

'Boob Jargon': The Language of a Women's Prison

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In 1997 I chose to study the slang language of the inmates in a women's prison. This idea was developed from my study carried out in 1996 on the slang language of the inmates at Rolleston Men's Prison — looking at their 'boob jargon'. Dr Greg Newbold defines 'boob jargon' in his book *The Big Huey* as 'the jargon of the jail. Many of the terms involved in this language are specific only to prisons... and will be unfamiliar to the person on the street.' (1982:7) This is a unique form of expression among inmates which seems to have developed due to their segregation from mainstream society and their close and continued association with one another in fairly constant and controlled circumstances, resulting in the formation of a kind of subculture. This subculture has constructed a form of language with which to represent objects, personalities and procedures in day-to-day life, indicate identities, solidarity networks and codes of behaviour, communicate emotions, beliefs and attitudes, maintain social hierarchies and personal privacy, boost morale and to serve a practical purpose in enabling inmates to plan (often illegal) operations with relative secrecy in the presence of officials or other prisoners. This paper outlines the aims of the 1997 study and provides a description of the results.

I knew from the study completed in 1996 (using evidence from Greg Newbold's 'Glossary of Argot Terms in New Zealand Prisons' — compiled during his experiences within several New Zealand penal institutions — and my own interviews at Rolleston) that such a form of language existed and was in use in men's prisons around the country. What I wanted to explore was:

1. whether this language was also being employed in women's prisons. If so,
2. were the terms were the same — part of a core slang vocabulary which was developed to a similar degree and used throughout every prison, or, alternatively, were there differences which depended on prison, gender, age, location, race, influence and the individual themselves. From the differences in personal vocabulary between the inmates of Rolleston and that of Newbold's list I was aware that there were some variations among the males, however, this gave no indication about how the women's language worked.
3. I was also interested to consider how slang functioned in general society and the similarities and differences between its use 'on the street' and the way it was employed in the prison environment. Slang in mainstream society is defined as 'vocabulary, idiom, etc. that is not appropriate to the standard form of language or to formal contexts and may be restricted as

to social status or distribution'¹ and is mostly used to endorse solidarity — to increase the 'in-group' bond and to exclude the 'out-group' — and to provide a specialist terminology in certain situations to give economy and precision. I was curious to see if the specific prison situation allowed for these general uses of slang but whether it also gave rise to extra functions of the language to suit particular needs and processes.

To attempt to answer these questions I decided to look at 'boob jargon' and its use at Christchurch Women's Prison. Christchurch Women's is a small high-medium security prison just out of Templeton, Canterbury, about twenty minute's drive from the centre of Christchurch city. It has a capacity for 69 women, but at the time of interviewing there were only 55 inmates imprisoned there, 24 of whom were Maori. The rest were European Pakeha except for a small number of women of Pacific Island or Asian origin. The prison is divided into three wings in which inmates' cells are grouped. Christchurch Women's was a good choice primarily because it was convenient to Christchurch (the next women's prison being Arohata in Wellington), and also because it was a small sized jail (only about a quarter of the size of Rolleston) where a sample of half a dozen inmates would give a fairly good representation of the prison as a whole. 1997 was a suitable time to approach the prison: they had been extending their public relations with their participation in the recent Christchurch Arts Festival with the performance 'Kia Maumahara', and so they appeared eager to continue positive interaction with people from 'outside'.

The subject sample consisted of six women to represent just over ten percent of the jail population; the choice being based upon age, ethnicity, length of time in prison, crime, area of the prison in which were housed. The subjects were divided into two age groups, 20-30 years and 45-60 years. This was in order to get a marked generational difference, to see if there were variations in the amount of, type of and the acquisition time for the prison lingo between older and younger inmates.

Ethnic identification became a factor in the sample in order to investigate the consequences for prison language when the users identify with a particular ethnic group — are special words used for inmates to identify as Maori/Pakeha within the general population? — are there special words inmates of a certain group use among themselves, to form a subgroup of that subculture?

Length of time in prison was also included as part of the sample criteria because it would be interesting to note whether this had any bearing on the prison language in terms of the words used (did inmates who had been in prison a long time use different words to short termers — did they perhaps use 'older' terms reflecting the quickly changing face of slang which new prisoners were not picking up? What were they using? Was there a pattern?) The definition: 'has been in prison for a short period of time' was given to those inmates who, at the time of interview, had spent 0-3 years in prison,

¹ *The Collins Concise English Dictionary: Third Edition.* ed. D. Adams. Glasgow: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992.

and 'has been in prison for a long period of time' was given to mean those who had spent more than five consecutive years in prison at the time of the interview.

The nature of an inmate's conviction was also relevant. The women's sample ideally would include inmates who had committed different crimes so that I had the potential to collect a range of different slang terms — for example, it had been apparent at Rolleston that an inmate in prison on a drug charge was familiar with a lot of slang words for various narcotics, and someone imprisoned for robbery or burglary had jail jargon pertaining to relevant objects and concepts. A prisoner with gang affiliations might, for example, use separate (often racist, due to the nature of most gangs — 'Black Power' / 'White Power') terms, which may have been used prior to imprisonment in the gang environment, and then used with fellow gang members in prison, giving a key as to the origins of the language. (Alternatively, have these words found their way into wider prison usage?)

If possible, interviewees would be gathered from different wings in the prison. At Rolleston there were different terms for particular things depending on which wing you came from and I was curious as to whether the same variation occurred at Christchurch Women's as well.

The set of stimulus material for the interviewees consisted of a list of about two hundred slang terms and their definitions taken from the amalgamated inmates' list from Rolleston Men's Prison (updated from Greg Newbold's glossary) as it was all the New Zealand prison slang available. In the interviews, which were, on average about two hours each, the interviewees were presented with this list of terms and definitions: first, they were asked which of these terms they were familiar with, then they were asked whether they had any additional definitions for these terms; finally, the interviewees were asked whether they had any additional terms for the definitions. Along with this list a set of questions was included to find out about the prisoners' attitudes to the language. These were:

- Why do you use this type of language?
- When would you use it (in what situations)?
- Are there a different set of words you would use for different situations?
- Why?
- When would you *not* use it?
- Who would you use it with (do you have a different set of words for different groups of people)?
- Why?

Research at Christchurch Women's Prison revealed that the inmates there possess a colourful and varied vocabulary comprised of obscenities, rhyming-slang, alliterative words, double-entendres, words from wider

underworld origins, adaptations from popular culture, contractions, acronyms, words with different meanings to 'outside', clever variations of other slang terms, terms with wider or more emotionally loaded meanings than standard language allows for and completely original terms — all of which reflect the keen wit and personality of the inmates as well as the situation 'inside' and the influences upon it from mainstream society. This language functions in many different and often unique ways to enable prisoners to negotiate their environment more effectively.

The prison argot acts, firstly, as a means of communication between inmates. It functions factually to provide a precise linguistic reference for specific objects, personalities and procedures within the prison context. In this way the argot is employed for economy because it gives a fast and accurate meaning, expressing 'in one or two words what may take long sentences which (still) don't impact as much. It is to the point.' (Inmate E). Inmate D had a similar opinion about prison argot working as a time saving device. She felt that the argot made things 'easier to say... takes less time' and that it provided 'short-term equivalents' for words and situations which would otherwise involve lengthy explanations, because 'everyone knows what you're talking about' (Inmate D) — it is 'just for you to talk about things in your wing... your stuff.' (Inmate A). For example, everyday expressions such as **line up** (The ordered positions of inmates for meals or for a head-count for officials to check easily whether anyone is missing) and words like **bitchkeeper** (the member of the police force who works as the dog handler when they search the prison for drugs) give concise alternatives which encapsulate a lot of information in a nutshell. It is quickly learnt and makes life easier for the prisoners.

Prison language also helps inmates to communicate on an emotional level. In a difficult environment which does not allow for openly physical expressions of feeling; where someone is expected to **handle the jandal** [sic] (cope with their prison sentence) and put on a **front** (be brave when one is hurting), the need arises for a form of language which can cater for a prisoner's necessary expressions of feeling and which is readily understood by other inmates. These can be positive, for example, an expression like **you're the one** lets the speaker know that she is the speaker's best friend, or is held in extremely high regard. On the other hand, venting negative feeling is also possible: if someone is **broken arsed** they are explaining that they are shattered and stressed or are having a hard time doing their sentence. Often, because language is being relied on as the main vehicle for confiding feelings, lending support or showing affection, there is an extra loading of meaning on to terms which would be much less intense in general usage, so that they function 'like a spiritual hug' (Inmate 2, Rolleston Men's Prison 1996) and an effective outlet. Prison slang is also used in this way on the **dolly notes** (love letters) and **scripts** (letters which inmates pass to each other) to allow inmates to express themselves in the same style in written form. The use of prison argot in its supportive role may mean more to the prisoners because of its unconditional nature. Because the inmate speaking and the inmate listening have both committed crimes there are no value judgements being made; the support is there irrespective of whether a person does 'right' or 'wrong'.

By enabling inmates to communicate on an emotional level the prison argot also functions as a release mechanism. As well as its general supportive and sympathetic roles, the slang reflects the tensions, anger and anxieties amongst the inmate population which are an inevitable result of living with each other at close quarters with diminished privacy for extended periods; as one woman remarked: 'like living with sixty bitches with PMT all the time.' For instance, there are a lot of abusive terms for other prisoners which are either complete neologisms, or have had several additional connotations attached to them. Examples of these include **maggot** (an insult used toward someone one has had a fight with), **demon** (an evil, devious person) and **nark**. 'Nark' is a very complex word at Christchurch Women's, with about six subtly differing definitions. In general slang usage it is usually taken to mean someone who 'tells on' someone else, yet this idea has been considerably expanded upon in the jail situation, acquiring specific meanings unique to that environment:

- i. to inform (upon) v.
- ii. inmate informer n.
- iii. nosey person n.
- iv. to accuse, blame v.
- v. fabricated evidence used to secure a conviction n.
- vi. to use false evidence against the accused v.

This variety of like definitions makes a pertinent comment about the need for loyalty in the environment and the contempt in which someone is held when they break those rules.

Many inmates made the point that they all want to 'live in harmony' (Inmate D) and 'try to fit in, relate to everybody' (Inmate B) as much as possible, and so the argot may act as a kind of safety valve to diminish the likelihood of violent confrontations which may result in injury or death. This works by the substitution of prison argot terms in lieu of standard English expressions because of the indirect impact of the terminology. Because almost all inmates at Christchurch Women's have standard English as their basic frame of reference it is likely that spelling a comment out in ordinary language will elicit a more vicious response than using prison argot, as, although this language is familiar to the prisoners, it has been learnt later in life and may not impact as strongly upon them as language spoken from childhood.

It also appears that 'boob jargon' works as a device to maintain the complex systemic relations extant in the prison society. There are many distinct rules, codes of behaviour and identity, solidarity and hierarchy networks which the argot reflects and endorses. Most broadly, simply the use of jail argot helps to define an inmate's identity as a prisoner — associated with all people in prison, as well as specifically belonging to Christchurch Women's, which a more specialised vocabulary set indicates; for instance,

Inmate B said that a friend she was talking to on the telephone could tell she had been in jail because of the way she spoke. The idea that the language 'connects or bonds you to that particular group of people... [a] thing about belonging somewhere' reflects the strong enforcement of group solidarity which the language provides among inmates as a whole. Using words which are not of the dominant variety promotes the individuality of the prisoner group against those in general society; even the term **outside** to refer to those not in prison has connotations of excluding the mainstream public as the 'out-group' and strengthening the bond of those **inside** — an inclusive term with associations of shared knowledge and experience. Inmate E said that on the street: 'prison slang would not be used when communicating with a 'homie' or a particular gang, or friends in the community, unless they have been to prison.' For example, inmates would not use prison argot with visitors because they felt it was not polite. Visitors would not understand it because it was purely a prisoner's dialect; as Inmate C remarked: '[it's] talk only your fellow inmates understand — doesn't mean much if you don't know it.'

Especially, this individuality is asserted against systems of authority; in particular, the Justice Department. The slang use emphasises the fact that prisoners are eager to hold themselves different to and not to identify with prison officials, not just as a language form but most strongly with the amount of pejorative terms reserved for Justice authority figures. Here there is a twofold form of alienation: prisoners are not only saying 'we're not like you' by choosing an alternative form of expression, but they are using derogatory terminology towards these people to put them on a different level of social acceptance. For example, words for the Police include: **pigs, filth, heat and bitchkeepers** — words for prison guards include **pig** (again), **screw, dog, B.O.S.S., four-by-two** and **bum girl** and prison psychiatrists are known as **quacks**. This last category is interesting (although the term is often used more generally) because it displays an overwhelming lack of faith in the psychiatrist's professionalism and thus questions their ability to draw conclusions about the inmates' mental states and to categorise them accordingly.

This attitude amongst the inmates is also articulated in terms of a kind of emotional retaliation against governing forces. Many inmates have the impression that prison guards and other officials are set on seeing the inmates depressed and having a bad time in jail. To counter this, expressions like **no effect** have come into use — meaning 'I'm okay, not a problem' — openly asserting that prison life is not upsetting them, and that what they deem to be unfair treatment from guards has, literally, no effect on them. Another phrase is 'I'm off to the **Bahamas**' for 'solitary confinement'. This cell was given its name for several reasons: to imply that it is sunny, that inmates are having a holiday, and that they are having a good time instead of treating it as a punishment. As one inmate put it: 'I'm always smiling. They [officers] want to get you down, see you sad, I don't let them.'

However, as at Rolleston Men's Prison, the language does not reveal a simple dichotomy between 'prisoners' on the one hand and 'authority' on the other. A more intricate infrastructure of social relationships is in operation. The idea of solidarity and identity enforcement may be seen at work on

many different levels throughout the prison, organising inmates into closer social groups in some instances and segregating them from others in different circumstances; thus the language can be used to identify an inmate as being a certain type of person to a very detailed degree. Important in group solidarity and identity formation is the aspect of gender. Inmates living in an all-female environment have a heightened awareness of their femininity and many are very cognisant of men being part of an out-group. This becomes apparent through the derogatory epithets attached to males in general and male visitors in particular (perhaps like the word **bitch** used for female visitors at Rolleston) — for example: **Half-Wit-Harry**, **Dolly** and **Sugar Daddy** (a male visitor who brings out money and gifts — often drugs) are a selection of some such expressions.

Within the prison there are also 'geographical' divisions in the form of **wings**: the different areas where the inmates are housed. Although the inmates mingle with each other, it seems that those women whom a prisoner sees the most and is closest to are those in her wing. Here, a denser network of relationships is built up, with a wing having its own specific vocabulary items and reputation. For instance, wing one is often known as the 'privileges' wing, wing two is known as the 'druggie' wing, and wing three is known as the 'party' wing. Each wing has different slang terms for various things; for example, one might call the main corridor at Christchurch Women's **Mainstream**, **The Corridor** or **The Highway** depending upon which wing one comes from. The emptying out of cell chamberpots is also known as **Potty Parade**, **Golden Shower** or **Pisspot Parade** from wing to wing — a form of 'regional' variant throughout the jail.

The extent to which prison argot can provide clues to an inmate's identity moves further to include the smaller groups with which prisoners affiliate themselves. The ethnic identity of an inmate is also indicated by their personal use of prison slang, or the use of certain terms directed at them by other inmates. An example of connecting as part of a racial group includes the use of the general Maori **Bro** — a term of affection only used by Maoris to Maoris — apparently a Pakeha inmate responded to this title with 'Don't call me Bro!' However, the wider group solidarity was still at work because she then added: 'I'd rather be called that than a warden.' (Inmate A). There are also an abundance of racist terms which move in several directions between the various inmates; for example, words for people with dark skin include: **coconut**, **jungle bunny**, **nigger**, **niglet**, **sandpeople**, **mudpeople** and **Rasta**. People of Oriental extraction are known as: **slopehead**, **ching**, and **ping** and people of European origin are called **bullheads/ baldheads**. The most uncomplimentary terms for white people refer especially to the White Supremists (Skinheads), for example, **Tissues**, **Leafs**, **Shitheads**, **Skinz**, **Pinheads**, **Baldies** and **Nude Nuts** — perhaps because of the violent and aggressive way this movement asserts their particular culture and racial dominance, and possibly because their singular appearance invites ridicule by those who do not agree with their ideology and their methods.

The concept of gang affiliation in relation to racial identity provides yet another subgroup which the use of 'boob jargon' serves to define. It was interesting to note whether some inmates identified as Maori or Pakeha, as it

not always easy to tell from physical appearance. There appeared to be degrees of ethnicity by which prisoners could be categorised, depending upon their preference and the attitudes of other inmates. A reflection in prison argot was the word **Sooty** (a negative term for a person with dark skin) used by 'not white-white girls but *brown-white* girls' (Inmate E) — meaning young, part-Maori inmates who identified with their European ancestry and were affiliated to the White Power Movement. They used this word to non-European inmates to strengthen their own solidarity network between White Power members and to differentiate themselves from women who identified as or looked more Maori or Pacific Islander.

There is room within prison argot for inmates to be identified on grounds of their sexual orientation. Having interviewed inmates both homosexual and heterosexual it appeared that lesbian inmates did not tend to use a specific vocabulary to identify themselves, but rather they were constructed by the terms the heterosexual inmates used to describe them. I was told that many of the women had come from abusive relationships with men and so had found 'love' with women whilst in prison. This was supposedly quite common, but there still seemed some stigma associated with them as a group, even more so with inmates who identified as lesbian before they were incarcerated. This is shown by the use of words inclining to the obscene, for example, **Tongue Fu**, **Lick-Boxer**, **Mickosaurus**, **Camping** and **Dolly**. Women's prison argot includes pejorative slang terms for male homosexuals: **Shit Pusher**, **Bum Boy**, **Pin Pusher** and **Woolly Woofter** amongst others.

An inmate's use of prison argot also identifies where they have come from, in terms of the prisons they have been in. A specific instance was commented on by one woman who had previously been in a North Island prison for the first half of her sentence. She said that inmates there had tended to take drugs in the form of pills, in particular, amphetamines and so she used words like **go-fast** for these. In Christchurch, however, intravenous drug use is much more widespread, and in Christchurch Women's inmates used barbiturates (often morphine-based) which they administered with a needle. Inmate B was identified as having come from Wellington by her knowledge of certain slang drug terms but her lack of knowledge about others. (Someone completely new to the prison situation would, of course, stand out because of their lack of any prison argot.)

Prison argot may be employed to label an inmate as belonging to a particular religion. Several prisoners convert to Christianity whilst in prison and so there are words with which to describe these people, such as **Happy Clapper**, **Bible Basher** or the collective term **God Squad**. Although this was acceptable among the older inmates, some younger inmates interviewed seemed to regard church-going as 'uncool' — as one teenager hastily mentioned: 'We just go for the biscuits.' (Inmate A)

Differences between older and younger inmates are reflected in their respective use of boob jargon and so age is also a factor by which inmates may be identified or identify. There appear to be patterns in the type of slang usage between generations, for instance, older inmates in the 45-60 year age-group preferred to use words with rhyming-slang origins such as: **Billy Lid**

(one's child — 'your kid'), **Jack-and-Jills** (pills), **Half Inch** (steal — 'pinch'), **Tealeaf** ('thief') and **Brace-and-Bit** ('fit' — hypodermic syringe.) **Noah's Ark** ('nark') In some of these cases there is a double removal from the Standard English meaning; the rhyme corresponds with another prison slang term instead, showing the evolutionary process of slang terminology in prison. The younger (approx.) 20-30 year age-group did not use so much of the rhyming slang, yet it was noticeable that they were the forerunners as far as invention and use of drug terminology was concerned. Inmate E remarked on this; that: 'each generation has their particular 'slang'.'

In many cases an inmate can be identified as belonging to a particular group on the basis of the crime they have committed. For example, an inmate with a drug conviction tended (not surprisingly) to possess a lot of narcotics terms, and a woman in prison for robbery had many words for burglaries and hold-ups: **hit**, **raid**, and **heist** and expressions for like situations including being caught in the act: **sprung**, **undone** and **unstuck**. Inmates who had been imprisoned on prostitution charges used slang terms loaded with sexual connotation to describe certain things — for instance, **Wang Bang** for 'pub' denotes a place selling alcohol which possibly boasts a striptease; ('bang' is a general slang term for sexual intercourse.)

The narrowest of these various levels of identification through boob jargon is the specific use of the language to identify with a certain type of personality. In this way, the prison argot is character dependent, as there is the capacity for the individual only to use the words which they feel reflect who they are. For example, Inmate B said she did not use any of the terms on the vocabulary list which had to do with cattiness or gossip. She said: '[there are] some words I don't use... the bitchy gossipy stuff.' She felt that she tried to get along and fit in with everybody: 'but not **shitstirrers**' (people who spread malicious gossip). Another example came from Inmate C who said she did not use any racist terms herself because she did not agree with that sort of discrimination. Alternatively, other inmates will choose terms to enable them to sound **staunch**, to 'show that they (other inmates) can't push you around' and would 'probably not use words in the same way' (Inmate B). Many older inmates chose not to use rude slang words to refer to prison officials because they wanted to appear respectful. I wondered if this changed depending upon who they were with and what sort of impression they wanted to give — was their use of language influenced by they how they perceived me, for example — an interviewer effect?

The more negative side of using argot to be identified or to identify as a person was articulated by Inmate C. She said: 'Some choose to [learn the language] that's cool... others have to live in the identity of someone — if they have to find their identity through prison language (that's) sad, they can lose track of their own identity. I tried earlier to fit in... the language definitely came into this. [It's] part of a real bad identity crisis — wanting to fit in' — a very insightful point of view.

One inmate interviewed was particularly interesting because she did not use any of the prison argot terms. Although there were terms which she identified as having heard, (backed up by their usage by other inmates), she

said: 'I never use it out here... I wasn't brought up that way — like any kind of slang [it's] not nice. I don't like it so I don't use it' (Inmate F). This refusal to accommodate may have been a deliberate attempt to *not* fit in, perhaps a form of denial about being in prison at all and an anxious wish not to acquire any traits which may have identified her as having been in prison once she was released.

As well as boob jargon's function as a solidarity marker and an identity labelling system, the use of prison slang plays an important role in maintaining the social hierarchy at Christchurch Women's. From what the inmates reported, it appeared that there was a slightly different way of defining social hierarchy amongst women than amongst men. Men tended to base hierarchical distinction more upon the basis of crimes, with paedophiles being the lowest and crimes requiring skill and planning being most highly regarded. Reputation or **form** was also a factor in determining social status, often gained by being able to back up tough words with similar actions. At Christchurch Women's the lack of really violent crime (rape, vicious assault, serious child molestation) led to fewer social judgements on the basis of conviction, although crimes displaying **class** (cleverness, commendability) were looked upon with favour. Length of sentence appeared to be a main factor in deciding who was given respect and who was not. These attitudes are shown by the use of words like **bed-and-breakfast** to describe short-term inmates with condescending connotations of not staying long and therefore not really part of the institution. **Fresh meat** is another example of this — conveying the idea that new inmates are naive and do not realise the situation they are in. However, a life sentence (10+ years) is known as a **wicked lag**. 'Wicked' in general slang usage is associated with awe and respect and this appears to have been transposed into prison slang to hold the particular inmate in some esteem.

The suggestion that length of time in prison and knowledge about the environment is the key to a higher status in the social hierarchy is perhaps reiterated by the eagerness of the young shorter-term inmates to acquire the prison slang. One of the older prisoners noted that the 'younger ones maybe get on to it faster' (Inmate D). These inmates may acquire the language to get into the group, to become 'one of the crowd... fit in' (Inmate A, 19 years). Prisoners who are sure of their membership amongst other prison inmates may use the language to make hierarchical distinctions, and those who enjoy a high social status may use terms in the language to assert their own authority.

How an inmate is treated and the respect in which they are held also depends on their personality and behaviour to others in the same social situation. This adherence to a 'code of ethics' reflects the values of their society. For instance, if someone is a **nark** or a **topper** (informer, therefore untrustworthy) or is an **arse licker** or **scab** (someone who 'greases' or 'sucks up' to prison officials to help get through their sentence easily) then they command no respect and may be **coated** (shunned) — **not the one**. This last expression is the opposite of **you're the one**, and thus is a heavily loaded negative term. On the other hand I have included the word **loyal** in my list of female prison slang terms even though it is not even a slang word in general

society, because it is a very important term among inmates. The importance of being **staunch** (true to one's friends) and **on the mark** (faithful, reliable) is paramount and emphasises the need for solidarity and reliance upon each other to get along successfully in jail.

These social parameters of solidarity, identity and hierarchy are very carefully defined and monitored, controlling an inmate's social mobility and conduct. The initially deliberate use of slang appears to become natural after a while, showing where inmates fit within this complex social network.

Because boob jargon is by inmates, for inmates and works only for them, the argot acts as a 'secret code' for members of this group. Thus, prison argot serves a practical day-to-day purpose among inmates at Christchurch Women's Prison. Jail argot gives the prisoners an opportunity to talk 'when you don't want other people knowing what you are saying, especially [i]f you are unable to talk in private' (Inmate E). Although some prison officers may become familiar with the more widely used everyday terms, there are many terms which are unknown to them, used by inmates in more secret situations. Often these special terms are employed to plan and carry out illegal jobs in prison. Most of the time these jobs involve the **drop** (delivery or deposit) of a **parcel** (illegal contraband — usually drugs or money) and then the process of **holding-out** (hanging on to and keeping secret) your **stash** (your hoard of drugs or contraband). Because the items supplied are illegal in prisons/generally, it is imperative to have a parallel system of meaning to refer to these items, because inmates 'know what it means and officers don't so you can say anything you want, ... plan stuff and they don't know' (Inmate A) by being able to 'camouflage what you're truly trying to say' (Inmate E). A good example of this is seen in the huge amount of drug terms which adapt rapidly to escape detection and so allow long-running operations to survive. Even other inmates not intimately involved in a certain activity may not be able to follow the particular argot, let alone officials. As one inmate replied when asked about specific drug terms: 'Oh, I don't know — they change every day' (Inmate E).

Living in circumstances which are very limited geographically gives rise to a different perspective as far as referring to the environment is concerned. When one's world consists of a few (mostly single storey) buildings and couple of acres of vegetable garden and paddock surrounding those, areas and living spaces adjust themselves according to the size difference. For example, a common substitute for 'cell' is **house**: 'Come to my house for coffee' is a common invitation. This works in the reverse as well, where ideas of **inside** (all those in prison) and **outside** (all those not in prison) are expanded to include a much wider range of space than is normally meant.

In Christchurch Women's an element of passive vocabulary exists. During the interviews words were recognised or definitions were given for items which the inmates did not have in the prison. For example, the **Restricted Diets No1.** and **No2.** were recognised still, even though these were abolished years ago with the introduction of the Bill of Rights. The word **boob gear** (prison uniform) was also recognised by several inmates and alternative terms such as **kit** were offered, even though the prison does not have specific

clothing for inmates. This suggests that there may be some vein of influence feeding between prisons which have such items.

This leads on to the question: 'Where, then, does 'boob jargon' come from?' From what I learned during the research process, there seem to be a variety of origins from which argot at Christchurch Women's Prison in 1997 has evolved. Firstly, these include grammatical changes, many in the form of contractions from words which used to be longer titles or descriptions. This appears most strikingly amongst the narcotics terms, for example: **tammies** (from 'temazepam'), **misties** (from Morphine Sulphate Tablets — **M.S.T.s**), **rivvies** (from 'rivitrol') and **Vs** (from 'valium'). Other forms of contraction include acronyms, often from existing prison slang words, such as **SNU material** (idiot, mad person), from the formal description: **Special Needs Unit**, **B.O.S.S.** (prison guard — possibly from the American prison slang: 'Sorry Son Of a Bitch' backwards), **K.P.** (**King Pin** — leader who has gained her position from violence) and **K.F.** (**Kid[ie] Fucker** — paedophile).

As has been mentioned, a considerable portion of this prison argot has rhyming-slang origins — a common form of slang in institutions such as jails or the armed services. More examples include: **turtledove** (in love), **hairy ape** (rape), **Al Capone** (telephone), **dog and bone** (telephone), **Nellie Bligh** (lie) and **trouble and strife** (wife). Many other slang terms have been coined from older rhyming-slang origins, for example, **Beat the Feet** (escape) has moved to **Beat the Hoof** as well, and **tealeaf** for 'thief' / steal has been adapted to **teabags** (more modern?) with the original root, but with the 'bags' ending — to 'bags' something in general slang means to steal or claim as one's own — making an effective pun. Rhyming-slang words based on actual prison jargon are also in use: **four-by-two** (**screw** — prison guard) for example.

Sometimes the origins may be personal; expressions which individual inmates bring in and which catch on for wider usage. It does not, however, have to be an inmate who introduces new terms. I found that I acted as an influence by bringing in the list of slang terms which some inmates preferred to their own terms, and so new terms were brought from the men's usage to the combined vocabulary of the wings and the whole prison. At the end of the week when I collected the stimulus material sheets adopted words included: **teabags** (steal), **detective** (nosy person), **dog box / dog house** (guard house), **gannet** (greedy person), **gate fever** (pre-release tension) and **sour grape** (rape).

One cannot deny the influence of popular culture upon jail argot. Although prisoners are segregated from mainstream society and are relatively isolated, they have open access to television, radio, videos, books, magazines, newspapers, computers and compact discs, tapes and records. This gives rise to words with pop-cult associations, for example, the words **Bob** and **Marley** for marijuana come about as a direct influence of the reggae singer Bob Marley whose cannabis use was legendary. Another instance I noted was the use of the term **CCs** — a contraction of 'cell confinement' but known in the plural because of the link with the brand of corn chips (an ingredient for the Mexican dish, 'Nachos') known as 'CCs': 'Only CCs ees tasting like thees' (*television commercial*). These associations help make the term more clever and

memorable, as is seen in the example of **Party Pack** (the issue of women's toiletries). Apart from the obvious irony of the term, the allusion to the Kentucky Fried Chicken 'Party Pack' adds a further level of meaning. The words **Tongue-Fu** and **Lick Boxer** for 'lesbian' are a parody of the 'Kung Fu' and 'Kickboxer' martial art movie titles, loaded with sexual connotation. Prison argot may also develop independently from television in prison; it does in wider society — why not in jail?

Boob jargon may also have originated in jargon used by subsets of the wider community. An outstanding example is (again) the huge range of drug terms which made up almost a fifth of the inmates' entire prison vocabulary. Although some have developed in jail, a large number come from terms spoken by drug users and dealers 'outside'. Out of five-hundred terms there were at least seventy-five words for drugs and drug-related terms involving more than twenty words for marijuana in various forms: **bob**, **cabbage**, **doobie**, **dak**, **grass**, **hooter**, **j**, **marley**, **tinny** and **pot**; over twenty-five words for heroin and devices for taking it: **hammer**, **crack**, **fix**, **fiddley** and **gun**, **I.V.**, **smack**, **pick**, **shot** and **blast**; approximately eighteen words for pills of various kinds: **Mickey Finn** (sleeping pill), **Jack-and-Jills** ('upper' and 'downer' drugs), **house Ms** (halcyon), and **moggies** (mogadon) and a handful of terms for drugs like speed — **go fast** and **LSD** — **acid**, **trip** and **lucky** — (short for **lucky dip**, rhyming slang for **trip**). There were shades of meaning within these drug terms, for example, **crank** and **shank** referred specifically to heroin of poor quality and **lazy Js** was applied only to marijuana which was bludged off somebody else. **Cabbage** was bad quality marijuana (leaf). It was interesting to find no words for drugs like opium or ecstasy in the prisoners' vocabularies, as I was told that, some years ago, one inmate had once grown poppies in the wardens' garden and used to 'bleed the heads' (get the opiate) regularly.

Aside from the drug community, words are also brought into prison by members of gangs who may have used that particular term among themselves. One such jail term is **ropehead** for a person with dreadlocked hair, which was identified as having come from the Mongrel Mob Gang.

The inmates' argot also boasts words which have originally been (and perhaps still are) part of general underworld slang. For example, **hit man** for 'assassin' and **heist** for 'robbery, hold-up'. **Bust** for 'burglary' was first noted in 1857, **copper** for 'policeman' first became popular between 1840-1865 and **nark** was first defined as: 'someone who obtains information under seal of confidence and afterward breaks faith' in 1851 which was, by 1874, 'applied to the lowest class of informers.' **Nark** may have its initial origins in the French '*narquois*' meaning 'sly, slyly cunning' and have been adopted to English in the early nineteenth century.²

It seems that the prison argot is also simply formed from descriptions of objects in the environment. Examples include **Fish Bowl** for 'Control Room', because at Christchurch Women's this room has large glass windows at the

² E. Partridge. *Dictionary of the Underworld*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.

intersection of two main corridors so that everyone can see in and the officers can see out — assisted by a set of video camera screens which monitor the entire prison. The colours of some drugs are a basis for their slang names: **grapes** are purple, **grey coats** are grey and **oranges** are orange morphine sulphate tablets.

Boob jargon at Christchurch Women's Prison is a complex linguistic melange of words of various types from a multitude of origins which have come together to produce a unique form of expression made to function specifically for inmates in their prison environment. The language allows them privacy, an enlarged element of freedom, a form of identity, a higher self-esteem, support and solidarity and a sense of humour. It monitors behaviour and attitudes and generally enables life in jail to run more smoothly for all those who spend part of their lives there. I found that this study provided a fascinating insight not only into prison language and its functions, but introduced me to the lives and personalities of the female prisoners; something which I will always consider a valuable experience.

Glossary of slang terms in use at Christchurch Women's prison: September 1997

† Word has the same meaning/usage at Rolleston Men's Prison as it does at Christchurch Women's Prison.

ACDC <i>n.</i>	A game similar to draughts, played on a backgammon board.
† ACID <i>n.</i>	Lysergic acid diethylamide, commonly known as LSD, used in experimental medicine and taken illegally as a hallucinogenic drug.
† AL CAPONE <i>n.</i>	Telephone – rhyming slang.
ARMO GEAR <i>n.</i>	A hypodermic syringe and needle; the equipment used to administer drugs intravenously.
ARO or ARROW <i>n.</i>	Arohata Women's Prison, Wellington.
ARSE LICKER <i>n.</i>	1. Someone who is easily conned. 2. An inmate who ingratiates himself or herself in order to get through their sentence easily.
† BABE RUTH <i>n.</i>	The truth – rhyming slang.
† BACK UP <i>v.</i>	† 1. To reoffend or repeat (an offence), commit a crime twice. † 2. To look out for or to protect one's friend.
BAHAMAS <i>n. pl.</i>	Solitary confinement, secure unit.
BALDY <i>n.</i>	White Supremacist gang member with a shaven head.
† BARREL <i>v.</i>	To tell off, chastise.
BARRICADE <i>v.</i>	To go on strike.
† BEAT THE FEET <i>v.</i>	To escape — 'do a runner'.
BEAT THE HOOFF <i>v.</i>	To escape; [a variant of beat the feet .]
† BED SICK <i>n.</i>	Confinement to cell for medical reasons.
BENZO <i>n.</i>	Benzedrine pill (amphetamine).
BIG LAG <i>n.</i>	A long sentence; [see lag for 'sentence'].
BILLY LID <i>n.</i>	One's child – rhyming slang for 'kid.'
BITCHKEEPER <i>n.</i>	Member of the Police Force in charge of the dogs which search the prison for drugs, dog-handler.
† BLADE <i>n.</i>	Knife.
BLANKET <i>v.</i>	To assault someone by first blinding them with a blanket and then beating them up (see blanket job below).
† BLANKET (JOB) <i>n.</i>	A mode of assault. A blanket or pillowcase is used to blind and confuse the victim and to ensure that the attackers remain anonymous.

BLAST <i>n.</i>	Heroin – a Class A morphine-based opiate derivative.
<i>v.</i>	To inject intravenous drugs, e.g. heroin – ‘blast up.’
† BLOW IT <i>v.</i>	To perform fellatio.
† BLUE <i>n.</i>	A fight.
BOB <i>n.</i>	Marijuana.
BOLT <i>v.</i>	To escape — ‘do a runner’.
† BOOB GEAR <i>n.</i>	Institution clothing — prison uniform.
BOOB TOBACCO <i>n.</i>	Prison tobacco. Not available since 1992-3.
† BOOBHEAD <i>n.</i>	Inmate.
BOOBSMOKE <i>n.</i>	Prison tobacco.
† BOOBWEED <i>n.</i>	Prison tobacco. Not available since 1992-3.
† BOSS <i>n.</i>	Prison guard.
BOYS IN BLUE <i>n.</i>	The police.
BRACE ‘N’ BIT <i>n.</i>	Hypodermic syringe and needle – rhyming slang for <i>fit</i> (see below).
† BROKEN (ARSE) <i>n.</i>	A name for an inmate who is melancholy, depressed, stressed or shattered, usually by the hardships of prison life.
† BROWN BREAD <i>adj.</i>	Dead – rhyming slang.
† BUGS BUNNY <i>adj.</i>	Funny – rhyming slang.
BULLHEAD <i>n.</i>	Pakeha; [possibly a variant of <i>baldhead</i> , of the same meaning].
BUM BOY <i>n.</i>	1. A homosexual. 2. An inmate who acts as a slave for another inmate, does all their work.
BUM GIRL <i>n.</i>	The Assistant Superintendent.
BUM <i>n.</i>	Cigarette filter or filter used when smoking drugs, e.g. in a marijuana joint.
BUNGY JUMPING <i>v.</i>	‘To go —’; to commit suicide by hanging.
† BUNNY <i>n.</i>	1. A woman with loose morals, ‘an easy lay’. † 2. Someone who is an easy mark, easily conned.
† BUST <i>n.</i>	A police raid.
<i>v.</i>	† 1. To burglarise. 2. To get caught committing a crime. † 3. To arrest.
BUY UP <i>v.</i>	To shop. This is done by filling out P119 forms by which inmates can order extra clothes, food, etc.
CAMP <i>v.</i>	To take part in lesbian activities.
† CAN <i>n.</i>	Prison.
CAT FIGHT <i>n.</i>	1. A fight between women. 2. An attack from behind. 3. A cowardly assault.
CAVE <i>n.</i>	Cell.
CCs <i>abbr.</i>	Solitary confinement (lit. ‘Cell Confinement’.)
† CHARGE <i>n.</i>	Contraband (usually wrapped in gladwrap) hidden inside oneself (esp. vagina.)
<i>v.</i>	To insert illegal contraband into one’s rectum / vagina.
† CLASS <i>adj.</i>	Cleverness, commendability, bravery.
† CLASS. <i>n.</i>	Shortened form of Classification Block; here inmates are given a security classification (high-medium, medium, low-medium, minimum, etc.)
CLAYTON’S VISIT <i>n.</i>	No visit.
† CLEAN <i>adj.</i>	Innocent, naive person.
† COP <i>v.</i>	To receive, accept (without complaint): <i>cop that, cop a lag, cop it sweet.</i>
† COP OUT <i>v.</i>	To back down or withdraw.
† COPPER <i>n.</i>	† 1. Policeman. † 2. Inmate informer.
CRACK <i>n.</i>	Heroin.
CRANK <i>n.</i>	Heroin of poor quality; ‘poor man’s smack.’
† CRASH <i>n.</i>	A game of football, usually played in prison corridors, or on concrete.
CRIPPLE OUT <i>v.</i>	To ‘go nuts,’ lose one’s temper.
† CUT UP <i>n.</i>	A mutilation.

<i>v.</i>	To mutilate oneself.
D <i>n.</i>	Detective.
DAK <i>n.</i>	Marijuana.
† DEAL TO <i>v.</i>	To assault, beat up.
† DEMON <i>n.</i>	† 1. Detective. 2. Evil, devious person.
DEN <i>n.</i>	Cell.
DETECTIVE <i>n.</i>	Nosey person.
† DIGGER <i>n.</i>	Solitary confinement, the pound .
DO THE DEED <i>v.</i>	To kill someone.
DOG BOX <i>n.</i>	1. 'To be in the' = to be in trouble. 2. The guard house.
DOG CART <i>n.</i>	'To be in the' = to be in trouble.
DOG HOUSE <i>n.</i>	Guard house.
DOG ROLL <i>n.</i>	Prison meatloaf.
DOLLY <i>n.</i>	1. Male visitor or male partner of an inmate. 2. Lesbian partner.
DOLLY NOTE <i>n.</i>	(Illegal) love letter from one female inmate to another.
DON'T GO THERE <i>int.</i>	Expression meaning: 'I don't want to know.'
DOOBIE <i>n.</i>	Marijuana (joint).
† DROP <i>n.</i>	A deposit of money or contraband – 'do a drop.'
<i>v.</i>	1. To deposit money or contraband in a chosen place for pickup. 2. To take a pill; 'she dropped some jacks .'
DUB <i>n.</i>	Two-ounce packet of prison tobacco. Not available since 1992-3.
DUMP <i>n.</i>	Prison.
DUNGEON <i>n.</i>	Solitary confinement.
EASY LAG <i>n.</i>	An easy, hassle-free sentence.
EASY (TOUCH) <i>n.</i>	Someone who is an easy mark, easily conned.
† EGG <i>n.</i>	Idiot, stupid person.
FIDDLEY AND GUN <i>n.</i>	Hypodermic syringe and needle.
FILTH, THE <i>n.</i>	The police.
† FINGER <i>v.</i>	1. To accuse or blame. 2. To steal.
FIRST TIMER <i>n.</i>	Innocent, naive person: most often used toward people doing their first sentence; otherwise used toward those who display that characteristic lack of knowledge about the world/prison environment.
FISH BOWL <i>n.</i>	Control Room.
† FIT <i>n.</i>	Hypodermic syringe – shortened form of 'outfit.'
FIX <i>n.</i>	1. A hypodermic syringe. 2. A shot of drugs.
† FORM <i>n.</i>	1. Guts, 'balls', bravery. † 2. Reputation.
† FOUR-BY-TWO <i>n.</i>	Prison guard — rhyming slang for screw.
† FREAK <i>n.</i>	Paedophile.
FRESH MEAT <i>n.</i>	Inmate new to the prison.
† FRONT <i>n.</i>	1. Put on a front . To be brave when one is hurting. † 2. Persona.
FRONT (UP) <i>v.</i>	Come clean, own up.
† GAME, THE <i>n.</i>	Prostitution – on the game .
† GANNET <i>n.</i>	A greedy person.
† GATE FEVER <i>n.</i>	Pre-release tension.
GEAR <i>n.</i>	Drugs and associated devices for administering them.
GET DONE <i>v.</i>	To be convicted.
GIVE <i>n.</i>	A persona.
GO DOWN <i>v.</i>	1. To be convicted. 2. To perform cunnilingus.
GO FAST <i>n.</i>	Speed, an amphetamine drug.
GO HARD <i>v.</i>	1. To do something on one's own. 2. To display radical behaviour.
GO OUT IN THE SHINE <i>v.</i>	To go outside in the sun.

GO OVER <i>v.</i>	To commit suicide, especially from a drug overdose.
GO SLOW <i>v.</i>	To take a day off.
GO SPARE <i>v.</i>	To lose one's temper.
† GO UNDER <i>v.</i>	To be convicted.
GO WITH IT <i>v.</i>	To do one's sentence easily.
GOLDEN SHOWER <i>n.</i>	The emptying out of cell chamberpots.
GRAPE <i>n.</i>	30 milligram morphine sulphate tablets (barbiturate).
† GRASS <i>n.</i>	Marijuana, especially the leaf of the plant, not as good quality as the head, the bud.
† GREASE <i>v.</i>	To bribe.
GREYCOAT <i>n.</i>	100 milligram morphine sulphate tablet.
† GROUSE <i>adj.</i>	Excellent, of high quality, awesome — 'good shit'.
† HALF INCH <i>v.</i>	To steal — rhyming slang for 'pinch.'
HALF WIT HARRY <i>n.</i>	Male visitor/partner of an inmate.
HANDLE THE JANDAL <i>v.</i>	'Handle the lag' — to cope with one's sentence.
HEAD <i>n.</i>	'To give —.' To perform fellatio.
† HEAT, THE <i>n.</i>	The Police.
† HEAVY <i>adj.</i>	Violent, threatening.
HEIST <i>n.</i>	A robbery.
HIGHWAY <i>n.</i>	Main corridor at Christchurch Women's Prison.
† HIT <i>n.</i>	† 1. Object or act of burglary or assault. 2. Intravenous drug injection.
HOIST <i>n.</i>	A hold up, robbery.
HOLD <i>v.</i>	'She's holding' — to have a store of drugs or contraband.
† HOLD OUT <i>v.</i>	† 1. To refuse to share. 2. To hang on to something and keep it secret.
HOLE <i>n.</i>	Cell.
(HOME) BREW <i>n.</i>	Illegally made alcohol.
HOOTER <i>n.</i>	Marijuana (joint).
HOUSE <i>n.</i>	Cell.
HOUSE M or HOUSIE <i>n.</i>	Halcyon pill.
I.V. <i>n.</i>	Heroin.
INSIDE <i>n.</i>	Imprisonment, 'doing a lag.'
INSTITUTION CLOTHING <i>n.</i>	Formal title used by inmates to refer to boobgear .
† ITCHY FEET <i>n.</i>	The desire to 'do a runner,' escape from the prison.
J <i>abbr.</i>	Marijuana (joint).
JAB <i>n.</i>	Marijuana.
† JACK-AND-JILLS <i>n.</i>	Pills — rhyming slang. (Also referred to separately — see below.)
JACK <i>n.</i>	Pill — a 'downer' (barbiturates).
JILL <i>n.</i>	Pills — an 'upper' (amphetamines).
† JOB <i>n.</i>	A robbery.
† JOINT <i>n.</i>	† 1. A rolled cigarette of marijuana. † 2. A prison.
K.F. <i>abbr.</i>	Short for Kid Fucker or Kiddie Fucker , a paedophile.
K.P. <i>abbr.</i>	Short for King Pin — a leader who has gained his/her position from violence.
† KING HIT <i>n.</i>	† 1. An attack from behind. † 2. A cowardly assault. 3. A direct punch to the face.
† KING PIN <i>n.</i>	A leader who has gained his/her position from violence.
KIT <i>n.</i>	Prison clothing.
KITE <i>n.</i>	Mail, a letter.
† LAG <i>n.</i>	Sentence.
LAZY J <i>n.</i>	Marijuana that is bludged off someone else.
LEAF <i>n.</i>	Skinhead — White Supremacist gang member with shaven head.
LICK BOXER <i>n.</i>	Lesbian.
LIFER <i>n.</i>	An inmate serving a life sentence.

† LIGHT DUTIES <i>n. pl.</i>	Medical order excusing a prisoner from heavy work and/or medical lockup.
LINE UP <i>n.</i>	A line of inmates in ordered positions for meals or a head-count.
LOCK DOWN <i>n.</i>	Confinement to cell for medical reasons, punishment, or when officers are having a staff meeting.
LOCK UP <i>n.</i>	Bed-time.
LOCKED DOWN <i>adj.</i>	In prison.
LONER <i>n.</i>	An inmate who spends their time alone, not in a gang or a crew, either by choice or through ostracism.
LOOKOUT <i>n.</i>	Someone who keeps watch for someone else — e.g. in a fight.
LOYAL <i>adj.</i>	Faithful, reliable — (an important concept among inmates.)
MAGGOT <i>n.</i>	1. A moron. 2. An abusive term for somebody one is angry or annoyed with.
MAINSTREAM <i>n.</i>	The main corridor at Christchurch Women's Prison.
MANA <i>n.</i>	Bravery, esteem and modesty combined.
MARLEY <i>n.</i>	A big, fat marijuana joint.
MATE <i>n.</i>	(pron. /meit/ or /mate/ — Maori) Menstruation.
† MICKEY or MICKEY FINN <i>n.</i>	† A sleeping pill — 'slip them the Mickey.'
<i>v.</i>	To spike one's drink with drugs or alcohol.
MICKOSAURUS <i>n.</i>	A lesbian.
MINCE <i>v.</i>	To hold conversation (sometimes illegally) with other inmates or wings.
† MINCE PIES <i>n. pl.</i>	Eyes — rhyming slang.
MOGGIE <i>n.</i>	Mogadon sleeping pill.
MISTIE <i>n.</i>	Morphine Sulphate Tablet (MST).
MUCK <i>n.</i>	An idiot.
† MUG <i>n.</i>	† 1. Face. † 2. Foolish, naive person.
MUSTER <i>n.</i>	Head count of inmates to ensure that everyone is present.
† NARK <i>n.</i>	Inmate informer.
<i>v.</i>	1. To blame. 2. To use false/fabricated evidence against the accused in order to secure a conviction. † 3. Inform, to inform upon.
NEEDLE <i>n.</i>	Hypodermic syringe.
† NELLIE BLIGH <i>n.</i>	Untruth, lie — rhyming slang.
NEW ON THE FLOOR <i>adj.</i>	Refers to prison officers who are new to the prison or have just finished training.
NEW SCREW <i>n.</i>	An officer who is new to the prison or has just finished training.
† NICK <i>n.</i>	Prison.
<i>v.</i>	1. To steal. † 2. To arrest.
NIGLET <i>n.</i>	A dark skinned child.
NO EFFECT <i>int.</i>	Expression meaning: 'I'm okay, not a problem' — shows that the bad news, punishment, hard work etc. that the inmate has to face literally has no effect — they are not troubled by hassles of prison life.
† NOAH'S ARK <i>n.</i>	Informer — rhyming slang for <i>nark</i> .
† NOD <i>v.</i>	To plead guilty — 'nod to it,' 'give it the nod,' = yes, I did it.
† NORTH AND SOUTH <i>n.</i>	Mouth — rhyming slang.
NOT THE ONE <i>n.</i>	A person whose behaviour is considered to be offensive or substandard, or something unpopular, disgusting. (compare with the one below).
NUDE NUT <i>n.</i>	Skinhead — White Supremacist gang members.
† NUMBER ONE <i>n.</i>	1. Bully, controller; intimidating person who tries to run the wing. † 2. Restricted Diet No.1 — abolished because of the Bill of Rights in 1981. (Consisted of fat, bread, water and one pint of milk per day.)
† NUMBER TWO <i>n.</i>	† Restricted Diet No. 2. (Abolished). Consisted of two ponds of potatoes and a pint of milk.

O abbr.	An ounce of marijuana.
OBs n.	Observation Cell – a strip cell with a camera.
OLD LAGGER n.	1. Repeat offender, recidivist, e.g. someone in and out of prison for years. 2. Inmate serving a life sentence.
ON REPORT adj.	To be —; to gain a criminal charge in prison.
ON THE BLOCK adj.	To be —; to be ostracised, shunned, to get nothing.
ON THE COAT or COATED adj.	To be —; to be ostracised, shunned to get nothing.
ON THE CORNER adj.	To be —; to be a prostitute.
ON THE MARK adj.	Reliable, faithful.
ON THE NOD adj.	Under the influence of a shot of intravenous drugs.
ON THE STREET adj.	To be —; to be a prostitute.
ON TO IT adj.	1. All right, okay, fine. 2. Reliable.
ON YOUR BIKE adj.	Involved in a jail divorce.
ONE ON ONE n.	1. A fight. 2. A talk 'woman to woman'.
ORANGE n.	60 mg morphine sulphate tablet.
OUTSIDE n.	Anyone / anywhere not in prison.
PAP n.	Paparua — Christchurch Men's Prison.
† PARCEL n.	Illegal contraband.
PARK UP v.	To finish work for the day, relax.
† PARRY n.	Paremoremo Prison, New Zealand's maximum security institution.
PARTY PACK n.	An issue of female toiletries.
PAT THE HOOF v.	To hurry up, 'get cracking.'
† PEG v.	To notice, watch.
PICK n.	The actual hypodermic needle attached to a syringe.
† PIECE n.	A firearm.
† PIG n.	† 1. A policeman. 2. A prison guard.
PIN HEAD n.	Skinhead.
PIN PUSHER n.	A homosexual.
† PING n.	A dose of drug administered with a needle. v. To administer drugs with a needle – 'ping up.'
† PISSPOT PARADE n.	The emptying out of cell chamberpots.
† POLICEMAN n.	1. A nosey person who asks a lot of questions. † 2. An inmate informer.
† PORRIDGE n.	Imprisonment.
POTTY PARADE n.	The emptying out of cell chamberpots.
† POUND n.	Solitary confinement punishment cell.
PRIMO adj.	Good, excellent.
PROSPECT n.	Officer who has just finished training.
PSYCH n.	An inmate in prison for murder.
RAID n.	A police invasion.
v.	1. To assault. 2. To invade and arrest. 3. To burgle.
† RAP n.	1. To take the — = to take the blame for someone else, or sole responsibility in a group offence. † 2. A criminal charge.
RED FLAG n.	Menstruation; 'got your red flag out?'
† RINGBOLT n.	Clandestine voyage by sea used by escapees.
RIVVIE n.	Rivitrol – a drug.
† ROD n.	Firearm.
ROLLY n.	Rolleston Men's Prison, Canterbury.
ROOKIE n.	Officer who has just finished training.
ROOM n.	Cell.
ROPEHEAD n.	Person with dreadlocks in their hair.
RUMBLE n.	A fight.

† SCAB <i>n.</i>	1. Insult used to someone you've had a fight with. † 2. Someone who 'greases' to prison officials.
SCARPER <i>n.</i>	An escape.
<i>v.</i>	To escape.
† SCREW <i>n.</i>	Prison guard.
SCRIPT <i>n.</i>	A note passed by one inmate to another, often written in slang.
† SEND TO COVENTRY <i>v.</i>	To ostracise.
SEW UP <i>v.</i>	To secure a conviction using fabricated evidence.
† SHANK <i>n.</i>	1. Bad quality heroin. † 2. Knife, blade.
† SHIT <i>n.</i>	Drugs.
SHITHEAD <i>n.</i>	Skinhead — White Supremacist gang member.
† SHIV <i>n.</i>	Stabbing weapon.
SHOOT UP <i>v.</i>	To administer a drug intravenously.
SHOOTER <i>n.</i>	Firearm.
SHOT <i>n.</i>	Heroin.
SICKIE <i>n.</i>	To have a —; confinement to cell for medical reasons.
SIDEWAYS <i>n.</i>	Commit —; commit suicide by cutting.
† SKAG <i>n.</i>	Heroin.
SKINS <i>n.</i>	Cigarette papers.
† SKINS or SKINZ <i>n.</i>	'Skinheads' — Neo-NAZI / White Supremacist gang members with shaven heads.
† SLAMMER <i>n.</i>	† 1. Prison, lockup. † 2. Solitary confinement.
SLEAZE <i>v.</i>	To bribe.
SLOPE <i>n.</i>	Asian person.
† SLOP OUT <i>v.</i>	To empty out cell chamberpots.
† SLOT <i>n.</i>	Cell.
† SMACK <i>n.</i>	Heroin.
SMASH <i>v.</i>	To beat up, assault.
SMOKE <i>n.</i>	1. Marijuana. 2. Cigarette tobacco.
SNAP <i>v.</i>	To escape.
SNU <i>abbr.</i>	Special Needs Unit — for mentally unbalanced or potentially suicidal inmates.
SNU MATERIAL <i>n.</i>	Idiot, mad person.
† SOLID <i>adj.</i>	Faithful, reliable.
† SOOTY <i>n.</i>	A person with dark skin.
† SOUR GRAPE <i>n. and v.</i>	(To) rape.
† SPEW (ON) <i>v.</i>	1. To be angry or annoyed. 2. To be extremely worried about having told someone something you shouldn't have.
SPIN <i>v.</i>	To be angry or annoyed.
† SPOON <i>n.</i>	A moron, idiot.
† SPOT <i>n.</i>	† One hundred dollars.
<i>v.</i>	To take marijuana by heating two knives on a stove element, placing a drop of marijuana oil between the hot knives and inhaling the resultant smoke through a milk or Coca-Cola bottle.
† SPRING <i>v.</i>	† 1. To escape. † 2. To discover. 3. To get arrested or caught committing a crime.
† SQUARE OFF <i>v.</i>	To apologise.
† SQUEAL <i>v.</i>	To inform upon — nark .
STANDOVER <i>v.</i>	To threaten someone in order to take something from them; 'demanding with menace.'
<i>adj.</i>	For example, 'standover tactics.'
STARS BEHIND BARS <i>n.</i>	Prison.
STASH <i>n.</i>	A store of drugs or contraband.
<i>v.</i>	1. To arm oneself. 2. To hide or hold on to.

† STAUNCH <i>adj.</i>	1. Someone who thinks they are tough. 2. Violent, threatening. 3. Someone who can 'talk it and walk it' — actually go through with what they promise/say/threaten. † 4. True to / standing by one's friends. Reliable, faithful.
† STEP OUT <i>v.</i>	To challenge to a fight.
† STICK <i>v.</i>	To stab someone.
† STIR CRAZINESS <i>n.</i>	Prison psychosis.
STITCH UP <i>v.</i>	To fabricate evidence in order to secure a conviction.
STRAIGHT <i>n.</i>	An innocent, naive person.
STRAIGHT UP <i>adj.</i>	Honest, true, standing by one's friends.
STRETCH <i>n.</i>	Sentence, time serving in prison.
STRIP <i>n.</i>	A body search.
STRIP CELL <i>n.</i>	Cell for suicidal inmates. The strip cell is practically bare — free of anything that the inmate could potentially use to harm herself.
SUGAR DADDY <i>n.</i>	A male visitor/partner of an inmate.
SUPER. <i>n.</i>	Superintendent.
† SWEET (AS) <i>adj.</i>	Fine, okay, good.
TAKE OUT <i>v.</i>	To assault.
TAKE OUT <i>or</i> TAKE ON <i>v.</i>	To challenge to a fight.
TAMMIE <i>n.</i>	Temazepam. (Sedative in the form of a gel-like capsule either taken orally or melted and injected.)
† TANK <i>n.</i>	1. Burglary involving a safe. † 2. Safe.
† TANK MAN <i>n.</i>	† Safe blowing expert.
TASTE <i>n.</i>	An injection of drugs.
† TEALEAF <i>n.</i>	† A thief — rhyming slang.
<i>v.</i>	To steal.
TELLING PHONE <i>n.</i>	Telephone.
THE BASH <i>n.</i>	An assault.
THE BIG HOUSE <i>n.</i>	Prison.
THE BOSS <i>n.</i>	Male visitor/partner.
THE BROS <i>n.</i>	Dark-skinned people, (esp. Maoris.)
THE CORRIDOR <i>n.</i>	The main corridor at Christchurch Women's Prison.
THE MASTER <i>n.</i>	Male visitor/partner.
(THE) MOUNT <i>n.</i>	Mt. Eden Women's Prison, Auckland.
THE ONE <i>n.</i>	An object or person which is good, excellent, awesome — 'That's the one!', 'She's the one!'
TIME OUT <i>n.</i>	Solitary confinement.
TINNY <i>n.</i>	Marijuana joint.
TISSUE <i>n.</i>	Skinhead.
† TOES UP <i>adj.</i>	Asleep.
TONGUE FU <i>n.</i>	Lesbian.
TOOL <i>n.</i>	1. Knife. 2. Firearm.
† TOOL UP <i>v.</i>	To arm oneself.
TOOT <i>n.</i>	Marijuana.
TOP	To tell on someone.
† TOP OFF <i>v.</i>	1. To commit suicide. † 2. To kill.
TOPPER <i>n.</i>	Nark.
TRIP <i>n.</i>	Lysergic acid commonly known as LSD. Used as a drug.
† TROUBLE-AND-STRIFE <i>n.</i>	Wife — rhyming slang.
TRY HARD <i>n.</i>	1. A violent, threatening person. 2. A trickster, swindler.
† TURD BURGLAR <i>n.</i>	Homosexual rapist.
TWAT <i>n.</i>	An idiot.
UNDER THE THUMB <i>adj.</i>	In love.
† UNDONE <i>adj.</i>	Come —; To get arrested or caught committing a crime.
UNIFORM <i>n.</i>	Prison guard.
† UNSTUCK <i>adj.</i>	Come —; To get arrested or caught committing a crime.
URINE <i>n.</i>	A drug test.

USER <i>n.</i>	A person who uses intravenous drugs.
† VERBAL <i>v.</i>	To use false evidence against the accused.
† VOMIT <i>v.</i>	To be angry or annoyed.
V <i>n.</i>	Valium Pill.
WANG BANG <i>n.</i>	A pub – especially striptease.
WASTE <i>v.</i>	To kill.
WAY COOL <i>adj.</i>	Excellent, very good.
† WEASEL <i>n.</i>	A sly or devious person.
† WEED <i>n.</i>	† 1. Prison tobacco. Not available since 1992-3. 2. Marijuana.
WHIGGER <i>n.</i>	A white person trying to be a Maori.
WICKED LAG <i>n.</i>	A life sentence.
WING <i>n.</i>	Called units at Rolleston Prison: the different areas where inmates are housed.
† WOOLLY WOOFER <i>n.</i>	A homosexual – rhyming slang for ‘poofter.’
WORKING GIRL <i>n.</i>	A prostitute.
WORLD WAR THREE <i>n.</i>	An argument.
† WROUGHT <i>n.</i>	1. A pack of lies – ‘what a wrought!’ † 2. ‘To pull a wrought’ – to trick, swindle, conspire.
YOU'RE THE ONE <i>int.</i>	Expression indicating that the hearer is a best friend, good mate.

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