

GBB benefits outline:

My Second Analysis chapter identified that prison volunteering has mutually beneficially benefits- from the perspective of volunteers:

Benefits Experienced by the Volunteers:

1. Career Development and Experiential Learning:

- Experiential learning in volunteering is predicated on “learning by doing” where particularly student volunteers can learn through the process of hands-on experience and reflection (MacNeela & Gannon, 2013, pp. 409).
- Volunteering opportunities in prison offer individuals the chance to explore new interests and potential career pathways.
- Prison volunteerism can open new avenues and career trajectories that may ultimately lead to employment in these fields, while simultaneously providing valuable experiential learning and equipping individuals with the relevant skills needed (Gilmour & Alessi, 2022)
- ***“Due to what I was doing volunteer-wise, it really did push me to begin working with corrections.”***

2. Transformation of Beliefs:

- Many participants discussed, through working closely with the inmates over several weeks, months, to even years, becoming well versed in their stories and beginning to develop a greater understanding of their positions and the broader contexts behind their offending.
- Through the experiential learning process, and their reflections on their volunteering experiences, volunteers can adopt a more humanising perspective, seeing inmates beyond their criminal offending and developing a more compassionate and tolerant outlook (Duncan & Balbar, 2008; Kort-Butler & Malone, 2015; Tewksbury & Dabney, 2004; Loughnan, 2022).
- ***“The exposure to the inmates was a massive thing for me, I've developed a lot of patience and openness”***

Perceived Benefits of Volunteer Work for inmates:

1. Improvement in Mental Health and Wellbeing:

Providing safe emotional outlets:

- Many of the volunteers in the current study discussed their perception that their programs provided inmates with safe, non-judgmental, and positive spaces for inmates.
- Through the provision of such spaces, in different ways, the inmates were able to express themselves and vent their emotions while also taking part in a positive activity.

- Research on communal cooking classes with inmates, such as GBB's Prison Bake program, can create beneficial well-being outcomes for inmates such as improving self-esteem and developing a more pro-social identity (Parsons, 2017).

Connective bridge to the community:

- Another identified benefit from the current participants concerning inmate mental health and well-being was the theme of connection. Specifically, the volunteers discussed how their programs helped connect inmates with the outside community, and with each other as they collaborated on tasks.
- Connection through volunteers is significant as inmates who are socially isolated from their communities are more likely to experience negative mental health outcomes such as self-harm and suicide during their incarceration, as well as long-lasting effects that can carry over to life after release (Cochran & Mears, 2021; Siennick et al, 2013).
- Current participants Alice and Belinda through Good Bitches teach baking to inmates, which is donated to various charities. These community-based initiatives allow the inmates to give back to their communities and, as argued by Kort-Butler and Malone (2015), provide vital links between inmates, community, and community resources.
- ***Alice (GBB) "So, it wasn't it wasn't just about teaching them a skill. Yeah. So, the kind of the baking was just the vehicle for really, and actually giving them a chance to think about being kind to other people, and how that benefited them as well as other people."***
- ***Alice (GBB) "... the guys (inmates) realised they could take those recipes with them when they leave prison and maybe bake for themselves or for their family or something. And some of the guys were like, "oh, yeah, cool, I never really thought that baking would be kindness, but I could bake this batch and give it to my partner, or I could give it to my friend or those people with the kids at the street." And so, they suddenly kind of saw how they could do something small, that had never crossed their mind before that, that was in itself a form of kindness."***

Positive break from routine:

- Another repeated theme was that the volunteers believed their programs benefited the inmates as they provided them with a positive break from the highly structured and regimented nature of prison life. The volunteer programs were often more creative, less formal, and not treatment focused, and provided the inmates with more relaxed environment
- Alice (name has been changed for anonymity) GBB: ***"...And people need to feel good about themselves and connected to other people. Like sometimes it just needs to be about doing something fun."*** (Alice)

- Alice from GBB discussed how the Prison Bake program gave the prisoners a positive and constructive experience within their often highly regimented routines.
- ***“Having us coming in and having a bit of a giggle and doing something quite different that had a positive focus made a difference to them. And it gave them a bit of lightness amongst everything else.”***
- The inmates Alice worked with often described the overwhelming nature of prison life, and for them, the programs were a chance to break away from the toils of their everyday routine.
- ***“One of the guys in there was telling me how for him, it was just so nice to have something like normalised but also positive....because there's nothing planned, they just kind of mope around the villas, and often the others are whining or complaining about the way that their life is, but then it just sometimes it's a bit overwhelming. And so having us coming in and having a bit of a giggle and doing something quite different that had a positive focus made a difference to them.”***
- Belinda (GBB):
- ***“When all the ingredients come out, we always sort of made double of everything so that they (the inmates) could keep some and then they would box up a cake box, which is like what our bakers do, and write on one of our flyers, and we would take it to Women's Refuge. They (the inmates) loved the fact that they were giving back something. And that was obviously a very big part of us going in there and explaining about what we did and giving them (the inmates) the opportunity to give back.”***
- ***“They (the inmates) put so much care into what they were doing, the way they wrote on the flyers, I don't know if you know, like we, as I said, we provide this with all our volunteers, we provide the cake boxes, and we have flyers and they write on one side of the flyer, they write the ingredients. And then on the other side, they write a note. And just with their penmanship, some of them would write in Māori, and it was just incredible. They just put so much attention into it.”***
- ***“I think the benefit of this program is that if someone that is a complete stranger, is willing to give up their time, on a Sunday, and go in and teach them (the inmates) baking, we're showing them that there are kind people out there beyond prison. And I think if we can model that kind of behaviour to them, then hopefully they will model that..... It's not about the baking, it's about someone actually coming in with no judgment that you are in prison, that has no idea about your background, but is willing to give you their time, and show you a skill or whatever, but to give you the time of day, so hopefully when they get out, hopefully they might model that kind of behaviour. That they're kind to someone else.”***

2. Education and Opportunities for Change:

Volunteers Engaging in Critical pedagogy:

- The volunteers in this study embraced critical teaching pedagogy, allowing them to approach education beyond the confines of the prison's institutional requirements.
- It was found that volunteers approach their work from a more egalitarian standpoint, often being mindful of avoiding the teacher-student hierarchies which inmates have often had negative experiences with.
- The participants in the current study displayed using more dialogic teaching when they approached their work with inmates, aligning with the values of Freire (2000) and critical pedagogy. Alice provides a clear example of the GBB team's intentions to ensure they were not creating a typical hierarchical teaching environment.
- ***"Kind of a bit more mentoring than teaching in some ways. So, it wasn't us standing at the front of a school commercial kitchen type situation, teaching them it was, yeah, us hanging out in the kitchen in the villa, showing them how to do stuff and just letting them figure it out, and then help them when they needed it."***

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