities, the foundation provides *'holistic health services, contextual education, healthy housing and relevant employment'* to 125 residents (the Grace Foundation Charitable Trust, n.d). The residents are generally referred to the Grace Foundation from Auckland Regional prisons. However, a small proportion of residents consists of domestic abuse victims, homeless peoples, and otherwise marginalised. The foundation supports prospective residents through many stages of the prison and release process. Relationships with prospective residents are established often months before their release date to alleviate fear and anxiety of their prison release and Grace have a constant presence within the prison so inmates are aware of their services:

"We're there every day. So, Saturday is our biggest day so that's when we go in and we're there from say, 9 am. The three ladies that um, run the service so they're there from 9 am till I think 12 and then they have lock up. And then we're back from 1 o'clock till 4 o'clock and then it's lock up. So a lot of the people that we get come, that, we tell them go straight through the right channels, go to your case manager, your case manager will contact us. Um, but a lot of the times we're just walking through the prisons 'cos we go directly to the units and they're just coming up to us and we're just taking down names. Then we contact their case manager and say look this person would like us to visit with them, are you OK with that?" (V. Letele, personal communication, 15 August 2015).

Central to Grace Foundation's operation is faith. Grace is a religious and faith-based organisation, however, this does not impact on who they will accept as a resident; and potential

residents do not have to follow a Christian lifestyle to be accepted into their facility. However, they do inform prospective residents that this is central to day-to-day activities within the homes and residents are often referred to Grace through prison chaplains.

“... we don't try and um tell them what they should be doing, it's more a less we show them through our example of God's love through us onto them. It blows them away, it does something to them and you know you can't take any credit for it, it's just God's love.” (V. Letele, personal communication, 15 August 2015).

Most community organisations that provide supported services to ex-prisoners in New Zealand are faith-based (Conradson, 2008). As is the case in many Western countries, Christian churches in New Zealand have a sustained history of involvement in welfare provision (Conradson, 2008). In fact, the New Zealand Government only provides funding directly for the Salisbury Street Foundation in Christchurch leaving an unknown amount operated independently by religious-based organisations or church groups to make up for the shortfall (Conradson, 2008). Corrections provide funding to 53 external providers to operate 'Supported Accommodation' facilities, and are primary providers to the Salisbury Street Foundation in Christchurch (Department of Corrections, 2014). Corrections work closely with community agencies that support the reintegration process, and prefer to contract the facilities to external providers rather than operate them directly (Office of the Auditor General, 2013). If each halfway house accommodated only 20 of the 15,000 offenders released each year, the Department affords just \$2,018.75 per resident per year. As the programmes in these halfway houses are only 13 weeks long, it is likely they house many more than this, further demonstrating the strain and underfunding the experienced by the service providers. These figures are only for the organisations that receive funding from the Department, including the Grace Foundations' 21 facilities, there are an unknown number who receive no Government assistance. The Grace Foundation operate without funding, and have calculated the costs for service delivery to be \$62,500 for their current capacity, with the length of stay for residents undetermined:

“No, we don't get any government funding. Could we do with some, yes. How much, I think we worked it out to be around at least \$500 per person to complete the whole range of services that we provide and we have 125 people.” (V. Letele, personal communication, 15 August 2015).

With increased funding, the Grace Foundation believe the quality of their services could improve. Operators worked voluntarily and were unable to pay those who donated their time every day. Not having enough funding limited the quantity and quality of the services they provide:

“But with some resources of funding behind us, I mean, we could open more homes, we could run more training programs, um... We provide food every single day with what we have so we could offer better, better food, and um, I just think our, we could do much more and we could grow a lot quicker as well. And I think also we'd be able to pay for professional people, um, not saying that the ones we do have aren't professional but a barrier for people to come and work, as you know it's voluntary, it isn't money because they've got to pay bills. I'd love to one day turn around and just be able to pay them.” (V. Letele, personal communication, 15 August 2015).

The sample was sourced following a presentation of the proposed research by the primary researcher. The research proposal was presented to the Grace Foundation, and participant information sheets were distributed to potential participants, and contact information was provided should the residents wish to volunteer themselves for the study. The research proposal was presented by way of an oral presentation and visual presentation and the use of accessible, non-academic language with time provided to answer all questions from potential participants. This approach was to account for the high rates of illiteracy amongst the prison population and the barriers this creates. It was asked that potential participants do not respond to the invitation through the Grace Foundation to ensure there is no power imbalance and collected narratives are independent from influence of the Grace Foundation. The final sample consisted of six residents. Though the sample of six is too small to be considered a complete representative of all ex-offenders released into a half-way house in New Zealand, is intended to provide a rich and elicit picture of the experience of leaving prison in New Zealand and the experience of living in a supported accommodation facility.

Data collection

The researcher was cautious to establish a trusting and reciprocal relationship, and to ensure anonymity when the participants were disclosing their life-story. Because of the amount of stigmatisation the ex-prisoner population faces when re-entering the general population, anonymity was key to prevent the sample from shying away from exploring devalued

experiences, as does society at large. Life-story research is dependent upon the researcher building a collaborative relationship with the participants and, in this context, seeking information of a highly sensitive nature. The relationship between researcher and participant must be built on trust and the researcher needs to be able to enter into the world of the other. Neither is an easy task as the participants may understandably be suspicious of the research process. Individuals may refuse to fully engage in the process. Confidentiality is closely related to a person's autonomy and can also be problematic in life-story research with the ex-prisoner population. A concern that arises for researchers when interviewing any person with a criminal history is that he or she may disclose criminal activity that has not been subject to prosecution. For offenders engaging in life-story research there may be little insight into the personal implication of disclosing such offences in the research interview. Research participants were informed that the primary researcher may be obliged under mandatory reporting legislation to supply information to authorities, or under subpoena to testify in court or to produce documents in relation to information supplied to them in the course of their research. However, such information will not be volunteered. One risk which presents itself is the participant disclosing information which was previously unknown and could be considered unlawful. The researcher would not disclose the identity of the participant should this situation arise, unless in the unlikely event there is a direct threat to their or another individual's safety. It was communicated to the participant that if previously undisclosed criminal activity is shared within the life-story, it would not go beyond the researcher and their supervisor. This was stated explicitly and transparently in the participant information sheet and confidentiality agreement provided to the sample prior to the research.

As participants shared their own life-story, the confidentiality agreement assured safety to the participant and also those victimised by their crimes. Risk assessment was also crucial as the research involved vulnerable individuals. Pūrākau requires the researcher to consider how the research will benefit the participant. This approach takes into account ethical and moral issues especially where power relations exist (Lee, 2008). The participant voice is central. The careful use of 'voice' is significant for both the participant and researcher's experience (Lee, 2008). The methodology chosen ensured protection to the six participants, and their well-being was priority throughout the research. If the nature of disclosed events triggered emotional discomfort in the participant, they were informed that they could terminate

the interview at any point and will be protected by the use of a pseudonym in the publishing of the thesis. Any discomfort experienced by a participant was alleviated through privacy, confidentiality and the insurance that each participant has a clear and comprehensive understanding of what the research asks of them. Furthermore, due to the nature of narrative inquiry, what the participant choose to disclose is completely up to them and this selectiveness does not skew the data or outcome of the research.

One of the Grace Foundation staff members was present in the office next door (as agreed in researcher's safety protocol) though she did not enter the room during the interview process, only to check on the well-being of both the researcher and participants prior to and after the interview took place. An interview with the service provider was also conducted to receive information on logistic operations of the Grace Foundation such as funding, limitations they experience and elements of service delivery.

The participants were not compensated for their time however, koha was donated to the Grace Foundation. This is to further emphasise the reciprocal relationship the researcher has with the Grace Foundation. It is expected that this study will benefit both the Grace Foundation community and the wider community, potentially increasing resources for the community sector who operate these facilities, to funding boosts for the Grace Foundation by demonstrating the success from the perspective of a resident. The Grace Foundation will also be benefitted by the information by which they can evaluate or understand the success their operation has on their residents and the reintegration process. Furthermore, through the therapeutic nature of narrative analysis, the participant is able to reflect on their development and progress since their release from prison.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify particular topics and primary themes which were common throughout the collected narratives. Narratives were transcribed, and then subsequently categorised by anticipated themes after review of the existing literature. Presser (2010) recommends against using analytical methods which exclude intuition and prior research. Thematic analysis allowed for categorisation of the data within the narratives. Coding of the data and the recognition of important moments within the narratives allowed for theme development and the identification of implicit and explicit themes. Emerging themes of

conversion, redemption and prosocial and peer support occurred as the discussion of events pertaining to these themes were frequent and dominating. Co-occurrence of themes developed, and participant discourse revealed similar experiences within the narratives and an experience of the halfway house was illustrated. Relationships between conversion, redemption and prosocial and peer support developed and interrelated through a deductive approach. The nature of narrative conveys these abstract concepts over concrete ones, as relationships and self-identity are more likely to be discussed than tangible, practical barriers to re-entry (Maruna, 2001). Through the literature, it was expected to see evidence of narrative change through conversion or redemptive script, and the discussion of prosocial support was inducted in the coding process, as it was determined this was a point of difference for the reintegrating through the halfway house environment. The result after coding, was a vivid display of three distinct themes discussed by all six participants.

When interpreting the data, it was imperative that the researcher not *re-interpret* the participant narratives as according to a Kaupapa aligned research. The participants held ownership of their story, and access was to be treasured. The researcher was to bring interpretation of the narrative alongside the participant voice, rather than insertion of assumptions and preconceived expectations of the data within the narrative. Pūrākau obligation influenced the researcher to ensure there was no sanitising any of the narrative, to protect the data extracted. This made for a true and genuine account of the experience within the Grace Foundation.

There was sufficient discussion around several common and recurring themes which participants identified as being successful in desistance from crime upon release. The reporting of these findings are based around these themes.

Research Findings

Six Grace Foundation residents were interviewed. Each respondent came into contact with the half-way house through some aspect of the church, or prison chaplains. Five of the six respondents had converted to a Christian faith since engaging with the Grace Foundation. One was still considering conversion. Two participants discussed being baptised since their involvement with the Foundation. Following a Christian faith is not a prerequisite to residing at the home, however, Christian themes and teachings dominate day-to-day life and participation is encouraged.

Two of the participants were male and four participants were female. Five of the six residents had been residing in one of the Foundation homes for more than three months. One of the participants had only been there for one month at the time of the interview. Two participants, Kahu and Tina, were a couple and had been there for nine months though resided in separate homes for the duration of their residency. The couple had an infant child together who stayed with Tina in a Grace Foundation home specifically for mothers and children. One participant, Stephanie, had been involved with the Grace Foundation for several years though was no longer living in one of the homes. She had also been a house-parent and was still involved in a volunteer capacity. Tina was also a house parent. The other two, Jenna and Jessie, were still living in one of the Grace Foundation homes and had been for over six months. In addition to Kahu and Tina, Jaykob had two infant children. Stephanie was the official guardian of two primary school aged children, and along with Jenna, had adult children of her own.

The offending history of the participants was diverse. Three participants had been in prison more than once, and one said they could not recall how many times they had been to prison. The conviction history of each participant was varied and lengthy and included a wrongful sexual connection offense, two participants entered prison on an aggravated robbery conviction, assaulting a police officer, drug convictions and manslaughter. The longest prison sentence served was eight years for the manslaughter charge, and one participant was serving a 14-year extended supervision order. Four of the six participants had been involved with the criminal justice system from a young age, and one of these four began their

involvement through the youth court system as a child. The other two participants entered prison for the first time in their late 30s.

The researcher explained the nature of narrative and life-story to the participants prior to the interview commencing. Out of the six participants, five began recalling their entry into the criminal justice system and the reasons for this with no prompting from the researcher after the research aims were described. It was necessary for the researcher to use prompts to direct the narrative toward their time post-release and their experience within a halfway house, and the same prompts were used for each participant when needed. One participant was reluctant to discuss her life before her imprisonment and residence at the Grace Foundation due to a special condition of her parole which restricted the discussion of her convictions.

After using thematic analysis to categorise and organise meaningful happenings within the narratives, three key themes emerged from all six narratives. These were conversion, redemption and prosocial and peer support.

Conversion

Conversion and religious transformation was credited by five of the six interviewees as responsible for their ongoing desistance from crime, and this dominated as a theme throughout the participant narratives.

Five out of six respondents directly credited their recent conversion to a Christian identity with their desistance from crime. A shift toward a Christian worldview was evident in the respondent's narratives, and was often credited for propelling long-lasting change:

"I came to Grace because I had to do good for my baby and um I had to change my life, I was violent to my partner um yeah and she came into Grace and then I followed her into Grace and about two months later we opened our life up to God. It's actually not just the best in a year that I have done but actually the best in my whole life."

Kahu's new Christian identity had become a major attribute and had overwritten his criminal ascribed status. He described his decision to be baptised as life changing:

"Going to church, yeah on Saturdays, that's it yeah! Those are my best days probably! And the Holy Spirit, a month after I was baptised he entered my body and it was powerful. Just something really good and amazing entering my body it was amazing. So yeah the baptism, going to church and succeeding on all my courses and that aye."

Kahu also felt he needed to accredit his success, transformation and desistance to God, and this conversion was responsible for his behavioural change:

"I may be at the start of my journey of being a better man even at the start of the day even when I wake up I know that um I know that I got things that I've got to do to benefit my family, to benefit myself, um, yeah my actions now from now to 9 months ago, I say thank you to God in the morning, I read the bible, and then our group sessions, talking as a group, go to class, come back home and I feel happy, a bit you know, I feel happy now, sometimes I do feel like crying, cause it's so different from what I used to do but deep down I'm really happy with where I am now."

A ceremony to mark conversion was crucial in affirming identity transformation, and was also used by Kahu as a marker for narrative change:

“The day of my baptism was also the night of my testimony. I was able to speak about things that I felt comfortable in speaking about. Just looking at everyone and just seeing Grace and see who I met in the beginning of my journey to now who is in the middle of me with my journey and who will be there at the end of my journey. Just seeing all of Grace. Seeing all of the church. Seeing everybody in front of me was... I have to honestly say that was one of the biggest highlights.”

Jenna was also baptised. This altered her values and she committed herself to a Christian framework:

“Then I started to go to church and I was still hiding behind my Mum and Dad. Until.... the Lord had been put into my life that it's time for me now to commit to the Lord. The only way that I could do that was stand in front of a whole congregation. At first, I was nervous and I'd had a few attacks with the devil that day. I overcame it. That started my building my self-esteem to be able to talk in front of people.”

The sense of being forgiven for past actions by God allowed respondents to regain a feeling of self-worth and rebuilt the confidence that they could again be a contributing member of their community. Stephanie's conversion had provided her with new meaning in life, and a new purpose as directed by 'God' who had now equipped her with what she needed to return to the community independently:

“With church, definitely I can't deny what God's done. God played a big part in that. I think, Vicki asked me, the other day, about this too. I knew that I was ready to move on what I knew that I was ready to live independently and get back, be a productive member of society. I am now fostering a friend's two girls who is in prison. To stop her girls going. I look after her girls. She's probably going to be in there for quite a few years.”

Jaykob also directly credited God for his crime-free lifestyle and progress he had made. While he struggled financially, his new identity motivated him to put his children first and disregarding his former identity:

“Financially it's a struggle. I don't get much money so I have to really budget and I have to wear the same rags. I can't go buy new clothes or steal any clothes or rob any people. You know how it used to be because now I've got a conscience now. I have to start looking for my

sons, do I really want to make a difference sort of thing. It's basically, it's God that's changed me. It's God that's changed me, and the positive people around me that have changed me, helped change me. It's not easy. Every day is like fire up, fighting against the old. You see things that you want. You see others with things and you want that too. I just got to keep staying focused on where I'm going and why I'm here and not forgetting about my children."

One respondent emphasised the role religious conversion had in her life more so than others. Jenna had been denied parole seven times before being released to the Grace Foundation. Jenna felt all avenues to achieving parole were exhausted, she had no family or support on the outside. She described volunteers at the Grace Foundation as 'sisters' and that they were her family now:

"In 2013, I meet Vicki. She was telling me about the Grace Foundation prior to my parole. I never got my parole, seven times... I gave up hope. Then I meet Vicki. She came in to prison and she told me about this Grace Foundation. I didn't have a lord in my life so I wasn't interested in something that was spiritual. She just left it at that. There was no pressure put upon me or anything."

"I started to query; maybe I should just give them a chance. Maybe I'll just see what more they've got to offer. The first visitor I meet was Vicki and the second visit I meet my sisters, Leah and my other sister, Taui. It wasn't that they were from Grace Foundation but there was just something about them that got my attention."

This conversion has also provided Jenna with security for the future, as she attributed her residency and current situation to an intervention by God. Jenna and other respondents often discussed God's plan for their future, and the direction that God had taken their lives so far:

"I would be still incarcerated. The end of my sentence was 2017. I would still be there until at least 2017 and then at the end of my sentence, no one could say anything so wherever I went is wherever I went. This was God's plan. This was God's plan to send them in to talk to me about Grace Foundation. It was God's plan for them to send in my three sisters because I wouldn't have listened to anyone else."

This was also applied to practical matters and the resident's eventual independence:

"I talked to Grace and they're like "just pray about it and forgiveness is the best cure. What do you think? Do you know how to get a house; I want to move into my own home now. You haven't got a house because God knows you and he knows you're not ready for a house."

Ritual and worship also gave individuals something to preoccupy themselves with, routine and constant peer support. Stephanie discussed the importance of the Grace Foundation day classes in relation to her desistance, where they engage in religious and non-religious educational activities:

"I think it started when with the unconditional love but also filling my days again with classes. Having that is really good. Worship because it brings you together. That family atmosphere brings you together. With church, definitely I can't deny what God's done. God played a big part in that."

"Now they have programs. They will start the day, usually, with worship and I like to start the day with worship. Breakfast. They have classes until midday. Then shared lunch. Then, afternoons whatever. I either spend time with the house parents or appointments. Then they usually like to finish with closing prayer. Worship in the evening as well."

One participant, Jessie, was still considering conversion, and had discussed the issue with those outside the Grace foundation

"... even going to church. They're like yeah, it's something new, and it's something different. I've even shared with my partner. What if I became Christian and he just looked at me like are you joking? I'm like no. It's something that I know that I've said I've thought about."

However, it was not something she felt pressured to convert, or pressured to participate in the religious aspects of the Grace Foundation:

"They say its choice. We're not here to demand anything from you but we'd like it if you can. Even if just time to interrupt. You don't even need to do anything. Have a lot less than, if

you don't think it's your time but if you think it's curious and may come up if you do like it, you know?"

Faith and religion was important to Jenna. She saw it as the common thread between the residents and the organisation, and also the most important aspect of the experience:

"One thing that we all have, and this is common within Grace is that we have God. That is one thing that the whole umbrella of Grace is God. That's just number one. That's just number one."

Earned Redemption

A theme which dominated throughout the respondent's narratives was that of redemption. All respondents sought affirmations that their past wrongdoings had been forgiven through the opportunity to guide and support others through a similar journey. This theme was not limited to a specific gender or age group, but appeared to occur after the confirmation that they had converted to a Christian narrative.

Movement towards meaningful work within the community was often paired with accountability and responsibility, apparent in narrative restructuring. One respondent described a clear division and growth between before his entry in the halfway house and his progress after nine months in the Grace Foundation. Discussing his ability and desire to mentor others away from the temptation of crime, Kahu stated:

"I have what it takes to do this, man I think I've done a lot, I've done good, if I see something bad over there, I either know how to walk away from it, walk up to it and say 'hey, how was your day?' And talk to the trouble, help the trouble, where like before, I used I to run up to the trouble, I used to love trouble you know so I can either see trouble and look the other way, or see trouble and have what it takes to not get involved you know, I've already proved this, proved change and that I can do it."

Kahu described himself as evidence of the effectiveness, adopting the narrative that if he could desist from his past behaviour then anyone is able to given they have the motivation to do so:

"How can they get on that same level? I don't know. But I help you know, I'll look at a person and say 'man, 9 months ago I was beating up my girlfriend, um, and look just come here (to Grace) because you can do the same thing' I haven't touched my girlfriend in one whole year, well, no police, no arresting or anything for 1 whole year! So I guess um it all depends on who wants to change."

One respondent, Jaykob, felt this aspect of the resettlement process was particular to his journey. Jaykob was sentenced to three years and six months for wrongful sexual connection with an underage female.

"I was convicted for a sexual offense against a 15-year-old girl, when I was 21. I went to prison, I got sentenced to 3 and half years for wrongful sexual connection. At that time, there were a lot of other offenses that happened during that period that I wasn't convicted for that totalled over 9 victims. Basically, what I had done was, I had done a treatment program inside. At first, I was working with a psychologist and she knew that something was up, and I wasn't giving my all into the program, because it was the first time I had to deal with everything, from my past leading right up to why I had done what I had done. I basically told her, "Well, this isn't just the one. There's a whole range of them."

"We went for a formal process of the police. With all of them. Then, I served in total 4 years and I've been out of jail now, what since that time, since I got released for those things, I've been out of jail for 2 years. I've gone back 3 times for a couple of breaches and stuff, but that's the basics of why I am in the criminal justice system."

In addition to his history of sexual offending, Jaykob was also a recovering alcoholic attending Alcoholics Anonymous and had been sober for 16 months. Jaykob had been diagnosed with depression and had attempted suicide a week prior to the interview.

"... on Monday morning, I tried to commit suicide because it just got too much. Not being able to see my sons, the one thing that I promised myself, was that if I was going to have children that I wouldn't put them through what I went through, and yet they're going through the exact same thing now."

Jaykob had often felt isolated in his upbringing and subsequent experiences in teenagehood, when most of his offending occurred and his addictions manifested. He had identified his strength as being able to share his lived experience hoping that others would not feel alienated.

"I will tell my story wherever I need to, in order for it to help someone else, or in order for it to help whoever. So, that's why you know, I'm telling you like I've known you ages."

"Oh, you're not supposed to tell these people, your deepest darkest secrets, because you want them to like you," but that's just one of those things where, I've had to become comfortable. I've had to accept that this is my life now."

The opportunity to do this had presented itself in a Grace Foundation project. The organisation and residents were collaborating on a stage performance which would explore different stages of the 'Grace' journey. Jaykob was working on the production and saw it as his opportunity to share his story:

"How can I share my story in a way so that someone else can hear? Like being in the production, how can I share my path, so that someone else can see in the audience and be like, "Wow, I'm not the only one." For someone like me, going through what I went through in life, I always thought that I was the only one. My biggest challenge now is to kind of get over that, and to also try to help other people, but also not neglect myself, because to me, that's really dangerous, is if you help someone so much that you neglect yourself."

The production explores different elements of offending and victimhood through a metaphorical train ride and was to be performed to the community at the end of the year. The train was to stop at different stations which would explore themes along the way.

"Basically, it's like a train ride and it stops at different stations. The first station is sexual abuse. Second station is addiction. Third station is ... Oh no. Oh yeah, third station is violence, fourth station is jail, fifth station is suicide. So basically, everyone that's involved, all have different parts to play, they've all got different inputs into the whole story. It's based on a female's perspective."

During the production, Jaykob was able to confront his previous conceptions of women, which had become a restorative process and resulted in a significant narrative redefinition and a shift in learned values he had before engaging in the production:

"Like, the thing that I was telling the girls today, was that if it wasn't for me being in their class and seeing the effect that all these different stages has had on them, I probably would have a different perspective on females in general. I used to just sexualize women, and know that I could use my looks or my talent to get whatever, but because thinking about all those stages, and thinking that some of these girls remind me of the girls that I put through all the stages ... It's quite humbling to be able to sit there with them and just tell them ... Like I said to the other lady, "I'm basically here as a male perspective, to tell you guys I've been through all of

that. So I can tell you from how a male thought when he was doing all of these things." It's really humbling, that's what I mean. To be able to do these afternoon sessions with them, to be able to sit down and listen, and just see how strong they are."

Jaykob's existing set of references were significantly challenged and ultimately changed because of this experience. References he held as the offender were altered. Listening to victim stories and their experience, he drew parallels between his past actions and their narrative identity. This change has occurred under a process of self-reflection, catapulted by the restorative process of sharing and owning up to his crimes as a sexual offender, in an environment where he was particularly open to new ways of perceiving himself and his past actions:

"This production's been a biggie for me, because it's a way for me to help people and also reflect for myself. It's not just, I'm putting my story out, so that other guys in the audience can, well the thing is it's in public So I'm putting out my story, so the guys in the public can think ok I'm not the only one but it's also for me, hearing the girl's story, seeing it from the victim's side. It's, it's amazing, that I've been given that opportunity to do that."

"If it wasn't for Grace, I wouldn't be able to see all these things. I wouldn't be able to feel all these things that I feel when I come home, when I lie down in my bed." I just think, another day gone by where I'm still alive. So yeah."

"This production's been a biggie for me, because it's a way for me to help people and also reflect for myself. It's not just, I'm putting my story out, so that other guys in the audience can ... relate. I'm putting out my story, so the guys in the audience benefit, but it's also for me, hearing the girl's story, seeing it from the victim's side. It's, it's amazing, that I've been given that opportunity to do that, so you know, I can use my time at Grace to be able to contribute as well. Yeah, that's pretty much my goal at the moment, to just get a plan going of how I'm going to live the next few months."

He was motivated to become a houseparent. He felt his identity and experience as an addict and sex offender would be valuable for others:

"That's probably the best place to be so I'm looking at long term, even maybe to become a house parent. There's a couple of girls that have just moved out, that are going to become house parents, so for me, that's a goal as well. Just take everything that I know, and have guys that have just come in, especially young guys. I don't mind running a house of young guys, because I know what they've gone through, and I know exactly what they're going through, and so to be able to do that would be awesome."

He had learned the value in his story. He felt liberation in understanding that by sharing his narrative with other young people, he could influence them in a prosocial way, and also relieve some of the isolation they had experienced:

"It's like what I was telling, you know, the girls today, or one of them, I said to her, "The best thing that you can do, but it's also the hardest thing you can do, is actually talk about it." It doesn't just help someone else, it's kind of like, it's freeing for yourself in a way, as well."

Several of the respondents demonstrated this type of change, and the seeking of meaning in their actions to maintain self-worth. Self-worth was achieved through 'earned-redemption', and opportunities provided to the respondents by the Grace Foundation. Jaykob had taken this empowerment and embarked on a career in social services, and aspired to become a drug and alcohol counsellor. His narrative had restructured through this process of self-redemption, and his goals became altruistic:

"My biggest challenge for me, which is always been that, is how I can better myself so that I can help other people, so that I do have the right to help people."

One respondent, Jenna, occupies two caregiver roles within the organisation. Jenna is involved in food preparation and teaching residents how to cook and budget their food for the week:

"They get a week's worth of meat and then the same every, every week. Coming from prison you can't just cook what you want. You've got to utilize what you get. That's what I teach the men. I already know what meat when they're getting their meat picked. You can't ask me to cook a roast pork if you don't get that. Everything that I teach them is utilizing what they have in their homes."

Jenna discussed the meals she has taught other residents to cook with a sense of pride. She saw it not only as her duty within the organisation but as relationship building and teaching other residents skills:

“Just showing them these different ways to cook their food, it’s so rewarding. My first day, second week, there was a guy who said, “Oh, what are we having?” I said, “Oh, Hawaiian curry sausages.” They said, “Oh, we’ve never done that.”

“There was one individual there that at the end of it, said, “You know, there’s 500 ways on how to cook sausages. I know them all. I’ve just learned how to do 501.” He reckons that out of all the curry sausages that he’s had, he’s never tasted this particular one. The thing with the cooking classes, I just tell them and show them, help them along. That way I build a relationship with them as well. We’ve done amazing.”

However, Jenna’s primary ‘earned redemption’ is her role within the Grace Foundation Peer Support team:

“Then that was for going and then I got asked to come on board Grace full-time on a different journey. Now I’m partners with my sister in G.P.’s which is Grace Peer Support where we go around to the homes and we support the women and the men. Whatever the support that they need.”

“We go to homes and we offer support in what area that they need. How can I explain it? We see how... We mostly see the woman in there and what can we do and ways of support. We offer also counselling that we have through Grace Foundation. Mostly we just make sure that we just check up on them. How is their living environment? Has there been any problems or anything? We more or less, keep them trying. Me, myself, I try and keep them from re-offending.”

Giving back was important to all of the respondents. Reparations to the Grace Foundation for their support were made through inhabiting volunteer positions and leadership roles. The ability to give through some form of altruism was an achievement, and a significant milestone in the respondent’s journey. This was termed the defining moment to Stephanie’s change:

“Probably the defining moment is perhaps when I came into a roll of leadership rather than receiving was when I was able to get back what was given to me. That was the defining moment. When I was able to give back.”

Appreciation for the existence of the Grace Foundation extended beyond an individual level. Stephanie believed the services of the Grace Foundation should be available to all ex-prisoners, and their access to prisoners should begin during their incarceration. Her narrative also involved the notion that if she could turn her life around, anyone can:

“I just wish there was a Grace foundation when I was in there, because they have just really blessed me, and they've really blessed a lot of other people too. I just wish more people would give people that are released from prison the chance, in terms of employment and housing and things like that. Because it's like they rolled me off. Look, I've turned my life around so it is possible.”

Prosocial and peer support

Each respondent described the peer support they had received from both volunteers and operators of the Grace Foundation as crucial to their desistance from crime. The prosocial support began with house rules. Substances were banned on premises, and visitors were monitored. Jessie spoke of her understanding as to why the rules existed:

“The obligations and the rules, no alcohol or drugs on the premises. No males, and it's the same for the male house, no females. Had to report visitors on the premises. I think mainly for safety, precautions or it may be they end up staying, don't leave and they're not paying their way.”

Residents were also required to attend day classes. Jessie believed worship in the morning was also an obligation, which contradicted her earlier statements of the religious participation being a choice. She perceived it as attempting to create a family environment:

“The other obligations are to attend class five days a week, church on Saturdays. We do devotions in the morning when you get up. To try to make it sort of family oriented, do it together.”

Jessie felt the rules and obligations had altered her attitude to consuming alcohol. This was evident in her narrative, which she had discussed with her parents:

“If I choose to drink, it's not whatever. They said we can't stop you, we just don't want it on the premises. After like a week after I had spoken to them about it, I went for a 21st and I said to my mum and my father, I said “hey, I'm not going to drink for a while. I want to go sort my stuff out and stop.” Which I am. I've been clean for the last two months.”

Jessie specifically credited the support as responsible for her desistance. She defined this as non-financial, prosocial support which had built her confidence and provided her with opportunity. She likened it to family support which she had never received:

“What makes me stay on this path is I think the support. The support, not like giving me stuff, the support on being there for me if I need someone to support me at a court hearing, you know what I mean? My family or any time of need, they're pretty much to be ... you know how it's family oriented, we've become a big family and I like to see to my family. They're kind of in

jail. I don't have that. They give me the family that I never really had and they're not off their face or they're not drunk. They're not trying to find some drink."

This was motivational for Jessie. She had been given the opportunity to exercise her passion to sing. She was encouraged to consider career options and her future:

"They just give me confidence to say if you want to do this, this is what you want to do, you do it. They've heard me sing, they know I sing, they secretly organised something where I can go and I can go and sing at the church. That's still my style. They ask my values, ask me what I want to do with my life and just doing that, they put it all together and encourage me like "oh we have this course if you're interested, if it's what you like doing."

Receiving support from those who had shared lived experience was discussed by the participants as part of the effectiveness of the Grace Foundation. This mutual experience was crucial for Jaykob. Although he had the support of his family, support from another Pasifika male who had been to prison was significant:

"I'm not saying that my own family haven't been family to me, they've still been supportive and they've still given me stuff, but to be able to talk to someone who's been through the system, who's been through, not necessarily for the same thing, but he's been through the system and he knows, and also from a Pacific Islander perspective as well. It's always good to have him."

The Grace Foundation adopts a 'whanau style' living arrangement. Residents are placed with appropriate housemates of the same gender, and the intention is that each resident contributes and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the household. Jaykob shares his home with other residents who have also been convicted of sexual offenses. One of his housemates had also received the same treatment as Jaykob:

"I live in the house with 3 other, 3 Samoans and a Māori guy. One of them I actually know from the treatment plan I was doing."

Jaykob stated the 'whanau-style' living arrangement was of stark contrast to the accommodation he had after his previous release from prison. His last stay was in a boarding

house which was formerly a maternity hospital. He found it difficult to relate to people and the boarding house incredibly transient in nature, and many of the residents had not experienced prison before. It was important to Jaykob that he had someone in the house that he could relate his life experience to:

“For me, being in place where I can relate to someone in my house, because he's been through the same upbringing that I have, to be able to get along with the neighbours and stuff, that's what makes a home for me. That's what makes the Grace Foundation home different to boarding houses. Boarding houses, yeah, you do talk to the other people, but half of them don't even know what you're there for. Half of them haven't even been to jail.”

The nature of the household had also helped Jaykob to alter his priorities. He was appreciative of his new environment, and it changed his perspective on what was now important in his life. His narrative reflected this change:

“Being with Grace is like ... In the past two years, I've lived in lodges, kind of gone between different lodges in Central Auckland and the one thing I remember I said to my probation officer, the first time I saw him after I moved into Grace. I said, "You know, just being able to wake up in a home environment, be able to open the curtains. Look out and sort of, at the street, the daylight and stuff. It's just small things like that, that are absolutely amazing. And it's those small things that I treasure now, rather than where am I going to get my next drink from? Or who is going to be my next one-night stand?”

The influence of the whanau-style characteristic of the Grace Foundation facility extended beyond niceties within the home and physical differences, it created an abstract feeling of belonging for Jaykob. This belonging and support was in Grace Foundation home, and also the community in which he grew up in:

“Basically, like after my first half hour, I felt like, you know, I was with family. I had been there for so long, and yet, I was only there for like half an hour, and I really could just sit down and just feel like "I'm home." When I left prison I told myself I would never live back South Auckland. I thought it was trouble, but now that I'm back here, it's actually one of my dreams to be a Drug and Alcohol counsellor out here.”

A founder of the Grace Foundation had also been through the criminal justice system. Jaykob had found him to be a confidant, and drew parallels in their experience as both Pasifika males and dealing with addiction:

“Having people like Dave, because he's been through the justice system. He's an ex-addict. He's another Pacific Islander as well. To be able to have someone that you can relate and to talk to, you know, means more to me than someone providing me with food, or someone providing me with clothes. It's just someone that you know you can just call and say, "Hey, I'm struggling," and straightaway, that's what they do.”

“Or, Saturday before, they said come back on Friday the 18th, and I remember Dave, Dave was the one that picked me and basically, as soon as I jumped in the car, started driving home, he said to me, "I need you to tell me about your offenses and stuff." I was just like, it was one of the easiest things to do, because that's how much I trusted him. That's how much I wanted his support.”

This mode of support was invaluable, and Jaykob believed it was exclusive to his experience at the Grace Foundation. Jaykob reiterated the importance of sharing experiences and narratives with house mates and other Grace Foundation residents.

“I think the, I guess the thing for me, they're basically people you can talk to. The one thing I was just talking with one of the other girls just before, the one thing that people struggle with, is just talking. Especially males. Just you know, what I've said is you can't just go to the boys at the pub and tell them because they'll just say 'just have another drink, its fine,' and you put a smile on and it's all right.”

This was also this case in the support he was receiving from his drug and alcohol counsellor. Receiving support and guidance from someone whose addiction experiences he could relate to was important, and he valued the support more so than from someone who had not experienced addiction:

“Like the counsellor that I was working with, I've been with him for two years now, since I was released. He's actually, I think 16-years drug free, and it's easier to relate to him, than to relate to another guy who's never touched a drug in his life, but he seems to know everything

about the brain, and how it deals with addiction. I'd rather listen to the guy who's been through it. Simple as that."

The production that some of the residents had been working on also gave Jaykob the opportunity to consider the impact his crime may have had on his victim through association with other residents of the Grace Foundation. The production explored themes of victimhood and violence:

"Also, having like what I said before, having the girls there. Being able to see, see it from the other side. Rather than being from the offender, coming from the offender's side, seeing it from the victim's side. The girl's that have been sexually abused. The girls that have been beaten up by their partners. The girls that have been to jail. All those type of things, to be able to see it from their side, is really humbling, and like I said, if I wasn't at Grace, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to be able to see that. That's what's helped me along my journey."

Jaykob stated this experience had empowered him to seek help when he felt he needed, and he shared this with other residents of the halfway home:

"I was going to one of the girls this morning, I said to her, "There's a saying that goes, 'You can surrender the battle, and still win the war", which means that you can say you need help, but you're not weak. You're not showing that you're a pussy or whatever, you're basically wanting to strengthen yourself because once you say those words, it opens up a whole other level of life, you know? She was like, "Wow.""

Kahu also echoed the empowerment felt by Jaykob. Kahu contributed a desire to change his lifestyle to the prosocial support and encouragement he received at the Grace Foundation. Since his stay, he had completed programmes his probation required with the support of the Foundation:

"Grace gives you strength to want to be someone you know? A different person. A that strength comes from god too, yeah but, you know um Grace has encouraged me to do the programmes that probation want me to do so I have been doing them you know, that social welfare wants me to do, I've been doing them! It's their encouragement that's helping us at Grace, I can't ask for anything better, it's the best I've done in my whole life. My whole life, I'm

happier as a person now, I still have days but nothing compared to what I used to be like, I sometimes get stressed out but it's honestly just nothing like it was. So yeah."

The support from the Grace Foundation was a factor in this, as he had been released from prison before and returned to his offending behaviour. He regretted not receiving this support sooner and identified that he could have desisted from crime at an earlier stage in his life:

"The first time I got released I went straight back into my neighbourhood, and you know, but I should've gone somewhere else, you know a place like Grace and maybe I would've changed way back. I should've, and I would've been better."

Kahu talked about the empowerment and how it had promoted his desistance from crime. Kahu had encountered an old acquaintance who had offered him methamphetamine, however Kahu refused. He claimed this was because of his empowerment during his time at the Grace Foundation, and evidence of his desistance from crime:

"I used to love trouble you know so I can either see trouble and look the other way, or see trouble and have what it takes to not get involved you know, I've already proved this, proved change and that I can do it. I was offered to smoke P you know, 3 times. This was when I went to PE one day, and I used to love P, I was crazy for it, and this fella was at PE one day and he said to me "bro you wanna smoke some P?" and I said "oh nah nah" and he asked me again, he goes "bro, are you sure? I've got a big bag of P" and I said "nah nah it's alright" and there came that third time, so yeah, I guess that um, I said no then, and that was earlier, I was only here for 5 months then. Grace builds you up pretty strong you know."

Apart from this instance, Kahu had not reoffended, or had any other temptations. Every other time he was released from prison, he returned to the same environment, and consequently ended back up in prison. He believed this would not have happened if he entered the Grace Foundation earlier:

"There hasn't been any others, no incidents, none. I stay away from those people nowadays. I don't hang out with my friends that much now. Um yeah, I went straight back to them last time I got out. That's what I did heaps. Um, that's what I done all the times I got out

you know, but like I said if I had come straight to Grace from prison, I wouldn't have done that it might have been different."

His partner, Tina, had also had issues with spending time with antisocial peers from her time before the Grace Foundation. She had consumed methamphetamine on one occasion, though had also turned the drug down:

"It's pretty hard to be in Grace and not fall, try not to fall. I have, I have had a couple of instances, I've gone out and put myself around people that use drugs and passed on it as well but I've, I have family I'd like to see or go home, I thought I was handling ok. I was in a group and the pipe's going around and I said no, and no, and no, and then like, it's just one, you know?"

Though she had consumed drugs since her stay at the Grace Foundation, she had identified the factors which lead to her drug use. Her narration on her drug use demonstrated change since coming to the Grace Foundation:

"Myself, I'm sorry man, when things just get, like I can't handle, I just go out and get fried. And then 'til you come off of it and you're back in the show again. Being in Grace has made me deal with my problem instead of always finding something to cover up the problem, which is substances, friends."

Her partner, Kahu, described what the support he received from the Grace Foundation was like, and that the Grace Foundation and the residents did not stigmatise him once he entered the home. He discussed how this felt for him upon entering the home:

"Like love, yeah I just buzzed out aye, I was a bit shy at first, but after I started to not get shy I started to pick up real fast and just be happy. Cause they love you like a family man, and in a way it's like a family that some of us don't have, because I have a family but they don't really love me that much and they always doubt me, and they always judge me but Grace you know, they never judge me, they always tell me don't judge people, love people."

Stephanie also felt the indiscriminate nature of the Grace Foundation. Despite her history of mental health and self-harm, she was still given the opportunity from the Grace Foundation. She didn't expect to be treated that way:

“She approached me telling me that she wanted me to move in to one of these homes. She knew my background. My self-harm, my depression, and my loneliness. When I first went to church I sat all hunched over like this. Didn't want anyone to come up and speak to me. She sensed things, and we talked a lot of things. From May until November before I moved to Grace.”

Kahu has resided with three other men for the past nine months since he got to the Grace Foundation. His day begins by interacting with these men, through worship. This period is also spent as a peer support session, where they discuss troubling matters and seek support and advice from each other. This also has established a routine for Kahu, which is followed by attending the day classes with other residents:

“We all get up, staff will wake us up, we go into the lounge, do a prayer, say good morning to each other, then devotion then pray again then straight after another staff member will come in a van, then we get taken to class, we will go round and pick up all our brothers and sisters and go straight to class.”

The morning routine described by Kahu emphasised the importance of interaction and support from his housemates to his desistance from crime. Talking about their everyday experiences on a daily basis was something he found new, and different from his life prior to the Grace Foundation:

“Just saying prayers together and stuff. That right there, doing that, every morning, sets you up for the whole day, it's cleansing, it's mighty, and it's strong. There's an open heart there and that love so I guess you know having that in the morning talking to us, you know how many people out there living the bad life actually get together and talk, you know, happily, about nice things you know, not many I don't think, I never used to do that. It's being together in a group, it's important, it is important.”

This interaction continues when they reach the day classes. Residents are encouraged to share any current concerns they may be facing, or to reach out for help if they require assistance:

“Starting our day off, everyone has to say what's on their mind. You know just waking up in the morning and jumping in a vehicle you know, knowing where you are going but then not

letting out something that you need to speak about, well, you're just going nowhere. The staff giving us a chance to speak from our minds or so we can let them know if we need help with our family struggle or whatever you know I think that's important. I don't hardly get that from my own family to be honest, yeah."

Kahu was a stranger to discussing concerns with peers on a daily basis. He felt it took time to adjust to this as a routine, and now used talking with his peers as an outlet, or an alternative to offending. Being in this environment had improved his overall happiness since he came to the Grace Foundation:

"When I wake up I know that I know that I got things that I've got to do to benefit my family, to benefit myself. Yeah my actions now from now to 9 months ago, I say thank you to god in the morning, I read the bible, and then our group sessions, talking as a group, go to class, come back home and I feel happy, a bit you know, I feel happy now, sometimes I do feel like crying, cause it's so different from what I used to do but deep down I'm really happy with where I am now. So being woken up now days compared to before, I'd wake up and I'd want to rob someone or something you know, now I give thanks to god instead. I listen to positive stuff all day, there is nothing but positive there now."

The importance of peer support and interacting as a group was also reverberated by Jenna when she discussed her place in the Grace Foundation. She discussed the responsibility she felt for helping other residents through their journey. She felt as if she was part of something beyond purely residing in a reintegration facility, and likened the organisation to a large family:

"You can't do it on your own. If you fall and you are by yourself and there's no one there to pick you up. If doing things as a group, doing things as a community, if someone's down, you're there to pick them up. You're there to offer them that support. You're there to encourage them as well. A lot of things that we do within Grace is not done by ourselves. Like I said, it's like a community, like a big family. A great big family."

Jenna was involved in a Grace Foundation peer support programme. This programme coordinated residents who had been involved in the Grace Foundation for a longer period of time as a resource for those who required support from someone who was not alien to what

they were experiencing. Jenna was proud of her work as a Grace Foundation peer, and felt she helped in preventing residents from reoffending:

“We go to homes and we offer support in what areas that they need. How can I explain it? We see how... We mostly see how the woman in there and what can we do and ways of support. We offer also counselling that we have through Grace Foundation. Mostly we just make sure that we just check up on them. How is their living environment? Has there been any problems or anything? We more or less, keep them trying. Me, myself, I try and keep them from re-offending.”

Jenna is often approached by residents; however, she also identifies those which she believes would benefit from peer support. She did not discuss what, if any, formal training is required to become a Grace Peer support person, only that she determined what support was appropriate based on her own experience:

“If I know that they stand to go off track a little bit and I offer them support. I'm there 24/7. You can ring me over there anytime if you need to talk about anything. I might not be able to answer all your questions but I'm there. I know that that's what I wanted was just an ear. The Grace Foundation was that. There was this kid that used to come into the prison and all it was just a matter of just listening. Sometimes we're not even there to talk about accommodations. They just need a listen. That's what G.P. (Grace Foundation Peer Support) does.”

Tina had sought support from the Peer programme. She had never experienced what she felt was unconditional support before:

“Before I stayed there, I was staying with [name withheld] and no, he doesn't love me because he gave me a shit life. I've got no parents, they both died. I brought up my family on my own.”

Jessie also discussed the non-judgemental nature of the support she received from the Grace Foundation:

“They are just supportive and very caring and non-judgmental, which is awesome. Not someone that's going to stand against me what I've done or who I am. They don't care about

that. They just meet you for the first time as you are. No judgement, nothing and they want to help you. They just want to help you to succeed in life, to do whatever it is that you want to do without them telling you what to do. You just tell them "this is what I want to do". They will help if they can. If they can't they'll tell you. Just give you advice, just to go to them whenever."

The unconditional nature of the Grace Foundation resonated with Tina. Tina discussed the concept of 'falling' three times. Despite 'falling', the Grace Peer Support team were there to provide the necessary support for them to continue a prosocial lifestyle:

"Yeah, so just having Grace and the people that run it are just like, they're really awesome people. They don't ask for nothing. All they do is come send support to you. No matter even if you fall down they'll help you to get back up and get back on the right track. People like that just pray you out because they're doing steps of their own. I've met heaps of people in Grace that have had many chances."

"Pray. Stay positive. If I feel myself going downhill, I just pray about it. I pray about it. I've only learned how to pray now or I just change my thinking. I take note of what I'm thinking and I try not to over think things because sometimes it can be way more in my head than it really is. I've learned that over being drug free or not, just drug free. I don't want to say alcohol free because I still have a drink now and then. I just know way more about myself because I used to blame it on everyone else, like it's not my fault. Who did this to me and it's why I'm fucked now. It's kind of time I've got to grow up and let things go here. Look to the future. Maybe you can't control how you get here but now you've got a chance to change it. I'll tell you, its hard work. If I started going back to my old self."

Abstaining from drugs and anti-social peers was crucial for Tina to desist from crime. She has identified that she needs to remove herself from these influences, which include her own family:

"Because my family there, they support me but not in all the ways that I need to be supported. I need to stay away from substances. They all drink and smoke and I can't be around it. Don't want my kids to be around it anymore. Especially after I made so much progress, I don't want to go back to that sort of environment. I just wasted all this goodness on going backwards. I've been really mindful about that."

She felt her family was waiting for her to fail in her goal to be drug free. She had recently witnessed one family member under the influence of methamphetamine:

"I think I'm not changing, I'm still the same. I will say you can see a difference in me. My own family, they try to not drink around me, try not to do bad things around me when they come and live with me. Maybe I'm inspiring my family from a distance. I know, I know they're watching me. They have been waiting for me to fall and go crawling back to them or whatever. I'm seeing my sis drunk, wasted. She was smashed, I could hear it in her voice. I was like "what have you done and what are you on?" she was just busting out on me. She was cooking meth. I love you, you're my sister. My sister loves meth."

Despite intentionally distancing herself from her family, she felt the relationship had improved and that her abstinence was influencing them and a mutual respect had developed:

"Yeah, seems like my family are like, they're like watching me from a distance and being ... Even though they're not saying it to my face, I know that I'm inspiring them because the attitude towards me is a lot different now. They actually respect me. We respect each other."

Tina noted that those who would support her at the Grace Foundation were also sharing a similar experience. As also stated by Jaykob, it is important that those who are providing support have a similar background, or have been through the prison system and resided at the Grace Foundation. Sharing lived experience with those who she was providing support too was important to Jenna, and provided her with the validity to be a Peer Support person:

"Being able to say, "Yeah, I understand." Which I do fully understand. Some are there talking to me because I walk their walk. There are some, where I haven't walked their walk and I don't fully understand because just like with you, I haven't been anything like a real deviant all my life or anything. But like, within the Grace family, I'm able to say, "I understand," because I've walked that walk. We have a lot of things in common that we want to change."

Though she now occupied a leadership position as a Peer Support person within the Grace Foundation, she did not see herself as occupying a space which differed from those she was supporting. She distinctly viewed herself as a peer who had simply moved out of her Grace Foundation home.

Jenna discussed how she perceives herself in relation to the residents she supports with reference to the homes. She said the notion of whanau style living applies to more than the operational aspects of the facility, but also to the relationship the residents had with one another:

“The amazing thing is that with Grace Foundation is that the Grace Peers that I do here, because I’m exactly like them. There is no difference. The only difference between me and them is they all have family. They still live with family. They form a bond that is so tight in their home and they have a mum and dad.”

Not all associations with the other residents were reported in a positive way. Stephanie had experienced significant conflict. She had been a victim of theft and claimed the organisation itself had also had items stolen. This narrative was balanced with describing positive relationships she had developed during her involvement with the foundation:

“I’ve had things stolen, and I know Grace Foundation have had a lot of stuff stolen. TVs. People taking TVs. That’s the nature of some people. You can build really lifelong friendships, too. I did that too. Yes, there was conflict. Usually can be sorted. I also made lifelong friends.”

She had also been assaulted by one particular resident on two different occasions. The discussion of this incident also provided insight into conflict resolution processes and discipline within the homes:

“I have been assaulted. Twice or three times. I think three times she’s lived with me, twice she’s assaulted me. They talk to her. I looked at pressing charges. I just wanted to bring forgiveness. I had to think about where she’s come from. Her background, as well. They talked to her and told her that that was ... It was actually Vicki that came and talked to her. But that was totally unacceptable. They didn’t consider it assault because she slapped me, not punched me. The house parent immediately dealt with it. We had to both go into her office. That person and I are good friends, now. We can’t live together we clash. After living together for three times. Three times together. Not living together, we get along.”

Stephanie had to escalate to the attention of the organisations management. She talked about trust when a new resident moves in:

“If you don't have any luck in sorting out with the house parent, then you can ask management to step in. I had to do that. I had my laptop stolen. Even though there was a lock on the door, I trusted and a new person moved in. You have no proof. It's gone.”

Tina had also recently been involved in conflict, in the role of house parent. The homes were not immune to arguments and encounters, and they had to learn to resolve conflicts that arose:

“Grace is cool like that because you've got to get real. It keeps you real. There's no faking it to make it in this place because God always reveals it anyway no matter how much you try to hide shit, it comes out. Because one of my girls in my house, I'm the house parent of my house, I'm the leader, I've got to lead my house. I make sure everyone's sticking to the rules and that but a few weeks ago I went to go and smash this girl over.”

The incident occurred between Tina and an individual she knew from life before the Grace Foundation:

“This is my friend. See before Grace we were both in the Women's Refuge before Grace. For the first time I went “fuck man. I'm just going to smash your face in bro. You've got to shut your mouth”. It made me, it took me two days to apologise to her, that's how much I was hurting for what happened. I knew her before Grace but she's only been in Grace for like one month, two months. Somehow she like turned against me with these other two girls I live with too, and they were like doing shit behind my back, I knew for a fact, I could feel it. I assumed she was playing some stupid little game. One day she just yelled at me, it made me feel small.... but yeah. Two days it took, and now our house in back to normal. Everyone is getting along now, it was intense for a week.”

Tina felt overwhelmed by the prospect of being a house parent. She appreciated the opportunity to be one, though she felt she was ill-equipped for the job and still had some adjustments to make herself, and felt this impacted on her leadership skills:

“Then I had, again I sort of go and be a parent at one of the other homes and I was like hey, me, house parent. Wow, that's a big step. I took it. I don't think I'm at that point. Some of the girls at my house don't follow my lead because I've still got things that I need to work on, you

know what I mean? I'm not a hypocrite when I step inside the walls, but what I do outside of Grace is my business. Which I haven't gone and done anything in years. I haven't had a holiday. Just my attitude sometimes is not, it's not really graceful. It can be really ungrateful. That doesn't influence other girls."

The role of house parent encouraged her to sustain her drug-free lifestyle. She wanted to be a prosocial support person and an influencer for other residents adjusting to a sober environment:

"I try my best to be, to sit good examples for the girls because they got caught drinking, they tried to hide it from me and they were drinking into a stupor and I was like "oh no, you can't drink here. I'm not going to say anything to manager about it. You've just got to stop". The next day I was like, it was on my chest to speak, to tell the management what happened, that other girls are bringing drink back here and they don't like it."

"Yeah, it can, yeah. We're all different to see so you're bound to clash. That's just how people want to, you can either go and move forward or hold a grudge and keep killing each other off. Because we got Grace, the people that run Grace, they're the type of people that just rub off on people. I think us as women we learned how to just move and carry on. Carry on without holding anything back because there are inspirational people around us to show us love. It teaches us how to be towards each other. Maybe in the back of our minds it's like no. I've got a bad mood."

House-parenting experiences varied. Jessie was offered to share the role of houseparent with a close peer. They were able to relate to each other and shared similar backgrounds:

"The house that I'm in now, it's a good place because I'm, I've met a friend, and her background is quite similar to mine. We were given the opportunity to run one of the Grace homes."

Occupying this role with a peer helped Jessie. They supported each other in the role and in their journey. They shared similar characteristics and respect for one another, and their reciprocity assisted in staying clean. Jessie also saw this relationship as a form of giving back:

“She wanted me to go there and I wanted to go on the basis of that, we can give each other the encouragement if we feel each other slipping. She doesn’t listen to many people, neither do I. We listen to each other. She knows I listen to her and she’s like why would you go roll a joint? She is just like hey, what are you doing? If I see her with crack, you know. That’s what we need. I would be the same to her. Whatever. Carry on. Events where we’re going to help each other out and I think it’s what you’re doing with the house, live in one and give back to my house.”

Stephanie reported house-parenting as difficult. She felt she was good at maintaining the upkeep of the household, but could not cope with confrontation and challenges from the residents:

“I found it hard. I’m not used to being abused verbally and being questioned. Also, I’m quite a clean freak. I like things clean and tidy. Grace foundation like me and they know that the home that I live in is going to be well taken care of. Most of the classes were over cooking or cleaning or duties. If there was any maintenance on the home, they would attack me but I had nothing to do with the maintenance. I can only say I have reported it when it happens, I can’t deal with that. If something hasn’t gotten fixed or something. They would attack. I would verbally get attacked and yelled at. Such and such hasn’t been fixed for such and such amount of time. I reported it, and that’s all I can do.”

She found support in interacting with other house-parents and receiving on-going training from the Grace Foundation:

“I found it valuable in getting to know people. There are certainly ones I got on the really well that I cared a lot for. There were a few that tried to make it difficult, I swear that they were waking up in the middle of the night with the vacuum cleaner. It’s midnight. Stuff like that. I enjoyed the training in the meetings. House parents have training. We have training and meetings to discuss if there were any concerns, or how the house was going and how we were going. There’s been lots of changes since I’ve been house parent. We were just on our own but now they’ve got help so that certainly a lot better.”

Though she found house-parenting a challenge, she thrived in another leadership position within the Grace Foundation church. Stephanie was volunteering with the Children's Ministry. She felt this was a point of change, and a marker for completing an identity shift. She felt respected, and that she was ready to return to the community and become independent:

"Probably the defining moment is perhaps when I came into a roll of leadership rather than receiving was when I was able to get back what was given to me. There's my leadership meetings and stuff as well. I'm in the Children's Ministry. That was the defining moment. When I was able to get back. Also in a roll of leadership within the church, as well. I think that was when I was able to define that I was ready to move back into society."

She had been goal setting throughout her journey at the Grace Foundation, and had achieved those she established during her time at the Grace Foundation, and was now thinking about her future and what she needed to do to sustain the care she was providing to the children in her care:

"My goals have changed. When I was at Grace, my goals, and I met all my goals, was to be off all medication. Just hatched from mental health. To become a house parent, which I did. I'm glad I had that experience. There were some other goals. Now, my goals would be to be the best parent that I can be to these two girls and love on them like a mother would, and care for them, and also to find work. It's very hard to find work when you got a criminal record."

Leaving the support network of the Grace Foundation was discussed by all of the participants except for Jenna. Financial support was the main barrier faced by participants preparing to leave the facility. Kahu and Tina were hoping to move out but were unable to acquire the finances required to live independently from the Grace Foundation. The resources needed made them feel helpless. They felt they could approach the Grace Foundation for assistance:

"I think in terms of moving out, Grace helps you with that, Grace does a lot for you, you know? But I think my partner is wanting to move out but she can't really find a house at the moment because she has no more funds, yeah, she can't get a house. I can't afford bond or anything, so that would be hard, yeah. Depends on who has money to get bonds when we leave, who is going to help us? We haven't asked Grace to help us yet, but we would try that. I

really don't know how we would organise that stuff, we have looked at it and we can't afford to do it right now. Until we can find a bond, we can't move out."

Tina was anxious to leave. Tina felt safe within the Grace Foundation home, as she had previously been a victim of domestic abuse.

"That's pretty scary because I'm safe and I'm safe and I have my own home, just me and my baby. What scares me is probably Kahu will end up staying. Safe here when with Grace."

She had been trying to leave in the last three months, but had struggled to gather the financial resources required. The organisation also felt she wasn't ready to leave yet, and she had difficulty finding social housing:

"They will help but they say I'm not ready. I'm pretty much going on my own. I've been trying to get out for the last three months. Not really trying but planning sort of thing. I think something's up against me. Maybe if I tried and maybe I will get something but I just want them to snap their fingers and be yep, got your house. No, not yet. I'm not a priority, they won't even put me on a list. As long as I'm with Grace, I'm not a priority. You have to basically be homeless before you become on the list."

Stephanie has recently moved from her Grace Foundation home. She was anxious to leave, and anxious that her relationship with the organisation would wane. However, the support and relationship has been ongoing, and even increased:

"It was because they loved on me so much, I was scared of losing that. Now, being independent since May. First of May, I moved into my own two-bedroom place. I had more to do with Grace, really when I was in Grace. I see them every day. I don't at all feel like they've abandoned me. That was definitely a barrier. I was ready to move out years ago. They said months ago. But not emotionally. I was scared."

Jenna did not want to leave, because she did not have any other options and saw this organisation as her family, and her placement with them as her home:

"I don't want to. It's not that... That's home. That's home. I love my home. I don't want to leave. If I do leave, I'll take them both with me. It's just that I can't. I'm not there yet. With the other homes, it's just a transitioning period. Once you start gaining independency and you know that it's time for you to leave, it's the same feeling. It's the feeling that it's time for you to move on."

The Grace Foundation was perceived as family by all of the respondents. Three of the six respondents had severed family ties, and two of the respondents had impaired relationships with family members. The Grace Foundation had become a safety net for the participants. Tina felt like she always had the option to stay with Grace, should she reoffend:

"If I was to go back to prison, I'd come straight back to Grace. Even if I was to go out and get my own house and something happened and I ended up going, the first place I would want to go, Grace would be. I feel like I have a family, they love me in this place and even though we've had our ups and downs with the other people, we still are family. We all still come together as one and trust and we still treat each other like we're family, which is pretty cool. It's pretty cool. I actually love my Grace family more than I love my own family."

Discussion:

This study examined the experience of residents of a halfway house programme, through the collation and thematic analysis of their narratives. The data within the narratives revealed common themes of their experience, and how the halfway house environment developed by the Grace Foundation Charitable Trust mitigates barriers of reintegration while providing crucial accommodation. The Grace Foundation had the resources to support residents to meet concrete needs identified by Duffee & Duffee (1981), which were transport, education, employment and healthcare. Participants discussed the Grace Foundation providing transport for residents to meet appointments, educational day classes and from the prison to their halfway home on their release day. They supported Kahu in completing personal development courses as part of his probation, and each of the residents attended day classes facilitated by the Foundation. More abstract problems - which are more difficult to address – were also supported by the nature of the facility and organisation. Desistance from crime and antisocial behaviour was evident in the positive narrative identity adopted by the participants. The continuity of this prosocial identity was maintained by the Grace Foundation, and residents ascertained that they could not have achieved this without the influence of the organisation.

The accommodation and support provided by the halfway house, and in particular, the 'whanau-style' environment adopted by Grace Foundation provided the residents with a base to construct a prosocial network, address family separation and relationship strain and feel as they had earned themselves a position back in their community. There was an intense appreciation not only for the environment and the homely nature of the facilities, but also for the feeling of being 'home' and surrounded by family and support. Possessing a prosocial support network and connection to the community are critical elements to desistance from a criminal lifestyle (Pleggenkuhle, Huebner & Kras, 2015). Results from this study suggest that residence in a community facility such as the Grace Foundation may also achieve a narrative identity reconstruction, and a redefinition of references and worldview which is a shift from their former identity as an offender. Such identity transformations have been discussed by Maruna (2001) as essential to meaningful desistance from crime.

The respondent narratives illustrated several means by which their references and worldview had altered since arriving at the Grace Foundation. Respondents overwhelmingly

spoke of the influence religion has had on their desistance from crime, and their experience within the Grace Foundation. Every participant discussed the guidance they received from God. A religious conversion and identity shift makes sense in post-release circumstance. As discussed by Maruna (2001), this is because of the shame-management a religious narrative provides, and also religious-based group activities which involve frequent peer-support amongst the residents. The routine worship provided structure and purpose for residents on a daily basis. It also encouraged the residents to seek peer support and exchange lived experiences with their housemates. According to respondents, this reduced the feeling of isolation and brought comfort and encouragement that they could remain on a path of desistance together.

Prison is an extreme social context where self-identity is questioned, and substantial changes in self-understanding can occur (Maruna, Wilson & Curran 2006). Two participants discussed hitting 'rock-bottom' during their incarceration. This was a catalyst for identity conversion for Jenna and Stephanie. Maruna, Wilson and Curran (2006) describe the circumstances which individuals are more likely to convert as when their self-identity is under strain or crisis. A state of desperation can often be the catalyst for conversion, as Jenna found she had to question who she was and what would become of her life after being denied parole 8 times. Prior to conversion, the potential convert is thought to experience a profound psychological unhappiness and a desperate need for framework which helps them to interpret their situation. People are generally considered to be more open to religious ideologies when their identity is placed under strain. Psychological unease and trauma are known to be a catalyst for religious change. As a means to cope with this trauma and past actions, a new meaning system is adopted. Maruna, Wilson and Curran (2006) define conversion as an experience which involves a profound change in personality domains such as personal goals and self-identity, and that essentially, to convert means to reinterpret one's autobiography or to experience a change in subjectivity. Jenna's rock-bottom experience, and subsequent turning to religion and conversion script akin to this occurrence. She adopted the framework of Christianity to help her to process her the rejection she felt within prison. This offered her an established and accepted path to redefining their social identity, and offers forgiveness for past behaviour while providing a purpose for their imprisonment, and a purpose for the life ahead of them.

The Christian framework was also adopted as a means of shame-management, acceptance and understanding of the offending behaviour (Maruna, Wilson & Curran 2006).

This substantial narrative change had either occurred behind prison walls or upon release to the care of the Grace Foundation. The link between conversion and behavioural change is often contested, and the merits of faith-based treatment for recidivism are unproven. However, religion was directly attributed to the resident's current situation. According to Kahu, God had intervened in his life, and had sent the Grace Foundation to guide and take care of him. This absolved responsibility not only for their progress at Grace but their future. If they were unable to access social housing, it was because God did not think they were ready, not because of a wider bureaucratic issue. This helps to relieve feelings of powerlessness, and the dehumanisation afflicted on those who suffer from the stigma and scars imprisonment leaves behind (Maruna, Wilson & Curran, 2006). However, as participants rationalised their future, their independence and complete reintegration into the community became less urgent.

His religious self-identity markers were also now the highlight of his time post-release, and a marker for the shedding of his criminal past. This also established his commitment to God, enabling him to redevelop a sense of self-worth, and confirmation of his membership to a community outside of prison walls. Kahu discussed internalisation of shame, and an internal narrative of disappointment in his behaviour toward his partner, however his new membership provided him with capabilities to construct a positive narrative identity, and understanding of why he used to behave the way he did. He also had the ability to self-reflect on his progress, and had created meaning (goals, aims and intentions) and an emotional regulation to control his anger. He no longer beat his partner, and his narrative reflected his intention to be a good parent and good partner. The future was now important to him, and his conversion had provided him with hope. As discussed by Maruna, Wilson and Curran (2006), adopting a master religious narrative is a constant and continuous identity, whether the person is incarcerated or released.

The development of a conversion narrative also allows the individual to adopt a new scheme of language and provides a new framework for their life-story. Kahu has determined his baptism as marker for his identity transformation, and it has acted as an official ceremony for adopting this framework and shedding the identity of his criminal past. It was since his baptism that he had not been violent towards his partner, and he used this marker as confirmation of his belief in conversion, and attribution that his behaviour had changed because of this. This is a new social identity which has allowed Kahu to replace the label of prisoner or criminal, and provided him with a framework which helps them to interpret their situation. This ceremonial

aspect was also experienced by Jenna, who felt it was the marker of legitimising her belonging with an organisation and what she described as her family.

Following a Christian faith is not a prerequisite to residing at the home, however, Christian themes and teachings dominate day-to-day life and participation is encouraged. It is also not the only way to cope with shame management and the stigma which comes with being convicted of a crime. However, it is a narrative script that makes sense to adopt in these circumstances. Not only can conversion scripts organise shameful past events in a way that is empowering, they are also widely recognised and accepted by the wider population. Conversion also encourages the individual to give back in order to redeem themselves. This transfers into earned redemption and forgiveness, by making use of one's shameful past by helping others. The Grace Foundation provided residents with opportunities to do this, and it became a common narrative pattern amongst participants.

Subsequent to the process of adopting a conversion narrative, the participants tended to follow a common narrative pattern and attempt to find means to 'give back'. Giving back referred to the Grace Foundation and some form of repayment for the support and hospitality they had provided the resident, but also in an altruistic form. It was common for the resident to internalise and make sense of their criminal past, then put it to good use by helping others. This was the earning their redemption and their position back in the community they were excluded from.

The notion that former prisoners could benefit from helping others is not new, and has been promoted throughout literature in the last century, most notably Reissman's (1965) term 'those who help are helped the most'. Additionally, Maruna (2001) discussed the element of productivity and 'giving back' as crucial to desistance and a reformed identity. This notion of repair and reconciliation when returning to the community has been described as 'earned redemption' and is linked to a strengths-based form of resettlement (Bennett and Maruna, 2006). The goal of strengths-based resettlement is to cultivate a pro-social identity through completing work within the community which would be helpful for others, rewarding to the ex-prisoner and 'giving back'. Ex-offenders are supposedly motivated towards pro-social behaviour through activities and work which utilises their strengths and promotes their own dignity. As part of a helping collective, the ex-offender 'earning redemption' is also thought to obtain a sense of

belonging (Bennett and Maruna, 2006). Effective and true reintegration involves more than physical re-entry but also the earning of their place back in the community. This was particularly true for Jaykob, who felt disillusioned with the community he grew up in, and once vowed never to go back. His placement at the Grace Foundation had inspired him to return to the community and work within the social services. He was motivated to help other young Pasifika men who may be experiencing similar circumstances to his past.

The Grace Foundation production discussed by Jaykob and Jessie encouraged sharing lived experience and stimulated empathy amongst Grace Foundation residents. Jaykob was able to achieve his desire to share his journey for the benefit of others, and his contribution was recognised publically in production, which assists in 'de-labelling' and symbolically reducing the stigmatisation he carries (Maruna, 2001). This production has provided an opportunity for Jaykob to develop a pro-social self-concept and an opportunity for him to empathise and become aware of the challenges and difficulties faced by others within the half-way house environment. As Ward & Marshall (2007) discuss this exposure is the basis of narrative identity change and restructuring. By instilling appropriate attitudes, which Jaykob formulated himself during the preparation for the production, a new useful and positive narrative identity was achieved, and a specific criminogenic need self-identified by Jaykob was addressed. Importantly, Jaykob participated in the production with victims of sexual crimes. He listened to their experiences of as victims of sexual crimes. It altered his perception of women and forced him to confront his own references and identity. Kahu also stated he felt he had a responsibility to intervene in younger persons engaging in similar behaviour as he once did, because of his lived experience and narrative restructuring. This was a common self-narrative amongst the respondents; the desire to put their shameful past to good use and devoting their future to helping others. Maruna (2001) concludes that evidence of this narrative pattern indicates successful reform after imprisonment. This narrative pattern came naturally with the conversion to a Christian framework, and the tendency for respondents to find meaning and purpose in their lived experience.

Jaykob began to see his lived experience as a strength, exclusive to someone who has reformed from criminal behaviour. As many ex-prisoners face stigmatization within the community they are released to, this stigma can only be shared and understood by those who

have also had to the resettle after prison (Maruna, 2001). Residents of halfway housing have the opportunity to resettle with peers and those who are also experiencing alienation from the community. This production has provided an opportunity for Jaykob to develop a pro-social self-concept and an opportunity for him to empathise and become aware of the challenges and difficulties faced by others within the half-way house environment. As Ward & Marshall (2007) discuss this exposure is the basis of narrative identity change and restructuring. By instilling appropriate attitudes, which Jaykob formulated himself during the preparation for the production, a new useful and positive narrative identity was achieved, and a specific criminogenic need self-identified by Jaykob was addressed.

Engaging in altruistic behaviour creates a sense of accomplishment, meaning and purpose in addition to narrative restructuring (Maruna, 2001). Being 'generative', giving back, is one of the crucial components identified in those who have successfully desisted from crime (Maruna, 2001). Giving back can also take form of caregiving, which was discussed by two of the three female respondents. Adopting a caretaking role within the halfway home allowed those who previously had traditional caring roles resume what was interrupted by the incarceration period. Maruna (2001) also identifies the caregiver role as one of the few socially acceptable 'scripts' available to this population upon release. Jenna was assigned two caregiver positions by the Grace Foundation. Jenna operated as a cook within the organisation who also taught male residents economical recipes and budgeting of food. Jenna had responsibility within the Grace Foundation, a new social role and means of contributing to the operations of the home. She was also part of the Grace Foundation Peer Support group, where she was to be listening ear for anyone who may request it, and she felt her lived experience legitimised her position. Jenna wanted to help others who were far less along in the recovery process. This experience would strengthen her prosocial support network while enabling her participation in generative activities, effectively earning herself redemption along the way. Stephanie also discussed her desire to mother the children she had been assigned as caregiver. Her desire to do this reflected her capability to live a prosocial and personally meaningful life. Caregiving was essential to Stephanie's sense of self-worth and resumed her past role as a mother prior to her incarceration.

The Grace Foundation's house rules are the first instance of participants forcefully having to 'knife off' negative influences from their past. Creating a drug and alcohol free environment helped to remove the temptation for the four of the six participants. Residing in a halfway house directly post-release enables for the severing of harmful environments and former negative social groups necessary for behavioural change (Duffee and Duffee, 1981). It was only outside of the Grace Foundation jurisdiction that the residents had had the opportunity to consume drugs or alcohol. Tina had identified that it was necessary for her to disassociate with her former friends if she was to remain clean. Her desistance relied heavily on the 'knifing off' of her criminal past and peer group. This also removed her from drug and alcohol use, which she had identified as a problem and a barrier to her successful reintegration. In disassociating with, or as Maruna and Roy (2006) label it, 'knifing off' her former associates, she had also eliminated past opportunities. The setting of the halfway house removed former opportunities or choices she may once have had, which lead to her offending. The house rules imposed by the Grace Foundation did limit her freedoms and force her to desist from crime however, she demonstrated that this was not just forced knifing off through another agency. This was self-imposed by Tina. Tina recognised the anti-social influence her family had on her, and she decided to temporarily sever ties with them, with hope that they would also be influenced by her identity change. Tina has taken two routes to self-change, through environmental knifing off and also positive and prosocial narrative development. The halfway house Tina had been residing in, had been the catalyst for one of these routes, and provided the structure and prosocial influence required for this change to occur.

Social support was a crucial component of the participant's continuous desistance from crime during their stay at the halfway house. The residents had regained important social roles and had these roles established in their social identity. This was frequently emphasised in the narrative patterns, and applied when participants occupied roles of leadership within the organisation and the homes. This environment translated into a familial support system. Jenna, for example, had found a substitute for familial support within the Grace Foundation organisation. This was crucial to her transformed narrative identity. Her family had severed ties with her upon her conviction. She discussed the responsibility she felt for helping other residents through their journey. She felt as if she was part of something beyond purely residing in a reintegration facility, and likened the organisation to a large family. This reinforces the

importance of community belonging when reintegrating from prison back into the community (Maruna, 2001). Inclusiveness was also reflected in participant discussions when interacting in a group and peer support sessions. Though sharing their daily challenges was done under a religious context of morning worship and devotion, this simple continuous peer support underpinned the relationship between the residents within the homes. Knowledge that another person was sharing a similar journey to theirs, and attempting to attain positive self-change gave a sense of security, relief and hope to the residents.

Maruna & Roy (2006) discuss the process of reconstructing the past to serve as a marker to demonstrate the progress they have made to prove how far they have come. This is the justification of a criminal past while rationalising the decision to desist from crime. Evidence of this occurrence was disclosed by Jaykob. He realised how isolated he felt as a sexual offender. He also realised the practicality of his narrative restructuring, and felt it was now his duty to share this with other young offenders, and be an example of identity change. This was not by completely amputating his past and former references, rather by reorganised them to fit his new, crime free identity (Maruna & Roy, 2006). Offenders who lack a clear narrative identity are more likely to offend, or similarly, those with a negative narrative identity. Residents who had resided in the home for some time and made significant developments to their narrative identity, and directly articulated this development. Kahu had developed the appropriate attitude and accomplished a useful and positive narrative identity, without the erasure of his criminal past. Kahu's script of "if I can do this, anybody can" shows achievement of a prosocial narrative and a restructuring, and means he is likely to succeed in long term desistance from crime.

In conducting the study, the researcher's adoption of a kaupapa methodology became a limitation. Pūrākau and Kaupapa methodology is a response to the exclusive nature of westernised research models. It is constructed by Maori as part of a decolonising method, and is not intended for Pakeha use and should be conducted by indigenous people themselves. The researcher identifies as both Pakeha and Ngai Tahu (*iwi*). Because of colonising practises there is much disconnect between the researcher and her lineage. There was a discomfort in adopting a purely Pūrākau approach in this research with *taonga*, however the researcher was conflicted as the values and process in indigenous storytelling would guarantee the respect she wanted to apply to the narratives. This limitation resulted in utilising a kaupapa aligned

methodology with the same intent, but without the requirement that the researcher was to bring an indigenous worldview to the research methodology.

Another limitation encountered by the researcher was probation conditions of one of the respondents. One respondent was unable to discuss her offending history. This was due to a restriction imposed by probation that she was to decline any interviews. The researcher was respectful of this and identifying information has been excluded.

Conclusion

An unsupported return to the community denies the ex-prisoner of the crucial aftercare and support required to successfully desist from a criminal lifestyle, and shed their criminal identity and worldview. A halfway house provides this, and supports effective identity change. In addition to meeting practical needs of accommodation, transport and education, the halfway house also alleviated the more abstract barriers. This was revealed in themes throughout the six participant narratives, which were conversion, redemption and prosocial and peer support. Religious conversion can reduce the anxiety the ex-prisoner faces upon release, and relieves the uncertainty about what they will be able to achieve with a criminal conviction. The conversion script contains not only an interpretation of the past, but also a strategy for the future. Notably, a new converted narrative came with ritual and worship, which not only reinforced their new religious identity, but also provided the residents with a daily dose of peer support. The nature of a conversion script developed into a narrative pattern, which naturally lead to redemption, and the participant need to demonstrate they have earned their position back in to society. The Grace Foundation provided residents with the opportunity to achieve this, through projects within the organisation, platforms for participants to share their story or the opportunity to lead and inspire change. Respondents were given the opportunity to put their experience as offenders to good use, which allowed for a restructuring of their past rather than amputation. For this to be consistent and continuous, narrative change and redemptive scripts developed within prison require continual support upon release from prison. To successfully demonstrate desistance from crime, a prosocial narrative must be achieved. Narrative inquiry reveals the extent of this change within a half-way house environment post-release. Should the New Zealand Government look to reduce the reoffending rate and achieve a 25 per cent reduction by 2017, it must look beyond concrete barriers to reintegration, and consider abstract

needs as of equal importance to resettling back into the community. For this research to be conclusive, a larger scale investigation into sustaining narrative identity change within a halfway house would be beneficial. Adoption of different scripts (redemptive, conversion, prosocial) and their helpfulness in a longitudinal study would also further the scope of this research within Aotearoa New Zealand.

Glossary

Māori The indigenous peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand

Pākehā New Zealander of European descent - probably originally applied to English-speaking Europeans living in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Whānau Extended family, family group, a familiar term of address to a number of people - the primary economic unit of traditional Māori society.

Tikanga Correct procedure, custom, habit, lore, method, manner, rule, way, code, meaning, plan, practice, convention, protocol - the customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context

Kaitiaki Trustee, minder, guard, custodian, guardian, caregiver, keeper, steward

Runanga Council, tribal council, assembly, board, boardroom, iwi authority - assemblies called to discuss issues of concern to iwi or the community.

Iwi Extended kinship group, tribe, nation, people, nationality, race - often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory.

Pūrākau Myth, ancient legend, story.

Kaupapa Māori approach, Māori topic, Māori customary practice, Māori institution, Māori agenda, Māori principles, Māori ideology - a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society.

Taonga Treasure, anything prized - applied to anything considered to be of value including socially or culturally valuable objects, resources, phenomenon, ideas and techniques.

Hapu Kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe - section of a large kinship group and the primary political unit in traditional Māori society. It consisted of a number of *whānau* sharing descent from a common ancestor, usually being named after the ancestor, but sometimes from an important event in the group's history. A number of related *hapū* usually shared adjacent territories forming a looser tribal federation (*iwi*).

Tino Rangatiratanga Self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy, self-government, domination, rule, control, power.

Tangata Whenua Local people, hosts, indigenous people - people born of the whenua, i.e. of the placenta and of the land where the people's ancestors have lived and where their placenta are buried.

(Te Aka Maori Dictionary, 2016)

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