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**Jailcraft: Exploring Informal Knowledge and Practices of  
Corrections Staff in Custodial Spaces**

A thesis  
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of  
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## **Abstract**

Custodial officers have one of the most complex, high-risk jobs within our society. The job is formally guided and bound by organisational policy, national law and international law. However, in Aotearoa, New Zealand, the role of a custodial officer is held by a range of people to support the diverse prison population in an array of contexts, which requires nuance as not one model will be optimal for all needs. The present research aims to identify and understand the informal knowledge and informal practices held by custodial officers. Seven custodial officers employed by Ara Poutama Aotearoa from across Aotearoa, New Zealand, were interviewed for this research. These interviews were analysed using constructivist grounded theory. The theory states that a custodial staff's experiences of recruitment and initial training will shape the attitudes they adopt and the subsequent practices they engage in. The data shows that two operational attitudes on the floor will contribute to the formal and informal behaviour of custodial officers and that tension arises out of these differences that contribute to rates of staff turnover.

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## Glossary

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Aotearoa</b>	New Zealand
<b>Ara Poutama Aotearoa</b>	Department of Corrections New Zealand
<b>Karakia</b>	To recite ritual chants, say grace, pray, recite a prayer, chant
<b>Kaupapa Māori</b>	Māori approach, Māori topic, Māori customary practice, Māori institution, Māori agenda, Māori principles, Māori ideology - a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society
<b>Mana</b>	Prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma
<b>Mauhere</b>	Prisoner, captive
<b>Tāne</b>	Male gender
<b>Te Ao Māori</b>	The Māori worldview
<b>Te Reo</b>	The language
<b>Te Tiriti o Waitangi</b>	The Treaty of Waitangi
<b>Tikanga</b>	Correct procedure, custom, habit, lore, method, manner, rule, way, code, meaning, plan, practice, convention, protocol - the customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context
<b>Whakapapa</b>	Genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent
<b>Whakawhanaungatanga</b>	Process of establishing relationships, relating well to others
<b>Whānau</b>	Extended family, family group, a familiar term of address to a number of people (Moorfield, 2024)

## Chapter One: Literature Review

### Introduction

The state of our prisons tells a story about all of us. Prisons reflect society back to itself: they embody the ways we have failed, the people we have failed, and the policies that have failed, all at immense human – and economic – cost. (Crook, 2021)

Correctional spaces contain highly complex ecologies comprised of the people inside of them, influences of the structures it exists within and the vast history of the institution. Formal knowledge guides some custodial officer behaviour, but there is also *informal* knowledge a person will accumulate through their experiences that impacts their practice. Ara Poutama Aotearoa (Department of Corrections, New Zealand) (Moorfield, 2024) holds a plethora of influences on the formal and informal knowledge a custodial officer consumes and the subsequent behaviours they exhibit in their workplace. Not only is Ara Poutama Aotearoa a governmental institution, but it is also a workplace housing approximately 10,000 people from Aotearoa's (New Zealand's) (Moorfield, 2024) population (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024d). Prisons serve to punish, deter, keep the community safe and rehabilitate, which in practice is complicated as there are tensions and contributors for each of those outcomes. Presently, it is unclear how custodial officers' informal knowledge and behaviours manifest and function to address professional and personal pressures.

Workplace behaviour describes the formal and informal behaviour of an individual or a group shaped within their work environment. Formal behaviour comes from the formal learning that is delivered and endorsed by the institution, often characterised by knowledge crucial to the role or skills needed to do the work effectively (Manuti et al., 2015). Informal learning and the subsequent behaviour is a title to encompass what the individual learns on the job, over time to be able to adapt to the present tensions and needs (Le Clus, 2011). This

learning is non-tangible and context-specific; some scholars have suggested informal learning may be superior to formal learning (Colley et al., 2002).

Aotearoa's (New Zealand's) prisons contain a unique context with several environmental factors that may impact the informal knowledge of a custodial officer. Namely, Aotearoa's prisons are overpopulated, and the Indigenous Māori culture is over-represented within the institution (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024d). Also, staff are exposed to and victim of violence in their workplace. Due to legal liability, there are strict formal practices that custodial officers adhere to; however, the prison ecology has developed many different subcultures when considering location, security classes, offence types, sentence length, rehabilitation programmes and many others. All these subcultures, whilst still governed by formal practices, have developed individual informal knowledge and behaviours to ensure mauhere (prisoners) (Moorfield, 2024), staff and institution safety.

## **Literature Review**

To understand the impact on the ecology that informal knowledge and behaviour of custodial officers have, it is integral to understand the context in which informal knowledge and behaviour develop. First, it is crucial to understand that correctional systems are an institution; they are therefore influenced by institutional pressures and their functioning can be explained by institutional theories such as institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) or Scott's (2001) three pillars framework. Research on institutions is sought to be understood through theories of organisational behaviour and workplace behaviour studies. Organisational behaviour theories aim to explain how organisational, group and individual levels influence behaviour within the institution. Whereas workplace behaviour investigates the behaviour of an individual or a group within a specific context and how that behaviour developed.

Contributions of formal knowledge appear across the three types of behaviour (institutional, organisational and workplace). Understanding formal knowledge within correctional systems requires defining what it is in the workplace and how it is typically delivered to the employees. From here, we can begin to understand how formal knowledge both necessitates and contributes to the development of informal knowledge. Similarly, to understand the development and impacts of informal knowledge, it is crucial to have a clear outline of what 'informal' knowledge is. Furthermore, as informal knowledge is often intangible and non-assessable, I draw on some theories of learning to hypothesise how and why informal knowledge is developed and transmitted between employees. I also explain the value of informal knowledge and how this differs depending on how hazardous a workplace is.

As this is a study about informal knowledge and behaviour in custodial officers, understanding the context they exist within is key. I outline key properties of prisons and the tensions between them, specifically how they serve to punish, deter, keep the community safe and rehabilitate. Furthermore, this research is investigating Ara Poutama Aotearoa, which is its own specific context that comes with its own issues that custodial officers are shaped by. Although there are a variety of issues in prisons to draw on, overpopulation, the disproportionate Indigenous Māori population and violence against staff are the three discussed due to their impacts on frontline staff and culture. Finally, I define how Ara Poutama Aotearoa's current national strategy Hōkai Rangi shapes the informal knowledge held by staff as well as staff turnover and the relationships custodial officers foster with mauhere.

### **Institutional Behaviour**

Correctional facilities are a significant organisation in society that was founded for social purpose as they are intended to maintain social order. Corrections systems are

structured and operate under established rules and legal frameworks whilst also serving the important social functions of justice and trying to rehabilitate those who have been convicted of criminal behaviour (Rawls, 2017). As an enduring social structure, Ara Poutama Aotearoa is subject to institutional psychology, which offers explanatory frameworks for how overarching societal influences impact the policies, behaviours and norms of the institution (Scott, 2014). These frameworks aim to understand how correctional institutions will shape the patterns of formal and informal behaviour of their staff. Institutional isomorphism is a conceptual framework that theorises that similar organisations will become increasingly alike over time by inheriting similar structures and practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This convergence of the institutions is thought to be achieved through three mechanisms: (1) pressures and cultural expectations from organisations they are dependent on, (2) to be perceived as more legitimate and (3) the establishment of professional standards. This may explain how Ara Poutama Aotearoa adopts structures from other correctional institutions internationally or how it adapts to the local needs.

Scott (2001) built on DiMaggio and Powell's concept and developed the *three pillars* framework as to how to regulate and maintain institutions. The first pillar is regulative, there are both external and internal laws, rules and policies that regulate behaviour within the institution (Scott, 2001). The second is the normative pillar, that acceptable behaviour is shaped by shared values and norms, such as a commitment to safety and the institutional goal of reducing recidivism. Finally, the cultural-cognitive pillar suggests some common assumptions and understandings that guide institutional behaviour.

Four core components are thought to drive institutional behaviour: formal structures, normative elements, cultural-cognitive aspects and power dynamics. In the context of Ara Poutama Aotearoa, the organisation is bound by a variety of formal structures. Importantly, the Corrections Act 2004 is an external legal framework that shapes Ara Poutama Aotearoa's

institutional policies, such as the Prison Operations Manual and the Code of Conduct, to ensure staff adhere to strict guidelines (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024e, 2025). Furthermore, there are other established internal professional guidelines, i.e., incident reporting requirements and emergency response protocols. Normative elements that guide institutional behaviour are professional standards, which include adequate mandatory training and standards for performance reviews to enable staff to remain highly competent in their jobs. Cultural competency is crucial to the Aotearoa context, specifically Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) (Moorfield, 2024) obligations as Aotearoa's founding document to ensure partnership, protection and participation between the crown and the Indigenous Māori culture. A major cultural-cognitive tension is that Ara Poutama Aotearoa functions both as security for the community and focuses on rehabilitation for the people in their care. This dual mandate contributes to the shared professional identity amongst staff who navigate experiences of a high-risk environment, managing mauhere behaviour and collective assumptions on risk management. Furthermore, the understanding of both security and rehabilitation extends to the perceptions of hierarchy, which contributes to the power dynamics within the institution. Within correctional facilities, there are both formal and informal hierarchies occurring between management, custodial staff and the mauhere. Not only is there a formalised chain of command, but there are also complex informal dynamics within prison sites informed by gang relationships, sentence length and several other factors. Institutional psychology research broadly aims to understand the structural influences to the institution, however, staff behaviour is much more complex than understanding the context the institution they are employed at exists within.

### **Organisational Behaviour**

Organisational psychology seeks to understand human behaviour in the workplace by addressing issues pertaining to organisations, such as the group dynamics and individual

factors within them. A key denomination that distinguishes *organisational* psychology from *institutional* psychology is that organisational psychology is primarily person-centred.

Therefore, the focus is on aspects of human behaviour within a work environment where institutional psychology investigates wider social influences and systems. Organisational behaviour often reflects how staff mediate the tensions between institutional pressures and practical needs. To further understand these outcomes, organisational behaviour research is commonly separated into three interrelated key levels of influence: individual factors (micro), group dynamics (meso) and organisational structure (macro) (Robbins et al., 2013). Micro, meso and macro levels each have their own factors that contribute to organisational behaviour; however, these needs do not always align with each other.

There are many factors to consider when investigating individual behaviour in a workplace, such as personality, motivations, values and perception. Examining group dynamics within an organisation is more complex than understanding multiple individuals. The group will be influenced by patterns of behaviour such as what is considered appropriate, communication styles, as well as responses to team processes and leadership. Furthermore, the organisational structure is more than multiple groups. At the macro (organisational) level of influence, company policies, change and culture will all impact the system's efficacy; in the correctional context, this reflects policies on mauihere management and security. Additionally, organisational behaviour seeks to understand the impact that values, norms and shared beliefs within an organisation have on the functioning of that workplace. Furthermore, it is important to understand how power dynamics and politics contribute to the functioning and structures within the organisation's ecology. Specifically, how leadership styles, hierarchy structure, decision-making and the relationship between the organisation and its employees influence behaviour. Correctional institutions have additional relationships

between the organisation and the mauihere as well as the organisation and the wider community it functions to protect.

Considering the three main levels of influence that organisational behaviour seeks to understand (micro, meso and macro), there is a variety of psychological theories that pertain to each. For example, at the individual level, Maslow's hierarchy of needs could explain how motivation or job satisfaction can contribute to staff behaviour within the organisation (Griffin et al., 2010; Lambert et al., 2007; Leip & Stinchcomb, 2013). At the group level, there will be more consideration of social psychology theories that seek to understand how social identity, group dynamics and conformity impact the behaviour of prison staff (O'Connell et al., 2024; Stephenson & Bell, 2019). Whereas at the organisational level, there may be more emphasis on leadership psychology's contributions to behaviour (Choudhary, 2020; Swanigan, 2022).

Organisational psychology examines the beliefs, processes, dynamics and norms that drive the work environment and the overall prison ecology. Furthermore, organisational psychology examines group dynamics on many levels, importantly, individual staff's thoughts, feelings and actions. Understanding these dynamics will contribute to the explanation of development and utilisation of knowledge and practices across the organisation. However, organisational psychology in isolation cannot comprehensively explain an individual's workplace behaviour.

### **Workplace Behaviour**

Workplace behaviour examines the conduct of the group or an individual within a work setting (Brief & Weiss, 2002), which includes the informal and formal behaviour between an individual and their context. Workplace behaviours can include communication, involvement, reliability, absenteeism and collaboration. The culture and dynamics of a

workplace contribute to shaping the workplace behaviour of an employee (Bujang et al., 2024). However, a large part of the workplace culture is sourced from other employees, which suggests that social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) may be how knowledge and practices are transmitted among staff. Social learning theory states that people learn new behaviours through observation and imitating behaviours they see to identify what is socially acceptable (Bandura, 1977), which can be generalised to the workplace. This understanding conceptualises learning as a cultural process where learning environments influence the learner (Yardley et al., 2012). Even further, experiential learning suggests that learners also affect the environment and together, create a community of practice (Kolb, 1984; Lave, 1991). A point of contention for the community of practice is satisfying the needs of newcomers for professional growth whilst navigating the requirements of the organisation (Li et al., 2009), which creates demand for informal behaviour.

Additionally, the formation of workplace relationships at all levels and how these develop into networks will influence employee behaviour. A significant amount of tension occurs at this level, where employees are managing the formalised requirements of the organisation as well as the practical needs of their job. Informal knowledge and practices are necessary to address these tensions. For example, all employees undergo the same formal training when entering an organisation, but when they arrive on-site, they are exposed to on-the-job learning and develop tacit knowledge through their experiences. Tacit knowledge is composed of a variety of factors and may be difficult for an individual to articulate or operationalise (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2001), but it is commonly described as the 'know-how' of the job.

The three levels of influence on behaviour exhibited in an organisation (macro, meso and micro) have complex, highly interconnected relationships with each other. Beginning at the macro, institutional level, there is an acute degree of formal pressure on the organisation

that will dictate institutional behaviour. At the meso, organisational level, there is a delicate interplay of balancing the formal pressures of the institution and the culture of the company to ensure the employees can thrive. This is complicated further in a correctional context where they are not producing outcomes for clients or consumers, but instead incarcerated populations that have deep cultural nuances within themselves. Finally, on the micro workplace level, individual employees are integrating the formal knowledge directives and experiential tacit learning with their own beliefs and behaviours they brought to the job with them. The interactions between the three behaviour types produce a complex framework where both formal and informal practices develop as adaptation is required. This is also a fragile system where changes in one level will have a widespread ripple effect across all others and necessitate new practices in response to their daily experiences.

Together, institutional, organisational and workplace behaviours produce a complex context for custodial officers to develop their knowledge and practices within. As an institution that serves a social purpose, staff are navigating ensuring they not only uphold the standards set for them by the institution but also those set by the society they exist within (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2001). As is with any organisation in any industry, there are influences at the macro, meso and micro levels for custodial officers to perceive, interpret and integrate into their personal knowledge, which then shapes their formal and informal behaviour (Robbins et al., 2013). Lastly, individual workplace behaviour is learnt through a highly individualised process of a person's experiences. A person's understanding of what is normal for their workplace will then integrate to become a part of what is the norm as they join the community of practice; this environment is then what new staff members learn from (Kolb, 1984; Lave, 1991; Yardley et al., 2012).

## **Formal and Informal Behaviour**

Employee behaviour can be categorised as formal or informal; this section explores both behaviour types in depth. Both behaviour types will be defined, and theories of how they are acquired within the correctional context will be described. Formal learning and behaviours serve explicit purposes, whereas informal learning, knowledge and behaviour are highly variable and may have a range of intended and actual outcomes. Furthermore, the use of informal knowledge and behaviour will be encouraged and useful in some environments more so than others based on the industry-specific hazards (Scharf et al., 2001) which is important to consider when considering the dimensions of risk within a prison.

### ***Formal Behaviour***

In the workplace, formal behaviour and knowledge are outcomes of formal learning that employees experience and often involves organised learning, the gaining of a qualification or credit, a designated teacher and specific outcomes to be achieved (Eraut, 2000). The institution endorses formal learning through the training programmes it offers (Manuti et al., 2015) that are typically ‘off the job’ (Marsick, 2001; Marsick & Watkins, 2015) and based on traditional pedagogical frameworks of learning (Beckett & Hager, 2002). Formal trainings are comprised of knowledge that is critical within the job and designed to develop skills to ensure employees are capable of performing their jobs effectively (Manuti et al., 2015).

In a correctional context, formal learning is guided by legal frameworks, written policies and operating procedures that are standardised and documented (Coyle & Fair, 2018). Particularly in this context, this formal knowledge base upholds the lawful exercise of power or legitimate authority (Liebling, 2011) to standardise decision-making to remain legally compliant. Formal knowledge and the subsequent formal behaviour exhibited by custodial officers serve to keep everyone within the context safe in a myriad of ways. There

is a clear and correct way to perform duties. For example, how to conduct security procedures and use tactical options is highly standardised to strive for mauhere and officer safety; these procedures protect the custodial officer and Ara Poutama Aotearoa from liability claims when the procedures are followed as prescribed (Crawley, 2008). However, not all knowledge of an institution or workplace can or will be learned through formal procedures as the employees do not exist in a vacuum where that is exclusively what they are exposed to. Exposure to novel situations or something staff were not explicitly trained for encourages the development of informal knowledge.

### ***Informal Behaviour***

The context and conditions for learning are established by the institution; the relationship between the employee and their organisation determines their learning (Tynjälä, 2008). The title ‘informal learning’ encapsulates any learning that is not inherently ‘formal’; therefore, it is achieved differently and focuses on other aspects of an employee’s skill development not targeted by formal learning. Informal learning encompasses a plethora of ways an individual can learn, especially in the workplace (Le Clus, 2011). It is from the employees’ workplace experiences that informal learning occurs; therefore, contrary to formal learning, informal learning is nondidactic and non-assessable. Informal learning is often continuous so that employees can adapt to ever-changing workplace needs and sustain effective engagement in everyday work activities (Le Clus, 2011).

Informal workplace knowledge can be comprised of experience-based, incidental, informal and self-directed learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). There are four shared qualities between these forms of learning that Marsick and Watkins (1997) suggested underpins informal learning: (1) context, (2) cognisance, (3) experiential and (4) relationship. Per this theory, informal learning is any learning that occurs external to classroom-based settings (context) and can be intentional or incidental (cognisance) (Marsick & Watkins,

1997). Furthermore, learning is achieved through experience on the job (experiential) and occurs within relationships between an individual, their management and their teams (relationship) that influence their learning experience (Burgoyne & Reynolds, 1997). The informal learning one experiences will contribute to that individual's informal knowledge of a workplace and the informal practices they engage with as part of their job.

Informal knowledge is an integral component of the functioning of any workplace, and some scholars have suggested it may be superior to formal knowledge (Colley et al., 2002; Rainbird et al., 2004) as it may be more significant and effective (Manuti et al., 2015). However, as formal knowledge often functions to uphold legal requirements and legitimacy (Coyle & Fair, 2018; Liebling, 2011) for an institution, some workplace contexts require stricter adherence to the formal knowledge to protect the employers, employees and clients. Alternatively, some fields encourage the use of informal knowledge and practices to make developments.

For example, within Academia, the skills valued to be considered effective include dynamism and staff's interactions with students (Hildebrand, 1973). Also, critical thinking is a core skill for higher education and beyond (Karbalaie, 2012). Critical thinking skills involve evaluating all the information you have available to draw conclusions and generate new ways of understanding to move forward. Furthermore, academic staff are given freedom on the content they teach in their courses at their universities as they are considered expert in their fields. Typically, while ethical standards are being upheld, academic staff can teach and assess however they determine to be both beneficial and effective. These practices in academia are not likely to harm the staff or students physically or psychologically and are therefore deemed 'low risk' (Fenn & Ashby, 2004). However, when you consider workplaces such as civil defence, it is crucial that procedures are followed accurately to ensure the safety of staff and those in need of the services. Civil defence is an example of a 'high risk' or

hazardous environment due to the risk of injury and fatality (Fenn & Ashby, 2004) and therefore not an institution where it is acceptable to change employee behaviour without formal declarations of a change in policy based on the most recent evidence.

There is an identified dimensionality to how crucial it is to uphold formal knowledge over informal knowledge acquired as there is variability of how 'hazardous' a workplace is. Even further, there are industry-specific hazards that would make 'hazardous workplaces' look different (Scharf et al., 2001). Scharf and colleagues (2001) hypothesised that the central feature, across fields to a workplace being 'hazardous' is constant change, that a dynamic environment that requires regular adaptation will be hazardous because these environments require a highly skilled, vigilant workforce to do the work effectively. Custodial officers have a wide combination of psychosocial and occupational hazards they are exposed to on the job that makes their workplace dangerous (Montoya-Barthelemy et al., 2022). Scharf and colleagues' (2001) typology suggested eight dimensions of dynamic work environments that can increase their level of hazard and acknowledged that most workplaces would not have all eight. For a correctional context, where staff are working with people, not machinery, three dimensions are particularly relevant: human-generated hazards, controllability and predictability. Human-generated hazards include the intentional criminal behaviour of the mauhere as well as the unintentional behaviour of fellow custodial officers. In this context, violence is the paramount concern for safety that makes Ara Poutama Aotearoa a hazardous workplace (Mayhew & Chappell, 2007). Controllability describes to what extent the current technology controls the known risks, in this case, violent or other antisocial behaviour. While this is currently developing as the use of tactical options are being introduced, it is still people, not machinery, the effort is being made to mitigate the risks of, making controllability difficult to achieve. Finally, predictability: while violent behaviour in prison contexts is researched, it is not fully understood across all situations because of the complex interplay of

people, the environment and the context (Levan, 2012). Therefore, while there are some tools to predict where, when and why violence may occur, there is no entirely accurate way to reliably predict violence all the time.

Formal knowledge and behaviour serve the highly specific purpose in the correctional context of keeping everyone safe by ensuring legal compliance and the legitimate exertion of authority (Coyle & Fair, 2018; Liebling, 2011). This information is delivered and endorsed by Ara Poutama Aotearoa (Manuti et al., 2015); however, the limited classroom-based learning cannot account for every situation an individual will encounter whilst working, which creates the need for informal learning. This informal learning occurs in everyday experiences so staff can adapt to the everyday requirements of their work (Le Clus, 2011; Rogoff et al., 2016). Both forms of knowledge and subsequent behaviour are valuable; however, to what degree depends on the context of the workplace (Colley et al., 2002; Rainbird et al., 2004). Ara Poutama Aotearoa is notoriously a high-risk environment (Montoya-Barthelemy et al., 2022) which indicates the need for formal knowledge and behaviour. However, the key risk in prisons is violence, which is difficult to control and predict (Scharf et al., 2001) which is a highly complex issue that custodial officers are faced with managing daily (Levan, 2012).

## **Prisons**

Institutions have the power to shape the formal and informal behaviour that exists within them. This section examines the properties of prisons and, more specifically, how these factors can and do contribute to the learning, knowledge and behaviour that develops within them. Additionally, as this study is seeking to understand custodial officer behaviour in Ara Poutama Aotearoa and not correctional facilities broadly, it is pertinent to recognise the specific issues within Aotearoa's prisons and how these influence the knowledge and behaviour of the staff. Specifically, how overpopulation impacts mauhere and staff, violence

against staff, and the long-lasting effects of colonisation and how this has directly related to disproportionate Māori representation in the prisons. Finally, I will explore current influences on the informal knowledge and behaviour of custodial staff. Specifically, the current national strategy 'Hōkai Rangi', how staff turnover changes the knowledge on the floor and the impact that differing types of relationships staff have with the mauhere may have.

### ***Properties of Prisons***

Prisons serve many purposes within modern-day society. Prisons are designed to punish by employing justified deprivation of liberty and property because someone has been found guilty of criminal behaviour (Sigler, 2010). Also, prisons are intended to function as a deterrent for criminal behaviour before it occurs, although evidence is mixed as to what extent this is successful (Lee & McCrary, 2017) as it is difficult to accurately measure what an individual did not do. Communities and the wider societies also expect that prisons keep them safe by excluding from the population people who have been found guilty of committing criminal behaviour. However, to what extent a sense of safety is experienced will differ across demographics (Martin & Myers, 2005). Finally, prisons also intend to rehabilitate mauhere with the overarching goal of reducing recidivism when they reintegrate back into the community. Custodial officers are faced with navigating these four highly complex functions that are hinged on and influenced by institutional, organisational and workplace behaviour.

Security classifications for the mauhere are part of how Ara Poutama manages the risk of the context whilst also focusing on rehabilitation. A mauhere's security classification describes the risk they pose both internally and externally to the prison as well as to the public if they were to escape. However, the guidelines state that a mauhere will be given the lowest level of security class at which their risk can be safely managed; therefore, where practicable, mauhere will be managed within a facility consistent with their security class

(Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024e). Factors included in a mauhere's risk score include but are not limited to the seriousness of the most serious offence they are presently imprisoned for, history of violence, history of escape attempts, mental health and outstanding charges. These are all factors that Ara Poutama Aotearoa have deemed to be linked to a person's risk (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024e).

A risk score translates into five security classifications: Maximum, High, Low-Medium, Low and Minimum. At the macro level, Ara Poutama Aotearoa is responsible for setting specifications as to how to best manage each group's risk with the resources available, which the custodial officers implement in their day-to-day practice at the micro level. For example, a mauhere classified as maximum security will have limited access to programmes for rehabilitation and the highest staff-to-prisoner ratios, whereas a mauhere classified as minimum security may have opportunities for work release and more visitation privileges. Within these classifications, there is variability in how necessary it is to adhere to formal knowledge and procedures due to the level of risk or identified hazards. Not only will staff workplace behaviour differ due to the formal expectations but also potentially due to the variance of informal knowledge that comes from differing security classes.

### ***Issues Within Prisons***

#### **Overpopulation**

Overcrowding in prisons is a concern internationally (Nudd et al., 2024). Whilst the level of overcrowding varies, 68 countries have reported overcrowding rates over 150% (MacDonald, 2018; Penal Reform International & Thailand Institute of Justice, 2024).

Overcrowding does not have one consistent definition; however, it can be used to describe short staffing, which reduces the ratio of staff to mauhere. Overcrowding can also describe when mauhere experience double bunking, in which two people are placed into one cell. Ara

Poutama Aotearoa reported in September of 2024 that the total prison population was 9,924 (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024d) and that 43% of the population was double-bunking (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024c). Additionally, overcrowding in Aotearoa prisons is a growing issue, as the prisoner population has steadily increased since 2021 (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024d). Overcrowding contributes to several negative outcomes both for the mauhere and staff (MacDonald, 2018). For custodial officers, prisons being overcrowded has been linked to a volatile work environment (Ricciardelli et al., 2018) and increased violence from mauhere (Baggio et al., 2020). Furthermore, fully staffing a correctional context is a difficult task, which is compounded by the high turnover rate. Turnover not only disrupts the organisation but also means the experience and expertise is lost with the departing staff (Lambert et al., 2024).

### **Disproportionate Māori Representation and the Effects of Colonialism**

Aotearoa is a colonised country, and there have been widespread, devastating impacts of colonisation on Māori, the indigenous culture. Across the globe, indigenous populations are over-represented in incarcerated populations (Cunneen & Tauri, 2016). Aotearoa's reality is consistent with the international statistics as Māori are disproportionately represented within prisons. Despite only making up 14.4% of the population (Stats NZ, 2023) Māori account for 52.6% of the prison population (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024d), highlighting that colonisation is a living phenomenon (Monture, 2007). Systematically, Māori had their land forcibly removed from them, lost control over their livelihoods and were stripped of their autonomy; they were then placed as secondary citizens as their society was destroyed. Stevenson (2000) hypothesised that these factors lead to manifestations of internalised colonialism where indigenous people then move to internalised violence that leads to more frequent contact with the judicial system. These contacts then directly relate to higher rates of

incarceration (Stevenson, 2000). This process has also served to create a narrative that Māori are violent and, therefore, need to be controlled (Henry & Tamatea, 2023).

### **Violence**

Prison facilities are one of the most dangerous places to be employed (Ellison & Caudill, 2020; Steiner & Wooldredge, 2020). Being a custodial officer puts the individual at acute risk of violence every time they come to work, which is only one factor contributing to the complexity of the role's experience. Frontline prison staff are all at risk of becoming victims of verbal, physical, psychological and sexual assault. Ara Poutama Aotearoa reported 843 serious, non-serious and no injury assaults recorded against staff, perpetrated by mauhere in the 2023 to 2024 period. Custodial officers are perpetually aiming to protect themselves and their colleagues from being assaulted, whilst simultaneously protecting the mauhere also. There are several consequences of these violent acts over and above physical harm, both as being the victim of violence and witnessing violence so frequently in the workplace (Arnold, 2017; Bierie, 2012). Custodial officers experience higher levels of work stress, burnout, substance use, Post-traumatic stress disorder (Boudoukha et al., 2013), hypervigilance, reduced sense of safety and changes in threat perception (Isenhardt & Hostettler, 2020; Ricciardelli & Gazso, 2013; Seidman & Williams, 1999; Sorensen et al., 2011). As a result of their experiences with workplace violence, custodial officers may no longer feel safe at work (Gordon et al., 2013) and subsequently avoid work or resign from their position (Lambert et al., 2010). Taaka and colleagues (2024) identified that there are key characteristics within the prison ecology that are associated with a higher risk of perpetrating violence. There are also characteristics of violent perpetrators that contribute to the severity of their violence, such as segregation and the security class of the mauhere (Sorensen et al., 2011; Taaka et al., 2024).

When identifying what may put individual staff at higher risk, it is important to assess all available information. Situation-specific characteristics such as the security class of the unit are known to have an impact on the risk of violence and, therefore, have different systemic factors to protect against them. However, when adopting a holistic view of the person and the environment they are in, it may be possible to identify other factors that may contribute to their risk, such as age (Sorensen et al., 2011). Steiner and Wooldredge (2020) identified a link between staff who report insufficient training and a lack of collegial support and were more likely to have been threatened or assaulted in the last month.

Experiences of overpopulation, disproportionate Māori representation and violence all uniquely contribute to the knowledge a custodial officer holds. These three factors comprise a volatile work environment where the safety of self, fellow colleagues and the mauhere are of utmost importance and at the forefront of staff behaviour. However, staff are also experiencing a variety of negative outcomes that they must navigate for themselves on top of the institutional needs of their job, which is a prime context for informal behaviour to develop and flourish.

### *Shaping Informal Knowledge in Aotearoa Prisons*

#### **Hōkai Rangi**

Hōkai Rangi is Ara Poutama Aotearoa's national strategy for 2019-2024 (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2019). The ultimate goal for Hōkai Rangi is to reduce the proportion of Māori in Ara Poutama Aotearoa's care to reflect a level that aligns with the general population of Aotearoa. Ara Poutama Aotearoa acknowledges they are only one part of the country's judicial system, and therefore, their responsibility is to do their best for people in their care to reduce their chances of returning to the justice system. Ara Poutama Aotearoa identified six key strategic areas for change to achieve their goal,

1. Partnership and leadership, to share decision-making through best-practice Crown-Māori relations.
2. Humanising and healing, to uphold mauhere mana (dignity) (Moorfield, 2024), not further traumatise them in their experiences and support them with their transition back into the community.
3. Whānau (family) (Moorfield, 2024), support whānau of mauhere to stay connected and acknowledge whānau is not limited to immediate relatives.
4. Incorporating a Te Ao Māori worldview (Moorfield, 2024) to embed Kaupapa Māori (Māori Approach) (Moorfield, 2024) spaces and acknowledge access to culture is a right.
5. Whakapapa (genealogy) (Moorfield, 2024) facilitates a safe space for Māori to learn about and strengthen their cultural identity.
6. Foundations for participation, to give support to mauhere and their whānau to ensure they have relevant tools for participation in the community.

All six areas for change came equipped with ‘do now’ and ‘do later’ actions as well as the expected long-term outcomes and identified new approaches required. The full approach also specified which planned projects align with the Hōkai Rangi strategy and specifically how. However, the three key actions pertaining to training custodial officers (2.9, 4.13 and 6.8) were categorised as ‘do later’ actions and therefore not included in the planned projects. There was one exception, the “operational and policy practice review”, which is inherently formal knowledge. The strategy did not articulate how it was going to be disseminated for frontline staff to integrate into their daily practice with the mauhere. Therefore, how Hōkai Rangi is implemented by custodial staff will largely come from informal learning practices (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2019).

## Service and Turnover

Ara Poutama Aotearoa has a history of retaining staff for a long time, as reported in the 2021/2022 annual report, where the average length of service is eight years, and their longest length of service is 51 years and four months (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2022). With longer service lengths comes a significant amount of informal learning that has accumulated over the years that allows these staff to remain effective in their jobs. Recently, there has been a shift towards higher rates of turnover, including staff that have been employed by Ara Poutama Aotearoa for a long time. In 2017, turnover was reported as declining at 8%, which is lower than the average 11.1% for the public sector (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2017), however, this increased to as high as 15.1% in 2023 (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024a). As a result, the organisation required a large drive to hire new frontline staff due to the staff shortages, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. In June of 2022, it was reported that there were 779 unstaffed frontline roles, 438 of which were vacant and 341 of staff unavailable for work for other reasons (Cornish, 2022). This demand has been targeted with national recruitment campaigns that Ara Poutama Aotearoa has invested a significant portion of resources into. In 2023, this campaign cost \$3,399,626 in media buy and campaign production (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024f); also, Stories from the Inside, the 2024 recruitment campaign, was budgeted at \$2,800,827. Whilst Ara Poutama Aotearoa stated they could not directly attribute success in increasing applications to these advertising campaigns, they have reported that between February 2024 and March 2024, they have had 19,232 job applications compared to 6,464 in the same period in 2023. Prison-based roles have reached 85% FTE nationally as of the 29<sup>th</sup> of February 2024.

Staff turnover has impacts that ripple throughout the organisation; not only are there economic impacts associated with hiring and training replacements (Cascio, 1991), but it also disrupts social dynamics amongst staff (Mitchell et al., 2000). High turnover over time will

change the characteristics of the workforce to have a higher proportion of new staff that are not finely attuned to the intricacies of the informal knowledge and practices of their site and therefore reduce the quality of service received by the mauhere (Lambert, 2001).

### **Relationships with Mauhere**

The personal relationships between custodial officers and mauhere influence levels of tension and, subsequently, safety, security and control in the prison (Gilbert, 1997). Liebling and colleagues (2011) suggested that nothing is more important in the prison environment than the relationships between mauhere and the staff, and those relationships are the heart of the prison. However, it is difficult to decipher what a 'good' or 'right' relationship is, and there are several opportunities of causing harm when it goes 'wrong' (Liebling et al., 2011).

Mauhere-staff relationships have changed over time to a point where now there is less of a barrier between each other (Crewe, 2009). Although these relationships inherently have a power imbalance as staff has an everyday use of authority available to them, it is up to their discretion how they use it. Furthermore, there is the opportunity for both 'hard power' such as orders and the use of coercion as well as soft power which gains compliance through relationships and putting the responsibility of conduct directly onto the mauhere (Crewe, 2011). How mauhere-staff relationships develop is not well understood, however, many theories will consider a staff member's use of discretion, which is to what extent they exert their power (Liebling et al., 1999). Liebling and colleagues (1999) highlighted that these relationships will impact both staff and prisoner behaviour, which in turn impacts the functioning of the whole prison ecology. Some research has indicated that whilst difficult in a prison setting, working to facilitate a therapeutic community can be successful (Bennett & Shuker, 2010). However, a core challenge to creating a therapeutic community is that staff must be empowered to be centrally and meaningfully involved in the process, which involves

a more flexible approach of returning some autonomy to the mauhere by changing belief systems about authority by allowing and respecting mauhere's right to question and challenge.

What is clear internationally is that mauhere-staff relationships, their development and their impact are not fully understood, particularly as so many dimensions of these relationships are immeasurable and result from experience and informal learning. This is further compounded by each country having its own culture and subsequent value systems, to which Aotearoa is no exception. Furthermore, each prison site and each unit will have a different set of circumstances that influence the culture of the unit, such as security classifications, management and the physical environment.

Hōkai Rangi has been Ara Poutama Aotearoa's national strategy since 2019, and its consideration has shaped the department in subsequent years through decision-making and the projects that have resulted from it. The high rates of staff turnover are shifting the level of experience on the floor. As the average length of service decreases, the rates of new staff increase, which impacts the development and transmission of informal knowledge as well as increasing reliance on the formal knowledge taught in the training period for new recruits. Mauhere-staff relationships have always had significant contributions to the functioning of a correctional institution and is a largely informal process. Understanding the development and factors of these relationships is crucial to the prison ecology.

### **The Present Study:**

The current study aims to identify the informal knowledge custodial officers hold and where the knowledge is sourced from. I then wanted to investigate the contributions of informal knowledge to the informal practices utilized by custodial officers and what the intended outcomes of these practices are. Finally, I want to evaluate the impact this

knowledge and subsequent practices have on violence within Aotearoa prisons. I will utilise organizational psychology approaches to explore the intersection between the institution, culture and, most importantly, the people in the custodial officer role. I will use qualitative measures in which I conduct interviews with Ara Poutama Aotearoa's custodial officers to gain their unique insights and experiences, both in their role and as people with diverse histories.

Considering these aims, this research aims to answer four questions:

1. What are the informal knowledge and practices among custodial correctional staff?
2. How does informal knowledge create variance between policy and the informal practices that occur?
3. What are the intended functions of the use of the identified informal practices?
4. How do informal practices impact violence in a custodial setting?

## Chapter Two: Method

### Ethical Approval

The key ethical issues that were pertinent to this study included confidentiality, privacy, and cultural safety. For these purposes, I had to seek ethical approval, consider how to make sure participants both felt that their privacy was prioritised and the logistics of ensuring their data was secure and evaluate how the methodology could both meet the needs of the project and be appropriate for the target population.

The study had ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at the University of Waikato. Approval number HREC(Health)2023#15. I recognised the potential harm this research could cause to participants if they were to be viewed as employees speaking out against their employer, Ara Poutama Aotearoa. Due to this concern, as is with all research, taking steps to protect the privacy of the participants was paramount. Therefore, the generated transcripts had any identifying information redacted. Redaction included removing information such as names, locations of work, identifiable stories and where a participant grew up. I also chose to use Otter.ai for transcription as the company is bound under United States of America laws to protect stored data and the privacy of its users. Furthermore, only information relevant to the findings has been reported on. To further protect participants, during the planning stages of this work, I underwent extensive consultation with Corrections Association New Zealand (CANZ), which is the largest union for Aotearoa's custodial officers. In this process, I discussed the purpose of our research and what I aimed for the implications of this work to be. I also discussed the potential risk to participants to ensure CANZ was well informed before supporting the research. Following this period, I had full support from CANZ.

Due to the disproportionate number of Māori in the prison population, any research that has implications for the prison system is going to have greater impacts for Māori than any other demographic. Also, this research exclusively pertains to the Aotearoa prison system and its staff. For these reasons, I chose to align our processes with Kaupapa Māori research principles, such as Te Reo (Māori language) (Moorfield, 2024), tikanga (correct practice) (Moorfield, 2024) and not placing myself as the expert. Also, my processes were designed with consideration to the principles of Te Tiriti O Waitangi, which is Aotearoa's founding document.

I prioritised the use of Te Reo Māori throughout this research. For example, including te reo where possible, always calling the employer Ara Poutama Aotearoa instead of Department of Corrections and ensuring Māori words were pronounced correctly. Tikanga is embedded throughout the how we think and behave, it is not a specific action or process that can be taught (Smith, 2015). Steps towards tikanga in this work included integrating whakawhanaungatanga (establishing relationships) (Moorfield, 2024) into the interview process by having some time before the recording devices were turned on for the interviewer and participant to get to know each other. Another example was inviting participants to open and close the session in any way they preferred and the researcher also offering a karakia (prayer) (Moorfield, 2024). Finally, not placing myself as the expert on the topics discussed also aligns with the Te Tiriti O Waitangi principles of partnership and participation that contributed to our choices of analytical strategy and processes. I chose constructivist grounded theory over classical grounded theory as it acknowledges that I, the researcher, was a co-participant. Specifically, I did not discover the knowledge but co-constructed it with the participants; it was a mutual process (O'Connor et al., 2018). Due to this, there was more opportunity to discuss the results and data with the participants throughout the process at different stages of analysis. For this project, I was able to share a draft model with

participants and ask for their feedback. This allowed me and the participants to truly partner and co-construct an authentic theory.

### **Positionality**

As the method of data collection and analysis constructivist grounded theory actively acknowledges that the researcher is a co-constructer of the data and has their own biases, it is important to highlight what the I have reflected on during the process and is aware I bring to the study. The most influential factor, I believe, is that for over three years, I have been a specialist support worker for intellectually impaired youth. For the last two years, the unions have been undergoing a pay equity process where it was determined that the demands of the job and skills needed to be a care and support worker are most like those of a custodial officer. Therefore, I identified a lot of my experiences with those of the participants. Furthermore, when discussing research with my whānau who work within the learning and development space in education, the similarities across fields and what their experiences are were noted. Also, for the duration of this project, I have been employed by Ara Poutama Aotearoa within the psychology space. Therefore, I had some knowledge of wider systems in Aotearoa and have some limited experience within prison sites but largely did not encounter custodial staff.

### **Participant Recruitment**

Both convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used to recruit participants for this study. The first participants were recruited through CANZ. The CANZ president disseminated an email (See Appendix A.) on the researcher's behalf to members outlining the purpose of the study and my contact details, which members could use to express interest in taking part. Following this, more staff members became available, and I was able to develop a snowball sample. There is no set number of interviews that determine data saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) as that will vary between projects

depending on individual factors and the scope of the research. Following seven interviews, I determined that I had reached data saturation for the purposes of the project.

## **Participants**

Seven employees of Ara Poutama Aotearoa (Department of Corrections New Zealand) were identified and interviewed for this study. At the time of the interview, all participants were either currently employed as a custodial officer or had been formerly and now hold different roles within the organisation. Participants' ages ranged from 40 to 60+. Participants ethnically identified as New Zealand European ( $n=2$ ) and Māori ( $n=5$ ) and the length of service ranged from 5 to 36 years ( $M=13.62$ ) within the department. To protect the identities of the participants, I did not formally collect location information as part of the demographics. However, throughout the interviews, participants shared they had worked at a variety of Ara Poutama Aotearoa locations across the North Island and South Island throughout their careers. All seven participants were members of CANZ.

## **Procedure**

### ***Location***

To foster an environment where participants felt safe to speak freely on their attitudes, beliefs and informal practices, participants based in the Waikato were given the choice to engage in the interview electronically or in-person. One participant chose to be interviewed on the University of Waikato's Hamilton Campus. For out-of-region participants, they were given the choice to be interviewed either over the phone or online, either via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. One participant was interviewed on Zoom, and five were interviewed via phone call.

## ***Materials***

Interviews were all voice-recorded using an iPhone, a laptop or both. In-person sessions were recorded using both the iPhone and a laptop. Interviews conducted over the phone were voice recorded exclusively on the laptop, similarly, the interview on Zoom was voice recorded on the iPhone. Participants read the Information Sheet (See Appendix B.) and, using the consent form (See Appendix C.) provided, wrote written consent, to be recorded before the initiation of the interview. The interviewer also verbally notified the participants when the recording began and finished.

All interviews were semi-structured, guided by an evolving interview schedule (See Appendix D.). Due to the process of constructivist grounded theory, this interview schedule was updated throughout the data collection and analysis phases to include topics emerging from earlier interviews and exclude topics that had reached data saturation.

To transcribe the interviews, I used the Otter.ai software (Otter.ai, n.d) , which transcribes the interview and allows the researcher to edit for accuracy and make changes. Then, to generate codes, the transcripts were put into the nVivo software (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2024). Finally, these codes were arranged using Draw.io (Ltd, 2024) to form diagrams and develop the theory.

## ***Interviews***

I conducted interviews between August and December 2023. Participants received the information sheet and consent form prior to the interview via email. All seven participants were offered the opportunity to ask me any questions before the scheduled time for the interview prior to signing and returning the consent form. I conducted all interviews alone and invited all participants with the opportunity to open the discussion in their preferred manner, for example, with a prayer or karakia. Confidentiality and consent were then

discussed verbally, as well as offering participants the opportunity to ask any further questions before the recording commenced. After this process, the recording device was turned on. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed for further questions to be asked to gain further understanding and clarification from the participants. Once the researcher had concluded asking questions, participants were invited to clarify anything they had said throughout the interview or add anything they wanted to be considered during analysis that had not been asked about. The recording devices were then turned off, and participants were again explicitly given the chance to ask any further questions. Finally, participants were invited to close the session in any preferred manner. Due to the nature of semi-structured interviews, these sessions ranged from 45 minutes to two hours. I immediately transcribed the interview, redacting any identifying information and returned it to the participant. Each participant was given 14 days following receipt of the transcript to add, redact or adapt any part of their transcript and return it before it was used in analysis.

### **Analysis Rationale**

When choosing the methodology, I needed to consider how this type of work is typically achieved, as well as the benefits and concerns of the methodology types. Importantly, this was exploratory research that had no hypothesis where I wanted to understand custodial officers' subjective experiences of their reality. I also needed to evaluate how a chosen method would align with the philosophies of Kaupapa Māori research as well as my own to ensure authenticity.

This research aims to understand the workplace behaviour of custodial officers in Ara Poutama Aotearoa, which can be investigated in a variety of ways. Commonly, workplace behaviour can be evaluated through surveys, which allow large-scale reach across the target population. However, surveys do not allow for elaboration on responses, which may mean researchers miss the context behind answers and cannot probe for more in-depth information

when required. Observation is another tool that can be used for researchers to witness behaviour rather than have behaviour reported on. The observation approach provides rich data and reveals patterns of behaviour that may be unconscious, but there is the chance of people adapting behaviour when they are aware they are being watched, and this method is resource intensive. A 360-degree approach would also offer in-depth data and understanding of the interplay as data is collected from multiple sources aiming for a holistic view. This method works to reduce bias as many perceptions are evaluated, however, the size of an organisation can impact the feasibility of the approach.

There were many factors to consider when deciding how to best conduct this research. A driving factor in the decision-making was that the experiences of custodial officers throughout Ara Poutama Aotearoa are fluid and often would not fit into categorical responses. Therefore, to ensure these experiences were captured, it was important for the data collection to be a qualitative process that allowed participants to elaborate on their thoughts so the researchers could understand what they meant, so surveys would not be appropriate. Also, as the population of interest is within a prison, it was not realistic to use any methodology that involved direct observations as they are not accessible in that way. As I aimed to both identify and understand informal knowledge and informal practices, I required an exploratory process that identifies the phenomena (informal knowledge and practices) and generates theoretical understanding that can be supported by empirical literature. For this purpose, I chose Grounded Theory methods as it allows theory to emerge organically from real life experiences and can explore under-researched or novel areas (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A prominent strength of Grounded Theory generally is that the research does not begin with a hypothesis or expectations (Conrad, 1982). Instead, it allows the researcher to systematically discover patterns within the generated data and uniquely elaborate on this knowledge using further data collection. However, there are sub-methods within Grounded

Theory as an approach that have different features and philosophies that I needed to evaluate to determine what was going to be most effective and appropriate for the study. Also, as I aimed to understand *informal* knowledge and practices, it is inherently subjective data that was constructed as characteristics and experiences of each individual influenced the knowledge and practices.

These needs can be addressed with constructivist grounded theory as developed by Kathy Charmaz in 1995. Constructivist grounded theory is a later adaptation of grounded theory that was developed in the 1960s (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Two identifying factors of the constructivist grounded theory philosophy contributed to our choice to use this over classical grounded theory, subjectivity and the use of a literature review. The first is that it recognises the subjectivity of experience, and many realities are co-existing within the Ara Poutama ecology. This is contradictory to classical grounded theory, which operates on the basis that there is an objective reality that researchers wish to uncover. Secondly, constructivist grounded theory encourages the use of a literature review before collecting data. This point was particularly integral in the design of this research because of who the population of interest is. In the current Ara Poutama Aotearoa climate, where they are understaffed and the employees are working significant overtime, it was integral to gather the most information as effectively as possible. Having the researcher conduct a literature review before meeting with participants gave the interviewer an understanding of the area that contributed to being able to interview effectively and get salient information and create an interview schedule for semi-structured interviews. This would not have been achieved using Classic Grounded Theory as it is intended to collect data before reviewing the literature to be as free from bias as possible. These aspects aligned with the needs of the project as coming in prepared with some knowledge indicated the level of respect the interviewer had for the custodial officer's limited time. Furthermore, I was able to acknowledge my limited

interviewing skills and that I would struggle to be as receptive as required without having an interview schedule. This ensured we were able to maximise the exchange of knowledge effectively and collaboratively.

While focus groups are often used to explore workplace behaviour and attitudes, preserving the participants' anonymity was of utmost importance due to the nature of the data we would generate. It was vital that participants were confident they would not be identified and, therefore, felt safe to share their experiences candidly. Choosing one-to-one interviews gave participants an extra sense of privacy to share their perceptions on the Ara Poutama ecology.

Constructivist grounded theory aligns with a postpositivist view of knowledge where there are limits to how methods of science can be applied to the social world (Tenny et al., 2023). As informal knowledge and behaviour results from the interplay of so many factors and will be perceived differently depending on an individual's personal experiences, there is likely no objective reality experienced by all. Furthermore, as this research was embedded in Kaupapa māori principles, it was important that the processes were not rigid and that while still based in science methodology, it remained open-ended (Smith, 2015). Acknowledging the researcher is a co-participant allows the researcher to reflect on their own bias and positionality, as well as the implications these factors may have on the work and the theoretical output. Another key concept in constructivist grounded theory is that the results are not discovered but constructed between the researcher and the participants as the researcher cannot be completely objective. Furthermore, co-constructing with participants serves as an inter-rater reliability process as the findings are evaluated by the interviewees to ensure accuracy throughout the process and before finalising the theory.

## **Analysis Process**

Although there have been many iterations of grounded theory since it was created, it has remained consistent in that it is a structured process with defined steps. For constructivist grounded theory, three steps occur alongside consistent memoing, however, it is important to note that it is not a linear process as the data collected and subsequent analysis informs the later interviews.

Following each interview, the recordings were immediately transcribed and returned to the participant for 14 days to allow them to adapt, remove or add anything they wished to accurately reflect their opinion. After this 14-day period, the transcript would then be uploaded into nVivo for the open coding phase. This involved line-by-line coding of the data to derive meaning from the participants' comments. These codes ranged to cover one-word answers to entire paragraphs, depending on the content. The assigned codes were then compared to find conceptual similarities to generate categories of codes sharing a common idea, which is the second phase of focused or selective coding. The categories from these processes allowed the researchers to identify gaps in the knowledge and new concepts that had arisen that I knew little about. This information would then be integrated into the interview schedule to enable more nuanced interviews with focussed questions. The final stage is theoretical coding, in which I searched for meaning between categories to develop the theory. This included identifying relationships, processes and mediating factors to inform our understanding of the prison ecology. Finally, I developed a theory and the model to explain it based on the key, overarching themes and output from the theoretical coding stage. This stage required many iterations and reviewing how other researchers address moving from categories of codes into a comprehensive theory (Charmaz, 1995; Jaccard & Jacoby, 2020). This process involved taking a step back to understand what the common themes throughout the data were and what the narrative underlying the pieces of data was.

Throughout this process, my supervisor and I had several in-depth conversations where we discovered new patterns and identified what the key points were, which eventually evolved into the theory and model that is the output of this research.

One of the key components of constructivist grounded theory is the level of engagement from a study's participants to ensure authenticity and mitigate the effects of the researcher's biases. Therefore, once researchers had developed the model, they reached out to participants to give them an opportunity for another round of feedback. This included privately sending participants an email (See Appendix E.) that included a document that had a brief explanation of the model, a video of the principal researcher explaining it and a Google survey link with some prepared questions as well as open space to offer any feedback they had. The email outlined that participants had 14 days to review the information and provide any feedback they wished to give. Following these 14 days, the researchers reviewed the feedback given and integrated that data back into the model.

### **Chapter Three: Results**

The data collected in this research was analysed to develop a theory of informal knowledge and practices in Aotearoa custodial settings and a model to describe and explain the relationships between the factors, their dimensions and their properties. For further explanation and depth, direct quotes from the interviews have been selected to highlight and offer further meaning to the descriptions and relationships between variables. I chose quotes that validated the understanding of the factors, showed the extremes of the dimensions and offered clarity on how the participants understand their reality and context. This chapter concludes with explanations of how the model is processed for different members of staff and what is likely to happen at each extreme based on the observations of the participants.

#### **Theory of Differences in Attitudes and Practice**

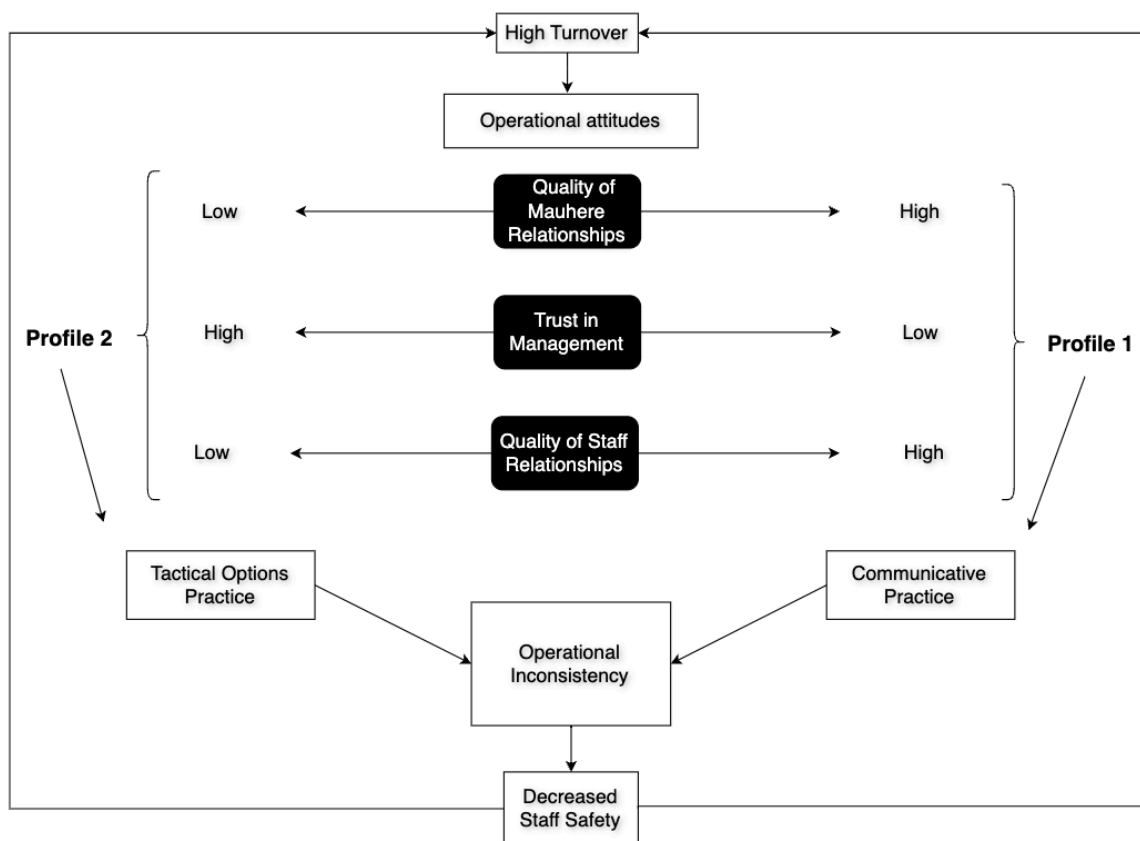
Custodial officers viewed that the experiences staff have during recruitment and initial training will impact the attitudes about the job they hold and subsequently shape how they will practice. Participants' understanding was that Ara Poutama Aotearoa has increased the level of staff turnover in recent years as existing staff are burnt out and new recruits are not sufficiently prepared, both by an idealistic recruitment campaign and a reduced quality initial training. Three key variables were identified that custodial officers believed were most influential in staff differences: quality of relationships with mauhere, trust in management and quality of relationships with colleagues. These three variables then interacted to influence how a custodial officer practices, particularly regarding the use of tactical options or communicative techniques. The differences in practices and attitudes have created a divide between groups of custodial officers on the floor and had culminated into inconsistent practice received from the staff to the mauhere.

## Descriptive Model of How Informal Knowledge is Generated for Custodial Officers

I designed the model to explain the theory of differences in attitudes and practices. It shows the process in which the informal knowledge and informal practices are developed and understood by custodial officers. It is important to note that this model is a cyclical, reinforcing process. Also, each member of staff may be in a different part of this process, and similarly, some staff may have only seen it play out once in its entirety, whereas others have seen it occur multiple times.

**Figure 1**

*Descriptive Model of How Informal Knowledge is Generated for Custodial Officers*



### High Turnover

Ara Poutama Aotearoa has experienced increased rates of staff turnover during recent years, which participants described as a large part of what shapes the reality for custodial

officers. Not only was a large portion of jobs left vacant, but there was an increased rate of new staff being hired and trained. Ara Poutama Aotearoa being short staffed negatively impacted custodial officers' wellbeing due to the pressure they felt to be there for their team by making up the short fall, which then contributed to burnout by not using their leave entitlements. The increase in the proportion of new staff had a systemic impact on the ecology and was a driving factor in Figure 1. Further exacerbating this change were the concerns existing custodial staff have with the ideology the national office taught new recruits, as well as participants view that initial training quality has deteriorated.

### ***Understaffing***

Frontline staff felt the reality of Ara Poutama Aotearoa being understaffed. Participants reported their observations of being short staffed and the effect of insufficient staff on the floor. Five participants commented on their observations of short staffing. Participant 2 said, "That place was so grossly understaffed," and Participant 1 described their time at a different site: "When I went up there (differing Ara Poutama site), I worked a week because they're short staffed." Short staffing was a major concern for participants and an issue across the organisation. Participants noticed patterns of feeling short staffed on a shift-by-shift basis and saw a cycle where there was no one to cover their shift if you are sick, so staff come in to not let their team down, "there is times that you feel like you don't really do just when you tired worn out, and you just don't feel like turning up. I still turn up," (Participant 7). Furthermore, staff were reluctant to take their accrued annual leave as there was no staff to cover their work, which would increase the pressure and workload demands on their colleagues, which Participant 2 explained, "but me and most of my team, we've all got sort of 10/12 weeks annual leave owing because we've just had no staff to take leave." Staff not feeling able to utilise their sick or annual leave entitlements contributed to the growing concern of custodial officers being burnt out that Participant 1 noticed, "the burnt-

out staff.” Participant 2 described how once staff are burnt out, they used most or all of their sick leave, which then further compounded the concern of being understaffed, “I think the national average is people take about 9.78 sick days a year.”

### *Underpreparing Recruits*

When new recruits were hired, they underwent initial training before coming onsite to their assigned prisons. Participants felt that the advertising campaign misrepresented the reality of being a custodial officer and this attitude was continued throughout the initial training process. Participants discussed issues they had with the initial training process and compared it with their own experiences, both of training and their learning from the floor. Major concerns included that the initial training was not practical enough and does not sufficiently prepare recruits, that the training was too lenient and that due to a history of experienced staff putting effort into recruits who quit quickly they were unmotivated to deliver comprehensive site inductions. Overall, participants reflected on their own experiences of initial training they had over five years ago and felt the quality of this training has diminished since.

Many participants shared their views of the advertising campaigns created by Ara Poutama Aotearoa. While participants shared that they applied for the role for a variety of reasons (supporting fellow Māori, bored of their old work or having whānau already working), they felt the new recruits have been “sold a dream.” Whilst this strategy has been effective at increasing interest in the work and job applications for custodial officers (Powell, 2024), these staff were then underprepared for the realities of being frontline staff within a prison,

And then I went to see somebody, and they said, look, if you can help one person from coming back for his family, that's immense. And for the crimes her won't do

after that is even more, but they can't measure that. So they sold me that dream.

(Participant 3)

I asked (redacted), “do you think that the current advertising campaign is an accurate reflection of what we do as a business, and do you think that the dream you're selling to these people is conducive to staff retention?” And (redacted) only answer was, “we're getting more people pushing the button to be interested.” (Participant 2)

That's our biggest thing is after two years most staff are leaving because it's not the job they were told and signed up for. What they seen on TV and Facebook like 10 times is different to what they're actually experiencing. (Participant 4)

This has meant that more people are applying for the job under false pretences and may not be suited for the work. Furthermore, participants shared a range of concerns with the initial training new recruits receive and how this has impacted them when they came to the floor. The key issues were that the training was too classroom-based, initial training lacked the discipline it once had, and there was no longer a probationary period, so recruits did not need to work as hard to pass. Custodial officers reported a perceived shift in the quality of the initial training new custodial officers receive. Issues raised is that initial training lacked the practical component needed to be successful in the job in favour of theoretical knowledge, which Participants 1 and 6 described, “a lot of it you sit down talk, talk, talk,” (Participant 1) and “I mean, they're great with policy and procedure down there. But they're not showing them the fundamentals to get them on the floor and get them going.” (Participant 6)

However, participants reported that when they completed initial training, they understood that it lacked the practical component and were aware they would receive that knowledge onsite as part of the site induction process. Participant 5 relayed a quote from their initial training period, “what happens at the college (initial training) stays at the college.”

Now, despite the site induction still being a formal part of the process, new recruits were being instructed not to listen to the older staff and report when they are taught incongruent knowledge. Participant 7 said, “they get taught down at college, to dob people in all the time now,” and Participant 4 shared the same notion, “because a lot of the newer staff within the last four years have been told not to listen to us dinosaurs.”

A large component of what participants felt underpinned quality training was a high level of discipline, characterised by following procedure and having pride in their work, as highlighted by Participant 2, “but it's something that we have a bit of pride in the uniform, we lean on that quite heavily.” Many participants associated these attitudes with the former green uniform, compared to the present blue uniform,

It was very military like back then, more so than I expected, but as I had already been in the job about a year before going to the college, I had been sure what to expect, we were told do not embarrass the site, if you muck up, you're done – gone. Big emphasis on discipline, acts and reg's, etc... When we were in the greens... taking or giving orders, discipline, rank structure. The culture was very military based from parades to following and not questioning orders staff, implemented this on to the men and women in our care whether they wanted it or not. (Participant 5)

A contributing concern the participants had is that there is no longer a probationary period during or after initial training. Participant 5 shared their own experience of a probationary period, “if we passed the induction, we were ‘probationary’ officers for up to 12 months, we could resign or be terminated during that time or have it extended for a further 6 months.” The lack of a probationary period meant if Ara Poutama Aotearoa identified a new member of staff early into their employment that is not a correct fit for the role, it was more

difficult to terminate them, the impact on the behaviour of new recruits was described by Participant 3:

I got told nobody can fail college. They can't fire you at college. So you can do just about anything you like other than get into a big punch up like a couple of them did you know? And it's okay because they won't fire you. (Participant 3)

Participants reported that these standards further contributed to staff coming on the floor underprepared. Participant 7 stated, “We are getting too many people that just shouldn't be passing,” which then led to new recruits resigning quickly.

### ***National Office Idealism***

Arguably, the most prominent concern from participants that extended further than initial training was the idealism displayed by the national office and how this impacted new recruits, “national office contributes a lot because they're in a little world of their own little dreamy, dreamy selves,” (Participant 7). Following on from selling new recruits a dream, participants felt that the national office was out of touch with the realities of the floor, and this was subsequently what was taught to new recruits. Participant 5 shared one of many quotes describing this notion, “Jail, this is the real world, college is in a perfect world, there were many sayings.” Participants viewed that initial training did not sufficiently preparing the new recruits on what to expect on the floor or how to deal with it, as highlighted by Participant 2, “that's something that they don't talk to you about in college either, that was dealing with all the stress of the job because there was quite a lot of stress.”

The difference in attitudes of the floor between custodial officers and the national office has exacerbated the disconnect between the initial training and what happens on the floor. Participant 4 explained the impact of new recruits who came onto the floor underprepared, “we're in the quandary where you've got a lot of new staff who know nothing.

And it's us older staff, that are actually the ones holding it together and teaching them how to do the job. It's gone backwards." These factors mean recruits arrived on site with little to no knowledge of the realities of the floor and often resigned quickly. A component of the initial training a new hire received is being paired with an experienced officer on the floor to gain practical knowledge. However, due to the high levels of burnout the floor staff experienced and the knowledge of high staff turnover, the experienced officers have not put 100% effort into each person to prevent wasting their own time and burning themselves out further.

Participant 2 described their experience of being a new recruit in this situation, "I got assigned to an officer that couldn't be bothered. And he just said you'll work it out and it was about the end of that." Therefore, new staff have not received the same on-site knowledge their predecessors had and had to rely heavily on what they were taught during their initial training,

So, I think they're (experienced officers) doing like half a job sometimes. They're over it, they don't care... They just like, go for a little walk around the unit, don't really engage with them... Go to the garden maybe, here have coffee, stay here. Yeah you know, just leave them... Then you get another guy and you want to you don't give your 100... Oh, this again, I'll just give a little rundown. Yeah, don't tell them everything, you know. (Participant 1)

Overall, participants believed the quality of training they received is higher than what new staff receive, "ours was the older generation of training where it's, you do what you're told, here's everything you're meant to do," (Participant 4). There was a preference for how initial training used to be facilitated and a subsequent desire to have the training to return to the original regime,

I found the college training was quite good. I was of the last year of the old system or the old way of training. Yeah. So I found that was quite good. But I don't feel it's good now... And I don't think that the depth of learning is been taught down there as it once was... Because everyone's rushing to get these people graduated. (Participant 6)

Based on this data, 'high quality' training includes high practicality, high discipline, having a probationary, high preparedness and a site induction with a non-burnt-out staff member. Participants viewed that new recruits received 'low quality' training where it was not practical and the barrier was placed where new recruits were told not to listen, there was less discipline and no probationary period as there was an increased number of new hires, the national office has 'sold a dream' contributing to low preparedness and the floor staff were burnt out and do not provide a quality site induction. The quality of training received, and the processes embedded within it contribute to the key components that floor staff vary on.

### **Operational Attitudes**

There were three key variables that custodial officers differ on: the quality of relationships between staff and management, the level of trust they have in management and the quality of relationships between colleagues. Importantly, the variables described are on a continuum and are not discrete variables. Participants largely attributed the changes in operational attitudes to the training new staff receive, particularly emphasising the use of tactical options (pepper spray, tasers, stab proof vests, etc). Trust and respect are themes that underly all levels of the prison ecology. Many breakdowns in the prison ecology were preceded by an actual or perceived breakdown in trust and/or respect. Trust and respect are both prominent throughout the entire descriptive model, and when distinguishing between profiles, participants discussed where their trust and respect lay and how this culminated into their practice.

## Quality of Mauhere Relationships

Participants reported on a variety of variables for successful, high-quality relationships with the mauhere. Much of what underpinned success is attitudes about mauhere and the practices staff engage in to build rapport and that align with these values. Attitudes, beliefs and values that underpin the successful relationship between staff and mauhere include high levels of honesty, empathy and genuine concern. When Participant 7 was asked why they may have a stronger rapport with mauhere than some other staff, they answered, “because I'm honest, yeah. I'm pretty blunt, more of a hammer.” Participant 4 explained what they believed mauhere value:

They like honesty... If you treat them how you how you would treat your own or want them to treat you, then they're either gonna like you for it, or that they don't like you, but they appreciate the fact that you actually are honest.” (Participant 4)

Participants described having a balanced level of empathy for the mauhere. Many participants shared that they understood the complex histories many of the mauhere have, particularly concerning their trauma experiences, as depicted by Participant 3, “but I think everybody has a story. Right. And I think that we are the lowest form of mental health here, is our prisons, so I think they need some aroha.” So, whilst staff understood the mauhere are incarcerated for a reason, they did not wish to further punish or wish them harm, as described by Participant 1, “so here I try to look at them as a person really, not judge them for what they've done,” and Participant 6, “so you kind of have that empathy, without having too much if that makes sense.”

Staff who exhibited high levels of honesty, empathy and genuine concern for mauhere practiced distinctly. Paramount to their practice was putting intentional effort into building rapport with the mauhere. Rapport was often achieved through practices of relatability,

treating mauhere with respect, and consistency. Participant 5 explained why they are able to relate to mauhere, “We basically live in the same environment day in and day out, so we can relate to their situation.” Participants 1, 2 and 4 specified how they show they mauhere respect, “I, you know, treat ‘em with respect. I don't look at him as sort of lower or higher, an equal really, when I when I give him respect he'll give respect back,” (Participant 1) and “I talk to them like they're people.” (Participant 2)

You don't have to be their friend. But don't treat them like crap... You're meant to call them prisoner or whatever it is, but get to know who they are. Like, you don't have to be best of friends, but just treat them like a person.” (Participant 4)

A central practice to fostering high quality relationships with mauhere was being consistent. This meant that mauhere knew exactly what to expect from you, which in turn managed their expectations to avoid being let down. Participant 1 described why their mentor was able to facilitate strong relationships with mauhere, “fairness, his respect that he gave to the guys his black and whites rule.” The concepts of fairness and consistency were also depicted by Participant 4:

As long as you stick to it, you're fine. Be consistent... I'm consistent. Because I know no matter what they say at me say or throw it at me. I'm doing it the right way as I was trained to do it... So, policy and procedure is good. If we had all staff doing it, how it should be done.

Participants described that to practice consistently, they would under promise and overdeliver. This meant that when unsure, they would give the mauhere the answer they would not like before checking the rules or asking permission from a superior,

The answer is always no, because it's much easier to turn a no into a yes. You never turn a yes into a no, because that'll start a fight. But if you say no, but I'll go and check

on it, and if I'm wrong, I'll come back and change and then actually do it. Prisoners will respect that. Whereas if I say, yes, you can have something then come back ten minutes later and say, actually, I had a look and no, you can't, that all goes horribly wrong. (Participant 2)

Furthermore, participants widely agreed that while mauihere may not *like* rule-following staff and will try to push the boundaries on their entitlements, they would *respect* staff that consistently uphold the rules. The difference between liking and respecting was paramount in terms of safety:

Even some of them that was I've had issues with in the units and things. They respect you because you stand up. A lot of the new ones you don't trust because they don't know you and you don't know them. (Participant 7)

It works both ways, right. So you have a rapport or reputation or a bit of both where you were, if you operate to a certain standard, they respect that and they will take you at your word when you say you're going to do something. If I tell the person I'm going to do something then he knows that that's exactly what's going to happen. He's not going to talk his way out of it. Or I'm not going to try and dodge it. And I think that's a good thing. That's a healthy way to have a relationship. (Participant 5)

### **Quality of Relationships with Staff**

Participants recognised that trusting the team you had on the floor with you was integral to maintain everyone's safety. Participants discussed the importance of earning your way into staff culture by proving you were trustworthy, consistent, not going to resign quickly and shared a similar attitude about understanding the floor practices may be incongruent with what was taught in initial training. Participant 4 highlighted that they have to trust the colleagues they are working with to keep them safe "so you come to work, you

put your trust and your fellow colleagues to keep you safe, and you carry on,” this feeling was shared by other participants also:

So my immediate ones (colleagues) now I'm trusting them with my life every day I walk out on the floor right? And I do trust them... like don't get me wrong, I could end up with a black eye or broken anything but they would be beside me. (Participant 3)

Historically, participants reported a culture where new staff must earn their way in and earn the trust of their colleagues as described by Participant 1, “they thought it was kinda them against the new ones until you earned respect I guess. Do your time do your work. Once they saw you do that then they would kinda accept you into their little cliquy group.” Participants noted newly hired staff were less willing to earn their way into the staff culture, in part because they were told to not listen to the floor staff and report on them. This directive contributed to low levels of trust and respect from new recruits towards the older staff and subsequent division between groups of staff on the floor. Following the newer training staff have received, they trusted that tactical options will keep themselves safe and therefore did not rely on collegial support as much,

Because there's that many people that have come through in the last four years. It's not funny. I'm a dinosaur to a lot of them because I'm talking about stuff that they've never heard of or never been around to see... (it's impacting the culture and how we do our job) more so than anything. (Participant 4)

### **Quality of Relationships with Management**

Staff that have been on the floor longer had lower feelings of trust and respect towards the national office and upper management as they are harbouring a lot of resentment. Participants 1 and 2 shared how they felt unheard and victim to the bureaucracy, “the

bureaucracy was more than I expected... There's the problem isn't it, they are not letting people see what's actually going on... I do not trust national office," (Participant 2), "I think when things come from head office, or something like political or from head office, that changes things again," (Participant 1). A significant influence on this is the inconsistent messages from the national office, and that staff felt as though the national office was out of touch with the realities of the floor as most of them have not been custodial officers.

Participant 5 explained why they trust staff who have been a custodial officer before, "I place more faith in the people that I've worked with on the floor because we have a shared common experience, as opposed to somebody who hasn't." The impact of the national office being disconnected had compounded over time as it continued to happen,

We have a whole pile of people in offices in the building, far, far away, making decisions for people that are working on the front line with the men in our care. And they have no idea what they're doing. They're making policies that are affecting me and my workmates. But they have no idea what we're going through to get in that place or space. (Participant 2)

Due to these feelings, staff are often worked around the system to achieve positive outcomes for themselves, their colleagues and the mauhere, which Participant 5 described, "using what they know to beat the system, playing the game, manipulating, or influencing a situation or person to get an advantage. 'player gonna play'."

What further compounded this issue is that at initial training, new staff are told to tell superiors when floor staff teach them skills incongruent to their initial training. This means that new staff look out for this knowledge to report it to a superior as opposed to integrating it into their practice. A key point of contention that determines the quality of relationships staff have with management is when it comes to being given opportunities to progress in their

careers, either by promotion or ability to gain higher levels of certifications, which comes with a pay rise. Experienced staff have often been on the floor for many years and have a wealth of knowledge. Therefore, they were “continuously asked to act up,” (Participant 5) into supervisory roles when they were short staffed, and management indicated to them that when a new role opened, they would be promoted. However, when the new positions were opened, these staff were often overlooked for newer staff who objectively had less experience and skill but align more with the organisational shift the national office is implementing. This had included “staff that have been on the job 22 years and have applied multiple times for SCO or PCO,” (Participant 4) in favour of “people who have never, have no experience in the role are getting them. And you have to sit there and wonder why or why because they're the friend.” (Participant 6). Many participants shared their experiences of being overlooked and the implications of that:

When I first came back, I was told that there'd be opportunities for me to get back into my previous ranks and different roles, I would need to apply again, which I initially did for whatever reasons I wasn't successful” (Participant 5)

People are getting angry, staff aren't being recognized. Promotion rounds are getting fucked over big time in promotion rounds. You know, staff who were working their ass off and put up these positions are going for these positions when they're advertised, because, you know, of course, they're just like seconded or acting up into these positions, these positions become available. (Participant 6)

Furthermore, newer staff were frequently also allowed and encouraged to push through the qualifications programme quicker than prescribed to allow for pay rises and promotions and “everyone's in a hurry to get the promotion and earn the big money,” (Participant 5).

And when we came when we originally came in, we got told, as far as financials, take at least two years before you can do your level threes. And there'll be three years if we can do your level fours. And now we've got staff that come in, they got the level threes in six months and level fours in a year. So that's how the things have changed that the they get pushed to do all the levels now to make them earn more money.

(Participant 7)

This has then placed new recruits into positions of power and authority over experienced staff, further enforcing their mistrust and struggle to respect both upper management and the national office.

## **Profiles**

The three operational attitude variables in combination generate two profiles of staff. However, as each variable is on a continuum, these profiles are not distinct; individuals can possess traits from each and combine them differently. However, based on the data retrieved from participants, there were two common profiles: Profile 1 and Profile 2. The participants of this study have been employed for at least five years and lean towards the Profile 1 profile. Newer recruits tend to lean towards Profile 2.

### ***Profile 1 – Communicative Practice***

This profile was the existing profile of custodial officers that has been adapted over the years. These staff were not 'sold a dream' and felt their version of initial training was distinctly more disciplined than what it is now. Importantly, they were not told to report the advice of the staff on the floor when they underwent site induction. This profile is characterised by three reinforcing factors: high quality of relationships with mauhere, high quality of relationships with colleagues and low trust in management. As Profile 1 staff have put effort into their relationships with mauhere they were able to use communicative methods

of de-escalation, they also felt confident in using these methods as they have fostered trusting relationships with their colleagues who they trusted to have their back. When they experience bureaucracy from the national office, such as not being promoted when promised, the trust in management went down, and the relationships with colleagues who experience the same thing increased.

Staff with higher quality relationships with the mauhere staff viewed themselves closer to equal to the mauhere. These staff members did not discount tactical options but preferred using communicative methods first in de-escalation. An individual's preference for de-escalation tactics results from a variety of factors already discussed, such as staff who have high quality relationships with mauhere being able to use communicative tactics first, whereas staff who have low quality relationships with mauhere are not afforded the same opportunity. Many participants alluded to the strategy of "talk before touch," which speaks to the tendency to use communication skills as a default to resolve a conflict as opposed to utilising the tactical options available defined by Participant 3, "I believe that the tactical that we're doing now is all about talking, before we do hands on," and Participant 7, "well, we've got the number one weapon, you talk. that's your first line of defence no matter what you're doing." This de-escalation tactic is often effective for them as they have invested time into rapport building and can therefore use their relationships with the mauhere to reach them,

If you're able to de-escalate at the lowest level in the first instance, then follow the tactical options if it escalates. Good communication is the most important thing. If there's a staff member who has a good with that tāne (male gender) (Moorfield, 2024) then try to get them to talk with the prisoner. To me, that's one of those jail craft moments where sometimes it's better to step back, get somebody who knows him to de-escalate him if you can't, if that doesn't work, then follow other options until it's resolved. (Participant 5)

So if it's violence, of course you're going straight in, depending on the situation. Or if it's someone having a meltdown over something. Yeah, just talking, listening, try to resolve. If you can't resolve you know, let them know that you'll find out and come back. (Participant 6)

Whereas participants viewed that newer staff members do not have the opportunity to use talk before touch due to their high reliance on tactical options. They had not fostered connections with the mauhere and therefore cannot use communicative de-escalation tactics as effectively. Participant 4 recounted how all staff used to be able to communicate effectively, “whereas once upon a time, a good officer they'd started getting angry with you. So you, you tell him we'll come over here sit down and talk to me. What is the issue?”

### ***Profile 2 – Tactical Options Practice***

New recruits often lean towards this profile. These staff members were ‘sold the dream’ and undertook training that did not sufficiently prepare them for the realities of the floor. Furthermore, they were told not to listen to the staff on the floor, initiating low trust in colleagues. Additionally, the culture was difficult to integrate themselves into, so they practiced to align with management, which deepened the divide between themselves and the existing floor staff. As they did not take on board the advice of fostering relationships with mauhere and how to navigate these, they relied heavily on tactical options which further placed a barrier between them and the mauhere. The trust in tactical options also increased their trust in management, as this is what they were trained to do, and it was initially effective. Participants described some staff relying so heavily on their tactical options that they did not develop the communication skills needed to de-escalate.

Before we had that, you had to know how to talk to them. So that you didn't have to get into a fight with them. Yeah. It's too easy now just to get angry with them, push

you turn your camera on and pull the pepper spray because they haven't listened to you while they're getting angry with you. (Participant 4)

Yes, I think it gives you a false sense of self (bullet proof syndrome) which impacts on thoughts and actions, our tāne look at us differently as well, clearly says YOU and US, don't mess with me. Do we really need these, should we depend on these tools? We didn't before? (Participant 5)

### **Operational Inconsistency**

The two profiles operated very differently based on their attitudes, although safety was paramount for all staff members within the prison ecology. The influx of staff who fit the characteristics for Profile 2 were not prioritising their relationships with their colleagues due to their trust in management and reliance on the tactical options that were available to them. Not prioritising staff relationships contributed to the observed shift away from a unified culture. Furthermore, there were two explicit styles of practice on the floor between groups, but also individual staff were operating differently depending on who they are working with on any given shift. The two inconsistencies (group and individual) were perceived by the mauhere which weakened the relationships between the staff body and mauhere.

There were now two differing views of how best to achieve and maintain safety, which led the organisation to a shift from a unified culture towards an individualised culture as these two views became more entrenched. Participants reported on a culture where “if you're not one of us, you're one of them the simple as that,” (Participant 2) that has now deteriorated in favour of individualised practice of prioritising keeping yourself safe at all costs, even at the expense of colleagues. While there have been differences between officers and styles of practice historically, the ideology has been consistent, with slightly different practices to achieve it, the culture among staff was still unified,

It was them against the prisoners... Over the years, a lot of old schools say that the staff were tight. The staff were one, unified... To an extent, with the older staff, if the older staff in a unit they try and lead in bring the team together. It's a, the staff from in the past, it used to be so tight. They used to look after everyone. They used to have everyone's back... They didn't worry about climbing. They worried about being safe, being together and being one. Now it's more selfish, I guess. Staff today, what we're seeing a lot of is backstabbing, a lot of narking, kind of setting up other staff so they can climb. Which seems like the culture now all the way to the top. (Participant 1)

The amount of, like I've been away to summits and stuff at national office for PDs and residential managers and all the national office people. And they're flat out running around stabbing each other in the back, while standing in front of people, telling them how wonderful they are. (Participant 2)

The individualised culture amongst staff culminated in a variety of ways. Staff were actively making teams or “cliques, there were groups of people,” (Participant 6) out of whom they trust and respect, which was often those who share their same attitudes and practice accordingly,

So the very few that want to climb the ladder, you let them climb and you make a team out of everybody else. Okay, know which ones, it doesn't take long, and everybody knows who's the ones that will sink everybody else to get to the top. And that you generally just let them go. And you'll do your own thing, and you stick together. (Participant 4)

This also meant that when they are working with people that they do not trust, they practice differently to avoid incidents on their shift,

When I'm driving to work. I don't feel unsafe. When I get here, depending on who I'm working with, that's the way that I change how I work. I shouldn't have, but I do... I go, so I've got him, him and him today. So today, I'm not going to argue with anybody on the floor, I'm gonna give them everything they want. Otherwise, I'm gonna get my head smacked in because these three men are going to be running backwards. And we all say that, and we all know it. And so do the managers say they also know.

(Participant 3)

Or I might look around the wing and see what staff are on go I can open that door and I'll be safe. Or look around the wing and see the staff that are on and go, we'll just leave that door shut until some more people turn up. (Participant 2)

As identified, a key component to successful relationships with the mauhere was practicing consistently. The conflicting ideologies, spectrum of values and practices contributed to the inconsistent service delivery received by the mauhere. Participant 1 reported identifying the differences in relationships between staff and mauhere, "You see the difference in the way that the guys treat them when they're one that respects you versus scum of the earth." This feeling by the mauhere then manifested in their interactions with staff on the floor:

Violence and aggression, you dumb it right down to the point where it's teaching staff to do the basic job consistently like we used to. And that's violence and aggression in a nutshell. All they want is consistency. And if you tell them you're going to do something, do it. And everybody's happy. Just little things like that. (Participant 4)

Again, mauhere may not like but will respect actions taken by an individual when it aligns with clearly set out rules and guidelines. The group and individual inconsistencies that mauhere have perceived have decreased the level of respect they have for the front-line staff.

Based on the knowledge participants shared, a decrease in respect from mauhere can be linked to an increase in manipulation of staff or 'getting got'. Participant 3 discussed this in detail when asked about the types of staff members mauhere respect the most,

A rule follower. Yeah, I think that if you get somebody that can break rules then they've got no respect for them at all. It's a bit like getting got, I suppose. They might look like they like that guy. But they're the first ones to turn on him when something goes wrong. I mean, so if you stay by the rules for everybody, I follow the rules, so I expect them to follow the rules. If I stay by the rules, they stay by the rules, then I think they know where they are. (Participant 3)

Participant 3 further explained this when asked about the staff members mauhere respect the least,

Those people and they talk about it a lot, about those staff seeing, if you can get this off this staff or that of that staff. And so like I said, I've watched them turn, in a heartbeat on them. Because they can because once they stopped giving out stuff that they're not allowed to have if they haven't got any more of it or breaking those rules for them then they come back at them and they come back at them at 100 miles an hour. (Participant 3)

### **Decreased Staff Safety**

The deterioration of staff-mauhere relationships meant that Profile 1 staff who used to be able to use their relationships to de-escalate no longer could and Profile 2 staff learnt that tactical options are insufficient without also being able to use communication skills. De-escalation for both groups became more difficult, which meant that both their actual and perceived safety decreased. Participants acknowledged that when staff no longer feel safe, they resign, further contributing to the concern of high turnover. Based on the knowledge that

relationships between staff and mauhere are deteriorating, it is reasonable for staff to assume their safety is decreasing. Not only from mauhere behaviour and conduct within the unit but more importantly, their knowing that the culture has shifted and not the entire team has their back, and they do not feel protected, as “that (feeling of safety) depends on the staff around you,” (Participant 7). Furthermore, participants also felt the national office prioritised mauhere over staff safety and were therefore unprotected by management also,

And in all honesty, I wouldn't trust the management team with absolutely anything, because they'll always cover their own asses before they look after new staff... they're always looking for an issue that you of course, are the reason it's happened because you might be at fault. They're always looking for something to try and blame the staff member. (Participant 7)

If your bottom staff are been treated like that. Good luck. Are you thinking that they don't think it's okay to treat prisoners like that? Because they're the next lowest in ranking I don't think they are, but in speaking, that's how some of them look at it. Well, we're getting it from them. We'll give it to these. (Participant 3)

Participants reported that the Profile 2 staff were underprepared for the realities of the floor and often resigned quickly because of it. Furthermore, the skills they were taught are insufficient in isolation, and they are not able to cope with the job, which meant Ara Poutama Aotearoa “put somebody through college for three months, and then have them walk out two months later,” (Participant 3). Participant 2 shared their experience of staff turnover generally, “half of them are out the door the next day,” and Participant 1 shared their personal experience, “two of my classmates, started their job, they don't have any floor experience. They're just straight in there and deep, high security, and they left the next day.” Profile 1 staff were struggling with this organisational, cultural shift, particularly as their sense of

safety decreased. Participant 4 indicated that these staff have already resigned, “the oldest staff for various reasons they're starting to leave.” Participant 5 stated, “when the day comes that I can't or don't feel safe, then I'll hand in my keys my whānau, and their needs are my why.”

### **Staff Resign**

Regardless of the pathway and individual takes to get to resignation, the reality is “that we've got people coming in and going out, but they're all saying it's because of the pay that they can make more driving a bus than getting abused every day,” (Participant 3). As staff leave, these positions need to be filled, which then returns to the top of Figure 1.

### **Pathways**

Figure 1 is experienced differently, depending on the profile an individual is associated with and to what degree. It is important to note that the identifying features of the profiles are on continuums, therefore, each experience can vary. This model is based on the descriptions of staff who associate with the Profile 1 pathway and describe their observations of the Profile 2 pathway.

### ***Profile 2 Pathway***

For the extreme end of those in Profile 2 (High trust in management, low quality of relationships with mauhere, low quality relationships with colleagues), this model is a linear process. They saw the latest advertising campaign of Ara Poutama Aotearoa that tells them they will “Change lives and shape futures.” Participants view this campaign to be a misrepresentation of the job as making change is infrequent. Once they signed their contract, they were sent to initial training where they received a lot of classroom-style, theoretical learning and were taught in detail about the tactical options that are available to them. Therefore, as they believed they could rely on tactical options, they did not develop effective

communication skills. There was no probationary period, and they were given several chances to pass the testing for initial training. In this time, they were warned that when they get to a unit, the staff on the floor will teach and operate differently to what has been taught in initial training. They were asked to tell superiors if they saw that happening.

On the floor, they were met with exactly what they were warned about, floor staff telling them that initial training is effectively useless, and the floor will teach them things that can only be learnt through experience. They found it difficult to make relationships with the staff that have been in the department for longer than two years and associated with newer staff who have all been through the same training and experiences that they had. The tactical options made them feel safe, so they did not put effort into creating strong collegial relationships with the 'dinosaurs' they were warned about or with the mauhere. The tactical options serve as a level of separation between them and the mauhere. Management provided opportunities to get qualifications quicker, which came with a pay rise, so they took these chances.

The combination of these three factors contributed to developing Profile 2, where there was high trust in management, low quality relationships with staff and low-quality relationships with mauhere, which led to a high reliance on tactical options. They and the staff they aligned themselves with were getting promotions into supervisory roles, so they continued to practice the way they always have. They noticed there were differences on the floor between how staff operated and that the mauhere were frustrated with the lack of consistency they received across staff. These staff got involved in violent incidences on the floor and, despite using the tactical options, themselves or other staff members were injured. Progressively, their sense of safety decreased, and they decided they did not want to put themselves in this position every time they came to work, and they resigned.

### *Profile 1 Pathway*

For Profile 1, they may have seen this process multiple times and have seen different people in different stages. They joined Ara Poutama Aotearoa prior to the COVID-19 pandemic because they knew other staff and thought this might be a good job for them, they were bored with previous work, or they are Māori and wanted to help other Māori. They signed their contract, and they went through initial training that was strict on discipline, and they felt a sense of pride in the uniform.

They arrived at the prison site and were told that initial training was effectively useless and the floor would teach them things they could only learn through experience. They struggled to make connections with the other floor staff, but they kept trying. Eventually, after some time has passed, they were welcomed into the staff culture. They felt the reality of the floor and saw how quickly some people resign after starting, they understood why staff may not put effort into a relationship with a new staff member immediately. Over time, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, tactical options were introduced. They had staff coming onto the floor who relied heavily on the tactical options and did not try to join the standing collegial culture. Profile 1 staff would act up in supervisory positions because of their experience but were never given a promotion or reasons why, new staff were, so their trust in management decreased. They put effort into the mauhere to learn about them and gain their trust. They learnt mauhere stories and decided they did not want to punish them further; they believed in rehabilitation focussed discipline. The combination of these three factors contribute to developing Profile 1 where there was low trust in management, high quality relationships with staff, high quality relationships with mauhere and therefore the ability and preference to use communicative methods of de-escalation.

These staff have seen how the relationships with mauhere can be used to de-escalate a situation using communication. In situations that are not already violent, they would try

talking with the mauhere first, which was often effective because of the effort they have put into their relationships with mauhere. If the situation continued to escalate, they would use tactical options when required and felt that their colleagues had their back. They recognised there are two operational attitudes on the floor. They identified those staff who held differing operational attitudes. These staff no longer trusted everyone on the frontline with them. When they worked with staff who had different attitudes to them, they practiced differently to try to preserve safety. The mauhere got frustrated with the lack of consistency they received across the staff body. They saw more violent incidences, particularly with staff who reached for tactical options first; they saw a lot of people get hurt. Progressively, their sense of safety decreased, and they decided they did not want to put themselves in a high-risk position every time they came to work, and they resigned.

## Chapter Four: Discussion

I aimed to understand how informal knowledge is developed within Ara Poutama Aotearoa for custodial officers and how the knowledge contributes to the informal practices custodial officers engage in. As this knowledge is often invisible, difficult to articulate and tacit, being able to describe the knowledge and practices tangibly will allow for the identification of the consequences of both. I aimed to afford custodial officers the opportunity to explain the intricate details of their work as it is highly skilled and their behaviour has long-lasting impacts on their colleagues, the mauhere and the wider community. Through this research, I sought to understand how custodial officers view the impact of their own informal knowledge and behaviours as well as discover the patterns embedded in the custodial workforce within Ara Poutama Aotearoa.

I used constructivist grounded theory to discuss seven custodial officers' experiences of their job and co-construct a model with them. The theory and Figure 1 give an overview of how custodial officers view and understand the informal knowledge to develop and, more importantly, how this knowledge impacts their own and colleagues' practices day-to-day. Fundamentally, this model offers theoretical explanations of how the variables within the model develop and are understood to interact with each other. This then allows us to hypothesise how different outcomes are produced for different staff depending on their personal experiences and situations.

### **Research Question 1. What Are the Informal Knowledge and Practices Among Custodial Correctional Staff?**

How informal knowledge and practices custodial officers hold and use are generated and enforced is represented by Figure 1. This model explains how participants view the dynamics of all floor staff, as well as their understanding of how it came to be and continues to be reinforced. Furthermore, Figure 1 explains how informal knowledge and practices

reinforce each other. Participants view that the recruitment, initial training and their on-site experiences will shape a custodial officer's perception of the Ara Poutama Aotearoa ecology and, therefore, their informal knowledge and subsequent informal practices. Custodial officers hold the informal knowledge that there are two 'profiles' of staff operating on the floor that they have opposing views on trusting management, the quality of their relationships with fellow colleagues and how important relationships with the mauhere are. The attitudes of these profiles then underpin the behaviour exhibited by custodial officers day-to-day, chiefly, what de-escalation tactics they prefer and can use. However, these attitudes are continuous, not categorical, meaning staff can be positioned on different parts of each continuum based on their personal experiences and learning.

### ***Informal Knowledge***

Profile 1 staff place a strong emphasis on the importance of facilitating high-quality relationships with the mauhere. Often, Profile 1 staff members have been in the role for a long time and underwent initial training before tactical options were integrated into Ara Poutama Aotearoa. Therefore, these staff could not rely on tactical options for de-escalation and had to use soft-power skills, such as their strong operational relationships with the mauhere, to maintain safety (Crewe, 2011). Profile 1 staff needed to foster high-quality relationships characterised by consistent practice and respect with the mauhere to be able to de-escalate using communication skills. Taking the time to build relationships with mauhere reinforces itself; as staff put effort into talking to mauhere and learning more about them, it is easier to be relatable as well as develop empathy and genuine concern which guides their practice. Also, due to the amount of time these staff have spent working together, in a united 'us vs them' culture, they have developed high levels of trust and respect with each other. Furthermore, staff also feel they know what behaviour to expect from colleagues in high-risk situations and trust that they have each other's back, therefore, they are safe to use lower

levels of de-escalation first, as their team will support them if it were to continue to escalate. This profile has also experienced a lot of changes implemented by the national office and has borne witness to what they perceive as high levels of bureaucracy, such as being overlooked for promotions. These experiences contribute to a lack of trust from this profile towards the national office, which further enforced the high level of trust in frontline colleagues having similar experiences.

Participants explained that Profile 2 has developed due to a combination of high turnover within Ara Poutama Aotearoa and the deteriorating quality of initial training new recruits receive. The high turnover and successive influx of new recruits have meant the proportion of new staff compared to old staff on the floor is increasing. The new staff are trained with tactical options and receive limited practical training where they can see the realities of the floor. Also, in initial training, they are told not to listen to the older staff on the floor, which places a barrier to developing high trusting relationships with each other. This notion means that not only are new recruits generating high quality relationships with their colleagues, but they are also trusting management and the national office by discounting the informal knowledge and practices in favour of tactical options. Furthermore, new recruits believe the tactical options they were trained with will keep them safe and do not work to generate quality relationships with the mauhere. Therefore, during an escalation, they are unable to use communication skills as effectively as Profile 1 staff and must favour tactical options, further weakening their relationships with mauhere and their colleagues.

The knowledge of the two profiles has developed over time and is influenced by institutional, organisational and workplace behaviours. Institutionally, Ara Poutama Aotearoa updates its policy to align with international evidence and to navigate the adaptive political climate, which is consistent with DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) theory of institutional isomorphism. Ara Poutama Aotearoa's behaviour of integrating tactical options is seen as

more legitimate and adapting to the expectations from organisations (New Zealand government) they are dependent on. Also, when considering the core components that drive institutional behaviour, normative elements such as mandatory training are highly influential (Scott, 2001). The initial training that staff receive has changed over time to align with present institutional (macro) demands. However, the expectation of the sites (meso) and staff (micro) is that new recruits will listen and integrate their knowledge into their practice, which creates tension for new staff to navigate and contributes to the two conflicting styles of practice on the floor. Furthermore, as part of this formal process, staff are paired with an experienced staff member on the floor who will often fit Profile 1 and, therefore, share information incongruent with the initial training (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024b). Consequently, new staff receive conflicting information.

The existence of power dynamics and how they are perceived are key factors towards an individual's informal knowledge that shapes their attitudes and behaviour. Ara Poutama Aotearoa has a formalised hierarchy that gives groups of people authority over others. In this model, mauhere answer to custodial officers, who answer to their local management who answer to the national office, Profile 2 strongly adheres to this structure. Profile 1 staff lends themselves to a therapeutic community ideology in which each member within the ecology has their own responsibilities to work towards a common goal of rehabilitation and reducing recidivism (Bennett & Shuker, 2010). These differences in understanding of power dynamics offer some understanding of how the two profiles operate at an organisational behaviour level as two groups. As Profile 1 views themselves as more equal with everyone, they will work to foster strong relationships with the mauhere as they do not view themselves as 'above' them, whereas they respect management less than Profile 2 does as they do not have such rigid faith in the hierarchy.

As new recruits have been instructed not to listen to floor staff, the transfer of informal knowledge has been disrupted. To address the gap in practical learning left by initial training, it has always been a formal process for new staff to pair with an experienced staff member to undergo a site induction. It is during this time that site-specific knowledge can be explicitly shared, and a relationship between new recruits and existing staff can begin to form. As there is a base level of respect here, new recruits would look to existing employees to identify what behaviours are socially acceptable (Bandura, 1977) whereas now they look to fellow newly hired staff. As these relationships are following a new trajectory, not only is the environment influencing the learner (new staff) (Yardley et al., 2012) but they also influence the environment (Kolb, 1984).

### *Informal Practices*

Both the profile a custodial officer aligns with, either consciously or not (Marsick & Watkins, 1997), and the awareness of both profiles contribute to the informal practices a staff member will engage in. Profile 1 has experienced high levels of turnover and for this reason, may put less effort into training the new staff on the floor because they know that (1) they have been told not to listen and (2) a lot of new staff do not last very long so they do not want to 'waste' their energy. Profile 1 staff will also consider which staff members are on shift with them and will approach situations differently accordingly. For example, if they are with a higher proportion of Profile 2 staff, they may choose not to exert authority in a situation that could escalate because they know the staff members will not support them and instead run away. Whereas in that same situation but with predominantly Profile 1 staff, they will engage because they trust that staff will have their back, behave consistently and keep the team safe. Due to Profile 1's beliefs, they engage with mauhere to build rapport, this rapport means when there are escalations, they can 'talk before touch' and effectively utilise communicative de-escalation tactics first. They also used to feel safe to do so because they knew that if the

situation were to escalate, they would have support from their team. However, now they may not feel confident to engage how they would like to if they are surrounded by Profile 2 staff that they do not trust.

The informal practices an individual engages in are influenced at all levels within an institution. However, workplace behaviour is dependent on the micro level of a person. It is up to each staff member to integrate the formal knowledge they receive with experiential on-the-job learning. Also, how a person views themselves within the hierarchy and weights the importance of each relationship is the crux of the attitudes they will hold and behaviour they engage in.

### **Research Question 2. How Does Informal Knowledge Create Variance Between Policy and the Informal Practices that Occur?**

When new recruits come onsite, the process is that they are paired with an experienced staff member, learning buddy or practice lead who completes a site induction with them for four weeks (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024b). This is a formal process that, in theory, should encourage the transfer of informal or site-specific knowledge to the new staff. However, this has been hindered by two factors.

1. New recruits, whilst in initial training, are told not to listen to the ‘dinosaurs’ when they share information that contradicts what they were taught in initial training. These staff are also explicitly told to report to their superiors when they are taught something contradictory on the floor.
2. The experienced staff on the floor, typically Profile 2, are aware of these orders. This awareness, alongside the knowledge that there is high turnover, contributes to a lack of effort put into the induction process, limiting the transfer of informal knowledge.

In partnership, this means new recruits are relying more heavily on the formal knowledge they gain in initial training and not fostering quality relationships with their fellow frontline staff. The understanding of this process directly impacts the formal process of site induction.

Ara Poutama Aotearoa has clear safety response protocols outlined in the Prison Operations Manual (Ara Poutama Aotearoa, 2024e). The protocols are in place to ensure consistency of practice so that the mauhere knows what to expect and the staff knows what is expected of them. Profile 1's informal knowledge is that they can no longer trust everyone explicitly on the floor, and they are either unsure how some staff will react or know that they will not follow protocol to protect themselves. This is developed into Profile 1 staff, who pride themselves on consistency and recognise the importance of it will respond differently depending on who is on shift with them. An example of this is choosing not to open the cell door of a dysregulated mauhere as they knew their colleague would not support them to regain control if the situation were to escalate.

Participants discussed how the formal processes for gaining qualifications are being bypassed as well. The national office and management are allowing newer staff to complete qualification levels quicker than prescribed so they are eligible for pay raises and promotions. Participants hypothesised that this is because newer staff more readily agree to the newer ideology and processes, so therefore, it will be easier to shape into the management the national office wants. Whether or not this is objectively true, the staff on the floor believe it, which in turn contributes to their lack of trust in the national office and management. This means that when new policies or instructions come through that staff do not believe in or think will be effective, they will not comply or do the bare minimum to fulfil the requirements.

### **Research Question 3. What Are the Intended Functions of the Use of the Identified Informal Practices?**

The ultimate goal for all staff is safety, however, there are differing views on how this is achieved and prioritised. The primary goal for Profile 1 is to keep *the team* safe, which in turn keeps themselves safe too, whereas Profile 2 aims to keep *themselves* safe. Participants highlighted a key indicator of who they aim to keep safe in action when discussing the use of discretion for a custodial officer. Profile 1, who prioritises high-quality relationships, understands that the mauhere prefers and responds positively to consistent practice. This means that although they may not *like* a rule being enforced, they will *respect* the enforced rule. For this reason, when Profile 1 custodial officers are unsure of the rules surrounding a request, their answer will be no or that they do not know, but they are honest and say they will find out. This practice works towards developing a respectful and trusting relationship between themselves and the mauhere where empathy and consistency are prioritised. Furthermore, their discretion comes with the intention of not further punishing the mauhere. For example, if a mauhere were to insult them but sincerely apologise for their behaviour before the end of the shift, staff may not report on it as those reports have long-term impacts on parole and privileges mauhere receive. These staff understand the volatility of the environment and want to afford mauhere the opportunity to rectify minor mistakes informally, which treats mauhere with the same respect they give to other people. Participants reported that Profile 2 is more easily manipulated and can 'get got'. Profile 2 will use their discretion to grant requests to try to earn the favour of the mauhere. However, when they and the mauhere discover they cannot fulfil that request anymore, this damages their relationship. Participants shared that staff who find themselves in this situation are the 'first to get turned on. Also, if mauhere has had a request granted that they should not have by a Profile 2 staff when someone else rejects this request, it entrenches mistrust in not only that relationship but

as well as the mauhere's general view of the staff body. Discretion behaviours are engaged in with the intent of safety, however, Profile 1's approach leads to longer-term safety for both them and the team, whereas Profile 2's leads to immediate safety but longer-term consequences.

#### **Research Question 4. How Do Informal Practices Impact Violence in a Custodial Setting?**

Violence in prisons comes from complex interactions between the mauhere and their environment (Johnstone & Cooke, 2010; Steiner & Wooldredge, 2020). Custodial officers and their behaviour have major impacts on the prison environment. The key impact that informal knowledge and practices are having on violence is that there are two profiles shaping behaviour which leads to inconsistency of practice the mauhere are on the receiving end of. Inconsistency in practice has two major outcomes that contribute to violent behaviour from mauhere. The first contributor to violence is the anxiety and uncertainty mauhere feels. Being in prison is a high-stress, punitive environment with little liberty or autonomy (Sigler, 2010). An individual's liberty or autonomy can be directly impacted by the decisions made by the custodial staff in the unit, which is why the mauhere-staff relationships are so integral to the prison ecology (Liebling et al., 2011). When mauhere receive inconsistent privileges, disciplinary action and attitudes across staff, they perceive their environment that they already had little control over becoming more unsafe. The second major outcome of inconsistent practice resulting from this knowledge is frustration and subsequent anger. The two styles of practice operating on the floor means that mauhere will or will not be granted requests for reasons out of their control. This places staff at risk of violence when they are the ones to say no to something that has previously been granted when it should not have been.

Violence in prisons is contributing to more violence in prisons, according to this model. Profile 1 staff understand the risk of violence as part of their job. However, as the new

staff, with lower standards of training come through (Cooke, 1991), behaviour individualises, violence increases, and their sense of safety reduces. Many participants stated that when they no longer feel safe, that is when they will resign, which many experienced staff already have. These resignations are contributing to the high turnover, the need for new recruits and the process reinforcing itself. Furthermore, as experienced staff resign, the workforce loses their experience and is replaced by new staff, which means the proportion of experienced Profile 1 staff on the floor is decreasing in favour of Profile 2 staff. For Profile 2, they were sold a dream and unaware of the realities of the violence on the floor. For this reason, many of them do not last very long as their sense of safety decreases rapidly, also contributing to the high turnover.

### **Implications**

The outcome of this research has several practical and theoretical implications. Practically, this research has allowed custodial officers employed by Ara Poutama Aotearoa to give detailed accounts of their experiences and what they see impacting the ecology from their specific perspective. From this knowledge being identified, it is then able to be addressed to realise positive changes within the organisation for how to better train staff for the needs of the job and retain them. Theoretically, the results supported that individual employee behaviour is impacted by institutional, organisational and workplace psychological theories.

The key practical implication of this work is highlighting the experience of custodial officers employed by Ara Poutama Aotearoa and their understanding of their environment. Many scholars have discussed how front-line staff are the heart and soul of any correctional facility (Liebling et al., 2011), and their knowledge and experiences are so integral to the wider ecology. They possess the tacit knowledge of the job that has accumulated, adapted and evolved over many decades, so uncovering and exploring their knowledge and behaviour will

be the key to understanding Ara Poutama Aotearoa on a deeper level. Their knowledge has developed through institutional changes such as governmental differences and changes in law, as well as organisational policy updates. This research was exploratory, and the outcome was generating a theory within the scope of this thesis. However, the data collected was extraordinarily rich and deserves further exploration with more time and resources to understand the staff's perspectives further.

Furthermore, bringing this knowledge to light and generating awareness of it allows it to be addressed. I hope that the outcome of this research contributes to policymakers' understanding of the experiences of their frontline staff and that Ara Poutama Aotearoa will consider the feedback when constructing their formal knowledge to disseminate to new recruits. Also, as the model explains why staff are resigning, I hope that Ara Poutama Aotearoa will be able to intervene earlier with staff who exhibit turnover intent. As the model indicates, new staff could be better prepared when coming to the floor, and the deteriorating relationships between floor staff are two major contributors to turnover within the organisation. Both issues can be tackled at the institutional level if it is understood.

Theoretically, this research describes how informal knowledge is generated within Ara Poutama Aotearoa. As informal knowledge is typically invisible and difficult to articulate, understanding the factors that contribute to the formation of knowledge and subsequent practices is crucial. This research and model theorise that all levels contribute to the informal knowledge and practices held and used by a custodial officer. There is evidence for the macro, institutional level having strong implications via the formal training they implement and the informal behaviours they endorse by promoting certain types of people (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2001). Group dynamics (meso) are central to this model and understanding of the ecology as it is the tension between profiles that contributes to violence and leads to staff not feeling safe in their work environment and subsequently

resigning (Robbins et al., 2013). Finally, on the micro, individual level, each person's experiences will shape them differently to sit in different spaces on the continuum for the variables. It is the combination of these variables and their dimensions that shape the staff members' practices.

### **Limitations**

Fortunately, this research was supported by CANZ, which is the largest union for custodial officers in New Zealand, which allowed us to interview a representative sample. Recruiting through CANZ allowed this research to be independent of Ara Poutama Aotearoa, which meant we were able to mitigate the chances of the participants' privacy being compromised in their workplace. Also, as participants' managers were not involved in their participation, there was less opportunity for participants' answers to be influenced by the perception the organisation or their peers might have on their responses, allowing for organic and honest conversation between the participants and me. However, this also meant that all participants of this research had to be union members as this is the population I was able to reach. Practically, the implication was that I had to use convenience sampling as I could only access the target population through the union. However, I was also able to use purposive sampling where the union reached out to specific staff members whom they knew, based on the consultation, would be likely to opt in and offer detailed, rich accounts based on the positions they have been in and the experience they have had.

Purposive sampling did mean I was given a specific outlook on the ecology as all participants had been employed by Ara Poutama Aotearoa for at least five years. This meant the development of Profile 2 was based on their *observations* of these staff, whereas Profile 1 was based on their *experience* of being these staff. Also, the output of this research is the viewpoint of custodial staff where local management, the national office and the mauhere

may have different understandings and theories of how the ecology operates. However, that level of detail was out of the scope of this thesis.

### **Future Research**

As I have developed a theory through this research, important next steps would be to test the validity and reliability of the theory and search for nuance. Testing the theory can be achieved in a variety of ways, which may include other groups' perspectives, site-specific details and using different psychological approaches to validate the theory. The first would be to investigate how newly recruited staff (less than five years of service) see themselves within the ecology and if they agree with the processes identified in this research. Similarly, future research could involve examining local prison management and the national office perspectives of the ecology and how they view their contributions to shaping the development of informal knowledge and practices. As this research was exploratory and conducted with a relatively small sample size, future work should involve validation with larger sample sizes and quantitative methods.

Now, some relationships between variables in Figure 1 have been identified and theorised as to how they influence each other; future work could investigate these relationships in more depth. In this work, I specifically wanted to understand the contributions of informal knowledge and behaviour on violence in prison settings. The identified profiles and the distinguishing variables could be examined in a more targeted study aiming to understand the relationships between mauhere, staff and prison management. The understanding of these relationships and what contributes to them will have wide-ranging impacts on the prison ecology over and above the implications for violent behaviour.

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## Appendix A

### Email to Corrections Association New Zealand

Kia ora [CANZ President]

Thank-you again for meeting with me on Thursday. We really appreciate the support from CANZ, as it is integral to this project. This email contains both a brief synopsis of the project as well as an information sheet. The information sheet should hopefully answer any questions the executive team may have, but if not feel free to send any questions my way.

Informal knowledge is the knowledge generated on the job or passed on from experienced staff. This is knowledge that is not explicitly taught in training staff receive and may be relevant to an organisation as a whole or a specific unit. Informal practices may result from informal knowledge and are practices that aren't outlined in training or in this case the Prison Operations Manual. Informal practice is often guided by a unit's specific culture and ways of doing things that work for them.

We anticipate some of the identified informal practices will function to improve staff actual or perceived safety. This may potentially be by forming more positive relationships with inmates or reducing tension in daily activities. These functions may also contribute to reducing violence and violent incidents within the unit, therefore contributing to the wider Nga Tūmanakotanga project.

The method used is grounded theory, allowing for bottom-up research to take place. The interviews will try to understand what informal knowledge is held by staff in that workplace, where it comes from and how it contributes to the informal practice in the unit. Using grounded theory allows the participants to have input on the results and ensure they have been understood correctly. This method specifically allows for partnership to occur between researchers and participants as they are able to respond to the researchers understanding of what has been said.

There has been significant research on prison culture, however it is generally aimed at the people in Ara Poutama's care, not staff. New Zealand Prisons are simultaneously an institution and people's homes. The practices of staff are equally as important to understand as the practices of the people in their care, especially in an environment that is so high risk.

I will update you once I have ethics approval to discuss next steps. Please do not hesitate to contact me before that with any questions, concerns or comments.

Ngaa mihi,

Kristyn Rayner

## Appendix B

### Information Sheet

#### Information Sheet for Participants



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

**Ethics Committee Approval ID Number: HREC(Health)2023#15**

### **Exploring Informal Knowledge and Practices of Correctional Staff in Custodial Spaces**

**Name and contact details of the Principal Investigator:** Kristyn Rayner,  
[kristynrayner@gmail.com](mailto:kristynrayner@gmail.com), University of Waikato

**Supervised by:** Dr Armon Tamatea, [Armon.tamatea@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:Armon.tamatea@waikato.ac.nz), University of Waikato

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

#### **1. What is the project's purpose?**

We want to identify informal knowledge and practices used by custodial staff within Ara Poutama. There has been significant research on prison culture, however it is generally aimed at the people in Ara Poutama's care, not staff. New Zealand Prisons are simultaneously an institution and people's homes. The practices of staff are equally as important to understand as the practices of the people in their care, especially in an environment that is so high risk.

#### **2. What do we mean by 'informal knowledge and practices'?**

Informal knowledge is the knowledge that is developed outside of what is officially taught to you and your colleagues. This knowledge may be passed around colleagues or created whilst doing the job. The informal practices is what occurs as a result of this knowledge.

### **3. Is this study ethical?**

This research project is awaiting approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Human Research Ethics Committee at [humanethics@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@waikato.ac.nz) or The University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Gate 1, Knighton Road, Hamilton New Zealand.

### **4. Do you have to take part?**

Taking part in the study is entirely voluntary and refusal to agree to participate will involve no negative consequences. You may discontinue participation at any time without giving a reason and without penalty or prejudice. You can similarly refuse to answer any questions you are asked in the interview. You can request your data be deleted within fourteen days of receiving the transcript if you change your mind after taking part. If you decide to withdraw during the interview, you will be asked what you wish to happen to the data you have provided up to that point. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form). Any questions can be directed to Kristyn, the project lead.

### **5. What will happen to you if you take part?**

We will interview you about your experiences as a custodial member of Ara Poutama's staff. The interview will be conducted online if you are outside of the Waikato region. If you are within the Waikato region you will have the choice to have the interview online or in person at the University of Waikato. The interview will last approximately 1 hour. The data collected as part of this research project will be destroyed by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2031.

### **6. Will the interview be recorded and how will the recorded media be used?**

We will request your explicit permission to record the interview, but you may ask us to interrupt the recording or stop at any time, without giving any reason. The audio files will be transcribed by our lead investigator, Kristyn and will be used only for the purpose of research and no other use will be made of them without your written permission. No one outside the research team will be allowed access to the original audio files, keeping your data strictly confidential. You will receive a copy of the transcript and have 14 days to alter or withdraw part of the transcript or withdraw your participation entirely which results in your data being destroyed.

### **7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no immediate risks to taking part in this research. We are aware that the topics we intend to discuss in the interviews are sensitive and may cause unexpected discomforts and/or disadvantages, during the research. If you become

uncomfortable or distressed during the course of the interview, we can help you access appropriate support services.

### **8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

We hope that taking part in this interview will make you feel heard. Also, this research will inform future research on the knowledge custodial staff have and the practices they use. This knowledge will contribute to safer prisons.

### **10. What will happen to the findings of the research project?**

Results of the research will be written up in a summary report, Master's thesis, conference presentations, journal articles and may be used to inform training resources within Ara Poutama. You will not be identified in any report or publication. You can ask to be sent a summary of the findings in the consent form. Also, once I have completed analysis I will give you a chance to engage in a debrief session with me. In this session, I will present my theory and you will be able to give me feedback on it that I will integrate into the results I present in the research outputs.

**Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering to take part in this research study.**

## Appendix C

### Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO

FACULTY OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

#### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

[A completed copy of this form should be retained by both the researcher and the participant]

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 within fourteen days of receipt of the transcript

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.

	Tick Box
I wish to view the transcript of the interview	
I confirm that I have read and understood the Information Sheet for the above study. I have had an opportunity to consider the information and what will be expected of me. I have also had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered to my satisfaction	
I understand that should I choose to withdraw from the research I will be able to withdraw my data up to <b><i>fourteen days following receipt of the transcript</i></b>	
I understand that my data gathered in this study will be stored confidentially and securely. It will not be possible to identify me in any publications.	
I understand that if I decide to withdraw up to fourteen days following receipt of the transcript, any personal data I have provided up to that point will be deleted unless I agree otherwise.	
I understand the potential risks of participating and the support that will be available to me should I become distressed during the course of the research.	
I understand the direct/indirect benefits of participating will be for the larger social benefit.	
I consent to my interview being audio/video recorded and understand that the recordings will be destroyed within 5 years of the study ending on 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2024.	
I consent to participate in the study.	
I wish to receive a copy of the findings.	
I wish to be contacted about a debrief session with the principal investigator following analysis.	

Participant :

Researcher :

Signature :

Signature :

Date :

Date :

Contact Details :

Contact Details :

## Appendix D

### Interview Schedule (Version 1)

Give opportunity to open interview with karakia

Whakawhanaungatanga

Information on the project

Read through the information sheet

Answer any questions based on that

Reiterate key points;

- Approximately a 1-hour interview
- Can choose not to answer questions
- Can withdraw at any point of the interview
- Can take a break at any point
- Audio-recorded, with permission
- Confidentiality, anonymity of participant

Consent form

Demographics

- Age
  - Ethnicity
  - Length of service
- \*Audio-recorder turned on\*

Rapport

What drew you to work in Ara Poutama?

Why have you stayed?

What experience did you have in the Justice system prior to this role?

- History within Ara Poutama

What differences in culture have you noticed from other jobs or organizations when coming into this role?

Training/learning the role

How did you find coming into this role?

- How useful did you find your initial training?

What has your ongoing training involved?

What was your induction process like?

How does this job differ from what you expected?

How would you change the training if you could?

What policies or procedures do you find beneficial?

- Why?

What policies or procedures do you disagree with?

- Why?
- How would you change it?

When/if you induct someone onto the unit what's something specific you would mention?

### Culture

What do you view the purpose of your job to be?

How would you describe the culture among staff?

- The unit you're in
- The organization generally

Long term staff member

- What changes in culture have you noticed in your time?
- Or across units.

How do you describe an average inmate

How do you feel coming to a shift?

What if anything do you look forward to coming to work?

What do you dread?

How safe do you feel coming to work?

What do you think the inmates think of you and you colleagues?

How would you describe the staff member who inmates respect the most?

How much do you trust your immediate colleagues?

- Why?

How much do you trust management?

- Why?

### Specific Experiences

How often do you utilize disciplinary action?

What do you do that is not outlined as official policy?

- Why?

- How did you rationalize this?
- How did you feel during and after the process?

Have you ever had to cover up for someone? - Explain.

Have people covered for you, with or without your asking? - Explain

Have you ever had a strong rapport with an inmate?

- How did it come to be?
- Were you able to use this rapport for a beneficial outcome?
- Why do you have this rapport where other staff haven't?

Have you ever had an inmate dislike you specifically?

- To the best of your knowledge, why?
- The impact this had, on the job, handling that person

How do the inmates feel about you generally?

### Incidents

How do you avoid conflict or tension with the inmates?

How do you create and maintain positive relationships with the inmates?

What part of your daily activities do you do to keep yourself safe?

What strategy do you use first to deescalate a situation?

What strategy do you avoid?

What strategies have you developed during your time in the role?

An opportunity to add anything they've thought of during the interview and say anything else they want taken into consideration in analysis.

\*Audio-recorder turned off\*

Questions/debrief.

Closing karakia.

## Appendix E

### Email to Participants for Feedback

Kia ora koutou,

Long time, no talk! I hope you've been well and taking care of yourselves. I'm reaching out to give you an update on the progress of the study you took part in by an interview with me approximately a year ago. (All of the participants are receiving the same email with the same information).

I very much appreciate your participation thus far. I'd like to note up the top that the feedback I am asking for is welcomed and encouraged, but you are not required to provide me any. This is an incredibly busy time of year and I understand if you can't.

Following the interviews and over the course of the past year I have been analysing the data alongside my supervisor and making sense of how your systems are working. I've reached a point now where I've gotten it as far as I can and I'm looking for feedback from the participants to see if I can improve the model in any way. I've put together a short video talking through the project and importantly the model that has been generated.

**Here is the link to the video:** [link to video]

For your ease of referring back to, I have also attached a short written version to this email.

With the data collection and analysis approach I'm using, it is incredibly important to ensure I am putting across the essence of what is most true for you all. Hence the opportunity for a round of feedback that generally isn't offered for most projects. I have attached a google survey link that has both some questions and a free space to give any feedback I may not have prompted for. This survey is for your convenience. However, if you would prefer to get on a phonecall/zoom or give me feedback in a different way, you can absolutely do that.

**Here is the link to the survey:** [link to Google survey]

Similarly to when I sent you back your transcripts after our interview you will have a 14 day period to get any feedback you would like to give to me. This means could you please get me your feedback, if you have any by **Friday 13th of December 2024**.

I'm aware this is being sent to a work email so please let me know if you run into any issues accessing anything I've linked in this email so we can work on a resolution.

I hope I've accurately captured what's going on and I'm really looking forward to hearing your feedback!

Ngaa mihi,

Kristyn Rayner