# “This Is Not a Riot, It Is a Protest”

## A Discourse Analysis of Prison Violence in New Zealand News Media

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

**Master of Social Science in Psychology**

at

**The University of Waikato**

by

**Liam Membery**


THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

2022

## Abstract

This thesis examines the discourses of prison violence in the New Zealand news media. Prison violence is a pressing social issue that harms those involved and has permeating consequences for the institution. Prison riots, specifically, involve serious instances of disorder and violence that incur physical, psychological, social and economic harm. Despite prisons being private institutions, prison riots are public events that amass large social responses through news media coverage. The public often use news media to co-construct their perceptions of social phenomena, and policymakers use both public opinion and the news media to guide their decisions when shaping policy. Subsequently, the ways in which the news media discursively construct prison riots will have direct consequences for public attitudes and policy relating to prison violence, a phenomenon that exists outside of the public eye. However, there is currently no research that has examined discourses of prison violence and, further, what the consequences of these discourses may be. Therefore, using a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis, this study examined the discourses in the news media representations of the large-scale prison violence at the Spring Hill Corrections Facility (2013) and Waikeria Prison (2020-2021). The results uncovered three discourses: the riot discourse, the gang discourse, and the protest discourse. The riot discourse was identified as dominant and constructed prison violence as an individualised issue perpetrated by inherently violent prisoners. The gang discourse worked in conjunction with the riot discourse, constructing prison violence as an individualised issue perpetrated by gang members. The protest discourse was identified as a counter-discourse and constructed the unrest at both facilities as protests against living conditions and inhumane treatment. Each discourse has consequences for public attitudes and in turn, penal policy and practice.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Armon Tamatea. From the conversations about reality TV to the expert opinion and guidance, I appreciate all the time spent and the learning opportunities you provided me with throughout our time together on this project. None of this would have been possible without you.

To those closest to me, thank you for sticking by me, keeping me motivated, and providing me with distractions when I needed them. To my Nana, I appreciate everything you do for me, your kindness is inspiring. To Sian, thank you for your patience and your constant support. To my friends who kept me healthy both mentally and physically, I appreciate every one of you.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

Violence is a broad term encompassing a wide spectrum of behaviours that incur pervasive harm to individuals, families, the community, and society. Violence, largely assumed to be a preventable criminal justice and public health issue (Moore, 1993; Reza et al., 2001), has been ubiquitous across all cultures and in every epoch (Campbell, 2014) and is responsible for over one million human deaths each year (Krug et al., 2002; World Health Organization, 2021). In prisons specifically, violence constitutes a routine hazard that inhibits the prison from fulfilling its purpose in providing a safe and constructive climate for prisoners and staff (McGuire, 2018). Despite being generally concerned with prison violence, this thesis has focused its scope on prison riots as they typically comprise serious violent events involving collective interpersonal violence and damage to property that result in physical, psychological, social, and economic harm (Levan, 2012; Modvig, 2014; Schneider et al., 2011; Wooldredge, 1999).

Most prison violence research has focused on identifying individual and institutional risk factors that predate prison violence (Gaes et al., 2002; Gendreau et al., 1997; Useem & Kimball, 1991) and are typically performed in one of two ways. Firstly, prison violence research has utilised correlational approaches to determine which individual and institutional risk factors are associated with interpersonally violent behaviours (Cunningham & Sorensen, 2007; Lahm, 2008; Levan, 2012; Newberry & Shuker, 2012; Sykes, 1958). The implications of this research approach are typically concerned with strengthening prevention strategies to reduce the likelihood of interpersonal violence in prisons (Levan, 2012; Lahm, 2008). Secondly, with specific attention to prison riots, research has conventionally involved government-officiated reports that focus on deducing the causal factors that precipitated the prison riot and the control responses that resulted in its resolution (Boyle, 1988; Department

of Corrections, 2014; State of New York, 1972; Woolf & Tumim, 1991). The reports primarily involve interviews with custodial officers (previously referred to as *prison guards* or *correctional officers*) who assist in providing an overview of the events that transpired prior to and during the riot. The reports naturally conclude with an overview of what caused the riot and provide recommendations for policy and reform. However, these government-officiated reports have failed to examine the social response to prison riots.

Prison riots constitute large-scale public events that generate a substantial social response comprised of news media coverage that provides the public with information about prisons which are, for the most part, private institutions that exist outside of the public domain. Subsequently, the news media play a significant role in broadcasting the private issues of the prison, such as prison violence, to the public. Therefore, the ways in which the news media discursively construct prison violence will have consequences for how the public perceives prison violence and, in turn, greater consequences for public opinion, attitudes, and policy. There is a significant gap in the prison violence literature that has examined the social response to prison riots and, more specifically, how prison violence is talked about publicly and the implications this has for penal policy and reform.

In adopting a non-traditional approach to prison violence research, this thesis, through discourse analysis, aims to fill the gap by investigating the publicly available discourses in the news media reporting of prison violence. As the scope of this paper is limited, the decision was made to examine the social response of two discrete instances of large-scale prison violence in New Zealand: the prison riots at the Spring Hill Corrections Facility (2013) and Waikeria prison (2020-2021). These two prison riots generated substantial social responses involving large quantities of news media coverage, meaning a large corpus of discursive data was readily available for analysis.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter consists of a broad overview of research and theories of violence, violence in social institutions, prison violence, and introduces the rationale for this study. This chapter is comprised of three sections. The first section discusses violence as a general social phenomenon, the negative implications of violence, the relevant psychological theories and approaches to violence research, and introduces the concept of discourse and discourse analysis as a non-traditional approach to violence research. The second section covers the issue of violence in social institutions. Our discussion begins with violence in schools and hospitals and helps to expand the general understanding of violence in institutionalised settings before introducing the topic most pertinent to this thesis, prison violence. The third section introduces prison violence, the subtypes of prison violence (specifically prison riots) and covers the issue of prison violence in a New Zealand context.

## Violence

Violence is detrimental yet inescapable. Violence materialises in our families, communities, and institutions, is part of political debate, and has a permanent place on our television screens. In 2000, violence was responsible for 1.6 million human deaths (Krug et al., 2002). More recent statistics reinforce this claim, asserting that violence-related injuries are responsible for 1.25 million deaths annually (World Health Organization, 2021). In individuals aged between 15 and 34 in the United States, violence is the second (suicide) and third (homicide) leading cause of mortality, behind unintentional injury (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). Not only is violence preventable, but it is the direct, intentional result of human behaviour, and further, it is responsible for significant physical, psychological, social, and economic harm (Dahlberg & Krug, 2006; de Groot et al., 2022).

Violence is a broad term encompassing a wide spectrum of behaviours. A working definition for violence is adopted from the World Health Organization, where violence is defined as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Krug et al., 2002, p. 5). Each occurrence of violence is harmful in its own right. However, not all violent behaviours result in overt, physical harm. As illustrated by Table 1, there exist physically violent, psychologically violent, sexually violent, and indirect violent phenomena. Due to violence constituting a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, it is important to clarify which types and subtypes of violence are focal to this thesis. Despite being concerned with violence more generally, this thesis is primarily concerned with the acts of interpersonal and collective violence that occur in prison contexts. Not only do acts of interpersonal and collective violence have negative implications for perpetrators, victims and witnesses, but, as frequently observed in acts of collective violence, violence toward property is a significant concern (Ince et al., 2021; Tierney, 1994).

### *Interpersonal Violence*

Interpersonal violence refers to acts of violence (see the above World Health Organisation definition) that are physical, sexual, psychological (Ministry of Justice, 2015) and manifest between individuals in the home (Geffner et al., 1997; Purcell et al., 2021) and community (Blumenreich & Lewis, 1993; Brookman et al., 2011; Ceccato & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2020; Gerler, 2004; Levan, 2012). Interpersonal violence includes physical and non-physical acts of intimate-partner violence, sexual violence, assault, and homicide (Elliot, 2003; Renzetti & Edleson, 2008).

**Table 1**

*Types and Subtypes of Violence*

| Types of Violence | Definitions | Subtypes of Violence | Conceptual Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| Physical Violence | "Deliberately aggressive or violent behaviour by one person toward another that results in bodily injury" (American Psychological Association, n.d.-a). | Physical Assault | "…such as hitting, biting, scratching, pushing shoving, spitting…" (Pompeii et al., 2015, p. 1195) |
| | | Bullying | "[indicative of] an imbalance of power, unilateral subjection and hurtful behaviour, and the victim's inability to affect the nature of the relationship or to terminate it" (Cowie & Myers, 2019, p. 19) |
| | | Child Abuse (Physical) | "[physical] violence perpetrated by a parent or other caregivers…against children" (e.g., hitting; Annerbäck et al., 2012, p. 586) |
| | | Family Violence | "More than one household in six has been the scene of a spouse striking his or her partner…Brothers and sisters beat, stab, and shoot each other… and even grandparents are battered by their own children." (Straus et al., 2017, p. 3-4) |
| | | Suicide/Self-Harm | *Suicide:* "the act of killing oneself" (American Psychological Association, n.d.-c)<br><br>*Self-harm:* "a preoccupation with deliberately hurting oneself without conscious suicidal intent, often resulting in damage to body tissue" (Muelehkamp, 2005, p. 324) |
| | | Homicide | "…the killing of one person by another" (Swart & Mellor, 2016, p. 1) |
| Psychological Violence | "Verbal, mental, or emotional abuse intended to cause damage by undermining a person's well-being, self-esteem, or mental health" (Lehman, 2021). | Verbal Abuse | "…[people] screaming at you, calling you names or (making) verbal threats"" (Sprigg et al., 2007, p. 281) |
| | | Child Abuse (Neglect) | "…the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical [or] psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child…" (Horwath, 2013, p. 16) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Coercion/ Manipulation | *Coercion:* "…either having no choice or as having no acceptable choice" (Wood, 2014, p. 1)<br><br>*Manipulation:* "…the steering or influencing of the choices of others by means that might be morally problematic" (Wood, 2014, p. 1) |
| | | Threats/ Intimidation | "…words, actions, or implied threats that cause reasonable fear of injury to the health and safety of any person or property" (Hampshire College, 2021, p. 181) |
| Sexual Violence | "Unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent" (American Psychological Association, n.d.-b.). | Sexual Assault | "…the use of violent acts to forcefully obtain sexual gratification" (Greathouse et al., 2015, p. ix). |
| | | Sexual Coercion/ Manipulation | "…the use of violence, threats, and/or harassment to obtain sexual gratification" (Greathouse et al., 2015, p. ix) |
| | | Sexual Harassment | "…occurs when people are targets of unwanted sexual comments, gestures or actions" (Burn, 2019, p. 96) |
| Indirect Violence | "The ways in which social structures (economic or political arrangements) or social institutions cause harm to individuals or disadvantage them" (SaferSpaces, n.d.). | Structural Violence | "…the avoidable limitations that society places on groups of people that constrain them from meeting their basic needs and achieving a quality of life that would otherwise be possible" (Lee, 2019, p. 123) |
| | | Systemic Violence | "…any institutionalised practice or procedure that adversely impacts on individuals or groups by burdening them psychologically, mentally, culturally, spiritually, economically or physically" (Epp & Watkinson, 1996, p. x) |
| | | Symbolic Violence | "…violence exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (e.g., gendered power relationships when women are positioned as weaker, less intelligent, etc.) (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167; see also Southerton, 2011) |

The costs of interpersonal violence are inextricably high, not only physically, but also psychologically (Acierno, 1997; Mercy et al., 2017) and economically (Waters et al., 2005).

### *Collective Violence*

This thesis is concerned with the collective violence demonstrated in riots, specifically prison riots. Collective violence encompasses a variety of group-perpetrated interpersonal violence, such as warfare, genocide and riots, and results in permeating physical, psychological, social, and economic harm (Ireland et al., 2020). Take, for example, the recent riot in the United States that resulted from the police-perpetrated murder of George Floyd. The riot involved physical violence, arson, damage to the structural integrity of buildings, and looting (Newburn, 2021). The estimated insurance costs were upwards of one billion U.S. dollars (Kingson, 2020), and the unrest proves insightful into the relationship between collective violence and property violence. As will be discussed in a subsequent section, property violence is a common occurrence in prison riots, and although detrimental, literature tends to prioritise acts of violence involving people.

If we consider violence to be a spectrum, then collective violence resides at one end, and the more implicit and minutia acts of violence reside at the other. It is evident that the acts and implications of collective violence are overt and can be clearly observed. However, other, more subtle forms of violence exist and continue to perpetuate harm. These subtle forms of violence include the violence engendered in social structures and practices, also known as indirect violence (see Table 1). Indirect violence is pertinent to academic discussions of institutionalised violence, as many of our social institutions are regimented with systemic, structural, and symbolic violence that work implicitly to incur harm to individuals in institutionalised settings, as will be highlighted later in our discussions of violence in social institutions.

## Violence: Psychological Research

Theories of violence, and aggression, more generally, have a long history in psychology. Over the past century, different schools of thought have conceptualised aggression and attempted to understand how aggression manifests in human behaviour. As a result, the academic literature is vast and reveals diverse concepts, aetiologies, and approaches to research. In this section, this thesis will explore the notable theories of aggression and discuss the divergent approaches that psychological researchers have employed to understand the nature of human aggression and violence.

### *Psychoanalytic Research Traditions*

Psychoanalysts, most notably Sigmund Freud, initially postulated that human beings are beset with competing life (eros) and death (thanatos) forces (Freud et al., 2001). Life forces were responsible for behaviours related to survival and pleasure, and in stark contrast, death forces were responsible for destructive behaviours, such as aggression and suicide (Freud et al., 2001; Lowental, 1983). Freud (2001) claimed that "the aim of all life is death" and that humans implicitly sought to return to an inorganic state (Freud et al. 2001, p. 38). Thus, the power of thanatos would drive humans to act destructively and, in many cases, result in internal or external aggression. From its inception, the dual theory of eros and thanatos received criticism, with some scholars calling it "pure nonsense" (Van Haute & Geyskens, 2007, p. 16) and others describing how Freud "confused normal biological senescence with the fiction of a destructive death instinct to explain the social sources of hostility" (Lothane, 2012, as cited in Karbelnig, 2021, p. 4). The main point made by critics is that Freud's theory of aggression is untestable, and no empirical method exists to verify its relevance (Karbelnig, 2021; Tedeschi & Felson, 1994).

Psychoanalytic research typically adheres to the case-study approach, which entails an in-depth inquiry into phenomena "within [their] real-world context" (Hollweck, 2015, p. 2). The strengths of the case-study approach lay in its ability to collect in-depth, real-world data (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2017), and as suggested by Kächele et al. (2008), a case study can "provide meat for a theoretical skeleton" (p. 5). The psychoanalytic research on the death drive and aggression is derived from subjective, clinical interpretations of case studies (Kernberg, 2009). For example, several case studies have attempted to verify the death drive in individuals with self-destructive tendencies (Segal, 1997), personality disorders (Kernberg, 2017; Rosenfeld, 1971), and post-traumatic stress disorders (Kernberg, 2017). However, while being suitable in certain instances, the case-study approach has received a large level of scrutiny. Case study approaches have been critiqued as inherently biased, lacking generalisability (due to many studies investigating as little as one participant) and "too long, difficult to conduct and producing a massive amount of documentation" (Zaidah, 2007, p. 5).

### *Social Psychology*

The frustration-aggression hypothesis, initially developed by Dollard et al. (1939), contends that aggression is caused by frustration. More specifically, the theory suggests that aggression is recognised as a reactive force triggered by the thwarting of goal-directed activity (Dollard et al., 1939). However, Berkowitz (1989) later reformulated the frustration-aggression hypothesis, arguing that individuals who encounter either frustration or provocations (e.g., pain, loud noises) are positioned to foster symptoms of negative affect, which, with prolonged exposure, is likely to induce aggression (Berkowitz, 1989).

In order to test the frustration-aggression hypothesis, initial researchers conducted several experimental studies in laboratory settings. For example, Worchel et al. (1976) examined the effects of watching violent films versus comedies on aggression, and their

findings confirmed their hypothesis that “aggressive responses will be maximal when violent films are interrupted by commercials” (Worchel et al., 1976, p. 220). This study was pertinent to affirming the frustration-aggression hypothesis, as the commercials were perceived as frustrating, and the participants who watched the violent film and were subjected to four two-minute commercial breaks were deemed the most aggressive participants in the study (Worchel et al., 1976). In another study, Dill and Anderson (1995) measured the effects of frustration on aggression by measuring the aggression of participants who were actively and intentionally thwarted from completing a step-by-step origami task. During the experiment, the instructor intentionally demonstrated the steps at a speed “intentionally faster than the subject could follow” (Dill & Anderson, 1995, p. 364). The results from the experiment revealed that participants subjected to frustration exhibited higher levels of overt aggression, compared with those in the control group (Dill & Anderson, 1995). Despite congruent findings in these experiments, this research approach has several strengths and limitations. The strengths involve the ability to control the environment and variables to test theory-driven hypotheses, and further, the simplicity of experimental designs means replicability is easily achieved (Pederson, 2017). However, the results tend to lack ecological validity due to the limitations of the experimental design, especially experiments conducted in laboratory settings. Firstly, if an experiment is conducted in a laboratory in front of an experimenter, participants may exhibit socially desirable behaviours (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). Secondly, the derived results are unlikely to be generalised to naturalistic environments. In a laboratory setting, there are a number of controls and variables. However, in the real world, there are a plethora of social factors that influence behaviour (Pederson, 2017). Overall, the studies attesting to the existence of the frustration-aggression hypothesis are largely experimental, and although there are threads of its relevance, the theory has largely been disregarded as

more recent research on aggression has prioritised social learning theory and the general aggression model (Anderson & Bushman, 2018; Dewall et al., 2011; Pratt et al., 2009).

Bandura's (2017) social learning theory posits that human aggression is, like many other human behaviours, learned through social modelling. Bandura claimed that children learned to be aggressive through observing sources of aggression, whether that be watching family members or peers exerting aggression or interacting with media portrayals of aggression (Bandura et al., 1961, 1963). Social learning theory is not simply a theory that speaks to the imitation of behaviours. Rather, the theory argues that individuals pay close attention to not only the act of aggression, but also the cues and outcomes associated with the aggressive behaviour (Bjørkly, 2006). Accordingly, individuals can learn the appropriate times for aggression, and whether the outcome of their aggression is likely to be rewarded or punished. The theory suggests that once the modelled behaviour has been learned, the behaviour can manifest in the absence of the model's presence, pertaining to the idea that once an individual is modelled aggression, they may exhibit aggressive behaviours in future life situations.

Much of the early research on social learning theory and aggression was experimental and conducted in laboratory settings. For example, Bandura and colleagues (1961) conducted an experiment on 72 children using Bobo Dolls. The children were divided into eight experimental groups in which half of the children were exposed to models who exhibited aggressive behaviours toward the doll (e.g., hitting the doll with a mallet, kicking, throwing, and general beating), and the other half were modelled nonaggressive behaviours (Bandura et al., 1961). The results revealed that children exposed to aggressive models were much more likely to reproduce aggressive behaviour (Bandura et al., 1961). In spite of the name, the focus of social learning research is typically concerned with individual factors, and the

implications of research tend to underestimate the complex nature of social and biological influences on human behaviour (Bjørkly, 2006).

### *Integrative Approaches*

The General Aggression Model (GAM) is an integrative approach, implementing parts of previous theories (e.g., frustration-aggression hypothesis, social learning theory) to understand the role of cognitive, biological, developmental, and social factors in influencing human aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Allen et al., 2018; Tonnaer et al., 2016). The GAM is concerned with attitudes and beliefs of general aggression, cognitive and expectation schemata, and behavioural scripts (Allen et al., 2018). Allen et al. (2018) postulate that learned attitudes and beliefs of aggression (e.g., "believing aggression is normal, evaluating it positively," p. 75), expectation schemata (e.g., "expecting aggression from others," p. 75), and behavioural scripts (e.g., "believing that conflicts should be resolved with aggression," p. 75) can influence an individual's inclination to act aggressively. For example, if an individual perceives aggression as a viable option in conflict resolution and has a history of experienced or observed violence, the GAM suggests that the individual is likely to exhibit aggressive behaviours. One major strength of the GAM is that its proprietors claim that it can be used as an approach to more naturalistic and contemporary aggressive phenomena "outside [of] the laboratory" (Dewall et al., 2011, p. 245).

Research using the GAM has investigated the nature of salient social phenomena. Take, for example, media violence (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, 2018; Yao et al., 2019). Exposure to media violence has been postulated to increase aggressive tendencies in human beings (Anderson & Bushman, 2018; Bandura et al., 1963). Research using the GAM to investigate the effects of exposure to violent video games revealed that playing a violent video game for just a short period increased participants' expectations that a potential conflict

situation would be resolved aggressively (Anderson & Bushman, 2018). This finding was observed with no evidence to suggest the participants were "provoked or annoyed in any way" (p. 1683), implying the frustration-aggression hypothesis could not explain participants' expectations for aggressive conflict resolution. Additional research conducted by Yao et al. (2019) reinforced this finding, affirming that violent video game exposure was linked to increased anger and hostility, resulting in elevations in aggressive traits and the perpetuation of aggressive knowledge structures which facilitate moral disengagement, leading to an increased probability of aggression (Yao et al., 2019). Although the GAM integrates many different social-cognitive elements from former theories of aggression, there are limitations in its theory and approach to research. According to Ferguson and Dyck (2012), there are assumptions associated with the GAM in theory and practice that inhibit research from demonstrating empirical validity. The assumptions of aggression, as promoted by the GAM, suggest that "aggression is always bad" (Ferguson & Dyck, 2012, p. 222), "the human brain does not distinguish reality from fiction" (p. 223) and "aggression is mainly learned (p. 224) [and] automatic" (p. 224). These assumptions restrict the application of aggression in the real world, and the hypothesised inputs (e.g., exposure to video games) fail to realistically predict outputs (e.g., youth violence). Despite suggesting that the GAM can investigate issues of aggression in naturalistic environments, a significant portion of research adhering to this model has been controlled (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Anderson & Dill, 2000) and quantitative (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Anderson & Dill, 2000; Gentile, 2004; Yao et al., 2019). Thus, the limitations associated with the GAM fall in line with the limitations of quantitative research when examining real-world phenomena (Tenny et al., 2021).

Albeit psychological research has traditionally favoured quantitative research (Gelo et al., 2008), aggression and violence are social phenomena that exist in the real world. Subsequently, a qualitative approach to researching violence seemed a viable option, as it

"locates the observer in the world" (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 3) and seeks to provide enhanced opportunities for understanding social phenomena (Willig, 2019). Thus, in adopting a qualitative outlook for understanding violence, this thesis saw discourse analysis as a viable tool for analysing the talk that accompanies violence and what the consequences of this talk have for how we are enabled and constrained in perceiving violence in society.

### *Towards a Discursive Approach to Violence Research*

Discourse has been described by scholars as a "reflexive instrument to examine violence" (O'Connor, 1995, p. 310) and calls for approaches to examine the discursive constructions of violence have been made (O'Connor, 1995; van Dijk, 1995). This thesis uses Parker's (2013) definition of discourse, which refers to discourses as "sets of statements which constitute an object" (p. 1). Discourses constitute set ways of perceiving and talking about social phenomena, and often uphold taken-for-granted or common-sense understandings of the world. Thus, examining discourse challenges these typical constructions of the world (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wodak & Meyer, 2001), and has been used to deconstruct the ways we perceive a variety of social phenomena. What makes discourse analysis an increasingly viable approach to research is that there is an infinite source of data, either publicly available (news media, legislation, policy) or attainable via interviews (conversation) or similar research methods, readily available for analysis.

Discourse analysis involves interpreting the functions and consequences of written and spoken language (Parker, 2013). It is a complex and multifaceted approach to research with its foundation in post-structuralism, discursive psychology, and social constructionist theory. Discourse analysis and its epistemology will be deconstructed later in this thesis (see Epistemological Orientation). However, it is important to provide a brief overview to communicate what conducting a discourse analysis entails, and how the generated findings

and implications are significant. Fairclough (2014) describes the discourse analytic process as "analysing the relationship between texts, processes, and social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutions and social structures" (Fairclough, 2014, p. 26). Discourse analysis has been used as an approach to investigate many contemporary violence-related social issues, including intimate-partner violence (Leung, 2019), sexual violence (Anderson & Doherty, 2007), child sexual abuse (Mulya, 2018), and gender-based violence (Wolf, 2018), as well as the pervasive issue of violence in social institutions (e.g., school violence and hospital violence) which will be expanded on in a future section.

Leung (2019) conducted a discourse analysis of the language used in news media reports dealing with the topic of intimate-partner violence (IPV). The findings revealed that through several discursive techniques, the dominant discourses of IPV, as evidenced by the language in the news media reports, propagated unequal power relations between abusers and victims of IPV (Leung, 2019). News media reports constructed IPV as a symmetrical issue pertinent to both men and women, when statistics clearly demonstrate the contrary, with women bearing more physically damaging and frequent victimisation (Leung, 2019). Victims were labelled as "unusual" (p. 2236) or inherently problematic and were subsequently blamed for their victimisation (Leung, 2019). The study revealed that the news media perpetuate myths about IPV, marginalise victims, and the discourse serves to "justify and perpetuate such abuse" (Leung, 2019, p. 2241).

Anderson and Doherty (2008) analysed students' talk regarding incidents of rape perpetrated against women. The students' talk inherently promoted the idea of "individual responsibility" (p. 70), which held women responsible for the violence that was perpetrated against them. Rape was largely constructed as a foreseeable and avoidable phenomenon, whereby victims of rape were spoken about as "naïve" (p. 80) and "silly" (p. 74) for putting

themselves in reckless situations. In these accounts of rape, the emphasis was largely victim-focused, and the perpetrator was subtly talked about and only constituted part of "the hazard/risk to be avoided by good women and self-responsible citizens in the big bad world, rather than as an accountable agent in his own right" (Anderson & Doherty, 2007, p. 126). These discourses are readily and culturally available and are often promoted publicly. The issue with these individualised and victim-focused discourses is that they inherently legitimate the act of violence. By instructing individuals to avoid risky situations and blaming victims for being reckless, the act of violence and the perpetrator are legitimated. Rather than condemning perpetrators or constructing rape as a male-perpetrated issue, the discourse constructs rape as a female issue, and women are instructed to avoid risky situations.

Wolf (2018) examined (audio)visual media constructions of the Spanish and Austrian women's anti-violence initiatives to broaden our understanding of gender-based violence. In one of the Austrian nationwide campaigns, victims of IPV were constructed as passive individuals without voice or agency. This discourse is overtly patriarchal, and Wolf (2018) suggests that its promotion serves to perpetuate the narrative that a woman is inherently silent and "tied to her place as [a] bearer" (Wolf, 2018, p. 14). Further, in both the Austrian and Spanish anti-violence initiatives, IPV is socially constructed as a woman's issue, again, in a similar fashion to Anderson and Doherty's (2008) findings, more attention is given to the victims of violence, rather than perpetrators. Instead of fostering an image of IPV being a social phenomenon, it is instead deemed an issue of victims. Thus, we can observe how patriarchal discourses have been legitimated and publicly adopted, and in turn, have become dominant and govern how society perceives IPV.

Mulya (2018) investigated the spoken narratives of child sexual abuse victims in Indonesia to better understand how children might be constituted as sexual objects, which includes "their capability to exercise agency, perform resistance, and negotiate ethics"

(Mulya, 2018, p. 741). In line with the dominant discourse of children constituting powerless and innocent objects who lack agency in sexual encounters with adults, one participant's account reinforced the notion that children are powerless objects and perpetrators of child sexual abuse are exploitative, and instead of acting violently, adults should be protective and caring (Mulya, 2018). However, in another participant's account, the dominant discourse was challenged as the participant repeatedly voiced their enjoyment ("I just enjoyed it," p. 753) in their sexual encounters with adults. Although there is an overt ethical and legal issue in the participant's ability to exercise consent, the participant's verbal recount of his experiences gives rise to the idea that children can "make meaning out of their experiences" (Mulya, 2018, p. 753). This latter account of experienced child sexual abuse backs on previous academic literature (Foucault & Hurley, 1988) that claims children have the capacity for pleasure in their sexual experiences and that child sexual abuse is a more complex phenomenon that requires "less *certain* [emphasis added] constitutions of sexual abuse and its effects" (Mulya, 2018, p. 753). Overall, what can be observed in this study is the challenging of dominant and taken-for-granted discourses that uphold the idea that children lack agency in their encounters with adults.

In the above discourse analyses, several different data sampling techniques examined discourse in its various forms. For example, Leung (2019) analysed the language in news media reports; Anderson and Doherty (2008) and Mulya (2018) analysed the content in conversations; and Wolf (2018) analysed (audio)visual content. This provides a brief overview of the capability of discourse analysis in investigating the social constructions made by all artefacts of language and texts more generally. For it is not only language (in its verbal and textual forms) that can be analysed in discourse analysis. Burr (2015) refers to "texts" as any object that can be "read for meaning" (or interpreted) (Burr, 2015, p. 75), and Parker (2013) gives context to this notion, exemplifying that "speech, writing, non-verbal behaviour,

Braille, Morse code, semaphores, runes, advertisements, fashion systems, stained glass, architecture, tarot cards and bus tickets are all forms of text" (Parker, 2013, p. 7). This is an important clarification to make, as discourse is a highly contested concept that has been defined across several academic fields.

Not only has discourse analysis been used to examine general and contemporary violent phenomena, but the nature of discourse and its place in social institutions has also generated considerable scholarly interest (Fairclough, 2014; Foucault, 2002; Parker, 2013; Phillips et al., 2004). Discursive theory postulates that social institutions are constituted by discursive practices (Phillips et al., 2004) and that institutions themselves naturally "set conditions on action through the way in which they gradually acquire the moral and ontological status of taken-for-granted facts, which in turn, shape future interactions and negotiations" (Barley & Tolbert, 1997 as cited in Phillips et al., 2004, p. 637). Put simply, social institutions have the inherent power to dictate what knowledge becomes taken-for-granted. This power inherently restricts how subjects of the institution act, think, and talk about social phenomena, constraining subjects to act within a frame (Fairclough, 1995). As evidenced in the following section, discourse analyses provide great insight into how institutions naturally exercise power and generate discourses that govern ways of perceiving and talking about social phenomena.

**Violence in Social Institutions**

Violence is a significant issue for many primary social institutions, including our schools, hospitals and prisons. Not only does violence threaten the function of these institutions in their endeavour to harbour safe and constructive climates, but these institutions are inherently similar (Foucault, 1977). The architecture, regimentation, and practices of both schools and hospitals "resemble prisons" and function as a Panopticon (Foucault, 1977, p.

228; Schwan & Shapiro, 2011). The Panopticon was a plan designed by Jeremy Bentham for the “ideal prison” (Schwan & Shapiro, 2011, p. 129) and promotes an atmosphere of surveillance and control (Foucault, 1977; Novak, 2017). Thus, our discussions regarding violence in schools and hospitals will be used as models to further our understanding of the nature of violence in institutionalised settings. Moreover, the typical approaches to research on school and hospital violence will be discussed, before illustrating what discourse analyses have contributed to the academic understanding of these institutionalised phenomena.

### *Violence in Schools*

School violence is a broad term that encompasses a variety of violent behaviours, from bullying and verbal abuse to school shootings and suicide. The occurrence of violence threatens the school’s innate function as an institution, as the presence of violence, in any form, threatens to harm those involved and negatively impacts the school’s ability to harbour a safe, positive climate. School violence is a global phenomenon, and research continues to demonstrate the consequences of violence for students, the school itself, and greater society (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020; Rivara et al., 2019; Turanovic et al., 2022; Wilson & Lipsey, 2005).

On average and globally, one-third of students experience peer violence in schools, which amounts to hundreds of millions of victims of school violence each year (UNESCO, 2018). Bullying, the most common subtype of school violence, has been associated with precipitating school shootings and suicide among victimised students (Kim & Leventhal, 2008; Lee, 2013; Irwin et al., 2022; Peng et al., 2020; Raitanen et al., 2019). Moreover, in South Korea, school bullying is among the two leading causes of student suicide (Lee et al., 2011). In Europe, monthly bullying prevalence statistics are diverse, ranging from 12 per cent in the Netherlands to 37 per cent in Russia (Clark, 2022). In New Zealand, around 30 per cent

of students reported being victims of bullying, and around half of students reported being physically and intentionally hurt by their peers (Fleming, 2007). Despite the variance in national prevalence rates, research has continued to demonstrate the negative physical (Gaete et al., 2017), psychological (Bond, 2001; Hatchel et al., 2019; Wolke, 2015), economic (Jadambaa et al., 2021; Wodon et al., 2021) and societal harm (Huang, 2022; United Nations, 2016; van der Werf, 2014) incurred by school violence.

Research on school violence has predominantly focused on incidents of interpersonal violence (e.g., bullying, fighting, verbal abuse, sexual violence), resorting to the typical format for interpersonal violence research, examining the dichotomy between perpetrators of school violence and measuring the consequences of victimisation (Henry, 2000). If we isolate bullying and observe the research on perpetrators and victims, the literature proposes individual risk factors and characteristics present in bullies (Le Roux & Moukhele, 2011; Sharp & Smith, 1994) and examines the risk factors and consequences for bullying victimisation (Berger et al., 2008). However, this typical dichotomous approach to school violence research has been described as narrow and, further, omits any discussion related to the role of the institution in precipitating or perpetuating violence. Furthermore, the continual use of the dichotomous approach has been criticised as "reproducing" the occurrence of school bullying as the research outputs discursively construct bullying as a "naturalised, individualised phenomenon" (Ryan & Morgan, 2011, p. 3).

There are many contributing elements to school violence, and research has highlighted the implicit practices of the school that perpetuate violence (Bonus, 2012; Connolly & Healy, 2004; Epp & Watkinson, 1996). Several discourse analyses have revealed how the school upholds particular ways of perceiving and talking about school violence that have contributed to its normalisation (deLara, 2012; Hepburn, 1997; Hyo-Yong, 2013; Ryan and Morgan, 2011). For example, bullying has traditionally been perceived, both

institutionally and academically, as an individualised issue manifest in “problem pupils” and that bullies are responsible for their own behaviour (Watkins et al., 2007, p. 71; see also Hepburn, 1997; Hyo-Yong, 2013; Ryan and Morgan, 2011). Much of traditional research has clung to this idea, targeting intervention practices toward individuals at risk of perpetrating school violence, which naturally “maintain[s] the problem of bullying” (Hepburn, 1997, p. 44). For the dominant discourses frame school violence as an individualised issue comprised of students, which, in turn, absolves any institutional responsibility in precipitating or perpetuating school violence. The acquittal of institutional responsibility is of significant importance, as there is literature to suggest that the school is embedded with systemic issues that cause harm to students and may even precipitate the occurrence of interpersonal violence (Bonus, 2012; Connolly & Healy, 2004; Epp & Watkinson, 1996). For example, Epp and Watkinson (1996) discuss how the school promotes an atmosphere of docility and stratification while naturally perpetuating inequality through systemically violent and pedagogical practices. In addition, they bring attention to the normalised practice of academic competition, which they argue benefits certain students while harming minority populations and, in some instances, leads students to become aggressive (Epp & Watkinson, 1996). The strict architecture and regimentation of the school promote docility and conformity (Foucault, 1977). Deviance is often met with discipline, and students who repeatedly deviate from the normative practices of the school are often academically discouraged or physically ostracised (Epp & Watkinson, 1996; see also Phillips et al., 2004). This suggests that the school as an institution is not excused from causing harm to students, and further, school violence is not the individualised issue that research has traditionally conceptualised.

Overall, what can be observed is that, despite school violence being a multifaceted issue that exists between individuals and between individuals and the institution, the discourses, which the institution inherently legitimates, construct school violence as an

individualised phenomenon. In doing so, the systemic issues engendered in the school are dismissed, and instead, individualistic ideologies of violence are promoted. In turn, research and interventionist approaches that attempt to mitigate violence in schools have focused on the individuals, inadvertently reinforcing these discourses. Moreover, due to the practices of the school and their policies around violence, when a student is harmed by the institution and acts out aggressively, they are blamed, disciplined, and in many cases, implicitly (removed from academic competition) or explicitly (expulsion) ostracised. With this in mind, our discussion now shifts from violence in schools to violence in hospitals.

### *Violence in Hospitals*

Violence constitutes a routine problem for hospitals globally. Much of the literature focuses on violence perpetrated by patients against healthcare staff (Liu et al., 2019; Vento et al., 2020), and the prevalence rates suggest that up to 38 per cent of healthcare workers experience physical violence in hospital settings (World Health Organization, n.d.). When patients direct violence toward healthcare staff, the quality of patient care is jeopardised, and the victims are likely to suffer physical and psychological harm (Arnetz et al., 2014), and many lose professional motivation (World Health Organization, n.d.). Moreover, hospital violence incurs economic harm—resulting in "lost days of work, work incapacity claims, loss of expertise, and increased costs in investment to enhance safe work environments" (Spelten et al., 2020, p. 2; see also Maguire et al., 2018). Hospital violence includes acts of interpersonal violence, including verbal abuse and threats (Lepping et al., 2013), assault (Lepping et al., 2013; Levin et al., 1998), sexual violence (Clari et al., 2020; Kahsay et al., 2020), and in rare circumstances, homicide (Nielssen & Large, 2022). In New Zealand, 93 per cent of healthcare workers reported being exposed to verbal abuse, and 65 per cent voiced experiencing physical aggression in hospital settings (Swain et al., 2014).

Research on hospital violence has typically focused on highlighting the extent of the issue (Liu et al., 2019; Vento et al., 2020), the explicit and implicit harm to victims and the institution (Magnavita, 2013; Yao et al., 2014), and further, has attempted to identify typological characteristics and risk factors present in perpetrators of hospital violence (Blumenreich & Lewis, 1993; Gillespie et al., 2010; Spelten et al., 2020). The consensus among the literature seems to be, that hospital violence is inevitable and harmful, causing significant physical and psychological harm to victims (Magnavita, 2013; Vento et al., 2020; Yao et al., 2014) and amassing significant costs to the institution (Speroni et al., 2014). Moreover, the literature tends to suggest that hospital violence is a problem manifest in patients, and healthcare staff are subsequently trained to recognise risk factors and characteristics of perpetrators based on previous research (Blumenreich & Lewis, 1993; Spelten et al., 2020). The hospital as an institution naturally promotes this idea, primarily through policy and models for intervention, constructing hospital violence as an individualised issue. In doing so, the hospital, much like the school, acquits itself of any institutional responsibility for implicitly inciting or perpetuating violence (Powers, 2012).

Despite the heavy individualised focus of much of the existing research on hospital violence, several studies have identified underlying systemic issues within the hospital that lead patients to become aggressive (Haque & Waytz, 2012). The hospital has strict architecture and regimentation (Bucag, 2020; Foucault, 1977), which naturally nurtures power relationships (Goodyear-Smith & Buetow, 2001), promoting an atmosphere of dehumanisation and deindividuation (Haque & Waytz, 2012), which has been attributed to precipitating aggression (Prentice-Dunn & Rogers, 1980). Haque and Waytz (2012) revealed that the deindividuating practices of the hospital can lead patients toward “interpersonal aggression” by inciting feelings of frustration and, through prolonged exposure to the hospital’s strict regimentation, many patients become dismissive of social propriety (Haque

& Waytz, 2012, p. 177). Research has emphasised the existence of structural violence in the practices of the hospital, which inherently perpetuates and normalises inequality among certain groups of patients (Hamed et al., 2020; Shapiro, 2018). Shapiro (2018) found that doctors would often blame under-resourced groups, deeming them responsible for their ill-health, and further, Hamed et al. (2020) suggest that structural violence normalises racism which repeatedly denies minority groups access to the "humane quality of life" that many other patients experience in hospital (Hamed et al., 2020, p. 1670; Shapiro, 2018). Additionally, Green and colleagues (2007) found that many doctors had implicit racial biases that resulted in patient discrimination, in which the doctors in the study would overtly and repeatedly recommend effective treatment to white patients over black patients (Green et al., 2007). It is clear that systemic issues are embedded in the practices of the hospital, which have been postulated to induce aggressive responses from patients, suggesting that the institution may play a role in implicitly inciting violence among its constituents.

Powers (2012) conducted a discourse analysis to analyse the effect of hospital policies on the construction of violence (Powers, 2012). The analysis revealed that the policies designed to combat hospital violence are mainly contributed to by risk management or administration staff, giving little voice to the victims or perpetrators of hospital violence. Instead, the policies construct healthcare staff as "at-risk" and guide staff to identify perpetrators based on the risk factors and characteristics of patients who have exercised violence in the past (Powers, 2012, p. 74). The academic literature mirrors this ideology, focusing on the individual characteristics of perpetrators and measuring the harm suffered by victims (Blumenreich & Lewis, 1993; Gillespie et al., 2010; Magnavita, 2013; Spelten et al., 2020; Yao et al., 2014). Interestingly, Powers (2012) mentions that due to widespread "zero tolerance polic[ies]," patients who become angered due to poor care or unfair treatment are denied agency, and in many cases, patients can be refused medical care and removed from

the institution (Powers, 2012, p. 80). Overall, what can be observed is that the institution has the power to define what is and what is not violence, the language we can use when talking about violence, and, ultimately, how the hospital deals with violent individuals.

Based on the discussions above, the dichotomous approach to the existing research on violence in social institutions presents violence as an issue of individuals. Consequently, approaches to understanding and preventing violence have repeatedly focused on identifying typologically violent individuals and assisting victims post their violence victimisation. Thus, the research (and policies) related to violence in institutionalised settings naturally absolves the responsibility and contribution of the institution in precipitating and perpetuating violence. However, as evidenced by the non-traditional research approaches, the institution has been deemed an active agent in precipitating violence in institutionalised contexts. Moreover, the institution has an inherent power to govern how academics and the constituents of the institution discursively construct the issue of violence in these contexts. Therefore, to develop our understanding of violence in social institutions and, subsequently, violence in prisons, the institution must be treated as an agent that contributes to violence in these settings.

**Prison Violence**

Prison violence refers to acts of verbal abuse, threats and intimidation, assault, sexual violence, homicide, suicide, and collective violence—such as prison riots (Butler et al., 2021; Modvig, 2014). Prison violence, whether it be self-inflicted, between prisoners, between prisoners and custodial officers (otherwise referred to as *prison guards* or *correctional officers*) or between prisoners and the institution, is a significant issue for penal systems globally. It entails physical and psychological harm to those involved and incurs greater costs to the community and society (Levan, 2012; Schneider et al., 2011; Wooldredge, 1999).

Prison violence is typically perceived as inevitable due to the inherent nature of violent individuals being grouped together in a confined space (Bowker, 1980; Edgar & Martin, 2000). However, for the prison to function adequately and fulfil its purpose, it must remain as orderly and secure as possible (McGuire, 2018). Therefore, prison violence threatens the safety, order and function of the prison (Bottoms, 1999).

According to the World Health Organization, about 25 per cent of prisoners experience violence victimisation annually (Modvig, 2014). However, due to a plethora of contributing factors, prison violence is massively underreported (Bowker, 1980; McCorkle, 1993), and the actual prevalence rates are likely much higher. In addition, prisoners who experience violence are likely to endure physical harm, psychological harm (Conde et al., 2019; McCorkle, 1993; Wolff & Shi, 2009), adjustment issues (both in prison, and upon their reintegration into the community) (Conde et al., 2019; Schappel et al., 2016), and experience higher rates of recidivism (Cochran et al., 2014).

Regarding the aetiology of prison violence, research typically adheres to one of two schools of thought. On the one hand, research adhering to the importation model focuses on the individual characteristics and risk factors of prisoners who act violently. The importation model suggests that prisoners act violently based on imported norms and behaviours from their pre-prison life (Lahm, 2008; Schrag, 1944; Thomas & Foster, 1973). For example, research adhering to the importation model has observed that prisoners with gang affiliations (Cunningham & Sorensen, 2007; Gaes et al., 2002), prisoners with a history of violent convictions (McGuire, 2018; Rocheleau, 2013), prisoners with mental health issues (Newberry & Shuker, 2012) and prisoners from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Butler et al., 2021; Mears et al., 2013) are more likely to perpetrate interpersonal violence in prisons. On the other hand, research, in line with deprivation theory, tends to focus on the environmental influences of prison violence. Deprivation theory suggests that prisoners act

violently in response to the oppressive nature of the prison or the "pains of imprisonment" (Sykes, 1958, p. 63; see also Lahm, 2008). Sykes (1958) suggested that aggression and violence resulted from institutional deprivations of liberty, personal security, material possessions and heterosexual relationships (Sykes, 1958; see also Gover et al., 2000; Levan, 2012). Deprivation research has postulated that prison-specific variables—such as overcrowding and staff-to-prisoner ratios (Levan, 2016), the number of available prisoner programmes (Suedfeld, 1980), and institutional breakdown (Boin & Rattray, 2004; Useem & Kimball, 1991)—incur additional deprivations to the lives of prisoners, inherently contributing to the prevalence of prison violence. As a result, interventionist strategies have focused on reducing prison violence by focusing their attention on identifying and ameliorating prisoners with identifiable characteristics attributed to violence perpetration (importation) or working to reduce institutional factors that contribute to prison violence (deprivation).

Although no discursive research has examined discourses of prison violence, several discourse analyses have investigated the discursive construction of prisons and prisoners more generally (Drake, 2011; Jarvis, 2005; Marsh, 2009; Mason, 2006). In examining discursive constructions of prisons and prisoners, as depicted in artefacts of film and television media, Mason (2006) and Jarvis (2005) revealed that the prison is often constructed as "violent and inhumane" (Mason, 2006, p. 615) and prisoners are framed as an omnipresent violent threat (Jarvis, 2005; Mason, 2006). Moreover, Drake (2011) revealed that the news media typically construct prisoners as "dangerous others" and revealed that this perception of prisoners has subsequent implications for penal reform (Drake, 2011, p. 367). Lastly, Marsh (2009) examined competing discourses that either frame the prison as a holiday camp or a violent institution and links these discourses back to the film and television depictions, assuming that all discourses that construct prisons and prisoners (e.g., news media, film,

television, books) cooperate in forming a larger, more powerful discourse that constructs these phenomena through certain frames (Marsh, 2009). In sum, research has revealed that dominant discourses seemingly promote the narrative that prisons are violent institutions and prisoners are violent individuals.

Due to prison violence being a broad term encompassing a wide range of interpersonally violent behaviours, this thesis decided to focus its scope on prison riots. Prison riots typically involve serious acts of interpersonal violence (e.g., assault, homicide, arson, hostage scenarios), which inherently results in significant physical, psychological, social and economic harm. Additionally, due to their violent and captivating nature, prison riots typically amass considerable news media coverage. The news media coverage is significant for several reasons. Firstly, the news media directly informs the public about prisons, which are typically private institutions, and prison violence, an issue that exists outside of the public eye. Thus, the news media informs public opinion about prison violence, and subsequently, the ways in which news media discursively construct prison violence has implications for public attitudes and policy. Policymakers often use news media to discern the public consensus regarding a particular issue or event (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010; Yanovitzky & Weber, 2019). Secondly, the news media coverage means an ample pool of discursive data directly relating to prison violence is readily and publicly available. Thus, this thesis is primarily concerned with prison riots as a specific subtype of prison violence more generally.

**Prison Riots**

Prison riots have persistently involved acts of serious interpersonal violence, such as hostage scenarios, homicide, arson and physical assault that leads to the hospitalisation of

victims. The working definition for prison riot in this thesis has been amended from the definition given by Useem and Piehl (2006, p. 95):

> a prison riot is an incident (1) involving 30 prisoners or more; (2) lasting 30 minutes or longer; (3) resulting in serious injury or significant property damage, and/or (4) involving prisoners taking hostages or using force to expel correctional authorities from a section of the prison.

The amendment is with regard to the first point. This thesis defines any incident involving 15 prisoners or more that adheres to the remaining three principles as a prison riot.

Every prison riot is different, although there are commonalities. First, prison riots are costly. It is not uncommon for a prison riot to cause more than $100 million in damages (Useem et al., 1996). In addition, the costs associated with both experienced and witnessed violence are well documented (Krug et al., 2002), and the exposure to the acts of serious interpersonal violence is, no doubt, traumatic. The psychological damage is far-reaching, on top of the costs of premature mortality to families and the greater community. Second, prison riots are public events that often receive daily broadcasts, amassing large quantities of news media coverage and political commentary. The news media play a panoptic role in broadcasting prison riots to the public. This is profound because the events inside prisons are typically private and occur outside the public eye. The news media reporting of prison riots can thus elicit public commentary and contribute to the ways in which the public can perceive and talk about prison riots, and prison violence more generally.

### *The Anatomy of Prison Riots*

The anatomy of prison riots is typically concerned with the causal factors that precede prison riots and the control responses that result in the resolution of prison riots. However, there is a third, underappreciated component to prison riots; the *social response* to prison

riots. This section will cite the research and academic literature concerning prison riots, and a general overview of the casual factors and control responses will be conceptualised. Lastly, the social responses to prison riots will be expanded on, leading to our discussion of international examples of prison riots in the following section.

**Causal Factors.** While it is true that many prison riots occur in prison facilities plagued with poor living conditions, incompetent staff and overcrowding, these factors alone do not cause prison riots (Useem & Kimball, 1991). Instead, the literature suggests that it is a combination of factors relative to breakdown and deprivation theory that can best explain the causal factors attributed to precipitating prison riots (Useem & Kimball, 1991). The prison system is cooperative, and when this cooperation fails, and breakdowns in the institution, its administration and its legitimacy occur, prison riots and other symptoms of violence are more likely to materialise (Boin & Rattray, 2004; Goldstone & Useem, 1991; Useem & Piehl, 2006).

Goldstone and Useem (1991) provide evidence, based on their examination of 13 prison riots, that five key causal factors work in combination to create an environment that increases the likelihood of defiant and unruly prisoner behaviour (Goldstone & Useem, 1991; see also Useem & Piehl, 2006). The first factor concerns external pressures on prison administrators (Goldstone & Useem, 1991) and relates to deprivation theory (Sykes, 1958). It is not infrequent for government officials to impose new or increased demands on prison administrators, such as budget cuts or changes to penal policy (Boin & Rattray, 2004). These external pressures may result in decreased staff and maintenance and, quite possibly, a disregard for prisoner necessities. These changes may deprive prisoners of having their needs met, increasing their motivation to act violently and, in turn, riot against their "subjective deprivation" (Useem & Kimball, 1991, p. 204). The second factor relates to the dissension and division among correctional staff (Goldstone & Useem, 1991). Custodial officers may

feel uneasy and apprehensive when changes to penal policy involve changes to their practice. It becomes an issue when this conflict results in staff absenteeism, turnover, disobedience and prisoner–officer incidents (Useem & Piehl, 2006). These changes may lead to fewer staff, less experienced staff and, consequently, prisoner–officer violence, which, again, results in subjective deprivation among prisoners (Useem & Kimball, 1991). The third factor is related to living conditions and breakdown theory, postulating that breakdown is more likely to occur when prisoners feel that the conditions are worse than they should be (Goldstone & Useem, 1991; Useem & Piehl, 2006). Breakdown theory is related to the breakdown in a prison's administration, security and practice, and includes several institutional factors (e.g., inconsistent rules, conflict between the administration and custodial officers, disruptions in routine, weak command) (Useem and Kimball, 1991). The fourth factor suggests that breakdown is more likely to occur when prisoners speculate and spread ideology that undermines the strength or legitimacy of the prison system (Goldstone & Useem, 1991). When prisoners perceive the actions of the prison administration to be unjust or harmful, breakdown is likely to occur, and prisoners can legitimise their riotous and disorderly behaviour. The fifth factor concerns the ineffective handling of violent prisoner behaviour. If prisoners feel that they can escape punishment for physical violence or acts of defiance, they are more likely to engage in those behaviours (Goldstone & Useem, 1991). When several of these factors work in collaboration and result in administrative breakdown, miscommunication, and subjective deprivation, prison riots are more likely to occur (Boin & Rattray, 2004; Useem & Kimball, 1991; Useem & Piehl, 2006).

**Control Responses.** The control responses involve the decisions made by prison administrations and government officials in resolving prison riots. Control responses include negotiations between officials and prisoners, de-escalation and mediation techniques and armed responses in instances where forceful intervention is required. Although there are three

credited control responses that are recurrently described in the literature, it is typically a combination of responses that proves successful in resolving large-scale unrest. The three typical responses are forceful intervention, negotiation and waiting (Useem et al., 1996; Useem & Kimball, 1991).

Forceful intervention involves the use of armed personnel to forcibly retake an occupied prison facility. Although most states have the firepower to retake a prison facility at any given moment, this control response can be costly. For example, at Attica (1971), forceful intervention resulted in 43 deaths, including ten hostages being shot and killed by armed personnel (Greenberg, 2019). Therefore, the state must decide whether forceful intervention is necessary. Sometimes, a verbal or visible threat of forceful intervention is enough to convince prisoners to surrender (Useem et al., 1996).

Negotiation involves dialogue between prisoners and officials and is primarily focused on peaceful resolution. Negotiation might involve bargaining, in which the prisoners use hostages as "chips" to trade to have their demands met (e.g., amnesty, better prison conditions) before they surrender (Useem & Kimball, 1991, p. 215). Negotiation may also be used as a ploy to ensure that prison officials have more time to plan a successful control response. Prison officials sometimes entertain negotiations that involve trivial demands to reserve more time for forceful intervention to be achieved successfully (Useem et al., 1996).

Waiting works in a multifaceted manner. It increases the discomfort of prisoners, who might become exhausted or want to discontinue rioting (Useem et al., 1996; Useem & Kimball, 1991). Waiting can be arduous when hostages are involved, as they will often endure the same discomfort as the rioting prisoners. Waiting is often used in combination with the other two control responses. Officials sometimes stall prison riots in order to garner bargaining chips (such as food and water) for negotiation. Waiting may also be used to decrease the morale or strength of riotous prisoners so that forceful intervention can be

achieved smoothly (Useem et al., 1996). Resolving a prison riot successfully and with minimal cost to those involved and the facility, therefore, involves a due process of picking and choosing a combination of control responses.

**The Social Response**. Prison riots, due to their violent and intriguing nature, typically amass large quantities of news media coverage. Individuals use news media to understand public issues, and the news media are thus responsible for informing public opinion about the nature and reality of prison riots. The news media and their discursive construction of prison violence are pertinent to this thesis because the ways in which the news media frame or construct prison violence in public forums has direct implications for public opinion and policymakers (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010; Yanovitzky & Weber, 2019). The latter often use news media to discern the public consensus regarding a particular issue or event (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010). For example, suppose the public perceives a prison riot (or prison violence more broadly) as a salient, pressing issue that negatively impacts society. In that case, the public will likely take an authoritative, punitive stance on penal policy, penal reform, and prisoners more generally (Roberts & Doob, 1990; Roberts & Hough, 2005).

### *Prison Riots: International Examples*

In this section, this thesis will discuss several prison riots that have occurred in international contexts over different time periods. The causal factors, control responses, and social responses will be illustrated, and any consequences will be explained.

**Attica (United States, 1971).** The Attica riot began on September 8th, 1971, at the state prison in Attica, New York. The riot was built on perceived injustices, including racial discrimination and the alleged abuse and torture of prisoners by custodial officers. The riot involved a hostage scenario, prisoner demands and negotiations with officials, and resulted in

43 deaths (32 prisoners, ten hostages and one correctional officer) (Greenberg, 2019). Although tragic, the Attica prison riot provides valuable insight into the nature of prison riots and the systemic issues embedded in prison facilities that may contribute to large-scale unrest.

The riot was not spontaneous and there had been warning signs; the prison was overcapacity, and the prisoners were subjected to persistent racial segregation and inhumane living conditions (Kaba, 2011; Tartaro, 2012). The riot was sparked by an altercation between custodial officers and prisoners, in which a small group of prisoners assaulted three custodial officers. The prisoners managed to take one of the officer's sets of keys and started to unlock other cells around the prison (Greenberg, 2019). The rioting prisoners took 40 hostages and came up with a list of demands, which included items such as ending slave labour, allowing true religious freedom, implementing a healthy diet, modernising the education system and allocating prisoners more recreational time with better equipment (Kaba, 2011). Despite these negotiations gaining traction among observers and the commissioner, the New York State governor, Nelson Rockefeller, refused to visit Attica and did not entertain the prisoners' demands. The prison riot eventually concluded on September 13th, 1971, after Rockefeller ordered thousands of personnel to forcibly retake control of the facility. During this operation, "hundreds of prisoners [were] shot. The State's forces also [shot] and kill[ed] nine of the hostages" (Kaba, 2011, p. 31). Unarmed prisoners were massacred, with the alleged leaders of the revolt being specifically targeted and murdered. A total of 29 prisoners lost their lives in the massacre, including those who were told that they would not be harmed if they surrendered. The prison administration informed news media outlets that the hostages' throats had been slit by rioters. However, the coroner's report revealed that all of the hostages had died of gunshot wounds perpetrated by police (Kaba, 2011).

The injustices, inhuman living conditions and brutalities present prior to and during the Attica prison riot provide significant insight into the nature of prison riots and, ultimately, how not to resolve them. As Tartaro (2012, p. 339) points out:

> Few would disagree that the greatest lesson learned from those four days is that re-taking the prison through spraying teargas and then indiscriminately shooting at those inside the prison, including the hostages, is an exercise that should never be repeated.

Aside from the control response teaching observers a great deal, the Attica prison riot was also responsible for vast improvements to living conditions for prisoners. Useem and Kimball (1991) highlight enhancements to visiting conditions, prisoner access to pay phones, nutritional food, less time locked in cells, more diversity in staffing (to reduce racial discrimination) and a significant increase in educational and vocational prison programmes (Useem & Kimball, 1991).

***News Media Reports of Attica***. Despite the unrest at Attica being responsible for vast improvements to penal policy and reform, the news media played their part in informing public opinion about the nature of the unrest. It is of interest to note the tendencies of the news media when reporting on prison violence, and how the unrest at Attica was framed. On the one hand, the official report emphasises the injustices, overcrowding and acute disorganisation present in the Attica facility prior to the riot (State of New York, 1972; Useem & Kimball, 1991). On the other, the news media coverage was wholly misinformed and detrimental to the truth being reflected in public opinion. For example, a New York Times article titled “Massacre at Attica” (1971) described the “barbarism” of prisoners slashing the throats of “helpless, unarmed guards whom they had held captive through around-the-clock negotiations” (p. 40). As cited in the official report, the coroner denied the allegations that the hostages were murdered by prisoners, instead concluding that the hostages were collateral damage when Rockefeller’s authorities forcefully recaptured the

Attica facility on September 13th, 1971 (State of New York, 1972). The news media reports prioritised sensationalist elements of the Attica prison riot, and ultimately blamed involved prisoners for the deaths and violence that ensued. What can be observed is that Rockefeller and other institutional authority figures constructed the narrative that the violence was a result of inherently violent prisoners exercising "a barbarism wholly alien to civilised society" ("Massacre at Attica," 1971, p. 40). Despite being corrected in the official report published one year later, the public co-constructed their perception of the unrest at Attica through their engagement with news media. Members of the public are not typically inclined to read government reports, so the news media coverage of Attica is of significant importance. If the underlying systemic issues (racism, oppression, poor living conditions, no educational or rehabilitation programmes, inexperienced custodial officers) (State of New York, 1972) are not communicated, and instead the focus remains on the violent nature of prisoners, the public become positioned to adopt and promote the discourse that prison violence is an individualised issue of and between prisoners.

**Peterhead (Scotland, 1987).** The Peterhead riot began on September 28th, 1987. On the one hand, there are anecdotes and physical evidence suggesting that the riot was caused by excessive isolation, appalling physical conditions, cramped cells and officer-led brutality. One prisoner's account of Peterhead was that "violence and brutality were endemic to everyday life" (Sim & Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 68). On the other hand, the riot was blamed on a small group of prisoners who "manipulate[d] the quiescent prison population into riot and demonstration" (Scraton et al., 1988, p. 248). The riot involved the assault of custodial officers, a hostage scenario, significant damage to the facility and an eventual recapturing of the facility by the military.

The Peterhead riot began with an assault on custodial officer Jackie Stuart, who was later taken as a hostage. Stuart was beaten and stabbed three times before being paraded on

the roof of the facility ("Former Peterhead Prison Officer Shares Story," 2017). Prisoners took control of the facility and eventually settled on the rooftops and created signs of protest against the living conditions and unfair treatment they were experiencing. The prison riot lasted five days before the Special Air Service was requested to retake the prison and arrest riotous prisoners, which took six minutes to achieve.

The "appalling" conditions of the Peterhead prison facility were well known, and the prisoners had been voicing their grievances for years (Sim & Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 68). Prisoners were kept in claustrophobic cells with no heating or electricity. They were subjected to prolonged periods of isolation, and the geographical location of the facility meant that they received family visits seldom. Violence was routinely practiced and "had been an integral part of the prison's long history" (Sim & Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 68). The prisoners were often victims of legitimised violence perpetrated by custodial officers. Much like the Attica unrest, the Strangeways prison riot resulted in positive penal reform, which focused on all aspects of prison conditions (Scraton et al., 1988).

***News Media Reports of Peterhead***. The prison administration and the news media collaboratively promoted the narrative that the Peterhead prison riot was a result of prisoner behaviour and, more specifically, a few inherently violent prisoners who influenced other prisoners to perpetrate collective violence (Scraton et al., 1988). According to Scraton et al. (1988), this "bad apple" narrative had been persistent in discourses of prison violence since the 1960s, and due to the relationship between the state, institutions and media, this narrative "found [its] way easily and quickly into the press, radio, and television" (Scraton et al., 1988, p. 247). News media reports, again, prioritised the sensationalist elements of the unrest while omitting any discussion of the underlying systemic issues. Media reporting focused its attention on the hostage scenario, which framed violence as a frequent and pressing threat to the safety of Jackie Stuart, a custodial officer and member of the in-group (Gill, 1987). The

news media reporting of the Peterhead riot was dismissive of the evident systemic issues within the prison. The dismissal of any underlying cause of prisoner protest ultimately promoted the idea that the unrest was a result of inherently violent prisoners being violent. This narrative, in turn, informed public opinion about the nature of prison violence and took the focus away from the issues engendered in the Peterhead prison facility. Scraton et al. (1988) suggest that the narratives presented by the news media influenced public perceptions about the violent nature of prisoners, and the prison violence at Peterhead was met by institutional and administrative decisions to enforce harsher penal practice.

**Strangeways (United Kingdom, 1990).** The Strangeways prison riot began on April 1st, 1990. Strangeways, located in Manchester, was one of the largest prison facilities in Europe. Despite its size, the prison was running at close to 70 per cent over capacity and there were concerns about the level of hygiene, the quality of meals and the oppressive and abusive behaviour being directed at prisoners by custodial officers. The riot involved instances of homicide and assault, and the prisoner-led damage to the facility was severe, costing an estimated £60 million ($263 million NZD present day) to repair (Carrabine, 2005). Following the riot and the accompanied news media attention, the Woolf report was published (Woolf & Tumim, 1991), and with it came a new wave of penal policy and penal reform. The report detailed key steps that the Prison Service should take in order to achieve a more equitable and constructive institution (Jenkins & Player, 1993).

The Strangeways riot began when a small group of prisoners overpowered custodial officers at the weekly chapel service. Within one hour of the riot's inception, the prisoners had total control of the facility. Staff retreated with minor casualties, leaving anarchy in their wake. According to Carrabine (2005), the prisoners behaved in a variety of different ways, with some climbing scaffolding and settling on the rooftops of the facility before cathartically expelling their "frustration and anger" towards the institution (p. 153). Others engaged in

arson and vandalism, while others watched and enjoyed the “display of destruction of despised surroundings” (Carrabine, 2005, p. 158). The riot resulted in the death of one prisoner and the injury of 147 custodial officers and 47 prisoners (Jenkins & Player, 1993). The riot lasted 25 days and was resolved through forceful intervention (Carrabine, 2005).

The report that followed highlighted the importance of security and safety for prisoners, humane treatment of prisoners and rehabilitation and reintegration (Woolf & Tumim, 1991). In addition, the report stressed the negative influence of overcrowding and the significance of consistent living conditions for prisoners. The Strangeways riot, much like Attica, resulted in penal reform, positive changes to prison living conditions and a more constructive prison climate.

***News Media Reports of Strangeways***. The news media reporting of the Strangeways prison riot is of significant interest for several reasons. Firstly, the official report emphasised that the physical presence of news media prolonged the unrest (Woolf & Tumim, 1991). Secondly, the “sensationalist and inaccurate headlines about deaths and castrations caused distress to families of staff and prisoners” (Woolf & Tumim, 1991, p. 5). The Strangeways riot was broadcast to the public daily, with news media misleadingly reporting on murder and torture as frequent (Jenkins & Player, 1993). For example, on the front page of *the Times,* news media reported that “emergency service workers said that a number of bodies had been seen in the segregation wing. Twenty body-bags were delivered” (Cowdry et al., 1990b, p. 1) and that a man “who was in Strangeways during the rioting reported seeing six bodies in the prison” (Cowdry et al., 1990a, p. 1). Without any official confirmation, news media reports were filled with claims of homicide and torture being observed throughout the unrest. However, misinformation aside, the news media’s construction of the Strangeways prison riot informed public opinion about the nature of prison violence as a social phenomenon. The news media reports did not detail the systemic issues (overcrowding, low level of hygiene,

oppressive and abuse perpetrated by custodial officers) within the facility, instead focusing on the violence perpetrated by prisoners. Thus, public opinion was informed by individualised discourses that omitted any institutional involvement. The issue here is that due to the sensationalist style of reporting, public perceptions of the unrest (and the penal system more generally) were most likely negative, retributive, and fearful, which, in turn, has negative implications for public attitudes and policy relative to the penal system.

In summary, the examined prison riots have several commonalities. First, each riot involved serious acts of interpersonal violence, including assault, hostage scenarios, arson and homicide. Significant damage was inflicted upon each facility, and many individuals suffered physical and psychological harm and there were instances of premature mortality. Second, the systemic issues, including poor living conditions and unjust treatment of prisoners, were highlighted in all three examples. Each prison seemed to have deep-seated systemic issues that contributed to an unhygienic, inhumane and unjust prison climate. Finally, each prison riot was extensively covered by news media that tended to report on the sensationalist elements of each riot, while dismissing the underlying systemic issues that likely contributed to the precipitation of violence. The news media reporting recurrently framed the unrest at each facility as a result of inherently violent prisoners being violent. The news media reports played a panoptic role, informing the public about the “true nature” of prison violence. Public opinion was informed by narratives that overly dismissed any institutional factors that contributed to prison violence, and in turn, the public were positioned to perceive prison violence as an individualised issue of and between prisoners. This is a pressing issue for policymakers, as the news media is seen as an avenue to gauge public opinion. Therefore, if public opinion is misinformed, then changes to policy may result in changes to penal practice and have negative implications for prisoners.

**La Roca (Ecuador, 2021)**. A February 24th, 2021 news headline titled *Dozens dead after Ecuador prison riots sparked by gang fights and escape bid* describes the recent large-scale prison violence in Ecuador (2021). The article describes the extent of the violence in the La Roca prison facility and how it was caused by "two groups who were trying to gain criminal leadership within the detention centre" ("Dozens Dead After Riot," 2021, para. 3). The media described the prison violence as a gang issue and the article described how photographs and videos of gruesome acts of interpersonal violence had been circulated on several social media platforms ("Dozens Dead After Riot," 2021). Again, the news media reports omit any discussion about any underlying systemic issues. Instead, media attention prioritises the overt forms of violence involving people. However, one news media article stated that Ecuadorian prisons were accommodating around 9000 more prisoners than the facilities were designed to hold ("Ecuador Prison Riot Kills 68," 2021). Further, Garces (2014) reveals that the prison conditions at La Roca were systemically oppressive and inhumane. Ecuadorian prisoners were locked down in their cells and were not permitted leave, access to communal areas, visits from friends or family, and were subjected to persistent video camera surveillance for 24 hours a day, "even in their most intimate spaces and moments" (Garces, 2014, p. 26). The news media omitted any information about the oppressive and systemically violent practices in the La Roca prison facility. Once more, the ways in which news media tend to typically frame prison violence promotes individualised narratives of prison violence being a sole issue of violent prisoners. Specifically, the La Roca prison riot was blamed on gangs and their desire to exercise violence and control the institution.

**Mako Brimob (Indonesia, 2018)**. Online news media reports detail the Mako Brimob prison riot that occurred in Depok, Indonesia, on May 8th, 2018. The riot involved a hostage scenario, homicide, the assault of custodial officers, and lasted 36 hours, resulting in

the deaths of five custodial officers and one prisoner (La Batu, 2018; Lamb, 2018). The news media emphasised the alleged involvement of convicted terrorists with links to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Lamb, 2018). A more recent news media report, published in 2021, described how the riot was "mastermind[ed]" by terrorists who created fake keys and used a drill to attack police officers ("Six Sentenced To Death For Riot," 2021, para. 1). This statement is incongruent with police statements that refuted ISIS involvement and declared that the unrest was triggered by "a fight over food" (Llewellyn, 2018, p. 1). There was little to no discussion regarding any underlying systemic issues that may have precipitated the unrest. The original article briefly touched on overcrowding, stating how "extremist ideologies can flourish inside Indonesia's notoriously overcrowded prisons" (Lamb, 2018, para. 10). Notoriously overcrowded sounds indicative of a core systemic issue. If the news media are aware of this issue, then prison administrators are definitely aware. However, the overcrowding is not framed as a systemic issue but as an issue for ordinary prisoners who may become radicalised by convicted terrorists espousing radical ideology (Lamb, 2018; Llewellyn, 2018; "Six Sentenced To Death For Riot," 2021). In fact, the Mako Brimob facility had significant overcrowding, an unjust regime in which prisoners' families supplied novelties and additional food and there were no educational or vocational activities for prisoners (Llewellyn, 2018). Yet again, the news media reports tended to prioritise the sensationalist elements of prison violence while omitting any underlying systemic factors that may have contributed to the unrest. The news media promoted the narrative that the violence resulted from violent out-groups (terrorists) who manipulated other prisoners into perpetrating collective violence. This construction of prison violence has significant implications for public opinion. If the public perceives prison violence as the result of inherently violent out-groups exercising violence, the public are positioned to direct negative

attitudes toward prisoners, which may manifest in changes to penal policy that have direct implications for prisoners.

The prison riots at La Roca and Mako Brimob have overt similarities with each other, as well as with the aforementioned prison riots that occurred in Western prisons. First, each riot involved acts of serious interpersonal and collective violence. In both riots, there were accounts of homicide, as well as a hostage scenario, damage to the facility and instances of assault. The prevalence of serious interpersonal violence in these riots is congruent with the previously discussed Western prison riots. Second, both riots were framed as a result of inherently violent prisoners, many of whom were associated with violent out-groups (e.g., gangs, terrorists), who acted violently when an opportunity presented itself. In La Roca, the riot was framed as a gang issue, in which rival gangs attempted to exercise control over the prison, and in Mako Brimob, the riot was framed as a result of terrorist practices and ideology. Therefore, the individualised narrative that prison violence is a problem of and between prisoners is evident in all the geographical locations discussed. Third, the prevalence of systemic issues in each facility is overt yet seldomly discussed in public forums. The overcrowding, inhuman isolation and violating surveillance were deep-rooted systemic issues that likely contributed to the prevalence of interpersonal violence in the La Roca and Mako Brimob prison facilities. Moreover, it seems as if, irrespective of geographical location, systemic issues were ubiquitous and, with reference to the examples discussed, likely preceded each prison riot. Finally, in their reporting of prison violence, the news media recurrently prioritised sensationalist elements of the prison riots, focusing on accounts of homicide, gang activity, terrorism and other symptoms of interpersonal violence. As a result, the news media failed to report on the systemic issues or inhumane practices within each facility, providing public opinion with a one-sided narrative that framed prison violence as an individualised issue. As discussed previously, if the public perceives prison violence as an

individualised issue, this will likely result in negative implications for public attitudes, penal policy, and prisoners.

### *Research on Prison Riots*

Research on prison riots has typically involved post-riot government-officiated reports, such as those produced in the aftermath of the riots at Attica (State of New York, 1972), Strangeways (Woolf & Tumim, 1991) and Peterhead (Boyle, 1988). In addition, this research format has been observed at other, undisclosed prison riots, such as those at New Mexico (Bingaman, 1980) and Joliet (State of Illinois, 1976). These post-riot reports typically involve descriptions of the prison conditions and events that led up to the riot, interviews with administrative personnel and custodial officers, the control response(s) and administrative decisions involved in resolving the riot, actions made by staff and their consequent debriefing, speculation about underlying causes, and lastly, recommendations for penal policy and practice. The issue with this format of research is that, due to their inherent government support, the findings may naturally reinforce the institution, absolving institutional responsibility.

## The New Zealand Corrections System

Now that this thesis has explored prison violence in a global climate, our discussion shifts to the issue of prison violence in a New Zealand context. In this section, a brief overview of the New Zealand Department of Corrections, their policy, practices, and the routine challenges they face will be provided. From there, the issue of New Zealand prison violence will be outlined, followed by a brief history of notable instances of prison violence in New Zealand. Finally, the prison riots at Spring Hill (2013) and Waikeria (2020-2021) will be profiled.

### *Ara Poutama Aotearoa/Department of Corrections*

In New Zealand, the Department of Corrections oversees the administration and operations of the 18 prison facilities across the country. The Department works to deliver effective rehabilitation to New Zealand's prison population and maintain the safety and security of each facility. Maintaining the safety and security of these facilities is not a straightforward task, as there pose an array of systemic and security issues that often arise, from seizing contraband and prison abscondment to verbal abuse and collective violence. Due to the overrepresentation of Māori in the criminal justice system (Ministry of Justice, 2009), the Department also works to deliver a culturally sensitive and effective programme to reduce inequalities between Māori and Pākehā offenders.

The Department of Corrections has seen significant changes to penal policy and practice since its establishment in 1995. The Department has had to actively deal with societal pressures, including the tough-on-crime attitudes of politicians and the public, as well as immense scrutiny in times of turmoil. Regarding crime and criminal offenders, the public is under the impression that crime, especially violent crime, is an increasing social problem, even when statistics prove the contrary (Gluckman, 2018). Thus, the Department of Corrections has seen regular changes to legislation concerning their practice over the past 27 years, and several of these changes will be outlined hereunder.

In 1996, the Department of Corrections adopted an integrated offender management system that focused on rehabilitation and introduced a bicultural therapy model that worked to reduce Māori offending (Newbold, 2007). In 2002, the Sentencing Act and Parole Act were passed (Parole Act 2002; Sentencing Act 2002). These two acts worked, in part, to fulfil the public wishes for harsher minimum sentences and additional victim support (Ryall, 1999). Several years later the Corrections Act (2004) was passed, followed by the Corrections

Regulations (2005). These laws ordered and legitimated existing Corrections procedures and served to hold Corrections management accountable for the overall function of the penal system. In 2010, the Sentencing and Parole Reform Act (2010) was passed, introducing a three-strike offender management system. The three-strike bill was introduced due to the tough-on-crime attitudes of politicians, the general public, and "a decreasing societal tolerance for risk" (Foulds & Monasterio, 2018, p. 1019).

Due to the overrepresentation of Māori in all sectors of the New Zealand criminal justice system, the Department of Corrections has introduced bicultural strategies to achieve a culturally sensitive approach to offender management. Māori are the indigenous population of New Zealand and, despite comprising just 15 per cent of the national population, account for over 50 per cent of the prisoner population (Department of Corrections, 2022; Ministry of Justice, 2009). To combat these ethnic disparities, the Department of Corrections recently implemented the *Hōkai Rangi* strategy to deliver positive outcomes for Māori in Corrections' custody (Department of Corrections, 2019). The principles of Hōkai Rangi derive from the Department's Treaty of Waitangi obligations: to protect Māori interests, keep communication with Māori ongoing and consistent when developing policy or making decisions that affect Māori and cooperate with Māori communities to maximise rehabilitation efforts (Department of Corrections, 2019, p. 5). The Hōkai Rangi strategy was implemented in 2019.

The Department of Corrections has had to actively deal with systemic and security issues, including prison violence (Brabyn et al., 2021). Overcrowding has been a pervasive systemic issue in New Zealand prisons. In the 1990s, the prison population grew by 24 per cent to 5661. The department accommodated the rising population by constructing 1500 new cells in eight years (Newbold, 2007). New Zealand has since seen a 24 per cent reduction in the general prison population thanks to the Hōkai Rangi strategy and alternative options to imprisonment being utilised (Department of Corrections, 2019). The Department has also had

to deal with security issues, such as absconding, contraband (e.g., drugs, knives and cell phones) and frequent interpersonal violence (Newbold, 2007; see also Brabyn et al., 2021). The department has effectively reduced the prevalence of most security issues, including absconding and contraband (Department of Corrections, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). However, prison violence still constitutes a pressing penal and social issue that threatens the innate function of prisons, prisoners, prison staff, and greater society. Despite policies and initiatives being implemented to combat its prevalence, there continues to be an upward trend in aggregate counts of violence in New Zealand prisons (Brabyn et al., 2021).

## New Zealand Prison Violence: A History

In 1943, a Japanese prisoner of war camp became the site of New Zealand's first notable instance of large-scale prison violence. Negotiations between prisoners and camp commandment regarding the nature of work at the camp preceded the violence. The prisoners believed their demands were not being taken seriously, so they decided to stage a sit-down strike (Bedford, 2010). The sequence of events that followed is unclear due to inaccurate historical reporting. However, it is alleged that prisoners rushed at the guards, throwing stones. The guards used firearms to shoot the approaching prisoners. The unrest resulted in the deaths of 68 prisoners and the injury of another 74. The initial reports of the unrest were altered for fear of retribution being taken against Commonwealth prisoners in enemy territory (Weekes, 2021a).

The first two prison riots in New Zealand penal history occurred at the Mount Eden and Paparua prison facilities in 1965. What began as an escape attempt at Mount Eden resulted in a riot involving a hostage scenario, assault and arson. The 33-hour riot resulted in significant damage to the facility (Yarwood, 2016). The military was placed on standby to help in the event of forceful intervention being required (Macandrew, 2018). Once the facility

was recaptured, some of the prisoners were relocated to the Paparua Men's Prison in Christchurch (Weekes, 2021a). Within a week of being transferred, the prisoners from Mount Eden started a riot in the Christchurch prison. The unrest started in the recreation hall and carried on in the muster yard (Symon, 2012). The Paparua riot involved arson, projectiles being thrown, the injury of custodial officers and Fire Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) staff, and significant structural damage to the facility (Weekes, 2021a). The media reporting of the 1965 riots was significant and sensationalist. the Paparua riot "was the lead story on the front page of the Christchurch Press for three consecutive days and the articles revelled in vivid details of the horrendous events and the dangerous men that had caused them" (Symon, 2012, p. 86). The news media's depiction of the Paparua prison riot was the first notable example of prison violence being broadcast to the New Zealand public.

In 2007 and 2012, the Rimutaka and Northland prison facilities experienced several minor riots. The two riots at Rimutaka occurred within one month of each other and caused more than $400,000 (NZD) worth of damage ("$410,000 Damage Prison Riot," 2009). The first riot involved youth members of New Zealand gangs, notably Black Power and the Mongrel Mob (Weekes, 2021a). The second riot involved prisoners who seized the youth offenders' unit within the facility. Prisoners then climbed on the roof and settled there for several hours before being persuaded to come down (Weekes, 2021a)[1]. In 2012, the Northland Regional Prison (Ngawha) riot involved resistance, arson and the employment of a riot squad. The riot was quelled within one hour of its inception due to quick administrative decisions being made to involve a riot squad (Jones, 2012).

[1] Since the prison riots in 2007, Rimutaka has proven to be successful, with high rates of rehabilitation and special treatment units being utilised for high risk offenders (Tamatea & Brown, 2011).

### *Spring Hill Corrections Facility (2013)*

On June 1st, 2013, a riot broke out at the Spring Hill Corrections Facility in Northern Waikato. Nine months later, the Department of Corrections' Report of Inquiry was published. The report detailed the course of events, the causal factors, the control response and other findings related to the unrest (Department of Corrections, 2014). The report stated that the unrest was the result of a group of intoxicated prisoners having had their homemade alcohol seized by custodial officers. The seizure resulted in two prisoners assaulting a custodial officer. Corrections staff consequently retreated to the staff base and were advised to evacuate the unit. The atmosphere quickly escalated, and a group of prisoners began attempting to forcefully enter the staff base (Department of Corrections, 2014). After staff had exited the unit, around 27 prisoners began rioting. The riot involved arson, intentional damage to the facility, physical threats toward staff and hard resistance by rioting prisoners, which resulted in injuries to staff and prisoners. Corrections attributed intoxication and fighting (between prisoners) as the immediate causal factors related to the unrest (Department of Corrections, 2014). The contributing factors were breakdowns in management, gang affiliation and the involvement of maximum-security prisoners. The report praised the custodial officers and response teams involved in the unrest, stating that their actions demonstrated "courage and bravery" while condemning the actions of "violent, dangerous and intoxicated prisoners" (Department of Corrections, 2014, p. 31).

### *Waikeria Prison (2020-2021)*

On December 29th, 2020, the Waikeria unrest began. An Operational Review is yet to be published detailing the alleged events, causal factors and general findings. However, a Department of Corrections document notes that the riot began in the prison yard at the high-security unit when 20 prisoners began to light fires and riot (Department of Corrections,

2021). The rioters consequently climbed onto the facility's roof, granting them access to other areas inside the prison. On the roof, rioting prisoners began to light more fires and smash windows. The riot involved arson, significant damage to the facility and prisoner occupation of restricted areas (Department of Corrections, 2021). Despite no official review being published, the events were made public through news media reporting. The news media reports detailed the causal factors and the control response related to the unrest at the Waikeria facility, and the narratives were attested to by penal authorities, government officials, activists, and journalists.

**This Study**

Prison violence constitutes a significant social issue that prevents the institution from functioning adequately (McGuire, 2018). It results in physical and psychological harm to those involved (Bottoms, 1999) while incurring greater costs to society in the form of damages, costs to taxpayers and premature mortality. This study aims to enhance and broaden the understanding of prison violence in a New Zealand context with reference to the two most recent large-scale acts of prison violence, specifically the unrest at the Spring Hill Corrections Facility (2013) and Waikeria Prison (2020–2021).

Research on prison riots is typically conducted by government officials or independent inspectors. The research usually involves interviewing prison staff and prisoners, and closely examining closed-circuit television footage. This format for research has been observed in examining many historic and contemporary prison riots (Bingaman, 1980; Boyle, 1988; Department of Corrections, 2014; State of Illinois, 1976; State of New York, 1972; Woolf & Tumim, 1991). However, there is currently no research that has examined the social response generated by news media in their reporting of prison riots. Due to the intense public interest and quantity of news media coverage, this study involves a discourse analytic

investigation about how the language and talk engendered in the news media reporting constructs prison violence as a social phenomenon.

In our previous discussions on violence and violence in social institutions, discourse analysis was deemed a viable approach to qualitative research on contemporary issues of violence. As previously noted, discursive approaches have explored a range of violent phenomena, including intimate-partner violence, sexual violence, child sexual violence, and gendered violence. Moreover, in research on violence in schools and hospitals, discourse analyses have proved insightful in investigating the nature of violence in institutionalised settings. Discourses govern the ways in which we can perceive and talk about the issue of violence (Mejia et al., 2016). This study examines the public sentiment about prison violence as illustrated by the New Zealand news media. Using Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault, 2013; Parker, 2013), the research endeavours to examine the narratives and discourses within the publicly accessible discursive representations of prison violence. I explore the use of discursive devices to understand how discourses of prison violence uphold particular ways of talking about violence in prisons and how these discourses have consequences for public opinion, attitudes, and policy. Therefore, the research questions are as follows:

- How do the discourses in the news media reports of the unrest at the Spring Hill Corrections Facility (2013) and Waikeria Prison (2020-2021) discursively construct prison violence?
- What are the consequences for these discourses being received in public opinion, with specific reference to public attitudes, public policy, and penal practice?

# Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter the research methodology for the current study is outlined. This study employed a Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) to examine the discourses of prison violence in the news media constructions of the unrest at the Spring Hill Corrections Facility (2013) and Waikeria Prison (2020-2021). This chapter outlines the epistemological orientation, the rationale for using FDA as an approach to researching discourses of prison violence, other viable research methodologies, and the process for data selection, collection, and analysis. The chapter concludes with a reflexivity section and the ethical considerations pertinent to this thesis.

## Epistemological Orientation

In conducting a discourse analysis, researchers adopt theoretical underpinnings and specific lenses that guide the approach to data selection, collection, and the interpretation of meaning. The Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis was guided by Parker's (2013) text *Discourse Dynamics* and the theoretical underpinnings of discursive psychological theory, social constructionism, and the works of Michel Foucault.

### *Discursive Psychology*

Discursive psychology is concerned with the idea that talk and texts are insightful to social practice, as opposed to other fields of psychology, which postulate that talk and texts are by-products of cognition (McMullen, 2021; Potter, 2012; Wiggins, 2017). Wiggins (2017) provides three core principles of discursive psychology that pertain to the process of discourse analysis. Firstly, "discourse is both constructed and constructive" (Wiggins, 2017, p. 7). Put simply, discourse is constructed through the use of words, language, culturally and

historically-available phrases and further constructs the ways we perceive social phenomena. Discursive psychological theory overlaps with social constructionist theory in that it questions the legitimacy of taken-for-granted knowledge and common-sense explanations (Wiggins, 2017; see also Burr, 2015). Secondly, "discourse is situated" (Wiggins, 2017, p. 10). Discursive psychological theory suggests that discourses are culturally and historically contextual, and it is for this reason that the findings of discourse analysis can rarely be generalised (Wiggins, 2017). Discourses can only be explored with relation to the epoch they emerged or were employed, and further, with reference to the social norms of that given time period. Lastly, discursive psychological theory assumes that discourse has an "action orientation" (Wiggins, 2017, p. 12). This assumption is based on the idea that, if a discourse attempts to promote a particular way of perceiving or talking about an event, then there will be real-world consequences (Norris & Jones, 2005; Wiggins, 2017).

### *Social Constructionism*

Social constructionist theory argues that knowledge and truth cannot always be physically observed or material, and rather, knowledge is constructed through social interaction (Burr, 2015). Much like discursive psychological theory, there are a few core assumptions that convey the theoretical underpinnings of social constructionism. The first assumption is that social constructionism is critical of or common-sense (or taken-for-granted) knowledge (Burr, 2015). Instead of believing that common-sense narratives are based on conventional, objective information, a social constructionist believes that everything must be challenged, and we must be suspicious of our assumptions of how the world works (Burr, 2015). The second assumption is that knowledge and discourse are historically and culturally located. Both Burr (2015) and Parker (2013) argue that the way in which we understand the world is relative to the epoch we exist in and the cultures we adhere to

(consciously or subconsciously). We cannot discuss or begin to understand the historically bound discourses of the past, without bearing in mind all of the social, political, and cultural factors which beset that time period. The third assumption is that knowledge is created and sustained by social interaction. Thus, Burr (2015) emphasises the significance of social interaction, in which is the primary station for sharing and engaging with discourses, that, in turn, shape our understanding of the world.

### *Michel Foucault (1926-1984)*

Foucauldian theory is largely derived from Michel Foucault, a post-structuralist philosopher, who speaks to the power of discourse in influencing ways of perceiving and talking about social phenomena (Foucault, 2002). There are a few of his texts that directly pertain to the Foucauldian lens adopted in this thesis, notably *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002). The former works directly with the ideas of punishment, discipline and power that are central to understanding the practices of the prison from a critical standpoint (Foucault, 1977; Schwan & Shapiro, 2011). The latter is concerned with the concept of discourse and knowledge structures and how discourses govern the way we perceive the world (Foucault, 2002). Foucauldian theory assumes that discourses produce truth and ways of seeing the world, that have very real effects (Wiggins, 2017). Foucault dedicated a lot of his work to how institutions maintain discourses that serve to be reproduced, legitimated, and in turn, become dominant and taken-for-granted. Much like discursive psychological theory and social constructionism, Foucauldian theory is concerned with deconstructing these dominant narratives, and is specifically concerned with how power relationships are embedded in these typical ways of perceiving the world.

The theoretical underpinnings of this thesis could not be articulated without reference to the typical assumptions of psychological research, which are typically positivist and

guided by empiricism. Empiricism observes the nature of reality as observable, objective and quantifiable (Kuczynski, 2012). Researchers who operate with an empirical epistemological orientation are rarely questioned in their decision to use and follow the principles of empiricism (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). Through an empirical lens, scientific research must be "accessible via the senses" and replicable (Friedman, 2015, p. 55). It is difficult to question the nature of empirical research. For empirical methodologies and theories underpin the very nature and common-sense understandings of scientific research. Empiricism is etched into dominant and institutionally reproduced discourses of science and research, and as theories of discourse and its power have demonstrated, challenging dominant discourses is no easy feat. However, critiques of empiricism are concerned with how empirical approaches fail to recognise the subjective nature of reality and how individuals often and regularly construct their world through social interaction (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). It is the subjective nature of reality and how the dominant discourses influence this reality that this thesis is ultimately concerned with.

**Rationale**

Before delving into the theory and approach of FDA, this thesis explains the decision to use discourse analysis as a general methodology. It expands on the strengths and weaknesses of discourse analysis and argues why, compared to other viable methodologies, discourse analysis was most suitable for satisfying the aims and research questions of this thesis.

Discourse analysis involves interpreting the meaning of language and is often used to examine how social phenomena are constructed in texts (Parker, 2013). The term "text" referring to anything that can be "read for meaning" (Burr, 2015, p. 75). Discursive psychologists assume that meaning is interpreted through social action, and their focus is on

action, rather than cognition (Goodman, 2017). Discourse analysis has been deemed a viable and reflexive tool suited to investigate social constructions of violence (O'Connor, 1995), making it a suitable methodology for investigating discursive constructions of prison violence. As of now, discourse analyses of violent phenomena are, although sparse, becoming more and more abundant (Day et al., 2003; Easteal et al., 2019; Karlsson et al., 2021; van der Wath, 2019), especially in the field of psychology (Anderson & Doherty, 2007; Leung, 2019; Varela et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2018). Discourse analysis can be used as a methodology to work with all types of texts, and as aforementioned, these texts range from speech and written texts to advertisements and stained glass (Parker, 2013). Ultimately, Potter and Wetherell emphasise that data selection is ultimately "governed by what is available" (1987, p. 162), and due to the high level of news media coverage generated by prison riots, this thesis saw archived news media texts as an available data set rich in discourses of prison violence. Working with archived texts has been acknowledged as a strength of discursive research, as it allows for data analysis in which there is no researcher influence in data collection (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Many discourse analyses have worked with news media texts (Baden & David, 2018; Breen et al., 2017; Easteal et al., 2019; Karlsson et al., 2021; Krzyzanowski, 2019; Moodley & Lesage, 2020), and this contributed to the decision to opt for news media reports as the source of data in this thesis.

The critiques of discourse analysis are typically positivist. Discourse analysis is a subjective approach to research, and consequently the findings lack empiricism and generalisability to the "real material world" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 180). However, as Collins (1992) posits, the critiques of subjective analyses are largely concerned with the dominant idea that scientific knowledge must be visible. While it is true that the results generated by discourse analyses are not objective and do not constitute empirical findings, they typically reveal the implicit mechanisms that construct, govern, and constrain our

perceptions of the social world. A further critique of discourse analysis is that it does not solve any concrete problems and only reveals further questions. This critique provides insight into the nature of scientific research as it argues that research must follow a recipe and provide a strong results section rich in implications and generalisable statements. From this perspective, research is only deemed important if the results can be seen in the form of concrete conclusions. However, it is through discourse analysis that we can begin to understand how the implicit workings of discourse serve to promote and maintain "ways-of-seeing and ways-of-being" in the social world (Willig, 2013, p. 130). With the knowledge gained through discourse analysis, it is possible to question the inner workings of language and power, leading to a results section rich in patterns, questions and theory, rather than statistics. The results are subjective, and as Potter and Wetherell (1987) discuss, each reader gets to see the thought process behind each finding and its interpretation. From there, the reader can either agree with the thought process and the subsequent conclusions, or find grounds for disagreement, creating a demand for future research (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Initially, several methodologies seemed suitable for research that is ultimately concerned with discourses of prison violence. Firstly, survey research makes for a fast, easy and cost-efficient approach to research. Online surveys could have been distributed to discern public perceptions about prison violence. However, there are limitations to this approach. Self-administered surveys have proven to be precarious in nature, often resulting in low response rates, representation errors and administration misapprehension (Coughlan et al., 2009). Previous research has suggested limiting the number and complexity of the language of items in the survey to address these limitations. The issue here is that minimising the number items (or the language within) may inhibit research from collecting a large sample of in-depth data. Ultimately, survey research could have gratified elements of the research aims, but a more in-depth methodological approach was needed. Secondly, interviewing seemed

viable as it constitutes an acclaimed qualitative method for data collection. It typically results in large bodies of text that are ripe for analysis. Furthermore, interviewing participants enables researchers to ask follow-up questions, observe body language, and ultimately expand the data corpus. This study could have interviewed prisoners, custodial officers, or members of the general public to garner a corpus of how these groups discursively construct prison violence. The corpus could have then been transcribed, coded and analysed, revealing how the discourses of prison violence appear in conversational contexts. However, there are several limitations identified to this approach. Firstly, there would have likely been recall bias. Recall bias refers to the inability to accurately remember past events, and further, the influence of external factors (e.g., outcomes, alternative discursive constructions) on recollection (Althubaiti, 2016; Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010). With reference to the aims of this thesis, the influence of news media (who played a significant role in informing public opinion) would have likely skewed the recollection of the prison violence at Spring Hill (2013) and Waikeria (2020-2021). Secondly, COVID-19 restrictions and the limited time available for this project would have made conducting interviews an enormous and complex task. Potter and Wetherell (1987) also suggest that data collected through interviews may be misinformed due to social desirability biases and interview biases (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Ultimately, these approaches have certain strengths and weaknesses, and although this study could have adopted one of many approaches to examine discourses of prison violence, the decision to conduct a discourse analysis of archived news media data proved most convenient and favourable in satisfying the more complex aims of this thesis.

### *Why Foucauldian Discourse Analysis?*

FDA is primarily concerned with discourse as a form of power, and the role of language in “the constitution of social and psychological life” (Willig, 2013, p. 130).

Through a Foucauldian lens, discourses hold an inherent power over individuals in governing and restricting their perceptions and attitudes toward social phenomena (Parker, 2013; Willig, 2013). FDA is ultimately concerned with how discursive constructions of objects and subject positions promote normalised and taken-for-granted ways of seeing and being in the social world (Willig, 2013). To illustrate this idea, Parker (2013) gives an example of the power given to subjects in medical institutions. In the medical institution, discourses govern how certain subjects (doctors, patients) are permitted to talk and act, and power is afforded to certain subjects (doctors) whilst being removed from others (patients). Thus, patients are rendered powerless by the discourse and doctors are afforded power and can subsequently enact discursive practices (e.g., "cutting a body", "giving an injection") that would, outside of a medical context, be illegitimate (Parker, 2013, p. 17). FDA attempts to elucidate these heavily normalised and taken-for-granted discourses to reveal which power relations and ideology they may be implicitly legitimating, as well as which institutions are reproduced in discourse and which are subjugated (Parker, 2013; Willig, 2013). This inherent fixation with the role of institutions in the promotion and reproduction of discourse is what makes FDA a viable approach for examining discourses of prison violence, which are largely contributed to by institutional subjects. By employing FDA, this thesis endeavours to uncover the taken-for-granted ways of perceiving and talking about prison violence to uncover how the rules in the discourse govern who can contribute to and legitimate the discourses, what can be said in these discourses, and the consequences for these discourses being received in public opinion.

**Data Collection**

This study used FDA to examine news media reports of prison violence in New Zealand. Prison violence is a broad topic, and, as previously discussed, prison violence can include a spectrum of interpersonally violent behaviours (Modvig, 2014). This study focuses

on prison riots as these typically involve serious acts of violence, which amass a significant quantity of news media coverage. The news media reports of prison violence were found to be rich in competing narratives, and there was a large corpus of data readily available for analysis. The scope for data collection was narrowed to include only the two most recent prison riots in New Zealand: the Spring Hill (2013) and Waikeria (2020–2021) prison riots.

Data were collected via the long-term archive database *Newztext*, a New Zealand database containing archived news media reports in full text (from 1980 to present day). Newztext includes archived local and national news media reports (see Table 2). In the *first search*, 'Waikeria' and 'Spring Hill' were entered (in separate searches), followed by the word 'riot' as the *additional search term* (with the 'required' box checked). To prevent the appearance of irrelevant reports, the date range was narrowed to 2 years from the first day of the Spring Hill riot; thus, the date range generated news media reports from June 1st, 2013, to June 1st, 2015. As it had not been two years since the Waikeria prison riot, the cut-off date for news media reports was June 1st, 2021. The only exclusions were duplicated news media reports and news wires, as the latter typically end up in official news media reports regardless. The final sample consisted of 75 news media reports, containing 31 reports of the Spring Hill riot (2013) and 44 reports of the Waikeria riot (2020–2021) (see Table 2).

**Research Tools**

The study used the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software NVivo to complete the data analysis (Zamawe, 2015). Electronic data analysis programmes have typically been used for quantitative data analysis. However, NVivo is a research tool that allows for a variety of qualitative research designs and analytical approaches to be carried out electronically (Welsh, 2002; Zamawe, 2015).

**Table 2**

*Included News Media Reports of Prison Violence*

| Source | Number of Reports | |
|---|---|---|
| | Spring Hill (2013) | Waikeria (2020-2021) |
| New Zealand Herald / Herald on Sunday | 5 | 8 |
| Stuff | 1 | 24 |
| Waikato Times | 7 | 1 |
| Northern Advocate | 1 | 2 |
| Hawkes Bay Today | 2 | 1 |
| Otago Daily Times | 5 | 0 |
| Dominion Post | 3 | 0 |
| Sunday Star Times | 2 | 1 |
| NZC C | 0 | 2 |
| Daily Post | 0 | 1 |
| Manawatu Standard | 1 | 1 |
| Te Awamutu Courier | 0 | 1 |
| Timaru Herald | 1 | 0 |
| Whanganui Chronicle | 0 | 1 |
| Asia Pacific Report | 0 | 1 |
| Bay of Plenty Times | 1 | 0 |
| The Press | 1 | 0 |
| Taranaki Daily News | 1 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 31 | 44 |

The entire data analysis process was accomplished using NVivo, with the exception of the free association process, which was completed using printed-out copies of the corpus.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was guided by Parker's (2013) method (see Table 3), a 20-step guide that acts as a directory that researchers can use to effectively identify and analyse discourses within texts. The criteria present an open-ended methodology for researchers to follow to discover and engage with texts, uncover the discursive constructions of objects, expose subject positions, and adopt a Foucauldian lens to perceive discourse from a more critical angle (Parker, 2013). These criteria (and the associated steps) are illustrated in Table 3. In the following paragraphs, this thesis will discuss how I interpreted and employed Parker's steps when analysing the data in this study.

The first criterion (steps 1 and 2) pertains to text selection and describes which types of texts are suitable for FDA. For discourse analysts, texts constitute many artefacts of language, including conversation, novels, films and, with reference to this study, news media reports. The duty of the discourse analyst is to isolate the text—remove it from its source (e.g., the author)—and subsequently interpret its meaning through free association. Free association involves disengaging from any preconceived beliefs and letting the mind wander (Cooper, 2014). During these steps, the researcher printed out the corpus (so as to have a hard copy of the data) and worked through it to identify keywords and key phrases. This process was carried out at various stages throughout several months to ensure that no key elements in the texts were left uncovered.

The following criteria (steps 3 to 8) pertain to the idea that a discourse is *about objects*, *contains subjects* and constructs a particular image of the world (Parker, 2013). Put simply, an object of discourse is what the discourse refers to and constructs, and the subject

in a discourse refers to the voices of persons within the text (Foucault, 2002). Moreover, the objects and subjects work together to create a specific image of the world around us.

**Table 3**

*Parker's (2013) Procedure for Conducting Foucauldian Discourse Analysis*

| |
|---|
| *A discourse is realised in texts* |
| 1. Treating our objects of study as texts which are described, put into words; and |
| 2. Exploring connotations through some sort of free association, which is best done with other people. |
| *A discourse is about objects* |
| 3. Asking what objects are being referred to, and describing them; and |
| 4. Talking about the talk as if it were an object, a discourse. |
| *A discourse contains subjects* |
| 5. Specifying what types of person are talked about in this discourse, some of which may already have been identified as objects; and |
| 6. Speculating about what they can say in the discourse, what you could say if you identified with them. |
| *A discourse is a coherent system of meanings* |
| 7. Mapping a picture of the world this discourse presents; and |
| 8. Working out how a text using this discourse would deal with objections to the terminology. |
| *A discourse refers to other discourses* |
| 9. Setting contrasting ways of speaking, discourses, against each other and looking at the different objects they constitute; and |
| 10. Identifying points where they overlap, where they constitute what looks like the 'same' object in different ways. |
| *A discourse reflects on its own way of speaking* |
| 11. Referring to other texts to elaborate the discourse as it occurs, perhaps implicitly, and addresses different audiences; and |

| |
|---|
| 12. Reflecting on the term used to describe the discourse, a matter of which involves moral/political choices on the part of the analyst. |
| *A discourse is historically located* |
| 13. Looking at how and where the discourses emerged; and |
| 14. Describing how they have changed, and told a story, usually about how they refer to things which were always there to be discovered. |
| **Three Auxiliary Criteria** |
| *Discourses support institutions* |
| 15. Identifying institutions which are reinforced when this or that discourse is used; and |
| 16. Identifying institutions that are attacked or subverted when this or that discourse appears. |
| *Discourses reproduce power relations* |
| 17. Looking at which categories of person gain and lose from the employment of the discourse; and |
| 18. Looking at who would want to promote and who would want to dissolve the discourse. |
| *Discourses have ideological effects* |
| 19. Showing how a discourse connects with other discourses which sanction oppression; and |
| 20. Showing how the discourses allow dominant groups to tell their narratives about the past in order to justify the present, and prevent those who use subjugated discourses from making history. |

For example, a discourse of prison violence may refer to objects (prisoners, prison and violence) and employ the talk of subjects (politicians, experts and activists) to promote a particular construction of these phenomena (e.g., “prisoners are violent”). These steps involved identifying and listing all of the discursive objects and subjects in the discourses from the corpus.

The next few criteria (steps 9 to 14) pertain to the idea that a discourse inherently refers to other, and often historical, discourses (Parker, 2013). For discursive constructions of a

particular object are not possible without acknowledging other discourses that refer to the same object. In other words, we cannot describe a discourse involving a prison riot without acknowledging historical discourses that construct the same objects (e.g., prisoners, prisons, violence). These steps involved observing the differences in the discursive constructions of prison violence (at Spring Hill in 2013, and at Waikeria in 2020-2021) and interpreting what these discourses conveyed *then*, how they interacted in the discourse, instances where they sought discursive power from external discourse, and how these discourses were legitimated. These steps are of significance as historical discourses may hold significant weight. When a present-day discourse refers to historical, legitimated discourses, the current discourse may adopt the discursive power of the former.

The next steps (15-20) involved several components. Firstly, the researcher had to identify dominant and counter-discourses. The current study defines a dominant discourse as a discourse that is self-evident and communicates a way of perceiving a discursive object that is typically accepted as "reality" (Talbot et al., 1996, p. 226). Conversely, a counter-discourse is a discourse that bears an antagonistic relationship with the dominant discourse and can be easily subjugated (Heracleous, 2006). To identify dominant and counter-discourses, the researcher first completed a quantitative word frequency count to identify which terms related to which discourse, concluding that the discourse with the most frequently used terms was dominant. Next, the authoritative and institutional power held by the subjects in each discourse was observed. For if a discourse was heavily promoted and had institutional support with authoritative subjects affirming the construction of events, then that discourse was interpreted as a *dominant discourse*. Accordingly, any discourse that was not heavily promoted or did not have institutional reinforcement was interpreted as a *counter-discourse*. Secondly, Parker guides researchers to uncover and interpret the implicit meanings of each discourse, which can be liberally achieved through a hermeneutic style of inquiry (Parker,

2013). Moreover, Goodman (2017) postulates that "discursive devices" should be exposed and examined to understand the function of the subjects' actions in a discourse (Goodman, 2017, p. 148). In the current study, several discursive devices were identified, including *interpretative repertoires* (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), *subject positions* (Goodman, 2017), *stereotyping* (Lippmann, 1997), and *us-and-them rhetoric* (Wodak, 2008). Lastly, three auxiliary criteria are provided as supplementary. These criteria pertain to issues of institutions, power, and ideology. The relationship between institutions and discourse has already been emphasised (Phillips & Hardy, 2004), and steps 15 and 16 ask researchers to explore the relationship between institutions and discourses. Specifically, researchers are guided to identify which institutions are being reinforced, and which are subjugated in the promotion of a discourse. Steps 17 and 18 guide researchers to immerse themselves in the discourse to identify which groups benefit and which are disadvantaged through the promotion of a discourse. Steps 19 and 20 guide researchers to observe the discourses in action to see if the oppression of certain social groups is being legitimated. Moreover, these steps ask the researcher to identify the dominant groups who may be spearheading the discourse, as discourses predominantly allow dominant groups to tell their story whilst suppressing the attempts of others.

**Reflexivity**

Discourse analysis is a subjective, qualitative approach to research. Davies and Banks (1992) and Holloway et al. (1989) suggest that subjectivity affects the ways in which individuals assign meaning to the world. As a researcher conducting qualitative research, it is imperative that I articulate how my biases and the discourses I have engaged with will affect my worldview and approach to research. The process of locating and acknowledging one's biases and worldview in relation to their research is known as reflexivity (Willig, 2013). This

study required me to interpret the meaning of publicly available discourses that constructed the issue of prison violence. Therefore, my inherent biases and worldview likely impacted how I interpreted subjective meaning and articulated those results in writing. I am aware that total reflexivity is unattainable, but in the next few paragraphs I will illustrate my positionality and worldview as it pertains to this study.

First and foremost, my research background is sparse. Following the completion of an Honours dissertation in 2019, this is the second research project I have had the pleasure of undertaking. However, there are stark differences in the format and approaches of these two projects. The overarching dissimilarity between these two projects is that the former was quantitative and correlational. My dissertation investigated the relationship between self-promoting behaviours on a social networking site and trait narcissism. Although a qualitative element required me to complete a content analysis, most of the study worked with quantitative data. Therefore, this thesis was a step outside of my comfort zone and required me to adopt an alternative lens to psychological research. At first, the concept of discourse and the process of discourse analysis were overwhelming. The works of Michel Foucault (2013) and Ian Parker (2013) were re-read multiple times, and comprehension was subsequently an uphill battle—requiring me to adopt a critical and new means of perceiving language and its role in constructing social phenomena. So much so that I can quite confidently say I will never perceive language in the same vein as I did prior to undertaking this research.

As it is pertinent to the current study, I have little experience with prisons, prisoners and the overarching criminal justice system. I have a cousin with whom I have very little to do with due to family circumstances, who has been in and out of prison. I only really know what family members have told me, and it is taboo and frowned upon to discuss. I remember finding out when I was 10 or 11, and my preconceptions of prisons and prisoners at that time

led me to believe he was aberrant and inherently “bad”. Still, to this day, this topic is taboo, and I’ve not once spoken to him about his experiences, and I’ve only been informed about his wrongdoings. As this is the extent of my involvement with prisons and prisoners, I feel it is only right to mention my experience with dominant discourses of these phenomena. For a vital part of discursive research is becoming cognisant of the discourses we have found ourselves adhering to and reproducing throughout our lives.

Because I spent most of my developmental years surrounded by middle-class family members and being informed about the reality of social issues by artefacts of news media (newspapers, television news broadcasts), I found myself surrounded by dominant discourses, especially those that related to those perceivably lower in the social hierarchy. Take, for example, the dominant construction of “benefit bludgers” (e.g., “Cracking Down on Benefit Bludgers,” 2009). The news media and members of my family would contribute to the dominating narrative that positioned those who required financial assistance as being lazy and stealing from the “hard-working” majority of New Zealanders. This narrative positioned many struggling families as being lesser than privileged families, and allowed for negative attitudes to be harboured towards people who were already struggling. Even now, many of my social acquaintances harbour negative attitudes towards people who require government support. Although this is not directly related to prisoners, it sets the tone for how out-group members were ridiculed by news media. It was not until my later high school years and my journey through tertiary education that I began to see the façade presented by news media.

In relation to my earlier perceptions of prisoners, news media reports were often filled with interpersonal violence perpetrated by criminals, and each and every day, there were news stories constructing criminals as deviant and violent “others”. For many years, the dominant idea that criminals were violent others was ingrained in me. The notion that we (us) were *good* people and criminals (them) were *bad* people was heavily promoted and

perpetuated by the people who I was surrounded by and further reinforced by news media. The latter repeatedly dehumanised criminals and contributed to the ideology that *once you are a criminal that is your entire identity*. I began to perceive this ideology as a bit far-fetched, especially throughout my tertiary journey through psychology and sociology. Especially since a late-night drive in the rain or a heat-of-the-moment fight could result in a previously non-deviant individual becoming incarcerated. Their whole life and personality would be reduced to a criminal, a prisoner, and they would thereafter be a "bad" person.

My inherent biases toward news media are an important element pertaining to this thesis, as the nature of this research deals with critically examining news media reports. The worldview I currently hold is that the news media are profit-driven, as is any other capitalist business. Therefore, I believe that the news media focus on delivering news that resonates with or captivates their audience to maximise engagement. We know that television news and newspapers are becoming obsolete in younger generations yet continue to be prevalent among those aged 45 and older (Greive, 2021). Moreover, I think it is feasible to assume that middle-class families consume news more heavily than families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. I feel that the news media attempt to appeal to the former demographic by employing discourses imbued with inequality and power relationships that favour privileged individuals and reinforce their negative beliefs concerning those lower in the socioeconomic hierarchy. This is why I feel that hard-working taxpayers are consistently appealed to in the news media. It positions people who are receiving financial support from the government or are in taxpayer-funded houses or prisons as lower in the social pecking order.

Lastly, my background in sociology is also inherently biased, although this may be an advantage given the fact that this study examines a social phenomenon. My biases of being quite sociological in nature may influence how I talk about oppression, otherisation and institutions more generally. With reference to my beliefs about oppression and otherisation,

these may be felt in my discussions concerning the otherisation of prisoners. As I have previously been subjected to recurrent us-and-them rhetoric, I am much more optimistic about humanising constructions of individuals. Regarding my view of institutions, it is my preconceived belief that many of our social institutions are inherently damaging. This can likely be felt in my discussions on violence in institutions and in my analysis of institutions promoting or legitimating discourse.

## Ethical Considerations

This study did not require ethical approval from an ethics committee because it worked with and examined archived news media reports. However, the study dealt with discourses of prison violence in a New Zealand context and raises issues of racial stereotyping. Because of the overrepresentation of Māori in the prisoner population of New Zealand, the researcher had to be cognisant of the implications of cross-cultural research and its history of maintaining colonialised discourses that have constructed the public understanding of Māori culture and resulted in negative implications for Māori (Wilson et al., 2022). The Western approach to research revolves around acquiring knowledge. It is typically cumulative, and the idea is that once enough knowledge has been produced about an object or phenomenon, it may result in changes to policy, practice and thought. The ethical issue surrounding these traditional Western and colonialised approaches to research and the generated findings is that Māori have been portrayed as deficient, especially when compared to the Western norms that have been promoted by the literature and by media outlets as "universal, objective" norms (Cram, 1993, p. 28; see also Carpenter & McMurchy-Pilkington, 2008). Research has typically identified and described Māori problems without proposing informed solutions. Thus, core social issues that pervasively harm Māori continue to manifest socially, including the overrepresentation of Māori in the criminal justice system,

the high unemployment rate of Māori and the low success rates of Māori in educational institutions. Moving forward, there is a need for research involving Māori to be sensitive and inclusive and to provide culturally sound solutions to social issues that involve Māori (Cram, 1993).

As this study examines dominant discourses of prison violence, the social issue of Māori overrepresentation in the criminal justice system is relevant. First and foremost, it is important to discuss *why* there may be an overrepresentation of Māori in New Zealand prisons to avoid promoting or maintaining any harmful or oppressing discourse concerning Māori. The punishment of imprisonment is not equitably distributed between privileged and disadvantaged populations globally (Nicosia et al., 2013; Lammy, 2016). This pattern has also been observed in New Zealand (Soboleva et al., 2006), despite research suggesting that the public consensus is that Māori and Pākehā are treated similarly within the criminal justice system (Norris & Lipsey, 2019). As the literature demands more culturally sound, informed solutions to social issues concerning Māori, this study attempts to articulate findings sensitively and propose potential solutions for the inequality and oppression perpetuated by dominant discourses of prison violence.

# Chapter 4: Results

This thesis aimed to explore how discourses in the news media construct prison violence in New Zealand. This chapter will outline the results of my analyses as they pertain to dominant and counter discourses of prison violence as illustrated by the news media reports of the unrest at Spring Hill (2013) and Waikeria (2020-2021). Three discourses have been made explicit and will be outlined in their respective sections. In the first section, an overview of the narratives in the *riot discourse*, a dominant discourse, will be provided, followed by the discursive devices that inherently legitimated this version of events. Specific attention is given to interpretative repertoires, subject positions, and us-and-them rhetoric. In the second section, the *gang discourse* will be discussed, with specific attention being given to stereotypes and the discursive process of othering. In the third and final section, an overview of the *protest discourse*, a counter-discourse, will be provided. The narratives in the discourse will be unpacked, followed by the power struggle the discourse endured when competing against the riot discourse. When observing the analytic interpretations in this chapter, it is important to disclose that each discourse does not exist in isolation, and many discourses are interlinked across the many news media articles in the corpus.

## The Riot Discourse – *"It's Out of Control"*

The prevailing sentiment in the examined news media reports constructed the events at Spring Hill and Waikeria as violent riots perpetrated by a small group of inherently violent prisoners. Rioting prisoners are positioned by the discourse as perpetrators of prison violence, and custodial officers, non-rioting prisoners, and the New Zealand public are positioned as the subsequent victims. Established through the recurrent espousing of violent terminology and authoritative legitimation, the news media promoted the narrative that prison violence is

an out-group issue comprised of violent prisoners with deep-seated violent tendencies. Terms such as “riot/rioted/rioting” were cited 400 times throughout the corpus (*M* = 5.33), and supplemented by other violent terms, including “violent/violence” (70 citations), “damage/damaged” (98 citations), and “weapons” (46 citations). The riot discourse was identified as dominant and bore an antagonistic relationship with the protest discourse, which will be outlined later in this chapter. In this section, I provide a brief overview of the narrative presented by the riot discourse, followed by several discussions regarding the discursive devices which worked to promote and legitimate the riot discourse.

Several excerpts have been selected to provide a brief overview of the narrative presented by the riot discourse and are as follows:

> Three Corrections staff and two inmates were injured yesterday in a… riot that caused significant damage to the Spring Hill prison...Twenty-seven prisoners ran free in the courtyards of two cellblocks, lighting fires and smashing the facilities for more than eight hours. The riot started around 11am and was suppressed in a “control and restraint” procedure by Corrections and police staff around 8pm. Three Corrections staff were left with broken bones and two prisoners with undisclosed injuries. (Johnston et al., 2013, p. 3)

> The brawl was sparked by the discovery of two containers of ‘homebrew’ by prison staff at the North Waikato facility. Following the discovery staff members were assaulted, and when they retreated the prisoners began attacking the jail, the report released today said. Within hours up to 27 prisoners were running riot within the prison, damaging property and lighting fires. (Dougan, 2014, para. 2-3)

> An ongoing riot at Waikeria Prison has destroyed a third of its bed capacity with no end in sight… Rioting prisoners lit several fires in an exercise yard and many are still smouldering, Department of Corrections chief executive Jeremy Lightfoot says.

> Prisoners climbed on to a roof and were continuing to cause mayhem.
>
> (Dillane, 2020, p. A011)

The threat of violence is emphasised, with specific attention given to instances of assault, arson and anarchy. The narrative constructs involved prisoners as inherently violent individuals who are running free, exercising violence and causing mayhem. In the first and second excerpts, the narrative describes the violent nature of involved (or *rioting*) prisoners, who initially directed their violence toward custodial officers. However, upon their retreat, violence was directed elsewhere. In doing so, the narrative constructs prisoners as inherently violent individuals who are generous and non-discriminatory with their violence. Moreover, the narrative suggests that certain prisoners are constantly simmering below the surface, lying in wait for an opportunity to satisfy their cathartic need to act violently. The third excerpt, pertaining to the unrest at Waikeria, constructs rioting prisoners congruently. Arson, the availability of weapons, and the violent nature of the prisoners are described as imminent risks to safety. The violent nature of the prisoners is recurrently emphasised, sustaining the narrative that the unrest at both facilities resulted from inherently violent prisoners exercising violence.

To uphold this narrative the riot discourse was promoted by a range of discursive subjects who, either consciously or unconsciously, employed discursive devices to legitimate their construction of events. First and foremost, the news media reports were engendered with interpretative repertoires that presented taken-for-granted ways of perceiving prisoners and prison violence. Interpretative repertoires consist of recurrent and typical arguments that characterise social phenomena (Goodman, 2017; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The riot discourse is comprised of several interpretative repertoires that help strengthen the narrative of the unrest at Spring Hill and Waikeria being a direct consequence of inherently violent

prisoners. The first repertoire identified argues that *prison violence is an issue of violent prisoners:*

> A riot at Waikeria Prison is escalating, with inmates constructing makeshift weapons and raiding an equipment room for armour and batons. Ministry of Corrections incident controller Jeanette Burns believes "violent" prisoners are planning to attack staff. "The prisoners have continued to cause extensive damage to the facility, including forcibly accessing restricted areas including a room used to store tactical equipment that includes power tools, shields, batons and body armour," Burns said. "They have also constructed a number of makeshift weapons that we believe they are planning to use against staff." (Bhatia, 2021, para. 1-4)

> Twenty-seven inmates ran free in the courtyards of two cellblocks, lighting fires and smashing the facilities for more than eight hours…Three Corrections staff were left with broken bones and the two prisoners with undisclosed injuries. The Auckland-based Killer Beez gang was responsible for the riot, according to Corrections Minister Anne Tolley. "There are quite a number of them in this prison," Tolley told the Sunday Star-Times… "It is pretty difficult and can be pretty volatile at times…We are dealing with pretty volatile individuals, these are pretty bad people who have committed some pretty violent crimes," Tolley said. (Johnston et al., 2013, p. 3)

> Fires were set almost on a daily basis. The prisoners had access to the entire jail where they were able to move through and they were setting fires," Whitley said. Commentators who called the unrest a protest had left Corrections staff aghast. "They're disgusted by it to be perfectly honest. They were put at risk. The risk continued for a full six days." Whitley said unruly inmates repeatedly escalated tensions. "They were being violent towards anybody who was getting near them." (Weekes, 2021b, p. A005)

> In a presentation in February to Parliament's justice select committee, Corrections executive Jeremy Lightfoot said the actual demands of those rioting were vague and changed over the course of the riot. "It was clear to me actually that the activity was spontaneous and was something generated out of the moment in frustration rather than anything we had early heads up or a reflection around." (Mather, 2021, para. 20-21)

By emphasising the violent nature of prisoners and the spontaneity of the unrest, the riot discourse constructs the issue of prison violence as an issue of and between inherently violent prisoners. To argue that prison violence is an issue of prisoners is not unconventional. This repertoire has been observed in historical and contemporary discourses that have repeatedly constructed prisons as violent institutions and prisoners as violent individuals. Moreover, alongside this repertoire, the institution repeatedly claims that there had been no warning signs or intelligence to indicate any prisoner insurgency. There are several implications for this narrative being received in public opinion, especially if it is presented as an objective or legitimate claim by authoritative subjects. If the public perceives prison violence to be a salient social issue caused by violent prisoners, the public is more likely to develop punitive attitudes toward prisoners and condemn their behaviour. Moreover, by framing prison violence as an individualised issue caused by violent prisoners acting spontaneously, attention is redirected from any underlying systemic issues within the institution and focused toward the prisoners themselves.

The second interpretative repertoire called upon by subjects in the riot discourse was the assertion of the *prisoner as a violent other*. This repertoire is promoted by subjects who, through language, construct prisoners as members of a violent out-group and is maintained by the frequent use of "us-and-them" rhetoric (Wodak, 2008). Take, for example, the construction of prisoners in the news media reports of the unrest at Spring Hill and Waikeria: "*These people* [emphasis added] are not the sort of people we want in our community"

("Narrow Escape After Riot," 2013, p. 6); "*They* [emphasis added] used broomsticks, mops and volleyball net poles to break into a secure staff bunker and start their rampage in one of the country's newest and second-most expensive prisons" ("Prison Riot Costs $14m," 2013, p. 2); "They went berserk," Ms Tolley said of the prisoners who have since been relocated to other jails around the country…They are responsible for local, often violent crime" (Campbell, 2013a, p. A022); "They were being violent towards anybody who was getting near them" (Weekes, 2021b, p. A005). This construction is in stark contrast to how Corrections officials, custodial officers, and FENZ were constructed by news media: "The Corrections inspector will go over the whole thing from start to finish. *We're* [emphasis added] always trying to learn what we can do better" (Campbell, 2013a, p. A022); Ambulance crews remained at a safety staging area. "We're just there doing what we can. I'm not too sure if *our crews* [emphasis added] are tending to any patients at this stage." ("Gang Tensions Cause Riot," 2013, para. 10); *We* [emphasis added] know we always run the risk that a large group of prisoners might decide to take this type of action and we train for it" ("Pepper Spray Wouldn't Have Quelled Riot," 2013, para. 6). A combination of both constructions can be observed in the following excerpt:

> Gang tensions do cause problems, we have moved some [Killer Beez] out over the past few months, that is my understanding, so this might be a power vacuum, this might be about control. "*We* [emphasis added] are dealing with pretty volatile individuals, these are pretty bad people who have committed some pretty violent crimes," Tolley said. (Johnston et al., 2013, p. 3)

The discursive construction of prisoners as comprising a violent out-group, through the use of terms such as "they" and "them," and the co-construction of a social in-group comprised of morally superior individuals (e.g., government officials, ambulance officers, custodial officers) through terms such as "our" and "we," provides the public with a clear guide as to

whom they should sympathise with and whom they should emotionally and morally detach. In doing so, the riot discourse constrains the possibility for alternative constructions of prisoners to emerge. For the discourse omits the human complexity of the prisoner and instead constructs the prisoner as a one-dimensional identity comprised of violence and deviance.

In their propagation of the riot discourse, the news media liberally cite certain discursive subjects who are positioned by the discourse as *experts* and *officials*. Foucault commonly describes discourse in relation to power (Foucault, 2002). However, the power to reproduce or legitimate discourse is not distributed evenly. Certain subject positions, such as expert or official, give rise to discursive power as the public are positioned to trust authority, and thus, whichever narrative they wish to uphold is much more likely to become common knowledge and perceived as the "truth". Throughout analysis, several key discursive subjects were identified under the categories of expert and official, including Corrections Ministers (e.g., Anne Tolley, Kelvin Davis), Department of Corrections CEOs (e.g., Ray Smith, Jeremy Lightfoot), Corrections Regional Commissioners (e.g., Jeanette Burns, Terry Buffery), Corrections Association Presidents (e.g., Beven Hanlon, Alan Whitley), Government officials (e.g., Judith Collins, Jacinda Ardern Asenati Lole-Taylor, Simeon Brown, Barbara Kuriger), and New Zealand Police officials (e.g., Karl Thornton, Mike Whitehead).

The discursive authority of the aforementioned subjects can be observed in the following excerpts, which naturally legitimate the riot discourse: "Waikato police field crime manager Detective Inspector Karl Thornton said yesterday that 23 inmates face a total of 41 charges, including rioting, assault and injuring with intent" ("Prisoners Facing Charges Over Riot," 2013, p. 3); Writing on her Facebook account, [Judith] Collins said: "Mass destruction of taxpayer-funded property, assaulting Corrections staff and hoarding weapons is not a peaceful protest" (Gullery, 2021, para. 16); "[Jeremy] Lightfoot says he would not be sending

any of his staff into the unsafe environment, saying “we must be focused on the threat to life” (Dillane, 2020, p. A011);

> “They went berserk,” [Anne] Tolley said of the prisoners who have since been relocated to other jails around the country. “They bashed through into the guards’ areas, into the officers’ area, then they got all the records and the files and burned all those.” (Campbell, 2013b, p. A018)

> [Alan] Whitley said commentators who called the unrest a protest had left Corrections staff aghast. “They’re disgusted by it, to be perfectly honest. They were put at risk. The risk continued for the full six days.” He said unruly inmates repeatedly escalated tensions. “They were being violent towards anybody who was getting near them.” “It wasn’t a protest. It was a riot.” (Weekes, 2021b, p. A005)

Positioning subjects as experts or officials give these discursive subjects an unrelenting power to construct the “true” nature of public events. The discursive power attributed to penal, legislative, and government officials, gives them the institutional jurisdiction to inform public opinion about events and issues relating to their area of expertise or authority. As elucidated by these excerpts, these authoritative subjects recurrently promote the riot discourse, strengthening the narrative that the unrest at Spring Hill and Waikeria were violent riots perpetrated by inherently violent prisoners.

Additionally, the experts and officials who promoted the riot discourse used their discursive power to position others within the discourse as perpetrators and victims of violence. The riot discourse positions *rioting prisoners* as perpetrators of violence, and subsequently, three specific groups are positioned as victims. The three victimised groups include *custodial officers, non-rioting prisoners,* and *the New Zealand public.* In the following few paragraphs, this thesis will work through these four subject positions systematically. Firstly, the subject position of perpetrator can be observed in the following

excerpts: “[Alan] Whitley said unruly inmates repeatedly escalated tensions. “They were being violent towards anybody who was getting near them” (Weekes, 2021b, p. A005); “Ministry of Corrections incident controller Jeanette Burns believes “violent” prisoners are planning to attack staff” (Bhatia, 2021, para. 2); “[Ray] Smith said the incident started just after 10am, when the 29 prisoners in the high-security unit suddenly became disruptive, aggressive and violent toward staff who were forced to retreat from the unit” (“Narrow Escape After Riot,” 2013, p. 6). The discourse positions prisoners involved in the riot as perpetrators. The excerpts contain phrases such as “unruly inmates,” “violent prisoners,” and “the 29 prisoners”. By employing such terminology, the authoritative subjects do not position all prisoners as violent perpetrators but only a small portion of the prison population. By positioning a specified group of prisoners as violent perpetrators, the discourse is positioning this small group of prisoners as the violent out-group. Due to in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination (Abbink & Harris, 2019), the public are thus guided to morally disengage with and condemn out-group behaviour.

The primary group of victims positioned by the discourse is custodial officers (or Corrections staff more generally), and this subject position can be observed in the following excerpts:

> [Jeanette] Burns would not comment on the negotiations but indicated support from welfare officers, a psychology team and kaumatua was available to staff on-site. “Corrections officers come to work every day to help people in prison make positive changes to their lives and keep New Zealanders safe. The conditions they are currently working in and the level of violence involved has had an impact on them and are also distressing for their family members and friends.”
>
> (Flahive & Gullery, 2021, para. 34-35)

> "It's not a peaceful protest, this is a violent riot which put staff at risk who are responding at a difficult time…We [Simeon Brown and Barbara Kuriger] want to send a clear message to Kelvin [Davis], he should be down here supporting his staff, who are doing all they can to bring law and order into the situation," Brown said. "This is the fifth day running. We have prisoners fashioning weapons and putting staff in danger." (Flahive & Gullery, 2021, para. 10-16)

Custodial officers are praised, humanised, and the threat of violence they are facing is emphasised. Interestingly, there were no identified statements made by custodial officers throughout the corpus. Instead, the experts and officials in the discourse speak on behalf of custodial officers and construct them as hard-working New Zealanders who are victims of out-group violence. In this context, victim accounts are used to inform the public that an in-group is the specific target of out-group violence, compelling the public to feel sympathy for the victims while condemning and directing negative, punitive attitudes toward the out-group.

The next group that are positioned by the discourse as victims of out-group violence is non-rioting or "compliant" prisoners. Despite the entire prisoner population typically comprising a deviant out-group, in the riot discourse this out-group is split into "compliant" and docile prisoners who are not involved in the perpetration of violence, and the small minority ("bad apples") that are perpetrating violence. In doing so, the riot discourse frames a typical out-group as an in-group who are, like custodial officers, victims of violence. This subject position can be observed in the following excerpts: "On Wednesday, about 200 prisoners from Waikeria were transferred to other prison sites. The inmates are being provided with mental health support" (Hope, 2020, para. 47); "The prisoners that were housed there at the time of the fires will have lost most, if not all, of their personal belongings" (Lines-Mackenzie, 2021a, para. 26);

> The destruction of the unit saw more than 200 prisoners evacuated from the top jail during the fires. “It has significantly impacted on the 500 men that remain on site,” a spokesperson said. “We understand the distress this may cause for both the men and their families, and we are working to provide additional support for them, so they can maintain contact and continue to access the programmes and services they need.” (Lines-Mackenzie, 2021a, para. 11-14)
>
> There have been other consequences for the prisoners that were displaced. “This includes loss of belongings, lack of access to rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and being forced to move away from family, friends and legal networks. “We are working closely with each of these prisoners to ensure they continue to maintain their relationships with family and friends and receive access to their lawyers and legal advice.” (Lines-Mackenzie, 2021a, para. 22-24)
>
> An inmate at Waikeria Prison has described the 43 hours he was in lockdown while prisoners from its “top jail” were evacuated on December 29…“We got the call about 1.45pm that there was to be an emergency lockdown and we all went to our cells, compliant”, said the prisoner, who cannot be named. “We weren’t served our dinner until 10.30pm and some of us didn’t receive our nightly medication on time. “We were asking for fresh water but were getting refused. It was about 32 hours before we got some fresh, cold water.” (Gullery, 2021, para. 1-5)

Interestingly, non-rioting prisoners, who typically comprise a social out-group, are, too, deemed victims in the riot discourse. Non-rioting prisoners are positioned as compliant, docile “men” who are being harmed by the riot (“Waikeria Prison: Significant Damage,” 2020, para. 22-23). The riot endangered them, destroyed their belongings, disrupted their routine, and resulted in the temporary displacement of over 200 prisoners. The rioting prisoners are again framed as perpetrators of violence, while the non-rioting prisoners are

humanised and praised for their compliance and understanding. This pattern is overt, and in several of the extracts, the discourse treats these prisoners as typical victims of violence, by informing the public about the victim support being provided by the Department of Corrections. Moreover, in the following extract, the discourse contrasts the number of rioting prisoners with the non-rioting prisoners:

> Waikeria Prison remains in lockdown as a tense standoff with 16 prisoners, who remain on a roof, continues…Overnight, 49 prisoners were evacuated from the 'top jail' facility to another unit in the prison. A further 163 men were temporarily moved to other locations within the prison. "Throughout these movements the men were calm and compliant and understood that their safety and wellbeing was our top priority." The remainder of the prison, which is spread over a large rural area, was also calm, the Corrections spokesperson said. The prison population of Waikeria sits at around 750 inmates, making up about 7.2 per cent of the country's prison population. ("Waikeria Prison Significant Damage," 2020, para. 2-25)

In doing so, the riot discourse frames the unrest as the result of a small group of inherently violent prisoners (16 prisoners) who do not represent the greater prison population (750 prisoners). By framing the non-rioting majority as victims of violence, the non-rioting prisoners are positioned as members of an in-group who, despite being inconvenienced and provided with an opportunity to riot, are remaining compliant.

The third and final group positioned as victims is the New Zealand public. Through frequent attestations to the damage inflicted to taxpayer-funded property, the public, who constitute an in-group comprised of good, law-abiding taxpayers, are positioned as victims of out-group violence. This subject position is overt in the following excerpt from Spring Hill:

> It took 23 Spring Hill prisoners just eight hours to cause about $14 million worth of damage in the worst riot the country has seen in 15 years. The prisoners – who can

> each cost up to $100,000 a year to house – are all facing charges and will appear in Auckland District Court next week…Spring Hill is one of the country's biggest prisons with about 1100 beds and about 440 staff. It was built near Meremere in 2007 at a cost of $380 million…The fires were expected to cost taxpayers several million dollars. Completed in 2007, the prison's construction costs had ballooned to more than $380 million or $373,280 for each of the 1018 prisoners it holds.
> ("Prisoners Facing Charges Over Riot," 2013, p. 3)

The costs to taxpayers are made explicit in the news media reports of Spring Hill. There are multiple figures cited in quick succession that aim to inform the public of the expensive nature of prisoners in order to stimulate public frustration. Firstly, the overall figure of the damage to the Spring Hill facility is cited at "about $14 million". Next, the figure for housing each prisoner is cited at "up to $100,000" alongside 440 taxpayer-funded staff. Then, the construction costs of the Spring Hill facility somehow enter the discourse at "more than $380 million". Moreover, the construction cost for the facility is in some such way divided by the number of prisoners, which totals "$373,280". The numerical enthusiasm can only be interpreted as promoting the expensive nature of prisons and prisoners to the public. The public are undeniably positioned to perceive prisons and prisoners negatively. For the hard-working taxpayer is seeing their hard-earnt money being spent on an out-group. Not only has their money been spent on housing and rehabilitating members of this out-group, but further, the out-group is openly exhausting additional taxpayer-sourced funds by perpetrating collective violence and damaging the facility through arson and force. The same pattern is observable in the reports of Waikeria: "It's not immediately clear how much the chaos will cost taxpayers, but the Spring Hill riot in 2013 caused $10 million in damage" (Neilson, 2021a, p. A012); "Writing on her Facebook account, [Judith] Collins said: "Mass destruction of taxpayer-funded property, assaulting Corrections staff and hoarding weapons is not a

peaceful protest" (Gullery, 2021, para. 16). These excerpts work to rally taxpayers to condemn the violent behaviour of prisoners. The news media draws attention to the costs involved with the previous, unrelated prison riot at Spring Hill. In doing so, the public is reminded that this is not the first time out-group violence has caused significant economic harm to the New Zealand public. Moreover, political subject Judith Collins frames the unrest at Waikeria as an intentional attack on the New Zealand public. "Mass destruction" is used to rally taxpayers to direct harsh and punitive attitudes towards prisoners. In sum, the discourse constructs the unrest as an out-group perpetrated attack against an in-group (comprised of three sub-groups). In doing so, the public are guided to direct negative and punitive attitudes toward the out-group.

This section has outlined the overarching and prevalent narratives in the riot discourse. Through the exercise of power by several discursive subjects, the narrative that the prison violence at Spring Hill and Waikeria was an individualised issue of and between prisoners was promoted and legitimated. The discursive construction of prison violence being an individualised issue involving violent prisoners has several implications that govern how the public can perceive and talk about prison violence. Firstly, through repeated emphasis being given to the violent nature of prisoners, the institution and their potential contribution to prison violence is absolved. In turn, the public are guided to perceive prison violence as an individualised and overly simplified social issue. Secondly, by positioning a small out-group of inherently violent prisoners as perpetrators of violence, the discourse commands the public to condemn the violent behaviour of this out-group. Subsequently, by positioning custodial officers, non-rioting or "compliant" prisoners, and the New Zealand public as victims of out-group violence, the discourse imposes sanctions on how we can perceive and talk about the issue of prison violence. For the in-group/out-group dichotomy positions readers to adopt sympathy for the in-group and direct negative and punitive attitudes towards the out-group. In

doing so, the riot discourse subjugates any counter-discourses that attempt to construct prisoners in alternative ways, and through the institutional power attributed to certain authoritative subjects, the version of events presented by the riot discourse was framed as the "official" narrative.

**The Gang Discourse – *"They Cause Trouble"***

A prevalent discourse that is presented in and maintained by the examined news media reports constructs prison violence as a gang issue. Recurrently, the news media frame gang members as *a*, if not *the*, primary causal factor in the precipitation and perpetuation of prison violence. By constructing rioting prisoners as gang members, the news media draw on prevalent stereotypes that negatively construct gang members as inherent troublemakers that make up for a significant portion of violent crime. Legitimated by subject positions, the discursive process of othering and the frequent use of gang-related terminology, the gang discourse works in tandem with the riot discourse, framing the unrest at Spring Hill and Waikeria as the result of an inherently violent out-group. The identified terminology pertaining to the gang discourse included terms such as "gang/gangs" (103 citations) and "gang members" (21 citations), and specific references to the Killer Beez (19 citations), Mongols (7 citations) and Comanchero (7 citations) gangs.

The pre-existing and negative public perception of gangs has ultimately been defined by overpowering historical and contemporary discourses that have continually constructed gangs as a criminal issue rather than a complex social phenomenon. The Roper report, published in 1987, revealed that the news media had contributed to a public preoccupation with violent crime maintained by the routine news media reporting of "homicides, rapes, gang incidents…and the like" (Roper, 1987, p. 13). In his conclusion, Roper (1987) asked the news media to review its policy on gang activity coverage to aid and abet the "tough image"

and negative stereotyping associated with New Zealand gangs (p. 92). However, some 35 years later, the negative construction of gangs in the news media continues to prioritise the harmful elements of gang activity through continual stereotyping and otherisation.

In New Zealand, a long-standing discursive system has otherised gangs through the devotion to stereotyping in the news media. Stereotypes are described as "pictures in our head that can be primed or cued by words or images" (Lippmann, 1922, as cited in Hagedorn & MacLean, 2012, p. 1046). News media repeatedly use trigger words to prime negative stereotypical images and narratives of gangs, which has ultimately minimised the social complexity of gangs and their members. As a result, the public has repeatedly been exposed to news media reports that negatively depict gang members and boost stereotypical images and narratives of gang members being violent criminals (see Green, 1997). In doing so, there is an establishment of in-groups comprised of "law abiding citizens who are the mainstay of New Zealand communities" and an out-group comprised of violent gang members who continue to perpetuate societal harm (Green, 1997, p. 120). The construction of in-groups and out-groups is detrimental to out-groups, as people are prone to "subconscious in-group favouritism," and in turn, members of the in-group morally disengage and direct negative attitudes toward the out-group (Hagedorn & MacLean, 2012, p. 1043). Overall, this reporting style has resulted in the negative discursive construction of gang members who have had their identity and humanity minimised and replaced by the one-dimensional characterisation of *gang member*. Subsequently, when the discourse positions an individual as a gang member, their identity is minimised, negative stereotypes are primed, and ultimately, alternative constructions of this individual are inhibited from emerging. The subject position of gang member can be observed in the following excerpts from the Spring Hill reports: "On Saturday [Tolley] blamed the violence on notorious gang the Killer Beez, saying the riot "is all to do

with politics within the gangs. Thirty per cent of our prisoners are gang members so there's always tension" (Weekes & Carroll, 2013, p. A005);

> Last night Corrections Minister Anne Tolley blamed the violence on notorious gang the Killer Beez. "It's nothing to do with prison conditions. I understand it is all to do with politics in the gangs. "I understand the Killer Beez were involved and they are a nasty piece of work. They don't care. I have no sympathy for them. They put lives at risk," she said. The prisoners took control of Unit 16A – the same block where guard Jason Palmer was killed by a Killer Beez member in 2010 – about 11am.
> (Weekes & Carroll, 2013, p. A005)

> The Auckland-based Killer Beez gang was responsible for the riot, according to Corrections Minister Anne Tolley. "There are quite a number of them in this prison," Tolley told the Sunday Star-Times…"Gang tensions do cause problems, we have moved some [Killer Beez] out over the past few months, that is my understanding, so this might be a power vacuum, this might be about control."
> (Johnston et al., 2013, p. 3)

> Experts say the street gangs' younger members are more prone to violence, and will only cause more trouble, like the riot at Spring Hill last Saturday, if they are not better managed. Three guards suffered broke bones and two prisoners were injured in the eight-hour riot, believed to have arisen from a power struggle between Killer Beez gang members. (Johnston et al., 2013, p. 3)

Furthermore, this subject position is also overt in the news media reports of Waikeria:

> All 17 men charged for their alleged involve[ment] in Waikeria's fiery prison riot have international gang connections, it has been revealed…The six-day riot in late December saw much of the "top jail" complex at the prison left in ruins, with rows of

> roofs collapsed and the insides of buildings incinerated... “All those involved had an affiliation to gangs, and it is clear from our perspective that those men had associations with a number of long term international organised gangs,” Lightfoot said. (Lines-Mackenzie, 2021b, para. 1-6)
>
> Lightfoot said the demands of the rioters were unclear, changed over the six days and spoke to the spontaneity of the protest. “We aren’t clear what the real motives were around it.” Every single one of the rioters was gang-associated, Lightfoot said. Corrections Minister Kelvin Davis has previously said the “majority” of the men involved were members of the Mongols and Comancheros gangs, including five ‘501’ deportees from Australia. (Wade, 2021, p. A002)

By positioning all of the involved prisoners as gang members, the discourse constructs the unrest at Spring Hill and Waikeria as an absolute gang issue. In both instances, discursive subjects use terminology to suggest that gangs and gang tensions were the sole causal factor in precipitating the unrest. Firstly, Corrections Minister Anne Tolley is quoted stating “It’s *nothing* [emphasis added] to do with prison conditions. I understand it is *all* [emphasis added] to do with politics in the gangs” (Weekes & Carroll, 2013, p. A005). In doing so, the subject is promoting the narrative that the unrest at Spring Hill was not a result of systemic issues but rather the sole outcome of violent gang members. Subsequently, the subject employs derogatory language to describe the Killer Beez as “notorious” and “a nasty piece of work” who are apathetic about the implications of their violence. In doing so, the subject ensures the public is informed about the unpleasant and burdensome existence of gangs in New Zealand prisons. Secondly, Department of Corrections CEO Jeremy Lightfoot attests that “*every single one* [emphasis added] of the rioters was gang-associated” (Wade, 2021, p. A002). Once more, the sole blame for the unrest is pinned on the violent behaviour of gang members. The espousing of gang-related terminology (e.g., “gangs”, “gang member”, “gang-

associated", "gang connections") primes negative stereotypical imagery in the minds of readers. In this context, the public are positioned to perceive the unrest at Spring Hill and Waikeria as "just another exhibition of gang violence."

Discourses often refer to other, external discourses (Parker, 2013), and the reference to external discourse can influence the legitimacy of the current discourse. For example, in the maintenance and legitimation of the gang discourse, there are multiple references to external gang discourse, which primes negative stereotypical imagery of gang members and their inclination for violence and criminal activity. In the following excerpts, previous and unrelated discursive constructions of gang members are engaged: "Stuff understands that members of the Comancheros and Mongols gangs are among the group still rioting. Numerous members of both gangs were arrested this year after police conducted multiple crime operations in the Bay of Plenty" (Hope, 2020, para. 26-27); "Corrections analysis found 70 per cent of assaults on prisoners between May and September 2008 were caused by gang members, while 44 per cent of victims had gang affiliations. Half of all attacks on prison guards during the same period were caused by gang members" (Johnston et al., 2013, p. 3);

> "I understand the Killer Beez were involved and they are a nasty piece of work. They don't care. I have no sympathy for them. They have put lives at risk," she said. The prisoners took control of Unit 16A – the same block where guard Jason Palmer was killed by a Killer Beez member in 2010. (Weekes & Carroll, 2013, p. A005)

> New Zealand has traditionally had large, national gangs engaged in organised crime, while the LA- style gangs are smaller, younger groups, closely tied to their neighbourhoods and ethnicity. They are responsible for local, often violent crime, and gang rivalry is prevalent. Experts say the street gangs' younger members are more

> prone to violence, and will only cause more trouble, like the riot at Spring Hill prison last Saturday, if they are not better managed. (Johnston et al., 2013, p. 3)

Unrelated discourses that construct gang members as socially deviant and violent are called upon to reinforce the frame that gangs constitute a criminal issue both in and out of prison. Take, for example, the excerpt involving the murder of custodial officer Jason Palmer. The perpetrator of this murder was a member of the Killer Beez, the same out-group being attributed sole blame for the unrest at Spring Hill. By including a historic, unrelated event that involves negative gang activity, the public are obligated, through "analogical reasoning" (Hagedorn & MacLean, 2012, p. 1051), to transfer their feelings associated with the former instance of gang violence to the unrest at Spring Hill. The power of this external discourse is likely to influence public opinion into adopting punitive attitudes toward gangs, who "just keep causing trouble."

On the one hand, the discourse positions rioting prisoners as gang members, rendering them powerless and victims of otherisation and stereotype. On the other, several subjects are positioned by the discourse as experts or officials, giving them the discursive power to legitimise their version of events. In a similar fashion to the riot discourse, the subject positions of expert and official speak with authority about the events at Spring Hill and Waikeria, and their institutional jurisdiction governs the public into perceiving the unrest through the frame they provide. Take, for example, the following excerpts which involve authoritative subjects constructing prison violence as a gang issue: "The Auckland-based Killer Beez gang was responsible for the riot, according to Corrections Minister Anne Tolley" (Johnston et al., 2013, p. 3); "Corrections analysis found 70 per cent of assaults on prisoners between May and September 2008 were caused by gang members, while 44 per cent of victims had gang affiliations. Half of all attacks on prison guards during the same period were caused by gang members" (Johnston et al., 2013, p. 3); "Corrections Northern

Region Commissioner Jeanette Burns said…"Early indications suggest that the incident is gang-related," she said" (Johnston et al., 2013, p. 3); "Experts say the street gangs' younger members are more prone to violence, and will only cause more trouble, like the riot at Spring Hill prison last Saturday, if they are not better managed" (Johnston, 2013, para. 5); "The majority of the men involved were members of the Mongols and Comanchero motorcycle gangs, Corrections Minister Kelvin Davis said" (Lines-Mackenzie, 2021c, para. 19); "What I can say is that all those involved had an affiliation to gangs, and it is clear from our perspective that those men had associations with a number of long term international organised gangs," [Corrections CEO Jeremy] Lightfoot said" (Lines-Mackenzie, 2021b, para. 6). From this subject position, experts and officials are given significant discursive power, and the coinciding entailments give them the rights to construct prisoners in a certain way, whereas otherwise would be illegitimate. By authoritatively attesting to gang involvement, the public are inclined to believe and adopt the narratives attested to by officials, which frame gang members as the sole proprietors of prison violence.

The claims made by authoritative subjects are versatile. Not only do they construct prison violence as a gang issue, but they use their discursive power and public platform to condemn gang activity and promote punitive approaches to gangs more generally: "Increasing numbers of violent young gang members in jail – like those involved in last week's destructive prison riot – may force Corrections to review the way it deals with patched inmates" (Johnston, 2013, para. 1); "Experts say the street gangs' younger members are more prone to violence, and will only cause more trouble, like the riot at Spring Hill last Saturday, if they are not better managed" (Johnston, 2013, para. 5). The discourse frames gangs and their violent and deviant behaviours as a pervasive criminal issue, not just in prisons, but in the wider community. The discourse blames the increase in violence in prisons on the increasing number of gang members in prison, and calls for retributive action to be

taken against gangs as they will "only cause more trouble…if they are not better managed" (Johnston, 2013, para. 5). Stating that gangs will only cause more trouble works to incite moral panic, and in turn, the moral panic is met with public demand for punitive action to be taken against gangs both in prisons and in the community.

This section has provided an in-depth overview of the sentiment and discursive devices that promoted the gang discourse in the news media reports of the unrest at Spring Hill and Waikeria. Comprised of stereotypes, discursively constructed in-groups and out-groups, and authoritative legitimation, the gang discourse promotes the narrative that prison violence is a gang issue. Gangs and their members have been the recurrent target of negative stereotypes, so much so that gang-related terms hold an inherent power to prime negative and stereotypical imagery to manipulate the public perception of an event. In the context of the reporting of Spring Hill and Waikeria, gang-related terminology, the process of othering, and the subject position of gang member, worked to guide the public to perceive the unrest as an absolute gang issue. In doing so, public attitudes were likely negative and punitive and reinforced the negative image of gangs that a long-standing discursive system has upheld.

**The Protest Discourse – *"An Uprising Against Living Conditions"***

The protest discourse was identified as a *counter-discourse* which competed for legitimacy against the institutionally promoted and dominant riot discourse. The protest discourse constructed the events at Spring Hill and Waikeria as protests against living conditions and inhumane treatment. The living conditions and inhumane treatment were emphasised as causing the protests, and the discourse employed protest-related terminology and the talk of activists, ex-prisoners, politicians and whānau to reinforce and legitimate this narrative. Protest-related terminology ("protest/protested/protesters/protesting") was cited 81 times throughout the corpus, with a mean appearance of 1.08 citations per article. In a direct

comparison of term frequencies, the term “protest” (81 citations) arose over four times less than riot-related terminology (400 citations). In this section, this thesis will explore how the news media presented the protest discourse in their reporting of Spring Hill and Waikeria separately. This is because there is an overt difference in the promotion of the protest discourse at Spring Hill, whereby it was identified in three news media reports (9.68%), and Waikeria, in which it was identified in 33 (75%).

With reference to the Spring Hill reports, a small percentage of media coverage presented the unrest as a protest against systemic issues, including “an excessive lockdown regime,” (Feek, 2014, p. 6) “a dearth of [prisoner] activities,” (Weekes, 2013, p. A008) and “double-bunking” (Weekes, 2013, p. A008). An excerpt from the *Waikato Times* provides an overview of this narrative:

> Kylie Murray, a close friend of one of the prisoners in a high-security wing, said he had told her those inside were dismayed on hearing gangs were being blamed. Ms Murray contacted the Waikato Times on behalf of her friend yesterday, saying the prisoners at Spring Hill were eager for “the truth” to get out. The prisoners had 40 minutes to one hour each day for exercising outside their cells, which included time to make phone calls to family. With a limited number of phones, “the queues for them are always out the door,” she said. “It’s not good for their mental health being cooped up like that. All the guys are saying is just give us some breathing space.”
>
> (Mather, 2013, para. 3-7)

The protest discourse frames the Spring Hill unrest as a result of excessive isolation. The prisoners claim that they feel oppressed in that they are cooped up and just want some breathing space. It follows that the unrest was a result of feeling suffocated by the strict regimentation of the prison. The strict regimentation in the Spring Hill facility is also evidenced in the following excerpts: “Prison reformers insist double-bunking and a dearth of

activities are triggering tensions" (Weekes, 2013, p. A008); "Prison reformer Peter Williams QC, said Spring Hill prisoners and their families were blaming boredom and harsh conditions" (Weekes, 2013, p. A008). The protest discourse attempts to bring scrutiny onto the systemic issues that may have precipitated the unrest at Spring Hill. There is a significant lack of prisoner voice throughout the discourse, and the only real claim of prisoner concern is evidenced in the excerpt from subject Kylie Murray.

The news media reports pertaining to the Waikeria unrest were filled with points of contention, in which there was a battle for dominance and legitimation between the riot and protest discourse. The protest discourse positioned involved prisoners (and prisoners more generally) as victims of oppressive living conditions, and the large-scale disorder was framed not as a violent riot but as a protest for the "human rights [of] all inmates past and present" (Bhatia, 2021, para. 16). The following excerpts provide an overview of the protest discourse in the reports of Waikeria: "As Corrections itself has admitted, the top jail at Waikeria was unfit for humans to live in. Despite knowing for years that the jail was unhygienic and conditions inside were disgusting, Corrections still forced our loved ones to endure this treatment." (Neilson, 2021a, p. A012);

> [Emilie Rakete] said uprisings don't happen randomly and don't occur because prisoners are "bad or angry people". People wouldn't be on the roof for hours on a hot, sunny day because they felt like it, Rakete said. "They happen because prison conditions have become unliveable. "That is exactly what's been happening and it's been happening for a really long time." Overcrowding in the prison and long hours of lock-ups were "entirely logical reasons" for prisoners to riot.
> (O'Dwyer & Gullery, 2020, para. 3-15).

> An Ombudsman's report released in August 2020 found conditions at Waikeria in some cases failed to meet minimum United Nations standards. The Ombudsman

> found meal times across the prison did not reflect usual meal times, and many inmates voiced concern about water quality. Some cells were run down, with chunks of vinyl missing from floors, some windows did not have curtains and toilets did not have lids... "Whatever triggered this protest, poor prison conditions are a vital part of the context" (Neilson, 2021a, p. A012)

The protest discourse frames the unrest at Waikeria as an "uprising" or "protest" against prison conditions and positions involved prisoners as protesters. By positioning prisoners as protestors, the protest discourse legitimates the unruly and defiant behaviours of prisoners, who, according to the discourse, were protesting against the systemic issues engendered in the Waikeria prison facility. This subject position can be further elucidated in the following excerpts: "It might seem extreme that the Waikeria Uprising protesters gave up on the complaints system and torched the unit instead. But they succeeded where everyone else has failed" (Manch, 2021, para. 6); Waikeria Prison protesters have filed civil rights claims against the Corrections chief executive and the Attorney-General over what they say was "inhumane treatment" (Neilson, 2021b, p. A009). By positioning prisoners as protesters, the discourse attempts to legitimise the defiant behaviour of involved prisoners who are discursively constructed as protesting against oppressive and inhumane living conditions. In doing so, the discourse attempts to inform the public about the systemic issues in Waikeria prison facility, which have previously remained outside of the public eye. If legitimated, the protest discourse would have direct consequences for the penal system, and involved prisoners would be more likely to avoid retribution for their institutional deviance.

In an attempt to legitimate the protest discourse, several discursive subjects were observed to openly attest to the nature of the unrest being a protest against oppressive and inhumane living conditions. However, unlike the riot discourse, the discursive power held by the discursive subjects in the protest discourse is significantly lesser. Where the riot discourse

is promoted by penal, legislative, and government officials, the protest discourse is promoted by ex-prisoners, activists, and minor political subjects. These subject positions can be observed in the following excerpts:

> A former offender turned *anti-prison activist* [emphasis added], Leslie Orchard, also agrees that the riot was built on years of injustice. Described as New Zealand's most prolific fraudster, Orchard has "done his time" in various prisons across the country. Waikeria was one of the worst, he said. "This situation has been going on for years and it has taken something like this protest to bring it all out in the open," Orchard said. He said he first went to Waikeria in 1984 and was shocked by the treatment and "decrepit state" of the cells. "I know exactly what they [the group of 17] are going through asking for toilet paper. I've been there, done that," Orchard said. "You wouldn't put your dog in those cells, that's how bad it is." (Hope, 2020, para. 17-23)

> Prominent *activist* [emphasis added] Tame Iti was held in remand at Waikeria Prison several times between 1998 and 2010, and described the conditions as "not fit for a dog". "It's a dungeon, a pit. I wouldn't let my dogs in there," Iti said. "These things don't just happen. I think these men are trying to get their voices heard." (Bhatia, 2021, para. 17-19)

> A report by *Chief Ombudsman* [emphasis added] Peter Boshier…found cells in the prison's High Security Unit were in a poor state of repair. "They were poorly ventilated and uncomfortably hot," Boshier said. "Most cells accommodated two tāne but only had one chair and lacked sufficient storage space." As well, prisoners in the unit eat meals on their bunks near to an uncovered toilet, which Boshier said was unacceptable, especially in a prison where 67 per cent of the population was Māori. Tāne having to eat in such close proximity to the toilet is, in my opinion, both unsanitary and culturally inappropriate. (Block, 2021, para. 13-17)

Prisoners have the right to be treated humanely and have their human rights respected. However, the protest discourse and the subjects within frame the unrest at Waikeria as a result of prolonged exposure to breaches of human rights. The cited claims of prisoners and of independent inspectors suggest that the Nelson Mandela Rules (Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners; UNODC, 2015) were not being adhered to, and this is of significant concern. Firstly, claims of unsanitary cells and improper hygiene practices are prolific. Inspectors and prisoners congruently voiced that the drinking water was discoloured, clean bedding and clothing kits were not available to prisoners, and prisoners were unable to access toilet paper and cleaning products. These claims can be observed in the following excerpts:

> They [protesters] are pretty much arguing for the same things as everyone else, essential needs that we don't get, like cleaning products, our medical needs, food, good clothing kit. The water here is terrible, if you let it settle you can see all the sediment fall to the bottom. (Gullery, 2021, para. 12-13)

> As well, prisoners in the unit eat meals on their bunks near to an uncovered toilet, which Boshier said was unacceptable, especially in a prison where 67 per cent of the population was Māori. "Tāne having to eat in such close proximity to the toilet is, in my opinion, both unsanitary and culturally inappropriate." (Block, 2021, para. 16-17)

> The colour of the drinking water and substandard conditions were flagged in an Ombudsman's report last year. Other claims include unclean bedding and prisoners being fed food from paper bags. ("No Excuses Over Waikeria," 2021, p. A024)

The claims above, made by prisoners of Waikeria and the Chief Ombudsman, suggest that several Nelson Mandela Rules (namely Rules 17, 18, 19, and 22; UNODC, 2015) were not being respected at Waikeria. By framing the conditions and treatment at Waikeria as

inhumane, the protesters are humanised, and their unruly behaviour is framed as virtuous. The public are more likely to condone the protesters' actions if they perceive the prisoners as victims of prolonged oppression. The oppressive treatment of prisoners can be further observed in the following excerpt from the corpus: "Independent inspectors issued a report in 2017 identifying damp, dark cells with little air where prisoners could be locked away for up to 26 hours at a time" (O'Dwyer & Gullery, 2020, para. 7). This claim attests to further, more inhumane, violations of prisoners' rights (namely Rules 23 and 43; United Nations, 2015). The evidenced human rights violations observed at the Waikeria facility serve to legitimate the protest discourse.

The protest discourse frames prisoners as victims of the oppression embedded in the prison as an institution. The oppression of prisoners, specifically Māori prisoners, manifests itself in the cultural negligence and inhumane treatment at Waikeria. In an excerpt from political subject Rawiri Waititi, he makes the inhumane treatment explicit while bringing attention to particular systemic issues embedded in the New Zealand penal system:

> Rawiri [Waititi] said the men faced appalling, inhumane conditions inside the prison. "The environment in Waikeria Prison is dehumanising. The water they are expected to drink is brown. They don't get clothing or appropriate bedding. They are expected to wash their clothes in the yard shower… This situation is indicative of a dysfunctional justice system that has been failing our people for years. Until resources can be devolved to Māori to design and implement by Māori for Māori approaches, things are going to get worse. (Ward, 2021, p. A005)

The subject brings awareness to the oppression faced by prisoners and further sheds light on the systemic issues at play. The subject is likely referring to the overrepresentation of Māori in the criminal justice system (Ministry of Justice, 2009), prison violence prevalence statistics (Brabyn et al., 2021), recidivism rates (Gordon & MacGibbon, 2011), and the Western

approach to rehabilitation. The subject voices his disapproval of the current state of the criminal justice system and asks for reform. Specifically, calls are made for a culturally-sound approach to be devised by Māori to effectively work with and ameliorate the oppression and inequality embedded in the criminal justice system. This comes just one year after the Hōkai Rangi strategy was introduced to provide more equitable outcomes for Māori in the criminal justice system (Department of Corrections, 2019). There were several excerpts relating to the transgressions in the Waikeria facility that do not align with the principles of the Hokai Rangi strategy, including the breaches of human rights addressed above and the control response utilised by the Department of Corrections, which included "starvation tactics" (Block, 2021, para. 19). Moreover, the subject attempts to inform the public about the nature of the unrest: "They are clear that this is not a riot, it is a protest for their human rights for all prisoners past and present" (Ward, 2021, p. A005). After emphasising the injustices faced by prisoners at Waikeria, specifically Māori, the subject affirms his positionality by constructing the unrest as a protest.

The narrative presented by the protest discourse constructs the unrest at Spring Hill and Waikeria as resulting from the prolonged exposure to poor living conditions, breaches of human rights, cultural negligence, and inhumane treatment. Involved prisoners are positioned as protesters, and the subjects who affirm this subject position and attest to the nature of the unrest being a protest serve to uphold and legitimate the protest discourse. Despite eventually being subjugated by the discursive power of the riot discourse, the protest discourse provides the public with a more humanising construction of prisoners and insight into the systemic issues engendered in New Zealand prisons.

**Competing Discourses – *"It Wasn't a Protest. It was a Riot"***

The protest discourse bore an antagonistic relationship with the dominant riot discourse, and there were constant battles for legitimation, with a number of discursive subjects from each discourse attempting to subjugate the other. This section will strictly focus on the competing discourses in the reports of Waikeria, as the relationship between the two discourses is more clearly illustrated in constructing this event. This section highlights the few points of contention in these competing discourses, specifically; the nature and cause of the unrest and how each discourse constructed prisoners.

The competing discourses framed the nature and cause of the unrest at Waikeria antagonistically. On the one hand, the riot discourse framed the events at Waikeria as a violent riot perpetrated by inherently violent prisoners. The unrest was framed as opportunistic, with discursive subjects accentuating the "spontaneous" nature of the unrest and subsequently claiming there had been no lodged complaints and no "reflection of intelligence" suggesting prisoner insurgency (Mather, 2021, para. 21). On the other, the protest discourse constructed the events at Waikeria as a protest against living conditions and poor treatment. The unrest was characterised as a result of prolonged exposure to oppressive living conditions, and discursive subjects spoke about their failed attempts to lodge complaints. These points of contention can be observed in the following excerpts:

> In a presentation in February to Parliament's justice select committee, Corrections chief executive Jeremy Lightfoot said the actual demands of those rioting were vague and had changed over the course of the riot. "It was clear to me actually that the activity was spontaneous and was something that was generated out of the moment in frustration rather than anything we had early heads up or a reflection of intelligence around." (Mather, 2021, para. 21-22)

> A Corrections spokesperson said they were not aware of any further complaints from prisoners in relation to their treatment. “There are a number of channels for prisoners to report concerns or make complaints... These channels are free for any prisoner to contact, with contact details readily available to individuals”.
> (Line-Mackenzie, 2021a, para. 31-32)

> Whānau member of inmates have also slammed comments from authorities that no complaints had been made, saying they had been dismissed. In a statement issued through advocacy group People Against Prisons Aotearoa, whānau said they tried “many times to make complaints” but were “dismissed every time”. “Our loved ones inside also tried many times to make complaints, but were denied access to PC01 complaint forms. “The Ombudsman’s investigations also found that for years, Waikeria has denied prisoners these forms. (Neilson, 2021a, p. A012)

> Before the riots began, I am told, there was no access to PC01 forms. Although prisoners asked and asked...Apparently there are always loads of excuses given to the prisoners about why they can't access forms. It could be lack of printer ink or the classic “oops I forgot!”. No forms lodged then all is well in prison land apparently. So when the top dog prison officials have been saying in the news “well we didn't know of any concerns…” or “there was no indication of prisoners going without basic human rights'” they were right. They were right because the only way the prisoners could lodge simple concerns about toilet paper or whatever else, was with the PC01, and if they were not being handed out or lodged, absolutely no concerns were being seen or heard. By anyone. Nothing was lodged. Nothing was done. Plausible denial.
> (Gillepsie, 2021, para. 16-18)

In the first and second excerpts, the riot discourse attempts to subjugate the narrative that the prisoners were protesting against living conditions. By framing the unrest as spontaneous and

highlighting that no prisoner had made a complaint about their indignation, the riot discourse attempts to reinforce the narrative that the riot was a result of inherently violent prisoners exercising violence when the opportunity presented itself. However, the third and fourth excerpts combat these claims by arguing that the prisoners and prisoners' whānau were inhibited from accessing complaint forms. This is insightful as the legitimation of the riot discourse relies on its ability to frame the events as opportunistic, as riots are typically perceived as spontaneous acts of collective violence. In contrast, protests are typically built on a perceived injustice and are less spontaneous. These antagonistic constructions compete against one another to gain discursive power over the other in an attempt to promote the "true" narrative.

The antagonistic relationship is also observed in the subjugation attempts of each discourse, as is illustrated by the following extracts: "Once the riot — or protest, if you prefer — was under way, Corrections Minister Kelvin Davis should have acted, or at least be seen to be acting, much sooner" ("No Excuses Over Waikeria," 2021, p. A024); "The prison staff union leader says it's ludicrous to call six days of fiery destruction at Waikeria a "protest"" (Weekes, 2021b, p. A005); Commentators who called the unrest a protest had left Corrections staff aghast. "They're disgusted by it, to be perfectly honest. They were put at risk. The risk continued for the full six days." (Weekes, 2021b, p. A005); "But Burns said while the group state that they are protesting conditions at the prison and not rioting, their actions were clearly violent" (Bhatia, 2021, para. 21); "Writing on her Facebook account, Collins said: "Mass destruction of taxpayer-funded property, assaulting Corrections staff and hoarding weapons is not a peaceful protest" (Gullery, 2021, para. 16); "It's not a peaceful protest, this is a violent riot which is putting staff at risk who are responding at a difficult time" (Flahive & Gullery, 2021, para. 10); "Waititi, who is also the MP for Waiariki, said the men had made it clear this is not a riot. "It is a protest for their human rights for all inmates past and present"" (Flahive

& Gullery, 2021, para. 26). Parker (2013) guides researchers to look for points of contention between discourses to observe how different discourses construct the same objects differently. On the one hand, the riot discourse, as observed in the majority of the above excerpts, constructs the unrest at Waikeria as a violent riot and involved prisoners as violent rioters. On the other, the protest discourse frames the unrest as a protest and subsequently involved prisoners as protesters. This contention is significant as these discourses completely contradict one another, and thus, only one can be completely legitimated and inform public opinion of the "true" narrative. In the excerpts, the discourses compete for legitimation and attempt to directly subjugate the other. By attesting to the violent nature of the unrest, the riot discourse is bolstered, whereas the protest discourse pales in comparison as it can only claim the prisoners are protesting for human rights.

Moreover, the riot discourse claims that the collective violence was spontaneous and there had been no motive and "nothing standing out among official complaints channels" (O'Dwyer, 2020, para. 10). However, in direct contention with these claims, the protest discourse officially elucidates the warning signs (as communicated by an official Ombudsman report) and the powerlessness of the prisoners who, alongside their families, had been inhibited from filing complaints:

> A report by Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier…found cells in the prison's High Security Unit were in a poor state of repair. "They were poorly ventilated and uncomfortably hot," Boshier said. "Most cells accommodated two tāne but only had one chair and lacked sufficient storage space." As well, prisoners in the unit eat meals on their bunks near to an uncovered toilet, which Boshier said was unacceptable, especially in a prison where 67 per cent of the population was Māori. Tāne having to eat in such close proximity to the toilet is, in my opinion, both unsanitary and culturally inappropriate. (Block, 2021, para. 13-17)

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As can be observed, the prior claims made by Corrections that there was nothing standing out among official complaints channels is null in void when there are several claims made against Corrections making these forms available to prisoners and their families. What is important to note, is that despite these claims being aired in public forums, the inherent power and dominance of the riot discourse subjugated these claims. Thus, the battle for legitimation was inherently one-sided and no matter what action the protest discourse attempted to achieve, it was overpowered by the authoritative and institutional power of the riot discourse.

# Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter outlines the general findings of this study which sought to critically examine and deconstruct the publicly available discourses of prison violence in New Zealand. This chapter expands on the different discursive constructions of prison violence, the consequences of these discourses being received in public opinion, and how they have contributed to specific ways of perceiving prison violence.

## Prison Violence: The Dominant Discourse

As illustrated by the examined news media reports, the prevailing sentiment in the dominant discourse constructed prison violence as an individualised issue. Prisoners were constructed as inherently violent objects, and prison violence was described as the inevitable consequence. Through interpretative repertoires, subject positions, and "us-and-them" rhetoric, involved prisoners were repeatedly positioned by the riot discourse as an out-group comprised of violent perpetrators who acted together to commit collective violence against a morally superior in-group.

### *Prison Violence as an Individualised Issue*

Through the employment of several discursive devices, prison violence was constructed as an issue of individual pathology rather than a complex social phenomenon. The idea that prisoners are inherently violent is a widespread ideology that has been legitimated by many artefacts of media and has, in turn, become a dominant and "taken-for-granted" way of perceiving prison violence. The prison is repeatedly constructed as an institution which breeds violence in non-violent individuals and exacerbates violence in those with imported violent tendencies (Levan, 2012). Media representations affirm this ideology

with discursive research revealing that widely consumed discursive constructions, as illustrated by their depiction in film and television, portray prisons as violent institutions and prisoners as violent individuals (Jarvis, 2006; Marsh, 2009; Mason, 2006). This violent depiction of prisons and prisoners has inherently contributed to the dominant discourse that prison violence is an individualised issue precipitated and perpetuated by violent prisoners. Moreover, this way of constructing prisons and prison violence has been affirmed by the news reporting of prison riots, both historically (e.g., Cowdry et al., 1990a, 1990b; Gill, 1987; "Massacre at Attica," 1971) and as evidenced by the news media reports examined in this study.

The dominant discourse employed interpretative repertoires, which reintroduced typical and "taken-for-granted" arguments to uphold the narrative that prison violence is an issue of and between prisoners, who were, further, constructed as members of a violent out-group. These typical arguments helped appeal to the preconceived stereotypes of prisoners being violent individuals. In turn, the public were positioned to perceive prison violence as an individualised phenomenon. This thesis argues that simplifying the complexity of prison violence so that it is perceived by the public as an individualised phenomenon produces several negative implications for public opinion, policy, and ultimately, prisoners themselves. Rather than the public being informed about the complex nature of prison violence, members of the public are guided to morally disengage with and condemn prisoners. In turn, the negative image presented by news media is likely to bolster public support for harsher penal conditions and result in negative attitudes being associated and expressed toward the prison population (Roberts & Doob, 1990; Roberts & Hough, 2005). In this regard, it is problematic for uncritically reproduced discourse to remain dominant and unchallenged. For if these dominant discourses continually minimise the complexity of prison violence and prisoners, then attempts made by counter-discourses that seek to construct prisoners in more

humanising ways will continue to be subjugated. In their stead remain the dominant and "taken-for-granted" discourses that construct prisons as violent institutions inundated by inherently violent individuals.

### *The Discursive Construction of In-groups and Out-groups*

"Us-and-them" rhetoric was employed to guide the public into categorical thinking, which, on the one hand, constructed involved prisoners (them) as members of a deviant and violent out-group, undeserving of sympathy. On the other, the discourse constructed the victims of out-group violence as members of a social in-group (us) with whom the public could identify with and direct compassion. Research has demonstrated that when individuals perceive a social issue to be perpetuated by an out-group, individuals are likely to direct negative attitudes, higher levels of prejudice, and less overall support toward the out-group (Geschke et al., 2010; Rupar et al., 2022; Vaes et al., 2019). This is due to the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy, whereby the out-group is constructed as inherently negative and burdensome, and the in-group is constructed as socially acceptable and positive (Wodak, 2008). By framing a small out-group of inherently violent prisoners as perpetrators of violence, and overt in-groups such as custodial officers and the New Zealand public as victims, the discourse works in part to condemn the violent actions of the former while bolstering public support for the latter. By framing prisoners as a threatening social out-group, the public are positioned to express a desire for punitive penal policy as a means of social control (Kury & Ferdinand, 1999; Lehmann et al., 2020). In summary, "us-and-them" rhetoric simplifies the complexity of prison violence into in-groups and out-groups. This discursive device was conspicuous and has negative implications for public attitudes toward prisoners and policy (Roberts & Doob, 1990; Roberts & Hough, 2005).

This pattern becomes paradoxical in the discursive construction of non-rioting or "compliant" prisoners as victims of out-group violence and in the humanising language used by authoritative subjects to position them as members of a social in-group. This subject position was unexpected in that general discursive constructions of prisons and prisoners construct prisoners as members of an all-encompassing deviant out-group with which the public is inhibited from engaging with and feeling sympathy toward (Drake, 2011; Greer & Jewkes, 2005; Riches, 2014). Building on the more general issue of individualising the issue of prison violence, as described above, this subject position works to construct prison violence through a congruent but more nuanced lens. Prison violence is still constructed as an issue of and between prisoners; however, this lens constructs prison violence as an issue that involves certain prisoners ("bad apples") and not others. This thesis argues that the function of this unexpected subject position works to legitimate the material basis of the prison as an institution. For if the institution, as elucidated by the authoritative subjects who speak on behalf of the institution (e.g., Department of Corrections officials), constructs prison violence as an issue involving certain prisoners and not others, this implies that the prison works for the majority, and it is this small minority out-group that is responsible for perpetuating prison violence. Although this subject position is contrary to how dominant discourses typically frame prison violence, this "bad apple" ideology was implicit but congruent in the news media reports of international prison riots. Regarding our previous discussions of Peterhead, Mako Brimob, and La Roca, violent out-groups (inherently violent prisoners, terrorists, and gang members) were deemed responsible for the large-scale unrest at each facility. Take, for example, this extract from a political authority who spoke publicly about the cause of the Peterhead prison riot:

> There will always be a tiny number of individual prisoners who are violent, who are psychopaths, who are in prison precisely because of their dangerous proclivities and

> we shouldn't be too surprised that they do not cease to be violent from the moment they enter the prison gates. What we have to do is to minimise – indeed try and remove entirely – the threat they pose not only to the public and to the prison officers but very often to the other prisoners as well.
>
> (Rifkind, 1987, as cited in Scraton et al., 1988, p. 250)

This narrative imposes constraints that limit our ability to perceive the complexities of large-scale prison violence, but it also inhibits us from questioning the legitimacy of the prison. If large-scale prison violence is framed in this way, the public are informed that prison violence is not attributed to the systemic issues engendered in the prison. But rather, prison violence manifests as a result of individual pathologies and, thus, to put an end to prison violence, members of these violent out-groups need to be identified and dealt with individually.

This thesis concludes that the dominant discourse of prison violence frames prison violence as an individualised issue manifest in the individual pathology of inherently violent prisoners. As discussed, several implications exist for this discourse being promoted and publicly adopted. Firstly, public attitudes, which largely define how public policy is fashioned (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010; Yanovitzky & Weber, 2019), will likely be negative, resulting in more punitive approaches to penal practice which may serve to further oppress and harm prisoners. Secondly, by publicly attesting to this individualised narrative, institutional responsibility is absolved. The tendency of news media to report on the sensationalist elements of prison violence and recruit the voices of experts and officials worked to cement blame for prison violence on the prisoners themselves. Despite evidence suggesting that there were underlying systemic issues in the Waikeria and Spring Hill facilities, discursive subjects subjugated these claims and promoted the narrative that prison violence has "nothing to do with prison conditions" (Weekes & Carroll, 2013, p. A005) and is all to do with inherently violent prisoners. Moreover, these discourses may have implicit

effects on the expectations of prisoners in their activities of daily living. If the prison is recurrently framed as a violent institution and prisoners as inherently violent individuals, then prison violence is normalised. In turn, prisoners may expect violence and become inclined to act violently when conflict arises. Additionally, custodial officers who are exposed to these dominant constructions of prisoners may also have expectations that prisoners will act violently when an opportunity presents itself. Thus, custodial officers may distance themselves from prisoners which can contribute to subjective deprivation and an increased likelihood of interpersonal violence (Goldstone & Useem, 1991; Useem & Kimball, 1991).

**Prison Violence: An Emergent Counter-Discourse**

The protest discourse framed prison violence as the result of prisoners being subjected to oppressive and inhumane living conditions. Prisoners were positioned by the discourse as protesters who, upon prolonged exposure to unliveable conditions, began to "protest for the human rights of all prisoners past and present" (Bhatia, 2021, para. 16). The discourse provided the public with an alternative and more humanising frame for prisoners to be understood. The study identified the protest discourse as a counter-discourse, and the discourse endured an arduous battle for legitimation against the riot discourse and was ultimately subjugated by the discursive power of the riot discourse. This thesis argues, however, that, in order for the public to resist the dominant discourses that oversimplify the complexity of prison violence and minimise the identity of prisoners, alternative constructions, like those observed in the protest discourse, must enter the public sphere. This is because the dominant discourses that construct prisoners as members of a violent out-group limit the possibility for prisoners to become humanised and treated as complex beings rather than violent, deviant others "wholly alien to civilised society" ("Massacre at Attica," 1971, p. 40).

### *An Alternative Lens to Perceive Prison Violence*

The protest discourse provides the public with an alternative lens to perceive prisoners. Due to the dominant discourse that has typically framed prisoners as violent and deviant members of an out-group (Drake, 2011; Greer & Jewkes, 2005; Jarvis, 2005; Marsh, 2009; Mason, 2006; Riches, 2014), public perceptions have largely been punitive, resulting in the development and maintenance of "tough-on-crime" penal policy and practice (Roberts & Doob, 1990; Roberts & Hough, 2005). The protest discourse challenges the dominant frame for perceiving prisoners. The discourse speaks to the complexity of prison violence and provides the public with insight into the deep-seated systemic issues that are engendered in prison facilities, which have, until this point, been largely omitted from public discussion. Rather than contributing to the dominant individualised narrative, the protest discourse provides the public with a more holistic view of prison violence and emphasises the role of the institution in precipitating large-scale unrest. This is profound, as academic discussions of large-scale prison unrest, relative to deprivation and breakdown theory, have concluded that the institution plays a role in creating the circumstances for large-scale prison unrest to manifest (Boin & Rattray, 2004; Goldstone & Useem, 1991; Useem & Piehl, 2006). However, these discussions have rarely entered the public domain. Therefore, by bringing scrutiny to the systemic issues in the prison that may have contributed to the unrest at Spring Hill and Waikeria, the public are provided with a more critically-informed narrative about prison violence.

There are several implications for this discourse being received in public opinion. Firstly, if the dominant discourse has resulted in calls for harsher penal policy and negative public attitudes toward prisoners (Roberts & Doob, 1990; Roberts & Hough, 2005), this counter-discourse could theoretically lead to more humanising penal reform and constructive

public attitudes toward prisoners. Secondly, if the protest discourse were legitimated, involved prisoners, who claimed to be protesting, would have likely received public support for their courage in standing up against an oppressive system and inhumane living conditions. This may have, in turn, resulted in these prisoners avoiding proper punishment for perpetrating interpersonal, collective, and property violence. The problem with this outcome is relative to the fifth factor in Useem and Goldstone's (2002) conceptualisation of prison riot aetiology, which postulates that "poorly implemented responses to inmate complaints or actions may further legitimise rebellion" (Useem & Goldstone, 2002, p. 501). Suppose the prison population had observed how involved prisoners had escaped appropriate punishment for their violative actions (arson, destruction of property, threatened and actual assault). In that case, both involved and uninvolved prisoners may feel like the actions perpetrated by prisoners were legitimated and could, in theory, contribute to the perpetuation of prison violence.

### *Key Differences in the Reporting of Spring Hill versus Waikeria*

Analysis revealed a rather overt discrepancy in the protest discourse with reference to how frequently it was promoted in the news media reports of Spring Hill (2013) compared with Waikeria (2020-2021). The protest discourse was identified in three (9.68%) Spring Hill reports compared with 33 (75%) Waikeria reports, and there are several reasons that may have contributed to this divergence. Firstly, there has been a more liberal shift in public attitudes over the past two decades in which society has become more inclusive and introspective in the way we perceive and approach certain penal issues, such as offender rehabilitation (Bartels et al., 2018; Burton et al., 2020) and prison conditions (Jewkes et al., 2019; Moran & Turner, 2019). This may have contributed to an implicit tendency to humanise social issues, especially those that involve oppressed groups. Secondly, there has

been a recent surge in research that has critically examined how the news media frame indigenous issues in New Zealand (McCreanor, 2014; Nairn, 2012; Nairn et al., 2017; Rankine et al., 2014), ultimately leading to the introduction of a new news media framework developed in 2022 (Rankine et al., 2022). This research may have contributed to a more humanising discursive construction of prisoners, a predominantly Māori-comprised population, in the 2020-2021 news media reporting of the Waikeria unrest. Research has demonstrated that Māori have, over time, been continually stereotyped and the victims of negative news media attention (McCreanor, 2014; Nairn, 2012; Rankine et al., 2014). Thus, the research concerning Māori and their media representation may have been politically recognised prior to the unrest at Waikeria, resulting in a more diverse discursive construction. Lastly, the differences may pertain to the implementation of the Hōkai Rangi strategy (Department of Corrections, 2019). The Department of Corrections introduced this strategy to combat the ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system and provide more equitable and positive outcomes for Māori in New Zealand prisons (Department of Corrections, 2019). The protest discourse framed the unrest at each facility as protests against systemic issues, including specific references to unliveable prison conditions (Bhatia, 2021; Hope, 2020) and cultural negligence (Block, 2021). These conditions directly oppose the principles of the Hōkai Rangi strategy, which likely contributed to the divergence in reporting at Spring Hill, which was prior to its introduction and Waikeria, in which it was introduced the year beforehand.

### *The Normalisation of Imprisonment*

In stark contrast with the riot discourse and its legitimation of the institution, the protest discourse brings scrutiny to the prison and provides the public with glimpses into alternative means of punishment. Imprisonment is undoubtedly the most preferred and

widespread form of punishment for social deviance (Foucault, 1977; Paternek, 1987). It is almost impossible to conceptualise alternatives, as the prison is the social institution that has housed offenders for centuries. So much so that Foucault (2009) emphasises that imprisonment is so deeply ingrained and normalised in societal practice that in order for us to conceptualise an alternative to imprisonment, we must first "search for a new society" (Foucault, 2009, p. 24). Dominant discourses legitimise the prison, and it is only through engagement with alternative discursive constructions of the prison that we can begin to see its shortcomings. Although it is not a dominant discourse and was ultimately subjugated by the riot discourse, the protest discourse provides the public with glimpses into the systemic issues inside the prison and how prisoners are rendered powerless by the institution. If the news media incorporate alternative aspects of prisons and prisoners into their reporting, the public can learn more about the prison rather than being exposed to narratives that reproduce the sensationalist and negative elements of the prison.

Overall, an alternative construction of prison violence is a positive feat, as it provides the public with a non-traditional lens for perceiving prisons and prisoners. The prison remains outside of the public eye, and it is typically only the negative and violent events that reach the public through news media. When the narratives typically involve sensationalist elements of prison violence, it cultivates negative public attitudes toward prisoners and, in turn, has negative implications for prisoners. Being incarcerated and losing one's liberty is the punishment for deviance, and the negative stigma and public attitudes only add to the oppression prisoners face. Thus, the protest discourse, as an alternative means to perceive prison violence, can provide the public with a more critically-informed perspective of prison violence rather than adhering to and promoting the individualised narrative maintained by dominant prison violence discourse.

**Prison Violence: Reprimanding Gangs**

Gang culture was foregrounded as an integral part of prison violence, with many authoritative discursive subjects, who were positioned as experts and officials, attesting to the permeating negative presence of gangs in New Zealand prisons. Analysis revealed that the news media contribute to the public understanding of prison violence being a gang issue. Moreover, due to the ubiquity of gang discourse in New Zealand news media, the nods and references to gang members being the sole perpetrators of prison violence primed negative stereotypical gang imagery in the minds of readers. This process was followed by continual othering practice, which involved "us-and-them" rhetoric in guiding the public to condemn gangs. By positioning all of the prisoners involved in the unrest at each facility as gang members (or gang associates or gang-affiliated), the public, who are already sceptical of gangs more generally (Gilbert, 2010; Green, 1997; Roguski & Tauri, 2012), are informed that two large-scale instances of prison violence are attributable to the violent and criminal behaviour of gangs. There are several implications for this discourse being received in public opinion. This section will systematically outline and comment on the implications for prisoners, social injustices, public policy, and gangs and their presence in New Zealand prisons and the wider community.

Gang discourse has been pervasive in New Zealand news media reporting for many decades and has played a significant role in cultivating public perceptions of gangs (Green, 1997; Roper, 1987). Unfortunately, the news media tend to overrepresent the negative and sensationalist elements of gang activity, and news stories are habitually engendered with stereotypical imagery and language that discursively construct gang members as violent criminals (Green, 1997; Hagedorn & MacLean, 2012). Stereotypes have dramatically shaped the ways in which the public perceives gang members, and to be blunt, the terms *gang* and *gang member* prime subconscious and automatic imagery of "scary dude[s]" prone to

antisociality (Hagedorn & MacLean, 2012, p. 1049). The continual public engagement with these negative stereotypes has ultimately led to the dominant and "taken-for-granted" discourse that constructs gangs as a social scourge that threatens the fabric of society, becoming cemented in public opinion. The pervasive nature of this discourse has resulted in moral panic and overly negative public attitudes being expressed toward New Zealand gangs (Green, 1997; Kelsey & Young, 1982). Therefore, to link back to the current study, the authoritative and institutional legitimation of prison violence as a gang issue reinforces the negative public attitudes toward gangs. In turn, public perceptions of the unrest at Spring Hill and Waikeria are likely skewed. For if the public perceives prison violence to be a gang issue, they will have to actively resist the discursive power of the gang discourse to engage with alternative and more humanising constructions of prisoners. For example, if the public is exposed to the narrative that "every single one of the rioters was gang associated" (Wade, 2021, p. A002), then it is unlikely that the public would be willing to perceive involved prisoners through an alternative and conscientious lens. In fact, it is much more feasible for the public to have their negative perceptions of gangs reinforced by the narrative that the events at Spring Hill and Waikeria were perpetrated by gang members.

The overpowering narrative that prison violence is an absolute gang issue, accompanied by nods to unrelated instances of gang violence and organised crime, promotes a larger narrative that gangs constitute a pressing criminal issue that society needs to deal with. By framing gangs as a criminal issue rather than a complex social phenomenon, the New Zealand public, through inferential reasoning and cognitive schemata, are positioned by the gang discourse to expect most, if not all, gang members to be criminals (Green, 1997). However, there is an overt issue with this powerful discourse informing the public about the nature of prison violence. The gang discourse omits any conception of the positive elements of gang culture, including the well-documented familial atmosphere and emotional support a

gang provides for its members, who may not have had the most nurturing social environment prior to their gang connection (Green, 1997; Sonterblum, 2018). Instead, the news media reports are oversaturated with narratives depicting gang members as a violent, criminal out-group intertwined with organised crime and acts of interpersonal violence. These narratives have ultimately contributed to the otherisation of gangs which has been met with the public demand for a punitive crackdown on gangs (Vasiljevic & Viki, 2013).

Moreover, a racial undertone in the gang discourse is likely to have contributed to negative implications for Māori prisoners and the wider Māori community. New Zealand gangs are predominantly comprised (75%) of Māori individuals (Ministry of Social Development, 2016), and the public are aware of this (Beatson, 1987, as cited in Green, 1997). Subsequently, the overreporting of gang members being instigators of prison violence and the inclusion of external criminal and violent gang activity inherent in the gang discourse is likely to manifest in unfavourable public perceptions of gangs firstly and have implicit auxiliary repercussions for Māori. In previous discursive work on gangs and their construction in New Zealand news media, Green (1997) revealed that authoritative discursive subjects attributed the rising rate of crime to "Māori criminals" (Green, 1997, p. 44). While times have changed and the public condemnation of Māori is less overt in the news media, it could be argued that these historical discourses still hold power, especially over the generations of New Zealanders who were exposed to them. By attesting to the violent and harmful nature of gangs, the gang discourse may implicitly circulate historical and racially-loaded discourses that perpetuate social inequalities between Māori and Pakeha individuals.

The gang discourse, due to its ubiquity in New Zealand news media (Green, 1997; Roper, 1987), reinforces the dominant narrative that gangs, in and out of prison, constitute a pressing criminal issue. When the public are exposed to the sentiment in the news media that accentuates the role gangs played in the large-scale unrest at Spring Hill and Waikeria, they

do not perceive these events as isolated. Rather, the gang discourse re-enters public discussions and contributes to the greater understanding of gang crime and gang violence. The gang discourse ultimately contributes to the public condemnation of gangs, and as a result, penal policy and attitudes are likely to reflect negatively on gang members.

**The News Media as a Panopticon**

As Foucault accentuates in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), prior to the beginning of the nineteenth century, punishment was largely theatrical (hangings, guillotine, quartering) and served as a public reminder as to the consequences of social deviance (Foucault, 1977; Garland, 1986). However, since then, a notable shift in social punishment has resulted in the penitentiary becoming the primary and normalised means of punishment. These penal institutions typically exist outside of the public eye, and imprisonment is, for the most part, a private affair. But, as is illustrated by this thesis, even though disciplinary practices remain outside of the public eye, the news media play a panoptic role in broadcasting the private events within prisons to the public. This thesis argues that news media and their reporting of prison violence may serve as a Panopticon that reminds the public about the consequences of social deviance and, in turn, regulates the behaviour of the masses.

As has been elucidated by this study, news media reports and the discourses within include subject positions that hold discursive authority that can legitimate certain narratives and ways of perceiving prison violence. Quite often, the news media reports of prison violence are padded with authoritative subject positions that publicly condemn the actions of individuals who have committed violent and criminal offences. This thesis argues that this discursive action actually works, in part, to regulate the behaviour of the public. Members of the public are positioned by societal practice to depend on the talk of authorities. And much like how the teacher, who speaks with authority over their classroom, can make an example

out of bad behaviour to regulate the behaviour of other students, it could be argued that the authoritative condemnation of prisoners in the news media works to regulate public behaviour.

**Implications for Violence Research**

Research on violence has traditionally been conducted dichotomously, examining the typological risk factors and characteristics of perpetrators and victims of violence and measuring the incurred physical, psychological, social, and economic harm. This is evidenced in the previous discussions of issues of interpersonal violence (Elliot, 2003; Geffner et al., 1997) and violence in social institutions (Blumenreich & Lewis, 1993; Gillespie et al., 2010; Henry, 2000; Le Roux & Moukhele, 2011; Vento et al., 2020). In turn, violence has continually been conceptualised as an individualised issue, and the subsequent research approaches and interventionist strategies have been occupied with identifying individuals with typologically violent characteristics (Acierno et al., 1997; Greathouse at al., 2015; Spelten et al., 2020) and individuals prone to violence victimisation (Acierno et al., 1997; Gillespie et al., 2010). Accordingly, the majority of violence research has omitted the influence of external influences and has inadvertently contributed to dominant academic discourses that construct violence as an inevitable and individualised phenomenon. Thus, to provide an alternative approach which challenges the typical dichotomous style of violence research, this study examined the social problem of violence through a different lens. In doing so, I hope that future researchers, in an attempt to confront the dominant discourses of violence produced by academics, follow suit.

**Limitations and Future Research**

The Foucauldian approach to analysis adopted in this study sought to critically examine how prison violence is discursively constructed. The decision to adopt this analytic approach was to explore the discourses about prison violence from a non-traditional perspective. Due to subjectivity being unavoidable in discourse analysis and the limited scope of this thesis, there are several limitations associated with the current study. From Foucauldian and discourse analytic perspectives, discourse in all its forms should be challenged, including this thesis, in which I am inevitably contributing to discourses of prison violence. Even though reflexive attempts were made to elucidate inherent biases and how my worldview pertains to the research topic and approach, complete reflexivity is unattainable.

Prison violence constitutes a widespread phenomenon involving a plethora of divergent violent behaviours (Butler et al., 2021; Modvig, 2014). However, the limited scope of this thesis meant that analysis could only investigate the discursive construction of two discrete large-scale instances of prison violence in a New Zealand context. Moreover, the news media representations of prison violence were likely filtered by media protocols, which meant prioritising certain material over others to maximise engagement. Future research with an expanded scope could critically analyse a larger corpus of prison violence data, including, for example, more frequent violent behaviours (e.g., verbal abuse, assault, sexual violence) over a longer duration (e.g., news media constructions of prison assault over, say, a 20-year period). The decision to examine news media constructions of prison riots was justified because they constitute public events that receive large amounts of news media coverage. More frequent acts of interpersonal violence receive less news media attention, so other data collection techniques (e.g., interviews, penal policy) would be viable alternatives for future researchers to analyse discursively.

The decision to focus upon the three most overt discourses constitutes a limitation. This study does not claim to have comprehensively captured all possible discourses in the news media constructions of prison violence. Rather, it offers an in-depth deconstruction of the three most salient discourses that constructed prison violence and prisoners in more lucid ways. The researcher decided it was more optimal to diligently work through the three most prevalent discourses rather than describing all of the subtle and less meaningful discourses. Research with a more extensive scope that wishes to venture into discursive prison violence research may pursue a more diverse range of discourses, including the less significant and under-recognised discourses.

Due to the overrepresentation of certain authoritative and institutional subjects in the news media reporting, certain subjects were underrepresented in their ability to construct the issue of prison violence. Prisoners, specifically, were inhibited from contributing to the discourse, which is insightful as the issue pertains to them most. Future research could provide prisoners with a platform to exercise their thoughts and perspectives on the issue to identify prisoner-centric discourses of prison violence and how they discursively construct themselves, their surroundings, and the issue of prison violence.

**Policy Recommendations**

Not only are recommendations for future research necessary to advance our understanding of prison violence, but there are recommendations for news media policy regarding how they discursively construct prison violence. As we know, the news media have a direct influence on public opinion (Roberts & Doob, 1990), and both news media and public opinion contribute to the development of public policy (Koch-Baumgarten & Voltmer, 2010; Yanovitzky & Weber, 2019). Thus, the ways in which news media frame stories involving prison violence have a permeating impact on public attitudes toward prisoners. The

sensationalist style present in the dominant discourses of prison violence that promote the narrative of prison violence being an individualised issue is likely to result in increased public support for harsher sentencing and penal practice (Roberts & Hough, 2005). In a 1987 report authored by Moana Jackson, the mainstream media were denounced for their pervasive influence on public opinion, which, through the strategic inclusion and exclusion of certain material, reproduced power structures, social inequalities and colonialised ways of perceiving certain social issues (Jackson, 1987). The news media, due to their inclusion and promotion of dominant discourses, positions the public to perceive prison violence as an individualised issue and infers that to turn the tide on prison violence, we must focus our attention on these inherently violent prisoners. However, as we are aware, prison violence is a multifaceted issue involving not only the imported violent tendencies of prisoners (Lahm, 2008; Schrag, 1944; Thomas & Foster, 1973) but also the subjective deprivations that derive from institutionalised practices (Gover et al., 2000; Levan, 2012; Sykes, 1958). For this reason, news media policy concerning prison violence should revisit their sensationalist reporting style and prioritise critically-informed narratives. By reproducing uncritical discourses of prison violence, the news media play an implicit but powerful role in cultivating a negative public perception of prisoners, which has pertinent effects for public policy that have real-world consequences for those in custody.

## Concluding Remarks

This study aimed to examine the discursive constructions of prison violence in the New Zealand news media. This study illustrates the narratives and discourses present in the news media reporting of the unrest at the Spring Hill Corrections Facility (2013) and Waikeria Prison (2020-2021). The dominant discourse constructed the unrest as violent riots perpetrated by inherently violent prisoners. The discourse inadvertently contributes to the

dominant discourses that frame prisons as violent institutions and prisoners as violent individuals (Drake, 2011; Greer & Jewkes, 2005; Jarvis, 2005; Marsh, 2009; Mason, 2006; Riches, 2014). Moreover, the dominant discourse served to reinforce the institutional legitimacy of the prison and construct the problem of prison violence as an individualised issue perpetrated and perpetuated by prisoners. The uncritical reproduction of this discourse has permeating consequences that may contribute to the overarching punitive attitudes and approaches embedded in the New Zealand penal system.

In line with the dominant discourse, the gang discourse served to affirm the narrative that prison violence is an individualised issue. However, the gang discourse framed prison violence as a gang-specific issue perpetrated and perpetuated by gangs and gang members. Due to the long-standing discursive system in New Zealand news media that has cultivated negative perceptions of gangs (Green, 1997; Roper, 1987), the gang discourse contributes to the overarching narrative that gangs constitute a criminal issue rather than a complex social phenomenon. The subjects in the gang discourse seemingly use the gang-perpetrated prison violence at Spring Hill and Waikeria to enhance the public condemnation of gangs, which has a permeating negative influence on public attitudes, approaches and policy relating to gangs in New Zealand.

The protest discourse, a counter-discourse, emerged that constructed the unrest as protests against living conditions and inhumane treatment. The discourse positioned prisoners as protesters who were uprising against prison conditions and inhumane treatment. Despite being subjugated in its attempts to gain legitimacy, the protest discourse provided the public with an alternative and more constructive lens to perceive prisons and prisoners, and made overt the institutionalised and systemic issues that have largely remained out of the public eye.

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