Factors of Desistance in Violent Offenders: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Tai Aroha Programme

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CHRISTOPHER BEATTIE

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Abstract

The phenomenon of desistance from crime is central to the process of rehabilitation. This study examines desistance narratives from the Tai Aroha programme to identify the aspects of participation in a community-based special treatment unit that are effective from the perspective of participants. A review of desistance literature is presented in a New Zealand context. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to present common themes in 64 exit interviews of individuals who completed this programme over a period of 6 years. These themes were compared to the factors of desistance identified in the literature review. The three key concepts that emerged from this study as factors of desistance evident in the Tai Aroha programme were the Morphic Self, Family and Whanau, and Mindfulness. The concept of the Morphic Self is a perspective on the process of identity change as experienced by participants, and is a key product of this research. Three other factors were identified as prerequisites for successful completion of the programme that also therefore contribute to desistance: Motivation, Sobriety, and Peers and Support. Also identified from this research were aspects of the experience termed Elements of Influence, which are the facets of the participants, the programme and the interactions between the two that can be considered in order to improve the delivery of the programme and therefore promote desistance. A distinctive quality of the Tai Aroha programme that was influential in the successful promotion of desistance was its strong commitment to tikanga Māori and the incorporation of these cultural values into the lifestyle and therapeutic approaches adopted by the facilitators.

Dedication

to

Kay Beattie

My mother, and my shining light in the darkness.
Whose belief in me was so strong, you could bend steel on it.
We were lucky to have you for as long as we did, and I miss you more than I could ever say.

and to

Nikita Madani

Who showed me you don't have to be the biggest to be the bravest.
Azizam.

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Michael Ian Beattie

My Father

When someone stumbles, you catch them.
When someone is alone, you stand by them.
When someone is lost, you find them.

And when they ask how they can ever repay you, just say:
"When someone stumbles, *you* catch them…"

You taught me that.

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Chapter One

The aim of this study is to explore desistance narratives of the Tai Aroha programme graduates, in order to identify prevalent factors of desistance across 64 experiences as recorded through standardised exit interviews. The research intends to identify the aspects of participation in a community-based special treatment unit that are effective from the perspective of participants, with a focus on personal agency and identity change. By exploring these factors in a culturally-informed rehabilitation context, this study aims to provide insights into effective methods of facilitating desistance in violent offenders in residential therapeutic communities.

Violent crime is an extremely traumatic phenomenon that has considerable personal consequences in terms of mental and physical health (Miller, Cohen, & Rossman, 1993). It is also a subject of major social concern, and has an effect on victims and their families that extends far beyond the immediate transgression (Dolan, Loomes, Peasgood, & Tsuchiya, 2005). While the efforts of victim support groups such as Women's Refuge are extremely positive and laudable, there remains a responsibility for society itself and psychologists as a group to continue to address the source of the concern as well. This research is therefore directed at providing insights in the factors promoting desistance from violent crime in therapeutic communities, and has been conducted to answer the following questions:

1) What consistent themes emerge from interpretative phenomenological analysis of participants' experiences within the therapeutic community?
2) How do these themes reflect factors of desistance?
3) What barriers to desistance can be observed from analysis of these experiences?
4) How can these identified factors and barriers be used to improve the success of therapeutic communities in New Zealand?

This research sought to identify the factors of desistance in violent offender self-report interviews at the point of exit from a community-based treatment programme. This introduction first presents the concept of desistance and then presents the salient points of the research statement in order: factors as

a focus of the research; desistance in violent offenders; self-report at the point of exit; and community-based treatment programmes. This is followed by a brief overview of the Tai Aroha programme as the source of the archival research data.

The Concept of Desistance from Crime

Desistance in its simplest form refers to the permanent cessation of a given behaviour, and is most often used to refer to the cessation of substance abuse or, as in the present study, crime and criminal activities. In a similar way, the simplest definition of crime is a violation of, or offence against, the law (Lynch, Stretesky, & Long, 2016). The ability of any given society to understand and engage with both of these concepts is vital to the implementation of any organised response.

Societies faced with criminal violations have several options of recourse, including exclusion, punishment and intervention (Ryberg & Corlett, 2010). Exclusion options, such as exile and forcible removal, have largely fallen out of favour over the course of history, as human society has become more complex and all-encompassing. This was codified after World War II by article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to a nationality (Glendon, 1997). Punishment options range from the extreme, in the case of execution or permanent incarceration, to the demonstrative, in the case of public humiliation or 'making an example' by harshly reprimanding relatively minor offenders (Gibbs, 1975). From the perspective of psychologists, the most useful options of recourse are intervention options, which include education, correction and rehabilitation (Thorn, 2007).

Education is the process by which individuals are instructed about the norms and laws of a society, and is so much an intrinsic part of our childhood experiences that it is often overlooked as a process of intervention. Rather than *how* misbehaviour is treated (which is often the choice of the individual parent or teacher) it is the fact *that* misbehaviour is disapproved of that forms the strongest lesson for children, and informs their own future views (Schmidt & Tomasello, 2012). Correction represents an overlap between punishment and

intervention, in which penalties are applied to offenders alongside encouragement to conform to societal norms. This is done to reduce the risk of harm to others in that society. The incorporation of sentence reduction for good behaviour is a key example of this (Hann, Harman, & Pease, 1991). Repeat offenders are less likely to be affected by incarceration as a deterrence as they have a different perspective on imprisonment, having endured it successfully in the past (Crank & Brezina, 2013). Instead, they are more likely to respond to rehabilitation, which is the process of significantly changing the beliefs and behaviours of an individual in order to have them function positively in a society (Bennett, 2010).

A key focus of intervention is having a clear understanding of what success looks like – the 'what works?' approach (Gendreau, Little, & Goggin, 1996). A successful intervention is ideally efficient (giving good value for resources), efficacious (supported by evidence in test conditions) and effective (supported by results in practice). While the complex interactions of different influences on rehabilitation can be difficult to account for, the common factors of successful interventions should be identified as simply as possible, to inform both the current initiatives and future measures.

Factors as a focus of the research.

The word 'factors' is used throughout this study to distinguish concepts that assist in understanding from 'variables' that might be discretely measured. This study is qualitative in nature as it examines the experiences of the participants. Each participant presents a different perspective on desistance, informed by their own background and experience, rather than the results of any particular test or scale. This was a key determinant in the decision to consider factors as the salient focus of this research

As discussed in the method section, the type of qualitative research chosen for this data set was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The key reason for this decision was the dually heuristic nature of IPA, which enabled the researcher to understand both the perspective of the participants and the perspective of the programme. This allows the researcher to determine

which factors of desistance had become significant both in the responses to the exit interviews and from the perspective of the participants themselves.

The purpose of applying this same hermeneutic process to the key articles of the literature review was to establish common factors of desistance across the existing body of research, rather than to draw upon any particular framework of desistance theory. The commonalities and differences between these factors are then examined in depth in the discussion.

Desistance in violent offenders.

To place this data in context in a useful way, it must be considered as a subset of the participants who were able to complete the Tai Aroha programme (the source of the data collected). They are a subset of the group of individuals who were selected to participate. They themselves are a subset of the offenders who were eligible, through stringent selection criteria, to petition for a place on the course. And in a larger sense anyone who successfully desists permanently from crime is a member of a subset of those who cease to offend, who are likewise a subset of offenders (Laub & Sampson, 2001). Therefore, the best way to introduce these related concepts is to begin with the largest group and to refine the concepts step-by-step to reach the focus of this research.

Crime itself is the largest relevant concept, being defined as engaging in criminal thinking, behaviour, and attitudes (Bonta & Andrews, 2010). Not all individuals who are prone to these impulses or subscribe to these antisocial beliefs act on their thoughts – many are deterred by social norms, interpersonal boundaries, and the fear of retribution from authority or society (Gray, Jackson, & Farrall, 2008). Those who allow these thought patterns to influence and inform their actions to the detriment of others are the ones who become criminal offenders.

These offenders as a group have been the subject of intense debate and study (Bevan, 2015), and presented as part of this research is a literature review of the knowledge that has informed and guided this field. Given that prevailing common belief is that reliable researchers should not themselves be engaged in criminal behaviour (Jordan & Meara, 1990), the perspective of the extant

research is largely from the outside looking in – a fact that is particularly influential in the early studies done on anthropological determinism (Ellwood, 1912) and the concept of a criminal underclass as a permanent, self-sustaining fact of life (Braithwaite, 1981; Chadwick, LeFevre, & Rowan, 1839). Later theories adopted a more socially responsible approach, culminating in prevalent modern schools of thought such as the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) paradigm (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990; Bonta & Andrews, 2010) and the Good Lives Model (GLM) (Ward & Brown, 2004).

The two primary topics of concern for this review are the subject of violent offenders and how they differ from nonviolent criminal offenders, and the subject of desistance from criminal activity and the concepts that are believed to influence and guide the cessation of crime. Offenders that engage in interpersonal violence represent a greater concern to public safety than those who avoid this behaviour (Quinsey, Harris, Rice, & Cormier, 2005). They are also considered more difficult to manage in a correctional setting (Polaschek & Collie, 2004), and to present challenges to rehabilitation that can be greater than those presented by nonviolent individuals (Fox, 1999).

Modern theories of desistance from criminal activity have been primarily informed by sociological and criminological models, discussed in depth in the literature review in this study. These theories have informed rehabilitation initiatives, particularly guided by best practice principles and adjustments made due to monitoring and feedback – such as the exit interviews that form the basis of the dataset for the present study.

Self-Report at the Point of Exit.

This study mainly utilised archival data which limited the options in terms of methodology. Privacy, confidentiality and ethical concerns also largely precluded the possibility of following up on individual interviewees. However, the majority of hermeneutic research into desistance (as opposed to procedural approaches) relies heavily on self-report to understand the processes occurring from the offender's perspective (Packer & Addison, 1989). It is impossible and unethical for a researcher to simply undertake the experience of becoming a criminal and then desisting from crime in a way that allows them to

meaningfully contribute to the literature. Even those researchers whose background includes these experiences must first undergo desistance before they are in a position to consider contributing, which limits the possibilities of unbiased empirical evidence. In short, the only way to understand the experience of desistance is to ask offenders about it.

Community-Based Treatment Programme.

Community-Based initiatives are on the rise in New Zealand in accordance with the philosophy of the Department of Corrections move towards rehabilitation over punishment, which follows the larger trend across the world (Cayley, 1998). The literature review presented with this research includes a discussion of the progression towards community-based rehabilitation and its strengths and weaknesses when compared to traditional prison-based corrective initiatives.

The major points of concern for community-based programmes are particularly applicable to this research, as they revolve around the regard for public safety and the likelihood of reoffending – both of which are more pressing issues with violent offenders (Monahan, 1984). However, the counter-argument is also presented in the literature review – the purpose of intervention is, after all, rehabilitation, and community-based programmes are more successful in facilitating skill learning and cognitive changes that can be easily generalised to life after release than those conducted in more restrictive correctional facilities (Day & Doyle, 2010).

Treatment itself forms the final aspect of this research, as part of the international drive towards best practices in criminal justice. In general, humanitarian concerns drive the move away from isolation and punishment of violent offenders, while economic and social concerns drive the move towards rehabilitation over containment of these individuals (Dilthey, Makkreel, & Frithjof, 1910). Group sessions provide an economical method of large-scale rehabilitation, as individual therapy is not often viable or sensible in terms of available resources. There is also evidence to suggest that group therapy is genuinely more successful than the individual therapeutic approach, largely due

to positive peer pressure and the process of identity change (Norcross & Wampold, 2011; Thorn, 2007).

These are the concepts and evidential research that informed the creation of the Tai Aroha Programme.

The Tai Aroha Programme

The Tai Aroha programme from which this research data was drawn is a therapeutic community based in Hamilton, New Zealand, which has been operating for 8 years, as of September, 2018. It is a Special Treatment Unit (STU) for male violent offenders aged 20 and over, who are serving community sentences but have been assessed as having a high risk of reoffending (RoC*RoI 0.7 or greater). STUs are custodial therapeutic environments under the supervision of the Department of Corrections, which provide an intervention approach that integrates therapy, rehabilitation and reintegration. Based on the hierarchical model described by De Leon (2000), Tai Aroha is a full residence programme in which participants complete ten core modules over the course of sixteen to eighteen weeks, transitioning through four phases from orientation to full community living (King, 2012). In addition to these core skill modules, there are daily group therapy sessions and scheduled daily meetings and culturally-based activities in which residents are expected to participate.

Tai Aroha is based in a residence previously known as Montgomery House, under the supervision of the Department of Corrections, a division of the New Zealand Government. The programme has room for ten participants at a time and is structured around an open, rolling induction model – new participants join as former residents are exited or graduate, and longer-term residents are expected to act as mentors to them.

The programme draws its name from a *waiata* (or traditional Māori song) and has a strong cultural focus. Tai Aroha itself means ‘sea of love’, and the programme adheres to the principles of tikanga Māori (Mead, 2016). Residents and staff alike are encouraged to participant in the programme as *whanau* (extended family or cohabiting community).

Review of the Literature

In order to adequately apply IPA to the research data, an understanding of desistance is required that is derived from the same analytical process. This heuristic process allows for cogent comparison of the factors evolved from the two experiences, and therefore serves to identify and illuminate the factors that are distinct about the Tai Aroha programme.

The existing literature on the subject of desistance, with a key focus on the factors of desistance in therapeutic communities, is examined in this section. A major challenge to research in this field is the distinctive nature of the existing information - being highly developed in some areas and relatively sparse in others. While being one of the most fastidiously recorded aspects of human interactions, the phenomena of crime is not easily explained. Theories of crime are presented in the context of building a framework around criminal thinking and its causes, with each theory considered in light of its role in illuminating desistance. The emergence of the concept of desistance itself is discussed, along with the modern underlying definition of crime and criminal behaviour, and the prevalent philosophy of rehabilitation that drives and informs the implementation of programmes and initiatives such as Tai Aroha.

Crime and Criminality

An introduction to desistance must by its very nature include the conceptualisation of crime, criminal behaviour and criminal thinking (Laub & Sampson, 2001). A dictionary definition of crime is hardly illuminating, as the only requirement of a crime is that is either an act or omission which constitutes an offence against the law. While laws, by their very nature, differ in different societies as administered by governing bodies, the concept of desistance has a more ubiquitous meaning. Why do some individuals adhere to the enforced laws of a given society, while others in the same society fail to comply with them? What fundamental differences exist between these groups? How can psychology be used to inform the identification, qualification, quantification and comprehension of the differences between them? Why do some individuals demonstrate a high rate of reoffending, while others decelerate, decline or cease

offending behaviour altogether? Most importantly of all, how can psychology be applied to the process of moving individuals from one group to another?

There is no simple or easy answer. Rather, there are several competing schools of thought about what constitutes criminal or antisocial behaviour, how that may or may not differ from criminal or antisocial thoughts or beliefs, and how a society should go about protecting itself from, or working with, those whose current orientation places other people in a position of undue risk (Bevan, 2015). As the field of study about crime and desistance has grown and developed, psychology has shied away from the uninformed application of overly generalised or misleading labels in the pursuit of general understanding – particularly in light of the impact this can have on individuals who are already vulnerable (Mercer, 1971; Waxler, 1981). Vulnerable individuals may often include juvenile offenders, first time offenders, or those recently diagnosed or labelled with mental conditions. By examining the long-term effects of categorising the participants, these studies demonstrate that the application of labels, especially negative and poorly understood labels, can not only increase an individual's perception of persecution, they can exacerbate the symptoms that led to diagnosis in the first place (Ben-Zeev, Young, & Corrigan, 2010). In a similar way to the ethical issues labelling individuals as 'mentally retarded' observed in Mercer (1971), to label someone a criminal (even when they are guilty of a crime) increases the chances of them adopting criminal thinking in the future, through a combination of social pressure, negative self-perceptions and exclusion from positive groups or opportunities (Bernburg, Krohn, & Rivera, 2006). This concept is particularly relevant to the conclusions of the present study's research, as it suggests that the precise definition of crime is less important to the process of desistance than the perception an individual has of themselves.

One of the key concerns about defining crime, and by extension desistance, is the assertion that there is a common root cause or imperative – be it natural, social, economic or otherwise – which drives otherwise law-abiding individuals into law-breaking situations. This misconception draws its conclusion from the simple fact that the majority of people do not significantly

deviate from the established laws and traditions of their culture and society under normal circumstances (Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2007). Laws are established as codified versions of commonly-held beliefs, rules and morals, and because they are 'commonly-held' they must by definition be agreed upon by the majority. Therefore, or so the argument goes, there must be something *uncommon* about the people who break these laws. In fact, early philosophers decided, that meant there was something *wrong* with these people (Hartog & Gow, 2005).

Demons and Apes: Early Crime Models

The oldest recorded model to predict or explain criminal behaviour is the concept of demonic possession, which contends that deviance from social norms was the result of spiritual corruption and malign spirits (Henry & Einstadter, 2006). The proscribed treatment was generally some form of torture or abuse, up to and including physically cutting holes in the body to let the evil spirits out (Neugebauer, 1979). For centuries, demonology provided the most widely accepted and rigorously applied theory of criminal behaviour, much to the detriment of those who made poor life choices, were unfortunate enough to be accused of serious crimes, or suffered from mental illnesses (Ward, 1980).

From this inauspicious start, our concepts of criminal behaviour moved on to anthropological determinism – the idea that criminality is entirely biological in its origins and inherited from our animalistic ancestors (Wolfgang, 1961). This is closely tied to the concept of atavism, in which robust physical characteristics were mistaken for signs of human degeneration back into a less evolved creature (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1895). Championed by Cesare Lombroso in 1876, anthropological determinism held that a criminal could be identified by examination of their physical features, and that unappealing differences from the norm were evidence of an individual having been 'born criminal' (Lombroso, 1876/2006). There was considerable overlap between this theory and the common practices of racial discrimination, xenophobia and cultural oppression.

As is clear from these early examples, there is a strong tendency for communities to desire to establish a single underlying cause upon which they

can blame criminal actions and antisocial behaviour. However, this concept itself is manifestly flawed, as it assumes a unity of causation between activities as diverse and unrelated as rape, financial fraud, murder, failing to signal while driving, and environmental pollution (Canton, 2016). Indeed, the concept becomes even less tenable when you consider some challenging but commonplace situations. What about activities that were not previously against the law but have since been legislated against? Presumably the social pressure against these activities, being enough to force prohibitive codification, existed well before the law came into being. Does that mean those people who broke with common practice before the establishment of the law are still engaging in what is essentially criminal thinking? What about activities that *were* illegal but are no longer so? What causes people who were previously free from deviant behaviour to start committing crimes? What about those people who were once criminal but have stopped behaving and thinking in that way?

This last question is perhaps the most relevant, as it is a short step from asking why people have stopped committing crimes to asking how we can encourage or induce offenders to stop committing crimes. As the fields of sociology and criminology evolved and communities developed more sophisticated cultures around civil rights and civic responsibilities, theories moved away from the causation/blame model that fuelled atavism and demonology and towards more comprehensive frameworks.

The Next Step: Social Models

Some early social models of crime focused on concepts such as strain theory; in which crime results from excessive pressure on individuals with insufficient resources (Merton, 1938). In brief, criminal behaviour or delinquency is a proposed to be a natural response to the stress imposed on people by the current or future failure to achieve goals, the loss of positive influences, and/or the imposition of negative influences. The concept of ‘desperate times calling for desperate measures’ is a recurring one when considering the influences that lead to crime (Agnew, 1992), as well as a common justification for criminal behaviour, and even for the glorification of crime as a necessity in media and entertainment (Scully & Moorman, 2014).

By providing an *in extremis* justification for violations of both laws and social norms, these studies support the idea that crime is a function of an individual being pushed beyond their endurance by their circumstances and situation, rather than as a result of poor decisions, negative life choices, or a flaw within themselves. However, more recent studies dispute the empirical basis for strain theory, largely noting that there is *only* a causal relationship between life stress and severity of criminal behaviour in regards to aggressive delinquency and violent crime (Aseltine Jr, Gore, & Gordon, 2000). Another limitation of this theory is the fact that criminal behaviour, particularly violent behaviour, and the negative social impact on families, employment, finances and social status, leads to a chicken-and-the-egg style situation in which crime can also be said to cause strain. Strain theory fails to address the role of legitimate coping strategies (Broidy, 2001), and there is little consensus about how strain theory should or could be applied to the process of desistance (Eitle, 2010).

Another approach with origins in social constructs of crime includes the early examples of social learning theory; in which crime is a learned behavioural approach institutionalised in the 'lower classes'(Braithwaite, 1981; Ellwood, 1912). These theories would be particularly important in the later works around social learning theory and its role in aggression (Bandura, 1978), and developmental psychology (Grusec, 1992). While strain theory suggests anyone is likely to commit crimes if pushed hard enough, but fails to predict which individuals are at most risk, the early models of social learning theory implied strongly that there was an inherent weakness within the underprivileged parts of society that made them particularly vulnerable to criminal impulses (Chadwick et al., 1839; Clelland & Carter, 1980). These constructs tend towards explanation of criminal prevalence in underprivileged areas and failed to account for spontaneous criminal acts or indeed for crimes that are not associated with poverty such as white collar crime (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1987). The early social learning theory did not even take into account criminal statistics in general, which suggest instead that crime is actually relatively constant across the sociological spectrum but is much more likely to result in arrest, prosecution and sentencing in 'low class' areas (Wolf, 1962). It is noteworthy that more modern examples of social learning theory address this

imbalance with more specificity (Akers, 1973; Akers & Jensen, 2003), however, and draw upon behavioural theories that may actually make social learning theory useful to the conceptualisation of desistance. Recent perspectives on mass incarceration and the professionalisation of crime (Soering, 2004), based on the principles of social learning theory, have helped to drive rehabilitation efforts away from prisons as places of punitive incarceration and towards therapeutic communities. Programmes such as Tai Aroha evolved partially as a responses to this phenomenon, in an attempt to create a counterpoint to the perception of incarceration as a process akin to a school of crime, in which individuals who committed the most serious violations were accorded the greatest respect, and were encouraged to pass various tips or techniques on to others (Harris, Nakamura, & Bucklen, 2018).

Often, the decisions being made about where and when to allocate resources for these efforts are not being made by the individuals most affected by things like violent crimes, but instead they are being made by high-status, wealthy people who are extremely well insulated from the fallout of their own decisions (Black, 1983). Authorities may even be so far removed from the situation that they decide the problem is not 'where or when' resources are being allocated, but rather that they're simply not being tough enough on criminals. This attitude directly contributes to another key sociological theory of crime: direct control theory.

Acting with Authority: Direct Control Theory

Direct control theory is often raised in opposition to social learning theory or general strain theory. In direct control theory, crime is assumed to result from a lack of authoritarian discipline and consistent enforcement (Garland, 2001). Seldom championed by criminologists or criminal psychologists, direct control theory is a relatively non-scientific perspective largely promoted by politicians and social commenters (Gray et al., 2008). While it is most notable in the context of a literature review due to the lack of supporting evidence and research, direct control theory must be addressed in any consideration of desistance due to its high level of influence over policy makers, public opinion and the allocation of resources (Christie, 2017). In brief, direct control theory

assumes that crime results from a lack of police presence and the subsequent failure to adequately enforce laws, as well as a lack of judicial firmness and the subsequent failure to adequately punish transgressions. Crime is theorised as a result of people being too 'soft' on criminals, and the counter to this problem is often proposed to be a 'zero tolerance' policy (Muncie, 2005), which will induce a more appropriate reluctance to commit crimes through fear of repercussions. Direct control theory has little evidential support but considerable public acceptance (Chiricos, Welch, & Gertz, 2004), and it has been an area of concern for researchers in desistance since the 1979 television series *Scared Straight* (Finckenauer, Gavin, Hovland, & Storvoll, 1999) directly linked the two concepts together in the perception of the general public (Cavender, 2004). This programme, intended to implement direct control theory in order to promote desistance from crime and to reduce delinquency, actually had exactly the opposite effect (Oakley, 2002; Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, & Buehler, 2003). Other studies like Black (1983) have suggested that crime itself can become a form of rebellion against excessive authority or as an expression of self-help under the conditions favoured by direct control theory. Despite the consistent evidential research provided by studies like Garland (1996) against authoritarianism as a panacea for crime, the proven results of fear-based media influence over public opinion brings direct control theory back into the discussions about desistance time and time again (Maguire, Reiner, Morgan, & Reiner, 2002).

A more empirically-supported variation of control theory is that of social control theory, in which criminal behaviour is proposed to result from a failure to adopt normal social bonds and personal limitations (Agnew, 1985), providing opportunities to predict criminal tendencies through analysis of juvenile delinquency (Wolfgang, Figlio, & Sellin, 1987). This has been particularly influential to theories of desistance when considered alongside concepts of rational choice, suggesting that social control factors such as: parental figure pride; respect for authority; and perceptions of belonging and community, all play an important role in the decision-making process that leads to crime and/or desistance (Hirschi, 2017).

This has conceptual similarities with social labelling theory, in which crime is sustained by the act of labelling some individuals criminal and others not – causing those with the negative label to lack a reason to desist from criminal activity (Petrunik, 1980). According to social labelling theory, the resent a person feels for being considered a criminal is enough to sustain criminal thoughts and behaviour in them. While there is evidence to suggest negative labels are a factor in sustaining antisocial beliefs, the causal assumption of social labelling theory is not supported (Bernburg et al., 2006). This was often connected to social disorganisation theory, in which crime occurs in some areas but not others due to social factors including poor conformity and a lack of 'belonging' (Sampson & Groves, 1989). These last two sociological theories have largely been called into question, and are not considered to inform most current frameworks (Bevan, 2015). They are largely discredited due to being the result, and cause, of xenophobia – these theories are mostly attempts to suggest people should 'stay with their own' in order to reduce crime.

Other approaches *have* been strong influences on more modern theories of desistance, such as Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) – in which analogies are drawn between illegal behaviour and legal but socially undesirable behaviour (such as smoking, excessive drinking, driving fast, gambling, sexual excess, etc.). This approach includes the suggestion that the key determinants of *most* criminal behaviour, and by extrapolation *most* criminal thinking, are around personal gratification and lack of self-control rather than stress-induced psychosis or ingrained behaviours – although stress and role-modelling both play important roles in criminal conduct as predisposing factors.

The connection between these 'deviant' behaviours and criminal behaviour is an interesting one, and there is growing evidence to suggest correlations can be found between socially discouraged behaviour such as driving fast or aggressively and criminal acts of physical violence (Hennessy & Wiesenthal, 2002). Indeed, there are clear examples of similar mental strategies being used to justify an activity like illegally parking in a disabled access bay ('I was only going to be a minute and there were no other spaces'), as are often

used to justify domestic violence ('I was only trying to get a word in edgeways and there was no other way to do it'; Diaz-Aguado & Martinez, 2015; Lamnek, 2003). Several studies show significant similarities and overlap between individuals who commit these theoretically minor offences and those who commit more traditionally 'serious' crimes (Chenery, Henshaw, & Pease, 1999). Of particular interest is the observation in this last study that 21% of the individuals who park in disabled access bays would occasion immediate police interest for other reasons, contrasted with 2% of the owners of legally parked cars. It is examples of overlap like this that suggest, despite the wide variety of differences between studies and samples, there is a fundamental and common framework that underlies criminal behaviour that can be targeted for rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation is, of course, the end goal. That is, assuming it is possible to work out how to get there. In order to move on to rehabilitation, it is important to first cover more clearly the literature on the concept of desistance.

Defining Desistance

Desistance itself is a nebulous concept, historically regarded first as an impossibility (Chadwick et al., 1839), then as a state to be achieved (Glueck, 1943), and more recently as a process to be encouraged (Laub & Sampson, 2001). In the days of the perceived 'criminal class' of Victorian England, it was believed that criminal behaviour was an inevitable aspect of life – and was even suggested to have deep-rooted biological or cultural origins that could not be altered or denied (Wiener, 1994). Instead, the only way to supress criminal behaviour was through constant vigilance on the part of the law accompanied by the threat of retribution for transgressions. Those deemed to be criminals were declared biologically incapable of abstaining from crime without punitive prevention methods, or so it was claimed by the 'experts' of the time (Parssinen, 1974). As criminal psychology gained ground and developed into a more refined field of study at the turn of the 20th century, desistance came to be viewed as a state that some, if not all, criminals reached sooner or later. A variety of different explanations were suggested for what was described as 'spontaneous remission' (Wolfgang et al., 1987). It was suggested that aspects

of life or the surrounding society could hasten or delay this transition, and efforts were made to identify and encourage these positive forces.

It is now generally accepted that desistance is an integral part of the larger processes of individual rehabilitation and crime reduction. But what is desistance? Where does it begin? At what point can we conclude that desistance been achieved?

Desistance might be considered as the point at which criminal activity ceases and does not later resume (Laub & Sampson, 2001). It is considered almost impossible to *prove* desistance due to the difficulty in substantiating a lack of an activity as a permanent state. Instead, desistance is often considered retroactively – if crime continues, that is *persistence*. If it abates for a short time, that is *suspension* rather than desistance. The act of returning to criminal activity after a suspension is *recidivism*, while the actual criminal act itself at that point is a *relapse*, and so on (Gendreau et al., 1996; Weiten, 2007). As this study is based on archival data from an STU, in the context of this research, the definitions of desistance are in line with those used by the New Zealand Department of Corrections: the process of an offender successfully stopping or reducing offending over a period of time (Fagan, 2015).

Individual frameworks of desistance propose different factors as being influential forces, but there are several conceptual similarities. Desistance is generally recognised as being a process rather than an event, and is often marked by lapses, relapses and recoveries (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Aging itself is thought to play a key part, including in a phenomenon called spontaneous remission, in which criminal behaviour (and presumably criminal thinking) ceases without identifiable reason, often before the age of 35 (Bushway, Piquero, Broidy, Cauffman, & Mazerolle, 2001). There are several theories regarding why this age is significant, but most explanations suggested either involve the concept of transitioning to perception of the self as an elder, or are related to natural peak of physicality reached by individuals in their early 30s (Shover & Thompson, 1992). Personal agency has been examined closely in previous literature, and is believed to play a key role in the process of identity change (which itself is often held to be a major factor of desistance).

However, personal agency is an inherently challenging concept in the context of violent offenders, many of whom are (at least initially) unwilling participants in rehabilitation (Walker, Bowen, & Brown, 2013).

In a modern context, it is understood that desistance from crime is a process rather than an on/off state – and that some factors act to increase the risk of reoffending while other factors act to protect against recidivism (Bonta & Andrews, 2010). The precise theoretical framework of this process is the subject of intense debate (Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2011; Ward, Yates, & Willis, 2012), and there are several modern theories – some complementary, others conflicting – that seek to explain criminal desistance, illuminate pathways to rehabilitation and inform treatment approaches.

Modern Theories of Desistance

One of the most influential works is Laub and Sampson (2001), which sought to establish a unifying framework to 'distinguish termination of offending from the process of desistance'. Depending on the perspective taken, termination can either be regarded as the most important moment of the desistance process (as it marks the point where desistance is completed, rehabilitation is successful, criminal behaviour has been stopped, etc.), or the least important aspect of any desistance framework (being the point where risk and protective factors no longer matter, being a point that is impossible to prove has actually occurred, being the static end goal rather than an influence that can be altered, etc.). An alternative emphasis in research has been on 'turning points', the moments or experiences which change an individual from following a path of sustained criminal behaviour and towards the process of desistance (Uggen, 2000). Sampson and Laub (2001) has proven integral in fostering this distinction, and proposed that of the main theoretical frameworks presented at the time (maturation, developmental, life-course, rational choice and social learning), it was the life-course perspective that would prove the most compelling.

Another key framework of therapeutic treatment is the Risk-Need-Responsivity model developed by Andrews, Bonta and Hoge (1990), which focuses on the reduction of offending by linking offenders with particular

rehabilitative services in order to maximise desistance. The determination of which offenders should be linked to which resources is often guided by criminal history, demographics, psychometrics and assessment. This is a significant improvement on previous systems, which often relied solely on professional judgement and instincts rather than on evidence-based tools (Bonta & Andrews, 2007).

The risk principle has two aspects; prediction of the likelihood reoffending, which includes assessing both how likely reoffending is and how severe the consequences of those offences are likely to be; and matching the level of treatment to the situation, which includes assessing both the resources and treatment available, and the predicted effectiveness of those tools. The first aspect of the risk principle is often the focus of public attention in the case of violent offenders and sexual offenders, and especially with regards to child sex offenders (Prentky & Burgess, 1990). However, the second aspect is equally important as it prevents wastefulness and promotes responsibility (Rogers, 2000). The need principle is focused on criminogenic needs, which are dynamic risk factors directly linked to criminal behaviour (although not, despite what the name suggests, necessarily responsible for *generating* crime), and includes attitudes, values, thinking styles, social control perspectives and delinquency, both in terms of identifying indicators of risks or needs, and in terms of formulating intervention goals. The responsivity principle combines recognition of the fact that the most effective way to teach new behaviours to people is through cognitive social learning interventions (Dowden & Andrews, 2004), with the importance of establishing respectful and collaborative therapeutic alliances with the participants, and the responsibility of ensuring the change in behaviour is prosocial, problem-solving and positive. Responsivity also addresses an individual's inclination, likelihood and capacity for significant change as a result of resource allocation and cultural background (Bonta & Andrews, 2010).

RNR is often regarded as a deficit-based approach to offender rehabilitation, and focuses on the biological, social, personal and structural factors influences offending – but less on the concept of personal agency or

choice, which is regarded as difficult to assess or alter. A final principle of RNR is Professional Override, which acknowledges the flaws in applying wider guidelines rigidly to diverse individuals, and allows for the use of clinical judgement in assessment and treatment. Intended to emphasise the benefits of the 'psychology of crime' over 'mainstream criminology', this paradigm focussed on assessment, treatment, outcomes and individual differentiation rather than community-level crime statistics as predicators of rehabilitation needs (Andrews et al., 1990). This model was quickly embraced by many professionals and criminal justice organisations, and became one of the foundations for the psychology of criminal rehabilitation in countries like New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom.

A criticism of the focus on assessment and risk factors considered such approaches to be lacking in humanistic qualities and promoted instead a values-based model that made the offender themselves a key player in the process of desistance from crime. A paradigm that exemplifies these approaches is the Good Lives Model proposed by Ward and Brown (2004), and focused on the offenders personal interests and normative commitments, "building the competencies needed to achieve personally more fulfilling lives" (Ward & Maruna, 2007, p. 29).

The GLM proposes that individuals who possess sufficient resources – financial, social, emotional and physical – will demonstrate a comparable decrease in criminal behaviour (Ward & Brown, 2004). There are considerable similarities between the sociological assumptions of the GLM and the concept of *anomie* that underlies strain theory (Merton, 1938). In both cases, crime is considered to be the result of a gap between cultural goals and the structural means available to achieve those goals. Competing models of rehabilitation, like RNR, view the goal of treatment as the avoidance or reduction of further offending, while the GLM seeks to increase participant motivation by speaking to their core concerns. This is interesting, as it presents an opportunity to engage the personal agency of even the most anti-authoritarian offenders.

This latter model, GLM, is regarded as a strength-based approach to offender rehabilitation, and is often inclined towards the treatment of young offenders – both in order to address the disproportionate amount of crime, and in order to exert maximum influence over the individuals being treated. Instead of focusing on punishment and accountability, the GLM proposes that the purpose of rehabilitation is to assist offenders to acquire skills, build capacity and develop a sense of personal wellbeing. This model relies heavily on personal agency and skills-based learning, and has been cited as a significant influence on the formulation of the strength-based skills portion of the Tai Aroha programme (King, 2012).

Taking into account the current theories of desistance, and in particular this discussion between GLM and RNR based approaches, several key factors of desistance emerged as prevalent across the wider body of literature. These included the 'big four' (Anti-Social Attitudes, Anti-Social Associates, Anti-Social Personality, Anti-Social Behaviour) and the 'moderate four' (Family/Marital Circumstances, Social/Work, Leisure/Recreation, Substance Abuse) which inform the Risk-Need-Responsivity model (Bonta & Andrews, 2010; Polaschek, 2012), as well as the 11 'primary human goods' (life, knowledge, excellence in play, excellence in work, excellence in agency, inner peace, friendship, community, spirituality, happiness and creativity; Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward et al., 2012). Other literature addresses these influences in a similar way, often altering the grouping of aspects into different factors, but seldom offering more than an insight into the difference between 'currently criminal' and 'no longer criminal' (Serin & Lloyd, 2009).

There has been considerable back-and-forth in recent years, with research supporting (and refuting) both sides of the debate (Andrews et al., 2011; Ward et al., 2012), as well as attempts to propose frameworks that either bridge the gap between these paradigms or seek to establish alternative interpretations, criticising in particular the lack of parsimony and explanatory depth in the RNR model (Polaschek, 2012) and the lack of research data supporting the effectiveness of the GLM paradigm (Looman & Abracen, 2013). There is a certain determination in these debates to avoid the particularly bleak era of

"nothing works" philosophy dominated by the research of Robert Martinson (Martinson, 1974), which has been recently revisited by more modern studies that have failed to confirm the effectiveness of rehabilitation strategies (Farabee, 2005). This attitude is noteworthy because it has achieved mainstream media attention and has resulted in a resistance to the concept of rehabilitation in the general public that presents new challenges to therapeutic communities (Cullen, Smith, Lowenkamp, & Latessa, 2009). Given the significance of pre-existing attitudes in the context of desistance, negative stances being adopted by established psychological professionals can have drastic consequences (Cullen & Gendreau, 2001).

There have been several calls for a unified front to be presented – that experts from the converging fields of psychology and criminology should work to establish a consensus on the definition and nature of desistance, facilitating universal comprehension so that cogent rehabilitative strategies can be agreed upon (McGuire, 1995; McLaren, 1992; Polaschek, 2011a, 2016). After all, if we cannot readily identify the process we are discussing, we will struggle to know it when we see it.

Detecting Desistance

Despite their differences, all participants in this debate clearly see the necessity of being able to detect desistance. Andrews and Bonta (2010) emphasise that the psychology of criminal conduct, a field of research with the objective of understanding variation in the behaviour of criminal offenders, primarily involves the application of systematic methods of investigation to criminal thought and behaviour, in order to facilitate the construction of rational explanatory systems. Göbbels, Willis, and Ward (2014), meanwhile, emphasise the humanistic importance of values and ethics as well as personal agency in the process of desistance. These methods create concepts that allow us to further our understanding of this field, and apply that understanding in the future. Desisting from crime is a fundamental component of modern rehabilitation initiatives, and is therefore a key area of interest for law enforcement agencies, criminal justice systems, criminal psychometricians, and the community as a whole.

But the very concept of detecting or proving this 'desistance' provides a unique challenge to both of these approaches. Desistance is prevalent enough to demand large-scale investigation but individual enough to resist any obvious or self-evident generalised theory of detection. Criminal conduct is at one and the same time distinguished by the similarities across cases as well as the differences between them.

While the presence of microbiological life might be proven via direct inspection with an adequate microscope, and the presence of an electrical field might be inferred by measuring its influence on instruments of detection, there are no machines or electronic devices that can be used to identify or assess criminality. Desistance, then, being by definition the *absence* of a phenomenon that is itself not easily detected, as well as the maintenance in the future of this absence, is even more challenging to quantify, or confidently declare to have been achieved.

Desistance signalling is a theory presented relatively recently as a framework to detect and predict desistance, and suggests that individuals who are most likely to desist from criminal activity give clear signals about their intentions (Maruna, 2012). According to this theory, offenders who are ready to begin the process of desistance signal this through their language, actions and even their physical appearance: e.g. moving subtly away from clothing and accessories indicative of gang culture, changing their hairstyle or facial hair choices, or making other small alterations that suggest they are ready to make larger changes in their lives. Often, language is the clearest indicator of readiness for desistance, and that desistance has been achieved later on. Phrases such as 'what do I need to do to get a second chance?' suggest that an individual is ready to begin change, and phrases such as 'I am grateful that I got this opportunity' indicate they have successfully undergone identity change.

There are several weaknesses to this approach, the most obvious of which is false signalling. Simply saying what the other person expects to hear is an easy way to take advantage of confirmation bias, and for many offenders who are simply interested in getting out of prison it is relatively easy to game the system through false signals. Minor physical changes, such as growing a beard

or adopting glasses (both used as examples in desistance signalling), can be easily falsified or undone later; and there is little empirical evidence to support signalling theory as a true indicator of desistance (Maruna, Lebel, Mitchell, & Naples, 2004).

This last critique is perhaps the most important, as it can be applied generally to most methods of detecting desistance – the lack of empirical evidence (Aiyer, Williams, Tolan, & Wilson, 2013). This is problematic as it speaks to the nature of desistance itself – being the absence of a behaviour, desistance cannot be proven except at the termination of an individual's life. Only then can it be confidently stated that they truly desisted from crime, since a living individual could always go out tomorrow and commit more offences for a variety of reasons. Prediction of behaviour and the associated detection of desistance is often considered next to impossible for these reasons (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, & Bushway, 2008). In conclusion, an overarching global methodology to detect desistance may not be feasible in the foreseeable future, but instead we will be forced to rely on the cues and indications provided in particular situations that we know to have an effect on promoting desistance – which means looking at what works in a particular context.

The Literature in Context: the New Zealand Perspective

Psychological research is most useful when it can be effectively applied, and the modification of thoughts, beliefs and behaviours in order to promote criminal desistance in particular must rely heavily upon context. While it may be argued both for and against the notion that desistance from violence is distinct from desistance from other criminal behaviour, it is more accurate to assert that contextual factors such as gender, culture and socioeconomic status affect the process of criminal desistance and violent desistance differently.

Crime in New Zealand

New Zealand is a relatively modernised, westernised nation with notably low rates of crime and notably high rates of perceived public safety (Paulin, Searle, & Knaggs, 2003). Crime rates increased though the 20th century, but began to decline in the 1990s and reached a low of 777 crimes per 10,000 people in 2014 (Ioane, Lambie, & Percival, 2016; Mayhew & Reilly, 2007).

Publications regarding crime in New Zealand are relatively uncommon, mostly due to the small population size and resultant small market for publishers (Newbold, 2016). However, the general transparency of the New Zealand government is highly regarded, with New Zealand ranked 4th in the world by the Open Data Barometer in 2013 and more recently as 7th in the world in 2017 (Anonymous, 2017). As a result, New Zealand crime statistics are readily reported on governmental statistics websites and are regarded with high degree of trust by New Zealanders. This has meant that recent trends in crime and justice are visible and reliable – which makes even more concerning the tendency in recent years for crime rates to decline while prison costs increase substantially. Recent research has highlighted the present concerns in New Zealand about the rising cost and relative ineffectiveness of traditional incarceration, and the effects these can have on our economy and social wellbeing (Gluckman, 2018). Despite some concerns about the lack of statistical evidence to confirm that New Zealand STURPs are significantly reducing recidivism (Polaschek & Dixon, 2001b), these programmes are noted as comparing favourably with equivalent programmes in other countries (Anstiss, 2003), and are regarded as being more effective for Māori and Pacific Islanders (Tauri, 2005). This last point is an important facet of the programmes considering the overrepresentation of these ethnic groups in the New Zealand prison population (Ioane et al., 2016; Workman, 2011).

Table 1 compares population percentages for the New Zealand population, the New Zealand prison population, and the Tai Aroha Programme, to demonstrate the variation in terms of sex, Māori or Pasifika ethnic identity, gang membership and violence as the most serious convicted offence (MSCO). This 2012-2013 period data has been collated from Gluckman (2018) and King (2012) with one exception: the percentage of violence crime as the most serious convicted offence in the total New Zealand population has been estimated from the prison population MSCO percentage and the 2012 prison population rate of New Zealand of 192 prisoners per 100,000 people (Walmsley, 2013).

Table 1

Comparison of Tai Aroha to Relevant Populations

	% Male	% Māori or Pasifika	% Gang Membership	% Violence MSCO
New Zealand Population	49.3	22.3	0.11	0.07*
Prison Population	92.4	50.8	8	38
Tai Aroha Sample	100	92	58	100

*estimation only, refer to note in text above.

Rehabilitation in New Zealand

In New Zealand, the majority of resources are invested in custodial settings, with very few resources assigned outside of prisons and in the community. The majority of Special Treatment Units initiated in the 1980s in New Zealand demonstrated a disproportionate focus on Child Sex Offenders – despite these prisoners making up a relatively small portion of the offender population in comparison to Violent Offenders.

One of the main reasons for this was the lack of empirical research in a New Zealand context that could inform political appointees about therapeutic approaches. Notoriously unwilling to overspend on violent offender treatment, especially in the wake of the Nothing Works era (Martinson, 1974), politicians focused instead on the emerging global awareness of child sexual abuse. The treatment units that were approved in New Zealand were following on from the establishment of similar projects in the United States of America after the enactment of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, also in 1974.

This followed on from a series of violent incidents in the New Zealand prison system that occurred around the same time and underscored the issues of management versus punishment when they applied to criminals and criminal

behaviour (Newbold, 1989). A swing of the pendulum towards a more authoritarian and restrictive approach to incarceration culminated in a series of incidents in which offenders were subjected to excessive physical force. One of the most significant cases came to be known as the 1972 Baton Charge, and occurred when extreme force was used by armed corrections officers against unarmed prisoners in the maximum security Paremoremo prison in Auckland, in a pre-emptive retaliation for expected disobedience over a cancelled recreational concert (Newbold, 1989).

Violent incidents like these were key factors in the reformation of the prison systems that were part of in the cultural changes of the 1980s, when a number of humanitarian concerns dominated the public consciousness (Newbold, 2016). From the 1981 Springbok rugby tour to the 1985 sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*, social responsibility began to take a greater hold on the New Zealand perspective. This was also a key time for the rise of biculturalism, that would later go on to inform the Māori cultural focus of initiatives like Tai Aroha. In particular, the Māori Language Act of 1987, sparked in part by a national telephone tolls operator in 1984 who began greeting callers with 'Kia Ora', played a large part in bringing these cultural questions into focus (Nicholson & Garland, 1991).

The most significant result of these changes for the New Zealand justice system was the establishment of the Department of Corrections in 1995, a clear statement in favour of rehabilitation and public safety. As with many New Zealand governmental changes, this was subject to intense public scrutiny and there was conspicuous pressure for the Department of Corrections to provide reliable evidence in support of its actions and efficiency (Newbold, 1989).

By the early 2000s, risk assessment became a key focus of this Department following the development of the Risk-Need-Responsivity model, and the formal adoption of the "Risk of Reconviction multiplied by Risk of Imprisonment" measure (ROC*ROI) in 1999. These measures were particularly well received as they were relatively easy to provide statistical support for their use. Only four groups of offenders were considered anomalous under this measure: drunk drivers, child sex offenders, very young

offenders, and overseas convictions (Bakker, Riley, & O'Malley, 1999). Continued pressure to enhance rehabilitation through the 2000s culminated in the formation of several Special Treatment Units in 2007-2009. However, there was also the enactment of the Three Strikes Law in 2010, which at the time was promoted as a useful tool in enhancing deterrence, despite previous objections that it would be taking judgement away from judges (O'Malley, 2000). The later of these is considered by many to be a grave misstep, given the noticeably higher rate of conviction against ethnic minorities and the impact of similar laws in other countries (Chen, 2008; Pratt & Clark, 2005).

With the exception of the Three Strikes Law, there has been a strong trend in New Zealand away from penalisation and towards rehabilitation ("Parole (Extended Supervision Orders) Amendment Act," 2014). Many districts now have multiple programmes implemented to facilitate rehabilitation and criminal desistance. Table 2 presents seven major High Risk Special Treatment Units (HRSTUs) currently operating in New Zealand that together provide a contemporary background alongside Tai Aroha as a therapeutic community. In addition, this table includes Montgomery House, the programme that immediately preceded Tai Aroha at its current address.

Table 2

Special Treatment Units in New Zealand

Programme	Est.	Size	Time	Focus	Context
Montgomery House	1987	10	3 months	Violence	Community
Kia Marama	1989	60	8 months	Sex Offenders	Prison
Te Whare Manaakitanga	1998	30	12 months	Violence	Prison
Karaka	2008	10	9 months	Violence	Prison
Puna Tatari	2008	10	9 months	Violence	Prison
Matapuna	2009	60	9 months	Violence	Prison
Te Piriti	1994	60	6 months	Sex Offenders	Prison
Tai Aroha	2010	10	4 months	Violence	Community
Mauri Toa Rangatahi	2014	~20	4 months	Young Offenders	Community

While previously the HRSTUs were seen as intensive behavioural modification environments, they have in recent years transitioned to being fully integrated therapeutic communities within custodial settings. The main programme delivered to high risk offenders in HRSTUs is the Special Treatment Unit Rehabilitation Programme (STURP), focused on motivating offenders to change and helping them to recognise patterns underlying their offending, manage offense-related thinking and emotions, and develop interpersonal skills and coping skills to deal effectively with high risk situations. Matapuna, Puna Tatari and Karaka also deliver the Adult Sex Offender Treatment Programme (ASOTP) once a year using a co-facilitation model (Kilgour & Polaschek, 2012).

In the local literature, many studies have focused on similar therapeutic communities (Polaschek, Yesberg, Bell, Casey, & Dickson, 2016; Polaschek,

2011b). Much of the effectiveness of these STUs has been associated with cognitive-behavioural therapy, believed to address the Anti-Social Attitudes/Cognition factor of the RNR 'big four' (Polaschek & Collie, 2004). However, some of the observations and assessments made have been particularly critical of rigidly applying constructs and techniques developed overseas and by different cultures to a New Zealand context. Many studies have demonstrated that Māori and Pacific Islanders in particular are at a distinct disadvantage when rehabilitation programmes are designed and run by experts and staff with no understanding of their culture or worldview (Ioane et al., 2016; Marie, 2010; Tauri, 2005). This is extremely concerning in a country where, in the past, evaluations of prison inmates cultural needs have genuinely been informed by the 'best guess' estimates of police officers or prison guards (Callister, 2008). Māori are consistently overrepresented in prison populations in New Zealand and have been since the 1950s (Workman, 2011). There is a large disparity between the percentage of those identifying as Māori in the general population (15.2%), and those identifying as Māori in police arrest demographics (42%), as noted by Tauri (2005). Previous evaluation of STURPs in New Zealand have raised questions regarding the disparity between the proportion of Māori in rehabilitation programmes and the attention paid by those programmes to Māori values (Berry, 1999; Polaschek & Dixon, 2001a). This is one of the concerns that led to the refurbishment of the Montgomery House programme, and the establishment of Tai Aroha in 2010 (King, 2012).

Summary: A Hermeneutic Analysis of the Literature

After due consultation with supervisors and the completion of the literature review outlined above, a conceptual analysis of relevant literature was undertaken to establish conceptual factors of desistance that could provide a basis for comparison with those later determined to be present in the Tai Aroha programme. IPA was not deemed appropriate for this task, as there are (depending on your perspective) either no individuals experiencing the literature as a phenomena whose perspective may be understood, or far too many psychologists, researchers and participants experiencing the literature for such an undertaking to be sensible (Eatough & Smith, 2008).

Nonetheless, a viable approach was needed to distil common factors of desistance against which to compare those evolved from analysis of the Tai Aroha data. As the focus of the research was not to determine the mechanisms or conceptual framework of desistance, but rather the factors common to the process, this conceptual analysis could be free of adherence to any particular school of thought or pre-existing explanation of desistance and instead focus on the most common and influential factors.

Qualitative regression analysis was considered for this purpose, but there are two major factors acting against it in the psychological literature (Stanley & Jarrell, 1989). Firstly, the prevalence of common terms with different definitions across different frameworks undermines the strictly numerical qualitative regression methodology (Fakis, Hilliam, Stoneley, & Townend, 2014). Secondly, as much of the current literature is written in support of or opposition to competing theories, it is conceivable that an article that theoretically supported one position would regress to give more significant weight to the opposing theory it was written to argue against.

Indeed, for a comparison of the factors evolved from the research with the factors common to the literature to be viable, a similar method of analysis should be applied to minimise cross-theoretical noise (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A hermeneutic approach was therefore chosen, adopting the same fundamental four path annotation and interpretation technique outlined later in the Methodology for this study and given as the first stages of IPA in Smith & Osborne, (2014). As this is covered in more depth later on, an abbreviated description is presented here.

Hermeneutic analysis begins with a single interview transcript or article of literature, which is examined entirely on its own and without reference to other sources of information (Byrne, 2001). This is the first step in comprehending a phenomena known as the hermeneutic circle (Packer & Addison, 1989). This term refers to the dichotomy of text that only makes sense because it is a part of a whole, which itself only makes sense because it is made up of the parts – a situation that neatly encompasses most literature that is the subject of reviews (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010).

To achieve the left-hermeneutic interpretation outlined in Smith and Osborn, (2004), notes and first impressions are made regarding the article, focusing on summarising, paraphrasing, associating and connecting with basic principles (rather than advanced or specialised theories). After this is done with the key articles of the review, other pieces of research (usually those outlined in the key articles) are also added to the analysis to broaden the scope across the relevant literature. The right-hermeneutic is achieved by a second analysis of the key articles by the researcher, now armed with a greater understanding of the topic, to create concise phrases which aim to capture the essential quality of the first analysis (Osborn, 2004). The horizontal path is achieved by identifying the relevant aspects of the literature (in this case the common factors of desistance) and examining them in context across the key articles and beyond. Concept mapping is key to establishing the superordinate and subordinate terms as well as the relationships between them all. For example, maturation was swiftly determined to be a common factor in the first two analyses, and thus the subject of maturation formed the basis of one of the horizontal paths. After this is complete, the vertical path is achieved by examining each article in terms of its own context – now armed with an understanding of the history, relevance, influences and key terms in the literature as a whole.

Since this hermeneutic approach was being adopted to evolve the relevant factors of desistance for the purposes of comparison, the themes that provided the basis of the horizontal paths also provided the outcome data of this literature analysis, as summarised below.

Because this approach begins with a single article, it is often one considered by existing experts in the field to be relatively widely accepted and supported (Packer & Addison, 1989). Linguistic interpretation, conceptual coding and key terminology was used to build an understanding of this keystone article. The article chosen by strong recommendation was "Understanding Desistance from Crime" (Laub & Sampson, 2001).

From this point, several other articles deemed to be influential on the modern understanding of desistance were selected and the same process was repeated on each one. These included "The Good Lives Model and Conceptual

Issues in Offender Rehabilitation" (Ward & Brown, 2004), "Classification for Effective Rehabilitation: Rediscovering Psychology" (Andrews et al., 1990), and "Gender, Crime and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation" (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002). The first three articles were chosen as the three most commonly cited articles under the subject of 'Desistance' in both the University of Waikato library database and Google: Scholar. The fourth was chosen to act as a starting point for the sociological perspective from which criminal desistance was originally drawn.

As the analysis progressed, additional articles were included as they were obtained from the references most commonly cited in previously included articles, were drawn from psychology databases and were found to be relevant, or were recommended to this researcher by both University Supervisors and the Field Supervisor from the Department of Corrections.

The following nine themes were established as the commonly stated factors of desistance across the literature as it stands (Figure 1, p102), and are given below along with the major sub-thematic terms to provide an overview of the concepts and grouping:

- Maturation (age, generational factors, sociological perspective)
- Family and Relationships (marital, children, parents, close relatives, partner)
- Sobriety (drugs, alcohol, addiction)
- Employment (resources, stability, finances, purpose, labelling)
- Motivation (hope, dedication, perseverance)
- Identity Change (rejection of previous identity, embracing new identity, willingness to change, willingness to seek aid or support)
- Contribution (society, community, mentoring, creativity)
- Peer Group (social connections, clubs, sport, religion or spirituality)
- Pride and Support (being believed in, access to support, respect)

These key themes are important to understand *before* the second analysis of the Tai Aroha data for one major reason: they inform and frame the concepts upon which the Exit Interview questions are based. While it is true that establishing key themes from the literature before investigating the research

data raises the spectre of cognitive bias, it is even more true that blind analysis of this archival data without prior comprehension of these concepts would simply result in the evolution of these factors as 'false positives'. For example, if one were to conduct a survey about 'the things that matter' to people, but four of the five questions were focused on or biased towards family (i.e. "which of your relatives is most important to you?" or "who in your life has had the most influence over your childhood beliefs?"), then thematic analysis of the results would show an undue dominance of family as a concept.

In the present study, this is an important consideration. IPA is typically used on smaller subject groups and with more open questions and investigation of the responses, while the circumstances under which the archival data was obtained were in many instances less than ideal. The same social pressures that the therapeutic community is relying upon to effect cognitive and behavioural change also result in a uniformity of response to set questions, and a tendency towards the use of psychological jargon when answering interview questions from an identified psychologist. This subject is addressed more thoroughly in the Methodology section of this study, but should be noted here as a major influence as to why the researcher adopted the theoretical framework presented here.

Significant Concepts

Maturation is an acknowledged factor in desistance, and in many cases is agreed to be the only truly provable factor. Many individuals who engage in criminal behaviour simply cease of their own accord in a process known as spontaneous remission, and the concept of maturation has its origins as far back as the early works of Sheldon and Elenor Glueck (Glueck, 1943; Glueck & Glueck, 1974). This factor is most clearly outlined in Laub and Sampson (2001), where it is presented as an evidential example of behavioural change with significant statistical support. Maturation thus forms a key factor in the RNR model proposed in Andrews et al. (1990), but despite this statistical dominance, age of the offender is not regarded as a significant factor when calculating risk under the guidelines of the ROC*ROI. Age of the first offence is taken into account, but the age of the offender at the time of formulation is

not considered as significant, due to the wide variation in the stages of maturation (Bakker et al., 1999). However, maturation is accepted as a part of the life course model in Andrews et al. (1990), which contrasted and compared the four prominent conceptual accounts of desistance: maturation, development, rational choice and social control (Sampson & Laub, 2003). An interesting counter-argument is presented in Rocque (2015), in which he clearly demonstrates that the support for maturation is almost entirely tautological – maturation exists because people change over time, and people change over time because of maturation. In this, he calls upon one of the Gluecks' most prominent critics, Barbara Wootten, who raised similar concerns about the circular nature of the evidence for maturation (Wootton, Seal, & Chambers, 1963/1978). However, despite having established serious doubts about this tautology, Rocque's paper simply goes on to accept the existence of maturation and proposes five underlying categories rather than addressing the dichotomy he already raised (Rocque, 2015). In summary, maturation remains a clear and influential factor of desistance in the literature and has considerable evidential support, but has a key weakness as a self-sustaining concept that has yet to be fully dismissed.

Family & Relationships are considered a key factor of desistance in most conceptual models, being a major part of the social/antisocial factors considered in the RNR model outlined in *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*, which informs much of the New Zealand risk assessment strategy (Bonta & Andrews, 2010). Family and Relationships are also influential to the work presented by Sampson and Laub (1998), which establishes both that positive family environments in early childhood helps to facilitate desistance in later life, and that the formation of positive family support can provide an impetus for desistance on its own. Family is the key focus of Cid and Marti (2012), which explores narratives of desistance from the offender's point of view and thus establishes support for the phenomenological approach adopted by this study. However, there is also considerable evidence for caution about the use of family as a tool to facilitate desistance, particularly given the relative paucity of research into the impact of criminal offending on close family members and the expectations of their support. Christian and Kennedy, (2011), examine the

storyline framework of the criminal event from the perspective of the family in their study on secondary narratives in the aftermath of crime, and demonstrate the stress that incarceration – and release – can have on these bonds. There is relatively little psychological or financial support offered specifically to these family members by the NZ Department of Corrections, despite their established importance in the desistance process (Frieze, Hymer, & Greenberg, 1987). While the services set up for victims *can* be accessed by their families or other individuals affected by crime and violence (Morris, Reilly, Berry, & Ransom, 2003), this information is not widely known. In fact, except for family members who are also the victims of violent offending (and therefore the *least* likely or effective family members to assist in desistance), there is no official process for defining their position or supporting them in this process. This is concerning, as even family members who are not the direct target of violence can suffer considerable negative side-effects as a result of violent offending (Feld & Straus, 1989; Waltermaurer, 2012).

Sobriety has long been a key concern in promoting and maintaining desistance, given the strong association between criminal behaviour and both alcohol and drug use. Early studies focused on individuals arrested for violent crimes demonstrated the major role that intoxication plays in facilitating these actions even sixty years ago (Shupe, 1953), and more recent studies have demonstrated that this tendency has remained constant over time (Shepherd, 1994). In both of these studies, it is noted that over 80% of offenders had at least some alcohol in their system and that at least 40% of offenders were intoxicated to the point of impaired judgement. An interesting aspect of the second of these studies is the examination of the environments in which these offences took place, based on the research by Walmsley (1986) which suggested that social pressure and male grouping may be more influential than the presence of alcohol, and that inebriation affects an offender's likelihood of being unable to avoid arrest more than their likelihood of committing violence in the first place. In general, however, most of the extant literature accepts and supports the concept that sobriety is a necessary aspect of this transition, with both the physical and metaphorical act of breaking away from addiction being noted by Sampson and Laub (2001) as being crucial to the desistance process.

One of the more uncontrollable aspects of desistance as noted in the literature is the concept of **Employment**, mostly due to the reciprocal nature of gainful employment and continued abstinence from crime. As noted by Farrall and Calverley (2005), there is a wide body of research that provides evidence for desistance being associated with gaining employment – although this data is not conclusively causal in nature. Some of the theoretical models, such as the Good Lives framework proposed by Ward and Brown (2004), suggest that access to resources and social capital such as those that are normally made available by gainful employment, are significant factors in determining whether an individual engages in criminal behaviour. In particular, these theories focus on gainful employment as a pathway to fulfil many of the life requirements of offenders in order to help them transition to desistance from criminal behaviour (Purvis, Ward, & Willis, 2011). The social capital aspects of this model are also supported by research on labelling and criminal identity, which suggest that being employed and perceiving oneself as a worker is a positive influence on behaviour (Farrall, 2013), while a lack of employment and perceiving oneself as a criminal by default can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Bernburg et al., 2006). More in depth studies, such as Bushway and Apel's (2012) research on signalling and behavioural prediction, suggest that employment training completion can be a significant indicator of future desistance, and that the perspectives an offender has on the necessity, importance and desirability of a job are key to their successful transition. Similarly, Skardhamar and Savolainen (2014) found that the critical factor in desistance in terms of employment was the timing of the transitions in the criminal trajectory – contrasting the expectations of the turning point hypothesis (in which reductions in offending are expected after job entry) with the expectations of the maturation perspective (in which it is assumed that desistance must occur before transitioning to successful employment). With less than 2 percent of their data supporting the turning point hypothesis, this study strongly suggests employment is best viewed as a consequence of desistance rather than a causal factor.

Motivation is recognised as important to desistance in nearly every article of research that has been examined in this literature review, so much so that adequate motivation is taken as a presumption for most theoretical models of desistance (Farrall & Calverley, 2005; Laub & Sampson, 2001). It is not difficult to comprehend why this is the case: motivation is necessary for behavioural change, both in terms of the initial paradigm shift away from a criminal lifestyle and in terms of maintaining abstinence from criminal behaviour (Bonta & Andrews, 2010). While motivation itself can be considered in terms of the reasons why individuals are driven to commit crimes, it is more prevalent in terms of the motivation towards desistance – and it is noteworthy that many of the articles published recently focus on the role motivation plays in the process of identity change rather than on the factors of motivation themselves (Serin & Lloyd, 2009). In general, it is agreed that successful desistance results from motivation that is a combination of social support and individual resolution – when the offender's hope for a better life, dedication to the process of change, and perseverance through challenges to this process, all together outweigh the factors pushing them towards crime (Panuccio, Christian, Martinez, & Sullivan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Hope itself is often acknowledged as something of a nebulous factor in desistance, but is nonetheless regarded as a clearly extant and influential concept, particularly when reinforced by social support (LeBel et al., 2008).

Another factor that is regarded as so inherent to desistance as to be prevalent across the literature is the concept of **Identity Change**. This concept is often strongly supported by social psychologists and criminologists, particularly those who embrace the cognitive and self-agency aspects of desistance as matter of philosophical belief. A strong example of this is the examination of desistance and the concept of the feared self by Paternoster and Bushway (2009), which outlines the concept of offenders existing as working identities with preferences and contacts that sustain their criminal choices, and the eventual determination that their commitment to these identities is overcome by the costs of this existence. This moment of change is largely driven by the perception of life failures being linked to the working identity, and the need for a new identity to enable future successes. The prevalence of

identity-based theories in recent research is a movement away from the structural psychology and social control theories proposed by influential researchers like Sampson and Laub, and towards the concept of cognitive transformation as a prelude to desistance (Bushway & Paternoster, 2014; Giordano et al., 2002). Qualitative support for identity change as a significant and influential factor has also been proposed recently, including growth curve models that demonstrated pro-social identities change over crime and correspond to desistance from crime (Rocque, Posick, & Paternoster, 2016). Identity change is more than just a rejection of the previous identity, it also includes a willingness to change, the embracing of the new identity, and a willingness to seek aid or support in achieving this transition – and recent studies have called for greater precision in the use of terms such as 'agency' (Bottoms, Shapland, Costello, Holmes, & Muir, 2004; Farrall, Maruna, Sparks, & Hough, 2010).

The three remaining factors are **Contribution**, **Peer Group** and **Pride and Support**. These factors are linked thematically together, as they occur in very similar situations and are often indistinguishable from each other – due to the nature of social support going both ways in any relationship. If there were stronger generalisations that could be made about these factors, they might be linked together into a single concept, but the legacy of earlier frameworks – such as the Antisocial Associates construct of the RNR model (Bonta & Andrews, 2010) or the Spirituality component of wellbeing in the Good Lives Model (Ward & Brown, 2004) – have perpetuated their division into separate concepts in the literature. Unlike other factors of desistance, these influences cannot often be generalised across a group as they are directly related to the experiences and situations unique to each individual.

Contribution refers to participation in society and community endeavours, including both creative efforts and mentoring others – particularly towards desistance or away from crime. Peer Groups include social clubs, sporting groups, and religious or spiritual organisations, which by necessity overlap strongly with the concept of contribution due to providing the framework, background or opportunities for significant contributions about which an

individual can be proud or feel accomplished. Pride and Support refers to the concepts of respect, often mutual, being granted to the individual, as well as continued access to support and a sense of being believed in. Several of these are noted in the literature either as positive factors in their own right (Wong, 2011), or as reverse-worded risk factors in other models (Polaschek, 2016).

Informing the Research Questions

Having identified these themes across the literature, the research questions were then placed into context and could be applied to the archival data from Tai Aroha. Using IPA to develop the consistent themes from the participants' experiences within the therapeutic community, these themes could then be compared against those from the literature review and assessed to see how they reflect the factors of desistance. Also from this analysis, barriers to desistance can be identified through the dually heuristic interpretation examination of the responses, and used to improve therapeutic communities in a New Zealand context.

Chapter Two: Methodology

This research aims to analyse and illuminate desistance in a modern New Zealand context, specifically through rehabilitation in a culturally-focused therapeutic community, calling upon a series of interviews conducted by psychologists and researchers with exiting participants in the Tai Aroha programme. Using archival data, this study applies IPA as the qualitative basis for interpretation, combined with psychometric data from a before-and-after battery of standardised tests. Relevant and consistent themes present in the exit interviews were established, and then examined in light of the psychometric data in order to determine their relationship with commonly accepted factors of desistance. This chapter outlines how this data was collected and how the qualitative method was applied.

Desistance itself is inherently an individual phenomenon, although by necessity it must be understood through populations, tendencies and rates of behavioural change. While generalisations can certainly be made about age, culture, socioeconomic status and other broad categories, each case of desistance from criminal behaviour is relatively unique. Broad themes of desistance are included in every basic criminal psychology course, but the specific factors – and more pointedly, the application of these insights – are subject to intense debate. A method of research was sought that would both capture and illuminate the data recorded by the Tai Aroha project, and provide a window of understanding so as to better inform future efforts.

The rationale for adopting IPA is laid out in this section, along with a brief explanation of alternative qualitative research methods and why they were not selected for this study. IPA is then applied to representative examples of existing literature to elicit key concepts and factors of desistance, so that they can be used as a baseline to understand the information developed in this research.

By retaining a firm focus on the New Zealand context, this research aims to produce insights that are relevant and applicable, with particular attention paid to cultural considerations in an effort to address the staggering demographic imbalance in offender populations. The relevant ethical

considerations are also addressed as part of the method of research presented here.

Why IPA? A consideration of approach

As fundamental to the data included in any research is the method used to analyse the results, and while a detailed summary of the precise steps is included later in this Methodology, it would be remiss not to address the considerations that led to IPA and the literature supporting this approach.

Qualitative analysis has grown in importance in psychology along with the understanding and recognition of the importance of subjective perspectives. IPA is a particularly valuable methodology for undertaking qualitative research, and has some unique strengths that were favourable to this study. In essence, and in short, IPA is an approach used to first understand an experience from the perspective of an individual, and then to understand how that experience can be comprehended from the perspective of an outsider or researcher. As might be imagined, this is a useful approach, given that few researchers in the field of desistance are *themselves* hardened or violent criminals – but that a fundamental understanding of this phenomenon can only be obtained by including the perspective of exactly these individuals.

Advantages of IPA

IPA is both phenomenological, focused on identifying key characteristics of experiences in order to distinguish them, and dualistically hermeneutic, as it attempts to encompass both the interpretation of an individual's experiences and the interpretation of the researcher who is striving to comprehend these phenomena. This again makes it uniquely suited to desistance research, recognising both the intensively individual nature of this transition and the needs of society to be able to understand and encourage this change.

IPA is based around two key elements (Larkin et al., 2006); *giving voice*, which addresses accessing, capturing and reflecting upon the principal claims and concerns of the research participants; and *making sense*, in which the researchers assess the information presented and offer an interpretation grounded in the accounts but extended beyond them through psychological

concepts. The process of giving voice focuses on the meaning of an experience to a given participant, as well as its significance for that participant. In the Exit Interviews, many of the primary questions are intended to elicit personal responses, particularly focused on the influence of that event or the opinion of the participant regarding that subject.

Limitations of IPA

A key challenge in this study from the perspective of the interpretative phenomenological approach is the relative paucity of individual information – a typical IPA study might focus on between six and fifteen participants, in order to focus on the depth rather than the breadth of the data collected. Given the archival nature of the data available, this would not be possible – instead, by analysing a larger number of exit interviews over a wider span of years, it was hoped that factors and themes relevant to desistance would emerge more clearly.

Considerations must be made towards the presence of significant bias in any study, particularly in qualitative analysis. Prime factors of bias in this data pool include: the pre-set nature of the questions, many of which are intentionally leading or directed and reflecting the areas of interest of the original framers; the corrective nature of the treatment, which must prejudice the respondents with regards to certain answers (it is not unreasonable to assume participants in a rehabilitative programme are prejudiced away from responses which indicate they will continue illegal behaviour); considerable social pressure towards approving of the programme itself; linguistic similarities resulting from the extensive period of immersion, resulting in participants 'learning the language' of their therapists; and the voluntary nature of the exit interview at the end of a lengthy course, which resulted in varied levels of motivation to participate or complete this task; among other influences.

Despite these factors of bias, several assumptions must be made on the part of the researcher regarding the data collected, including several which may be subject of fair criticism. These assumptions include: that the interviewers recorded responses verbatim; that the interviewer took a neutral and facilitative

role that provided participants with an opportunity to present their stories; and that the participants were open in presenting their point of view and honest in their submissions. A full exit interview could easily take up to three hours to complete, and requires considerable commitment from both interviewer and participant as each question is designed with subtle nuances and opportunities for self-expression. However, as the process of conducting an exit interview occupies a relatively awkward niche in the collection of data (being conducted regularly enough to become boring for the interviewer, but not often enough for interviewers to standardise delivery and data collection practises), there is a significant variation in the quality and detail of the responses gathered. While some of this may be attributed to individual differences in participants, it must be acknowledged that variation may also be the result of the approach adopted by the interviewers, their familiarity (or lack thereof) with this process, and the inevitable time constraints placed on busy psychologists and psychometricians conducting voluntary interviews of extended length.

From the data, there is clear evidence of anchoring or focalism in many of the questions – in the case of some question sets, such as the section on staff and therapists, this is clearly utilised as part of the guided flow of the interview. For example, in section 5, questions are asked about individual therapists before more general questions are asked about the staff as a whole. There are two major results of this: getting the participant to think more carefully about the subject by focusing them on specific examples within the set; and creating an undoubted bias in favour of the staff – as the participants are generally only asked to name and rate the staff members with which they had the 'best' relationships.

Limitations of Alternative Analytical Strategies

Other theoretical frameworks that were considered for this study included Grounded Theory, a qualitative approach which strives to develop codes applicable to experiential data through which the information can be categorised and understood (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Initially a promising approach when considered for the interpretation of the archival exit interviews provided by the Tai Aroha programme, and indeed one of the perspectives

which informed the formation of graduated scales that were originally a key focus of this study, Grounded Theory nonetheless proved to be unsuitable in this case. This approach requires the natural development of coding categories, and includes an analysis of the frequency of codes being assigned, thus gaining a sense of their importance and significance.

Unfortunately, the guided responses of the exit interviews unduly influenced the responses in a way that would have been exacerbated by this approach – and the inability of the researcher to locate and re-interview Tai Aroha graduates over a period of several years prevented any attempt to obtain transcripts of more open-ended discourse. Grounded Theory requires a depth of data more commonly found in less numerous, more detailed sources of information (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) – and was not suitable for the relatively shallow and extremely directed exit interviews.

Another approach considered was that of Discourse Analysis, which appealed as an approach that could capture more than just the words used by the participants by examining the context, terminology and perspectives of the individuals whose experiences were being recorded (Lupton, 1992). Originating from research in the field of linguistics, in which fundamental translation errors in key works were able to be corrected through consideration of the components in different situations (Loriot & Hollenbach, 1970), Discourse Analysis is a useful tool in qualitative research when seeking more depth and understanding than a simple reading of the transcriptions can provide. However, upon closer consideration it became immediately apparent that this approach could not be faithfully applied to the exit interviews due to variance in participant motivation, conceptual engagement and comprehension, and interviewer fidelity.

As these interviews were a voluntary aspect of a course that was otherwise administered in a largely compulsory fashion, there was no consistency in terms of the participants' motivation towards completion of the interview. Few of the participants were men of great verbosity, and their enthusiasm for providing insight into their own experiences could be seen to wane considerably as progress was made through the two (or three) hour long interview process. Not

wanting to dismiss Discourse Analysis as an approach on a mere suspicion, I was able to speak with several of the psychologists and psychometricians who had administered these surveys – and had my concerns repeatedly justified. Even individuals who began with great gusto tended to lose interest sharply due to the duration of the process and the repetitive nature of many of the questions. Another factor was brought to my attention in these discussions that had not previously occurred to me – the tendency of the interviewers themselves, when faced with a participant who *did* sustain lengthy responses all throughout the interview, to resort to ever-greater use of summarisation, short-hand and abbreviation as the transcription process dragged on.

Discourse Analysis depends heavily upon contextual clues and preservation of data in its original form. If the participant answers four different questions with the responses: a) *Yeah*, b) *Oh, absolutely*, c) *Yeah, I guess*, and d) *Yeah, now that you mention it*, but the interviewer forsakes exact transcription in favour of noting each response as *Y*, then this loss of fidelity is absolutely fatal in terms of applying discourse analysis (Widdowson, 1995).

Many other approaches to qualitative analysis were also prevented by the archival nature of the data – the text records fail to capture gestures, syntax, speech patterns or vocal cues that are important in conversation analysis. Some interviewers proved to be very consistent about recording nonverbal responses or interpreting meaning in what was conveyed (C020.3.16 *"Facing my own demons…admitting things… was an ****hole to my partner". Indicated empathy, understanding and development.*), while others were less informative even about what were clearly verbal responses (C059.6.4, *he has plans*). Some participants clearly felt pressures that precluded the requisite openness or honesty in their answers (C001.5.1.12, *declined to answer these questions. Did not want to "name and shame"*), most likely because his interviewer was perceived to be too close to the individual to whom the respondent was referring. This was a key reason that IPA was chosen, as with the multiple heuristic paths the quality and quantity of information was improved and the impact of responses like these on the results was lessened. Future research in this field should take care to establish protocols to avoid this problem by

standardising shorthand across interviewers, establishing a separation between the individuals facilitating the exit interviews and the individuals administering the programme, and by recording interviews if possible to capture more verbal and nonverbal communication cues. This last suggestion must be carefully weighed against the challenges of ethically recording participants in these conditions, and the possibility of deterring feedback as many participants may well feel less inclined to contribute if they are being recorded.

In addition, the response terminology was corrupted in two distinct ways: the tendency of the participants to adopt the language of the programme, and the tendency of the interviewers to record responses according to their own expectations or habits (including inconsistent applications of researcher shorthand, first-person perspective, and transcription of jargon). Several of the responses were recorded in terms of the therapeutic approach that was used to address that issue, including multiple references to constructs such as the Johari Window, a graphical approach to understanding the perspective of others (Luft & Ingham, 1961), but it was not clear whether this terminology was utilised by the participants as a result of their experience in the programme, or by the interviewer recognising the model being described and noting down the psychological basis for the response. Some evidence supports the former, such as the terms being incorrectly spelled (C007.5.10, *Jaraha Window*) which likely indicates this particular interviewer was unfamiliar with the term and wrote down exactly what they heard said.

In order to address these issues, several steps were taken to bolster the information recorded in the exit interviews and to fulfil the requirements of IPA. These included site visits to the Tai Aroha programme, open interviews with both staff and participants, and access to the psychometric data obtained before and after the programme from the participants.

Data Collection and Organisation

This study used an archival data resource in the form of sixty-four Exit Interviews collected by the Department of Corrections from their Tai Aroha programme from March 2011 through to October 2017. Two of these exit interviews were non-standard in form, being written letters submitted by participants who wished to provide feedback on their experiences but were not willing to complete an exit interview.

Exit interviews were conducted by several psychologists, psychometricians and researchers over the course of the six and a half years. Several interviewers submitted multiple exit interviews, while others submitted only one, providing examples for both inter- and intra-researcher comparison. There was a wide and noticeable variation in the level of completion, attention to detail and adherence to the questions – all of which are most likely attributable to the lengthy nature of the interview and the often repetitive questions.

Analytic Procedure

A four-step method of hermeneutics was used to begin the interpretative phenomenological process of analysis, being first used to examine this archival data following the outline of IPA recommended in Osborn, 2004), and described in detail by Blore (2012). These four steps are the Left, Right, Horizontal, and Vertical Hermeneutic Phases. For the examples given below, responses from participant C002 to Q3.14 from the exit interview were used for the left and right hermeneutic phases, while Q3.2 and Q3.3 were used for the horizontal hermeneutic phase and participant C059's responses to Q3.2, Q3.4 and Q3.15 were used for the vertical hermeneutic phase.

It is noteworthy that the terms 'phase' and 'path' are used interchangeably in the literature, although conceptually the former term would refer to a stage of analysis and the latter would refer to a particular line of thinking or reasoning. In the interests of clarity, this conceptual approach has been taken throughout this study.

The Left Hermeneutic Phase

The first step in IPA is the left hermeneutic phase, in which the researcher's first observations and primary impressions are noted in the left-hand column of their notes. Each of these responses is examined as individually as possible, so as to avoid contaminating the perspective of the researcher with early preconceptions of the experience being recorded. This is also done before in-depth investigation of the literature is conducted, for the same reason. The researcher makes notes in the left-hand column about their impressions, the key phrases or thoughts being expressed in the response, and other terms that come immediately to mind. This is demonstrated in the example in the appendices (Figure 2). The purpose of this stage is to interpret the meaning of each response free from context, so that the researcher has an unbiased (if uninformed) understanding of the data collected.

As noted in Smith and Osborn (2004), the left hermeneutic is achieved by summarising, paraphrasing, connecting and associating in a freeform manner. Notes are made on preliminary interpretations, both of the responses and the sense gained of the participants themselves. Comments are made on the use of language, similarities or distinctions between responses, assumptions and agendas within the transcripts - a modification recommended by Blore (2012, p164) – and any echoes, amplifications and contradictions.

The Right Hermeneutic Phase

Now that the unbiased interpretation is complete, the literature review of the subject may begin in earnest. In some ways, the relative inexperience of the researcher with the topic of desistance and rehabilitation was an asset in early analysis to avoid bias – but at this point it could become a liability if an incomplete comprehension of the topic was applied. Guidance was sought from supervisors at the University, who recommended texts and articles to facilitate understanding of the topic, while field supervisors provided more specific interpretations of the programme and its specifics. This process resulted in the literature review provided in the previous chapter of this research.

For the right hermeneutic stage, the researcher returns to the data and refines their notes in the context of the subject and the literature itself. Notes

made at this stage are intended to be concise phrases or key words which aim to capture the essential quality of the left-hand hermeneutic, provide a higher level of abstraction and a placement within theory that remains grounded in the transcript itself, as demonstrated by (Figure 3). This allows for the first forays into conceptual coding, in which terms which are recognised to be similar can be noted and grouped, and phrases that are identified as being derived from the psychological theories underpinning the programme can be isolated so as to avoid artificially constructing concepts evolved from these specific experiences.

First conceptual coding was undertaken with each interview, in which the responses offered were considered in terms of the question and context of the interview and key points were noted by the researcher. Key terms and ideas were also noted in a response-by-response analysis.

The Horizontal Hermeneutic Phase

In the third stage of the hermeneutics for IPA, the researcher considers the horizontal phase – the responses to a particular question or set of questions that together grant insight into the shared experience of the participants. In more traditional examples of IPA, the horizontal phase can be quite deep and detailed, as the details of the particular experience are often the subject of the research. However, working with archival data and without opportunities to follow-up the research in detail, it became more prudent to consider concepts as a whole through the horizontal path. For example, the Q3.2 and Q3.3 as shown in (Figure 4) are conceptually related – the experience here relates to motivation to do the Tai Aroha programme, both in terms of why the participants agreed in the first place and in terms of why they think other people should (or should not) participate. Therefore, these notes are connected and are considered as a together as a horizontal path.

The Vertical Hermeneutic Phase

The fourth hermeneutic stage is the vertical hermeneutic phase, in which the responses are considered vertically – in terms of the overall experience of each individual participant in turn. Again, in traditional IPA, which has fewer respondents and more detailed transcripts, each individual's experience carries considerable weight and impact to the results. In this research, with 64

respondents answering relatively formulaic questions and with little ability to apply interpretation, the vertical path is mostly useful as a method of reducing participant bias. For example, some of the answers provided by C059 are presented in the accompanying appendix (Figure 5).

As is immediately apparent, the responses being provided by the participant (or the manner in which they were captured by the interviewer) are significantly different from the responses captured in other exit interviews. The transcript appears only partially related to the question being asked and contains what appear to be glimpses into a considerably longer conversational response. The response to Q3.4 in particular does not seem to be related to the participants' preconceptions about the programme, but instead appears to be a more current critique of the attitude of the staff.

The vertical path is used to determine the experience from the perspective of the participants, and also to prevent anomalous response patterns from overly obscuring or contradicting the data itself. The researcher makes notes based on their interpretation of a particular respondent to enable the responses to be considered in that context.

Establishing Concepts and Relationships

After the heuristic stages of data comprehension which allow for interpretation from the perspective of the participant, the next step of IPA is the interpretation of the experience from the perspective of the researcher. In order to achieve this, the researcher went back to each of the exit interviews and re-examined the responses in light of the shared themes that had emerged to establish relationships between the concepts. Some concepts were grouped together conceptually, such as *whanau*, *relationships*, *children* and *partner*, others were grouped thematically, such as *social clubs, mentoring/teaching, belonging* and *community support*. Themes were considered in terms of level of influence, rate of repetition and heuristic assignation of value or importance. At this stage, it was clear that the influence of both previous research in informing the style and order of questions in the exit interviews, and the expectations of the interviewers, were blurring the lines between the responses – confirmation bias, reporter bias and evidence of response fatigue were all

evident.

In the final step of IPA, the data and emergent themes were analysed for patterns, connections and tensions. Since the key focus of this research was desistence, the interview responses, thematic framework and concepts were considered in terms of the processes of change outlined in Prochaska and Norcross, (2018). This trans-theoretical model was selected for its relatively nonpartisan approach, and for its proven utility in fields as diverse as addiction therapy (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986), evidence-based interventions in education institutions (Kratochwill & Shernoff, 2003), adult counselling (Ryan, Lynch, Vansteenkiste, & Deci, 2011), and treatment of schizophrenia (Mueser et al., 2006). Responses were carefully examined for experiential and environmental examples of consciousness raising, catharsis, and self-choosing as evidence of successful awareness therapy. Similarly, examples were sought of conditional stimuli and contingency control, but it is acknowledged that as these processes of change result largely from behavioural therapy, the exit interviews were an unlikely and unreliable source of insight into their existence or level of success.

Applying the Analytical Framework to the Findings

IPA provided the basic framework – each interview was carefully examined and observations were made on the insights they provided. From this, themes were developed independently of programme results to avoid bias or misinterpretation. IPA has much in common with ethnographical immersion studies done by anthropologists, in which the purpose of the research is to understand as much as possible the world from the perspective of the participants, *then* to apply those findings to the results or outcomes of the situations.

Hermeneutics requires the application of a philosophical process known as *bracketing*, in which the researcher identifies their own presuppositions about a particular experience and sets these aside in order to experience the phenomenon as it really is for others (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Imaginative variation can be used to synthesis examples of similar experiences if required, although in the case of this research the abundance of cases allowed for

minimal use of this technique. The relative inexperience of the researcher in the field of desistance was used as an asset, and the experiences of the participants were examined and considered before the completion of the literature review that provided in-depth understanding of the topic.

A dualistic hermeneutic analysis also requires a commitment to idiography, given the focus on the individual in the exit interviews and responses. While the results and data by necessity referred to individual experiences, the themes and overall analysis was intended to be applicable to a broader group – specifically criminal desistance in violent offenders passing through a therapeutic community. Recognition also needs to be made of two other key concepts in interpretative phenomenological analysis – the hierarchy of experience, and the hermeneutic circle.

The hierarchy of experience, outlined by Dilthey, (1910), divided hermeneutics into three levels of experience: the elemental, the unselfconscious everyday flow of experience; the higher level, in which the person is aware of what is happening and has an experience; and finally the comprehensive, where the experience has a larger significance and can be truly understood. Hermeneutic knowledge is divided in this work into three structural levels: experience, which is to feel a thing or phenomena personally, and is the highest level of knowledge; expression, which is our attempts to convert experience into meaning for others, making analysis possible; and comprehension, the understanding of another person's expression and thus the understanding of their experience. The major challenge to this process is the identification and correction of incomprehension, which is expressed as a wrong understanding of the phenomenon itself, and requires the use of the hermeneutic circle to place the understanding in context (Clarke, 1999).

The hermeneutic circle is a concept that refers to the juxtaposition of knowledge that must be gained individually but understood within its own context. As a person begins to learn about a field, concept or phenomenon, they must build their comprehension with pieces of information set on their own – but which only truly make sense when placed within the wider context of the experience (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010). In order to learn a language,

for example, a student must begin learning the letters and words of that language – but they will not truly understand those letters and words until they can speak the language well enough to grasp the deeper meaning. This is why the process of interpretative phenomenological analysis uses multiple hermeneutic paths – to build an overall concept of the phenomenon while also bracketing the experiences to avoid bias (Packer & Addison, 1989).

Instead of using pre-established factors of desistance as the main categories for thematic analysis, themes were allowed to emerge on their own – both from significant instances and common occurrences. These were then mapped and clarified using a computer program to create concept maps, or C-Maps, and were initially ranked on two separate scales – commonality of response and significance of response. Commonality was considered a primary indicator of importance, but could not be relied upon as a distinguishing factor as many of the exit interview questions were intentionally leading. Significance of response was used to act as a counterweight for themes that were obviously important but may have been unintentionally selected against due to the interview structure. These scales were originally intended to inform and guide the process of analysis, but were discovered to be extremely misleading – not only did the format and nature of the questions influence commonality too much to be useful, many of the interviews were considered to evidence what might be termed 'survey fatigue' on the part of both participant and interviewer. As a direct result of this, earlier questions were answered in far greater detail and with far greater precision that later questions – likely as a result of investment and motivation sharply declining in both parties as the survey stretched on. Earlier responses were much more voluble, which would in other instances indicate greater importance, and earlier questions were much more consistently answered, which falsely biased the commonality of response in favour of the subject matter in earlier questions. The responses were recorded by hand, which resulted in a combination of shorter responses and less clarity of transcription in later questions – discussing this with psychometricians who had done several of the interviews, the rapid degeneration of handwriting was often directly attributed to physical fatigue. This was especially problematic in terms of the section on culture.

Section 7 of 7 in the Exit Interview format is the special section on culture, and was intended to address the Tai Aroha programme's focus on Māori culture. It includes eight substantive questions and one categorical question (distinguishing between primary self-identification as Māori or Pasifika), and in many ways should have been a primary focus of the exit interview. The Māori cultural focus of the Tai Aroha project is regarded as its greatest strength, and is often the key distinction between this initiative and other rehabilitation programmes. In almost every discussion of the Tai Aroha programme, a great deal is made of the fundamental and comprehensive Māori cultural base that informs and guides the structure and 'flavour' of the therapeutic community.

In terms of the interview structure, the questions regarding Māori culture should therefore have been a primary focus of the survey – but by including them in the final section, the effects of fatigue and increasing disinterest were regrettably maximised. For example, many participants who had responded positively about their culture and their self-identification gave no responses to the unnumbered question immediately prefacing Q7.4: [*Does the man primarily identify as Māori or Pasifika? If so:*]. From contextual cues, it was relatively easy to identify many examples where the answer was clear – such as when respondents had spoken positively about their newfound connection to their *iwi* in other answers and had expressed gratitude towards the programme for helping them understand or reconnect with that culture. There were also examples where earlier responses gave detailed information pertaining to Q7.4 [*What effect did the programme have on your pride, or sense of identity as a Māori/Pasifika man?...*] in previous responses, but failed to answer or only gave very cursory replies to this question.

When speaking to participants and staff members engaged in the Tai Aroha programme, a recurring theme was the strength and positive effect of the Māori cultural approach, and how much of a difference this made by comparison to other initiatives these people had previously experienced. Going by the exit interviews alone, the cultural component of the programme was significantly less important than the relationships the participants had with each

other within the programme – an artificial construct which was not supported by evidence in any other form. This was sufficient reason to dismiss the 'scales' approach as misleading and to exclude it from the findings and discussion.

In qualitative research, IPA is focused on the development of what Larkin et al (2006) refer to as an organised, detailed, plausible and transparent account of the meaning in the data. This requires the responses to be assessed through hermeneutic phenomenology, in which patterns of meaning are identified through analysis of common themes generated from the responses. Of particular note to the phenomenon of desistance are factors associated with processes of change – many of which form the focus of the findings and discussion of this study.

Ethical Considerations

As the data utilised in this research has already been obtained with proper consent by the Department of Corrections, there are no major ethical concerns regarding the appropriation and use of this information. This data was held by the Department of Corrections under their comprehensive security protocol, and therefore required some processing. With the guidance of Glen Kilgour as Field Supervisor, the data sets were carefully anonymised to remove identifying details and organised according to a master sheet which itself was retained within the Department of Corrections London Street site.

The major concerns regarding the ethics of this research included privacy, confidentiality, responding to diversity, cultural safety, and the uniquely sensitive nature of offender data.

Privacy

Privacy remains one of the major social expectations of psychological research and has taken on new meaning in the modern age of technology. If an individual's identity is revealed, then they may have their location, financial position, employment status and other personal details exposed relatively easily with a simple google search. Moreover, due to the prevalence of social media, identifying participants in events can be extremely easy even if personal details

are not directly revealed. In order to address these concerns, during analysis of the data, references to names, occupations, locations and other information that might reasonably be used to deduce or assume identities were removed or replaced with pseudonyms.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of information affects treatment, issues of trust, and reflects upon the reputation of the Department of Corrections and of the University of Waikato. If confidentiality is not properly respected, these concerns can have long-lasting impact on the therapeutic alliance between participants and staff in future initiatives. This is particularly sensitive for offenders, who already have considerable bias against the Department as an institution and often view psychologists as enemies or substitute authority figures against whom to rebel.

Cultural Concerns

Confidentiality is more than a simple refinement of privacy, in which an individual reasonably expects their details will not be made public. Instead, confidentiality refers to the premise that the thoughts, feelings, opinions and beliefs of an individual – if expressed to a staff member or psychologist in confidence – will not be shared unduly or used against the participant in the future. By obeying the existing guidelines for the Department of Corrections, anonymising data and separating interviews from treatment formulation, this study ensures that the confidentiality of the participants is fully respected.

Concerns about fair treatment and the respect for the beliefs and traditions of both individuals and groups are the main focus of the cultural aspect of these ethical considerations. In a therapeutic community, the rules must be applied evenly to all, especially when tikanga Māori principles form a core foundation of the rehabilitation initiative as they do with Tai Aroha. An excellent example of this occurred during the first site visit, in which one of the staff members erred and brought the visiting researchers onto the grounds without first making sure the group was ready to receive us. While we ourselves as guests were not unduly blamed for this minor transgression, the staff member freely admitted that he would ‘cop a lot of flak’ for it and be held as accountable as anyone else

for breaching cultural protocol.

In order to properly respect these cultural concerns, this study was performed under close supervision of Dr Armon Tamatea from the University of Waikato, and was informed by the guidelines of tikanga Māori as described in *Living with Māori Values* (Mead, 2016). A weekly waiata practice was attended by the researchers while working at the Department of Corrections, and we sought the guidance of the cultural advisory staff there in crafting and presenting our mihi for site visits.

Sensitivity of Data

The fourth ethical consideration was the sensitivity of offender data, which is again similar to privacy particularly due to the overlap with court records and archival information. Sensitivity of offender data differs from privacy in that even when anonymised in terms of names, dates and locations, any specific details of offending, criminal records or suspected associates are likely to be extremely specific to individual offenders. This can make them easy to identify through social media, news, court reports and other technological avenues, and can lead to social retribution, violence from other criminals, and potential 'sentencing by association' in which an offender or their family can be blamed because they cannot prove it was *not* them to whom the research is referring. As a result, all references to crimes and violent acts in the data set have also been made anonymous, with minor details not related to the research changed to ensure this data remains obscured. This also applies to details not available to the general public and instead obtained through reference to the archives – for while it is easy to assume the details of an offence are not generally known, it must be remembered that the witnesses or participants to these events are familiar with the details and may be able to identify individuals based on these facts.

Chapter Three: Findings

IPA of the archival data resulted in the development of themes considered to be influential factors in the process of desistance within the Tai Aroha Programme. Major themes, identified as those that were common to many participants, pervasive throughout the experience, and significant in terms of conceptualising the process of change, included: Morphic Self; Family and Whanau; and Mindfulness. Minor themes, identified as those that were considered necessary or vital components of programme completion, included: Motivation, Peers and Support Persons; and Sobriety. These were also conceptualised as 'minor' themes due to be being inherent to any successful intervention initiative, rather than being distinct to the therapeutic community itself.

Overall, these dovetailed well with the themes that were developed during the literature review, although there were key differences – most likely as a result of the programme's consistent cultural focus. This observation was supported by the testimony of the therapeutic staff and during a site visit where three one-on-one interviews were conducted with the participants. This included a conversation about the programme with one of the more influential group members, which offered insights into both the experience from the offenders' perspective and into the general culture of correctional facilities in New Zealand.

Noteworthy in these insights was the concept of the factors that influenced participants in their engagement with the programme – being more than simply 'you get out what you put in', it was clear there were several things that could affect rehabilitation and desistance that were not immediately apparent in the literature, nor were they clear from an objective analysis of the exit interview data.

Utility and application is an important part of psychological research, and a key aspect of desistance in a rehabilitative setting is the ability to comprehend, modify and adapt therapeutic approaches to ensure a coherent and efficient programme. Another round of content analysis was therefore required to establish the likely elements of influence in the Tai Aroha programme, being

categories of experience rather than contributors or detractors from desistance. The key themes and the elements of influence are explained below, and also mapped out conceptually in (Figure 6) in the appendices.

These elements of influence were grouped categorically into Participant Elements (traits particular to the offenders, over which the programme has little or no control), Administration Elements (aspects of the administration process over which the programme has considerable control), and Interactive Elements (resulting from the relationships between individuals over which the programme has some but not dominating control).

Participant Elements included: Readiness to Change; Relevance or Connection with the Process; and Individual Agency.

Administration Elements included: Flexible Aspects of the programme which can be easily modified; Immutable Aspects of the programme which cannot be easily changed due to legal or ethical restrictions; and Consistency, which refers to how these aspects are applied to different cases.

Interactive Elements included: Respect, between both staff and participants as groups and as individuals; Tikanga, how well the principles of tikanga Māori are enacted throughout the process; and Perception of Equality, which relates both to how fairly participants are actually treated, and how they view their own treatment compared to others.

The evidential and experiential support for each of these themes is addressed in this chapter, as well as an explanation of how and why they were developed into distinct factors of desistance. In addition, the results of assessment of the programme from the perspective of the participants has been included as the basis for future refinements, and the key insights and notes obtained from the site visits are detailed as well in the appendix to this work.

Morphic Self

The key development from the interpretative phenomenological analysis of the Tai Aroha programme is the double hermeneutic concept of the Morphic Self as a conceptual factor important for the process of desistance from crime. While the process of identity change is inherent to rehabilitation and is readily understood and accepted by the coordinators and administrators of therapeutic communities, the phenomena of the Morphic Self is the (often gradual) comprehension of the participant that the principles of identity change can, should and will apply to their own experience.

Very few of the participants in this research failed to mention a previous interaction with rehabilitation programmes – 36 of 64 respondents answered in the affirmative to Q3.21 [*Have you completed any other programmes before coming to STU?*], with 17 participants listing two or more *completed* programmes. In fact, due to the skewed nature of the question specifying *completion*, it is extremely likely that most of the other respondents have at least participated in one or more similar programmes, with 4 of the negative responses specifying they had failed to complete these. Only two participants (C008 and C063) specified that they had not participated in any programmes before.

The fundamental conceptual basis for the inclusion of the Morphic Self as a factor of desistance within the Tai Aroha programme is the prevalence throughout successful participants of the combination of readiness, willingness and ability to change. This is presented as the components of identity change in (Figure 7). Desire or recognition of the need for personal change was the most common factor in the reasons participants agreed to do the programme in the first place, being expressed in 29 of the 59 responses provided to Q3.3 [*When you started the programme, what were the reasons you agreed to do it?*].

As would be expected with any rehabilitation initiative, personal change is a fundamental aspect of the Tai Aroha programme, and a significant proportion of the exit interview data focuses on exploring this concept. Several questions are directly focused on identity change, such as Q3.9 [*Has anything about you changed since you came to the programme?*] and the entirety of

Section 6 (Personal Changes). From analysis of the responses given to these questions, and the most common responses from across the exit interviews as a whole, participants viewed significant identity change as a key aspect of their experience in Tai Aroha, and a primary factor influencing desistance.

The key distinction between the Morphic Self concept in this research and the general process of identity change in desistance psychology is the fact that participants needed to be aware of the possibility of changing their identity – that there was a path from where they were *then* to where they are *now* to where they wish to be in the future, and that the skills, tools and opportunities to traverse that path were not out of their reach.

Analysis and Composition

Readiness to change, conceptually related to the recognition of a participant for the need for change, was evidenced in the awareness of the impact offenders were having on others (often family members or partners), as well as dissatisfaction with how things were – either the situation they were in or the person they saw themselves as. This was often cited by the participants, particularly those who had participated in rehabilitation efforts in the past, as being an important distinction between previous unsuccessful experiences and the progress they had made with Tai Aroha.

> *C047.Q3.3 "Wanted change, something better for my life than how it was."*

> *C013.Q6.1 [I was] "a real d*ckhead. Nobody could tell me nothing. Change was never part of the game plan."*

Willingness to change, distinguished from readiness by the recognition of the central role participants held in the change process itself, was supported by acceptance of responsibility and maintained by a desire for a difference in the future. This is conceptually different from dissatisfaction with the current situation, indicating a positive move towards a goal rather than a negative reaction away from a problem. This is also regarded by the participants as an area in which the Tai Aroha programme distinguished itself primarily from

other rehabilitation efforts through its heavy focus on the responsibilities assigned to the participants as well as the cultural context that was able to speak more directly to their own experiences.

> *C009.Q3.1 "If you're willing to change – this is the place to start. You need to go there for the right reasons."*
>
> *C013.Q3.22"It didn't faze me. I came here thinking I would never change. The A&D* (Alcohol and Drug programme) *did not scratch the surface. This one* (Tai Aroha) *definitely did.*
>
> *C060.Q7.4 "Came here with no identity. Think the Tikanga programme has given that back to me."*

Ability to change relates to the capacity for personal change, first by rejecting previous habits and recognising that former strategies for dealing with stress or conflict were both wrong and unhelpful, and secondly by acquiring the skills or social tools required to successfully adopt alternative approaches to resolving these situations.

> *C040.Q3.3 "Break the cycle."*
>
> *C007.Q3.3 "I knew there was something wrong with my thinking."*
>
> *C058.Q3.2 "Sick of being stuck in the system, this is the programme, if you <u>want to</u>."*

Although recognition of the inappropriate nature of previous strategies is a clear prerequisite for the ability to change, the second component was equally important – participants understanding that they themselves were capable of learning and applying something different.

Participants at the start of the programme often had extremely negative, directionless or largely incomplete identities, or were focused on antisocial values and held them up as positives in rebellion against social norms.

> *C054.Q6.2 "Lost, ugly – I felt ugly because of the way I felt about myself,*

scared, no skills, no emotional control, broke, broken heart, broken soul, sad, lonely."

When asked to describe their identity after participation, the same respondent replied that they were now:

C054.Q6.1 "Assertive, honest, open, good listener, good communication, strong, happy."

It is noteworthy that participants typically did not see themselves as having *been* changed by external forces, nor did they consider the experience one of fundamentally swapping out one person for another – instead, they were quick to clarify that it was about changing how they saw themselves, their own identity conceptualisation, and their perspective on their own skills and abilities.

C035.Q6.1 "The same person, just with more of an open mind and more things to deal with my anger, violence and substance abuse."

C008.Q6.1 "More laid back. Relaxed. Think of myself as a better person. Better understanding of who I am."

This distinction is the reason for the adoption of a separate term, Morphic Self, from the usual concept of 'Identity Change'. It is inherent to the experience of the successful participants that they become a different person to who they were, but either maintain or *improve* the relationships and cultural perceptions that previously distinguished and defined them. The cultural focus of the Tai Aroha programme is a key component of this, and is likely a strong contributor to the experience of the Morphic Self.

All three of these contributing concepts were required to facilitate the Morphic Self as a major factor of desistance evidenced in the Tai Aroha programme – a central theme repeated throughout the exit interviews was the absolutely necessity for participants to be ready, willing and able to change their behaviour and thinking.

Role in Desistance

Examined in context, the tripartite components of the Morphic Self are central to desistance, but must be distinguished from the familiar conceptualisation of identities, personal change, and development. The key to this distinction is that of existential awareness – the fact that the *participants* themselves are aware of the possibility of identity change, regard such change as not only positive but potentially necessary to achieve their own goals (which ties back into motivation), and believe that the tools or skills required to achieve this change are within their grasp.

In the case of Tai Aroha, this is particularly significant. The programme structure for this therapeutic community acknowledged and addressed the necessity of the phenomenon of identity change, but the evidence for participants to be cognisant of this possibility is a result of this study's research rather than a construct from the pre-existing literature.

Family and Whanau

Representing two interrelated but culturally distinct concepts, the role played by Family and Whanau as a factor of desistance in the Tai Aroha programme was both very prevalent amongst participants and very important to their experience. In the context of this research, these two words are used in a specific way, with *family* referring to the cross-cultural, globally accepted relationships of familial bonds (specifically parents, siblings and children, and to a lesser extent aunts and uncles, cousins, grandparents and similar), while *whanau* refers to mentors, role-models, supporters, confidantes, dependants, and long-term cohabitants, amongst other similar relationships. Naturally there is considerable overlap between the two groups when considering any individual participant. The reason for this distinction is not intended to be exclusive or discriminatory, but is an arbitrary measure intended to make clear the small but subtle difference between those whom the participants were *expected* to consider part of their familial circle, particularly before their inclusion in the therapeutic community, and those they *choose* to include in their familial circle after completing the programme.

The relevance this has on the process of desistance is clear: many

participants associate very negative experiences with individuals in the Family group, whether due to abuse from parents or relatives during their childhood, or as a result of their own violence towards others. By and large, these individuals are not currently included in the Whanau group for that participant, regardless of previous relationship ties, while mentors, religious leaders, and even other participants in the programme may well be considered whanau in their place. In many ways, this is an extension of the concept of being able to choose your friends but not your family.

Analysis and Composition

The major role of Family and Whanau as a factor of desistance is providing a framework of understanding for participants to view and understand their past actions, both in terms of their own experiences and in terms of the effect their choices have on others, and as a basis for constructing a more positive framework in the future. The key relationship components of both Family and Whanau are Children, Partners and Parents, while the key emotional components are Closeness, Responsibility, and Respect. These are presented conceptually in (Figure 8).

These components were particularly important in programme initiation and persistence, as in the responses to Q3.3 of the exit interview [*When you started the programme, what were the reasons you agreed to do it?*]. Of the 62 responses, 9 mentioned Children as a primary factor, 10 mentioned Partners or Relationships, and 10 mentioned Family as a primary factor.

C002.Q3.3 "Wanted to do it for my children…"

C008.Q3.3 "For my partner and kids"

C016.Q3.3 "to be better family man"

Q3.17, which asks about times the participants wanted to leave the programme, also instructed the interviewer to ask for the reasons why the respondents stayed. Many of these responses cited the influence of family members as a key sustaining factor.

C021.Q3.17 "When a [gang] member ran over my brother-in-law… …Rang my partner and she encouraged me to stay."

C061.Q3.17 [What made you stay?] "…my daughter and what she would think."

Parents or grandparents were often given as reasons to stay, although their influence tended to be more conceptual than directly interactive, in that the participants would modify their own responses to avoid disappointing or letting down these parental figures rather than needing to speak to or communicate with them to become convinced to stay.

C058.Q3.17 "My Nan passed away. I didn't leave. Would have been going backwards, not what she wanted."

The emotive components of this factor are closely interrelated. Closeness was a key component, as estranged or distant family members are often dismissed as influences by violent offenders, while the opinions of those who have always been there for them are instead given more emotional weight. Family and Whanau in this manner can be considered a counterbalance to Antisocial Peers as a factor of desistance against a risk of persistence, but it is noteworthy that the lines between the two are often extremely blurred. For those that have clarity about the distinction between the two, the difference can be powerful reinforcement of their commitment to change.

C061.Q6.12 "I can forgive my family and let those memories go. I don't blame my upbringing for what I have done. It is a good time to move on."

Respect, another of the key components, largely determines whether these opinions are viewed as positive influences to be encouraged by or negative influences to be rebelled against. This is important in rehabilitation efforts – understanding the role played by a parent in establishing or maintaining the offender's worldview often proves crucial to understanding their potential role in desistance initiatives.

> *C046.Q6.12 "[I] used to blame [my]self for abuse as [a] child, now understand [it was] not my fault. Realised not everyone is out to hurt me."*

Responsibility refers not just to legal guardianship (which many offenders do not possess) or direct parental influence over the children (which many offenders misuse), but rather to a *sense* of responsibility towards those who would otherwise be dependent upon them. The concept of role models is important here, especially in an oppositional sense – as many participants in the Tai Aroha programme seek in the future to be better fathers than they themselves grew up with.

> *C042.Q6.12 "Felt safe in treatment to offload about my Dad. I've never talked to anyone about that."*

> *C022.Q6.12 "...I've conquered some of the bad things in life. And I no longer wanna put all of that on my kids."*

A common theme amongst many of the participants was that of children as a primary motivation for change, or a fear that they were going down the path the participants themselves had taken. Some of the respondents expressed the hope of changing the path of their children's lives away from gang membership and violence.

These interactions in many ways typify the concept of Responsibility in this context. Participants that understand the potential role they can play in preventing their children from following them into criminal habits can also understand the positive effects they can create. For many offenders, this is a drastic change from their previous conceptualisation of their position in the family, and is often positively framed as part of their newfound or re-established connections with their cultural heritage.

> *C053.Q6.10 "...just stating what's expected of mana tane, our role as father, man of our families. [I've] told men of the family to stop mooching off the women and get a job!"*

> *C050.Q3.3 "I deserved a better life than what I had. They (partner and kids) deserved better than what I could give, too. Put myself through a lot over the years to please others."*

Others feel more responsibility to their (often long-suffering) partners or parents, and seek to make amends for their actions or failures through future efforts. There is a certain amount of hedging in many of the responses that refer to these concepts – likely a result of the intertwining between rehabilitation efforts and prevalent drives to restorative justice in the Corrections community. Offenders may feel obliged to claim that they are eager to make up for their mistakes, but having failed to do so in the past they also seek to avoid making overly difficult commitments. This itself may be a form of pre-emptive justification for future relapses, which does not bode well for continued desistance.

> *C045.Q6.13 "I have wanted to make amends with some of my victims – have with my partner – but could still do more."*

One component that was noteworthy for *not* being included in the composition of Family and Whanau as derived from the data is the concept of **Love**. Early on in the process of interpretative phenomenological analysis it became clear that there was an expectation that love, whether expressed as strong affection or romantic infatuation, would play a role in the definition of Family and Whanau. However, at secondary analysis it became clear that this was only a presumptive part of familial relationships as traditionally constructed, and was not in fact expressed evidentially in the responses. Simply put, the participants seldom refer to love or loving emotions, and seldom express an affinity with this concept. The key components of Family and Whanau as a factor of desistance as derived from the study were Closeness, Respect and Responsibility, *not* love, affection or emotional intimacy.

It is conceivable that this is a result of the reluctance of the participants to express these emotions to the interviewers, with whom they may not be familiar, and can sometimes be viewed as outsiders to the therapeutic community. Some of the participants also indicated that by completing the

course they felt they were finished delving into their emotional connections, and declined to talk about them in the Exit Interviews.

Role in Desistance

Family and Whanau emerged as the most prevalent supportive factor in the analysis, being spoken about more frequently and assigned greater importance than the concepts of religion, social groups, peers, or community support. Often, the prevalence of Family and Whanau over other groups was a result of the combination of persistence and duration – no other group remained consistently connected to the participants over long periods of time – and a change in how the participants interacted with their whanau members.

C009.Q6.10 "...get on more like a family. Starting to trust me more."

C023.Q6.9 "[Things are] a lot better. Actually able to talk to [my] partner and tell her how I feel. I listen when she tells me how she feels. [We are] working together more to solve problems"

C036.Q6.9 "It's a nice feeling talking to my family. My grandmother hears a difference in my voice. They don't hear anger. I laugh more. I'm honest now."

As a result of engaging with and completing the programme, most participants expressed significant differences in how they now viewed family and whanau and the connections they had with them. These connections ranged from a sense of support and encouragement that enabled them to desist from criminal behaviour, to strong reinforcement in the form of responsibility and newfound respect for their whanau – and complimented with changes in their perceptions of how their whanau thought of and treated them in return.

Mindfulness

One of the guiding principles of the Tai Aroha programme, Mindfulness plays a vital role in the journey to desistance and in maintaining progress in the future. While the concept itself has a wide range of influences and is experienced (and expressed) by participants in many different ways, the core components of Comprehension, Responsibility and Reflection are prevalent

throughout the exit interview responses. This is conceptualised in (Figure 9).

This concept proved particularly challenging to formulate, given the requirements of IPA to separate the prior knowledge and understanding of the researcher from the concepts being evolved through the data. As the main subject of the cognitive behavioural therapy upon which much of the Tai Aroha project is based, Mindfulness permeates the programme – informing the therapeutic approach, the exit interview questions and even the terminology and language used to communicate with the participants. As such, this terminology is adopted by and used by the respondents frequently to answer the exit interview questions – sometimes in ways not completely in line with established conventions!

An example of this in the Tai Aroha programme is the term 'Johari Window', a graphic model for conceptualising interpersonal relationships and perspectives on communication that was most commonly mentioned in the responses to Q5.10 [*Did you find it helpful to talk to the other men in group, and to hear what they thought? Why?*]. Five separate interviews included responses mentioning the Johari Window concept in the responses to this question alone. While there were examples of why this was being mentioned, other responses simply included the words alone and without further explanation.

> *C043.Q5.10 "Yea. Coz you don't really see you as good as some other people can see. (Johari Window)"*

> *C045.Q5.10 "Yes – jaharas window – didn't always like hearing it."*

Other respondents mentioned the model but failed to put it into context, making it difficult to interpret their responses free from bias – the assumption being made in the interview process was that anyone using this information would know exactly what the Johari Window was and how it was being applied. This assumption is naturally at odds with the process of IPA, which cannot rely on the researcher's own understanding of a concept until the participant's perspective is clear. It is also noteworthy that there were

discrepancies in the spelling of the term itself, which suggested that some interviewers were not as familiar with the model as might otherwise be assumed.

Analysis and Composition

Mindfulness as a concept evolved from the results as a combination of the qualities of Comprehension, Responsibility and Reflection.

Comprehension entails both the ability to understand and the ability to recognise qualities and traits apparent in the self, both those in harmony with others and those that are more discordant. A required factor for self-awareness, Comprehension allows those who have discerned that 'something is wrong' to order their thoughts and put words to those feelings, and is thus strongly contributed to by an increase in education, an expansion in available terminology, and also the participant's readiness to accept alternative explanations for their situation.

> *C008.Q5.1.6 "…pinpointed my faults. Made me realise that these faults were the actual causes to my actions."*

> *C021.Q6.4.1 "Realised it's not the police's fault that I end up in jail, it's my own."*

> *C064.Q3.6 "Gaining more self-awareness around thoughts and emotions and where they come from (core beliefs), + understanding how they were developed. Now I can see how they contributed to offending."*

This last portion is significant, as it is a key overlap with both Responsibility and Reflection. If the participant refuses or is incapable of understanding the possibility and import of alternative explanations, then they are also incapable of challenging their existing justification framework.

> *C055.Q6.14 "I blamed her at the start. I've taken on full responsibility for what I did. It's caused a lot of damage. My dedication is to make sure it never happens again."*

This awareness is a key factor in Comprehension, as many participants

previously failed to notice or recognise cues to their own qualities, or excused the evidence of those qualities as being symptomatic of the flaws of others rather than of themselves. This shifting of blame also allows for the transfer of the perceived locus of control from internal to external, thus preventing true self-awareness from forming.

> *C060.Q3.22 "I was a work in progress there and I still am. The awareness and mindfulness has helped keep me here and out of jail, away from the place I don't want to be."*

Responsibility is a key quality required for Mindfulness and in many ways is a core quality in terms of rehabilitation – if a person is unable to accept responsibility for their actions, they lack one of the primary motivations for changing their behaviour in the future. Responsibility is, however, far more than simple admission of wrongdoing or guilt. Instead, it is a recognition of the requirement society asks of individuals in exchange for their freedom; an ownership of the self in past, present and future; and a product of self-determination – commonly phrased as 'taking responsibility for myself/my actions'.

> *C044.Q6.4.1 "…accepting responsibility for my own actions."*

> *C061.Q6.4.2b "It kept me away from family and ruined my thinking. Now I want to take responsibility for my actions."*

> *C043.Q4.3 "I've learnt that responsibility is yours – you do what's right"*

In addition, Responsibility encompasses the role an individual plays within a family or as a parent, as well as recognising others who rely upon them or support them, and the mutual bonds these relationships have formed. Responsibility forms a bulwark against the transfer of the perceived locus of control, so that those who possess or acquire this quality are prevented from passing the blame of their actions to others and must instead take ownership of their behaviour.

C006.Q6.5 "…stand up to be my own role model for my children/grandchildren."

C054.Q6.6 "What inspires me is a father who can provide for his kids, show them life skills and be there to see them blossom."

The third key quality of Mindfulness is Reflection, which forms the positive future focus of the triumvirate. Once a behaviour has been comprehended as problematic, and the participant has truly accepted responsibility for it, they must reflect on their situation and how to proceed in order to make any progress towards desistance. This was regularly alluded to by the participants, who often observed that previous to the programme they lacked the skills, tools or pathways they needed in order to effect true change.

C051.Q6.8 "Stop, think and reflect. Yep it's changed. I never used to think, action before thoughts. I never used to reflect on it."

C055.Q6.8 "I sit back and gain more clarification. Stop, think and reflect. I try not to catastrophize."

C024.Q6.8 "I've been handling it better. I think it over first. Processing it in my head – what I can do to deal with the situation."

These comments reflect the pervasive commitment towards consideration of the participant's own behaviour that distinguishes their thinking after the programme and is sharply contrasted with their behaviour before participating.

Role in Desistance

Mindfulness is regarded as vital to desistance, both by the participants and by the staff consulted at Tai Aroha. Teaching mindfulness and self-awareness techniques through cognitive behavioural therapies has been a core component of the Tai Aroha programme – both to induce a reduction in violent reactive behaviour and to promote emotional resilience that can help participants endure stressful periods. Comprehension allows for recognition of social cues in others and behavioural cues in the self, as well as providing the vocabulary for discussion and communication and the terminology that gives a feeling of

command over the situation.

> *C043.Q6.8 "I always get frustrated, but I know how to handle my frustrations better these days. Yes, I've learnt skills to stop and think, have time out, stop and breathe, realising alternative thoughts."*

> *C044.Q6.8 "Being able to speak my mind and speak assertively instead of being passive aggressive."*

Responsibility is vital for desistance, as without accepting responsibility for their own actions a participant is unlikely to change their behaviour. And Reflection is an important aspect of cognitive change, providing both the insight to see when an approach is problematic and illumination into alternative ways to proceed with the situation.

Minor Factors

Motivation, Sobriety and Peers and Support Persons are defined as minor factors not because of any implication that they play a lesser role in the overall process of desistance, but rather because they are factors over which the Tai Aroha programme has less influence or ability to determine. In each case, it is more accurate to say that these factors were consistently present in each successful graduate of the programme, with motivation to completion being a key factor of endurance, sobriety being a requirement of remaining in the programme, and peers/support being the primary service provided by the programme itself. Nonetheless, each one was determined to be important to the experience of the participants in the Tai Aroha project.

In addition, these factors are not distinct to therapeutic communities, or the Tai Aroha project itself. Instead, they are key components of any intervention initiative: if a participant lacks the motivation to complete the programme, the sobriety to take on board the changes, or the support required to maintain the behavioural change in the future, they are unlikely to be successful in any case.

Motivation

Motivation is affected by many different components, some distinctly positive (such as encouragement and respect for others) while others are distinctly negative (such as laziness and temptation). One of the key components of motivation is the combined concept of skills, tools or techniques. Motivation requires an individual to feel that achievement is possible, and often participants with criminal records can struggle with the concept that they have not already been excluded from achievement by the stigma of society (Bernburg et al., 2006). Teaching participants the skills to succeed through cognitive behavioural therapy, group therapy, cultural immersion therapy and the other techniques employed by the Tai Aroha programme, not only gives them the capacity to improve, it facilitates their motivation. The conceptual map for motivation developed from the responses in this research is presented in (Figure 10).

Thematically, motivation is very pervasive throughout the exit interviews (and thus theoretically indicates a factor of successful desistance). It is also the factor with the highest linguistic polymorphy rating [1.858, with 210 responses over 113 variations], meaning that while participants often reference aspects of motivation they seldom use common words to describe it. There are three questions that artificially increase this variance and must be taken into account:

> *Q3.3* [*When you started the programme, what were the reason(s) you agreed to do it?*]

This question implies motivation clearly without stating it, causing participants to reply with motivation-adjacent concepts, such as "*do it for my children*" [C002] or "*I couldn't keep on going like this. Knowing and admitting that I had a problem*." [C022].

> *Q3.17* [*...Did you ever want to leave the programme? (how did they get through it?)*]

This question also speaks directly to emotional resilience and stress endurance, with an emphasis on motivation-like concepts.

Q5.2 [*If you think of that person (or those people) [who you made friends with] do you think they helped you or changed you in any way? How?*]

This question is more subtle, but has a strong bias towards motivation/encouragement-type answers and contributes to the emphasis on motivation that emerged from the analysis.

Finally, it must be acknowledged the bias inherent in the requirements for participation in the exit interviews. Specifically that offenders who have successfully got into a difficult to enter rehabilitation programme and have completed 16-18 weeks of intense 24hr therapeutic community living, and are still willing to volunteer two hours of their own time to complete a survey, are likely to demonstrate more motivation characteristics than offenders who have not done these things.

The characteristics recorded in the C-Map for motivation (Figure 10) are those common and significant to participants in the Tai Aroha programme that conceptually and functionally relate to motivation and motivation-like qualities.

Sobriety

Like motivation, Sobriety is a factor inherent to the self-selecting sample that were able to complete the Tai Aroha programme in the first place, and thus is over-represented as a potential factor of desistance if considered strictly from the data presented. The monitored housing, while less overtly strict than a prison, is still a largely controlled environment and the firm penalties for breaching the conditions of attendance (which include removal for first drug-related offence in all but the most unusual cases), helps to keep the participants from indulging addictions or vices. Although not recorded in the exit interview sample for obvious reasons, it was noted by one of the Tai Aroha therapists that one of the factors that regularly precipitated participants breaching their conditions of residence was perceived interference with possession of or access to cigarettes and smoking opportunities.

In this restrictive environment, sobriety was often an enforced condition and therefore easier to maintain than in the general population. While this in no

way downplays the importance of sobriety as a factor in desistance, or indeed as a factor in the treatment of alcoholism and addiction, it does skew the sample results considerably. One hundred percent of successful graduates from the programme would fulfil the requirements for a sustained period of sobriety, but that factor would not have been influential in their expected desistance 100% of the time. The aspects of sobriety that did emerge as significant were the limited access to drugs and alcohol – 6 out of 64 participants answered Q4.5.3 [*did you ever think you were going to be kicked out?*] in the affirmative due to drug use. When compared to 6 affirmatives for swearing/verbal abuse and 8 affirmatives for unauthorised cell phone use, drug use was not overly significant as a factor for this question. Of the same 64 participants, only one admitted to currently using drugs (*"coke once a month" C003.Q4.5.3,* although it is unclear if he understood the emphasis in the question was on his time in the programme). Another 6 indicated they would drink alcohol in the community – but were very clear that they did not intend to overindulge. Whether this remarkable adherence to the rules reflects reality or is merely being offered as the expected response to these questions is not explicitly clear from the exit interviews.

As with Motivation, the C-Map for sobriety was constructed from concepts discussed or indicated by the participants as part of their association with drugs and alcohol, rather than as a result of significance or commonality that might indicate a particularly strong link with desistance in Tai Aroha. This is presented in (Figure 11).

Peers and Support Persons

Peers and Support Persons was always clearly going to be a factor of desistance in this research as an inevitable outcome of applying IPA to a therapeutic community. The impact and influence of the 24 hour/day immersive environment is very obvious and constant throughout the data. In addition, the exit interview includes in its clear goals a desire to assess the programme from the participant's perspective, and many of the questions and assessment scales directly relate to custodial staff, therapists and the other participants in the community. Both peer interactions and the role of support persons are key to the concept of the therapeutic community, and will inevitably

emerge as influential factors in any analysis (Clark, 1965). Drawn from the responses given in the exit interviews, the concept map for Peers and Support Persons is presented in (Figure 12).

The rolling induction adopted by the Tai Aroha programme was also deliberately designed to allow for peer support and positive interactions. More experienced participants were expected to support and mentor more recent inductees, fostering positive peer pressure. Support persons, including both therapists and custodial staff, are considered part of the whanau in line with the principles of tikanga Māori upon which the programme is founded (Roper, 1989). In the case of Tai Aroha, staff who break the rules are subject to the same penalties as the offenders, at least in theory. Many of the responses gathered from participants addressed this fact – both in terms of their expectations around this arrangement and how well they felt it worked.

In the case of Q3.20 "*What do you remember most about your time at the STU?*", the peer and support arrangements formed a major focus for many of the responses.

> *C003.Q3.20 "Kotahitanga, unity, the whanau go out of their way for each other/us."*

> *C017.Q3.20 "The people, good people, all the support"*

Many of these responses also focused on the reception experienced during induction and the peer interactions with other participants. This is a notable distinction from other treatment environments, in which the normal models of prison life often prevail.

> *C053.Q3.20 "The challenges I've encountered, the support I've had along those challenges, how welcoming the place was when I came here, how much one person can affect the whole whare, and the beginning of my new, improved life."*

Peer interactions are very important for fostering this sense of unity and belonging, and the mentorship roles participants were encouraged to take on

were also considered to be a particularly noteworthy part of their experience.

> *C010.Q3.20 "The responsibility I felt I had as a senior resident."*
>
> *C057.Q4.3 "[The] rolling cycle helps – [you] can see guys at phase three who have made changes. Boys telling newbies [the] same as facilitators."*
>
> *C022.Q5.2 "…coz we're all here to help one another. They helped me get an understanding of my violent offending. Although we were all here for different reasons, it all the seemed the same. We were all working on the same problems."*

This was the largest distinction noted between Tai Aroha and other STU/prison arrangements. Many of the participants commented positively on the sense of love and acceptance in the therapeutic community, and how much this helped to facilitate their successful completion of the programme.

> *C007.Q4.4 "A warmth – came in and get welcomed. House has its own spirit – spirit of love, respect, safe, comfortable, important, wanted. People care for you (feelings) – made me want to change and learn. Not just chucked into a cell."*

Chapter Four: Discussion

The major themes that emerged from the interpretative phenomenological analysis of the Tai Aroha Programme archival data were: the Morphic Self; Family and Whanau; and Mindfulness. The minor themes that emerged were: Motivation; Peers and Support Persons; and Sobriety. The factors independently evolved from the literature review were: Maturation; Family and Relationships; Sobriety; Employment; Motivation; Identity Change; Contribution; Peer Group; and Pride and Support. This answers the research question of what consistent themes would emerge from analysis of participant's experiences within the therapeutic community.

There are strong parallels between several of these concepts and factors, in particular between: the Morphic Self and Identity Change; and between Family and Whanau and Family and Relationships. The evolution of Mindfulness as a key theme of the archival data but not as a factor of the literature review is also noteworthy. There were also direct equivalences between the three minor themes and factors evolved from the literature review; Sobriety; Peers and Support Persons; and Motivation. These mostly reflected the necessity of these factors in the introduction and maintenance of any rehabilitation rather than characteristics that were particular to the Tai Aroha project itself. This answers the research question of how the themes evolved from the analysis reflect the factors of desistance. The absence of the other desistance factors from the research results, in particular Maturation, Contribution and Employment, most likely reflected weaknesses in the ability of the archival study to capture adequate data.

The Morphic Self and Identity Change

Identity change is a key component of successful desistance, as determined by the literature review in this research (Bonta & Andrews, 2010). In many ways, identity change is the purpose of rehabilitation overall, and the key factor of influence inherent in the concept of the Morphic Self is the ability of the participant to (a) recognise the need for change, (b) understand that the programme can provide the tools for change and (c) take upon themselves the responsibility for change.

This means that they also have to understand that they are capable of changing, and that they will be the person who comes out the other side. It is important that this becomes an integral part of their narrative, so that the programme can facilitate this change in the context of tikanga Māori (Mead, 2016).

In the past, participants have engaged in other rehabilitation initiatives but without great success. However, the majority of respondents in the Tai Aroha programme described their experiences as being different – more personal, more influential and more successful in facilitating their change. The key difference inherent in the responses was that they were now able to see the path or the possibility of a path along which they could progress. It is important to note that they were not being changed by an external force, nor were they exchanging one identity for another, but that there was a continuity of identity along this journey. And it is one that was facilitated by the cultural connections found within the Tai Aroha programme.

It is hard for offenders to leave behind their self-concept as a criminal or outsider of society if they do not have a perceived place to move to as an alternative (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). The strong cultural focus of Tai Aroha allows this to be grounded in pre-existing aspects of their personal identity construct, namely their Māori ties, and strives to make this the foundation of a new positive identity.

Family and Whanau and Family and Relationships

Cultural differences provide the clearest distinction between these two concepts – the cultural focus of the Tai Aroha project revolves around the principles of tikanga Māori. The Māori family concept, or *whanau*, is a larger and more encompassing structure than the westernised concept – relying far less on blood relationships and far more on the bonds of community and cohabitation (Thomas & Nikora, 1996). The cultural awareness of the Tai Aroha project promotes understanding of this concept, and allows the therapeutic community to both embrace the values of whanau and to promote the development of a healthy future family model.

The levels of community and relationship, and their importance within Māori culture, are vital to this understanding – and thus to the success of this project. The complex interplay of connections between whanau, hapu, iwi and waka is extremely hard for an outsider to conceptualise, but can be used to find connections and strengthen bonds between anyone with Māori heritage (Quinn, 1993).

In this way, there are distinct similarities between the idea of whanau and the tribal community models extant in other non-western societies around the world. Many of these have come into being in places that have similar geographical constraints to New Zealand before the arrival of the European settlers – with populations dispersed over a large area but concentrated in traditional villages, and separated by potentially hazardous terrain. The African tribes are the most obvious comparison, and there are indeed distinct similarities in terms of community structure, respect for elders, family roles and other anthropological concepts. From a western perspective, the closest model might be the clans of Scotland before the domination of the English, but even that comparison is muddied by the passage of time and the effects of colonialisation. This lack of direct comparison makes it difficult for western psychology to quantify or comprehend Māori communities and their values (Bell, 2013).

Further complicating matters, there is an imbalance in the research itself due to differences in cultural traditions (Didonna, 2009; Mosig, 2006). The present studies of desistance suffer from the traditional weakness that is relatively common in psychological research – a distinct bias towards western sociological norms and particular demographics common to North America, Europe and similar nations (Brennan, 2003). A great deal of well-regarded work has been done, especially in recent years and on the subject of mindfulness, to address this historical imbalance (Weick & Putnam, 2006), but the legacy of the early psychological pioneers still holds considerable influence over the field. This bias is further exacerbated by the requirement of serious research to adopt western referencing styles in order to gain acceptance, and the adoption of terms such as ‘international psychology’ by distinctly western

organisations (Marsella, 1998). The majorities of studies, research and theoretical frameworks are constructed around data originating in Eurocentric, westernised cultures – and theories of desistance are additionally vulnerable to this distortion due to the regrettable biases that have resulted in those who prove the exception to these majority demographics being over-represented in the criminal populations of these areas. In New Zealand, this can be clearly seen in the disparity between the percentage of those identifying as Māori in the general population (15.2%), and those identifying as Māori in police arrest demographics (42%). There is a concerning potential for these individuals to be ill-served by theoretical frameworks of rehabilitation conceived and structured solely in other countries and by other cultures (Tauri, 2005).

Systematic, empirical investigations conducted in New Zealand and by New Zealanders (or by those adequately familiar with the land, the people and the culture) are the only viable source of relevant data that can be utilised to construct realistic strategies of rehabilitation here. Initiatives tailored to New Zealand have already begun to manifest, but require regular and comprehensive evaluation and adjustment to best suit the unique and constantly evolving conditions (Mead, 2016). A balance must be struck that takes into account the finite nature of resources available for these endeavours, as well as the relatively small sample sizes that are inherent to a small country – we cannot logistically afford to tailor a personalised rehabilitation programme to each and every unique situation, nor can we morally or ethically afford to feed countless individuals into a mass-produced, one-size-fits-all ‘solution machine’.

Therapeutic communities such as the Tai Aroha programme provide a solution that fits our current requirements – acknowledging the bicultural realities of the New Zealand population as well as the psychological realities of rehabilitation and sociological demands of a community to minimise reoffending.

Mindfulness

The concept of mindfulness is central to successful cognitive therapy, and is strongly aligned with Māori concepts of mental health (Mead, 2016; Shapiro, 2009). All three aspects of mindfulness as it evolved from the research data,

Comprehension, Responsibility and Reflection, are strong indicators of the processes of change.

These indications are similar to the signs used in signalling theory (Maruna, 2012) by one individual to demonstrate their nature or intentions to others. Just as there are many examples of the participants in the Tai Aroha programme signalling to the researchers their readiness to change and their desire to move away from a criminal identity, there are many examples in the exit interviews from participants to indicate their successful transition.

In a similar way, the graduation process at Tai Aroha may be a helpful and supportive ritual that reinforces desistance by signalling back to the participant that their change has been noticed and is real. Mindfulness is often informed through the feedback and interactions of others, especially with regards to socially focused behaviour such as crime and desistance. Being treated as a criminal is known to reinforce self-perception as a criminal and, from that perception, to increase criminal behaviour (Bernburg et al., 2006). Stepping away from that perception is an important part of identity change, and is informed and guided by mindfulness – especially in terms of self-reflection.

Direct Equivalences & Research Bias

The three minor themes (Sobriety, Peers and Support Persons, and Motivation) are all considered requirements for completion of any rehabilitation initiative, and their inclusion in the results of this analysis are entirely expected. Simply put, an offender who lacks any one of these: the sobriety to comprehend or remember the information provided by a course; the support and guidance required to stay on task and on track; or the motivation to see an initiative through to the end; is extremely unlikely to reach the end of the programme.

In addition, it can be assumed that with the exception of the 8 year period that this programme has been running, the same body of literature largely informed the survey questions. This creates significant bias towards the existing and expected factors of desistance.

For example, if there was a significant and unexpected impact on the

effectiveness of the Tai Aroha programme as a result of the presence of Smokey the housecat (whose presence was commented on favourably by a pair of participants during the introductory dinner), then the survey questions were not equipped to account for or address this influence. While at first glance this might seem an unlikely example, there is a growing body of research focused on the role of animals in desistance – both in terms of how changing attitudes towards animal companions can be an important signal in desistance prediction (Mulcahy & McLaughlin, 2013), and in terms of how increased positive interaction with animals can actually positively influence desistance (Hill, 2016).

Other Weaknesses of the Analysis

Inherent to any research project are limitations, and there are particular limitations common to both qualitative analysis and to archival research that have both significantly impacted the results of this study. These weaknesses also demonstrate the observable barriers to desistance as a result of these findings, and the question of how these factors and barriers can be used to improve therapeutic communities in New Zealand is addressed.

Qualitative analysis, particularly hermeneutic analysis like IPA, requires the ability to understand a concept or experience. This is particularly challenging for a researcher who has not undergone the experience themselves, as is the case for almost all researchers in the fields of criminal conduct and desistance. As noted in the methodology of this study, archival research limitations are also quite severe, especially in a study in which the researcher was not involved in the design of the survey questions, the implementation of the data collection, or the manner of recording the archival data.

The most obvious weakness, apart from these limitations, is the loss of data that might contribute to the emergence of Maturation, Contribution or Employment as contributing factors to desistance. The data was collected at the end-point of the programme, meaning that subsequent contributions to society (and the effect of pride and a sense of belonging thus engendered) could not be measured. In a similar way, employment rates and employment attitudes were relatively limited, with only two questions addressing work and work attitudes.

Even these questions could be considered extremely limited, simply asking how the participants currently felt about the concept of work.

Another influential aspect of this research is the timing and nature of the exit interviews themselves, occurring as a voluntary process engaged in only by successful participants at the point of exit. Unavoidable biases are introduced in this way: including only successful participants assumes that desistance has occurred but the lack of follow-up data means this cannot be proven; making the process voluntary inclines the pool of participants towards those motivated to provide feedback, generally those with strong feelings about the programme; and conducting these interviews at the point of exit means that the responses are strongly influenced by the recent primacy of the intensive therapeutic community.

In addition, participants are likely to have been strongly influenced by the client-therapist relationships formed within the community, but are at the time of report yet to apply these lessons to their lives in a long-term, meaningful way. This inevitably colours their perspective, inclining them towards responses that praise their therapists, indicate success in desisting from crime, and suggest a mental resilience that may not actually endure (Hill, Thompson, Cogar, & Denman, 1993).

All of these factors are likely to have been exacerbated by the relatively small sample size, as over a six and a half year period there were only 64 exit interviews filed, and many of these were incomplete or inconsistently conducted. This could in some ways be considered an unfortunate reality of the small New Zealand population, but is still a very real concern worth addressing in future research.

Elements of Influence: How to Improve Therapeutic Communities

One of the other results that was drawn from the IPA of this data was a series of conceptual traits and aspects termed Elements of Influence and presented as part of (Figure 6). This was an important result of the research, as many of the survey questions were focused on feedback from the participants as to ways to improve the therapeutic community.

Drawing specifics from the data was extremely difficult, resulting from the reluctance of the participants to 'name and shame' (as they referred to it), and the tendency to be more general in the phrasing of their feedback.

However, it was possible to identify three major categories of these elements of influence: Participant Elements (traits particular to the offenders, over which the programme has little or no control), Administration Elements (aspects of the administration process over which the programme has considerable control), and Interactive Elements (resulting from the relationships between individuals over which the programme has some but not dominating control). These elements of influence are worth examining individually, as each one represents opportunities and obstacles relevant to the success of therapeutic communities in the future.

The participant elements included: Readiness to Change; Relevance or Connection with the Process; and Individual Agency.

Readiness to change is also one of the factors of the Morphic Self, and can be considered in many ways to be the key 'requirement of entry' into successful participation in the therapeutic community. Relevance or Connection with the Process relates to the participant's ability to see how the programme relates to them and how they are affected by it – in the case of the Tai Aroha therapeutic community, this was often also strongly affected by their relationship with the principles of tikanga Māori. Individual Agency is the element over which the programme can exert the least influence, as it relates to the choices of the individual and the consequences of their own actions.

Administration Elements included: Flexible Aspects of the programme which can be easily modified; Immutable Aspects of the programme which cannot be easily changed due to legal or ethical restrictions; and Consistency, which refers to how these aspects are applied to different cases.

In the case of Tai Aroha, the biggest concerns were related to consistency. This was a matter brought up time and time again by the participants, particularly in the early years of the community. However, there are

considerable biases to take into account here: the self-reporting nature of this feedback, the tendency of repeat offenders towards justification of their own activities and blame towards others, and the difficulties inherent in administering any rehabilitation programme in a correctional setting.

Interactive Elements included: Respect, between both staff and participants as groups and as individuals; Tikanga, how well the principles of tikanga Māori are enacted throughout the process; and Perception of Equality, which relates both to how fairly participants are actually treated, and how they view their own treatment compared to others.

Respect was often noted in the exit interviews as being an important aspect of the Tai Aroha programme and one of the key differences between this therapeutic community and prison. While treating prisoners with respect and in recognition of their humanity has long ago become a mainstream ethical expectation, it is undeniable that offenders are treated differently in correctional settings. Several of the participants in Tai Aroha stated that the whanau-based conception of the programme lent a new level of recognition that encouraged and supported them in the process of desistance. This also relates to the principles of tikanga Māori, which underpinned the entire therapeutic community and informed the cultural focus of the project.

The third interactive element is perhaps both the most influential and the most controversial: the perception of equality. On the first site visit to Tai Aroha, the supervisor who was introducing us as researchers to the community made a faux pas in bringing us right up to the door and opening it while the group was still in the middle of their morning session. After a brief discussion with one of the programme participants, he then took us back out to the roadside and told us we would be waiting outside the gate until they were ready to receive us – as would be more normal for visitors being invited into a Māori community. He observed at the time that he would be ‘copping some flak’ for his error, and I was interested to note this would be coming from the residents themselves rather than in the form of a reprimand from a supervisor. The interesting part was the concept that his actions as a correctional officer could be challenged by the participants in the programme as equals, rather than in the

more normal form of a complaint to the system itself or in the form of protests, open or otherwise. In fact, he muttered 'sorry' to one of the participants as we passed and received a quiet 'c'mon mate, you know better than that' in response. This exchange was very casual, but clearly highlighted the perception of equality in place between these individuals.

Those perceptions of equality – not in terms of expertise or positions of power, but equality as persons deserving of respect – are fundamental to the principles that inform and support the Tai Aroha project. They are also an important part of social signalling, as is the difference between how individuals are treated here when compared to a correctional facility. Interestingly, this actually suggests that it may be necessary to maintain a certain level of tension in more traditional correctional facilities in order for the transition to a therapeutic community to have as much impact as it does, but that hardly seems to be an ethical approach.

Summary and Conclusion

The three key concepts that emerged from this study as factors of desistance in the Tai Aroha programme were the Morphic Self, Family and Whanau, and Mindfulness. These three concepts were distinguished by being both crucial to successful desistance narratives from the perspective of the participants, and by not being constructs directly related to the successful completion of the programme. The three minor factors of desistance that also emerged from this research were Motivation, Sobriety, and Peers and Support – however, these three concepts were all prerequisites for successful participation and completion. These concepts were supported by the literature review as viable factors of desistance in this therapeutic community. A key aspect of the Tai Aroha programme that was influential in the successful promotion of desistance was its strong commitment to tikanga Māori and the incorporation of these cultural values into the lifestyle and therapeutic approaches adopted by the facilitators. Challenges to the research included the static nature of the exit interviews, the lack of consistency in how the interviews were conducted over a six and a half year period, and the inherently leading questions. Other concerns

included the variance in interviewer fidelity and recording conventions, and the small sample size included.

There were several important elements of influence that were also identified as promoting desistance, and can be used to inform future initiatives as ways to overcome barriers to desistance. The most influential of these elements were those resulting from the interactions between participants and administrators, including tikanga Māori, Respect, and Perceptions of Equality. Moving forward from this research, the Tai Aroha programme presents a positive template for therapeutic communities to promote desistance from violent crime in a New Zealand context, provided issues of consistency in the conceptualisation and delivery of the core concepts can be resolved.

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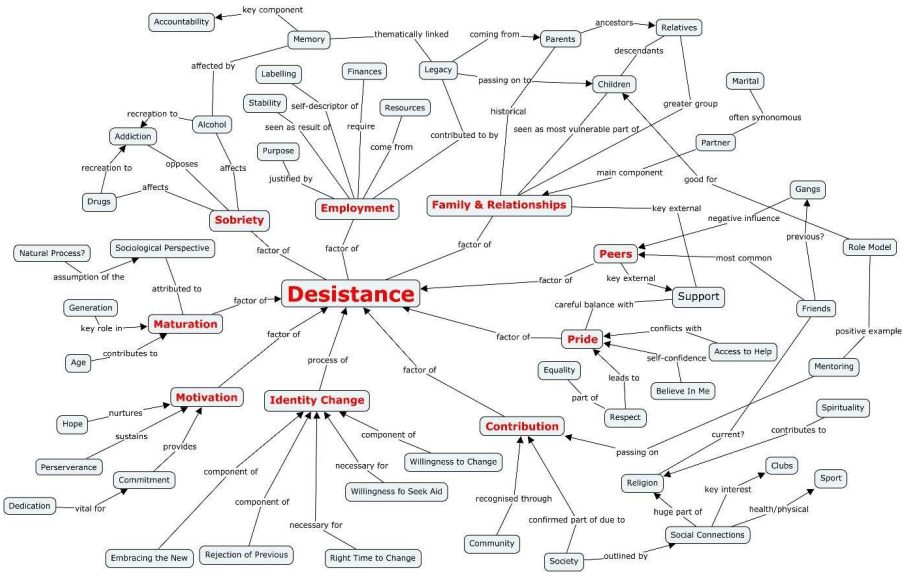

Figure 1. Conceptual Map of Desistance

Question	Response	Left-Hand Column
Were you asked to do things in the programme that were not just a waste of time but could have harmed you? (What?)	When new members come onto a rolling programme with active core beliefs around gang mentality and other members and other encouraged to change, then feel like personal safety is at risk – risk of being perceived as nark. Fears – like to agree with the logic behind psychology.	Identifies the source of problem as being the rolling nature of the programme. Refers to past identity and change, uses psychological terminology "active core beliefs". Notes personal safety as concern, peer pressure to conform, perception from others. Openly expresses fear of not agreeing with the logic behind the psychology. Agreement? Initial impression is more comprehension. Follow up.

Figure 2. Left Hermanuetic Phase - C002.Q3.14

Question	Response	Left-Hand Column	Right-Hand Column
Were you asked to do things in the programme that were not just a waste of time but could have harmed you? (What?)	When new members come onto a rolling programme with active core beliefs around gang mentality and other members and other encouraged to change, then feel like personal safety is at risk – risk of being perceived as nark. Fears – like to agree with the logic behind psychology.	Identifies the source of problem as being the rolling nature of the programme. Refers to past identity and change, uses psychological terminology "active core beliefs". Notes personal safety as concern, peer pressure to conform, perception from others. Openly expresses fear of not agreeing with the logic behind the psychology. Agreement? Initial impression is more comprehension. Follow up.	Rolling Programme, Inductee Issues Past Identity and Change Antisocial Peer Pressure No-Nark Culture (Trammel, 2012) Therapeutic Authority Comprehension Fear of the Unknown Disagreement

Figure 3. Right-Hand Hermanuetic Phase - C002.Q3.14

3.2 Would you recommend the program to other men? What would you say to other men who are thinking about doing it?

Ready or Willing to Change in 25 responses, 009. If you're willing to change, this is the place to start. You need to go there for the right reasons.
035. What you put in is what you'll get out of it.
039. You've got to want to make the changes.
Statements about motivation in 16 responses, with most common insight from 035 "What you put in is what you get out of it" (repeated nearly verbatim in 6 responses).
Opportunity to learn skills/benefits or tools in 11 responses,
Mindfulness/Self-Awareness in 9 responses.
Family in 3 responses.
Note: Comments about intensity of programme in 9 responses.
Only one negative.
062. No. I personally didn't like it. Feel like I was a guinea pig.

3.3 When you started the programme, what were the reasons you agreed to do it?

Wanted to Change in 26 responses.
Avoid Jail in 12 responses, Easy Option in another 3
Drug & Alcohol in 7 responses
Anger/Violence in 7 responses
Children in 9 responses
Partner/Relationship in 10 responses
Family in 10 responses
Self-Awareness in 10 responses
Learn Skills/Tools in 9 responses
C009. It wasn't for me when I first started – I was sent here. But it was actually a good thing that I did.
C060. For myself, for my family, to change. Find yourself again.

Figure 4. The Horizontal Hermaneutic Phase - Q3.2 & Q3.3

3.2 Would you recommend the program to other men? What would you say to other men who are thinking about doing it?
-> good.
-> don't know; contradictions of the programme. The book parts are wrong, there are –
-> TC examples – operates on 9 principles. The principles are there. 2nd chance of life. Still a prison sentence. Vic.

3.4 Before you started the programme what did you think it was going to be like?
Staff view as sentence. Staff think they are officer. Supervisor - used to enforce control.
-> staff pretended to be with us, us vs them tension. Staff changing. Yesterday's seminar - staff don't know or management don't. Do research on bringing here.
- use them a sleep - this what.
- Eileen - needs to go, she's doing my residential
- guaranteed address
- she started coming down 3hrs in library
- Eileen turns up ->

3.15 How could the programme be improved?
->thought house worse than being home detention
->could ask don't need to put proposals in
->able to do e.g Drs, t.
->treated as a prisoner ->hopefully will.
->Change 15 min observation, stop being Corrections staff. Open and and honest. Theme of prison.
-e.g. mum - having to show ID.

Figure 5. The Vertical Hermaneutic Phase - C059 (Q3.2, Q3.4 & Q3.15)

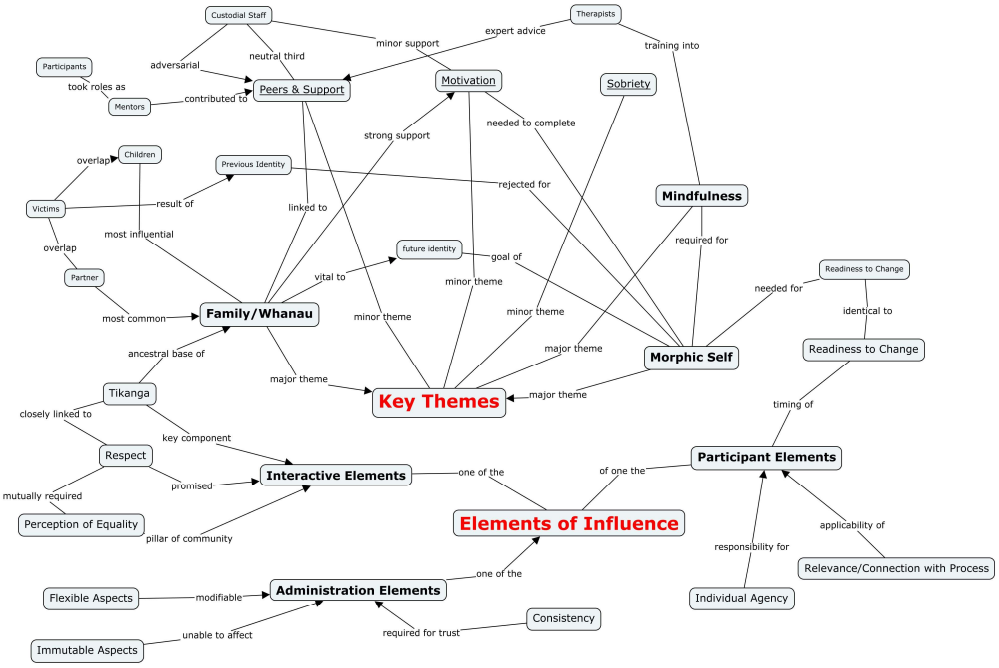

Figure 6. Key Themes and Elements of Influence

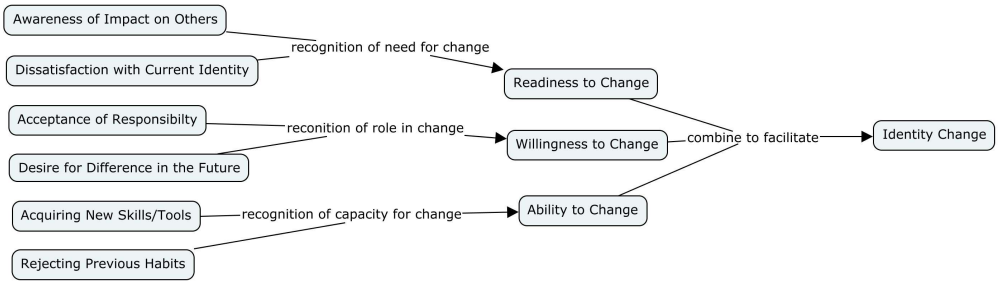

Figure 7. Conceptual Map of the Morphic Self

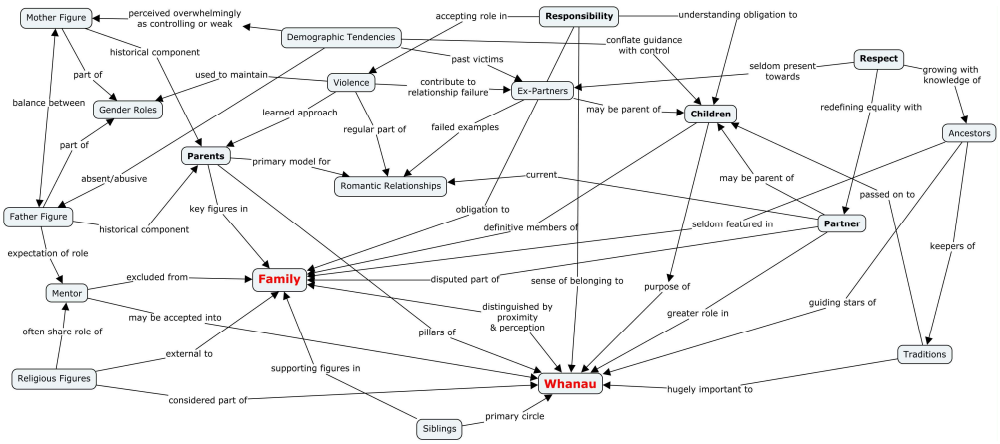

Figure 8. Conceptual Map of Family & Whanau

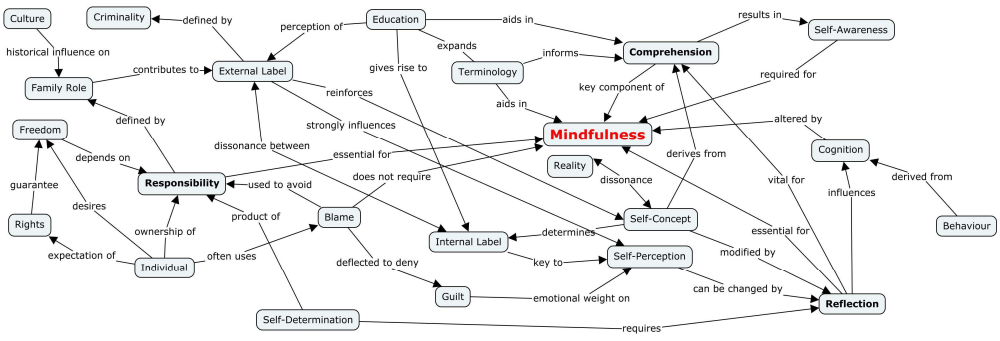

Figure 9. Conceptual Map of Mindfulness

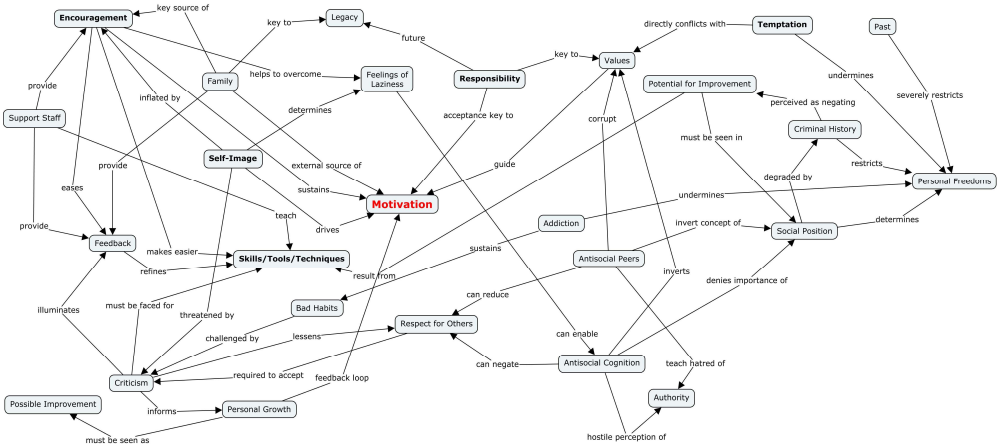

Figure 10. Conceptual Map of Motivation

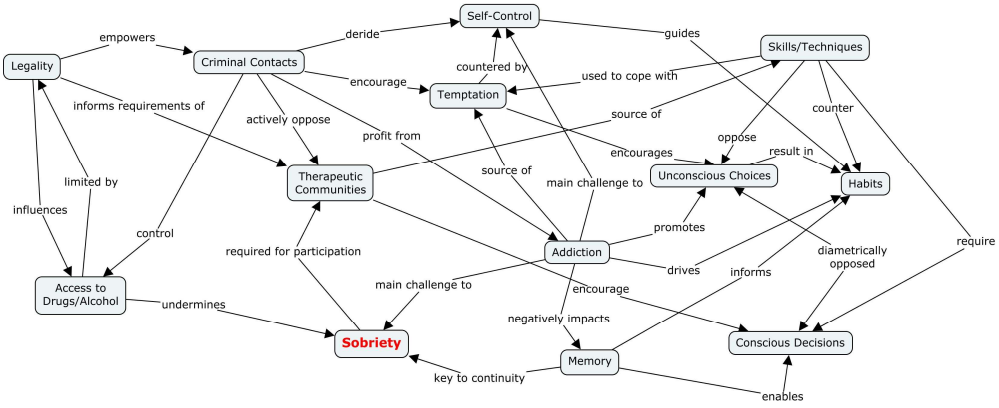

Figure 11. Conceptual Map of Sobriety

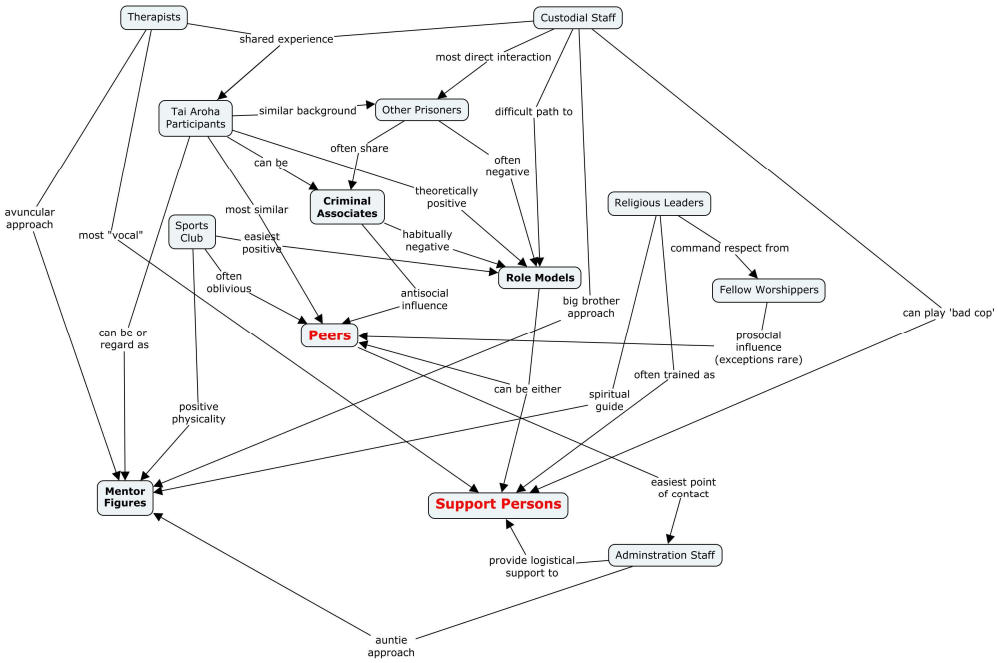

Figure 12. Conceptual Map of Peers & Support Persons