The Investigation of Military Style Academies as an Intervention for Young People with Serious and Persistent Criminality

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Science (Research) in Psychology

at

The University of Waikato

by

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2025

Abstract

A developmental perspective asserts that criminal trajectories arise due to the complex interactions between environmental factors and individual factors increasing vulnerabilities towards persistent criminality. These criminal trajectories are identifiable during early childhood and represent unaddressed vulnerabilities across social, cognitive and familial contexts. The presence of serious and persistent offending amongst young people is significant because it highlights the accumulative effects of risk factors present in childhood and places them at increased risk of transitioning into persistent criminality in adulthood. It is therefore advantageous to design interventions targeting serious and persistent offending in young people. Aotearoa's National government proposed military style academies (MSAs) as an intervention to reduce the amount of young people involved in serious and persistent offending. The combination of physical activity and rehabilitative components is proposed to alter criminal trajectories and encourage desistance from crime.

This thesis investigates youth practitioner's perceptions of MSAs, an intervention for youth with serious and persistent criminality to conceptualize how youth rehabilitation can be shaped to positively contribute to the wellbeing of Aotearoa's most vulnerable young people. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse 11 interviews with youth practitioners with at least one year's experience working with vulnerable youth. Four main themes and nine sub-themes were identified. The four main themes included addressing the root causes of crime, reducing re-offending, cultural considerations and the juvenile justice system. Serious and persistent offending amongst young people was viewed to be the result of a lack of early interventions targeting those at the highest risk of developing enduring criminal identities. The whānau unit was highlighted as a key target for early interventions and rehabilitative programmes. Participants raised concerns about the incongruence between MSAs and a Te Ao Māori world view. Participants suggested that MSAs failed to recognise the extent to which

young people who offend are often victims first. Further, they argued that MSAs did not facilitate reintegration into the community. These factors were associated with increasing the likelihood that young people will go on to offend. These findings support the need for interventions to embrace a therapeutic model emphasizing the reconciliation and redemption of the young person. As such, the re-structure of youth rehabilitation and the juvenile justice system to more closely align with Mātauranga Māori and desistance theories can be considered a robust strategy to disrupt the care to custody pipeline so prevalent in young people who offend.

Acknowledgements

I've spent a considerable amount of time discussing how ill-matched Academia and I are, lo and behold here stands a completed thesis. The glory is truly His alone.

To my parents who have made an infinite number of sacrifices for me. May you be no stranger to prosperity and may health be your closest companion.

To Prof Katrina Roen for all her guidance and advice throughout the research process.

To Afye, I owe you so much and have not been keeping score, so please accept my eternal friendship as recompense.

To Anna for being my eternal job reference and stewarding my professional career. Your support has given me such flight.

To Liz, my role model, mentor and dearest friend. Psalms 20 over you and your family. To know you is truly to love you.

To Aimee for being the inspiration behind this thesis. Thank you for your friendship and continual support, you have my kudos forever.

To Law-and-Order SVU for getting me through the long nights of writing and editing.

Finally, to the participants, whether your participation was hesitant or enthusiastic, in the end you said yes and I am grateful. Rest assured, should we ever find ourselves in the same café, I shall graciously foot your bill.

Glossary

Aotearoa- New Zealand

Hapū- Kinship group, clan

Iwi- Extended kinship group

Kapa Haka- Māori performing group

Kaupapa Māori- Incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society

Karakia- To recite ritual chants, prayers

Māori- Indigenous Peoples of New Zealand

Māoridom- The sphere of Māori life encompassing customs, beliefs and identity

Mamae- Pain, wound, ache

Mana- prestige, authority, influence, spiritual power, inherited at birth

Mātauranga Māori- The body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors

Marae- Traditional meeting house

Pākehā- New Zealander of European descent

Pepeha- Tribal saying, tribal motto

Tangata Whenua- Indigenous Peoples of New Zealand/People of the land.

Te Ao Māori- Māori worldview

Te Reo- Māori language

Te Tiriti O Waitangi- The Treaty of Waitangi

Tikanga- Correct procedure, custom

Tikanga o ngā hara- Law of wrongdoing

Tino rangatiratanga- Self-determination

Rangatahi Māori- The Indigenous youth of New Zealand

Rangatiratanga- The right to exercise authority

Rūnanga o ngā ture- Assembly where laws are discussed

Waiata- Song, psalm, chant

Whakapapa- Genealogy

Whānau- The primary economic unit of traditional Māori society, family group

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The Investigation of Military Style Academies as an Intervention for Young People with Serious and Persistent Criminality

Individuals who engage in serious and persistent offending demonstrate significantly higher rates of antisocial behaviour across a range of domains and are therefore the target of schools, the juvenile justice system, psychiatric hospitals and prisons (Moffitt, 1993). Across these institutions, the same cohort of individuals appear to be over-represented, creating a significant economic burden on governments. A large number of resources are dedicated to reducing their involvement in the criminal justice and social welfare system across the lifespan. The cost of persistent criminal behaviour within youth populations has a negative cascading effect on their immediate social context and the broader social context of their victims and by implication the community (Jackson 1988; Ministry of Social Development, 2010). This cost is both individual, in undermining the likelihood that the young person is represented in positive outcomes across life domains and societal, in severely hindering the demographic dividend of the country. It is at the junction of the juvenile justice system and the adult court system that juvenile justice rehabilitation programmes attempt to prevent the on-going development of persistent criminal behaviour.

The effectiveness of youth rehabilitative programmes is vital and of consequence to young people who offend (in establishing a pro-social identity and desisting from crime), general society (who carry the general burden of persistent and serious crime) and the government (who are tasked with developing effective rehabilitative interventions). The predictive value of youth offending is highlighted in the following statement by Moffitt (1993) “extremity of antisocial behaviour does not imply stability; measures of frequency or seriousness of adolescent offending will not distinguish between life course-persistent and adolescent-limited delinquents.” As such the process of developing effective interventions though critical, is complex. The failure to differentiate between those who will offend across

the lifespan versus those whose offending is limited to adolescence, poses a serious problem. Practitioners rely on retrospective measures to determine if rehabilitative interventions applied during adolescence have targeted those most likely to become serious and persistent adult offenders.

The effectiveness of youth rehabilitative programmes is influenced not only by programme design but also implementation (Orsi et al., 2010). Programme implementation can broadly be understood as the factors that govern the carrying out of the programme, which includes the therapeutic relationship between client and clinician (Manso & Rauktis, 2011). The therapeutic relationship describes the context in which therapy occurs and identifies that the interactions between the client and the clinician can influence treatment (Karver et al., 2006). Bordin (1994) proposed three factors governing the therapeutic alliance namely a positive client-clinician relationship, collaborative treatment goals and a clear plan of how these goals will be achieved (cited in Orsi et al., 2010). These factors create an optimal environment to facilitate change, therefore therapeutic alliance has been linked to higher levels of treatment adherence which in turn is associated with positive increases in psychosocial wellbeing (Karver et al., 2006; Orsi et al., 2010). Whilst the therapeutic relationship is vital for programme outcomes across all age groups, youth practitioners operate through a unique lens of influence (Ungar & Ikeda, 2017). The complex relational realities of young people who offend means that youth practitioners operate through dual roles of guardianship and mentorship. For example, Ungar and Ikeda (2017) found that youth practitioners likely operated from three distinct yet related roles (informal supporter, formal administrator & caregiver substitute) in therapeutic engagement. They found that the ability to navigate between these three roles was positively associated with the young person's engagement (Ungar & Ikeda, 2017).

A second point of difference lies in the fact that youth often enter into rehabilitative programmes involuntary which creates further complexities to the therapeutic relationship (Ungar & Ikeda, 2017). The dysfunctional relational contexts of young people who offend creates a foundation based on mistrust. When paired with the negative associations of the juvenile justice system, it facilitates hostile engagements from the young person, negatively impacting the young person- youth practitioner relationship (Karver et al., 2006; Orsi et al., 2010). Adolescence also causes significant shifts in the young person's viewpoint of authority figures (Manso & Rauktis, 2011). These factors in combination create a difficult environment for the development of a collaborative relationship. Given its proven impact on treatment outcomes, the therapeutic relationship must be a priority for the practitioner, despite the highlighted challenges. Bickman et al. (2012) found that changes in youth practitioners' ratings of therapeutic alliance were associated with corresponding changes in client symptom severity. They concluded that it is necessary for youth practitioners to be conscious of the dynamic nature of the therapeutic alliance during treatment because of its associated effect on treatment goals. While factors such as programme content and willingness to change are positively associated with rehabilitation, it is the ability of the youth practitioner to maintain engagement with the young person that significantly influences therapeutic outcomes.

This study therefore seeks to build on the literature regarding the therapeutic alliance between the youth practitioner and the young person, to effectively explore rehabilitative responses to serious and persistent offending in young people. MSAs was proposed by the National government as part of a broader initiative seeking to reduce serious offending rates amongst young people (Oranga Tamariki, 2024). MSAs encompass features of traditional military style bootcamps in that they emphasize physical training, however includes the addition of rehabilitative, educational and aftercare components (Oranga Tamariki, 2024). The literature has demonstrated the ineffectiveness of bootcamps in reducing recidivism

within both adult and adolescent populations (Mackenzie et al., 2005; Welsh & Rocque, 2014; Gascón & Roussell, 2018). MSAs seeks to differentiate itself from traditional bootcamps by focusing on rehabilitative programmes and intensive wrap-around support within a structured environment (Meade & Steiner, 2010; Sellers, 2015; Oranga Tamariki, 2024). Few studies have explored the effects of bootcamps on serious and persistent offending and on Indigenous youth populations. This study aims to explore how the components of MSAs might influence rehabilitation for young people who offend seriously within the context of bicultural Aotearoa.

Rationale for the Study

Over the last decade there has been a global reduction in youth offending (Reil, 2021; Rooney et al., 2024). Aotearoa's youth crime rates have remained stable over the last two years coming from a backdrop of significant reductions in the total youth offending over the last decade (Evidence Centre, 2020). The Youth Justice Indicators Summary report (2018) demonstrates an overall reduction across all youth offending. The result of substantial reductions in minor offending has however meant that serious offending represents a larger percentage of the total offending (Evidence Centre, 2020). This is further exacerbated by the elevated recidivism rates observed among serious youth offenders. Reil et al. (2021) using New Zealand official government statistics reported that in 2018, 33% of children who committed an offence before the age of 14 (CWHO), committed an offence that was assessed as being serious in nature. Though only accounting for 20% of the offending cohort, CHWO committed a disproportionate amount (57%) of the total crime (Reil et al., 2021). For the 16year-old cohort, of those convicted of robbery or extortion in 2021, more than half (52%) reoffending within a 24-month period in an adult court.

The term “serious and persistent” captures those who differentiate themselves from their offending cohort by the frequency and seriousness of offending (Oranga Tamariki, 2024). The seriousness of the offence is defined by it incurring a sentence of imprisonment with a maximum tariff of seven or more years whilst the term persistent captures the high recidivism rates observed within this population (Ministry of Justice, 2024). In 2023, 886 young people were convicted of serious and persistent offending in Aotearoa (Ministry of Justice, 2024). Early involvement in the justice system provides opportunities for persistent offending through processes such as modelling (Lambie, 2018a). The literature demonstrates that approximately 41% to 83% of incarcerated youth will go on to re-offend post release (Wong et al., 2024). Creemers et al. (2022) conducted a meta-analysis to investigate the relationship between the length of incarceration and the rate of recidivism in youth convicted of serious violent and/or sexual offences. The sample included 27 publications between 1986 and 2020. In line with critiques of Jackson (1988) majority of the studies were conducted in America and Europe. Creemers et al. (2022) found that minority status was not a significant predictor of overall recidivism. Youth with violent convictions were more likely to re-offend when compared to those convicted of sexual offences. Of significance, Creemers et al. (2022) found that the length of imprisonment was not correlated to lower rates of recidivism. This suggests that longer imprisonment lengths are not an effective solution to targeting youth offending or recidivism and further supports the argument that alternative considerations should be made to address youth involvement in crime (Lambie, 2018; Littell et al., 2021).

The work of Stouthamer-Loeber et al. (2004) using the Pittsburgh Youth Study was significant in demonstrating that persistent offending is identifiable from elementary school age. The increased number of serious and persistent offending within youth populations poses both a societal and economic burden. This is especially pertinent considering the additive

effects of risk factors and the relationship between early onset offending and persistent criminality. A significant proportion of the literature within criminology has been dedicated towards predicting future criminal behaviour, however this has not translated into the development of effective rehabilitative measures (Lambie et al., 2024b). There are currently very little interventions targeting serious and persistent offending within youth populations (Lambie et al., 2024b). The needs of high-risk youth remain unaddressed leading to the increased likelihood that they persist in criminality into adulthood (Lambie, 2018b; Dembo et al; 2024). This is concerning because within Māoridom, rangatahi are considered an essential fabric of society, representing the future potential a society holds (Cunningham et al., 2023). The current trajectory of rangatahi offending in Aotearoa therefore demonstrates a failing on both societal and governmental fronts.

In response to this identified cohort of serious and persistent youth offenders, MSAs was proposed as a rehabilitative measure as part of a broader initiative seeking to reduce serious offending rates (Oranga Tamariki, 2024). Whilst the literature has demonstrated the ineffectiveness of bootcamps in reducing recidivism, the focus on rehabilitative programmes and intensive wrap-around support within a structured environment may be beneficial for serious and persistent youth offenders who otherwise have proven to be resistant to standalone rehabilitative programmes (Meade & Steiner, 2010; Sellers, 2015; Oranga Tamariki, 2024). Broadly speaking, there are three moving parts to consider when targeting serious and persistent youth offending; the intervention, the youth practitioners who are likely to carry out the intervention and young people. These parts are distinct and yet interrelated, having both an individual and collective influence on the targeted issue of serious and persistent youth offending. The literature highlights that youth practitioners occupy a unique and complex role within youth rehabilitation and due to the developmental stage of the people they work with, have the ability to greatly influence programme outcomes within the context

of the therapeutic relationship. Given this, the exploration of their perspectives on MSAs has the potential to provide valuable insights into the current status of interventions and future directions of youth rehabilitation, particularly in targeting serious and persistent offending.

Brief Outline of the Proposed Military Style Academies (MSAs)

As part of the current Government's action plan to incur a 15% reduction in the number of children and young persons with serious and persistent offending by 2029, three focus areas were proposed. MSAs falls under focus area one: "Strengthening System Settings (Oranga Tamariki, 2024). The first action point involved the development of the Young Serious Offender (YSO) declaration which would speed up intensive responses to young people who have been identified to contribute disproportionately to the total percentage of youth offending. A youth offender aged 14 to 17 years meets the criteria for a YSO status if they have committed two or more serious offences, with at least one having a maximum tariff of seven years imprisonment or more (Oranga Tamariki, 2024). The two offences must not be associated with each other and represent two distinct offences. Sufficient evidence must be provided to the Youth Court of the recidivism risk of the young person and the lack of success of previous interventions (Oranga Tamariki, 2024). A YSO status would make a youth offender eligible for the consideration of MSAs. MSAs is proposed to last for a total of 12 months, dividing into two segments: a three-month residential phase followed by a nine-month community phase with intensive wrap around support. According to Oranga Tamariki (2024) the residential phase will be based on a routinized structure and include the following: criminogenic interventions including individualized therapeutic and cultural programmes, physical exercises, educational interventions and preparatory support regarding employment. Attendees will be provided with a case manager who will serve as a mentor and supported with continued whānau engagement throughout the process (Oranga Tamariki, 2024).

On the 17th of February 2025, the Children's Commission completed an evaluation of the MSA Pilot (Mana Mokopuna, 2024). They identified the usage of a reliable model of care and found sufficient support that there were no incidents of misconduct and/or abuse (Mana Mokopuna, 2024). A key recommendation included the need to develop a therapeutic model of care consistent with the key recommendations of Whakamana Tangata which is overseen by the Welfare Expert Advisory Group. The purpose of Whakamana Tangata is to ensure that engagement with the social welfare system results in the increase of capabilities of New Zealanders and does not result in further stigmatization (Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019).

Outline of Chapters

Chapter one provides an overview of the issue regarding serious and persistent offending, particularly in youth populations. This includes the consideration of how different definitions of serious and persistent offending influences the formation and implementation of rehabilitative interventions.

Chapter two considers the three main theories accepted within criminology and psychology explaining why individuals engage in crime. The different explanations influence the theories underpinning rehabilitative interventions. The chapter highlights the difficulties criminologist face in attempting to predict criminal behaviour. Risk factors that are associated with serious and persistent criminality are discussed and contextualized to Aotearoa given its bicultural nature. Risk factors are highlighted as being additive, where the presence of more than one compounds the vulnerabilities experienced by young people.

The second part of chapter two focuses on Aotearoa's juvenile justice system, providing a brief landscape of the interventions designed to target offending in youth populations, before highlighting the global literature on military style bootcamps. This

includes past attempts at conducting military style academies. Because bootcamps include a residential phase, the chapter also provides an overview on the literature regarding reintegration back into the community.

Chapter three explores the methodology implored in the present study, which aims to investigate the attitudes of youth practitioners regarding MSAs. The chapter highlights the strengths of using an interpretative- constructive approach and describes why reflexive thematic analysis is the most appropriate method for investigating the narratives of youth practitioners.

Chapter four presents the study findings by using reflexive thematic analysis. Four main themes and nine sub-themes are identified, all pertaining to MSAs and youth rehabilitation in general.

In chapter five, the research findings are discussed and several implications applicable to youth rehabilitation and the juvenile justice system are considered. The chapter concludes with an exploration of study limitations and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter highlights the differences in the literature between the definitions of serious and persistent offending and discusses theories within psychology aimed at explaining why individuals engage in criminal offending. These theories help to identify risk factors that are most associated with enduring criminality and therefore influence rehabilitative programmes. As Aotearoa is a bicultural nation, critical arguments are made demonstrating that the lack of cultural identity operates as a key risk factor. The second half of the chapter considers the components of Aotearoa's juvenile justice system and the general state of rehabilitative programmes, before exploring the literature surrounding bootcamps as a rehabilitative measure for young people who offend.

Serious and Persistent Offending

There is a lack of consensus on what is meant by serious and persistent offending. Stouthamer-Loeber et al. (2004) using the Pittsburgh Youth Study, categorized serious delinquency in adolescents aged 13-19 years as engagement in the following offences: breaking and entering, rape or aggravated sexual assault, manslaughter or causing serious grievous bodily harm. Persistence was identified if participants reported serious delinquency for two or more of the seven assessment years in the study. Ahonen et al. (2020) defined high frequency and persistent offending as adolescents between the ages of 12-17 years, having at least 10 theft and/or at least four violent offences or four subsequent years of at least two theft or violent offences. Classifications were made using self-reported measures initially however at age 40 official records were used.

In response to critiques made by Sampson and Laub (2005) regarding the use of the term 'persistent' to describe life-course persistent offenders, Moffitt et al. (2015) informed

that the term should be understood as “high rate over time” rather than a steady rate of offending across the lifespan (Sampson & Laub, 2005). Sampson and Laub (2005) argue that this definition of persistence (high rate over time) highlights chronic offenders rather than life course persistent offenders. Jolliffe et al. (2017) makes an important distinction between persistent offending and chronic offending, categorizing chronic offenders as being responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime within their cohort. For example, Eme (2020) identified that a small group of individuals at age 38 within the life-course persistent category accounted for 53.3% of all convictions within their study. This suggests that persistent offending is largely indicative of intensity rather than duration. According to Sampson and Laub (2005) and Jolliffe et al. (2017) these individuals would be identified as chronic offenders rather than life-course persistent offenders. Life-course persistent offenders may be classified as chronic offenders however not all chronic offenders will offend across the lifespan (Jolliffe et al., 2017).

The New Zealand Ministry of Justice (MOJ) categorizes serious offences as such that incur a sentence of imprisonment with a maximum tariff of seven or more years (Ministry of Justice, 2024). When considering The Oranga Tamariki (Responding to Serious Youth Offending) Amendment Bill, persistence can be understood to cover recidivism and failed previous engagement in rehabilitative programmes as highlighted by the following clause: “the Youth Court is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the young person is likely to reoffend, and previous interventions have been unsuccessful.” Oranga Tamariki (2024) defines serious and persistent offending as three or more offences within a 12-month period with at least one of the offences carrying a maximum tariff of at least 7 years imprisonment.

The term ‘serious and persistent’ offending is not synonymous with the life course persistent offender; however, these young people are assessed as being at increased risk of

becoming life course persistent offenders. Creemers et al. (2023) found that the differences in definitions of recidivism when investigating serious violent and/or sexual offences in youth offenders influenced overall recidivism rates. Across the 27 studies included in the meta-analysis, those that quantified recidivism as an arrest for any new conviction reported higher recidivism rates. Such definitions of recidivism do not capture a reduction in offending severity and/or intensity. It is the discrepancies around what counts as persistent that plagues research findings. As the effectiveness of programmes are largely centred on the reduction of recidivism, the way in which recidivism and by implication persistence is quantified is important.

Theoretical Explanations of Crime

Within a Te Ao Māori worldview, engagement in antisocial behaviour is viewed to be the result of a lack of harmony within the context of the individual (Webb et al., 2017; Henwood & George, 2018). Rather than being relegated to the philosophical sphere, Māori understood law and order alongside spiritual and cultural dimensions (Jackson, 1988). The focus on risk factors delineates from a Te Ao Māori worldview because it seeks to deter the individual from committing future offences. For Māori, the primary motivation behind engaging an individual in formal proceedings was to restore the individual back to their social and cultural context (Tauri, 2005). This disconnect between Indigenous and Western ways has been attributed by many Indigenous scholars as the key driver behind inequities across all sectors (Jackson, 1987; Tauri, 2005; Henwood & George, 2018). According to Jackson (1988), the theories of crime proposed by mainstream psychology fail to consider the unique cultural factors that influence behaviour, values and ways of being, presenting a linear view of a multifaceted and multisystemic issue. When applied unilaterally, these theories are unable to provide insights as to why individuals engage in crime within a bicultural context (Jackson, 1987). Fix et al. (2021) identified that differences in parenting styles between

African Americans and European Americans was the result of differences in cultural norms. As a result, different risk factors were associated with delinquency for each group. They concluded that whilst parenting styles are embedded in cultural norms, they are heavily influenced by factors such as resources, support and environment. Differences in the associated risk factors leading to the increased likelihood of the development of low self-control within the study where indicative to child-rearing in an environment with a lack of support and resources (Fix et al., 2021; Erickson & Burgason, 2022). Such conclusions however do not consider the unique issues faced by African Americans that contribute to their over-representation in environments with a lack of resources and support thus resulting in an over-representation in statistics of deficits. *Table 1* provides a brief summary of the key differences between Te Ao

Māori view on criminal justice versus a Western viewpoint (Pratt, 1992, as cited in Tauri, 2005)

Table 1

A Comparison of Māori and European Criminal Justice Processes

	European	Māori
Criminal Responsibility	Individual	Collective
Location of Justice Processes	Private (Courtroom)	Public (Marae)
Aim of System	Deterrence/retribution	Reintegration/restore social bonds
Key actor in the system	The state	The Victim

Dual Taxonomy

Moffitt's (1993) dual taxonomy encompasses life course persistent and adolescent limited offenders. This developmental theory of antisocial behaviour posits that life-course persistent offenders exhibit prolonged engagement in crime and though being estimated to be 5-10% of the criminal population contribute heavily to the total proportion of crime (Moffitt, 1993; Lipsey & Derzon; 1998; Eme, 2020.) The following risk factors in childhood are highly correlated with the demonstration of persistent offending across the life-course: low self-control, high presence of physical aggression, behavioural difficulties, neurodevelopmental difficulties and difficult temperaments (Eme, 2020).

The dual taxonomy established the premise that antisocial behaviour becomes a core tenet across the life stage, and is expressed differential across the lifespan (Moffitt, 1993). A pattern emerges where physical aggression in early childhood is likely to lead to truancy during early adolescence, substance abuse and theft during late adolescence, followed by aggravated robbery and sexual assault during early adulthood and homicide in adulthood. (Moffitt, 1993; Ahonen et al., 2020). Life course persistent offenders when investigated prospectively, demonstrate higher levels of exposure to environmental and social deprivation (Moffitt, 1993; Eme 2020). Ahonen et al. (2020) found that those identified as high frequency offenders had significant exposure to delinquent peers, substance use and poor housing quality. These findings corroborate assertions made by Moffit (1993), highlighting that the most vulnerable children tend to be reared in environments that exacerbate their vulnerabilities. This increases the likelihood of the prevalence of persistent offending. The impact of persistent criminality has further been associated with a range of negative outcomes outside of criminal engagement, such as an over reliance on state welfare benefits and the increased use of the health system (Eme, 2020).

By contrast, adolescent limited offenders differ from life course persistent offenders in the following categories: age of onset, severity of offending and frequency of offending (Moffitt, 1993; Moffitt & Caspi, 2001; Jolliffe et al., 2017; Eme, 2020). A core characteristic of adolescent limited offenders is that their offending is limited to adolescence (Moffitt, 1993). In line with the age-crime curve, peak offending is observed in adolescence, mimicking the behaviour of life-course persistent offenders (Jolliffe et al., 2017). Adolescent limited offenders tend to experience fewer adverse experiences during childhood which is associated with an increased likelihood to desist from criminal engagement (Moffitt & Caspi, 2001; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2004). Joliffe et al. (2017) however found that there was no significant difference in the age of onset between life course persistent and adolescent limited offenders. These findings are significant because age of onset has largely been considered a stable predictor for serious future offending (Loeber & Farrington, 1998; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2002; Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2004). It has therefore been proposed that rather than being a dichotomy, life course persistent and adolescent limited classifications represent a continuum of antisocial behaviour, with life-course persistent being the most extreme (Eme, 2020). Ahonen et al. (2020) found that only 20% of those identified as adolescent high frequency/persistent offenders went on to replicate the trajectory of a life course persistent offender in adulthood.

General Theory of Crime

The general theory of crime as theorized by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) stipulates a range of conditions which appear to be in direct conflict with the developmental perspective utilized by Moffitt (1993). The premise for a general theory in understanding crime arises from the observation that human behaviour and/or problems tend to share underlying causes (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 2016). Based on the features of crime, offenders are assessed to

possess complimentary behaviours that increase the likelihood of engaging in crime. These same behaviours are considered to be incongruent with educational, occupational and relational stability (Evans et al., 1997; Erickson & Burgason, 2022). Offenders are assessed to demonstrate high levels of impulsive behaviour, risk and self-seeking tendencies and temperamentality (Evans et al., 1997; DeLisi & Vaughn, 2008). According to Hirschi (2016) these behaviours are indicative of low levels of self-control, which forms the basis for engaging in criminal behaviour (Evans et al., 1997; Fix et al., 2021). The presence of low self-control within individuals is predictive of a range of harmful behaviours and negative outcomes, including criminal behaviour (Erickson et al., 2022).

The prevalence of low self-control is associated with child rearing practices (Erickson et al., 2022). Poor parental supervision and lack of discipline is correlated with the increased presence of impulsive and self-seeking behaviours and deficits in consequential thinking (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Fix et al., 2021). This is significant because low self-control is assessed to be stable across the life-course (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 2016; Fix et al., 2021). This assumption by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) has three main implications. Firstly, the consideration of environmental factors in the explanation of crime is made redundant because the presence of low self-control will inevitably create less than favourable environments. Evans et al. (1997) provided the following profile for individuals with low self-control; high prevalence of delinquent friends, low academic attainment, higher probability of being unemployment, and less likely to have a successful marriage (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 2002; Morris, 2019). The presence of negative socio-economic outcomes is considered to be an indicator of low self-control. Low self-control is therefore a reliable predictor of criminal offending (Evans et al., 1997). Environmental explanations do not provide any additional insights into why individuals commit crime (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 2016; Fix et al., 2021). DeLisi and Vaughn (2008)

found that career criminals had lower self-control scores when compared to non-career criminals, outperforming factors such as age, sex, race, socioeconomic status and trauma in predicting criminal career membership. Erickson et al. (2022) were interested in investigating the relationship between low self-control and street code. Street code is identified to begin in childhood and represent attitudes that are indicative of living in areas of disadvantage (Erickson et al., 2022). It is considered significant because attitudes relating to street code perpetuate violent reactions, which in turn has been associated with low self-control (DeLisi & Vaughn, 2008; Erickson et al., 2022). At wave six, they found that low self-control predicted engagement in violent offending, whilst street code did not. This suggests that low self-control uniquely contributes to the engagement in crime and facilitates the formation of other risk factors which are strongly associated with antisocial behaviour. Rather than considering environmental influences on crime, identifying low self-control in children can be a meaningful way of quantifying the likelihood of engaging in anti-social behaviour across the lifespan.

Age-Graded Informed Social Control

The age-graded informed social control theory affirms that crime is likely to occur as a consequence of low and/or lack of bonds to social institutions such as family, peers, school and government agencies (Metcalfe et al., 2019). Engagement in these institutions provide a form of control as they establish a blueprint of expected norms (Metcalfe et al., 2019). The lack of bonds to social institutions creates the foundation for persistent criminality because of its influence on informal social bonds such as employment (Sampson & Laub, 2005). This process is termed cumulative disadvantage, where the exclusion from one institution, predicts exclusion to others, increasing the likelihood of criminal involvement (Sampson & Laub, 2016). Sampson and Laub (2005) found that the presence of social bonds such as

employment and marriage had an inverse effect on adult involvement in crime. This relationship was observed for both delinquent and non-delinquent samples and was significant for other criminogenic risk factors (Sampson & Laub, 2005). For example, stability in employment was positively associated with longer periods without arrests (Metcalfe et al., 2019); increased social bonds is inversely correlated to engagement in white collar crime (van Onna & Denkers, 2019) and moving homes frequently increased the likelihood of adolescent delinquency (Unlu et al., 2021).

Unlike Gottfredson and Hirschi, (2016), the age-graded theory of informal social control acknowledges that the prevalence of criminogenic risk factors facilitates the development of antisocial behaviour (Laub et al., 2019). The longer an individual is exposed to cumulative disadvantage, the less chances they have of creating pro-social bonds, thus making anti-social behaviour stable. The age-graded theory of informal social control views observed differences in crime rates as the result of increases and/or decreases of social bonds in adolescence and early adulthood (Sampson & Laub, 2005; Laub et al., 2019; Morris, 2019). Individuals are presented with turning points (life events) that alter their bonds to social institutions. The degree to which tuning points influence criminal trajectories is further contingent on agency (Laub et al., 2019). Laub et al. (2019) argues that these turning points present individuals with the choice to desist or persist in offending. In line with the ecological perspective on criminal behaviour, this supports that the presence of risk factors during childhood is not deterministic. Interventions centred on increasing an individual's bonds to social institutions can effectively reduce the risk of offending.

The Profile of a Serious and Persistent Offender

Those who have been identified as being at risk of serious and persistent offending represent the most vulnerable cohort of young people. All three major theories of crime

emphasise that deficits across social, psychological and structural domains accumulate over time increasing the likelihood of criminal engagement. The following section discusses some of the risk factors associated with criminal involvement and their influence on the development of persistent criminality in young people.

Cultural Identity

The process governing the relationship between cultural identity and positive outcomes is likely to be complex and dynamic. Ethnic identity is defined as a belonging derived from being a part of a membership to an ethnic group and governs thinking, perceptions and feelings (Smith et al., 1999). A positive ethnic identity has been linked to increased self-efficacy (Smith et al., 1999), subjective wellbeing (Houkamau & Sibley, 2011) and whānau connectedness (Stuart & Jose, 2014). It is the accumulation of these effects that enables ethnic identity to function as a protective factor (Shepherd et al., 2018).

To understand how ethnic/cultural identity may act as a protective factor, it is important to understand its components. Smith et al. (1999) utilized the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEM) which comprises of ethnic identity summarized by the following three dimensions; sense of belonging, cultural awareness and cultural engagement. Sense of belonging serves as a key mechanism through which individuals construct personal and collective self-concepts (Houkamau & Sibley, 2014). How cultural groups are viewed by others and by themselves influences the extent to which their members feel empowered (Houkamua & Sibley, 2014). If a young person has a strong sense of belonging, is knowledgeable about their culture and engages in cultural practices, they develop positive mental representations of themselves and their cultural group. This is either strengthened or challenged by the societal narrative regarding the cultural group (Smith et al., 1999). In order

to maximise the extent to which ethnic identity can act as a protective factor, it is necessary to ensure that structural systems are in place to reinforce notions of ethnic identity.

The Multidimensional Model of Māori Identity and Cultural Engagement (MMM-ICE) which is specific to Māori considers cultural efficacy rather than cultural identity (Houkamau & Sibley, 2011). MMM-ICE stipulates that ethnic identity is not a static measure and is a representation of the degree to which Māori are able to engage in Māori ways of being (Houkamau & Sibley, 2011). This is correlated to agency and efficacy because it involves both awareness and active participation (Houkamau & Sibley, 2011). Stuart & Jose (2014) however considers cultural identity to be primarily linked to whānau engagement. The whānau unit facilitates cultural transmission through inter-generational relationships, whakapapa and tikanga (Stuart & Jose, 2014). A strong whānau unit creates an environment where cultural values are positively upheld, and it is through this context that the child comes to learn about themselves (Jackson, 1987). Considering all the above, cultural identity can be viewed as the combination of cultural participation, cultural engagement, sense of belonging and whānau involvement.

A lack of cultural identity therefore reflects a lack of cultural participation, cultural engagement, sense of belonging and whānau involvement, each of which has been individually and collectively associated with adverse outcomes. In Aotearoa, this has been the direct result of colonisation (Webb et al., 2017). Cultural deprivation is defined as the process through which the dominant group creates policies that prevent other cultures from practicing their cultural values i.e. Tohunga Suppression Act (1907). These practices have directly impacted cultural participation and engagement (Jackson, 1988). Cultural denigration is defined as the process by which the dominate cultural group devalues the cultural beliefs of another, impacting sense of belonging. Both processes prevented the transmission of

Matauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) to the next generation (Jackson, 1988). Without sense of belonging, cultural participation and engagement, rangatahi Māori are unable to make sense of their place in Aotearoa, severely impacting notions of self-concept, self-esteem and efficacy (Jackson, 1988).

Smith et al. (1999) found that for adolescents, self-esteem was positively correlated with ethnic identity. Using a sample of school aged children (n = 100, aged 11 to 13 years old), whereby 67 identified as African American, self-esteem and ethnic identity were found to affect self-efficacy. Perceptions of ethnic identity directly informed the young person's self-esteem which in turn influenced their sense of professional and academic ability (Smith et al., 1999). This suggests that the link between cultural identity and pro-social behaviour can be understood as being established through distal factors. Self-efficacy mediates the degree to which a young person is likely to engage in certain academic or professional environments, limiting opportunities to strengthen pro-social identities. As highlighted through the age-graded theory of informal social control, this restricts the individual's number of informal social bonds, increasing the risk that they may engage in anti-social behaviour (Laub et al., 2019). Similarly, a young person may struggle to identify with their ethnic identity as a result of perceived ability. This is particularly salient in minority and/or Indigenous populations, where structural and historic inequalities and inequities result in their over-representation in statistics of deficit. For example, The Native Schools Act 1867 was responsible for suppressing the transmission of te Reo Māori, significantly reshaping how generations of Māori would come to view their language and by implication their cultural identity (Wirihana & Smith, 2019). Houkamua and Sibley (2011) argue that whilst the increase in cultural identity is associated with positive outcomes, this is likely to be only one side of the chain. They found that the increase in cultural efficacy was associated with the increase of negative perceptions of the New Zealand State and state systems. The process of increased cultural enculturation alerts the individual to alternative

ways of being that likely oppose mainstream politics (Houkamua & Sibley, 2011). Interventions that are focused on increase cultural identity, may also promote disengagement from mainstream social structures. Houkamua and Smith (2011) attribute this disengagement as a necessary component for social change.

Stuart and Jose (2014) utilized a rangatahi Māori youth sample taken from the New Zealand Youth Connectedness Project (YCP) to investigate the relationship between Māori identity and subjective wellbeing longitudinally. Whilst the sample included only those who self-identified as Māori, they did not check if self-identification included cultural awareness as in the case of Houkamua and Sibley (2011). Stuart and Jose (2014) found that family connectedness and ethnic identity was associated with higher levels of wellbeing over time. A high ethnic identity was not associated with incremental increases of wellbeing. This reinforces that the process through which cultural identity operates as a protective factor is not linear. It can be concluded that high levels of cultural engagement are predictive of stronger ethnic identity and the combination of the two (high ethnic cultural/high ethnic identity) is indicative of increases in wellbeing (Stuart & Jose, 2014).

Crime prevention has however largely focused on socio-economic criminogenic factors, failing to identify how the loss of cultural identity contributes to the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the juvenile justice system. According to Pitama et al. (2014) the failure to contextualize assessments within the socio-political context has resulted in the incorrect application of interventions, misdiagnosis and further harms associated with Indigenous populations being labelled as ‘resistant.’ Shephard et al. (2018) argue that Indigenous populations become at increased risk of experiencing adverse outcomes because of the loss of cultural identity through colonisation and the on-going resultant systemic pressures. Using a sample of 122 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in custody, Shephard et al. (2018) found that those who strongly identified with their culture reported

higher levels of personal agency. This is significant when considering reintegration into the community and criminal desistance. High levels of personal agency results in the individual being more likely to engage in after-care services, reconnect with family and engage in vocational and employment opportunities and therefore less likely to re-offend.

The extent to which rangatahi Māori demonstrate cultural identity should be contextualized within the socio-political climate. Shephard et al. (2018) highlight that those who fell in the low Aboriginal and Tores Strait Islander identity category were more accurately viewed as having a "confused identity." The socio-political climate limits their opportunities to engage and participate in their cultures. Low levels of cultural identity are therefore indicative of the socio-political climate rather than an accurate measure of ethnic identity. The 2008 National Australia and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey reported that less than 25% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have regular access to a community leader (Shephard et al., 2018). Furthermore, many rangatahi Māori will encounter cultural programmes only after entering interventional settings. This environment has the ability to reinforce negative perceptions of cultural identity because participation is mandated.

It is evident that the loss of cultural identity is a risk factor, but the above findings also demonstrate that emphasizing cultural identity within interventions does not equate to an increased cultural identity. The mechanism through which cultural identity operates as a protective factor is complex, dynamic and contingent on the social-political context. The Meihana model contextualizes Māori health within the Nga Hau e Wha (four winds) (Pitama, et al., 2014). The four winds are colonisation, racism, migration and marginalisation. According to Pitama et al. (2014), each of the winds contribute to the current context of Māori and should be explored individually and collectively when engaging in clinical

assessment *(***Table 2***).* The degree to which an increased cultural identity can be utilized to reduce re-offending should be considered within the context of the four winds.

Table 2

Meihana model: A Summary of the Four Winds

Name of the Four Winds	Description
Colonisation	The historic and on-going policies and practices that have resulted in the removal of tino rangatiratanga for Māori and alienation from political, economic and social spheres of society.
Racism	Includes systemic, social and internalised racism which individually and collectively impact Māori and their experiences of society.
Migration	Migration from traditional iwi lands to urban settings facilitated the loss of extended supports and cultural identity.
Marginalisation	The privileging of Western knowledge systems and methods impinging on tino rangatiratanga.

Neurodevelopmental Disorders

Neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) encompass a range of disorders that are characterized by impairments in physical, mental or sensory domains resulting from atypical central nervous system development (Heanue et al., 2022). NDDs have become of increased interest within criminology due to the high prevalence rates detected in custodial settings

(Satterfield et al., 2007; Hales et al., 2022). Hales et al, (2022) found a 9% prevalence of Attention Deficient/Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) for children placed in secure care in England, compared to the community prevalence of 2%. NDDs disrupt regular neurological functioning resulting in impairments in impulse control, communication/social functioning and cognitive appraisals (Hughes et al., 2015). These factors are associated with the increased likelihood of early onset offending, which in turn is associated with persistent criminality (Hughes et al., 2015).

The high prevalence of undetected NDDs within young people who offend is a significant cause concern (Heanue et al., 2022). The combination of vulnerabilities resulting from NDDs and maladaptive environmental influences exacerbate risk profiles. Satterfield et al. (2007) utilized controls in a prospective 30 year follow up study of hyperactive boys with conduct disorder. The study is seminal in demonstrating that a diagnosis of ADHD is not deterministic. Though they found that boys in the hyperactive group were more likely to be arrested and convicted at follow-up, a significant proportion of the hyperactive group did not offend in adulthood. Across the hyperactive and control groups, the risk of offending decreased with age. Socio-economic status (SES) and Intelligence Quotient (IQ) were associated with the likelihood of offending across the study sample, highlighting the potential accumulative effects of environmental influences. 26% of the hyperactive group were incarcerated at follow-up. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that this subset of the hyperactive group (26%) was more likely to come from low SES and have low IQ.

Kirby et al. (2020) found that young men (n = 188) serving sentences at a juvenile facility in Scotland, were more likely to have been placed in state care, and report functional difficulties, and less like to remain in school after 17 years of age. Half the study sample self-reported deficits in concentration, social communication, literacy and numeracy. For those that reported a high level of problems in numeracy and literacy, a very small proportion had a

formal diagnosis prior to entering the juvenile facility. The lack of diagnosis is the result of several factors including disengagement from school and the associated barriers accessing services (Kirby et al., 2020). Hales et al. (2022) found that all of the young people in secure detention with a NDD diagnosis (n = 244) included in their sample (n = 1322) had at least one contact with social welfare agencies. Notably, 49.2% of this cohort had engaged with social care, youth justice and mental health agencies.

NDDs further tend to have high comorbidity rates. Individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) are susceptible to the development of intellectual disability and anxiety disorders (Grace Kuen et al., 2022). The study conducted by Grace Kuen et al. (2022) is unique because it includes a broad study sample of 211 participants aged 2 to 21 years old, of which 163 participants identified as Australian Aboriginal. This is significant because the under-diagnosis of NDDs is likely to be even more significant for Indigenous populations due to factors such as inequitable access to services. Finally, the study sample was representative of cross-over cases with 70% having had previous contact with care and protection services and 40% with the juvenile justice system. Grace Kuen et al. (2022) found that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) was a predictor of juvenile justice involvement and care and protection involvement. ACEs scores were positively correlated to the presence of other disorders such as attachment disorder or substance use disorder. By contrast, those with FASD and Intellectual Disability (ID) were found to report lower ACEs scores. This may occur because the development of an ID is contingent on early-life biological influences. Because ID is diagnosed earlier, families are more likely to receive support (Grace Kuen et al., 2022).

In sum, the prevalence of NDDs has a significant impact on the young person's contact with the juvenile justice system, their ability to engage in rehabilitative programmes

and follow community-based conditions. They are more likely to be assessed as noncompliant and receive harsher sentences as a result (Heanue et al., 2022). The juvenile justice system and rehabilitative interventions are as it stands not adequately equipped to recognize functional deficits associated with NDDs despite reporting higher prevalence rates than community samples. This increases the risk of re-offending and the development of persistent criminality through a number of mechanisms:

1. increased likelihood of being placed in secure placements
2. breaches of community orders resulting in increased incarceration times
3. non-engagement in rehabilitative programmes
4. being viewed by the juvenile justice system as "resistant."

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Investigation into the developmental histories of young people who offend demonstrates that they experience an increased number of adverse experiences during childhood. The profile of a young person who engages in serious offending likely lends itself to the status of a victim rather than a serious offender due to their increased exposure to traumatic and/or abusive events (Fox et al; 2015; Reil & Lambie, 2022). The presence of ACEs has been well-established in the literature to result in the increased susceptibility of negative outcomes across behavioural, mental and physical domains (Weissman et al., 2019; Ranu et al., 2023). ACE's cover a broad range of events that are associated with negatively influencing normal development such as maltreatment, parental incarceration, separation, exposure to violence, parental mental illness and substance abuse (Fox et al., 2015; Ranu et al., 2023). It is the disruption to the psychosocial development of the child that has resulted in ACE's being considered as a significant predictor of criminal involvement (Reil & Lambie,

2022). Fox et al. (2015) found that ACEs score was a better predictor of serious, violent and chronic offending in young people when compared to risk factors such as age of onset, antisocial peers, impulsivity and family income. Approximately one-third of their study sample had experienced four or more ACEs. van Duin et al. (2021) similarly reported an average of 3.6 ACEs for a juvenile male sample in the Netherlands.

The presence of more than one ACEs during childhood highlights the high-risk rearing environments young people who offend often grow up in. This is significant because these environments hinder normal development and subsequently facilitate the development of pro-offending attitudes. Fox et al. (2015) found that experiencing four ACEs was associated with a 2.4 times increase in the risk of engaging in serious, violent and chronic offending. Guarnaccia et al. (2020) found that the presence of an ACE was significantly correlated with the risk of re-offending. They assessed substance use, impulsivity and the presence of pro-offending attitudes to have a significant impact on recidivism. These factors often emerge within the context of ACEs. The presence of ACEs is therefore indicative of increased risk of criminal involvement and provides insights into patterns of re-offending. The literature further highlights that the presence of one ACEs increases the likelihood of the development of others (Fox et al., 2015; van Duin et al., 2021). The contexts in which young people who offend are nurtured in; tend to be marked by trauma and deprivation (Reil et al., 2021). The engagement in anti-social behaviour can be viewed as a form of learnt behaviour to these adverse environments. Emotion dysregulation for example is thought to be the outcome of ACEs and increases the likelihood of traits positively associated with the increased risk of criminality such as impulsivity and behavioural difficulties (Weissman et al., 2019). Weissman et al. (2019) found that the presence of ACEs and their severity was significantly associated with emotional reactivity and rumination. Rumination and emotional

reactivity are further associated with the risk of developing general psychopathology (Weissman et al., 2019).

Early Onset of Offending

Early onset of offending has also been identified as a significant predictor of serious and persistent offending and is defined as offending occurring before 14 years old (Loeber & Farrington, 1998; van Domburgh et al; 2019; Reil et al., 2025). In 2024, Aotearoa saw a high number of children aged 12-13 years with a finalized charge in the Youth Court, with 42 children being formally prosecuted (Ministry of Justice, 2024). This figure represented a 50% increase from the previous year. According to Doherty and Bacon (2018) early onset offending is likely to impact the following parameters: the duration of offending, the type and the frequency of offending. Because children are implicated into the juvenile justice system at an early age, they spend more time in custodial settings and have increased exposure to pro-criminal attitudes creating the context for persistent criminality (Reil et al., 2021). The mechanism by which early onset offending affects long-term criminality could be explained by the Age Graded Theory of Informal Social Control, Dual Taxonomy of Crime and the General Theory of Crime. The additive nature of risk factors is emphasized because offending before the age of 14 is more likely to occur in the context of several ACEs and disengagement from social institutions such as school.

Cross-Over Cases

The above-mentioned risk factors demonstrate areas of vulnerabilities in the sociocognitive-familial context of the young person which increases their detection to care and protection services. Between 2010 and 2018, in Aotearoa, it was reported that 89% of young people involved in formal criminal proceedings were also known to Oranga Tamariki

(Lambie et al., 2022). The most recent statistics puts this figure at 88% (Oranga Tamariki, 2024). Crossover cases are a significant and emergent area of research in youth crime because they represent the care to custody pipeline. The care to custody pipeline identifies that children involved in state-care tend to be over-represented in criminal justice settings and persist in offending as the result of the interactions between care and protection concerns and criminal involvement (Baidawi & Sheehan, 2019). The tendency for children with care and protection concerns to become involved with crime is identified as the maltreatment-custody pathway. Baidawi and Sheehan (2019) found using a study sample of 300 crossover children aged 10 to 17 years, that more than half had family members with severe mental health issues, a significant majority (74%) were exposed to domestic violence, and one quarter had a parental figure with a history of incarceration. Furthermore, more than half of the study sample were subject to physical abuse (60%), neglect (67%) and emotional abuse (53%) (Baidawi & Sheehan, 2019). Not all youth identified as having care and protection concerns become involved with the criminal justice system. For example, The Evidence Centre (2018) reported that in 2018, 18% of all youth aged 18 years old with Oranga Tamariki involvement had subsequent youth justice involvement. In comparison for those aged 14 to 16 years old with a youth justice placement, 45% had concerns relating to their care and protection. The younger the child, the more likely their involvement in juvenile justice system will result in the subsequent involvement of Oranga Tamariki. Early onset offending likely notifies social welfare services to care and protection concerns.

Cross-over List

The cross-over list identifies children and young people in the Auckland Courts who are facing both juvenile justice proceedings and care-protection matters, allowing these matters to be addressed concurrently in Family Court (Baidawi & Sheen, 2019; George,

2020). This fulfils the requirements stipulated by the Children, Young Person and their Families Act 1989, by addressing offending, maintaining the duty of care and supporting the on-going development of the child (Morris & Maxwell, 1999). The formation of the crossover list sought to address gaps occurring as a result of proceedings falling under separate jurisdictions, namely Oranga Tamariki and Youth Justice (George, 2020). The cross-over list provides continuity with one judge overseeing both hearings and the involvement of a multidisciplinary team (Baidawi & Sheehan, 2019). The cross-over list represents secondary efforts to disrupt the care to custody pathway which has been associated with persistent criminality.

Aotearoa's Juvenile Justice System

The Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 was proposed as an attempt to incorporate diversion methods into the juvenile justice system (Morris & Maxwell, 1993). The Act recognised that the separation of the young person from the wider community as a by-product of imprisonment was detrimental to the on-going development of the child (Maxwell et al., 2004). In order for the juvenile justice system to provide the child with the best chance for rehabilitation, it had to consider the least restrictive option, directly target recidivism and involve the young person and their whānau in the decision-making processes (Becroft, 2017). The Act therefore symbolized a transition from a Westernized approach in favour of Indigenous approaches; by embracing collective responsibility, rehabilitation and restoration (Becroft, 2017). The Family Group Conferences (FGCs) was developed to ensure that decisions regarding the child were not made unilaterally by the Courts (Morris & Maxwell, 1993). FGCs attempts to re-dress the power imbalance in the decision-making process by including the young person, their whānau, hapū, iwi; the victim, Oranga Tamariki and Police. The overall goal of these discussions is to formulate a plan to address the offending of the young person (Becroft, 2017).

Whilst the FGCs utilizes aspects of Tikanga Māori, it is not recognized as a fully Indigenous approach to youth justice. The concept of Tikanga o ngā hara (law of wrongdoing) and rūnanga o ngā ture (direct translation alludes to an assembly whereby laws are discussed) are described as aspects of Māori law that govern how justice is administered (Maxwell et al., 2004). Tikanga o ngā hara involved including all those who were affected/involved in the offending, to reach a consensus on how to remedy the disharmony caused by the offence (Morris & Maxwell, 1993). The impact of wrongdoing differs from Western systems of justice because it considers the victim's family also. The goal of engaging in these proceedings was to create reconciliation between the two parties. The offending was viewed to be the result of a lack of balance in the perpetrator's social and familial context and therefore conceptualized as a collective responsibility (Maxwell et al., 2004). This concept of collective responsibility governed rūnanga o ngā ture, where decisions regarding the perpetrator was considered in a forum which included the elders from both parties as well as those deemed as experts in law (Maxwell et al., 2004). According to Maxwell et al. (2004), the FGCs delineate from rūnanga o ngā ture because they require representatives of Oranga Tamariki and Police to be a part of the group consensus.

Youth Court

In Aotearoa, when an alleged offence has been committed, police have three avenues to consider; an informal warning, a referral for a FGC, or if the offending is serious as in the case of murder or manslaughter and the youth is over 13, arresting the young person (Morris, & Maxwell, 1993; Maxwell et al., 2004; Becroft, 2017; Henwood & George, 2018). Serious offences are transferred from the Youth Court for the consideration of the High Court. In most cases, an alleged offence will be dealt with by youth justice FGCs. **Table 3** highlights the circumstances requiring an FGC (Becroft, 2017).

Given the emphasis of the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 to focus on diversion methods, Court-ordered FGCs tend to be utilised for serious and/or persistent offenders. Majority of young people who offend are dealt with through diversion methods (Becroft, 2017).

Table 3

Circumstances Resulting in an FGC

Circumstance	Intended outcome
Police lay a charge; however, the young person has not been arrested.	The young person provided a platform to admit culpability. A plan is formulated to address the offending. No agreement or a denial of culpability may result in a formal charge with the youth court.
Young person appears in court and admits offending.	FGC is subject to judge approval however the completion of the plan by the youth offender may result in the discharge of conviction.
Young person denies culpability and a youth court hearing is conducted	The offence is proven, and an FGC is ordered by the Court
Young person is remanded in custody	FGC occurs whether or not the youth offender has accepted culpability and aims to consider alternative options for the care of the youth offender.

Interventions for Young People who Offend

Based on the literature regarding risk factors and the process of the juvenile justice system, it is clear that by the time a child becomes known to Police, the development of antisocial behaviour and pro-criminal attitudes have begun to emerge. Early interventions are therefore the most effective way to curb crime rates among young people who offend. Early interventions allow us to identify potential children who are at risk of offending by addressing the risk factors early on in their development process. Because interventions are applied early, they have the best chance to reduce recidivism in offending cohorts and significantly limit the risk of persistent offending (Reil et al., 2025). This requires a multidisciplinary approach across sectors such as health, education and social welfare (Lambie, 2018). Parenting programmes for example seek to create a positive rearing environment for the child to prevent the development of maladaptive coping strategies. This might include communication, boundary setting and behavioural support strategies (Lambie, 2018). Toussaint (2016) describes secondary and tertiary interventions in the context of youth violence as targeting young people who have already engaged in violent behaviours or have demonstrated the risk of doing so. The goal here is to decrease the frequency and severity of the offending occurring in the future.

The focus on rehabilitative measures for youth offenders has been substantiated by the plethora of research that demonstrates that early engagement in the criminal justice system is associated with the strengthening of criminogenic risk factors (Polglase & Lambie, 2024). McCuish et al. (2021) using the Incarcerated Serious and Violent Young Offender Study (ISVYOS) found that for 30% of young offenders, incarceration resulted in an increase in the frequency of convictions after adolescence. Similarly, Dembo et al. (2024) investigated criminogenic risk factors within Juvenile Assessment Centres (JACs) in Florida. Two subgroups of male offenders were identified differing by their initial level of offending upon

arrival to the JACs. Despite baseline differences in the severity of offending, both groups demonstrated an increase in security level after re-entries into the JACs when compared to baseline (Dembo et al., 2024). These findings support arguments for the need for early intervention when possible and the increased use of diversion methods within the juvenile justice system. The lack of reduction in security level highlights that for most young people with serious offending histories, incarceration is not a significant deterrent and represents the strengthening of offending behaviour.

According to Maxwell et al. (2004) interventions centred on the following components are likely to have an influence on recidivism: mentorship, trusting relationships with programme facilitators, cultural components, prolonged support, engages the young person, builds autonomy and provides education. Interventions should further facilitate opportunities to desist from crime by creating turning points that prevent the continuation of antisocial behaviour (Laub et al., 2019). This creates a new social environment, where the young person is exposed to pro-social opportunities, shifting routines that previously accommodated anti-social behaviour (Sellers, 2015). A key set back however has been the inability of interventions to re-create this new social environment outside of the therapeutic setting. Reef et al. (2023) investigated a cohort of serious youth offenders placed under a Placement in an institution for Juveniles (PIJ) which represents the highest tariff sentence within the Dutch juvenile justice system. The PIJ order is similar to the "Serious Youth Offender Status" proposed by Aotearoa's National government in that it is imposed by the Court, seeks to target those aged between 12 to 23 years old, who have committed a serious violent and/or sexual offence. The PIJ aims to target a sub-set of serious and persistent youth offenders by stipulating that the young person must have a developmental or psychological disorder at the time of the offence (Reef et al., 2023). Other similarities between PIJ and MSA include:

- The young person is under the order for a set number of years, in the case of PIJ it is imposed for three years with a possibility of an extension.
- The Court is required to be sufficiently convinced of the risk of re-offending.
- Combines a community reintegration phase with a punitive (PIJ) custodial confinement or a restrictive phase (MSA).
- The young person attends intensive programmes aimed at addressing risk factors.

Reef et al. (2023) did not find that the reduction in criminogenic risk factors resulted in lower levels of recidivism. Low scores in social skills, maladaptive coping strategies and the inability to maintain self-care correlated with the increased risk of re-incarceration. Additionally, the community phase saw an increase in violations of the order. These findings suggest that reducing re-offending also involves addressing the broader social challenges faced by the young people as they transition from custodial to community settings and emphasizes the need to create long term support.

Multisystemic therapy (MST) is classified as a short-term intervention and aims to address these short comings by recognizing the importance of the young person's wider social context in helping to reduce re-offending. MST theorizes that antisocial behaviour is the result of maladaptive interactions across individual, social and community contexts (Warren & Frazer, 2009; Littell et al., 2021; Sheerin et al., 2021). MST aims to provide those in the familial context of the young person with the necessary tools to facilitate the development of pro-social behaviours and minimize problematic behaviours, through increasing parental involvement and communication (Littell et al., 2021). Therapists provide on-going support, including making at least two home visits per week (Sheerin et al., 2021). Because MST relies on intensive family involvement, therapists are restricted to small caseloads. This and

factors such as high programme costs is considered to be a major drawback in the implementation of MST. Littell et al. (2021) reported that Multisystemic therapy for Problem Sexual Behaviours incurs a cost of roughly £10, 000 to £12 000 per case.

Sheerin et al. (2021) found that MST- related improvements in caregiver supervision and discipline was associated with a reduction in youth criminal involvement for a sample of serious youth offenders. Littell et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review on the effectiveness of MST to address social, emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents. They found that MST was not associated with improvements in youth antisocial behaviour, substance use, social relationships and academic performance despite having a sample that included 23 studies involving 3987 families. MST was positively associated with self-reported delinquency and family support. Littell et al. (2021) concluded that the available evidence did not support that MST was more effective than standard interventions at addressing social, emotional and behavioural problems in adolescence. MST does, however, demonstrate the ability to influence the wider social context of the young person (Littell et al., 2021).

Interventions with a Bicultural Approach

In Aotearoa, there is a lack of targeted interventions for serious youth offenders that incorporate a bicultural approach (New Zealand Psychological Society, 2012; Lambie, 2018). Te Hurihanga was developed by the Ministry of Justice with a bicultural, ecological approach to address the over-representation of rangatahi Māori and operated between 2007 and 2010 (Warren & Frazer, 2009). The eligibility criteria required extensive whānau involvement (Warren & Frazer, 2009). The programme attempted to influence cultural identity by incorporating practices such as karakia (prayers, chants), waiata (songs), pepeha (reciting one's origins) and kapa haka (Māori performance) (Warren & Frazer, 2009). The immersion

of the young person in these practices should increase their knowledge of te Reo, whakapapa (ancestral history) and result in the re-connection to their marae (traditional meeting house). Te Hurihanga included three phases (residential, transition & community) and the total programme took roughly between 9 to 18 months to complete. As of June 2009, three participants had completed the programme for six or more months and had not incurred any new offences (Warren & Frazer, 2009). The programme was however terminated in 2010.

Reinfeld and Pihama (2007), argues that a bicultural approach does not address historical trauma because it does not prioritize te Reo and Tikanga Māori. Kaupapa Māori distinguishes itself from a bicultural approach by centralizing Māori knowledge in knowledge production thus creating an opportunity for rangatiratanga (self-determination of Māori) (Reinfeld & Pihama, 2007). Webb et al. (2017) highlights that the high prevalence of rangatahi Māori in youth justice settings demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the current strategies at addressing re-offending rates. The juvenile justice system upholds values and theories that are inconsistent with Indigenous ways of being and consequently cannot offer adequate solutions to youth crime. Lambie (2018) argues that without systemic change, interventions will continue to have a minimal impact on crime rates. Rather than attaching cultural components to rehabilitative interventions, scholars call for a change in the way in which the individual, criminal behaviour and society is viewed to better serve offending populations in Aotearoa (Jackson, 1987, Tauri, 2005; Lambie 2018a).

Bootcamps

Bootcamps have previously been used as a mechanism to divert young people from the criminal justice system whilst providing a punitive consequence (Gültekin & Gültekin, 2012). They gained popularity as a response to the rising offending rates and subsequent overcrowding in prison (Parent, 2003). Bootcamps fall under shock incarceration

programming whereby the intensity of the programme coupled with the restriction of freedoms was designed to “shock” participants into pro-social behaviours (Parent, 2003; Gaffney et al., 2021). The following themes regarding bootcamps have been highlighted; a lack of clarity in the structure of bootcamps, in particular the way in which rehabilitative programmes are incorporated (Mackenzie et al., 2005; Meade & Steiner, 2010; Welsh & Rocque, 2014), the over-reliance on physical exercise as a mechanism for rehabilitation (Sellers, 2015; Ikonompoulos et al., 2015; Gascón and Roussell, 2016) and the mixed findings regarding the effectiveness of bootcamps (Farrington et al., 2002; Farrington et al., 2022).

Bootcamps utilize physical exercise, strict routine and discipline, components borrowed from the military context as a mechanism to incite change in young people who offend (Reid-MacNevin, 1997). The strict routine provides the young person with a context with clear expectations and boundaries (Sellers, 2015). Physical labour is used both as a teaching tool (a mechanism to instil morals and deter delinquency) and as a consequence (to promote conformity). Despite their initial popularity, bootcamps have been called into question for their inability to target criminogenic needs (Reid-MacNevin, 1997). Parent (2003) concluded that after 10 years of research into boot camps, there was little evidence to support that the diverting of young people who offend to bootcamps made significant differences in prison populations, criminal justice costs or recidivism rates. Meade & Steiner (2010) found that more than half of the studies (13/24) in their meta-analysis reported no significant differences in recidivism rates between bootcamp participants when compared to controls. The structure and emphasis on physical exercise within a military style setting was not considered to be sufficient to address criminogenic needs and influence re-offending rates.

Second Generation Bootcamps. The term ‘second-generation bootcamps’ reflects the shift away from the physical and punitive nature of bootcamps in favour of a greater focus on rehabilitation (Meade & Steiner, 2010). The added rehabilitative component is said to provide participants with the ability to address criminogenic factors in a structured environment (Jolliffe et al., 2013). These often include life skill sessions, drug and alcohol counselling and employment support (Farrington et al., 2002; Joliffe et al., 2013; Oranga Tamariki 2024). Farrington et al. (2002) found that youth who attended the second generation bootcamp demonstrated lower recidivism rates at one year follow up but not at year 2. Second generation bootcamp participants demonstrated improvements in antisocial beliefs however not in areas such as behaviour, responsibility and sociability (Farrington, et al., 2002). Willson et al. (2008) found that youth bootcamps that incorporated counselling were somewhat correlated with reductions in re-offending, however it was difficult to know to what extent counselling was incorporated into the programme.

The differences in the therapeutic components and treatment outcome measures across bootcamps influence the effectiveness of the intervention. Jolliffe et al. (2013) advises that given the time taken to prosecute a serious offence, interventions with only one- or two-year follow-up periods, are unlikely to capture serious offences, reporting lower re-offending rates. They conducted a 10-year follow-up on a cohort aged 18 to 21 years completing the High Intensity Training (HIT) boot camp in 1996 at Thorn Cross Young Offender Institution. The results indicated that those attending the second generation bootcamp demonstrated lower recidivism rates at year 5 follow up, however the effect was not significant past this point.

Most of the studies mentioned occurred in United States or the United Kingdom. The effect of bootcamps on Indigenous populations has not been well researched. The

Queensland Bootcamp programme was operational between February 2014 and October 2015 with similar objectives to MSAs (KPMG, 2015). The circumstances surrounding the formation of these youth bootcamps appear to mirror the circumstances currently occurring in Aotearoa. According to KPMG (2015), the Queensland's Government's choice to consider bootcamps was largely in response to the perceived increase in youth offending in Queensland. A get-tough approach was deemed to be the most effective way to curb the increase in crime, and over the course of six months, the Youth Boot Camp Programme was designed and implemented. Much like in Aotearoa, the Queensland's 2013-2014 crime statistics depicted increases in theft, particularly relating to the illegal use of a motor vehicle (KPMG, 2015).

The Sentenced Youth Boot camp (three phases; residential, community reintegration and mentoring) most resembles the proposed MSAs and therefore is described in detail. After committing a relevant offence, the young person is referred to be assessed by the Youth Justice and a specialised panel (Collaborative Case Panel). A judge decides based on the recommendations made as to whether to sentence the young person to a Boot Camp Order (BCO) or a Mandatory Bootcamp (specifically for vehicle offences). In total 60 participants partook in the Sentenced Youth Boot camp (12-17 years old), of which 82% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (KPMG, 2015). It was possible for a young person to complete the programme multiple times. 73% of those who completed the bootcamp committed an offence between the end of their sentence and March 2015 (KPMG, 2015). Approximately 38% of those who did not re-offend, did not associate their participation in the bootcamp as the reason for desistence. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait were more likely to re-offend upon completion, however the programme lacked any cultural interventions and did not include the involvement of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait elders in the design and implementation process. KPMG (2015) identified that the failure of the Sentence Youth Camp

to increase the cultural identity of participants and involve both participant's families and communities contributed to its ineffectiveness at addressing youth offending.

These findings demonstrate that military-style bootcamps have little to no effect on recidivism and do not appear to be more effective than treatment as usual interventions. Second-generation bootcamps demonstrate short-term effects on recidivism however this appears to be contingent on a number of factors including how recidivism was defined, the length of the follow-up period and the length or intensity of therapeutic interventions integrated into the bootcamp. Studies that reported a reduction in re-offending included very short follow-up periods. There is some evidence that second-generation bootcamps can influence recidivism rates post-treatment, however due to the lack of longitudinal studies investigating this, it can only be concluded that the results demonstrated by Jolliffe et al. (2013) should be associated with the specific programme structure of the HIT programme. When considered against operational costs, bootcamps appear to be an expensive solution that produces little to no results. The emphasis on routine and physical exercise appears to have no observable merit in influencing recidivism, making stand-alone rehabilitative measures more cost-effective. Finally, the failure to include Indigenous knowledge in the design and implementation of bootcamps when considering Indigenous populations has a negative effect on cultural identity and by proxy recidivism.

Military Camps in Aotearoa. The introduction of the MSAs is not the first time Aotearoa has utilized a "get tough approach" to address youth offending. Military-style Activity Camps (MACs) were implemented between 2010 and 2013 to target young people with serious and persistent offending (Spier & Sun, 2016). The New Zealand Defence Force and Oranga Tamariki (formerly known as Child, Youth and Family) provided oversight (Spiers & Sun, 2016). The intervention utilized discipline and responsibility within a

structured setting (Youth Justice Residence) to facilitate change for young people who offend. The programme included a nine-week residential phase that involved participation in a wilderness camp and a community phase that included social support for up to 12 months (Spiers & Sun, 2016). **Table 4** highlights the differences between MSA and MACs.

Table 4

Differences between MSA and MACs

	MSA	**MAC**
Oversight	Oranga Tamariki, Ministry of Justice, Police & other government organizations	Child, Youth & Family, NZ Defence Force
Target population	Serious and persistent youth offenders aged 14-17 years	Serious and repeat young offenders
Sentenced under	Youth offender receives a serious youth offender status, sentenced the Military-style academy order	Supervision with Residence Order
Length of residential phase	12 weeks	9 weeks including a wilderness camp
Length of community phase	9 months	Up to 12 months

Interventions	Physical exercises Vocational and employment support Cultural interventions Therapeutic interventions	Drug and alcohol treatment Therapeutic and educational interventions

Between October 2010 and December 2013, 79 males had graduated from the programme with rangatahi Māori making up 54% of the population (Spiers & Sun, 2016). Spiers and Sun (2016) found that within 12 months of exiting the residence, approximately 67 graduates (86%) had committed a criminal offence. Rangatahi Māori demonstrated marginally higher re-offending rates than Pākehā (86% vs 85%) however were less likely to offend within the first 70 days (33% vs 50%). 71% of MAC graduates committed less serious offences 12 months post treatment when compared to 12 months pre-treatment and 14% did not recidivate. Based on the figures from the MAC as of August 2013, the Ministry of Social Development (2013) concluded that the re-offending rates of MAC graduates did not differ significantly from young people subject to standalone Supervision with Residence orders. These findings and the reported expenditure costs favoured standard rehabilitative interventions, resulting in the termination of MACs as an intervention to reduce serious and persistent youth offending.

Reintegration

The transition of young people who offend from custodial settings back into the community has raised several issues, including being associated with persistent criminality. The gap in reintegration has resulted in the following outcomes: lack of re-engagement into educational settings, high unemployment rates due to lack of skills, and sustained involvement with social welfare services (Kurlychek et al., 2011; Chung et al., 2007). Custodial settings provide protective factors in the form of routine, established boundaries and access to rehabilitative programmes. The transition into the community for many young

people who have offended represents the reintroduction to criminogenic settings (Chung et al., 2007; Hazel et al., 2017).

Reintegration services aim to facilitate the transition from the prison environment and/or therapeutic environment (in the case of rehabilitative programmes) to the community. Chung et al. (2007) investigated the effects of aftercare services on a cohort of serious youth offenders (n = 378) taken from the Pathways to Desistance longitudinal study. Of those that remained in the community for longer than four months and had a court-imposed sentence, only 35% (n = 124) engaged with community-based services (CBS) during the aftercare period. Chung et al. (2007) found that prolonged engagement with CBS reduced the likelihood of contact with juvenile justice services. Engagement with CBS was further mediated by the lack of deviant peers and the presence of supporting adults. Deviant peers and social support were not significantly correlated with self-reported antisocial activity (Chung et al., 2007). It appears that these factors (deviant peers & social support) indirectly influence recidivism by the following mechanism: the lack of antisocial peers and the presence of supportive caregivers create an environment where the young person is able to access aftercare services which in turn reduces the likelihood they will reoffend.

Jian and Skeem, (2023) highlighted that strengthening pro-social identity, relationship skills and the formation of clear guidelines was conducive of establishing protective factors in the community. Recidivism rates are therefore limited in their scope to accurately capture the mechanisms governing desistance. The absence of criminal involvement does not directly correspond to the adoption of a pro-social identity (Case & Haines, 2014; Hazel et al., 2017). Effective re-entry into the community is highlighted by the transition of anti-social attitudes to a pro-social identity (Hazel et al., 2017). Wong et al. (2024) found that in general, aftercare/reintegration programmes had no significant influence on the recidivism rates of

young people who offend when compared to controls. Programme components such as behavioural therapy, the involvement of family members and academic support was not associated with a reduced number of arrests post-release (Wong et al., 2024). A number of themes were identified to contributing to the lack of success of aftercare programmes including lack of theory governing the implementation of reintegration programmes, lack of funding, lack of resources made available to young person and the lack of communication between agencies (Wong et al., 2024).

In summary, current aftercare services lack a theory of change that supports the young person into developing a pro-social identity once released from custody, increasing the risk of the development of persistent criminality. Young people with serious and persistent offending have failed to be captured by early intervention programmes during childhood and persist in the development of pro-criminal identities. They are further unlikely to be well captured by after-care services increasing their risk of re-offending once released in the community.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Problem and Objectives

The literature review has demonstrated several gaps in the current rehabilitative programmes targeting serious and persistent youth offending. This research seeks to investigate the attitudes of youth practitioners regarding MSAs. Youth practitioners have a direct influence on programme implementation, and the environments programmes are conducted in. Both these mechanisms have an indirect effect on programme outcomes as highlighted by the research underpinning the youth practitioner-young person relationship (Bickman et al., 2012; Ungar, & Ikeda, 2017). By focusing on youth practitioners, we recognise that they are key instruments in fostering change.

This research addresses the following research questions:

1. How do youth practitioners talk about military style academies (bootcamps) for youth people in Aotearoa New Zealand?

1.1 Are military style academies (bootcamps) perceived as an effective tool for addressing serious and persistent offending?

2. What is the current evidence for and against military style academies (bootcamps)?

2.1 To what extent can the current evidence be appropriately applied in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Methodological assumptions

This study adopts an interpretative-constructive approach to explore the meaning created by youth practitioners within the cultural context of youth rehabilitation. Language is viewed as the vehicle through which meaning is developed and its interpretation is considered to be contingent on the socio-cultural context (Levitt et al., 2017). This is important within

the context of serious and persistent offending and MSAs for two reasons. Firstly, youth rehabilitation seeks to facilitate behavioural change by creating a therapeutic alliance between the youth practitioner and the young person. This therapeutic alliance is built on the cultural and personal assumptions of both the practitioner and the young person and viewed to be the function of language. Secondly, youth rehabilitation is centred on "change talk" and tools such as "the wheel of change" and motivational interviewing are frequently used to inspire change within the individual. The tools used are language laden and the interpretation of these tools by both the practitioner and the young person are a significant part of knowledge production. By aligning this research with an interpretivist constructionism approach, knowledge production is assumed to be a subjective process influenced by a range of factors. This methodology follows the assumptions of knowledge production as informed by Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) (cited in Madill et al., 2002). Knowledge production is influenced by the interactions between the participant's personal context, the way the researcher frames the relevant topic, the cultural understandings of serious and persistent youth offending and military style bootcamps and how youth rehabilitation is understood within the broader research community.

As knowledge production is not an objective activity, I acknowledge that my previous work experience in criminal justice and rehabilitation influenced the way in which interview questions were created, participants were approached therefore influencing knowledge production. My previous work experience will also have an impact on the initial generation of themes as it has informed the way in which I have come to conceptualize rehabilitation. Rehabilitation in Aotearoa is designed along the tenets of the Risk, Needs and Responsivity Model (RNR). Youth who are assessed as having the highest risk require intensive rehabilitative programmes to target specific criminogenic needs. The programme must also address or recognize any potential barriers hindering the young person from fully

participating in the programme (responsivity). The interview guide partly represents my understandings of risk mitigation within youth rehabilitation from a therapeutic lens.

Reflexive thematic analysis (reflexive TA) emphasizes the active role of the researcher in the generation of initial themes. I therefore considered reflexive TA as the most appropriate method to investigate the attitudes of youth practitioners (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Reflexiveness goes beyond acknowledgement and involves deep consideration. In order to achieve this deep consideration, Teo (2019) proposes a triad model of subjectivity. Socio-subjectivity considers the influence the social-cultural environment has on knowledge production. Both serious and persistent youth offending and MSAs have been under immense scrutiny within the media furthermore shaping public opinion on serious and persistent youth offending and informing a general negative consensus on MSAs. Inter-subjectivity considers the influences across the lifespan, whilst intra-subjectivity focuses on individual factors (Teo, 2019). For example, having previous work experience in the criminal justice system influences the way in which I, the researcher conceptualizes crime (inter-subjectivity), consume public opinion regarding MSAs (socio-subjectivity) and it is influences across the lifespan that has led to the development of the current research project (intra-subjectivity).

It is the ability of reflexive TA to encourage the exploration of all three dimensions of subjectivity throughout the research process that makes it the preferred form of thematic analysis. This deep exploration allows for the development of rich and nuanced findings as it encourages the researcher to deeply engage with the data ((Madill et al., 2005). This is further supported by using an induction approach. In order to deeply engage with the data, this study is not based on a set of hypotheses and allows the development of a model or framework to come from the data itself (Thomas, 2006). The overarching purpose of this research project is to use the insights of youth practitioners to provide recommendations relating to MSAs and

youth rehabilitation when considering young people with persistent criminality. For this to be achieved, I assume that youth practitioners have high information power. This research project therefore uses Maltred et al. (2016) criteria (study aim, sample specific, use of established theory, quality of dialogue & analysis of strategy) on information power to facilitate large information power among participants (See Table 5).

Table 5

Summary of the Information Power Held by Youth Practitioners

Component	Description
Study aim	The study aim is specific to serious and persistent youth offending and MSA only.
Sample specificity	The study sample work with high risk and/or vulnerable youth and have knowledge on the subject matter.
Established theory	Theories of crime have been well researched over the last decade.
Quality Dialogue	A high quality of dialogue occurs because participants are well informed on the topic, having work experience in youth rehabilitation.
Analysis of strategy	Reflexive thematic analysis, using an induction approach allows us to analyse in depth the perspectives of youth practitioners.

Latent thematic analysis allows for the exploration of the cultural, political and ideological assumptions within the participant's social environments (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I am interested in both the way in which youth practitioners speak of serious and persistent youth offenders and MSAs as well as what their talk represents. It is these underlying assumptions that are said to have an effect on the implementation of rehabilitation as they govern the practice of youth practitioners. Based on the large information power of the research participants and the choice to use latent thematic analysis, the themes generated are assessed to be relevant to MSAs albeit that participants may not be directly involved with the current MSA pilot being conducted by Oranga Tamariki and the current government.

The current research builds on the preliminary findings and recommendations of the MSA pilot made by Mana Mokopuna (2025) by contributing to the emerging body of literature addressing serious and persistent offending in youth. The research findings will provide insights from the perspectives of youth practitioners, who are likely to be actively involved, should MSAs be implemented as a rehabilitative programme. Furthermore, whilst the term 'bootcamps' is used in the international literature, the term MSAs is adopted to mirror the terminology used by agencies such Oranga Tamariki, Mana Mokopuna and Youth Justice.

Recruitment

Recruitment emails were sent to five organizations in the youth rehabilitation sector outlining the purposes of the study. These specific organizations were targeted due to their known involvement with "at risk" youth. According to Tong et al. (2007) purposive sampling enhances the quality of data provided as participants are selected based on characteristics that position them as having expertise in the subject matter. To be able to accurately reflect on the general trends of youth crime and provide rich insights into youth rehabilitative programmes;

it was specified that participants had to have at least one year's experience working with at risk youth. The term "at risk" youth apply to all youth who have been identified as being vulnerable and at risk to adverse outcomes. Participants were encouraged to provide the details of other colleagues who had experience working with at risk youth. Youth practitioners met the eligibility criteria of the study if they had at least one or more years' experience working with at risk youth aged 13 to 18 years old. In total, 11 participants working broadly in the field of youth rehabilitation in the North Island were recruited. The majority of participants were female, and the average amount of work experience was 7.4 years.

Interviewing

The choice to use semi-structured interviews was informed by its ability to generate qualitative data in a spontaneous manner (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Wilkinson et al., 2004; Tong et al., 2007). The number of questions asked, the order of questions and the number of follow up questions varied with each participant. This created the opportunity for the organic development of qualitative data. Additional prompts and follow-up questions were employed to elicit responses with sufficient depth for latent thematic analysis. The lack of a rigid template allows participants to make a choice on how they answer questions and what to quantify as important, which inherently conveys meaning (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Because the exploration of meaning is central to the aims of this study, an interview guide was used for reference (see Appendix A). The nature of follow up questions was largely contingent on participants' responses, creating a dynamic process of knowledge production. The use of semi-structured interviews ensured that the qualitative data privileged the personal and cultural assumptions of participants. Participants were encouraged to share their personal opinions through the use of open-ended questions. Interviews lasted approximately 36 minutes and were audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Participants were provided with

a copy of their transcripts to ensure they accurately represented their viewpoints. Participants were given up to two weeks from the interview date to make minor corrections or withdraw from the research process (see Appendix B).

Transcription

I transcribed interviews by creating a skeletal transcript using Microsoft Word. The accuracy of the skeletal transcript was very low. To ensure accuracy and facilitate data immersion, I listened to interviews and made changes to the skeletal transcript. This process involved listening to segments of interviews several times to note for discrepancies and correct them. The process was stopped when it was deemed that the transcript accurately matched the audio file. By transcribing verbatim, I was able to note for non-verbal descriptors such as laughter, hesitation and/or contemplative pauses which aligns with an induction approach and Reflexive TA. To protect the anonymity of participants, all identifiers were removed. Once the identifiers were removed, I re-read the transcripts so that the overall integrity of the transcript was not altered. This process ensures that transcription was thorough and facilitated intensive engagement with the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Transcripts were provided to participants for minor corrections to ensure clarity, however no participants proposed corrections to their final transcripts. Once the transcripts were finalized, I continued the process of deep engagement using Braun and Clarke, (2016) six stage of thematic analysis as a guide. The transcripts were then uploaded to NVivo, a qualitative analysis software.

Data Analysis

In Phase two of Braun and Clarke (2016) six phase of thematic analysis, I generated codes by systematically going through the transcripts and identifying patterns. To ensure that codes were data-driven the names of codes came from words and/or terms used by

participants. In Table 6, the italicized section of the excerpt is used to develop the code "MSA is a Westernize approach". To ensure consistency in the coding process, I described "MSA is a Westernize approach" as the following: "the degree to which youth practitioners perceive that Tikanga Māori was involved in the development and implementation of MSA". This created a consistent thread from code name to brief description to excerpt. In total, 17 different codes were identified.

Table 6

Summary of the Code: MSA is a Westernized Approach

Code MSA is a Westernized approach	
Participant number	Excerpt
2	"And you're following on with *that Westernize approach* of "now we are going to do this," you know "this is what is best for you" instead of "hey what do you want to do, how can I support you uhm yeah so that's, that's another key part"
13	When we think about the young people that come through youth justice, uhm typically they don't fit into the niche model of those that are designing the services, *which might be uhm male, European, affluent* (laughs)."
1	How do we support them to feel uhm heard and seen with structure for them to be individuals and in military style environment and for their individual needs to be addressed uhm and *for their mana to be upheld*, you know."

In Phase three, I organize codes around central ideas to help identify overarching themes and begin to highlight relationships within the codes and the data set as a whole. This process is active and dynamic because it requires the consideration of how codes might relate to each other to form themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2022). I created two mind maps to facilitate the process of searching for themes. Figure 1 demonstrates the initial process of grouping codes together as a way to identify relationships.

In Figure 2, arrows are used to indicate the direction of influence and demonstrate how codes might relate to central ideas. This process highlighted the latent aspect of analysis because the relationships were identified and defined by the underlying assumptions held by the participants and I, which influenced the overall generation of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2014). For example, the codes "Negative Family Influences", "Involvement in Crime is Traumatic", "Doing it Most of Their Teen Lives", "Lack of Routine", "Disconnection From Culture" all relate to youth practitioners' perceptions on the root causes of criminal involvement. The mind map yielded three potential candidates for themes which were "Youth Justice Reform", "Youth Rehabilitative Programmes Appear not to Address the Root Causes of Crime", "The Framework of MSAs Lacks the Ability to Address the Root Causes of Crime (see Figure 2). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the process of defining and naming themes should also consider the extent to which individual themes are associated with the entire data set (17 codes across 11 transcripts). This prompted a revision of the initial themes to ensure that all identified themes fitted the data set. The following four themes were finalized, "Addressing the Root Causes of Crime", "Reducing Re-Offending", "Cultural Considerations" and "The Juvenile Justice System".

Figure 1

A Summary of Codes Grouped Together by Relationship

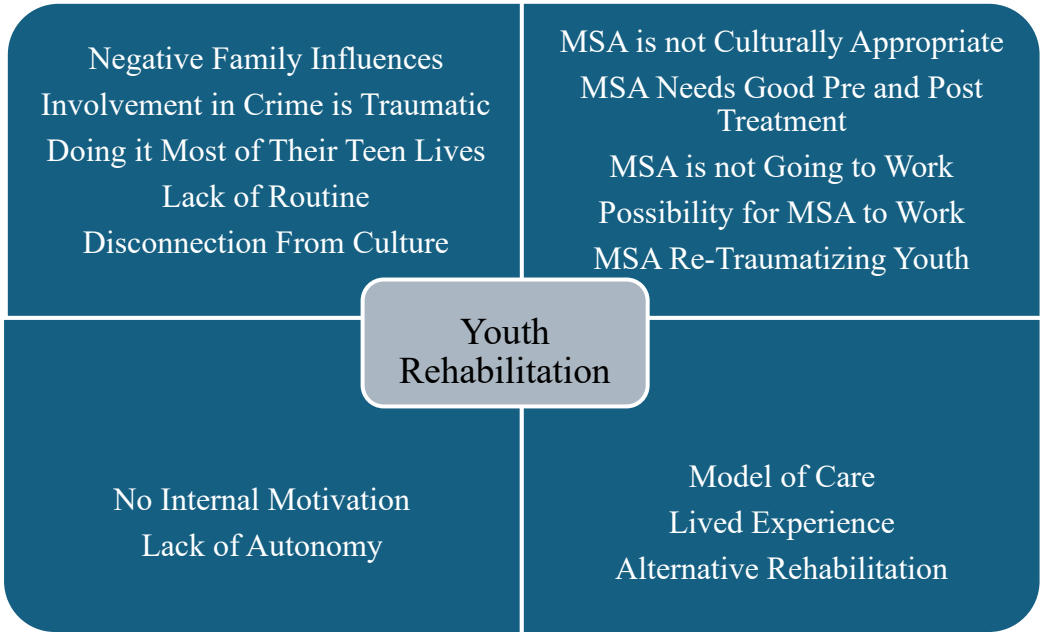
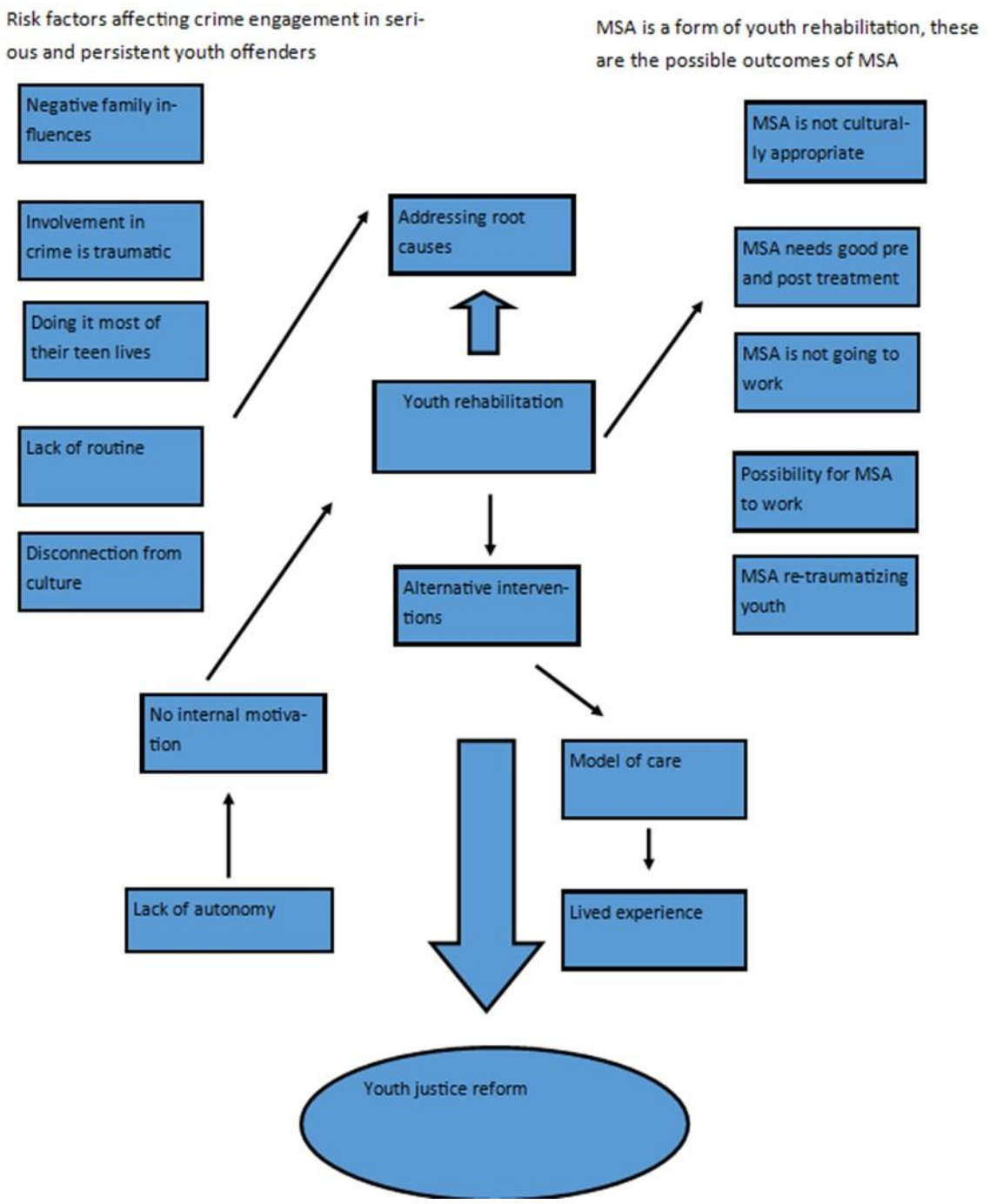


Figure 2

A Mind Map of the Direction of Influences of Codes on Potential Themes



Theme four, "The Juvenile Justice System" was informed by the following four codes; "Alternative Interventions", "Lived Experience", "Model of Care" and "Lack of Autonomy".

Table 7 highlights how these codes contributed to the overall theme of The Juvenile Justice System.

Table 7

A Summary of Theme Four: The Juvenile Justice System

	The Juvenile Justice System
Code	Excerpt
Alternative Interventions	"I reckon if they, if the government were very intentional about stopping youth crime or supporting our youth so that our youth crime rates dropped, you could invest into what we have now and create a intense wraparound support"
Lived Experience	"I understand the Vulnerable Children's act. I really do. I want young people to be protected as well, but we can do better around how we allow people with lived experience to have access to these young people"
Model of Care	"Yeah, rather than labelling them that they are, you know, a youth offender, and that's who they are, and that's who they're gonna be, and that's how they're gonna carry on and how can we change that and empower them."
Lack of Autonomy	"I've been to many FGCs, met with many young people who have been told what their plan is or have been told what is best for them or their next step"

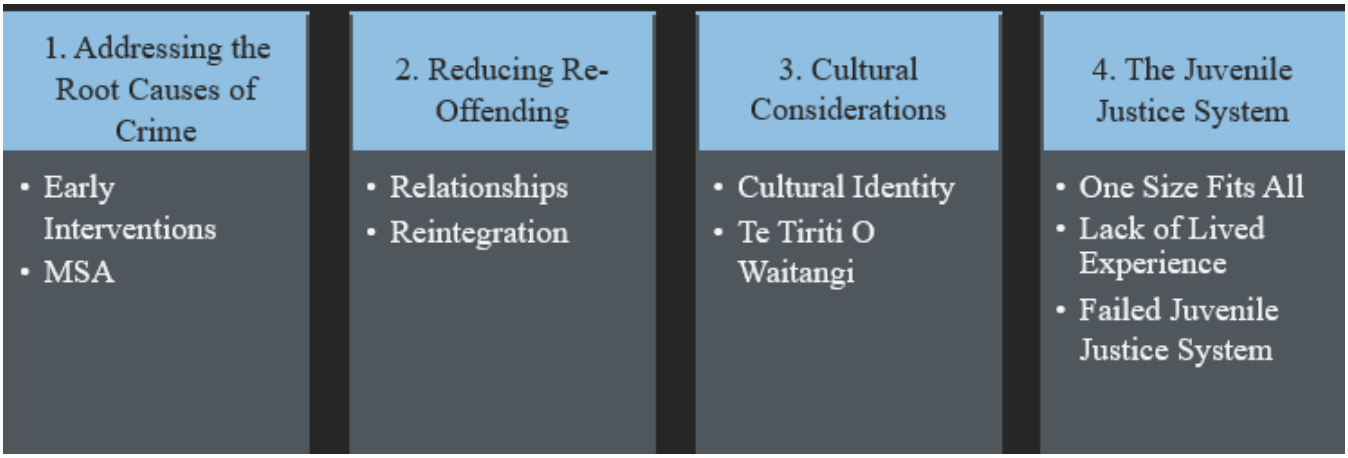
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Overview

The aim of this research study was to investigate the perspectives of youth practitioners regarding MSAs as an intervention for serious and persistent youth offending. Four key themes emerged from the interviews relating to serious and persistent youth offending and more extensively the juvenile justice system. The perceptions of youth practitioners are important because they have a dual focus. Firstly, perceptions dictate practice and the way in which youth practitioners are likely to engage with interventions. This directly impacts young people who offend. Youth practitioners' perceptions are also influenced by the young people they work with. The dynamic relationship between practitioner and the young person, places the youth practitioner in a unique position, where their practice and their experiences with young people can be explored. This is because they have vested interests in the young person, to create enduring positive outcomes and in youth rehabilitation, to facilitate environments that encourage pro-social development. This dual position provides rich insights within the context of serious and persistent youth offending and was the basis for our exploration of MSAs as a rehabilitative intervention. Figure 3 provides a summary of the four themes and nine sub-themes that were identified during data analysis. These themes are discussed in-depth in this chapter and though listed as four separate themes significantly influence each other.

Figure 3

Summary of Results



Theme One: Addressing the Root Causes of Crime

Youth practitioners spoke about youth offending in the context of its root causes. Whilst the context was serious and persistent youth offending and information was provided regarding the tariffs associated with a serious offence; youth practitioners repeatedly suggested that there was a kaleidoscope of risk factors that were responsible for young people choosing to engage in crime. The following statement made by participant 11 highlights this:

> What's underneath the bad behaviour? A lot of hurt, a lot of mamae. And what's underneath that significant trauma. Good kids typically are coming from good families and kids that are exerting all of these challenges and quote on quote bad behaviour, there's a reason beneath that.

The excerpt provides a three-dimensional framework to explore youth engagement in crime namely, the young person, the crime and the environment. Through this dialogue, we come to understand how youth practitioners conceptualize youth crime. The idea that the young person should be considered separate from the offence foregrounds perceptions of youth

offending, youth rehabilitation and the juvenile justice system. Serious youth offending is viewed as a symptom of failings across the young person's life. Similar definitions have been applied by Moffitt (1993) and Lambie (2018b) in describing serious youth offending. This is demonstrated by participant 8:

> No serious offending happens just straight like that. So it's come from somewhere and these young people have sort of built it over time. But if you look right at the back, there's going to be a need for something, right?

The severity of offending becomes important in this context because it highlights the scale of dysfunction present in the young person's life. This is consistent with the way in which youth practitioners referenced risk factors throughout the dataset, stressing its additive effects. Engagement in serious and persistent offending was predicated on the presence of more than one risk factor; however, it was clear that youth practitioners attributed negative family influences as being a significant predictor. Participant 3 mentions this in the context of both offending and rehabilitation:

> Yeah I think whānau involvement too, that's really important uhm because you know it comes back to that connection and yeah, you know, the sad truth is a lot them don't have a positive whānau to look up to or to go back to.

The idea of negative family influences was multifaceted because whānau were viewed as risk and/or protective factors. The identification of whānau as a risk factor was due to them creating an environment that rendered the young person susceptible to substance abuse, sexual abuse, exposure to violence and neglect, as highlighted by participant 7:

> I think, yeah, with the kids, role modelling, boredom, nothing to do uhm and I think, you know, being poverty, there's not much opportunities uhm. Poverties are big thing

> to do with it, but in terms of parenting, like just lack of parenting skills, you know, uhm addictions, drugs, alcohol, gangs.

Whilst youth practitioners viewed each of these risk factors as individual contributors to the risk of offending, they considered the whānau unit as an integral component in minimizing the additive effects posed by risk factors. For example, by mentioning "sadness" participant 3 alludes to the deterministic nature of criminal involvement through the whānau unit. The whānau unit can be the primary mechanism through which the young person is exposed to a simultaneous succession of risk factors during early childhood. As a consequence, the presence of these factors precluded whānau from being identified as protective factors. Negative whānau influences within the context of youth offending is also significant because it results in the young person being involved with the juvenile justice system and Oranga Tamariki. The focus of youth practitioners on the root causes of crime provided clarity regarding their perceptions of the current structure of youth interventions which is discussed in the context of early interventions and MSAs.

Early interventions

Youth practitioners identified the root causes of crime as a key argument for early interventions. Criminal involvement was perceived by youth practitioners as a response to maladaptive environments. Given that criminal involvement leads young people who offend into the juvenile justice system—where they are subsequently sentenced to rehabilitative programmes; their engagement with rehabilitative programmes is conceptualised as delayed intervention (Reil et al., 2025). In this context, the offending behaviour has already been established. This rationale served as evidence for the need for interventions to address the root causes of anti-social behaviour. The excerpt from participant 8 highlights this:

> Uhm, we're not just looking at the offence, but like, I was saying before, if you can go as far back as with, with a young person and find out what led them down this path. That's going to help you.

Participant 8 identifies that reducing youth offending rates is contingent on two factors: early intervention and addressing the root causes of crime. Youth practitioners alluded to the fact that current interventions do not explicitly consider these two factors. This is evidenced by participant 5:

> (Laughs). I think just consequence is the only thing and I think it's realistically the whole system needs to be overturned, and people need to be uhm, you know stern. But in terms of the system, like there needs to be a massive social shift.

Youth practitioners identify the current trends in serious and persistent offending as the consequence of unaddressed risk factors. Participant five highlights that whilst early intervention strategies are an effective means of reducing re-offending, a "social shift" is required to fully accommodate an early intervention model within the juvenile justice system. This requires us to reconsider how risk factors are categorized and addressed. Byrne and Case (2016) defined this social shift as creating a positive youth justice system, where the identification of serious and persistent offending within young children should result in approaches that strengthen the child.

The lack of early interventions for vulnerable children was described as creating a deterministic pathway for young people. In this case, engagement in offending behaviour was viewed as inevitable. Participant 10 addressed this:

> How can we get in there earlier and support families and parents to be safe families, healthy parents, you know, how do we break those cycles? Instead of these little ones

> growing up, you know, coming to [name of the organization], coming to youth court or going to prison.

Participant 11 describes the apparent deterministic nature of young people offending as the joint failure of all government organisations:

> Uhm, so I don't agree necessarily with the incarceration treatment, but prior to that, there's a responsibility that's jointly held on health, education and children's services, and that requires those agencies to communicate with each other on a weekly basis to meet six weekly.

There is a transfer of responsibility from young people who offend and their whānau to governmental organizations to operate as a safety net in firstly identifying the most vulnerable children of society and providing services to mitigate the maintenance of these vulnerabilities. This was viewed as a possibility only in the context of early interventions. The persistent nature of criminal involvement amongst young people despite their engagement with the juvenile justice system and other governmental agencies supports evidence for the need for early interventions. Youth practitioners frequently referenced this relationship throughout the dataset.

Military style academies (MSAs)

Addressing the root causes was discussed in the context of MSAs, which lies on the opposite spectrum of early interventions as a tertiary intervention. Tertiary interventions are largely viewed as being reactive in nature (Lambie, 2018). Youth practitioners were sceptical of the ability of MSAs to address the root causes of crime. They consistently assessed the punitive nature of MSAs as being in direct conflict with therapeutic frameworks. Participant 1 highlights this:

> Uhm yeah, I think it is, it's a punishment it and it's punitive…. do I think it's a rehabilitative process for young people, for the boys that I work with that would be helpful in the long term- no.

The punitive nature of MSAs, the lack of evidence supporting its ability to address criminogenic needs and the vulnerabilities of young people who offend was considered to be potentially damaging from a therapeutic perspective. Participant 7 discusses this in the context of juvenile justice engagement:

> I think it's just more sort of punishment, really. It's just punishing them. And from what I believe, it's like these boys have been through punishment all their lives you know…. You're, sort of more, sort of stepping on their mana.

Participant 7 perceives that attending MSAs has the ability to diminish the mana of young people by placing them in an environment that does not encourage them to flourish. Youth practitioners attributed the structure of MSAs as one that discouraged autonomy and encouraged conformity. Youth practitioners were aware of the way in which their assumptions of MSAs informed their assessments and advised that these same assumptions would govern how young people who offend perceive MSAs. Participant 8 discussed this:

> Like as a young person, if they think military, they think army, they think you know so automatically they're going to have this idea of what they think military and they think ohh why I'm going to be woken up at 2:00 in the morning, 4:00 in the morning, and I'm running, running, running.

Youth practitioners' assumptions of MSAs foregrounded their perceptions of the ability of MSAs to address the root causes of crime. This would likely occur for the attendees of MSAs. The effectiveness of MSAs as an intervention is not only contingent on addressing the root causes of crime but also counter any pre-conceive notions young people are likely to have.

Participant 10 links perception with desire to change in the following excerpt:

> So it's already like a punishment, so if it's being offered as support, but it's a punishment and you have to do this, in my mind that's never a great, uh, it's not setting the tone for genuine desire to change.

Assumptions have the ability to influence the effectiveness of an intervention through influencing an individual's desire to change. This relationship is established because young people who offend have developed a cognitive lens oriented towards mistrust. This lens has further been reinforced by their early childhood experiences and extensive engagement with juvenile and social services. Participant 1 relays the above-mentioned:

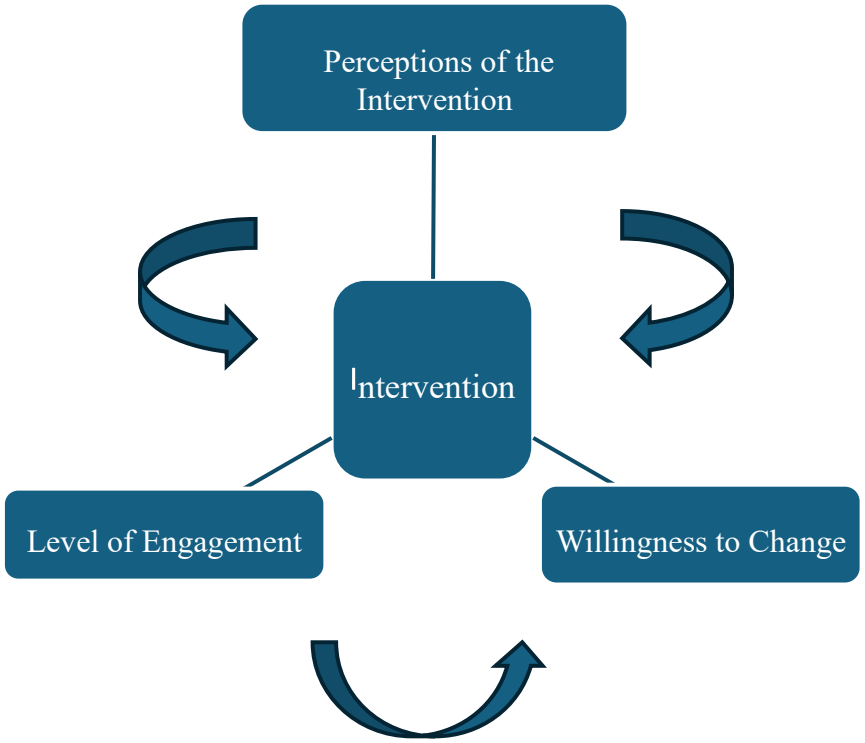
> These young people can just like sit through like three hours of adults talking like they are not in the room and making decisions for them right, and so like why would they engage in support if it's just another decision that gets made for them, uhm an allocation that gets made for them.

From this we see that there are several indirect effects influencing the effectiveness of an intervention, and the perceptions of young people who offend is assessed to be an important predictor**.** The dataset reveals that youth practitioners associated engaging in serious and persistent offending with a number of risk factors. The seriousness of the offence was significant because it was indicative of high levels of exposure to criminogenic risk factors. Negative family influences were perceived to be a significant predictor of youth offending and further highlighted the need to target the root causes of crime. Youth practitioners associated early intervention strategies as the most effective way to address the root causes of crime and have a lasting impact on deterrence. The structure of MSAs was deemed insufficient to address the complex interactions between risk factors. Interestingly, youth practitioners were aware of their implicit negative assumptions of MSAs and the influence

this had on their assessments of effectiveness. **Figure 3** highlights a triad relationship emerging between perception, effectiveness and desire to change, where it is assessed that the more negatively young people who offend viewed MSAs, the less likely they will be willing to engage and by implication change, affecting effectiveness. The complexity of this model is highlighted by the arrows indicating that the factors are mutually influencing each other. It is the totality of these interactions that have potential to have a significant impact on the effectiveness of an intervention.

Figure 3

Triad Model of Individual Factors Influencing Programme Effectiveness



Theme Two: Reducing Re-Offending

Youth practitioners often spoke about reducing reoffending as a secondary outcome measure for rehabilitative programmes. This is demonstrated by participant 8:

> I think we just need to resource our people more. And when I mean people, I mean our communities uhm. And community agencies, local Marae, local churches. Let's get everyone involved uhm to create opportunities for our young people. Yeah. I think that that's what's going to help serious offending

Participant 8 defines successful rehabilitation as increasing opportunities for young people who offend and sees this as having the greatest impact on reducing serious and persistent offending. Emphasis is placed on creating a sustained therapeutic environment outside of the treatment setting and in the community by resourcing local organizations. This definition was consistent throughout the dataset and centralized on equipping the young person rather than limiting opportunities to offend. Participant 6 discusses this:

> How can we still as a community or as a country, see these youth as capable young people that can live a great life. Yeah, rather than labelling them that they are, you know, a youth offender, and that's who they are, and that's who they're gonna be, and that's how they're gonna carry on and how can we change that and empower them.

Whilst youth practitioners did not divert from the Risk, Needs and Responsivity model (RNR) used in youth rehabilitation, the excerpt by participant 6 challenges the order of the components, and by extension the focus of youth rehabilitation in utilizing risk reduction as a primary outcome measure. The need to focus on the development of protective factors was highlighted by participant 3:

> If we can focus on the outside factors that, they're always going to have their whānau right… they're always going to have their past, so it's how do we bring all of those together to support ultimately the young person.

It was significant that youth practitioners did not equate reducing re-offending as an inherent positive outcome, choosing rather to emphasis support. Participant 3's remarks allude to the disproportionate value placed on risk reduction and highlights the potential harm that might occur as a result. This harm emerges because of the inverse relationship between support and risk reduction. The emphasis on risk reduction is associated with decreased attention to protective factors, ultimately failing to support the young person as highlighted by participant 1:

> And so you take the drugs away, their whānau away, all their friends and peers away, the structure of the youth justice system in prisons that they know really well and feel safe in and then kind of like throw them into this new environment.

Whilst youth practitioners saw the benefit of changing environments for young people who offend to facilitate change, they recognized that anti-social behaviour allowed young people to survive in their environments. The introduction of new environments without sufficient support increased the risk of re-traumatization. The effect of support on reoffending was considered in the context of the therapeutic relationship between the young person and the practitioner, and reintegration.

Relationships

Youth practitioners described the emphasis placed on reducing re-offending as deterring from a seminal aspect of rehabilitation with young people who offend. Maxwell et al. (2004) defined successful interventions has including a strong working relationship between programme facilitators. The relationship between the young person and the youth

practitioner was considered integral to encouraging a desire to change. This was often missed in interventions. Participant 11 demonstrates the importance of a therapeutic relationship:

> What, what does work with therapy uhm is building relationships with these young people. It's critical, they are not going to listen to somebody they don't trust or respect.
>
> If we don't have that as a foundational platform, we're never going to get anywhere.

Forming these relationships was identified as difficult due to several factors including the relatability of the youth practitioner and previous experiences young people have had with organizations. On the surface, these factors are often misinterpreted by professionals as disengagement. Participant 10 provides a potential explanation for why young people who offend are perceived as resistant to rehabilitative programmes:

> But you've got to get on their level and build that trust and connect with them in the right way and then they flourish. So it's not that they don't want to change, it's just that these quote-on-quote interventions and people haven't been able to find a way to connect with those young people.

Connection was described as a key factor in developing a therapeutic relationship with young people who offend. Unlike adults who offend, this process was considered far more complex because of the developmental age of young people and their pre-conceived views on authority figures. Youth practitioners grounded discourses of disengagement within the context of past trauma or experience as evidenced by participant 3:

> A big part of this, is just prior experience, being let down, you know I've worked in quite a few different places where what is expected of a role, or a support person doesn't actually help to finish it, it's not met with those expectations.

Youth practitioners saw two other factors influencing the likelihood that they were able to develop a therapeutic relationship once trust and relatability had been established. Consistency and time constraints were frequently addressed throughout the data set. Participant 8 builds on the assertions made by participant 3 by introducing the variable of time, highlighting that staff need to "take the time to sit down with young people." The process of taking time was associated with depth and an opportunity "to get know them, who they are."

The formation and depth of the relationship was a consequence of time however interventions are often time sensitive as highlighted by participant 9:

> Uhm, and so that this comes back to the person not feeling like an individual rather than a statistic. So I understand that needs to be practical parameters on these things uhm in sentencings. And I get that but there just isn't any humanness in saying nine months is enough.

Resource and time-constraints influenced the depth of relationships. This was significant for youth practitioners who recounted their own narratives of young people initiating change as a result of the influence of a support worker or mentor.

> But I can really bring myself down to their level, work with them, and meet them where they are uhm. And I think that's where the like growth happens and the change happens when uhm they're able to see aw ok, this person is just another human uhm that wants the best for me uhm. And it takes time. (Participant 6).

> If you ask them, what do you want to be when you grow up, aww I want to be like my youth mentor, I want to be a youth mentor because of my youth mentor, how he helped me, you know what I mean, so there's definitely an importance to that relationship. (Participant 2).

The excerpts from participant 2 and 6 highlights a significant difference between the traditional therapeutic relationship versus the relationship discussed by youth practitioners. Whilst the therapeutic relationship focuses on creating a working, collaborative relationship, the young person-youth practitioner relationship holds connotations of guardianship. This is referenced by the terminology used throughout the dataset such as “our youth” or “our young people” when referring to young people who offend.

In conclusion, the young person-youth practitioner relationship was assessed to be a significant predictor of the young person’s engagement in rehabilitative programmes. Youth practitioners saw the reliance on recidivism as an outcome measure as a missed opportunity to strengthen protective factors and encourage long term change. Participants emphasized time and relatability as the driving forces behind an effectual working relationship with young people, whilst lack of consistently was perceived to severely hinder youth engagement.

Reintegration

Reducing reoffending was further discussed in the context of reintegration (Hazel et al., 2017). Youth practitioners saw risk reduction as occurring as the result of the successful reintegration of the young person back into the community. The depth of reintegration determined whether youth practitioners saw it as having a positive or negative impact on recidivism. For example, participant 6 relayed concerns on the potential difference between the therapeutic environment and the home environment, advising that “it’s more so once they then go back into their environment.”

The lack of reintegration services within youth rehabilitation was supported by stories of young people who were placed in transitional housing and did not have sufficient support, as highlighted by participant 3:

> I think he was in transitional housing and he didn't have one person that came and checked on him, he didn't know how to cook so he was living off mi goreng (noodles), he didn't know how to, you know apply for a job or how to interview, or how to do his own washing and so you know he ended up back in jail.

The excerpt from participant 3 demonstrates the importance of effective reintegrative services. This was further highlighted by Participant 8:

> But I think the military style Academy isn't going to stop it. It's going to reset it and give the young person a fresh start, it's what happens after the programme that I think will be really beneficial.

Youth practitioners consistently emphasized the need for reintegrative services to provide support in all areas of the young person's life. The necessary components of reintegration varied from education, employment support, therapy and life skills. There were differing opinions on whether reintegration should be centred around the home environment or be completed in a transitional facility. Participant 9 identified that returning a young person to a home with "no structure" was detrimental to the therapeutic work done in the treatment phase because there is "no balance" between the home environment and the therapeutic setting.

The change from the structured environment in MSAs to the home environment was a significant argument for the need for a transitional period in a residence. Youth practitioners recognized that the period immediately following the end of MSAs posed the highest risk for young people who offend. Participant 1 and 8 discusses this:

> Yeah. I mean, if, how do we, how do we treat all of those complexities in a year, right… How do we uhm honour the work that they've done in those spaces and finish well and make sure that uhm, it's not just a one, you know, like a one-off that they fixed. (Participant 1).

> Because a young person is just going from three months, full intervention, seven days a week, surrounded by staff, in a closed the facility to now being like boom, you're back home, you're back wherever with all this freedom and engagement is only gonna be like, oh, once a month, you know. Like so, there's a big, big gap there. (participant 8).

As highlighted by these excerpts, youth practitioners saw reintegration as significantly more important than reducing re-offending. Their dialogue centred around creating sustained change in the lives of young people who offend. In that sense, youth practitioners viewed the process of reintegration as more important than MSAs. The way in which youth practitioners discussed reintegration alluded to the current state of reintegration processes. Participants 1 and 8 highlighted that the current structure creates barriers for young people to implement what they have learnt during treatment into the home/community setting. This was largely due to different definitions of reintegration and the length of services. For example, youth practitioners attributed anywhere from 6 months to as long as necessary for the length of reintegration services. It was also difficult to pinpoint a clear model of reintegration given the unique complexities of young people who offend, and the effectiveness of reintegrative services was assessed to be moderated by the young person's willingness to engage. The following relationship is highlighted by participant 1:

> Because these are the most complex, high needs young people that we have in Aotearoa, like this is a solution that is being used to address the most complex young people and so therefore the most vulnerable young people that we have and so they can't all just have the same problems

The excerpt from participant 1 highlights the difficulty in creating a standardize model of reintegration because each young person faces a unique set of risk factors in the community.

The complexities and vulnerabilities faced by young people who offend means that the reintegration model has to go beyond simply providing educational and vocational opportunities. Youth practitioners advocated for the development of reintegrative services which are able to provide a continuous therapeutic environment in the community. Participant 9 discusses the relationship between reintegration and complexities of risk factors:

> I'm just thinking of our context here, and sometimes there's not a lot of, there's not a lot of growth to get them even into, we're not even thinking of getting them into jobs, uhm let alone trying to fully reintegrate them into society or even into education.

Participant 9 highlights that rehabilitative outcomes are often incompatible with the degree of change present in the young person. Youth practitioners identified that it is unlikely that young people will be rehabilitated after engaging in short-term interventions. Change was likely to occur through engaging with rehabilitative interventions several times. The statements made by participant 9 demonstrates that the goals set by rehabilitative interventions and reintegrative services might represent the desired goals of the agency rather than the young person. The profile of a young person with serious and persistent offending, their engagements with care and juvenile services might require an alternative definition of reintegration and successful rehabilitation.

Finally, youth practitioners had realistic expectations of both the intervention and post-treatment phase and its impact on recidivism rates. This perspective challenged the underlying assumptions of reintegration as highlighted by participant 9:

> (Laughs) The thing is that, what, what is really hard for us to capture is that people regress. Uhm and, and as a youth worker, they've had to really fit into, into a progressive, progressive always criteria and check box… it just sucks that when these guys regress, there's serious implication and impact from it.

Whilst reintegration focuses on the mitigation of risk, primarily through the development of protective factors, youth practitioners saw it necessary to incorporate a safety net that was realistic to the seriousness and complexity of young people who offend within reintegrative services. This reinforced by participant 6:

> When you're uhm going for those hard times where you think you might slip up to call uhm to talk to or connecting yourself to other networks, I guess where you can still have that support.

Participant 6 calls into question how measurements of re-offending are used within rehabilitation. In general, youth practitioners were consistent in highlighting the need for consequences when dealing with young people who offend. Rehabilitation programmes were not seen as a mechanism to absolve the young person from their offence, but an opportunity to address their offending related needs. Youth practitioners identified a reintegration model that had to provide consequences, a safety net for young people to be able to implement programme learnings in the community, facilitate and empower young people and simultaneously integrate protective factors to support the young person (see Figure 4).

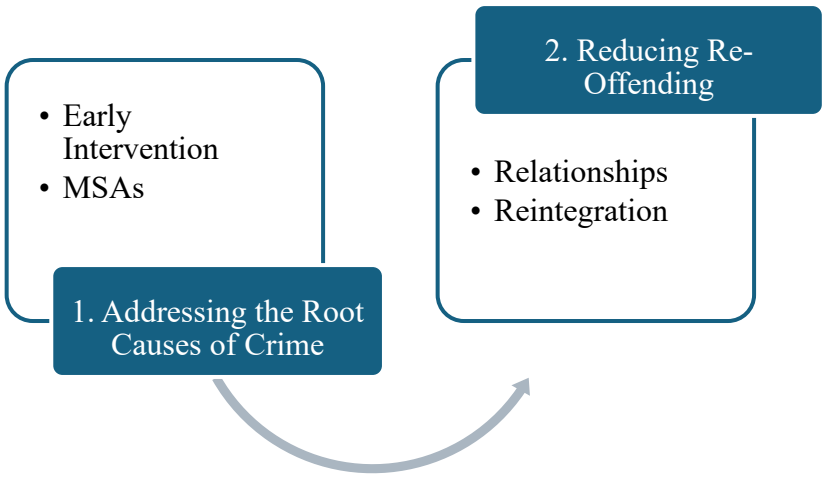
Figure 4

A Reintegration Model Based on the Perspectives of Youth Practitioners

To summarize, theme one, "Addressing the Root Causes of Crime" and theme two, "Reducing Re-Offending" can be viewed as the driving outcomes of rehabilitative interventions within the juvenile justice system. The subthemes identified highlight key components within rehabilitative interventions that have a significant impact on these driving outcomes. For example, the subtheme "Early Intervention" and "MSAs*"* demonstrates the degree to which the root causes of crime can be addressed in rehabilitative interventions. Early interventions are considered to have the most significant impact on the root causes of crime, whilst MSAs is viewed to have minimal impact, and these in turn have an influence on reducing re-offending. Figure 5 highlights how theme one influences theme two.

Figure 5

The Relationship between Theme One and Theme Two



Theme Three: Cultural Considerations

Youth practitioners discussed cultural considerations in relation to the extent that they perceived it to be incorporated into MSAs. Cultural identity has been described as a key protective factor mitigating the risk of adverse outcomes (Smith et al., 1999; Shepherd et al., 2018). The theme of cultural considerations is therefore considered through cultural identity and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In general, youth practitioners identified the importance of adopting a Te Ao Māori worldview within rehabilitation. This was highlighted by participant 1:

> I think it's going to be just another case of (long pause) uhm Pasifika and Māori young people being placed into uhm an environment that is being forced on by Pākehā that is going to make them more angry and feel uhm more stigmatised and discriminated against.

Participant 1 identifies that the way the current juvenile justice system views rangatahi Māori perpetuates colonial narratives. Jackson (1988) highlighted that the overrepresentation of Māori in the criminal justice system is a directly result of systemic stigmatization and discrimination. This was conscious to rangatahi Māori and youth practitioners as highlighted by participant 7:

> I mean I've had this a few times with my boys actually like, you know, my white boys, you know uhm, they know me and like they get off sentences easy and I'm sort of like take my Māori, Pacific Islander boys in and then they get sort of smashed

The conscious recognition of cultural bias both overt and covert within the juvenile justice system and youth rehabilitation, as highlighted by participant 7 has implications on engagement, both for rangatahi Māori and their whānau. Tangata whenua are less likely to engage within a system they perceive to not have their best interests at its core.

Cultural identity

The exclusion of Māori voices was considered on both a proximal and distal level. On a distal level youth practitioners attributed colonisation to presenting unique risk factors to rangatahi Māori by disconnecting them from their culture (Jackson, 1988). Participant 7 discusses the gap this disconnect has resulted in:

> I don't think it's the youth that attracted to the gangs, but I think it's the youth are so vulnerable, lost, broken and gangs can sense that, they can sense that this young boy, oh look, he's got nothing, we can easily influence this young fella.

Participant 7 highlights the ability of gangs to provide a sense of culture to young people by creating belonging, tradition and practice. Sense of culture was formerly developed by Mātauranga Māori and Tikanga Māori however colonial practices have left rangatahi Māori vulnerable by stripping them of the ability to enact their cultural identity (Houkamua &

Sibley, 2014). Within the structure of a gang, young people are able to enact these cultural behaviours by finding belonging. Cultural disconnection was considered to be especially pertinent for young people who offend given their developmental stage. Youth practitioners identified adolescence as crucial for the development of identity for both Pākehā and Māori. This is highlighted by participant 11:

> In terms of culture, the kids that we see in residence particularly, often disconnected from their uhm whānau, hapū, iwi…so they, they miss out on that really crucial phase of adolescence where they develop their identity and pro social ways such as cultural connection.

Participant 11 asserts a clear link between cultural disconnection and pro social ways of being, identifying the importance of cultural identity. This link is discussed by participant 6 in terms of future behaviour.

> After I think a lot of our youth offenders have no hope or no ideas for their future. Uhm, it's just day-to-day surviving uhm and getting by a lot of offending happens because they have to, to get by uhm. So I think yeah, capturing that.

The excerpts by participant 6 and 11 demonstrates the extensive cumulative impact disconnection from culture has on rangatahi Māori. This influences past, present and future perceptions of self. Youth practitioners discussed incorporating Tikanga Māori within youth rehabilitation however recognized their limitations in being able to do this as Pākehā. Participant 1 for example addressed the complex interaction between having predominately Pākehā representations as youth practitioners and the over-representation of rangatahi Māori in the juvenile justice system. Being “educated” “qualified” and “white” was considered to have an inverse outcome on engagement when compared to “men with lived experience.” This discourse was frequently centred around the theme of creating rehabilitative

programmes that resembled and empowered rangatahi Māori. Participant 1 identifies that whilst practitioners have the qualifications and skills to operate in their respective spheres, these spheres can be increasingly strengthened by the inclusion of tangata whenua.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Some youth practitioners felt less knowledgeable about the cultural considerations involving Te Tiriti however they consistently considered the structure of MSAs to be in direct violation of Te Tiriti and the government's responsibilities towards tangata whenua. Participant 1 considered partnership in the context of the government's responsibilities towards rangatahi Māori:

> Because are we talking about partnership with tangata whenua or are we talking about is true partnership, partnership with rangatahi. If this is uhm programme that is being created by a white government by a white Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister to treat a problem, that is definitely a problem.

Participant 1 makes a distinction between partnership with Māori and partnership with rangatahi Māori. This demonstrates that partnership is multifaceted and includes the involvement of all parties involved in the care of the young person, including the young person. The use of "true" highlights that whilst government organisations tend to consider the voices of iwi and hapū, there is the additional need to include the voices of rangatahi Māori. Participant 1 further attributes the lack of partnership between Māori and the government as the result of the lack of representation of Māori in leadership. This has had a flow on effect, influencing all sectors of government and industry within Aotearoa. Participant 1 challenges the effectiveness of a bicultural approach in a socio-political context where Pākehā are overrepresented in leadership roles and rangatahi Māori are over-represented in the juvenile justice system.

Youth practitioners therefore considered that interventions had to transcend biculturalism and be informed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi. For example, participants 4 and 8 anchor notions of partnership between Māori and the State by foregrounding Te Tiriti.

> The way that they could be using the Treaty, uhm having the Treaty in mind is by working with Māori to put together the programme and navigate that, I think they need some Māori voices to be a part of that. (Participant 4).

> Yeah, I guess if you're going to use theoretical frameworks, it's about matching it with the cultural framework right. So, it's, we have theoretical frameworks there because it's tested, it's proven right, but you've got to match it with a cultural. (Participant 8).

These excerpts highlight several key issues: the alienation of Māori voices in the development and implementation of rehabilitative programmes, the on-going reliance on Western therapeutic models and the subsequent failure of the government to uphold their Te Tiriti responsibilities (Jackson, 1988). Terms such as “white government” and “Westernized approach” were frequently used to describe the ways in which the juvenile justice system and the government maintained colonial narratives. The excerpt by participant 8 identifies that while theoretical models have their evidential basis, they should be considered in Aotearoa’s cultural context.

The consideration of Aotearoa’s cultural context whilst developing interventions was also significant for other Indigenous groups. Participant 3 identifies that a Westernize approach results in the othering of all cultures and creates an environment where Pasifika youth are not having “their cultural values” upheld. Youth practitioners considered the exclusion of tangata whenua in the development of MSAs as detrimental to the overall success of the intervention. Participant 10 discusses this in the context of providing trauma informed care within youth rehabilitation:

> It's like somebody at the hospital trying to be a doctor who doesn't, hasn't been to Med school. Very dangerous because you're going to miss the symptoms and you're going to miss what's actually wrong or misdiagnose or just not provide the right treatment that somebody needs because you're not aware.

Participant 10 likens the focus on serious and persistent offending to misdiagnosis because it leads to interventions that are focused solely on recidivism. Youth practitioners identified the development of MSAs as the outcome of this misdiagnosis. The analogy used by participant 10 is poignant because the doctor-patient relationship holds similar characteristics to the relationship between the young person and the State. The State holds a position of authority that affords them the ability to make decisions based on the needs of the young person. This assumed authority only works if the State is aware of the needs of the young person. Participant 3 discusses this:

> I think partnership is definitely a big part of that uhm you know, are we doing this for our young people, is it what the young people want to do, is it being run how they will respond well to or is it what people who have no idea what these young people have gone through or are going through uhm think is best for them.

The narratives presented by youth practitioners demonstrated the importance of the consideration of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the designing and the implementation of interventions. Such considerations caused youth practitioners to re-define what might be viewed as best practice in focusing on reducing recidivism and operate through a lens that empowered rangatahi Māori. As evidenced by the excerpts, youth practitioners viewed Te Tiriti as embodying best practice because it ensured that the interests of tangata whenua were represented. Youth practitioners concluded that MSAs were not informed by Te Tiriti and this,

in combination with the exclusion of Māori in the development of the intervention presented significant issues affecting implementation, practice and effectiveness.

Theme Four: The Juvenile Justice system

Youth practitioners discussed the juvenile justice system and its impact on youth rehabilitation and the outcomes of young people. Youth practitioners challenged the juvenile justice system for failing to focus on rehabilitation. The structure of the juvenile justice system was assessed to being inconducive of a therapeutic environment. This is highlighted by participant 1:

> Errrr a youth justice prison system that's set up to uhm punish and not to rehabilitate…there needs to be a restructure of, of what happens when they're in those spaces. Uhm, smaller numbers, uhm more rehabilitation focus.

This failure was attributed to several features, including the way in which the juvenile justice system viewed young people who offend. The stigmatization occurring from the label "serious offender" was deemed counterintuitive because it limited the potential of the young person to see themselves as a contributing member of society. Participant 10 saw the seriousness of offending as an indication of the depth of "transformation" that could occur "in their lives" whilst participant 11 highlighted the drawbacks of labelling in the juvenile justice system:

> If we're going to rehabilitate them, would it not make sense to include them and what that plan looks like? Just a thought. Uhm, because they're not problems to be solved. They're resources to be developed.

Youth practitioners frequently highlighted the need for interventions to be strength based and mana-enhancing in order to create long term change. The above excerpts demonstrates that these assertions were based on the way in which youth practitioners saw young people. Their

views of the juvenile justice system were associated with how they perceived that the juvenile justice system saw young people. These conflicting viewpoints were at play throughout the dataset. Youth practitioners' perceptions of the juvenile justice system's views on young people influenced how they perceived current juvenile justice processes. They characterized the juvenile justice system as having a one size fits all approach that ignores the voices of young people.

One Size Fits All

Youth practitioners discussed the limitations of the juvenile justice system in addressing complex criminogenic factors. This was attributed to a lack of different approaches/interventions/avenues made available to young people. Youth practitioners described interventions as "one size fits all" and considered this as a "gap" within youth rehabilitation. Participant 2 highlighted this further:

> And I think we have to be very careful when it comes to being that black and white approach because that's, that's very Westernized, and you know that just doesn't work with a lot of our young people uhm yeah if it was something maybe more Indigenous and something that just worked alongside them.

This was significant because the one size fits all approach within the juvenile justice system was associated with limiting the autonomy of young people. Youth practitioners assessed increased autonomy as having a positive effect on engagement in rehabilitative interventions. Participant 7 discusses the lack of autonomy often present in youth justice proceedings.

> And what makes it worse is that guy sitting in the dock, he has no say what's going on, so there's all of this talk about this one fella up in the thing uhm and they have no say sort of a thing, and I think that, that maybe have something to do with it, of why I think it's not really working. It's because they're being forced to be here, to do that.

> And they have no say in it.

Participants 7 highlight that youth justice proceedings further contribute to the stigmatization of the most vulnerable young people by limiting tino rangatiratanga. The impact of this is demonstrated by participant 3:

> The minute you start trying to tell these young people what to do, especially considering that youth have done their whole life uhm feeling like the minority from the system, they don't have a good perspective of the system.

The excerpt from participant 3 shows us how colonial narratives can be reinforced within structural systems resulting in double victimization for rangatahi Māori. Participant 3 views the hostile engagement of young people in the youth justice system as a response to this double victimization. The lack of autonomy experienced by rangatahi Māori within youth justice proceedings centralizes their Indigenous status which results in hostility and reinforces their lack of trust in the system. Participant 10 discusses this in the context of MSAs:

> So, I don't know if there's trained like therapists and aspects of those programmes that do therapeutic work, if there is, great. If it's just a boot camp to kind of teach these kids a lesson. No, that really just teaches them even more to F the government like, F the system, you know.

The lack of trust in the system is the byproduct of the lack of efforts made by the government to incorporate Te Tiriti o Waitangi into all streams of governance. Youth practitioners concluded that it was often the case that policies and interventions failed to protect the best interests of rangatahi Māori as highlighted by participant 11:

> But I don't think that's what the Treaty had in mind for these young men when it was written. Uhm, yeah, sovereignty, chiefmanship, tino rangatiratanga I don’t think that we're seeing any of that with the military style academy in my opinion.

Youth practitioners identified that the one size fits all approach utilized within the juvenile justice system was a source of double victimization for rangatahi Māori and had the potential to further establish hypervigilance and defensive mechanisms. These methods of engagement were assessed to be severe barriers to change for all young people because they influence how young people perceive rehabilitative interventions.

Lack of Lived Experience

Youth practitioners discussed the importance of utilising mentors with lived experience within rehabilitative frameworks. Mentorship has been identified within the literature as an integral part of reintegration for adolescents (Maxwell et al., 2004). Mentors with lived experience were associated with hope for young people who offend because they were able to provide relatability and demonstrate to young people that change was possible in spite of barriers faced. An excerpt from participant 1 highlights this:

> I understand the Vulnerable Children's act. I really do. I want young people to be protected as well, but we can do better around how we allow people with lived experience to have access to these young people, particularly men with lived experience, because that's who they need. That that's where the hope comes from.

Participant 1 highlights some of the concerns that may arise due to the vulnerable nature of young people in care but alludes to the possibility for systems to be implemented to facilitate the safety of the young person and the mentor with lived experience. The reluctance to implement such systems was attributed to fear. Youth practitioners were able to articulate a

model in which lived experience could be successfully integrated and mentioned services that had implemented this model with success. Participant 4 discusses this:

> It would involve uhm having a mentor maybe and someone with lived experience either, you know, someone that has like mentorship training paired with someone with lived experience. I think that would be a key component.

The integration of a youth practitioner accompanied with a mentor with lived experience was frequently mentioned as a key component to a therapeutic model of care. Participant 7 highlights why this support system can be effective at engaging the young person and facilitating an environment for change:

> It's like a reflecting thing in the mirror but this person that they're looking at, looks like them and yeah has been through, possibly things that they're going through, uhm but has come out the other side like, you know.

The discourses from youth practitioners were centred around creating a supportive environment for young people, which was considered difficult given the level of mistrust developed based on their past experiences. Youth practitioners saw the power imbalance within the practitioner-client relationship as a potential barrier to engagement and recognized that this could be levelled out by incorporating mentors with lived experience. Participant 7 sheds insight into how the lack of representation of Māori practitioners within the juvenile justice system fosters disengagement from young people who offend:

> What I mentioned before of in terms of like people who have walked that path and are like the same colour and the same relatability, that's what creates their authority thing and it just separates straight off the cuff.

Youth practitioners' emphasis on the need for more practitioners with lived experience was associated with creating hope and facilitating a desire to change amongst young people. Rather than categorizing young people with serious and persistent criminality as resistant to change, youth practitioners challenged the way the juvenile justice system was structured. These narratives formed further arguments for youth justice reform. Youth practitioners perceived that practitioners with lived experience were an important component of creating interventions that were centred on the young person's best interests. Lived experience was associated with increased relatability, which was associated with increased engagement. Youth practitioners' assertions for mentors with lived experience is evidence of the importance of establishing relationships when working with vulnerable young people. In sum, the current structure of the juvenile justice system did not equip youth practitioners with the opportunity to formulate relationships with young people and by implication did not provide young people with the opportunity to desire change. This was a strong argument for the need for youth justice reform within Aotearoa.

Failed Juvenile justice system

Youth practitioners' descriptions of the juvenile justice system highlighted systemic issues that contributed to young people transitioning from the juvenile justice system to the adult criminal justice system. Rather than facilitating change, youth residences were defined as "baby prisons" that provided a breeding ground to further entrench antisocial identities within young people. Youth practitioners attributed failings within the juvenile justice system to be the combination of legislation, lack of resources and poor decision making. These factors were assessed to create additional barriers affecting both youth practitioners and young people who offend. The effect of these barriers was most felt by young people who offend. Frequent engagement with the juvenile justice system was associated with decreased

opportunities to develop pro-social behaviours rather than increased opportunities for rehabilitation. Participant 5 discusses this relationship in the context of legislation:

> Honestly legislation, all legislation was enacted in the 90's or earlier, whatever it may be and it was built around the idea that we would rehabilitate a youth offender and then they would not offend again, it's not built for people who are committing 40 stolen, stealing 40 vehicles and there's just no, no equivalent punishment, or rehabilitation for someone doing that and so yeah, that's kind of the issue.

Participant 5 highlights that the current legislation is not fit to deal with the current youth crime trends in Aotearoa. This impacts all processes from prosecution to sentencing to rehabilitation. This has resulted in the juvenile justice system being reactive rather than proactive in their responses to youth crime as highlighted by participant 2 who discusses this in reference to the development of MSAs:

> Aww I think when it came up it was like a big switch up (laughs) it was kind of like they, like they needed something stricter, which I understand, I think they, I think, government wise, let's say that the government probably saw, or the past government probably saw our interventions as not doing enough.

Youth practitioners saw the formulation of MSAs as a government response as opposed to being a rehabilitative intervention as highlighted by the except from participant 2. This affected their perceptions of the effectiveness of MSAs as demonstrated by participant 7:

> I just don't really think that those youths that are getting chucked into that situation would be in the mental space to uhm learn or taken in what's being taught to them on the inside… Yeah, so it's sort of just like a Guinea pig type of Muppet show, testing the boys, using them as like, you know the taste tester.

These excerpts highlight the limited confidence youth practitioners had in the juvenile justice system and formed the basis for arguments regarding juvenile justice reform. Youth practitioners were able to articulate the direction of this reform, however struggled to identify the specifics. This was due to the complex dynamics underpinning youth crime. The proposed future of youth rehabilitation was highlighted by participant 9 who asked, rhetorically "how do you encourage forgiveness in our society"? and was hopeful of a model of rehabilitation that reflected "forgiveness" rather than punishment. The consideration of the practicalities of a rehabilitative model centred on forgiveness, particular in the context of crime had the potential to appear "unrealistic" as described by participant 9. Youth practitioners frequently operated from a dual lens of practicality and ideal scenario. Participant 10 took a similar view suggesting "let's restore this young person or let's restore this whānau instead of taking a retributive approach".

Concepts of forgiveness and restoration are important, according to some youth practitioners, as a foundation for interventions. Participant 9 identifies the complexity of operating from a dual lens of practicality and ideal scenario in rehabilitating youth offenders. Youth practitioners operate within the confides of the juvenile justice system, which must consider the interests of the young child as well as the community. Because of this, young practitioners viewed consequences as a necessary component of the juvenile justice system and essential for establishing boundaries for the young person and keeping the community safe. They did not consider the removal of consequences as a way to create a model of forgiveness within the juvenile justice system. Rather, youth practitioners disagreed with the way in which consequences were enforced. For example, participant 4 described the need for consequences "to be paired with compassion." The word choice of "compassion" used by participant 4 is consistent with the Te Ao Māori worldview, which considers the development of antisocial behaviour to be the result of an imbalance in the life of the individual (Jackson,

1988). Such a view encouraged restoration because it was centred on amending the imbalance. Participant 4's remarks are further consistent with the Te Ao Māori worldview on rangatahi which considers them to be an essential part of the fabric of society (Cunningham et al., 2023). Their involvement in crime and disengagement in society draws out compassion for the dual negative effect it has on the rangatahi and on society.

Youth practitioners were able to identify two key areas in which youth justice reform could be initiated, early intervention strategies and a Kaupapa Māori emphasis. Participant five articulates these two key areas by describing the need for social change:

> But in terms of the system, like there needs to be a massive social shift, and it needs to happen when they are far younger but in terms of if we are just dealing with the problem, as it stands in front of us now, it just has to be consequence because there's nothing else.

The excerpt from participant 5 highlights the current limitations the juvenile justice system operates under. Interventions do not intervene early enough for the most vulnerable young people in Aotearoa. The failure of socio-structural systems to act as a safety net for those who have been identified as at risk has resulted in the juvenile justice system relying on punishment as the primary mechanism to rehabilitate or deter further offending. This has been demonstrated to be inconsistent with a Te Ao Māori worldview (Jackson, 1988). This failure is viewed to be the direct result of the lack of inclusion of Māori voices; and is considered to be a conscious act to maintain colonial practices (Jackson, 1988; Pitama et al., 2014). Youth practitioners viewed MSAs as a symptom of these failures and discussed the need for transformative change rather than adaptive change (Lambie, 2018).

Chapter 5: Discussion

Our findings shed light that the most effective way to address serious and persistent offending lies not in developing interventions such as MSAs but in focusing on early interventions. The juvenile justice system at times fails to recognize that young people who offend are often victims themselves (Byran & Grace, 2016; Lambie, 2024). Most of the research focusing on ACE's has been used to demonstrate the care to custody trajectory. The present study indicates that the significant number of ACE's identified in young people with serious and persistent offending highlights the need for early interventions. Tan et al. (2022) reported substance use, emotional neglect and physical neglect were positively associated with increased care involvement however did not find a significant association between these factors and juvenile justice involvement. The relationship between ACEs and juvenile criminal involvement is not straightforward, influenced by individual and environmental factors and is cumulative (Weissman et al., 2019).

According to the themes identified, negative family influences appeared to be strongly associated with the increased likelihood that a young person engages in antisocial behaviour. This is because the emergence of other risk factors often occurs in the context of the whānau unit. For example, parental substance abuse coincides with neglect and violence in the home. These findings narrow the potential scope needed for early interventions. The implementation costs of early interventions and/or systemic interventions have largely been used as an argument against the shift from punitive to therapeutic approaches (Littel et al., 2021). Whilst a multisystemic viewpoint on youth crime has been assessed as the most effective approach at preventing youth offending, in light of resource restrictions, we emphasize that it is beneficial to target early interventions within the whānau context initially. Of the ten ways to disrupt the care to custody trajectory identified by Lambie (2018b), six include interventions targeting early childhood and three directly involve the whānau unit. Early interventions tailored at

supporting the whānau unit are likely to be the most effective at transforming the trajectory of vulnerable children by influencing a range of dimensions simultaneously. Littel et al. (2021) found that MST had a negligible effect on antisocial behaviour and substance abuse however this was based on adolescents aged 10 to 17 years old. The same intervention applied during the first two years of the child's life is likely to have a more significant impact because it focuses on equipping parents with the necessary tools to establish high quality rearing environments for their children.

Research primarily focuses on the predicative value of ACEs on the increased likelihood of antisocial behaviour; however, the prevalence of ACEs in childhood represents missed intervention points. The lack of support from child-welfare services have also been identified by Reil et al., (2025) as a significant barrier to rehabilitation for young people who offend. High caseloads, a low number of interventions and increased barriers to access means that when support is offered, it is likely to be delayed or inappropriate (Reil et al., 2025). The accumulation of ACEs across childhood represents significant time periods where juvenile and care services could have intervened to disrupt the development of the care to custody trajectory. Applying this view to MSA's highlights the limited effect it is likely to have on reducing serious and persistent youth offending. Within Aotearoa, 89% of young people in the juvenile justice system have had some form of engagement with Oranga Tamariki (Lambie et al., 2019). This engagement does not appear to correlate with improved outcomes for young people who offend (Reil et al., 2025). Rather than focusing on the re-offending rates of MSA graduates as an outcome measure, the present study highlights that it is essential to consider how, if at all, MSAs disrupts the care to custody trajectory so prevalent in young people who offend.

The profile of a young person with serious and persistent criminality using the literature can be complied to encompass the following: experiencing more than three ACEs (Weissman et al., 2019), lack of cultural identity (Houkamau & Sibley, 2011), neurodevelopmental difficulties (Heanue et al., 2022), and the presence of delinquent peers (Metcalfe et al., 2019). Engagement in interventions are often staggered because of factors such as programme restrictions, substance abuse and mental health histories (Reil et al., 2025). MST attempts to address this by utilizing a range of treatment modalities to target risk factors however is plagued by high operational costs, staffing requirements and has been found to have a limited effect on antisocial behaviour (Littel et al., 2021). The findings of Reef et al. (2023) highlight that criminogenic specific interventions do not guarantee a reduction in recidivism, and yet the juvenile justice system predicates itself on recidivism as an indication of rehabilitation. It is imperative that the juvenile justice system and youth rehabilitation extend its focus beyond reducing re-offending through risk reduction and align itself more closely with desistance theories. McNeil and Weaver (2010) identified eight principles of desistence which should govern practice:

- The need to be realistic given the persistent nature of offending and the high likelihood of re-offending.
- The need to avoid formal proceedings which establish pro-criminal identities by labelling young people as “offenders.”
- The need to reinforce the social context of the young person rather than relying on incarceration.
- The need to develop pro-social relationships with individuals that young people respect and value.
- The need to establish multiple avenues to deal with offending.

- The need to develop adequate reintegration services that provide new opportunities for the development of pro-social identities.
- The need to avoid risk language by labelling young people as “persistent,” or “highrisk.”
- The need for the juvenile justice system to promote redemption and incentive prosocial engagement.

By considering recidivism as a secondary outcome measure, the juvenile justice system is better placed to promote and protect the on-going development of a child. This occurs by limiting stigmatization, early engagement with the juvenile justice system and the increased risk of developing pro-criminal identities, all of which have been demonstrated to increase persistent criminality (Lambie, 2018).

According to McNeil and Weaver (2010) the increased emphasis on punitive approaches arises from the political rhetoric of the need to protect the public. This creates a dichotomy between those who offend and those who do not. This dichotomy pathologies crime which in the context of Aotearoa ignores systemic influences leading to the overrepresentation of Māori in the criminal justice system. There is a need for interventions to redress these systemic inequities by being developed by Māori. Together, cultural deprivation and cultural denigration have resulted in Māori being unable to locate their place within Aotearoa (Jackson, 1988). Cultural disconnect is particularly relevant to rangatahi Māori. The present study indicates that a bicultural approach is not adequate to address the cultural disconnect experienced by rangatahi Māori and has the potential to maintain colonial narratives. This has been driven by the over-presentation of Pākehā in leadership. These concerns were re-iterated by Pitama et al. (2014) who highlighted that the engagement between Māori and government agencies do not consider the complex socio-political

relationship that exists between the two parties. The Meihana model for example, considers the impact of colonisation, racism, migration and marginalisation on Māori individually and collectively as crucial part of assessments in the health sector (Pitama et al., 2014). It is then difficult to see how MSAs, even with the integration of cultural components has the ability to consider these factors, without the extensive input of tangata whenua.

Rae (2024) provides a framework highlighting the ways in which non-Māori are able to engage in systems without perpetuating colonial narratives. This involves non-Māori acknowledging and understanding that the roles they occupy in Aotearoa have inherent privileges attached to it. This position is amplified in the context of practitioner-youth relationships, where practitioners occupy dominant positions because of their occupation. The dominant presence of Pākehā in leadership and government roles influences the direction of youth rehabilitation, which calls into question the cultural appropriateness of MSAs. Maltest International (2024) highlighted that whilst local iwi and marae were consulted in the implementation phase of MSAs, they were not actively consulted during development. It has been 32 years since Morris and Maxwell (1993) critiqued the extent to which the juvenile justice system can be cultural appropriate if its philosophical basis is in direct conflict with Māori philosophy. The present study indicates that the critiques of Morris and Maxwell (1993) and Reinfeld and Pihama (2007) have remained unaddressed. The tendency to create interventions and consider consultations with Māori as an afterthought persists in youth rehabilitation and is evidenced by MSAs.

The success of an intervention lies in its ability to prepare the young person to reenter into the community as a pro-social member of society. Reintegration focuses on the mitigation of risk in the community, which has demonstrated negligible effects in facilitating desistance from crime. Chung et al. (2007) found low levels of engagement in aftercare

services for a cohort of serious youth offenders. Our findings highlight the need to re-evaluate the tenets that govern reintegration and more closely align reintegrative services with desistance theories. When reintegration is centred on the reconciliation and redemption of the young person to their whānau and community, the young person is more likely to engage in after-care services, adopt a pro-social identity and desist from crime (Byran & Grace, 2016). The present study extends the findings of Wong et al. (2024) in identifying a third variable. The complex socio-familial contexts of young people who offend means that reintegration, even when premised on reconciliation and redemption will initially have a small impact on recidivism rates. This is because such models of reintegration place the young person in a state of continual progression. Pro-longed engagement in the juvenile justice system has excluded young people who offend from gaining the necessary skills needed to sustain such progression. An effective reintegration model acknowledges that the young person is a victim first and has a limited number of protective factors in the community. Relapse is assumed giving reintegration a dual purpose in desistance from crime. Firstly, reintegration provides the young person with opportunities to strengthen pro-social behaviour within the community context. Finally, the support offered during reintegration should be designed and applied with recidivism assumed (Case & Haines, 2014).

These findings have implications for court-imposed conditions. We must consider what potential court-imposed conditions have to encourage redemption and reconciliation in the young person. Rather than working on a relapse prevention plan, the present study emphasizes that it is more beneficial to develop a relapse integration plan, with the overall goal of creating a supportive environment to sustain the transmission of therapeutic learnings into the community. Such narratives are supported by Case and Haines (2014) who define current prevention efforts as being “negative, retrospective, risk-focused and offender-first” and call for a “positive juvenile justice.” Consequences will be a necessary component of the

relapse integration plan, but with the added feature of resulting in more intensive support. The relapse integration plan assumes that the young person will continue to make mistakes as they progress towards desistance but endeavours to provide a robust safety net within the community so that these relapses do not result in incarceration. It may be the case that failing a drug test results in the young person having to attend a day programme, meet more frequently with their mentor, spend more time volunteering at their marae rather than an inherent punitive outcome.

Implications

Several factors should be considered when developing interventions. Based on our findings, these considerations should include:

1. What is the targeted age group for this intervention (early childhood, early adolescence, adolescence, late adolescence)?

2. To what extent were tangata whenua involved in the development and implementation of the intervention?

3. To what extent are the interests and voices of young people incorporated in the development and implementation of the intervention?

4. In what ways does the intervention disrupt the care to custody trajectory of young people?

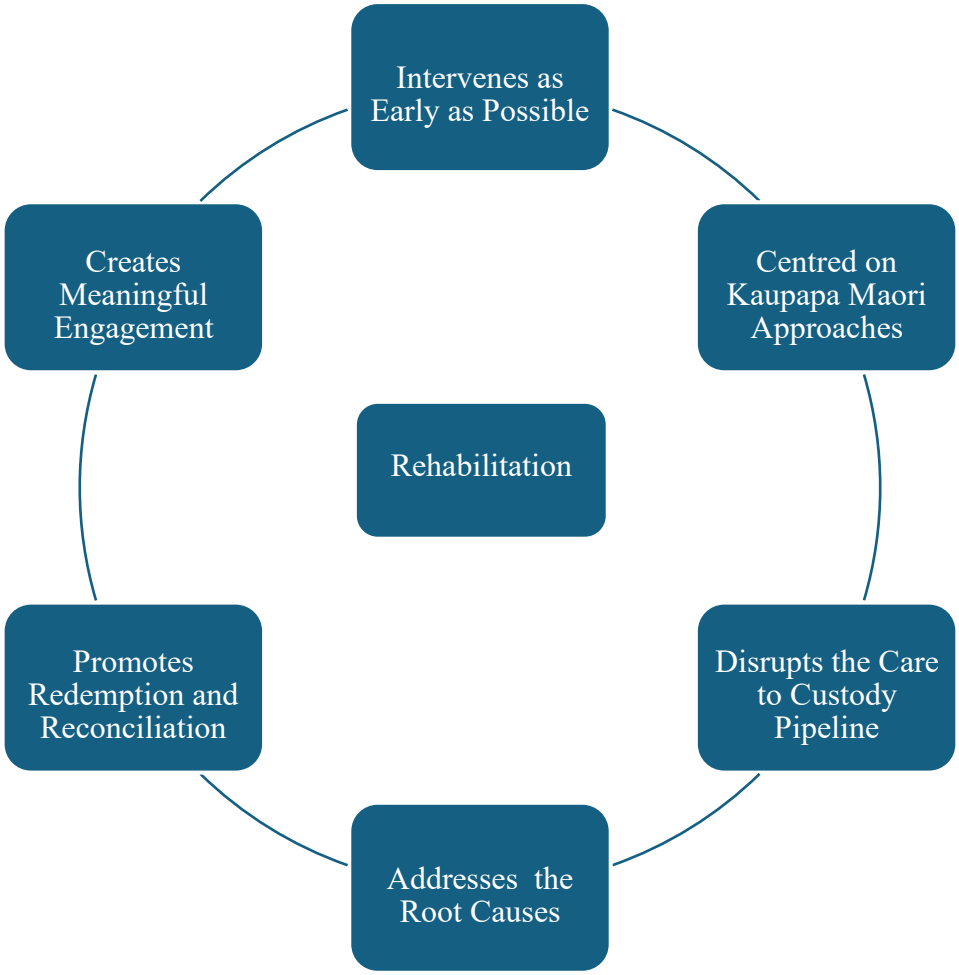
5. Does the intervention facilitate the reconciliation and redemption of the young person and their whānau?

6. To what extent does the intervention provide sufficient support for meaningful reintegration into the community?

The outcome of these considerations provides a general framework for interventions that incorporates the key components integral to the reduction of serious and persistent offending in young people (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Proposed Intervention Framework Based on Study Themes



Based on these findings, the following factors should be considered when working with young people with serious and persistent offending:

1. To what extent is the young person taking an active role in their journey of rehabilitation?

2. Have there been sufficient attempts to work alongside the young person to enhance their cultural identity?

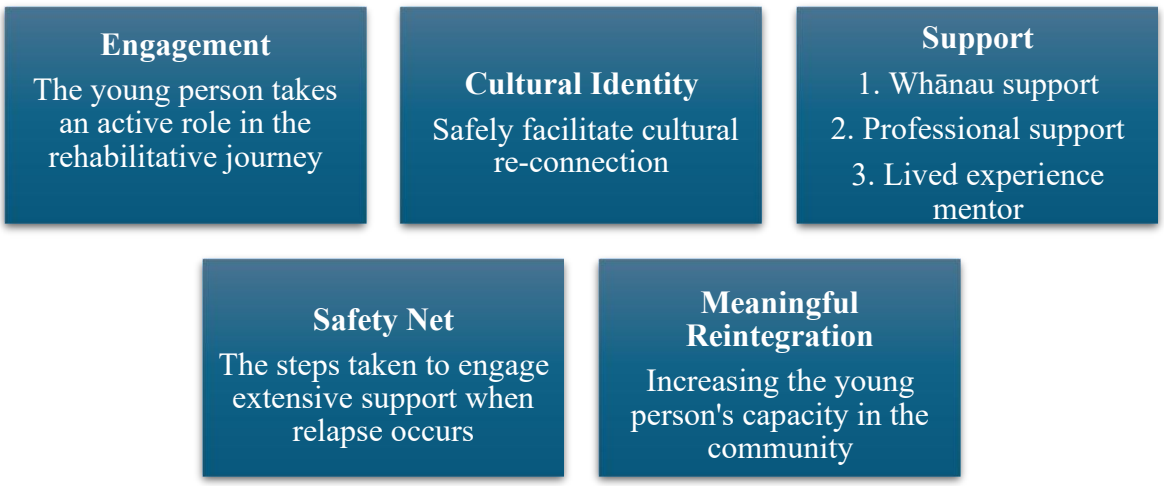
3. Have any attempts been made to match the young person with a mentor with lived experience?

4. How has relapse been incorporated into rehabilitation to create a realistic relapse prevention plan?

Based on these factors, Figure 7 proposes the building blocks when endeavouring to facilitate reconciliation and redemption once a young person has engaged in rehabilitative programmes. The application of these blocks to interventions should enhance positive outcomes for the young person as it places the young person at the centre and creates realistic goals and expectations within the context of intensive support.

Figure 7

The Building Blocks for Young people with Serious and Persistent Offending in Treatment Based on Study Themes



Limitations

This study has several limitations which should be considered for future research. The study limited its sample to youth practitioners who have experience working with young people aged 13 to 18 however did not actively select based on ethnicity nor record demographic information. Based on the statistics regarding rangatahi Māori it is important to have a strong presence of Māori voices foregrounding research into juvenile crime, and this strong presence was not well represented in our study sample. This has implications for study findings. The present study has attempted to align with the findings of Jackson (1988) and Rae (2024) to ensure that any potential findings do not perpetuate colonial narratives. It should be further acknowledged that this study cannot be the solution to juvenile crime. These findings should be located in the category of partnership, emphasizing that a longlasting solution to juvenile crime can only be found within a Te Ao Māori world view with Māori practitioners leading the way. Secondly, the study sample does not include the perspectives of those most impacted by the development and implementation of MSAs-young people and therefore fails to adequately provide a voice to our most vulnerable young people. Youth practitioners were located in the North Island, and their experience largely comes from working with organisations and young people in this area. The barriers identified by youth practitioners may therefore be regionalized. Youth practitioners from the South Island may offer unique insights into serious and persistent offending and the future of youth rehabilitation. The research findings may be applicable to the juvenile justice system, youth rehabilitation and serious and persistent youth offending in the North Island only. Finally, the present study focuses on youth practitioners however findings may have been enriched by including the perspective of judges, teachers and/or anyone involved with young people who may not fit the traditional definition of a youth practitioner in addition to the incorporation of rangatahi Māori perspectives. This is consistent with the recognition that serious and

persistent youth offending is a multi-dimensional issue that needs a multifaceted approach. Future research should investigate the perspectives across social, health, educational and forensic settings.

Conclusion

The present study highlights significant gaps in youth rehabilitation and the juvenile justice system. The development and implementation of MSAs is demonstrative of these gaps. On the whole, youth practitioners were concerned with the development and implementation of MSAs and its ability to address the root causes of crime. They considered the juvenile justice system and youth rehabilitation ill-equipped to adequately deal with the complex histories of young people with serious and persistent offending. This dialogue resulted in the exploration of the gaps and barriers within youth rehabilitation and the juvenile justice system which emerged as subthemes, pointing to the future directions of youth rehabilitation. These findings are not new and have been articulated within the literature. They are however unique in highlighting that the development and implementation of MSAs as an intervention for young people with serious and persistent offending is a symptom of a juvenile justice system that is failing on several fronts. The number of young people involved in serious and persistent offending is of such concern for Aotearoa because the status of young people is indicative of the future of this country. We have dishonoured the past, and this has resulted in the over-representation of Māori in statistics of deficit. We continue to dishonour the present by failing to capture our most vulnerable young people and dishonour the future in allowing them to be at increased risk of being adults with persistent criminalities. It is our role as the Māori proverb states “poipoia te kākano kia puawai" (nurture the seed so it will blossom). Therefore, calls for juvenile justice reform remain pertinent.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. How long have you worked in youth rehabilitation?

2. It might be that you have observed some patterns in your professional work regarding youth involvement in crime. Tell me about any patterns you might have observed?

3. Can you share your overall impressions of military style academies (bootcamps) for youth offenders?

4. The current pilot of military style academies (boot camps) in New Zealand targets serious and persistent youth offending. Can you share your thoughts on how their offending may or may not be influenced attending these bootcamps?

5. How do you think the idea of military style boot camps fits within youth rehabilitation in New Zealand for serious and persistent youth offenders?

6. In your opinion are there any other interventions that might be more effective at reducing re-offending in serious and persistent youth offenders?

7. Sometimes, serious and persistent youth offenders seem resistant to rehabilitative programmes. What do you think might be the reason for this?

8. In your view, in what ways do/do not MSA (bootcamps) align with the articles of Te Tiriti O Waitangi?

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO

DIVISION of ARTS, LAW, PSYCHOLOGY & SOCIAL SCIENCES

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Division of Arts, Law, Psychology and Social Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email alpss-ethics@waikato.ac.nz.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Name of person interviewed: _____

_____

I have received a copy of the Information Sheet describing the research project. Any questions that I have, relating to the research, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions about the research at any time during my participation, and that I can withdraw my participation at any time ***up to two weeks*** after the interview.

During the interview, I understand that I do not have to answer questions unless I am happy to talk about the topic. I can stop the interview at any time, and I can ask to have the recording device turned off at any time.

When I sign this consent form, I will retain ownership of my interview, but I give consent for the researcher to use the interview for the purposes of the research outlined in the Information Sheet.

[I understand that my identity will remain confidential in the presentation of the research findings]

Please complete the following checklist. Tick [✓] the appropriate box for each point.	**YES**	**NO**
[I wish to view the transcript of the interview.]		
[I wish to receive a summary report of the findings.]		

Participant :		Researcher :	Deborah Kazadi
Signature :		Signature :	
Date :		Date :	27/05/2025
Contact Details :		Contact Details :	Dk154@waikato.students.ac.nz

Appendix C

Participant Information Sheet

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Division of Arts, Law, Psychology and Social Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email alpssethics@waikato.ac.nz.

Purpose

Your insights as a youth practitioner are vital in influencing future pathways for change. I, Deborah Kazadi will be undertaking a Master's research project titled *"Exploring MilitaryStyle Academies as an Intervention for Serious and Persistent Youth Offenders: Insights from Youth Practitioners.*"

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of youth practitioners regarding military style academies (bootcamps) as an intervention for serious and persistent youth offenders.

By participating in research, you will contribute to a meaningful study that explores the potential of military style academies (bootcamps) in Aotearoa and ensure that the perspectives of those working with youth are involved in ongoing debates and policy discussions.

Participation

Participation in the study includes **one interview session** regarding questions about serious and persistent youth offending and military style academies (bootcamps). It is expected that interview sessions may last between 45 mins to 90 mins. You have the right to withdraw

from the study for up **two weeks** after the completion of your interview. Interviews will be audio-recorded to produce written transcripts. You will have the opportunity to indicate whether you would like to receive a copy of your written transcript.

Confidentiality

All the information you provide will be kept confidential. Any identifiers (name, occupation, workplace) will be removed, and your answers will be anonymized when communicated in research findings. All files will be saved onto the University of Waikato's secure server for a period of five years. The lead researcher and Research Supervisor will have sole access to the data. After the period of five years, all data will be securely destroyed as per The University of Waikato's guidelines.

All research findings will be communicated to you via a research summary report.

Research findings

All research findings will be communicated to you via a research summary report. Research findings will further be disseminated through a written master thesis as per the requirements of the University of Waikato.

Contact details:

Lead Researcher Deborah Kazadi

dk154@waikato.students.ac.nz

Supervisor

Professor Katrina Roen

School of Psychological and Social Sciences, Division of Arts, Law, Social

Sciences and Psychology

University of Waikato, New Zealand.

Katrina.roen@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix D

Ethics Approval Letter

*Te Wānanga o Ngā Kete | **Division of Arts, Law, Psychology & Social Sciences***

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Deborah Kazadi
[redacted]

Professor Katrina Roen

School Psychological and Social Sciences
Psychology Programme

27 May 2025

Dear Deborah

Re: **FS2025-21: Exploring Military-Style Academies as an Intervention for Serious and Persistent Youth Offenders: Insights from Youth Practitioners**

Thank you for submitting your revised application to the ALPSS Human Research Ethics Committee. We have reviewed the final electronic version of your application and the Committee is now pleased to offer formal approval for your research activities.

We encourage you to contact the committee should issues arise during your data collection, or should you wish to add further research activities or make changes to your project as it unfolds. We wish you all the best with your research. Thank-you for engaging with the process of Ethical Review.

Kind regards

Dr Amy Bird, Convenor
Division of Arts, Law, Psychology & Social Sciences Human Research Ethics