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Why and What Can We Do? University Student Perceptions of Why Young People Offend.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

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Abstract

Purpose. Public perceptions of youth crime have not received much academic attention; instead, most studies have focused on the perceptions of people who offend, their victims and those who work with them. This study aimed to understand better how university students define crime, what they think causes youth to engage in crime, and any recommendations for lowering the youth crime rate in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The purpose of focusing on university students is in hope they will provide new insight as a group close in age to youth offenders.

Method. A subjectivist epistemology and an interpretivist theoretical framework were employed in this research. The research was approached using a qualitative methodology focused on grounded theory. Twelve university students participated in semi-structured interviews.

Results. University students' perceptions of crime are related to the laws set forth by their government. There was limited knowledge of the New Zealand justice system, and the practises for dealing with young offenders. However, there was general consensus that the existing system was ineffective. Three types of crime were proposed by participants: theft, property damage, and drug-related offences. It was asserted that peer or familial pressure, thrill-seeking, mental health problems, desperation, or a lack of stability are the main causes of youth criminality. Findings suggested improved support networks, mentoring, education, and alternative spaces for prevention.

Discussion. The results of the study suggested several methods for addressing youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Suggestions were made for how the results of this study could be applied in a real-world setting. Limitations and recommendations for further research are discussed with a focus on how to build upon and further the conclusions of this research.

Keywords: public perception, youth crime, causes, prevention.

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To my grandparents, Marline, and Lindsay, for always reminding me that the hard work would pay off.

Dedication

For my mother, Donna,

This is a result of all your sacrifices and hard work as a mother. Thank you for supporting me during my doubts and turmoil, for being my number one supporter and always believing in me.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Background

According to the Ministry of Justice (2022), most of the time, local authorities in the community deal with youth in the juvenile court system. A police warning or a referral to police youth aid is often used to accomplish this. In more complicated situations where local authorities cannot appropriately deal with the youth, the next step is to hold a family group conference (Ministry of Justice, 2022). The Youth Court is only involved in cases where youth have engaged in serious crimes; however, the High Court manages crimes such as manslaughter or murder. This demonstrates that typically youth are faced with charges when there are no other options available within the local community. Based on the information provided by the Ministry of Justice (2022), youth usually receive an absolute discharge after court proceedings. This means that the youth have admitted to their crimes and participated in any required intervention programmes.¹ These interventions are planned during family conferences (Ministry of Justice, 2022). In cases where youth receive an absolute discharge under Section 282² their crime will not be listed on their criminal record. However, if they fail to meet the criteria for an absolute discharge, their crimes will remain on their criminal record according to Section 283 (Ministry of justice, 2022); this is utilised when the judge decides the charges are severe enough to justify an order.

The Ministry of Justice (2022a) provides statistics on the charges for all youth that have been finalised in any court, including the Youth Court, District Court, and High Court. These statistics only resemble those youth who have appeared in court and not those who have been dealt with by local police. These statistics indicate that from July 1st, 2021, to June 30th, 2022, there were 7,203³ charges brought against youth between the ages of 10 and 17 (Ministry of Justice, 2022a). During this period, 34% (2,460 charges) were theft or theft related offences (Ministry of Justice, 2022a). While theft and theft related crimes were the most commonly charged offences, it is essential to note that offences ranged from homicide (9 charges) being the most severe crimes to less serious crimes such as property damage (522 charges) or traffic and vehicle offences (432 charges). Of the 7,203 charges against youth, 46% (3,306 charges) were proved and given a section 282 absolute discharge (Ministry of

¹ These include drug and alcohol programmes, community service, curfews, and any other limitations set out for them.

² Section 282 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989

³ This information is based on “Table 2: Number and percentage of charges for children and young people finalized in any court, by offence type. 2012/2013 - 2021/2022” (Ministry of Justice, 2022a)

Justice, 2022a). Based on the statistics of charges against youth in 2022, there appears to be a decrease in the frequency in which youth are being charged for crimes compared to the years preceding. The statistics for 2012 to 2013 show a significant decrease in charges during this period totalling 11,508 (Ministry of Justice, 2022a). This data demonstrates a 38% decline in youth crime rates between 2012 and 2022. In 2020, Oranga Tamariki suggested that several variables, including adjustments to policing, elevated levels of community security, including CCTV, and more secure vehicles, may contribute to the decline in youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Oranga Tamariki also indicated that antisocial behaviour might shift to the internet (Stevens, 2022). While this represents a considerable decrease over the past ten years, it does not lessen the fact that there were 7,203 charges brought against young people between July 1st, 2021, and June 30th, 2022; this number does not include youth whose crimes were addressed by local law enforcement.

The Ministry of Justice (2022a) also provides statistics outlining charges against youth based on age, gender, and ethnicity⁴. This helps gain a better understanding of the history of youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The data shown here are based on the most serious crimes committed by young people between July 1st, 2021, and June 30th, 2022. In addition to young people who had been found guilty and given a sentence in youth court, charges that were proven in the adult criminal justice sector were also mentioned in this data section. With 83% of offences (1,035 males) related to crimes, these numbers clearly show that young males are more inclined to commit crimes (Ministry of Justice 2022a). This is compared to only 216 young females engaging in crimes that result in charges (Ministry of Justice, 2022a). Based on the Ministry of Justice (2022a) statistics, youth typically begin engaging in crime between the ages of 12 and 13; this is demonstrated in the statistics where 3% (36) of the charges given to youth were to those between these ages and zero charges for youth younger. From there, the number of charges increased for the older youth represented in these statistics, with most crimes being committed by youth aged seventeen at 28% (357 charges). Based on the same statistics, youth offending rates in relation to ethnicity are as follows; 64% of charges (798 charges) against youth are towards young Māori, 23% of charges (288 charges) are towards European youth, and 6% (78 charges) are against Pacific Youth (Ministry of Justice, 2022a). However, it is essential to note the over-representation of Māori within the criminal justice system, "Māori are 37% of people proceeded against by

⁴ This information is based on "Table 6: Number and percentage of children and young people with charges finalised in any court, by gender, ethnicity, and age. 2012/2013 – 2021/2022."

Police, 45% of people convicted, and 52% of people in prison. This is despite Māori being only approximately 15% of the New Zealand population” (Ministry of Justice, 2021).

There are several reasons examined by current literature to explain why youth engage in crime. These reasons cover a wider variety of issues, such as familial influence, peer influence, and individual circumstances. Research conducted by Putniņš (2010) suggests that youth engage in crime for various reasons, such as engaging in crime out of boredom, thrill seeking, fitting in with peers, and due to the influence of drugs and alcohol. The studies conducted by Putniņš (2010), and Tam et al. (2007) focused on youth crime from the perspectives of youth who had engaged in crime. The study conducted by Skrzypiec (2013) had a mixture of youth who had engaged in crime and non-offenders. Of these three studies, Skrzypiec (2013) is the only study that incorporates public perceptions of youth crime. Research conducted on homeless youth (Tyler & Johnson, 2004) stands out amongst the literature, suggesting youth engage in crime as a form of revenge; among their findings, crime as a mode of survival is a strong theme, suggesting youth engage in crime to meet their basic needs. Putniņš (2010) also found that youth were likely to engage in crime as a mode of survival. Burson et al. (2019) conducted research on youth crime worker perceptions, suggesting unstable home lives, abuse, and a lack of family support are contributing factors to youth engaging in crime. It is important to note that all these studies suggest that youth do not engage in crime for one specific reason but that reasonings for youth crime are multifactorial. These studies also demonstrate a lack of research focusing on public perceptions of youth crime, as none of these studies focused on the general public's understanding of youth crime.

Focus and Scope

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of youth crime and prevention strategies through the use of public perceptions. A subjective epistemology is used to approach this research. Subjectivist epistemology holds that a person's understanding of the world depends on how they perceive and comprehend it. People interpret the world in ways that make sense to them, giving it value and meaning (Moon & Blackman, 2014). An interpretivist theoretical framework is used in this research. The theoretical foundation of interpretivism is founded on a number of realities and truths. Qualitative researchers that do not believe in a single, coherent world utilise this framework (Katz-Buonincontro, 2022). A qualitative methodology with a focus on grounded theory (Lewis-Beck et al., 2003) will be used to gather the data for this research, and a thematic analysis will be used to analyse the

findings (Clarke & Braun, 2021). The sample was limited to university students residing in Aotearoa, New Zealand, who are between the ages of 18 and 25. Twelve University students from various parts of New Zealand will be included in this study, which will examine their perceptions of youth crime, its causes, and possible preventions. This project's entire research process was conducted over the course of 12 months (February 2022 to February 2023). The focus on university student perceptions can aid in bridging this gap and supporting the findings in current literature (Halsey & White, 2008; Barretto et al., 2016; Skrzypiec, 2013). This indicates that any conclusions drawn from this study may not apply to the global population and should be considered within the context of Aotearoa, New Zealand. While the sample for this research may not be generalisable to the wider public, the researcher chose to focus on university students as they are an underrepresented group within the current literature.

Rationale and Important of the Research Topic

There has been little research into public perceptions of youth crime and interventions the public feel will aid in reducing youth crime rates. Research was conducted by Skrzypiec (2013), who looked at public perceptions of why youth engage in crime, and Barretto et al. (2016), who examined public perceptions on managing youth crime. For example, Tyler and Johnson (2004) studied homeless youth, and Burson et al. (2019) studied perceptions of youth crime from the perspective of juvenile justice workers. The currently available research typically focuses on the opinions of youth who have engaged in crime themselves (Tam et al., 2007; Putniņš, 2010) and those who have been victims of crimes committed by youth (McArdle et al., 2018). University students are voices that are not accounted for in the current literature, and as a group who are close in age to youth who engage in crime. It is hoped that university students' perspectives in this research will build on existing literature and bring to light areas these public views believe need additional attention if youth crime rates are to be reduced in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Research Objectives

This study aims to understand how university students perceive youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand, as well as what they believe may be done to reduce or discourage youth from engaging in crimes. The research aims to answer the following questions:

- What do university students believe causes youth crime?

- What do university students believe can be done to reduce and prevent youth crime rates?

This study employed a qualitative methodology to examine how university students view the problem of youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The research aims were divided into four sections to understand the research topic:

- the understanding of crime among university students
- the types of crimes they felt youth were likely to engage in
- their perceptions of the conditions that lead youth to engage in crimes
- what they thought could be done to deter youth from engaging in crimes

Thematic analysis of the interviews will be used to provide insights into what university students understand about youth crime and any potential prevention strategies that may be put in place to aid in reducing crime among youth.

Author Positionality

In order for me to write and engage in this project, I needed to acknowledge first, who I am, where I came from, and any biases I may be bringing to the research. At the time of authoring this thesis, I am a 24-year-old/25-year-old Pakeha female. I was born in New Zealand and have spent my entire life living here. I grew up in a single parent household; this was important for me to reflect on as it shaped my understanding of parental roles in our lives. I have spent the majority of my life either in school or in tertiary education. I currently have four degrees; a Certificate of human health and science gained in 2016, a Bachelor of Arts majoring in psychology with minors in philosophy and social anthropology gained in 2020, a Graduate Diploma of Arts gained in 2021, and a Post-Graduate Diploma of Arts specialising in psychology gained in 2022. These degrees helped me form an understanding that, typically, human actions have multiple driving factors. I do not align myself with any set religion or political stance. Prior to the research, I was a victim of youth crime in 2019; this was a driving factor for this research. The incident left me wanting to understand why it had happened and if there was anything that could be done to prevent youth from engaging in crime. It is important to note that before this research, I had minimal knowledge of the youth justice system in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Much of the understanding I gained was through research and information shared by my participants. I am aware that my education, my individual experiences, my race, my sex, and my age are all factors that influence my understanding of the world; every person has varied factors that influence their

understandings. For this reason, I approached this research with the understanding that my participants would share perceptions based on their understandings of the world; these understandings may not always be in line with my understandings.

Overview of Thesis Structure

The introduction for this thesis provided information on youth offending in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This section briefly discussed the findings of research conducted on the reasons youth engage in crime. The introduction also included information on the focus of this thesis, the relevance of this research, and the aim of the research. An overview of recent research on youth crime is presented, along with potential reasons why young people commit crimes and prevention tactics. The perceptions of youth who have engaged in crimes and the general public are two examples of the perceptions that are currently available and are examined in this project. This is followed by an overview of the proposed epistemological framework, theoretical framework, and methodology. The next section of this thesis describes the method used while conducting this research, from ethics to conducting interviews. The section following this is the results section, where the analysis method is described, as well as the findings of this research. Following the results is the discussion section; in this section, the findings of the research are related to the current literature, the limitations of the research are discussed, and recommendations for future research on the topic. Lastly, the conclusion, in this section, the research aims will be restated, and the research will be summarised.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Background of Youth Crime

The following section will briefly discuss youth crime at an international level. Then, there will be a clear focus on youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This will be done by using three government documents providing an understanding of youth crime from a statistical view. The first report discussed is '*offending by children in New Zealand*' (Spier, 2016). While this article's research report was released in 2016, it is discussed here as it is the most recent information provided publicly by the Ministry of Social Development. This section will also examine the report on '*reoffending patterns for participants of youth justice Family Group Conference's held in 2011 and 2012*' (Spier & Wilkinson, 2016). This will help provide insight into reoffending when family intervention is provided. Lastly, this section will examine the report on '*reoffending patterns for recipients of Youth Court supervision*' (Spier & Sun, 2016). These reports will help provide an understanding of why youth crime in New Zealand is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Although the United Nations and other organisations have attempted to get a clear picture of the extent of youth crime globally, their relevance is poor, their information is sparse, and they are often of dubious authenticity (Hartjen, 2008). How often and how frequently youth engage in crime cannot be quantified reliably (Hartjen, 2008). Criminal activity is widespread. No country that has been researched is exempt from youth engaging in crime, and every country on which information is available reports at least some involvement by youth that can be considered delinquent or criminal. In that sense, youth crime is prevalent in all cultures (Hartjen, 2008). Despite the restrictions placed on official statistics, delinquency is a global problem escalating in many regions of the world. The widespread, serious, and even vicious criminality of their youth has caused several nations to voice extreme alarm and even terror in recent years (Hartjen, 2008). While this information does not provide evidence on global youth crime rates, it draws attention to youth crime being a worldwide issue rather than suggesting youth crime is only an issue amongst specific populations. There were 18,128 youth offenders (10-17 years old) in New South Wales between 2020-21. This was a 2% (418 offenders) increase over the previous year (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). In 2020, about 100,000 serious violent crimes were committed by youths between the ages of 12 and 17 in the United States. This shows a decrease of 30,000 compared to 2019 (Statista Research Department, 2023). In 2021, Norway saw 25,836 youth under the age of twenty-one being charged with criminal behaviour (Statista Research

Department, 2022). Statistics show that 29,126 youth under the age of eighteen engaged in crime in Russia in 2021 (Statista Research Department, 2022a). These statistics demonstrate high levels of youth crime at an international level; however, statistics for the United States, Norway, and Russia demonstrate a steady decline in youth crime rates. The statistics provide a concerning insight that youth crime rates are slowing inclining in New South Wales rather than declining, as seen in countries such as the United States, Norway, and Russia. According to the World Health Organization (2023), there are three types of risk factors that can lead youth to engage in crime. The first set of risk factors is those within the individual, such as being exposed to family violence, the use of alcohol and drugs, and low education. The second set of risk factors is related to those youth have close relationships with such as inconsistent parenting, parental mental health issues, and parental involvement in crime. The third set of risk factors is related to the community, such as access/misuse of alcohol or firearms, poverty, and "the quality of a country's governance" (World Health Organization, 2023). This suggests that when addressing youth crime at either a global or national level, there needs to be consideration of the micro, meso, and macro levels. While the information provided by the World Health Organisation (2023) explicitly focussed on youth violence, this information is valuable when discussing youth crime more generally.

It is important to note that Spier (2016) defined children as those who had been born between the years 1995 to 1999. In New Zealand, the police were aware of approximately 5% of the birth cohorts from 1995 to 1999 who had committed crimes before the age of 14 (Spier, 2016). When this report was published, it was noted that there had been a significant decrease in the number of children between the ages of 10 and 13 who had been reported to the police for their engagement in crime. This decrease in crime was also observed between 2009 and 2013; this suggests that demographic changes were not the primary cause of the decline in minor offenders (Spier, 2016). By the age of fourteen, Māori children were around three times more likely than non-Māori youth to be identified by the police as an offender. When comparing Māori versus non-Māori rates, the gap was more significant for females than males. Just over half of the decline of young offenders was attributed to Māori. The report discusses that in 2009 Māori made up 56% of youth offenders compared to Māori making up 59% of youth offenders who were noticed by police in 2013 (Spier, 2016). It is crucial to note that while the overrepresentation of Māori criminals is discussed in this report, the numbers are still pertinent to the study. Between 2009 and 2013, there were 1,344 fewer youth aged 10 to 13 who were first-time offenders and brought to the police's attention.

Seven hundred fewer youth were arrested for shoplifting as their first offence between 2009 and 2013, accounting for more than half of first-time offenders' overall decline (Spier, 2016). However, this does not confirm that youth were committing less crime; it could suggest that they were not being arrested for their offences or had not been caught.

Spier and Wilkinson (2016) consisted of two cohorts, the intention-to-charge family group conference (ITCFGC) cohort and the court-ordered family group conference (COFGC). The ITCFGC cohort consisted of youth who had allegedly engaged in crime but had not been arrested, whereas the COFGC cohort consisted of youth who had been arrested and been to court for their crime. Before the family group conferences, there was an increase in the frequency and severity of youth offences for both of the above cohorts, followed by a decline in both measures following the family group conferences (FGC). The three most frequent offence categories – theft-related, burglary, and property damage – saw significant declines in their numbers. Both cohorts had FGCs, which account for the bulk of the overall decline in the number of offences (Spier & Wilkinson, 2016). Past offences are typically a good indicator of future offences. Due to this, it would make sense to assume that those with shorter criminal histories would reoffend less frequently than people with longer criminal histories. According to the report by Spier and Wilkinson (2016), ITCFGC participants had fewer serious prior offences than those of COFGC. Based on this statement, it is likely that the ITCFGC cohort would have better results than the COFGC cohort. This could be attributed to the COFGC cohort having more serious criminal records than that of their counter cohort. However, the report found that 36% of the ITCFGC cohort did reoffend in comparison to 30% of the COFGC cohort (Spier & Wilkinson, 2016). In 2011 the percentage of the COFGC cohort who did not commit a new crime after twenty-four months was 18%; however, the percentage for the ITCFGC cohort was slightly higher at 23% (Spier & Wilkinson, 2016). Given that they had not been detained and taken to court for their offence, this could imply that the ITCFGC cohort did not take the conferences as seriously as the COFGC cohort did. According to this study, FGCs can help prevent youth from committing crimes again. The majority of research on the effectiveness of FGCs is favourable, suggesting the following, "families are able to follow through with effective family plans that address the welfare concerns of the child who offended; are more likely to engage in the services recommended in the FGC; and give young offenders better contact with their extended family" (Williams & Ioane, 2021, p. 68). It is essential to acknowledge that FGCs are not used solely for youth offending but also in situations regarding the care and protection of

youth. However, Dijkstra et al. (2016) concluded that there is no significant effect when FGCs are used in cases of child abuse, youth care, and when youth need to be removed from their homes. According to Spier and Wilkinson (2016), these interventions work best when used on young people who have been arrested and brought before a judge than when they are not.

Spier and Sun (2016) examined the impact of court ordered supervision of reoffending by youth. This report found that in the 12 months following all three forms of supervision orders, compared to the 12 months prior to the orders, there was a general decrease in both the frequency and the gravity of offending (Spier & Sun, 2016). This suggests that the young people who participated in this prevention strategy benefited from all types of court-ordered supervision. The survey notes that theft-related and burglary offences were the most commonly committed by young people in the year before and after the enforcement of all three decrees. These offenses displayed the most significant decrease in the year after the orders (Spier & Sun, 2016). This demonstrates a trend in the types of crime youth engage in that is reflected in the Spier and Wilkinson (2016) report. Youth who received short supervision with activity orders of three months or less were more likely to commit new offences in the 12 months after the order than those who received lengthier orders of more than three months. Despite this fluctuation, the percentages of youth who reduced the frequency or severity of their offences based on the duration of the supervision with activity order did not differ (Spier & Sun, 2016). This suggests that longer-term supervision as an intervention strategy is most effective as youths were less likely to reoffend where supervision periods were more extended than those with shorter supervision periods. However, these differences were not statistically significant, with shorter supervision having a 40% reoffending rate and lengthier supervision having a 34% reoffending rate. According to Sapouna (2015), supervision can assist offenders in overcoming real-world barriers to reoffending, such as unemployment and drug abuse, by facilitating skill development or gaining access to drug treatment programmes. It is crucial to have a strong working connection with the supervisor and feel that they are aware of the demands.

This section has briefly reviewed three government documents highlighting youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. According to the statistics in this section, youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand, has steadily decreased, similar to what has occurred in countries such as the United States, Norway, and Russia. These reports provide a basic understanding of New Zealand youth crime and current reoffending interventions. These reports help

highlight the types of crimes youth are more likely to engage in and how effective the interventions were at reducing reoffending. From these reports, supervision interventions and Family Group Conference's aid in reducing youth crime; however, there is still a significant amount of work required in this area. These reports indicate that the amount of crime youth engage in has decreased over the years; however, at least a portion of this could be due to youth not being arrested for minor crimes. This suggests that youth still engage in these crimes with the police using less restrictive measures.

2.2 Why? Perceptions and Factors of Youth Crime.

The following section will review research to understand why young people engage in crime. The sources used here are not limited to public perceptions of youth crime and will also include sources where youth themselves give the reasoning for their crime. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) also play a role in why young people become involved in crime (Bergquist et al., 2022). These include having numerous caregivers (such as foster care), receiving harsh punishments or maltreatment, and abusing drugs at an early age (New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage Te Manatu Taonga, 2017). These elements can also play a role in academic challenges, which is another element linked to youth crime (New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage Te Manatu Taonga, 2017). Reoffending is more common among boys, those who do not complete high school, and those who are associated with the police or child welfare in early life (Maxwell, 2017). When attending a family meeting or going to court, young people who do not have sufficient support and solid plans for their future are more likely to reoffend (Maxwell, 2017).

Halsey and White (2008) conducted a literature review investigating public perceptions of youth crime. This research differed from other research in the area as it looks at youth crime from the public perception but also because it investigates what influences these perceptions. According to Halsey and White (2008), the perception of young people nowadays looks to be under threat; in fact, one study indicated that 71% of media stories about young people were unfavourable and that 33% of articles dealt with criminality. Young people are forced to deal with the difficulty of growing up in a culture where there are pervasive negative impressions about youth because of this excessive focus on young people's behaviour (Halsey & White, 2008). This illustrates how an overrepresentation of harmful behaviours among young people may skew public perceptions of youth offences. Halsey and White (2008) found that the public tended to overestimate the amount of youth

who engage in crime, with people believing that roughly half of all youth are engaging in some form of crime. However, when reviewing statistics on youth crime, they found that, on average, only one-fifth of youth are engaged in crime. According to Halsey and White (2008), there was no evidence of a connection between the statistics on actual youth crime rates and data on public views of youth crime, indicating that attitudes towards young people's behaviour and the occurrence of adolescent offences are unrelated. When attempting to understand this disparity between statistics and public perceptions of youth crime Halsey and White (2008) found that the media played a substantial role in what influences the public's perception. Halsey and White (2008) state, "the media has a tendency to report on the most violent and sensational crimes – these are in the minority and not representative of the types of offences that make up the majority of youth court hearings... much media content relating to young people is crime related and conveys negative messages or imagery" (p. 11). It is clear from this assertion that the media, which frequently exaggerates crime and the types of crimes that young people commit, plays a role in how the public views young people's behaviour. When examining what influences public perceptions of crime, Halsey and White's (2008) research investigated the literature on those perceptions. This information aids in providing a baseline of current understandings of youth crime based on public perceptions. This research deepens our understanding of how institutions like the media contribute to the public's perceptions of crime.

Putniņš (2010) researched youth who had committed crimes and their self-reported reasons for committing them. The Secure Care Psychosocial Screening (SECAPS) and the Community Adolescent Psychosocial Screening (CAPS) were the two evaluations employed in the study (Putniņš, 2010). Offending history, family and residence, intellectual functioning, substance use, mood and self-destructiveness, aggression, attention, restlessness, and reasons for offending were among the topics covered in the assessments (Putniņš, 2010). Using both SECAPS and CAPS allowed the researchers to multiple factors in the youth's lives that could have led to them participating in crime; it also allowed them to get a bigger picture of the youth's lives and how these factors may be intertwined. The most frequent justifications given for committing crimes were being irate, bored, and without much else to do, participating because their friends were, being intoxicated or under the influence of drugs, continuing to commit crimes because they had not been caught before, getting a rush or buzz from it, needing money, lacking self-control, and being irritated by other people (Putniņš, 2010). In contrast to this, the least prevalent justifications for committing crimes were a lack

of concern for other people's well-being, the notion that it was unfair that others had more than they did, the desire to gain respect, and the notion that some people deserved to be victims, and the notion that they could get what they wanted without anyone suffering as a result of their crimes (Putniņš, 2010). The most and least frequent justifications for adolescent crime should be taken into account as they provide insight into what young people suggest their motivations are. Justifications such as the necessity for clothing, food, or shelter were among the responses that lay more in the middle of the reasoning spectrum. The findings of this study demonstrate that every participant gave more than one reason for committing a crime, which helps understand that young people who engage in crimes do so for a variety of reasons. This is significant as it contributes to discussions that in order to lower youth criminality, multiple factors need to be addressed. The article may have benefited from a discussion of the types of crimes the youth committed, as this would have helped to ascertain whether their justifications applied to serious crimes or were solely linked to minor and petty crimes.

Tam et al. (2007) conducted research on youth offending by examining youth who had committed crimes and the self-reported justifications for their crimes. The research conducted by Tam et al. (2007) discussed the types of crime that young people engaged in; this contrasts with Putniņš (2010), who did not include this information. These crimes included breaking and entering, theft, property destruction, robbery, possession of drugs or use of a controlled substances, and illegal possession of weapons. In their study in Singapore, Tam et al. (2007) found that peer pressure and influence were significant contributing factors for youth engaging in crime; this is a similar finding to that of Putniņš (2010). Much like the research conducted by Putniņš (2010), anger was also found to be a cause for engaging in crime, with youth mentioning being unable to deal with their anger which resulted in violent outbursts, these outbursts occurred in the heat of the moment, and youth later felt regret for their choices (Tam et al., 2007). Of the fifty-four case studies, 13% of youth stated that they committed their crimes for the thrill to overcome their boredom. This was also seen in the study conducted by Putniņš (2010). While drugs and alcohol were prevalent causes in Putniņš's (2010) research, in the Tam et al. (2007) study, just 6% of youth cited drugs and alcohol as the reason they committed crimes. In the Tam et al. (2007) study, youth reported committing crimes more frequently for money for essentials than those in Putniņš's (2010) research, with 28% of the youth reporting they engaged in crime to pay for things they needed, such as clothes. This provides an insight that was not given by Putniņš (2010) as it

shows the various levels of crimes that were committed; this helps to understand that justifications for crimes remain the same no matter how serious the crime is. This study's findings were much more constrained, given that it was based on case studies in which the young people's statements were obtained on the day of the crime. Because the researchers did not interact with the young people, they were unable to determine whether they continued to justify their actions with the same reasonings.

Skrzypiec (2013) conducted a study in South Australia to get youth perspectives on why young people offend. This study had twenty-four participants, both offenders, and non-offenders, intending to gain an understanding of what they believed led youth to engage in crime. This helps determine whether public perceptions diverge from those of young people who are committing the crime by allowing comparisons between non-offenders and those who have engaged in crime. This is a comparison that is not seen in studies such as those conducted by Tam et al. (2007) and Putniņš (2010). Interestingly, unlike other research in this area, youth suggested that a reason youth engage in crime could be related to their home lives, "it could be the way they're raised, because some parents just let their children go from when they're born; like, they grow up doing what they want, and do it whenever they want, and it just gets worse as they grow older. They do what they want, except in a bad way" (Skrzypiec, 2013, p. 193). Some participants made the suggestion that because they were exposed to illegal behaviour as children, they now think that is how everyone should act. Participants also claim that criminal behaviour is learned; as they watch their family members commit crimes like stealing, they imitate and perpetuate these actions. The results of this study's youth participants also imply that thrill-seeking serves as an excuse for committing crimes; this is a finding consistent with other research in this area. Many of the participants responses linked back to the youth's home life. This is not seen as firmly in other research, where causes such as anger are not linked to the youth's parents. This shows that a stable family/home life significantly impacts how young people perceive and/or commit crimes. Participants also believe that young people commit crimes to blend in with their peers or enhance their reputation. Some young people claim that they boast about their crimes to obtain their peers' respect or admiration. Skrzypiec (2013) indicated that the causes of youth crime are often complex and not just one particular event in the life of the young people.

Tyler and Johnson (2004) had the most interesting selection of participants in the research discussed here. The sample for this research consisted of forty youths, both male and female. However, what makes this sample interesting is that Tyler and Johnson (2004) focussed on

homeless youth in four different states across America. This brings an interesting element to the research as it allows researchers to address justifications for offending in specific groups of youths, in this case, the homeless. This study sought to understand why some youths are more likely to be victims than others, why some young people commit crimes while others do not, and why those who are victimised initially are more likely to retaliate. This introduces an element for comprehending youth criminality that is not covered in other research: youths commit crimes because crimes have been perpetrated against them. Unsurprisingly several of the youth in this study stated they had engaged in crime as a form of survival, needing to provide themselves with clothes, shelter, and food; "the majority of criminal behaviors described by the respondents could be classified as offending for the purpose of survival and/or financial gain. Several of the youth reported stealing as strictly for "survival purposes" (Tyler & Johnson, 2004, p. 435). These explanations are evident in the studies stated above, but this study indicates that they are more pronounced in young people who are homeless. Comparing this to earlier studies where crime for survival was less common, this might be because the youth in this study are fending for themselves and doing what they can to satisfy their basic requirements, as opposed to those who are being cared for in the home. The urge to present an image of invincibility also emerged as a common motif among justifications from youth why young people engage in crime. For many young people, seeming strong, resilient, and unafraid of anything is the only way for them to survive while being homeless (Tyler & Johnson, 2004). This survival technique leads youth to engage in violent crimes. Doing so means they appear tough, which keeps them safe from others, as one participant suggests that hurting other people kept her safe as people were less likely to mess with her (Tyler & Johnson, 2004). Due to its focus on a more specialised group of participants, this study offered a more detailed understanding than those of other studies. The results are significant because they reveal shared causes among homeless and non-homeless youth, even though they cannot be generalised to youth criminality in the broader population. According to Tyler and Johnson (2004), homelessness is the primary cause of youth crime, with other reasons following it as a method of survival. This research also demonstrates that the causes of youth crime appear multi-dimensional.

Burson et al. (2019) examined perceptions of the causes of youth crime, but their sample consisted of juvenile justice professionals and focused on the causes of female youth criminality. This contrasts with Halsey and White (2008), who examined youth criminality from a broader perspective. The study looked at both internal and external factors for young

females' engagement in crime and how they matched gender norms and societal expectations of females. The sample of this group provides an essential perspective on public perceptions of youth crime as those amongst this sample worked closely with youth who had engaged in crime. The choice to focus on one gender and how social standards influence their involvement in crime is another intriguing aspect of this study. Burson et al. (2019) found that internal factors perpetuated stereotypes about young females as manipulative, histrionic, hysterical, and in need of care and protection, depicting them as incapable of navigating high-risk situations. Participants suggested that young females are more concerned about their appearance and social status, with little care about their education or future. Some participants suggested that young females engaged in crime because "they are mentally ill or very dysfunctional and very traumatized and need help that they are that they've refused to engage in other places" (Burson et al., 2019, p. 161). External factors centred on the lives of young females, their dysfunctional families, poverty, and gender-specific risk factors (Burson et al., 2019). Burson et al. (2019) found that participants frequently discussed examples of family conflict experiences by young females in the past, such as a lack of family support, a distance between the young female and her family, or a lack of functional home life. These observations were made in response to instances of abuse, neglect, and poverty. The young female's engagement in crime was also related to inadequate parenting techniques or parents' poor moral integrity (Burson et al., 2019). According to participants' perspectives of youth crime, an unstable life at home is a factor for young girls engaging in crime, which is consistent with the study done with youth who had committed crimes (Burson et al., 2019). However, there were only six participants in this study, and they all took part in lengthy in-person interviews. The researchers did not disclose the gender distribution of the participants. This study may have benefited from a larger sample size that would have produced more reliable data. Contrary to Halsey and White (2008), this study's participants' judgements gave more weight to preconceptions of female behaviour, demonstrating that gender is a crucial factor in what causes young people to offend. This study might benefit from evaluating the results of a young male focus group to see if stereotypes of men also affect perceptions of youth crime to understand better what motivates young people to commit crimes.

This section has discussed public perceptions of youth crime and perceptions of youth who have engaged in crime. Youth engage in crimes for several reasons, including participating in criminal activity for social purposes, boredom, intending to harm others, and utilising criminal activity to fulfil fundamental needs like obtaining food, clothing, and

shelter. The information above makes it clear that youth crime is multifactorial. This means that when addressing why youth engage in crime, it is vital to remember there is not one single reason they engage in crime but several circumstances that build up to crime engagement. The types of crime that youth engage in are varied. However, in most cases, the justifications remain the same. Further research should be conducted around public perception of why young people engage in crime as current research is limited; it would also be valuable to research further what influences perceptions of why youth engage in crime. The current research does suggest that media plays a vital role in public perceptions of why youth engage in crime. While research in this area is limited, the research available does yield consistent evidence on why youth engage in crime.

2.3 What Can We Do? Strategies and Perceptions for Deterring Youth Crime.

The following section will review public perceptions of what can be done to deter youth from engaging in crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Two of the articles will discuss measures that the public feels should be included in efforts to deter youth from offending, as well as measures discussed to help prevent youth from reoffending. One of the articles will look at the justice system from the perspective of youth and their experiences in the New Zealand Youth Justice system, focusing on challenges that these youth may face. Part of this section will also look at the current New Zealand *Youth Crime Action Plan* to see how the New Zealand government intends to address and prevent youth crime. This plan will be compared with suggestions of measures from public perception to see if the government and the public's ideas of addressing youth crime address the same factors. Lastly, two other intervention plans will be discussed, one that is based in Australia (Communities That Care) and the other based in the United Kingdom (Towards a Youth Crime Prevention Strategy). This will be done to compare interventions and evaluate if any measures in these plans could be integrated into the New Zealand plans.

Barretto et al. (2016) researched public perceptions of youth offending and the New Zealand criminal justice system. The study aimed to compare the opinions of those who had personally experienced victimisation by youth offenders with those of people who had not about how to manage youth crime in New Zealand. The findings of this study can be applied to the entire population of New Zealand rather than just those who took part in the study by utilising a nationally representative sample. The data collected from the survey was both qualitative and quantitative, which aided the researchers in their analysis of public

perceptions of youth crime and the New Zealand criminal justice system. The most prevalent issue in the study was the need for systemic measures to deter young people from engaging in crime. To deter youth from committing crimes, participants suggested addressing broader societal issues. Government policy, parenting, poverty, and other environmental factors, including access to alcohol and drugs, were among the issues brought up by participants (Barretto et al., 2016). As seen in the section above, these are issues mentioned by both the public and youth who have engaged in crime as being factors in their crime. For this reason, it seems vital to address these to prevent youth from engaging in crime. Rehabilitation was listed by 34% of participants as another crucial factor. Participants concurred that rehabilitation involves the individual's family or the broader community in addition to the individual. One of the suggested individual rehabilitations included ensuring that fundamental reading and math abilities were attained to help with job searches, as well as recommending individual therapy to raise motivation, self-esteem, and interpersonal goals (Barretto et al., 2016). These treatments could be utilised as strategies to stop reoffending, even if they cannot stop young people from committing crimes entirely. More harsh penalties were indicated by 29% of the sample as a better way to deal with young criminals. Due to the apparent lack of respect and discipline, support for harsher punishments like boot camps and military training was stated in these comments. Additionally, harsher punishment was urged, especially for young people who continue to commit crimes (Barretto et al., 2016). These measures could be justified where other preventions or intervention strategies are not producing the desired results. According to the comments offered by survey participants, it seems that the general public is interested in seeing youth involved in treatments and/or preventions that assist them in re-entering society as mature individuals. These recommendations emphasise the value of educating youth and giving them a secure environment in which to develop.

McArdle et al. (2018) conducted a study to examine the connection between perceived community safety and public perceptions of how youth who engage in crime are treated in New Zealand. The findings of this research are especially interesting as they are remarkably similar to those of Barretto et al. (2016), whose study also examined the connection between public views of teenage criminality and neighbourhood safety. This research differs from the study conducted by Barretto et al. (2016), who wanted to compare the opinions of those who had been victims of crime versus those who had not. Much like the research conducted by Barretto et al. (2016), this research also suggests that participants feel

it is vital to address systemic issues. The study found that 35.6% of participants recommended addressing and resolving the systemic factors that are thought to increase the chance of youth engaging in crime (McArdle et al., 2018). The participants said that a number of issues needed to be resolved to address youth criminality. These components resemble and expand upon those provided in the study by Barretto et al. (2016). Drugs and alcohol, poor parenting, family violence, poverty, and a lack of jobs were some of the factors suggested for targeting (McArdle et al., 2018). According to Barretto et al. (2016), the participants' ideas for stricter punishment for youth who engage in crime were less common, with only 24.7% of the participants in McArdle et al. (2018) making this suggestion. These participants made it clear that they favoured stronger sanctions, such as longer prison terms. Others offered suggestions with punitive undertones, such as youth paying higher fines, physical punishment, permitting parents to punish their children physically, and restricting the rights of youth (McArdle et al., 2018). Participants in this study seemed to have stronger opinions about physical measures that should be considered than those of the Barretto et al. (2016) study. However, many of these measures are not plausible with current legislations in New Zealand, such as those related to parents no longer being allowed to hit their children. Instead of suggesting boot camps as a harsher punishment, like Barretto et al. (2016), McArdle et al.'s (2018) participants suggest these measures might be utilised as a form of rehabilitation. However, they advise that these be considered training camps. According to the findings of McArdle et al. (2018), it appears crucial to give young people stability and life skills as necessary measures to prevent them from committing crimes.

Lount et al. (2017) researched youth perceptions of communicating in the youth justice system in New Zealand. This is necessary research as it provides insight into how youth understand the processes in the criminal justice system and their awareness of their proceedings. This study is helpful in providing perspective on the current processes for interacting with youth who have engaged in crime. This research differs from other perspectives on how to work with youth who engage in crime as it provides an inside understanding of the situation from youth in the system themselves. The young people in this study expressed a sense of having no control or feeling as though they had no voice as they struggled to grasp most of what transpired in court (Lount et al., 2017). This could be a result of the terminology employed in the juvenile justice system or the educational backgrounds of the young people. This is supported by Lount et al. (2017), who state, "It was clear that aspects of the court hearing presented difficulties for the young people, and that the legal

jargon and formal language contributed to a general lack of understanding of the events. This, combined with the uncertainty of how and when to participate, led to frustration for the young people" (p. 600). Youth must play a proactive role in both of these circumstances and must be able to comprehend what is occurring and why; otherwise, they may lack the courage to speak up or engage in their hearing, which has been linked to frustration. Through further discussion with the youth in this study, they found many of the youth would have found it helpful to have someone nearby willing and able to break down the court language when needed. As stated by participants, this shows that it is crucial that a mechanism be put in place so that young people using the legal system have access to someone who can explain what is happening; doing so would make them feel less anxious and frustrated about their hearings. According to the participants, their interactions with professionals had a critical role in communication. To ensure that young people have a trustworthy resource they can turn to when comprehension or communication becomes difficult (Lount et al., 2017).

The New Zealand Youth Crime Action Plan, referred to as YCAP (Ministry of Justice, 2013), intends to reduce youth criminality and assist those who have offended in changing their lives. It focuses mainly on government organisations collaborating more closely and joining forces with Māori, communities, families, and education systems to address the issue of youth offending and the causes of this offending. YCAP (Ministry of Justice, 2013) introduces three strategies to address youth crime in New Zealand. The first strategy in this plan is partnering with communities; this strategy intends for government agencies to collaborate with communities to identify the issues within communities and provide coordinated responses to those who become aware of the issues. This plan then intends to introduce online tools and guidance related to youth justice. Members of the youth justice system and community will use these to create action plans. These plans will be implemented in communities with the highest levels of Māori youth engaging in crime. These plans will be modified to include measures that are working and exclude measures that are not (Ministry of Justice, 2013). The public's suggested actions, which include the necessity for family and community involvement in the process of avoiding youth crime, match this method. The second strategy suggested by YCAP (Ministry of Justice, 2013) is to reduce escalation; this strategy aims for youth who are engaging in crime to be dealt with outside of the justice system, with the justice system being the last resort. This strategy suggests after an arrest, making sure that most cases are sent to the Police Youth aid, creating a process for early case consultation, and expanding the number of alternatives to placing youth in

residential facilities (Ministry of Justice, 2013). At the core of New Zealand law is the idea that children and young people should be managed outside of the official criminal system. The principles, protocols, and laws of the United Nations also recognise this on a global scale. Research on New Zealand Police Alternative Actions also demonstrates that keeping young people and adolescents out of the formal criminal system can lower their likelihood of reoffending (Ministry of Justice, 2013). There is a contradiction between this and some of the public suggestions, where some called for the implementation of stricter punitive measures (McArdle et al., 2018; Barretto et al., 2016). The final strategy suggested by YCAP (Ministry of Justice, 2013) is introducing early and sustainable exits; this strategy aims to improve the current court systems, which is something that youth who have been in the court system says is important. This strategy also suggests increasing the range of options for dealing with youth who engage in crime, suggesting family group conferences were most appropriate. Once more, this runs counter to the belief that juveniles who commit crimes should face harsher penalties. However, YCAP (Ministry of Justice, 2013) defends this by claiming that less severe punishment and early intervention diminish criminal behaviour.

Communities That Care, referred to as CTC is a community-based, evidence-based prevention plan that aims to lower youth crime, behavioural issues and encourage healthy development. The article by Rowland et al. (2021) evaluates the effectiveness of this programme in Victoria, Australia. Risk and protective environmental factors are those that can be addressed by community coalitions. CTC offers a framework for analysing and enhancing risk mitigating factors for the development of youth. The adoption of the CTC in Australia started in the late 1990s in response to an increase in youth behavioural issues linked to environmental factors that make it easy for them to get access to alcohol and drugs (Rowland et al., 2021). This type of plan aligns with public perceptions of what needs to be addressed to prevent youth offending and reoffending, where a substantial portion of the public believes that youth engagement in crime is related to systemic issues such as access to alcohol and drugs. There are five phases to the CTC plan phase one consists of identifying and enlisting relevant community stakeholders and important decision-makers to get ready for action. In phase two, community leaders and government are formed to guide planning and decision-making in the community. In phase three, data is collected, and the involved community/government decides on priorities for their plans. In phase four, a plan is developed that is evidence-based and indicates relevant roles, responsibilities, and outcomes, and lastly, in phase five, the plan is implemented and evaluated (Rowland et al., 2021).

Although CTC is not a predetermined method for dealing with youth who engage in crime, it offers a solid framework for tackling specific factors that motivate young people to commit crimes. Rowland et al. (2021) found that there was a significant reduction in crime in communities using this plan compared to those communities not using CTC. The results of the study conducted by Rowland et al. (2021) are in line with the CTC framework, where this study target the use of CTC concerning Drug and Alcohol. Rowland et al. (2021) suggest alcohol and drug use, injuries, and criminality will all improve if risk factors for youth are decreased, and protective factors are increased. According to police estimates, alcohol is a factor in around one-third of crimes (Ball et al., 2022). The correlation between reducing youth drinking and declining juvenile crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand, is thus not surprising. Although there are several reasons for the decrease in crime, one of them is highly likely the declining prevalence and frequency of youth binge drinking. Along with increased efforts to prevent or lessen substance use and related harm, continued monitoring of substance use and harm is essential. (Ball et al., 2022). The framework shows immense potential, whereas the YCAP focuses on a broader set of factors. CTC could be incorporated to address specific factors such as alcohol and drug usage. While there are regulations against drug use and the use of alcohol by those under the age of eighteen in New Zealand, this does not stop young people from using these substances. Research conducted by Ball et al. (2022) supports that by addressing specific factors relating to crime engage, crime rates are likely to decline.

Towards A Youth Crime Prevention Strategy, referred to as TYCP (Ashford, 2007), is a prevention plan suggested in the United Kingdom. Ashford (2007) suggests it is vital to reduce the entrants into youth crime by allowing more resources to be dedicated to improving the quality of community sentences and allowing for more effective work with those in the system. An interesting element of this plan is that Ashford (2007) draws attention to the cost of not intervening in youth crime. Although it might not directly affect youth crime rates, this encourages legislators to think about what would happen economically if nothing were done. This could help the YCAP programme and convince the public that harsher punishments would be more expensive for the nation than other suggested solutions. Much like the CTC (Rowland et al., 2021), the TYCP suggest targeted prevention is vital to improve the lives of youth and steer them away from engaging in crime. According to Ashford (2007), all relevant agencies, youth, parents/caregivers, and the community must work together to address risk factors associated with offending while attempting to increase and/or strengthen factors that protect youth from engaging in crime if there is to be a long-term, sustainable decrease in the

number of youths who engage in crime. For all relevant agencies to reach and provide services to youth most at-risk, it is vital to encourage, facilitate, and improve accountability (Ashford, 2007). As seen with the CTC (Rowland et al., 2021) and the YCAP (Ministry of Justice, 2013), it is vital to include the wider community and family when it comes to preventing youth crime or re-engagement with crime. Interestingly, Ashford (2007) suggests the importance of accountability where other programmes do not; this could be a valuable strategy to provide youth who are engaging in crime with a moral code that steers them away from crime. Like YCAP (Ministry of Justice, 2013), there should be measures in place that steer youth away from the justice system, with only severe crimes requiring the youth to appear in court. Also included in the TYCP were case studies to support their programme goals. They provided examples of youth who engaged in crime and how their suggested prevention methods benefited these youths' lives. This could be beneficial for YCAP as it would provide reassurance to policymakers and the public that their suggested strategies are evidence-based.

This section discussed public and youth views on the New Zealand Justice system as well as three different approaches to youth crime. The two studies completed on public perceptions of how to address youth crime yielded comparable results suggesting that those involved in these studies hold the same belief on youth crime and how it should be addressed. The article by youth suggests there need to be better communication measures for youth in the justice system. The Youth Crime Action Plan is making significant efforts to address youth crime in New Zealand; however, not all strategies in this plan work with what the public believes should be done to address youth crime. There is no mention of addressing issues raised by youth about current issues in the Youth Justice system either. Communities *That care* could be incorporated into current New Zealand systems to address the specific factors that result in youth crime. Factors suggested by the public, such as alcohol and drug usage, poverty, and family violence, have the potential of being specific topics this programme could address. Towards A Youth Crime Prevention Strategy provide insight into the importance of addressing youth accountability. Many of their points also relate to current New Zealand systems or points that could be incorporated from Communities That Care.

Closing summary

Youth criminality is a multifaceted problem, according to both youth and the public perceptions discussed. Both sides have mentioned the influence of family and friends,

boredom, and drug and alcohol use as contributing factors. Public views and young people who committed crimes also supported this thinking. It is essential to understand how public perceptions of youth criminality are developed. Halsey and White (2008) suggest that media play a significant role in shaping perceptions of youth crime. While some members of the public advocated for tougher sentences, recent preventative initiatives like YCAP have demonstrated that less severe punishments and early intervention are better strategies for combating youth crime. As one of the current preventative programmes in New Zealand for dealing with youth crime, YCAP, consideration should be given to combining tactics proposed in programmes like CTC as research suggests addressing factors such as substance abuse can lower crime rates (Ball et al., 2022). Addressing issues on a micro, meso, and macro level could help lower youth criminality rates.

The literature reviewed here helped the researcher better understand the factors that lead to youth crime, potential preventative measures, and existing youth crime prevention programmes. The study deduced from this that public perceptions of juvenile crime were underrepresented. This study aims to supplement and enhance existing material for dealing with and reducing youth crime wherever it is practical, as current literature focuses on small sample sizes and low reliability of findings.

CHAPTER THREE – EPISTEMOLOGY, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Epistemology

The goals of focus groups and interviews are influenced by various epistemological frameworks or philosophical methods of knowing, which are used to conduct research. The lens of knowledge the researcher uses to see the world and the process of conducting research is known as an epistemological framework (Katz-Buonincontro, 2022). The potentials, nature, sources, and boundaries of knowledge in a subject of study are all topics covered by epistemology. As an alternative, epistemology might be defined as a study of the standards by which a researcher categorises what does and does not constitute knowledge (Grix, 2019). What defines a knowledge claim, how knowledge may be produced or gained, and how the breadth of its applicability can be established are just a few of the topics that epistemology addresses. The importance of epistemology to conservation science can be attributed to how it affects how researchers frame their investigations in an effort to gain information (Moon & Blackman, 2014).

Subjectivist research is valuable in that it demonstrates how a person's life experiences affect how they view the world (Moon & Blackman, 2014). According to subjectivist epistemology, knowledge is based on how an individual interprets and understands reality. Therefore, reality is pluralistic, which means that reality may be expressed using a variety of symbols and linguistic systems, and plastic, which means that reality can be bent and moulded to suit the needs of different people. This is also a limitation of this epistemology as it suggests there is no single reality on which we base our understanding. However, for the purpose of this research, the researcher decided participant perceptions were more crucial to the research than constructing a set reality to fit participant understandings into. The world is given meaning and worth by people, who also interpret it in ways that make sense to them. The maxim of subjectivism may be, 'believing decides what is seen,' as opposed to the maxim of objectivism, 'seeing is believing.' (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Subjectivist research is valuable in that it demonstrates how a person's life experiences affect how they view the world. Due to the fact that the world is frequently perceived based on very individual experiences, a substantial portion of perception research uses a subjective epistemology. Therefore, subjectivist research offers crucial insight into the elements that influence each person's conservation behaviour (Moon & Blackman, 2014). As stated above, subjective epistemology is frequently utilised in perception research, and this study will focus

on university students' perceptions. This research's use of a subjective epistemology is due to the fact that it gives participants the opportunity to share the way they view the issue of youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. As this research aims to gain an understanding of university student perceptions of youth crime, using a subjectivist epistemology allows the researcher to gain these perspectives without being influenced by the idea of a precise and uniform understanding of the world. This epistemology allows each participant to share their perceptions and meaning to be extracted based on their unique understanding of the world.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

An idea or collection of ideas that give a theory in a research study structure is known as a theoretical framework. Researchers may use theoretical frameworks to direct their work, identify or examine innovative viewpoints, or make links between concepts that appear unconnected (Dziak, 2020). Theories are developed to explain, forecast, and comprehend phenomena, as well as frequently to challenge and advance current knowledge while staying within the bounds of crucial limiting assumptions. The structure that can hold or support a research study's theory is known as the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework is the philosophical perspective that informs the methodology, giving it meaning and underpinning the research's logic and standards (Crotty, 1998). The researcher is connected to existing knowledge by the theoretical framework. A theoretical framework provides researchers with a foundation for the researchers' hypotheses and method of research selection, guided by a pertinent theory. It compels researchers to answer the how and why questions by outlining the theoretical presumptions of a research project. It enables researchers to go beyond merely describing an observed phenomenon to making generalisations with the aid of a theory. A theoretical framework identifies the crucial factors that affect a prominent issue. It prompts researchers to consider how and under what conditions those crucial elements might change.

The theoretical framework applied to this research is the interpretivism theoretical framework (Crotty, 1998). The interpretivism theoretical framework, often known as relativism, is based on a variety of truths and realities (Brown, 2019). The interpretivist framework is used by qualitative researchers who do not perceive a single, cohesive world (Katz-Buonincontro, 2022). Interpretivism, which rejects the objectivist theory that meaning exists in the world independently of consciousness and is connected to the philosophical viewpoint of idealism, is a term used to describe a variety of methods, such as social

constructivism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics (Katz-Buonincontro, 2022). According to the interpretivist method, it is critical for the researcher to recognise how people differ as social actors (Brown, 2019). Additionally, interpretivism studies frequently concentrate on the meaning and may use a variety of techniques to reflect various facets of the problem (Brown, 2019). The interpretivism framework requires researchers to look at the subjective meaning and social phenomena. A researcher's focus should be on the details provided by participants. They should consider the reality behind these details, any possible motivating actions, and the subjective meanings of the data. This also reflects the subjectivist epistemology adopted in this research. The interpretivist framework acknowledges that it is appropriate to live in and study the social environment and that analysis will never be utterly neutral due to the fact that researchers are inextricably linked to the social reality that they are studying (Grix, 2019). As a result of the interpretivists' interest in subjectivity, understanding, agency, and how people create their social environments, there are now more complexities and unpredictability present. Even within the answers that interpretivism offers, there is a chance that contradictions and internal inconsistencies will appear. The scientific pursuit of specific laws or unambiguous knowledge of how things operate is at odds with this (Grix, 2019). Grix (2019) helps provide justification for using the interpretivism framework by drawing attention to the interpretivism's aim to gain an understanding of the topic being researched; this aligns with the way this research aims to use university students' perspectives to understand and address the issue of youth offending in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Grix (2019) explains that interpretivism is not limited to merely understanding but also aims to explain the issues being studied using this framework. Within this research, significant importance is placed on the perceptions of the participants and how they believe youth crime can be addressed in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The use of an interpretivist framework allows for participant perceptions to explain the causes of youth crime and possible preventions.

3.3 Methodology

Qualitative research

To better comprehend ideas, views, or experiences, qualitative research entails gathering and evaluating non-numerical data such as text, video, or audio. It may be utilised to uncover intricate details about a situation or to spark new research concepts. Qualitative research is done to comprehend how individuals see their surroundings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although there are several ways to approach qualitative research, most of them are

adaptable and strongly emphasize preserving rich meaning when analysing data. Grounded theory, ethnography, action research, phenomenological research, and narrative research are examples of common methodologies. While they stress distinct goals and views, they do have certain commonalities.

Utilising one or more data gathering techniques is a part of any research strategy. The most common qualitative techniques include observations, surveys, secondary research, and interviews. Observations require researchers to take careful field notes to document what has been seen, heard, or encountered. Interviews can be direct questions asked of participants in one-on-one discussions or by posing questions among focus groups with the intent of group discussion on the questions. One of the few areas of conducting qualitative research where there is a preferred method is data analysis. In a qualitative study, the researcher has identified the issue and has chosen a deliberate sample to gather information from in order to address the issue. However, the researcher is unsure of what will be learned, what or whom to focus on, or what the outcome of the study will be. In this case, participants were selected based on their age and their enrolment in tertiary education. The data that is gathered and the analysis goes along with the entire process to influence the final result (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Cardano (2019) explains the process of analysing data as the following process. Firstly, researchers need to organise and prepare their data. This can require typing up field notes or interview transcriptions. The second stage usually entails evaluating and examining the gathered information to look for any patterns or themes that may have converged. In the third step, which involves developing a system for data coding, researchers compile a list of codes they can use to categorise the data per their initial hypotheses. Giving the data codes is the fourth phase. As researchers go over their data, they can add new codes. Recognizing recurring motifs and overarching themes is required during the last phase (Cardano, 2019). The analysis of qualitative data can be done in several diverse ways. These strategies highlight various concepts even if they use similar processes.

There are several benefits of using qualitative research, including how new research topics emerge. Qualitative research can be modified while frequently attempting to maintain the voice and perspective of the participants. One of the most significant advantages of qualitative research is the accuracy of information gained, as it allows participants to interact naturally and express themselves on their own terms (Cardano, 2019). Qualitative research is useful for its flexibility as fresh concepts or patterns surface, the data gathering, and analysis procedure can be modified. They are not predetermined inflexibly in advance. Data is

gathered in realistic settings in a naturalistic manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Designing, evaluating, or enhancing systems can benefit from insightful observations and thorough descriptions of people's experiences, feelings, and perceptions. Qualitative research allows for the creation of novel concepts, and open-ended questions allow for the discovery of contemporary issues or possibilities that would not have occurred to the researcher otherwise. Researchers should take theoretical and practical constraints into account when evaluating and interpreting their findings.

Qualitative research has several drawbacks, which are important to consider when conducting research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research may not be credible if any uncontrollable factors have an impact on the results. When conducted in a real-world setting, qualitative research can be unreliable. Due to the researcher's primary role being data processing and interpretation, there is also the issue that qualitative research is subjective and cannot be replicated. When analysing data, the researcher selects what is relevant and what is not. Therefore, different people may interpret the same set of data quite differently. Qualitative research also has a narrow range of generalisation; to collect comprehensive data regarding specific topics, small sample sizes are frequently used. Cardano (2019) explains a lack of generalizability as a disadvantage. Despite careful research methods, it can be challenging to obtain generalizable results since the data may be biased and unrepresentative of the wider population. Another drawback of qualitative research is that it is labour intensive, which means data analysis frequently must be reviewed or done manually, even though software may be used to organise and record the data that is collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The decision to focus on a qualitative approach in this research was made to gain an understanding based on participant perceptions without limiting them to a set variety of responses that would have been gained using a quantitative approach. Here there was a focus on participant voices rather than responses that would have been gained using yes or no questionnaires or Likert scales.

Grounded Theory Approach

This research uses the grounded theory approach to qualitative research. Grounded theory describes a collection of systematic inductive approaches used to create theories through qualitative research. The term grounded theory refers to two distinct concepts; the first, a methodology made up of adaptable methodological procedures, and the second, the findings of this kind of research. As a means of enquiry for gathering and, in particular,

interpreting data, academics are increasingly using this theory. This approach's reasoning is fundamentally based on an inductive theoretical approach. Robust empirical underpinnings serve as the foundation for subsequent studies. These analyses present specialised, abstract, conceptual ideas that account for the investigated empirical phenomena (Lewis-Beck et al., 2003). Katz-Buonincontro (2022) explains that grounded theory studies 'ground' the theory in the data using the authentic voices of many individuals from an interview or focus groups, as opposed to speculating about how people behave.

Grounded theory, which is fundamentally comparative, offers rules for dealing with data that inspire new ways of thinking. The researcher develops new concepts by contrasting data sets; data sets with theoretical classifications and sets of theoretical classifications. The creation of grounded theories is not a result of the data itself but of the researchers' extensive empirical training and their analytical interaction with the data (Morse et al., 2021). Grounded theory techniques allow researchers to start but not end with these perspectives, even when disciplinary opinions make them more aware of conceptual issues. (Lewis-Beck et al., 2003). With these techniques, researchers engage in early data analysis from the start of data gathering. The following data collecting for grounded theory researchers are thus guided by early analytical work. Strategies based on grounded theory keep researchers actively involved in the analytical process. These methods also include checks to make sure that the emergent theory is supported by the evidence it is meant to explain. Additionally, grounded theory techniques influence the types of analysis and the substance of the data (Lewis-Becket al., 2003). The purpose of grounded theory interviews is to facilitate an in-depth discussion on a specific theme. Therefore, interviews are not tools for gathering facts but a method for creating interpretations of experiences (Tarozzi, 2020). Grounded theory instructs researchers to approach their research in a deliberate, analytical manner. They concentrate data collecting more on addressing analytical queries and completing gaps in the developing field. This was incredibly important to this research as one of the aims of this research is to bridge a gap in the current literature using public perceptions to address youth crime. They look for information that will enable them to have a complete understanding of what is being examined. Instead of focusing on the overarching structure of one social environment, grounded theory tactics in this research encourage the collection of detailed data about youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

It is important to note that grounded theory streamlines and integrates data collection and analysis, advances conceptual analysis of qualitative data, and validates qualitative

research as a legitimate mode of scientific enquiry. Researchers from various fields and professions have been influenced by grounded theory approaches, which have become a staple of social research theory (Morse, 2021). Without properly comprehending or implementing its specific guidelines, qualitative researchers frequently assert that they have conducted grounded theory investigations. One of two of the guidelines might be used, or they might confuse qualitative analysis with grounded theory. In contrast, other researchers apply reductionist, mechanistic grounded theory techniques. The flexible yet methodical manner of enquiry, the focused yet open-ended analysis, and the creative theorising from empirical evidence that grounded theory approaches can produce are not embodied in either approach. Therefore, the grounded theory approach promises to produce a middle-range theory that has yet to be completely fulfilled (Lewis-Beck et al., 2003). Incorporating grounded theory into this research aided and reflected the subjectivist epistemology and interpretivist framework used in this research. The use of grounded theory was justified as the current research did not aim to prove or disprove previous theories of youth crime but construct meaning from participants' perceptions.

Semi-structured In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are one of the most common qualitative methods used (Darlington & Scott, 2002). Semi-structured interviews combine elements from both structured and unstructured interview formats (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semi-structured interviews frequently have open-ended questions, which promote flexibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semi-structured interviews are best used when research is exploratory in nature. Participant answers can guide future research questions and help develop a more robust knowledge base for future research. Just like in structured interviews, it is critical to remain organized and develop a system for keeping track of participant responses. However, as the questions are less set than in a structured interview, the data collection and analysis are more complex.

When conducting semi-structured interviews, it is crucial to design the questions that will be used; these questions should be phrased clearly so that all participants understand them, and they should also be simple and concise (Darlington & Scott, 2002). Knowing when to ask related follow-up or free-form questions is one of the most challenging aspects of semi-structured interviews. For this reason, having a reference point is essential. It can be helpful to make an educated prediction as to what queries participants' responses could raise.

There are several sampling techniques that can be used to find research participants, including convenience sampling of people who can be reached easily for participation in the research, stratified sampling of a particular characteristic attribute of interest in the study, or voluntary sampling (Cozby & Bates, 2015). This research used voluntary response sampling where an advertisement was posted, and participants were sourced from these respondents. Whichever sampling method is selected, it is vital to be mindful of sampling bias; this can occur when specific individuals of a population are more likely to be included in research than others. It is crucial to plan out the conduction of the interview in advance (Darlington & Scott, 2002). Video conferencing might come out as uncomfortable or unnatural, which could have an impact on the results of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Due to Covid-19, this research was conducted using video conferencing. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that video conferencing provides the researcher's freedom from geographical restrictions when selecting participants. Video conferencing does have a downfall in that technology can be unreliable, "there can be problems with audio recording equipment as sometimes break up on cell phones or over Skype or other computer-mediated venues which can cause frustration for both the interviewer and the interviewee" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 85). Lastly, it is essential to keep environmental conditions as constant as possible this helps avoid bias. As these interviews were conducted using Zoom, the researcher used the available blurring feature. Researchers need to be aware of their body language and their facial expressions; it is also vital to maintain an appropriate tone of voice (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). To address this, the researcher opted for casual dress and maintained neutral expressions throughout the interviews.

Semi-structured interviews come with many advantages. Semi-structured interviews combine aspects of structured and unstructured interviews; as a result, they have the benefits of both types of interviews, including the ability to collect comparable, trustworthy data and the freedom to ask follow-up questions. By creating a thematic framework in advance, it is possible to keep the interviewer and participant focused while preventing interruptions and promoting two-way dialogue (Cozby & Bates, 2015). Semi-structured interviews offer more depth and richness since they are designed to be more open-ended, even if their methodology is comparable to that of structured interviews, questionnaires, and surveys. If necessary, participants may be requested to explain further, expand upon, or reformulate their responses. However, semi-structured interviews also have their disadvantages. Semi-structured interviews might lose some of their value due to their flexibility. Depending on how far the

interviewer diverged from the specified set of questions, it might not be easy to compare responses among the participants (Cozby & Bates, 2015). This was something the researcher kept in mind while conducting the interviews for this research. The researcher responded to this by keeping the aims of this research a central thought in an attempt to ensure all questions asked were of relevance to the research. Due to the fact that semi-structured interviews are open-ended, there may be a desire to ask questions that may influence the answers given by participants. To avoid this becoming an issue, the researcher avoided using any leading terms and instead asked participants to expand on their answers where they felt comfortable.

In contrast, research participants could attempt to provide researchers with the information they believe the researcher wants to hear, which could result in social desirability bias (Cozby & Bates, 2015). In an aim to avoid social desirability bias, the researcher assured and, where necessary, reassured participants that the research aimed to gain their perceptions of youth crime and potential preventions. If an interview deviates too much from what the participant had been told to expect, they may grow reluctant to answer questions posed by the researcher. This is one of the main justifications for why it is crucial to clearly explain the study both when the researcher first makes contact with the participant and when the interview itself begins (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). In the case of this research, participants were given information sheets to ensure they understood the topic of the research before interviews, and the researcher ensured they were only asking questions related to this information. Semi-structured interviews can be challenging to conduct successfully owing to the delicate balance between pre-planned questions and unplanned diversions. The degree to which everyone is willing to share also varies. It might be challenging to be both uplifting and objective. In cases where participants were providing only brief answers, they were encouraged to expand on their responses and also asked if they had any other thoughts on each response. Practical considerations will frequently constrain the number of participants who can be interviewed due to how labour-intensive and time-intensive semi-structured interviews are, from data collection to analysis (Darlington & Scott, 2002). Due to the time frame of this research, the number of participants was limited to twelve. By doing this, the researcher was able to make sure they had enough time for the interviewing, transcription, and analysis of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR – METHOD

4.1 Ethics

Ethical approval was gained through the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC); this research was deemed as a low-risk project and was approved on June 7th, 2022 (reference number 400025818). The research supervisor reviewed both consent forms (Appendix A) as well as the information sheets (Appendix B) in alignment with templates provided by Massey University. Information sheets outlined the purpose of the research, the aims, what participants would be expected to do, along with their rights while participating in the research. Consent forms were signed by both the participant and the researcher, these forms were scanned, and password protected, with hard copies being stored in a locked filing cabinet by the researcher. Participants' real names were modified to safeguard their identities, and false names were used in their place. The only documents containing participants' real names were their consent forms, along with a document that was password protected; these documents were only accessible by the researcher and supervisor.

4.2 Gathering of Participants and Participation Criteria

An advertisement (Appendix C) was posted on Massey University's social media groups, where participants were able to volunteer to participate in the research by contacting the researcher via email. The criteria for participation in the research required participants to be between the ages of eighteen-years-old and twenty-five years old, and participants needed to reside in Aotearoa, New Zealand and needed to be currently enrolled in tertiary education. This age group was selected in the hope that participants would be more comfortable with a researcher their own age range. Participants were accepted in the order of contact made with the researcher; three people were turned down because they did not meet the requirements for participating in the research. Where participants were not eligible to participate in the research or had to cancel before participating, individuals who had expressed interest in participating in the research were contacted in the order they had reached out to the researcher.

4.3 Sample

The sample for this research consisted of twelve university students from varying degrees and levels of study. Of the twelve participants, nine were female, making up 75% of the sample, and three were male, making up the remaining 25%. Although students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five were targeted by the participation criteria, the age range

of the final sample was twenty to twenty-five. Three of the participants (25%) said they had either engaged in youth crime themselves or had been victims of youth crime; the other nine participants (75%) said they had neither been involved in youth crime nor been victims of it. Table 1. provides information pertaining to participant age, gender, and ethnicity. Several participants indicated they were bicultural; this helped to provide a representative sample of diverse cultural backgrounds. Of the participants, 58% identified as New Zealand Pakeha/New Zealand European, 33% as New Zealand Māori, 8% as Cook Island Māori, 8% as Austrian Māori, 8% as Sri Lankan, 8% as Filipino, and 8% as Romanian.

Table 1.

Description of Participant Sample

Participant Name	Age Range	Gender	Ethnicity
Grace	24-25	F	Pakeha
Oliver	24-25	M	Pakeha
Emily	24-25	F	Cook Island Māori/Māori
Amanda	20-21	F	Romanian
Holly	22-23	F	Māori/Pakeha
Rebecca	22-23	F	Filipino
Sam	22-23	M	Pakeha
Chloe	22-23	F	Māori/Pakeha
Sarah	20-21	F	Pakeha
Ashley	24-25	F	Pakeha/Sri Lanken
James	20-21	M	Māori
Alice	24-25	F	Austrian Māori

Note. Female is represented with F, and Male is represented with M.

4.4 Procedure

Interview Questions

The research questions were separated into sections, with each set of questions relating to different elements of the research. The first set of questions was related to the participant sample; these questions gathered information on participant age, gender, ethnicity, and any connection with youth crime. The second set of questions was explicitly related to

crime; these questions aimed to gain an understanding of what participants understood crime to be, the actions they felt were criminal, actions they felt should be overlooked or considered more harshly, and the influences on their understanding of crime. These questions also aimed to get an understanding of what participants knew about youth crime levels and youth sentencing in New Zealand. It was vital for the participants to share their understanding of crime and criminal actions to ensure there was no miscommunication when discussing youth crime. The third set of questions was explicitly related to youth engagement in crime. These questions aimed to gain an understanding of why participants felt youth engage in crime and the causes or circumstances leading up to involvement in their crime. The fourth set of questions was related to prevention; these questions aimed to gain an understanding of what participants felt could be done to prevent youth from ever engaging in crime and preventing reoffending by youth. The final set of questions was related to the New Zealand criminal justice system; these questions aimed to gain an understanding of what the New Zealand criminal justice system is doing well, and any changes participants felt could be made to improve the current system.

The purpose of each of these questions was to elicit from participants a thorough understanding of youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. As each question was designed to be open-ended, participants were encouraged to share whatever material they believed was relevant. This also gave participants a chance to talk about external factors such as information from their studies, subjective experiences, or other information from outside sources. A copy of these questions is included in Appendix D.

Pre-interviews

Once participants had made contact with the researcher regarding their interest in the research, they were provided with copies of the information sheets and consent forms via email. Questions related to either of these documents were answered via email between the participant and the researcher. Once consent forms were sent back to the researcher and signed by both the participant and the researcher, interviews were scheduled at a time convenient for both the researcher and the participant. These interviews spanned over three weeks at varying times of the day based on times suited to the participants. The interviews were conducted online using Zoom and were recorded for the purpose of transcription.

Interviews

At the beginning of each interview, the participants and the researcher discussed their consent forms to ensure all the information was correct. Participants were given the option to ask any questions they had about the research that had not been discussed via email previously. Before the recording of interviews, the researcher confirmed that participants were willing for the interviews to be recorded for the purposes of transcription. All participants agreed to have their interviews recorded and understood that any information identifying them would be excluded from their transcript. The researcher had predetermined questions to ask the participants; however, participants were encouraged to discuss any points they felt were relevant to the research. The researcher also encouraged participants to expand on their answers where this seemed appropriate.

Once participants had answered all the researcher's questions and had the option to discuss anything else they felt was relevant to the research; the researcher ended the recording. After the recording portion was completed, participants were asked if they wanted to be emailed copies of their interviews and transcripts; this was done to ensure participants felt respected. It also provided participants the opportunity to amend or add to anything they had stated in their interviews. Participants were again given the option of discussing the research with the researcher. A debriefing was provided where participants had shared sensitive information to ensure they were comfortable with their experience and the information shared.

Post-interviews

There were two participants who requested to add information to their responses, and this was accepted; the researcher kept copies of both the original transcript and the amended transcript in a password-protected file accessible only by the researcher. A forty dollar e-gift voucher was given to each participant as a thank you for participating, sharing their knowledge, and taking the time to participate in the research.

CHAPTER FIVE – ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

5.1 Thematic Analysis

The use of themes in data analysis is a technique for assessing qualitative data. It typically refers to a collection of texts, such as an interview or transcript. In order to find recurring themes, subjects, concepts, and patterns of meaning, the researcher must carefully analyse the data. Thematic analysis (TA) is a tool that can be used to examine, describe, and synthesis data. TA can remain faithful to the perspectives of participants while capturing the semantic meanings in the data. It can also look at the presumptions and hidden meanings that underlie the overt meanings. More inductive or more deductive analysis can be done when using a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021). According to Braun and Clarke (2021), reflexive thematic analysis is an interpretive study of data that takes into account the dataset, the theoretical assumptions underlying the analysis, and the researcher's analytical resources and skills. The most common approach to conducting TA involves six steps: familiarisation, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining, and labelling themes, and writing the results (Hayes, 1997).

In order to learn more about people's perspectives, ideas, expertise, experiences, or values from a collection of qualitative data, such as interview transcripts, thematic analysis is an effective research strategy. The grounded theory approach was also incorporated during this process. The researcher exerts considerable control over the grounded theory method of data processing. It is vital that the researcher carefully considers the opinions of the research participants. According to Hayes (1997), an explanation of what is done and why it is done at each stage of the research process is a helpful tool when using grounded theory. For this reason, the researchers' steps are explained alongside the explanation of each step of the analysis. Rather than transcribing and analysing data as it was collected, the researcher opted to begin this process after all the interviews were completed. This was to allow sole focus on the content of the interviews without becoming distracted by added information during transcription and analysis. It is critical to recognise that the application of thematic analysis and grounded theory are both active, reflective processes that inexorably display the researcher's marks. Inferring from this is the idea that codes and themes created by one researcher are not necessarily going to be replicated by another.

Braun and Clarke (2021) describe data familiarisation as follows, "data familiarization like jumping into the deep end of a swimming pool: it is about immersion" (p. 133). It entails

reading and re-reading data to gain a thorough understanding of its intricacy and overall picture, typically with an emphasis on the data's more evident and semantic interpretations. This stage necessitates separating oneself from explicit meanings, viewing the data as data, and considering more general assumptions and concepts and what they might signify. The researcher should take notes about the data informally throughout this process when something of interest occurs. During the coding and subject creation phases, these notes are intended to function as a reminder to the researcher of potential analytical insights or ideas to examine (Hayes, 1997). This stage of TA can feel very unstructured; however, this is to be expected as it is about ensuring familiarity with the data before the subsequent phases of analysis. A reflective practice must be kept up throughout the analysis process. Researchers should think back on their presumptions and expectations for the study, the design decisions they made, and how they positioned themselves in regard to the subject and the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This step of analysis was conducted over a two-week period. During this stage, interviews were read between six to ten times to ensure familiarity with the transcripts. With each read, the researcher took broad notes on statements made by participants. This was done without comparison between transcripts.

During the coding phase of TA, the researcher switches from casual engagement with the data to systematic engagement, where they develop codes for different segments of the data. A code is a brief identifier, such as a word or a phrase, which encapsulates an essential analytical concept in the data that may be relevant to the research issue (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Concepts from the data that the researcher believes may have some connection to the issues being studied, in this case, youth crime in New Zealand, are tentatively developed and labelled as part of the coding process (Hayes, 1997). Based on Braun and Clarke (2021), codes should be able to convey both the variety of perspectives that can be seen in the data and the underlying meaning; this means that some codes will be more interpretative than others. Typically, these codes begin on a hard copy or in programmes such as word, where the researcher can add comments to the data to keep track of codes. For this research, the researcher opted to use the comment feature in word; this also helped protect the privacy of participants by not having hard copies of the transcripts. While there is software that can aid in transcription, the researcher also opted for manual coding to ensure the accuracy of the codes being used. As this research uses grounded theory, it was essential to use the data itself to construct these codes, as opposed to trying to fit the data into codes (Hayes, 1997). This required line-by-line coding where every line of the transcripts was examined. Each code that

was generated needed to be noted, as well as comparing these codes with other lines to build appropriate provisional themes (Guest et al., 2012). Analytical engagement is deepened via coding. New analytical insights are developed as a result of coding with the data and as data coding progresses. Even though this is a valuable thing, essential information from previously coded data items may get lost in the new insights or be overlooked entirely (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This stage of analysis was also conducted over a two-week period. Transcripts were read and coded three times to ensure information was coded appropriately and to minimise the potential of the researcher missing important themes.

The building components of themes is codes. While a theme identifies a broad pattern of shared meaning, a code often refers to a very narrow component of the material. This stage necessitates taking a step back from the details of the data and considering the bigger picture of the patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The coded ideas must be honed, expanded, and connected as added information is discovered (Hayes, 1997). Based on Braun and Clarke (2021), the goal is not to summarise what each participant had to say about a particular subject or data collection question. Instead, the objective is to examine several issues in order to gather a more extensive meaning that is connected by a core notion or idea. The themes that are identified in this phase of analysis should only be considered provisional. A compelling theme will extract an important pattern from the data and present a claim. The themes provide a nuanced and complex explanation of the data and the researcher's analysis. Each theme is distinct but connected to the others. The researcher has been one step removed from the data at this stage; thus, it is critical to go back to the data to assess the fit between provisionally developed themes and the interpretations offered by the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This phase of analysis was conducted over a week, during which time the researcher focused on comparing all the codes generated from all the transcripts. This process was done using a white board where all codes were written and connected. During this phase, no codes were excluded; this included codes that only appeared once across the twelve transcripts. Codes were connected based on potential overarching themes such as aggression, survival, and mental health.

The next phase of TA requires the researcher to develop and review their themes. The initial theme development, the coded data, and the whole data collection are all connected during the development and evaluation phase. To ensure that prospective themes appropriately reflect the meanings in the data set and also tell an engaging story about the data in relation to the research topic, it adds a second layer of quality control (Braun &

Clarke, 2021). Developing and reviewing themes is an adaptable and iterative process that involves mapping, analysing, and frequently modifying organised meaning, first across the codes, then across the coded data, and lastly in relation to the complete set of data (Hayes, 1997). As analysis progresses during this process, it is critical to avoid getting too attached to original conceptions of themes and subthemes. Thematic maps and central organising concepts can be helpful tools to enhance the design of a thematic analysis, identify connections across the entire study, and guarantee nuanced themes with a primary idea and defined limitations (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This phase of TA is not simple or fast. It requires constant reflection to ensure that no themes have been missed during the coding process, that themes have not strayed from what the data set shows, and that the analysis provides a comprehensive, consequential, and refined representation of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This stage of analysis was conducted over a two-week period. During this phase, the researcher also used a white board mapping codes and their connections. These connections had already been given potential theme labels; however, during this phase, they were further condensed. Themes were renamed and reorganised to represent better the information they portrayed. After this was done, themes were compiled into a spreadsheet and colour coded to ensure the researcher had noted all the themes and the frequency they occurred within transcripts and as a whole.

The focus and scope of the analysis should be fine-tuned during the next phase of TA, which involves establishing and labelling themes to define the precise story the data will tell for each topic and overall. The story is an analytical narrative based on data examples that will be displayed in the research's results section. Examples that persuasively and vividly illustrate the problem or argument are considered the most important examples to include (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The patterns that appear across the data sets would be undermined by merely citing one or two sets of data. For this reason, themes that were not supported by four or more sets of data will not be discussed in the following results section. Data does not speak for itself is a fundamental tenet in the development and improvement of the analysis. When conducting analysis, it is vital to interpret data, what the data is saying in regard to the research topic, and why what is being said is essential (Braun & Clarke, 2021). During this phase, themes were given their final labels that the researcher felt best represented the information within the theme. The topic of the theme and the analytical scope or substance is indicated by the theme's titles. Having a sense of the theme's scope before reading the entire analysis allows the reader to understand it better (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This stage of

analysis was completed over three days. During this phase, the researcher also identified the strongest themes across the data; these are the themes discussed in the results section. With the weaker themes not being discussed.

Instead of writing the whole results section as a separate assignment, the last phase of TA focused on providing a polished analysis and polished report. For qualitative research, the results and discussion portions of quantitative research reports are sometimes, but not always, integrated into one section (Braun & Clarke, 2021). To provide a better understanding, the results and discussion of this study will be divided into two distinct sections. The data sets' findings shall be clearly reported in the results section without any speculation of their meaning. The discussion will offer an interpretation of the findings, place them in perspective, and highlight their significance. Data excerpts should be used to support the themes while writing up the results section of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This was done by providing a brief description of the theme and then providing quotes from participants that strongly supported each theme. Braun and Clarke (2021) draw attention to the importance of a literature review. Not only must the researcher provide a contextualising literature review, but there should also be re-engagement with the literature in the results section or if this section is separate from the discussion section. Here the researchers should highlight continuities and discontinuities, using existing literature to extend the insights gained from the data and, if appropriate, providing reinterpretations of earlier research on the basis of what has been observed during analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Information from the literature review has been included in the discussion section as the researcher opted to separate the results and discussion into different chapters.

5.2 Results

It is important to note that responses were consistent across the males and females who participated in this research. The themes noted in this section are those that appeared most frequently among all the participants. Themes that only occurred once or twice were deemed insufficiently supported for addressing the aims of this research.

5.3 University Students' Understanding of Crime.

This section will discuss the research findings that relate specifically to university students' understandings of crime. This section discusses the types of actions that university students think of when describing crime; it also discusses what university students' perceptions of crime are based on.

Based on law

When participants were asked to describe their understanding of crime, 83% of participants described crime as being related to laws outlined by their local government. The respondents tended to believe that actions are considered criminal if the laws of their country state said actions are criminal. Participants were asked if there were actions they felt should be considered criminal outside of local laws; however, none were stated.

“my understanding of crime is that um... anything that’s illegal... that’s against government law” Sam

“crime would be something that contravenes the law” Oliver

“my understanding of crime would be [section removed] an act that someone does that in fact is, in fact does not follow local laws and, and, and, or rules” James

Participants in this research suggested that while crime is based on the laws set out by local governments, they do not always agree with such laws. With several participants suggesting that laws should be changed around the usage and possession of marijuana.

“I think drugs should be legalised [section removed] legalising marijuana” Rebecca

“possession of drugs should be treated much more as a health problem than as a criminal problem” Grace

Violence

Regarding the types of actions that university students described as being criminal, 75% of participants discussed crimes best described as violence. These types of crimes covered physical and psychological violence, ranging from low level assault to higher level types of violence such as murder. This theme was used to address responses from participants that caused harm to others; for this reason, the researcher opted to include psychological violence in this theme.

“and then you move up, you know, stabbings or possession of knives [section removed] like murder, um... homicide, manslaughter, those types of things” Holly

“and yea causing potential harm to yourself or others” Ashley

“obviously, there’s like the really hard out ones like murder um... assault um... abuse” Alice

Emily: "emotional and mental harm as well and... I guess sexual harm as well" Emily

Theft

When prompted to discuss the types of actions participants felt were criminal, a strong theme of theft also arose in the data. University students described crimes that were related to taking things that did not belong to them; this theme has been titled theft but also covers crimes such as burglaries, robbery, shoplifting, and stealing. These types of crimes were typically listed by participants when asked what type of actions they considered to be criminal. Fifty percent of participants suggested that these types of actions are criminal.

"it can be things like, it can be stealing" James

"theft, burglaries... um... home invasions, that type of thing" Alice

This theme includes home invasions based on the consideration of home invasion being considered a sub-category of burglary. Where those engaging in this type of crime have the intent of stealing items from these homes.

"things like theft, robbery, um... is more at the minor end, burglary at the minor end"

Holly

5.4 University Students' Understanding of the Justice System.

This section of results discusses the findings of this research related explicitly to university students' perceptions of the New Zealand justice system. The two themes that are discussed in this section are the lack of knowledge surrounding the New Zealand justice system and that even with minimal knowledge, there is a strong theme that the New Zealand justice system is failing.

Lack of Knowledge

One of the most prominent themes that occurred in this research was a general lack of knowledge about the New Zealand criminal justice system and what consequences youth were given for the crimes they engaged in. Out of the twelve participants, 75% had little to no understanding of the New Zealand criminal system. The other 25% had knowledge based on personal experience or stories from people in their lives.

"um... I actually don't know too much about what they're doing with youth crime"

Rebecca

” I don’t really know I’m not really sure what they um... receive as youth offenders ”

Emily

“um... just, the only thing I can sort of say about it is that there... it's different to adults but I just don't know what's different” Sarah

The following information depicts responses where participants did have an understanding of the New Zealand criminal justice system—demonstrating that participants who had an understanding of the New Zealand criminal justice system participants needed to have direct or indirect experience with the system.

“I know from somebody that I've kind of engaged with on this type of thing [section removed] a youth unit in the prison, it's separate from the mainstream [section removed] from what I've heard that they have more, not liberties, but they're allowed more outside time versus mainstream” Alice

“personally, what happened for me is um... I committed a crime, go to youth court...”

Sam

Failing System

Fifty-eight percent of participants suggested that the current New Zealand justice system was failing. These participants suggested that the current protocol set by the New Zealand justice system was not working and that in order for youth crime rates to change, there needed to be drastic changes made to the current system.

“the legal system exists to enforce the status quo, and the status quo is pretty shit” Oliver

“in my personal opinion I don’t think that ah... you know our criminal system works, I don’t think it’s ever worked” Grace

“there definitely needs to be something put in place cause I don’t think what, what’s... oh... what they’re doing right now... is stopping it cause we tend to see the same people and it’s always the same people that keep coming back and that’s gonna transfer to their adult life as well I believe um... the system is definitely failing” Holly

The excerpt from 'Holly' also links back to a lack of understanding of the New Zealand criminal justice system. This suggests that better knowledge of the criminal justice system is required not only for better understanding but also to address perceived areas of failure within the system.

5.5 University Students' Understanding of Youth Crime Level and Sentencing

Table 2. illustrates participant responses when asked about their understanding of youth crime levels in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Participants were asked if they believed youth crime levels in Aotearoa, New Zealand, are currently high or low. Participants in this research responded by describing youth crime as either high, not too high or too low, or as low. To represent this effectively, the terms high, medium, and low have been used within this table. These terms were defined based on participant responses to being asked if they believe youth crime is high or low. No numerical value was placed on these categories. This table also shows participant responses when prompted to discuss how they felt about current youth sentencing practices in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Participants in this research used phrases such as "too harsh" or "too lenient" to describe how they felt about the suitability of current sentencing for youth. The researcher chose to keep this phrasing of responses to remain faithful to participant responses. These responses indicated participant beliefs related to current youth sentencing. The term "too harsh" is used where participants suggest youth are receiving more severe punishments than necessary. The term "too lenient" is used when participants suggest youth are receiving punishments that are more forgiving than necessary. The code N/A has been used here for participants who stated they did not have enough of an understanding to appropriately address this question. One participant (Alice) stated that sentencing should be compared to the specific crime committed before commenting on whether sentencing is too harsh or too lenient. For this reason, this participant's response is listed as contextual. Both sets of responses were necessary for this research as they demonstrate how the participants in this study view youth crime and the sentences received for engaging in crime.

Table 2.*University Students' Understanding of Youth Crime Levels and Sentences.*

Participant Name	Crime Levels	Sentencing
Grace	High	Too Lenient
Oliver	Low	Too Harsh
Emily	High	N/A
Amanda	High	Too Lenient
Holly	Medium	Just Right
Rebecca	High	Too Harsh
Sam	High	Too Harsh
Chloe	Medium	Too Lenient
Sarah	High	N/A
Ashley	High	N/A
James	High	N/A
Alice	Medium	Contextual

Note. N/A resembles participants who self-reported that they did not have the knowledge to answer this question.

5.6 University Students' Perceptions of Youth Crime Types.

This section is specifically related to the types of crimes that university students perceive youth as being most likely to engage in. The types of crimes were separated into three categories: theft, drug related crimes, and property destruction. These were not the only types of crimes suggested by participants. However, they were the most prominent occurring themes in the results.

Theft

The most commonly occurring theme for the type of crime university students felt youth were likely to engage in was crimes of theft. These types of crime were discussed by participants as including petty theft, shoplifting, stealing, robbery, and burglary. One participant also suggested auto theft as a type of theft youth engage in. These types of crime were discussed by 83% of participants.

“the other main thing I think would be kind of stealing to survive” Oliver

“I’m pretty sure it’s mostly ah like lower-level crime there’s things like petty theft”

Amanda

“um... probably more sort of petty crimes like stealing” Sarah

Property Destruction

Participants also suggested that youth are likely to engage in crimes of property destruction. These types of crimes were typically discussed as arson, tagging, ram raiding, or simply stated as property destruction. These types of crimes were discussed by 41% of the participants.

“arson is another one [section removed] and not irregularly bridges and bits and pieces are set on fire” Oliver

“like the ram raiding, um... destruction of stores, shops, and stuff like that, that is happening at the moment like you know, like the tiktok, I know it's becoming like a tiktok trend” Ashley

” some of the more common ones can be damage, damage of property” James

Drug Related Crimes

As stated above, several participants suggested a need to change laws around drugs.⁵ in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This could reduce responses suggesting drug related crimes. However, drug related crimes were suggested by 58% of participants. This was typically described as the usage, possession, and distribution of drugs. Many of these participants later mentioned they were discussing marijuana when using the term drugs.

“drug.... Drug crimes 100% um... just because it’s so easy to get a hold of um... [section removed] yea 100% drugs... would be the main one” Chloe

“hmm... drugs is a big one um... but that’s generally if... generally that’s only like marijuana but it can escalate” Alice

“I guess like underage, well using drugs and yea, like drug use maybe as well” Ashley

5.7 University Students’ Perceptions of Why Youth Engage in Crime.

⁵ Specifically, laws relating to marijuana

The following section of the results is divided into sections that reflect the reasonings given by university students that can lead youth to engage in crime. Each section reflects a theme that occurred across participant interviews and was then broken into themes that reflect these understandings.

Peer Influence

Peer influence is the title used to describe themes of peer pressure, attempting to fit in with peers, showing off, and trying to make a good impression on peers. Seventy-five percent of participants suggested peer influence as a cause for youth crime, with all these participants discussing peer influence at least twice throughout their interviews.

“peer pressure I suppose but you know just like who you grow up with or what sort of influences are around you” Rebecca

“if their life is stable, I would say that their friends could influence them a lot” Emily

“you’ve got the peer pressure aspect as well um... you’ve got the parties, you’ve got the drinking, you’ve got the alcohol” Chloe

Family Influence

Family influence is used to discuss findings suggested by university students' indicating that family plays a role in youth engaging in crime. These types of causes included circumstances such as absent parents, family violence, or parents struggling with their own addictions⁶. These types of causes were suggested by 75% of participants, with 33% discussing multiple types of family influences.

“absent parents, you know I think it's primarily, you know, home issues, parents who had their own issues or you know, drug addictions, alcohol addictions, violence um... yea just being raised, not well” Grace

“um... I would definitely say their upbringing um... [section removed] their family, who they spend their time with” Emily

“just speaking ideas out there um... um... it can, it can be their upbringing at home”
James

⁶ Described by participants as addictions to alcohol or illicit substances

Mental Health

Mental health is used to discuss findings suggested by university students' suggesting topics such as trauma or mental illness as being a reason that youth engage in crime. Mental health was suggested as a cause of youth crime by 33% of participants in this research.

“to go back to like mental health struggle, mental health struggle isn't exclusively as a result of oppression, I think that that would be a driving factor for a lot of youth as well”

Amanda

“mental illness I think I've already said that, but different types of mental illness, you're more likely to engage in different things [section removed] they've got PTSD so they're more likely to... oh... it depends if they've got the fight mode on, they're more likely to be abusive to repeat the cycle” Alice

“they could be dealing with mental illness that they don't wanna like bring up or talk about with family, so that could be another factor” Holly

Thrill Seeking

Thrill seeking was a cause for youth engagement suggested by 25% of participants, with each of these participants discussing thrill seeking at least twice in their interviews. Thrill seeking is used to describe engagement in crime for the purpose of getting an adrenaline rush from the crimes being committed.

“and just wanting I don't know like that adrenaline rush almost, of trying not to be caught” Sarah

“and be like, 'oh yep, I'll just take that,' and then the more they do it, the more they get a thrill out of it um... I think it's similar with driving, like while you're underage, like without a license um... that's more for the thrill” Holly

“that thrill of um... stealing or something really gets you going, and it really... really hypes you up, it's a bit like an addiction sort of thing” Sam

Crimes of Desperation

Forty-one percent of participants suggested that crimes of desperation were a cause for youth engagement in crime. Youth engage in these types of crimes to meet their basic needs.

These crimes are committed in order for youth to provide for themselves and their families in the absence of stability.

“when things like rough sleeping are defined as crimes as well, I mean, what the hell else are you gonna do but break the law” Oliver

“Sometimes they may not have a father figure in their lives as well um... whether that’s because the father left or they’re in a gang or um... and I feel like youth kinda take it upon themselves to... look after their family, look after their mum, their brothers, their sister and to do that they do stealing and um... anything that’s worth money or anything that’s food or drink” Sam

“if you're unemployed and maybe you need money, maybe you'd be more likely to steal or, you know to make ends meet” Ashley

Participants who suggested youth engage in crime as an act of desperation were typically more sympathetic to the youth who had engaged in crime. In some cases, participants suggested punishments in these circumstances should be approached more leniently.

“if people are shoplifting because they're hungry, they can't feed their children and stuff, you know, I feel like it should be um... a bit more lenient for that type of thing” Alice

Despite the fact that criminal actions are typically the responsibility of the offender, according to a few quotes from participants in this research, the circumstances that young people must cope with in their lives are sometimes unavoidable.

Stability is in the Eye of the Beholder

This theme is used to discuss findings that suggest even when youth appear to come from a stable background that, when youth are engaging in crime, there is always an underlying cause for this behaviour. Based on these excerpts, participants believe that instability is not always observable from an outsider's perspective. This type of reasoning for crime was suggested by 33% of participants.

“like I said I think there’s always a root cause that’s started somewhere so you’ve got to, you know, figure out where that root cause was” Grace

“even if they've got a stable family and you know they're doing well at school, they could, they could still be being bullied by peers, they could be... they could be, you know, they could be enticed by peers” Sam

“you can classify it as stable, but from the outside looking in, but to the person that is concerned, is it stable? Is it very, very religious, respectful family and their son or daughter does actually say 'well no I'm not, I'm not in for God, are they oppressed and cannot do certain things um... [section removed], but I mean whose there to dictate, to say that the family life is stable” Chloe

5.8 University Students' Suggestions for Preventions.

This section of the results is explicitly aimed at prevention methods suggested by university students in order to reduce youth crime rates in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Mental Health Services

Ensuring youth had adequate access to mental health services was suggested as a tool for preventing youth from engaging in crime. This type of prevention was suggested by 50% of the participants. This type of prevention also includes suggestions for tools such as rehabilitation facilities, family therapy, and individual therapy options.

“any intervention like counselling, group counselling, or you could do like family counselling and individual counselling is really good.” Alice

“Also, there needs to be better mental health services, we need to be looking at the mental health of youth because there is something going on there too.” Grace

“the schools in my area actually put into place and that's having guidance counselling, that's actually having a counsellor available 24/7” Chloe

Education

Education was suggested as a tool for preventing youth from engaging in crime; the types of education ranged from educating those who interact with children, such as caregivers and family, who may benefit from parenting courses, to education providing youth with an understanding of how to safely engage in crimes such as drug usage where this crime may not be entirely preventable. Education was a tool that was suggested by 50% of the participants in this research.

“education on people who interact with children on a regular basis and education for parents as well” Amanda

“I think it’s safer to assume youth would do drugs or commit crime than not and to educate them properly on it, so they are safe regardless” Rebecca

Thirty-three percent of participants also suggested the importance of educating youth on the consequences that go along with any crimes they may engage in rather than only telling youth that they will be punished for their crimes without providing specifics on what the punishments could be.

“um... mmm... Perhaps more awareness of the things that you wouldn't be able to do if you uh commit crime, like it's harder to get jobs and things like that, like if people were more aware of actually like what reality is” Emily

“keep that programme, but you might want to do it in year nine as well when everything actually starts to happen youth get into um... and that's not going to capture [section removed] actually target year nine's as well and have a like a little bit of a... I don't know... mature course of it and cover a wider range of topics than it could when you were year five or six, right? Actually, teach them the consequences, too, not just the topics, they need to know what will happen if they do these things” Chloe

Stronger Support Systems

Stronger support systems were suggested by 50% of participants as a feasible way to reduce youth crime rates. These types of support systems included better family support, peer support, and creating stronger communities, creating better bonds with youth and the people who are impacted by their crimes.

“promoting connection with the family members cause you really need a strong family system, support system” Alice

“more people to reach out to and stronger communities maybe to help, you know have that support system for them” Rebecca

“isn't stopping anyone from reoffending pretty much, it could be that they need more social supports, family support, or even community support and family life” Holly

Youth Mentoring

Fifty percent of participants suggested youth mentoring programmes to prevent youth crime. This could be one-on-one mentoring for youth who had engaged in crime, mentoring provided by ex-offenders, or providing mentoring for youth in schools.

"mentorship um between, like I would say um... I mean, like most, most youth like, most, most youth don't want to talk to like community olds like adults, I mean [section removed] it could be like young adult mentoring in schools" James

"some sort of mentorship programme and actually working with the youth instead of just some sort of punishment" Sarah

"... you know, uh, mentoring maybe from someone who has been in like their position when they were younger but has changed their life course, or you know, that sort of thing" Ashley

Alternative Spaces

Alternative spaces were suggested by 33% of participants as a way to reduce crime. These would be places where youth can engage in typically criminal behaviours in a controlled environment and provide them with more spaces in their communities to engage in typical behaviour, keeping them engaged in positive rather than illegal activities.

"I reckon there should be more youth centres around the country, I think youth ah... get bored, I definitely did [section removed] so I reckon youth centres are, and there are some around the country but I believe there should be more especially in smaller towns or smaller areas" Sam

"I would say more, more like community things [section removed] in towns that it's more prone in [section removed] like youth centres or youth activities and distractions" James

"its kids being kids, the action, in that case, is trying to be understanding and channel that exploration into more controlled circumstances, I think there's the discussion about boy racing, right? [section removed] and then the alternate view is well then places like Mansfield um... or other paved areas should be built to accommodate them [section removed] so that sort of model, if it could be applied to other things like fucking round with fire or just generally you know just trying out new things..." Oliver

There Will Always Be Crime

When participants were asked what could be put in place to prevent youth from engaging in crime in the first place, 41% of participants suggested that there are no measures that can be used to prevent youth from engaging in crime entirely, suggesting that there will always be

at least some youth who are engaging in crime, this is demonstrated in the extracts of four participants below:

“I don’t think you can prevent any type of crime entirely, in my opinion” Amanda

“No, I think it... no matter where you are in the world it’s... there’s always going to be crime whether that’s adult crime or youth crime um... it’s just... it’s just how it’s always been um... and I don’t think there’s any way... anyway you could stop that completely”

Holly

“in the first place... um... I don’t know, maybe no, because if they’re gonna do it... they know that there are consequences anyway so possibly... it’s not gonna deter them... so I’m not sure... any sort of consequence will deter them....” Sarah

“but I feel like in a lot of cases it’s like you know people are just gonna make decisions like, like those decisions no matter what so, yea” Ashley

CHAPTER SIX – DISCUSSION

The goal of this section is to discuss the findings of this study. This involves exploring the significance, relevance, and applicability of the findings. The relationship between the findings and the objectives of this study will be examined, as well as how they relate to earlier research and new supporting information.

Purpose of the Research

The researcher for this project concluded that the public's genuine understanding of youth crime was underrepresented. By investigating how the general public in Aotearoa, New Zealand perceives youth crime, this study contributes to closing this gap in the literature. Participants in this project may provide important insight into the causes of or strategies for reducing youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This study intended to augment and expand existing material, such as Skrzypiec (2013), who researched public perceptions of the reasons why adolescents commit crimes, and Barretto et al. (2016), who investigated public perceptions of reducing youth crime. This research aimed to answer the following questions:

- What do university students believe causes youth crime?
- What do university students believe can be done to reduce and prevent youth crime rates?

The present research is a qualitative study of university students' perceptions of youth offending, the causes of youth offending, and prevention strategies in Aotearoa, New Zealand. It is hoped that the viewpoints of university students in this study will add to the body of knowledge and highlight areas that the public believes require more attention if youth crime rates in Aotearoa, New Zealand, are to be decreased. The goal of this research was to learn more about how university students perceive what crime is, their understanding of the New Zealand Justice system, and the circumstances they believe motivate young people to commit crimes and, any recommendations they may have for lowering the rate of youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Summary of Findings

This section is broken into four parts, each of which addresses one of the objectives of this study.

Participant understanding of crime

Participants were asked to describe how they view crime, indicating it is based on rules set forth by their local government (in this research, referring to the New Zealand government). Two themes emerged when participants were asked to list the kinds of behaviours they regarded as criminal: crimes involving some form of violence and crimes involving theft. Participants spoke about crimes that were most appropriately categorised as violent; this included psychological harm and physical harm. Participants also discussed theft-related crimes, such as shoplifting, robbery, and break-ins.

Participant understanding of the New Zealand Justice system

The overall lack of awareness about the processes in place and the punishments meted out to youth offenders for their misdeeds was one of the most prevalent themes in the research findings. Those participants who did have some knowledge of the New Zealand legal system drew on their personal knowledge or information shared by someone in their life. Although many participants knew nothing about the New Zealand justice system, participants believed that it was failing in some way. In their opinion, the current measures are unsuccessful; thus, if youth crime rates were to reduce, considerable reforms to the New Zealand judicial system would need to be undertaken. Only one person said they thought that youth crime rates in New Zealand were low when it came to the topic. When participants were asked about the types of punishments given to youth offenders, 25% said they thought the penalties were too harsh, while the other 25% said they thought they were too lenient. It was requested of the participants to indicate the kinds of crimes they believed youth were most likely to engage in. Theft, drug-related crime, and property destruction appeared as the three main themes about the forms of crime that young people were most likely to commit.

Participant Explanations of Why Youth Commit Crime

Peer pressure was cited by participants in this research as a contributing factor in young people committing crimes. Participants indicated that family influences young people's decisions to commit crimes. Mental health was proposed by participants as a reason young people commit crimes; this included trauma or mental illness. Participants cited thrill-seeking as a factor in young people's involvement in crime, and each of these participants made at least two mentions of it while being interviewed. Participants believed that youth engagement in crime might result from desperate situations. Youth may conduct this kind of crime in the absence of stability in an effort to sustain themselves and/or their family. Participants contend that even among those who appear to come from stable households, opinions of stability

might differ and that there are always more profound reasons why young people commit crimes.

Participant Suggestions for Preventions

It was recommended that ensuring young people had appropriate access to mental health care was one approach to deter them from committing crimes. This type of prevention also includes suggestions for alternatives to individual therapy, family counselling, and treatment facilities. It was proposed that one way to prevent young people from getting involved in crime is through education. The suggested forms of education ranged from training those who interact with children to educating youth on drug usage in situations where the crime may not always be entirely prevented. Participants agreed that it is necessary to educate young people about the possible repercussions of any crimes rather than simply telling them that they will face penalties without explaining what those penalties might be. Having strong networks of support was seen by participants as a form of youth crime prevention. These support networks may enhance connections with young people and others who were impacted by their offences while also strengthening relationships with families, peers, and communities. It was identified by participants that using youth mentoring programmes could deter youth from committing crimes. This could entail providing one-on-one mentoring, mentoring from ex-offenders, or mentoring for young people in schools or for those young people who have committed crimes. Participants saw alternative spaces as a prevention that may deter young people from committing crimes. These would be places where young people may safely engage in potentially criminal behaviour. Participants said that there is nothing that can be done to entirely stop young people from committing crimes. These participants made the implication that there will always be at least some young people who commit some form of crime.

6. 1 Interpretation of Findings

This section discusses how the findings of this research contribute to the existing literature. There is consideration of opposing findings, an interpretation and analysis of the research findings, a description of how the findings contribute to the field, and a discussion of other explanations for the research findings. This section will be split into four sections covering each section covering one of the main aims for this research.

Understanding of Crime

The researcher for this project determined that it was essential to discuss with participants how they perceive crime. This was to ensure there was a clear understanding of the definition of crime from the outset of this study. As a result, the researcher and each participant had a clear understanding of the kinds of behaviours that participants regarded as criminal. This was also done to address the understanding of crime through public perceptions. The researcher was also better able to understand the participants' foundational ideas about crime. Themes of violence and some form of stealing emerged when participants were asked to identify the kinds of behaviours, they thought to be unlawful. Typically, participants in this study suggested that local government legislation was the foundation for their knowledge of what crime is. As a result, violations of these statutes are regarded as a crime by participants in this study. Participants in this research did not discuss specific statutes making statements that criminal behaviour is anything that contravenes the law. Participants classified acts done with the intent to cause injury to another person – whether it be physical, emotional, or psychological harm – as crimes. Participants also proposed theft-related behaviours such as stealing, burglary, and robberies. It is crucial to remember that this data was not only focused on youth criminality in Aotearoa, New Zealand but connected to the participants' general awareness of crime. In comparison, earlier studies (Skrzypiec, 2013; Halsey & White, 2008; Burson et al., 2019; Barretto et al., 2016) that focus on public perceptions of youth crime do not address understanding of crime. This shows that while conducting research based on participants' understandings of crime among particular groups of the community, such as youth, it is not sufficiently explored how the public perceives crime and criminal behaviour. It was crucial that the participants communicate their perspectives on crime in order to avoid misunderstandings while discussing youth crime. Therefore, by explaining how crime is understood, the findings of this research have the potential to fill a gap in the literature currently available. This offers new viewpoints on the subject while highlighting how crucial it is to understand participants' thoughts on crime when exploring why they believe young people commit crimes.

Understanding of the Justice System

Many participants in this study claimed to know little to nothing about the criminal justice system. Meaning they had limited knowledge relating to how youth offenders were punished, what sort of penalties they faced, or what kinds of crimes led to young people being brought before a judge. Binnie (2016) showed that 87% of its participants knew very little to nothing about the criminal justice system in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This supports

the current research as the finding is mirrored in the report. However, this survey did not explain how participants who did understand the system acquired their knowledge of the criminal justice system. The current study fills in this knowledge gap by proposing that those who do comprehend the criminal justice system may have first-hand experience with it themselves or be familiar with others who do. While the majority of participants in the present study had no knowledge of the criminal justice system, 33% of participants had either been involved in the youth system themselves, worked in the criminal justice system, or knew someone who had been involved in the criminal justice system. Suggesting that understanding is gained through experiential and/or social learning. Beard (2022) describes a key feature of experiential learning as follows, "The experience is central to the learning process, and in experiential forms of learning experience is the foundation and stimulus for learning, and in this way the experience takes centre stage" (p. 22). Social learning suggests that people learn by observing others (Kretchmar, 2021); while participants may have an indirect understanding of the justice system, it can still be considered social learning. This emphasises the importance of ensuring that the public has a better understanding of the criminal justice system. The current study, Halsey and White (2008) and Binnie (2016) demonstrate a significant lack of knowledge in this area.

In this study, more than half of the participants expressed the opinion that the New Zealand criminal justice system, as it is currently, is failing. Binnie (2016) supports a need for more confidence from the public in the current justice system. However, there is limited research outside of this, suggesting public opinions on the current criminal justice system. According to Binnie (2016), just under 50% of respondents lacked faith in the criminal justice system as it is currently constituted. This is slightly less than those who suggested the system could be more effective in the current research. Although participants in this study claimed to know little about the criminal justice system, many responses showed that participants were unaware of what was wrong with the current system but were aware that it was not having the desired impact. It is crucial to acknowledge that participants in this study's suggestions that the current system is failing may have stemmed from their lack of knowledge of it. The findings do, however, confirm the public's perceived lack of faith in the New Zealand criminal justice system found by Binnie (2016). Lambie and Gluckman (2018) suggest prisons are immensely expensive breeding grounds for new crimes, damaging offenders' chances for employment, housing, family life, and escalating drug usage and mental health issues. While participants in this study do not expressly state that the prison

system is failing, Lambie and Gluckman (2018) provide a deeper insight into how the current system may be failing. The Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group (2019) also supports that the current criminal justice system is failing, stating that the public has little faith in the current system. Research supports the findings of this study that the current New Zealand criminal justice system is in desperate need of change to increase the public's confidence in its effectiveness.

The majority of participants in this study indicated that they believed youth crime rates were high, even though they did not specify what portion of youths they believed committed crimes in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Despite employing data specific to Britain, one of Halsey and White's (2008) conclusions was reflected in this study. The public overestimates the proportion of young people who engage in crime; this can be seen in this project with participants believing youth crime rates in Aotearoa, New Zealand, are high when in fact, they have drastically declined over the last decade (Ministry of Justice, 2022a). While the results of this study corroborate this finding from Halsey and White's (2008) study, it is crucial to keep in mind that many of the participants in this study had little or no awareness of the current rates of youth crime and were only giving responses based on their perceptions of these rates. While Halsey and White (2008) were able to attribute public perceptions of youth crime rates to media influence, this study did not yield strong enough results to support this conclusion. This conclusion is significant in the field even if these might not be the most reliable responses, as Halsey and White (2008) was the only other piece of research discovered for this study that explored perceptions of youth crime rates. As a result, it appears there needs to be further research conducted on perceptions of youth crime rates as it is an underrepresented topic in current literature.

This study produced contradictory results regarding participants' perceptions of the severity of punishments for engaging in crime. One-quarter of participants believed that the punishments youth received were too lenient, while another quarter of participants believed current punishments were too harsh. The finding that punishments are too lenient is consistent with the study by Barretto et al. (2016), in which just over a quarter of participants recommended that young people should receive harsher punishments, such as boot camps or military training. Even though no participants in this study advised boot camps or military training, at least 25% of the participants in this study feel that the harshness of the current penalties does not dissuade young people from committing crimes. The study by McArdle et al. (2018) also noted that some participants suggested that more severe punishment was

necessary. In contrast, the Ministry of Justice's (2013) Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) adopts an approach more in line with participants who believe current procedures are too severe. YCAP (Ministry of Justice, 2013) argues that early intervention and less severe punishment deter criminal behaviour. This is also supported by Lambie and Gluckman (2018a), who state that boot camps or programmes designed to scare youth straight do not aid in deterring youth from crime. This action plan puts multiple steps in place before giving young people severe punishments for their crimes. This is an intriguing conclusion because participants in this study's findings both supported the need for more lenient policies for young offenders yet also reflected the need for harsher penalties.

According to Levick (2019), young offenders are less culpable for their criminal actions due to their developmental immaturity, which also shows that they have a more significant opportunity for growth and reform. When analysing how these findings contribute to ongoing research, the findings support and refute the conclusions drawn from the previous works equally. This suggests that more research is required to decide the appropriate punishments for youth crime. To appropriately decide whether punishments for youth crimes are too harsh or too lenient multiple factors should be addressed. Literature here discusses punishment in black and white terms; however, it is far more complicated than what is observed outside. Youth who are in conflict with the law must be addressed in a way that considers their age and best interests in light of the evolving concepts of children's rights in international law (Crofts, 2022). When deciding appropriate consequences, there must be consideration of how many offences the youth have committed, the severity of their crimes, and what extraneous factors led to the crime. According to (Maroun, 2019), a judge decides the appropriate punishment based on the crime, the offender's criminal history, and the offender's family background, all of which are documented in an official report.

According to Spier and Wilkinson's (2016) findings, theft-related crimes are one type of crime that young people are prone to commit. While Spier and Wilkinson (2016) opted to classify theft and burglary separately, this research discusses them together. This research placed these themes together within the current study as they all involve the unlawful taking of someone's belongings. This does, however, simplify the distinctions between theft and burglary. Spier and Sun (2016) corroborate that youth are likely to engage in theft related crimes. Theft and robbery were listed as crimes more likely to be committed by young people (Tam et al., 2007). Garduno (2022) suggests that youth who have poor anger management, those who have been abused physically and/or sexually, and who have been depressed are

likely to engage in crimes such as theft or burglary. While this finding does not provide any new material to the literature, it does support the concept that theft-related offences are among the more frequent crimes young people are likely to commit.

The present study found that young people are more prone to conduct drug-related offences, which was also supported by Tam et al. (2007). The findings of Tam et al. (2007) covered drugs such as ketamine; in contrast, participants in this study suggested using, possessing, and distributing substances such as marijuana and MDMA⁷. The study by Tam et al. (2007) was based in Singapore; therefore, this might be an example of cultural differences among youth who offend. Durrant & Thakker (2003) suggest that drug usage across diverse cultures holds a different meaning. For example, in Indian culture, cannabis usage is regarded as a traditional practice used in social, therapeutic, and ritual contexts. Additionally, Durrant and Thakker (2003) suggest that drug use is common in cross-cultural settings for social reasons. This could suggest that while drug type may vary across cultures, social interaction is a motivating factor for usage. In contrast, the study by Putniņš (2010) reveals that rather than the kind of crime that young people are prone to commit, drugs and alcohol may be the root cause of young people engaging in crime. According to Rowland et al. (2021), having access to alcohol and drugs may encourage young people to engage in crime. Although the results of this study did not support the notion that drug usage influences youth to engage in crime, the findings do support that drug use is a type of crime that young people are prone to commit, which was also Tam et al.'s (2007) study.

Two studies mentioned in this project's literature review attest to the likelihood that young people will engage in crimes resulting in property damage (Spier & Wilkinson, 2016; Tam et al., 2007). According to the participants in this study, one of the three main categories of crimes that young people are most likely to commit is a crime involving property destruction. Victim Support (2023) describe property destruction as typically understood as wilful or intentional damage to property. This can include vandalism, arson and can occasionally result in fatalities (Victim Support, 2023). Participants in this study did not specify vandalism when discussing property destruction. However, one participant did suggest that youth may engage in arson for fun. Spier and Wilkinson (2016) claimed that there had been a drop in young people committing this type of crime. While it is mentioned that there is a drop in this type of crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand (Ministry of Justice,

⁷ Methylenedioxyamphetamine is typically used in tablet form (ecstasy) or crystal form ("molly").

2022a), it is still a crime that is occurring. Hence this does not challenge the findings of Spier and Wilkinson (2016). Tam et al. (2007) suggested property destruction as a crime, illustrating how some crimes persist beyond cultural boundaries. This finding from the current study adds to the body of research that suggests young people are likely to engage in property destruction and that while the number of cases dropped from 1,497 in 2012/2013 to 522 in 2021/2022 (Ministry of Justice, 2022a) property destruction crimes are still a crime that the public takes notice of.

Possible Causes for Crime

The peak of peer pressure on conduct occurs throughout adolescence. It is also at this point that young people typically start to disobey and question the authority of their parents and other traditional socialisation agents (Baskin-Sommers et al., 2021). Peer influence emerged as one of the most prominent themes when participants were asked why they thought young people engage in crime. Research conducted by Osei (2021) describes negative peer influence as being metaphorically contagious and suggests that youth who associate with peers engaging in delinquent behaviour are more likely to engage themselves. Participants claimed that youth commit crimes as a means of impressing their peers, as an effort to fit in with their peers, and to improve the way their peers perceive them. This conclusion is supported by Skrzypiec's (2013) study, which also revealed that youth commit crimes because of peer influence. Skrzypiec's (2013) findings also discussed youth who commit crimes so they can boast to their peers about it. The findings of this research did not corroborate this as no participant stated that young people commit crimes so they can boast to their friends; however, boasting might also be referred to as showing off, which was evidenced within the current research. Based on Skrzypiec's (2013) limited sample size, they do not yield the most substantial results. In contrast, Scott and Brown (2018) have a significantly larger sample to support peer influence as a potential factor for youth offending. Scott and Brown (2018) suggest that males are more likely to be influenced by their peers when it comes to crime, with females being more influenced by romantic partners. Participants in this research did not make a distinction between gender when discussing peer influence as a factor for youth crime.

Family influence was discussed by participants in this research as a factor in why young people engage in crime. Three-quarters of the study's participants offered this conclusion. The idea of family influence holds that young people who commit crimes do so

because they have observed criminal behaviour in their relatives (Marković & Lakićević, 2020) or because of absent parents (Morse, 2003), family violence (Delaney, 2021) or relatives who battle drug and/or alcohol addictions (Tyler, 2006). Skrzypiec (2013) proposed that crime may be caused by familial influences, such as learning criminal behaviour from parents or developing the view that criminal behaviour is acceptable behaviour. Although these instances of family influence are distinct from those seen in the current study, they show how family influence can cause young people to act criminally. Delaney (2021) draws attention to youth engaging in crime as they have relaxed parenting that does not prohibit criminal behaviour. This varies slightly from participant responses within the current research that suggest criminal behaviour could be related to absent parents. In either of these circumstances, it appears that youth who do not have positive role models are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour. Family discord may lead to young people committing crimes, according to Burson et al. (2019). Participants in the current study propose that factors influencing youth crime include familial violence or family addictions. Morse (2003) suggested that youth without two married and working parents' youth are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system. This is suggested within the current study, where participants indicate that youth with absent parent/s are likely to engage in crime. The current research does not provide reasonings as to why absent parents may cause youth to engage in crime. According to Kroese et al. (2021), single-parent homes are, by definition, social environments that make it challenging to develop compliance because one parent is unable to properly supervise, regulate, and socialise the child. This shortfall would increase the risk of engaging in criminal activity. Extracurricular activities and other options that encourage youth to concentrate on constructive pursuits rather than criminal behaviours may not be financially feasible for single parents. Single-parent families may be forced to relocate to lower-income areas due to reduced money, which could expose the kids to possibly contagious higher levels of peer delinquency than in better-income areas (Kroese et al., 2021).

The youth population around the world is experiencing a pandemic of mental illness, which will have negative life-course effects (Menziez et al., 2020). The rate of youth suicide and psychological distress has rapidly increased over the past ten years, which is alarming (Menziez et al., 2020). Youth's poor mental health is an ongoing national inequity that is getting worse (Menziez et al., 2020). The majority of females in the juvenile justice system meet the criteria for a mental illness, and females have greater prevalence rates than males

(Mapson, 2005). Females within the criminal justice system are more prone than males to experience a number of problems, most often substance use and mental health disorders (Mapson, 2005). Several participants suggested that young people might engage in crime as a result of mental health issues. When participants expanded upon the types of mental health issues being discussed, they included suggestions of trauma or some type of mental illness. Borschmann et al. (2020) discovered that the vast majority of youth who have been detained suffer from some sort of mental health condition. These conditions range from anxiety and depression to conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder. While the findings of Borschmann et al.'s (2020) study supports mental health issues in youth, who offend, their research only focuses on youth who have been detained. While only one participant in the current study specified the type of mental health issues youth might be struggling with, Borschmann et al. (2020) confirm a wide variety of mental health issues. Burson et al.'s (2019) study did not employ public perceptions for their research, instead looking at youth justice workers; this study also focused solely on the factors that lead young women to commit crimes, differing from the more general scope of youth crime in this research. Given that mental health is becoming a much less taboo societal topic, it is possible that this is why mental health shows up in this research as a critical factor contributing to youth crime. Therefore, it is also possible that participants in this study are more at ease talking about mental health than previous generations were.

Participants in this study made the argument that young people might commit crimes because they are looking for a thrill. Young people may commit crimes because they get a rush; one participant speculated that this rush could become addictive. Putniņš (2010) suggests young people adopt thrill-seeking as a means of escaping boredom. The findings of this research did not support the idea that young people utilise thrill-seeking as a means of escape from boredom. This finding broadens upon previous findings by suggesting that thrill-seeking is not only connected to boredom but also an attempt to achieve an adrenaline rush. Burt and Simons (2013) made a distinction between self-control theory and thrill-seeking behaviour, suggesting these two terms do not necessarily describe the same behaviour. Participants in this research did not suggest that youth who engage in crime are doing so because they lack self-control. Instead, participants suggested that youth are attempting to achieve an adrenaline high; this could be from engaging in the crime itself or the thrill achieved when getting away with their crime. While the current research focuses on youth crime, it is essential to acknowledge that thrill-seeking or risk-taking behaviours are not

always a negative force in the lives of youth. Duell and Steinberg (2012) state, "In many circumstances, adolescents may choose to take positive risks for their own benefit, such as improving their academic resume by enrolling in a challenging course or enhancing their social status by initiating a friendship with a high-status peer" (p. 3).

Crimes of desperation were suggested by half of the participants who took part in this research. Participants in this study asserted that young people might turn to crime to support their families or to meet their basic needs. Included in this are offences like stealing supplies such as food or clothing they might otherwise be forced to forgo. According to participants in this research, although youth are accountable for their criminal actions, the conditions that young people must deal with may be unavoidable, and they may consider crime their only option to meet their needs. Tyler and Johnson (2004) identified crimes of desperation as a cause of youth criminality. It is significant to highlight that their study concentrated on homeless youth who have engaged in crime. Despite the fact that their focus group is different from the one employed in this study, it supports the notion that young people are using crime as a means of survival. The current research does not support this theory as strongly as it does some of the other theories. It is possible that this is not a particularly compelling conclusion or that it is an understudied predictor of youth criminality; however, it is still a valid finding for this study.

Lastly, participants in this research hypothesised that a lack of perceived stability could cause young people to engage in crime. Participants in this study indicated that although a young person may seem to lead a stable life, this may not always be the reality. The young people who engage in crime may be victims of bullying. Bullying at school increased the likelihood of delinquency by almost threefold, whereas cyberbullying increased the likelihood of delinquency by more than threefold (Lee et al., 2020). While many schools put in measures to attempt to prevent bullying, unfortunately, it is not entirely preventable. This suggests further research should be conducted into both preventing bullying in schools as well as ensuring youth have the appropriate resources to deal with bullying. The current research supports that bullying is a potential cause of youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. While one participant in this research mentioned cyberbullying, that does not provide a reliable result on the impact of cyberbullying to build upon Lee et al. (2020). Participants in the current study also suggest that youth may feel under pressure to live up to the expectations of people who are important to them. Little is known about the connection between parent-child interactions and criminal behaviour in youth (Johnson et al., 2011). This

suggests a need for further research investigating high parental/caregiver expectations and youth crime.

Prevention Suggestions

Participants in this study recommended that more effective mental health treatments for youth are required if present rates of youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand, are to be decreased. This could consist of individual, family, and group therapy programmes as well as rehabilitative measures. Lambie and Gluckman (2018) suggest cognitive behavioural therapy is the most cost-effective form of therapy for preventing youth crime, suggesting this type of therapy has the potential to break intergenerational trauma and prevent youth from ending up in prison. As suggested by 34% of their participants, Barretto et al. (2016) also advocate for the need for youth to have access to rehabilitation services. This is comparable to the 50% of participants in this study, who indicated that using some kind of mental health services could reduce youth crime rates. The findings from McArdle et al. (2018) reinforce the necessity for mental health services, as 34% of their participants suggested that counsellors should be more accessible to young people who are at risk of offending. Lambie and Gluckman (2018) suggest that therapy programmes are a highly effective early prevention method. This included programmes available for both youth and their caregivers. As a result, it would seem that mental health services would be helpful both as a strategy for prevention and as a tool for assisting in the reduction of the number of young people reoffending. Programmes designed for older youth are more intellectually centred, involve more extensive treatment, and involve numerous functional domains (Advisory Group on Conduct Problems, 2009). Individual therapy, multisystemic therapy, and functional family therapy were among the methods suggested (Advisory Group on Conduct Problems, 2009). This provides evidence in support of the participants in the current study's suggestion of a variety of therapies. When considering rehabilitative programmes relating to issues such as substance addictions, research suggests these are most effective when used as early intervention tools (Lambie & Gluckman, 2018). It would be beneficial for further research to address the types of therapy programmes that are not beneficial in reducing youth crime, as current literature seems to focus on only those that have a positive effect.

Participants in this study proposed a solution to reduce youth crime rates in Aotearoa, New Zealand: ensuring that youth have strong support networks. Maxwell (2007) and Burson et al. (2019) found in earlier studies that young people who lack a strong support system are

more likely to commit crimes or commit repeat offences. Young people who have received inadequate family support are more likely to commit crimes, according to Maxwell's (2017) research. Barnert et al. (2015) suggested that youth who have been incarcerated require stronger support from their families. Stating that participants felt their families' love and support were protective factors for deterring them from crime. Barnert et al. (2015) also demonstrated how social support could be provided outside the family, indicating that support from teachers could also deter youth crime. The findings of this research are consistent with Burson et al.'s (2019) theory that a lack of family support can encourage youth to commit crimes, as evidenced by participants' suggestions that stronger family ties might assist in reducing youth offending rates. These findings show that young people with strong support networks are less likely to commit crimes. Strong support systems could, according to a small body of literature, have the potential to lower the youth crime rate in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The current YCAP (Ministry of Justice, 2013) emphasises the importance of strong connections among families and communities. It also suggests that "Those working with children and young people encourage them to develop a sense of who they are, resilience, and self-management, and build positive relationships with whānau, adults and peers" (Ministry of Justice, 2013, p. 18).

There is limited research supporting the effectiveness of education as a preventative measure in regard to youth crime. Lochner (2004) suggests that "a policy that subsidizes schooling or job training is likely to reduce crime more in the long run than the short run by increasing skill levels." (p. 813). Participants in this study claimed that young people are not informed enough about the potential repercussions of committing crimes, such as prison time or the kinds of offences that could lead to home detention. Participants expressed concern that young people may not realise how committing crimes can affect their adult lives, including their ability to gain employment. Education of young people and those who participate in their lives may help lower the youth crime rate because they may be more equipped to raise children and educating youth on repercussions may help them better comprehend their conduct. If more data supported this conclusion, it might be seen as a successful method for lowering youth crime rates in Aotearoa, New Zealand. There was insufficient evidence within this study to support the claim that educating young people and the people in their life will lower youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. A crucial difference between the current research and the study conducted by Lochner (2004) is that participants in this research had a stronger focus on education surrounding crime and its consequences. In

comparison, Lochner (2004) highlights that people of higher education and skill are less likely to engage in crime. Considering this, the findings of this research bring added information to the field, suggesting a different form of education amongst youth to reduce youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

According to the perceptions of 50 percent of the participants in this research, youth mentorship programmes could lower the rate of youth crime. According to participants, one-on-one mentoring with ex-offenders will give youth a first-hand perspective of how these activities affect people's lives and assist them in understanding the potential ways committing crimes can impact their lives. Mentoring young people who have committed crimes may give young people a glimpse of what their life could look like if they engage in crime; a method such as this may have a more significant impact as they are hearing from peers their own age. According to DuBois (2021), linking young people with mentorship programmes is a practical way to both prevent and curtail delinquent conduct. Actions aimed toward mentor training and support tend to increase the success of the mentoring programme. Mentoring relationships have been shown to be effective at promoting positive outcomes, such as the reduction of delinquent conduct, when youth have an emotional connection with their mentor and related interpersonal experiences (Dubois, 2021). Olsson et al. (2021) conducted research investigating the effect of mentoring on recidivism; however, the results of this study did not suggest that mentoring had any impact on the likelihood of reoffending. However, Olsson et al. (2021) are criticised for drawing conclusions based on a small sample (DuBois, 2022). The effectiveness of mentoring programmes varies, and there is a lack of knowledge on the length of time that benefits last (King et al., 2019). This suggests that there needs to be further investigation into the effectiveness of youth mentoring in reducing crime.

Lastly, according to 33% of participants in this research, alternative spaces could be used to deter youth from engaging in crime. Participants in this research believe that youth will be less likely to commit crimes if they have access to areas that allow them to act in ways that are inappropriate in public; however, there is little research to support this idea in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Participants in this study did not make reference to green space; however, research suggests that this could reduce crime rates as well as increase community health. According to a recent study, carefully planned and managed outdoor green space has the power to make communities safer, keep citizens healthier, and reduce violent crime and gun violence. On the other hand, poorly planned and poorly maintained green space can encourage the emergence and growth of crime (University of Virginia Health System, 2020).

Participants proposed that youth centres could minimise youth criminality, particularly in smaller areas where there is not much for young people to do. Sports facilities could also be used as alternative venues where young people can interact with others their own age and engage in sports activities rather than commit crimes. This offers a chance for later research to build on this discovery.

6.2 Implication of the Findings

This section of the discussion focuses on how the findings of this research contribute to the field, where these findings are applicable, why the findings should be addressed, and ways the findings of this research can be applied. The stakeholders for this research include the youth justice system, government agencies that deal with youth welfare and interventions for youth crime, as well as providers who implement and promote youth crime prevention in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Findings from this study highlight the significance of expanding mental health services for young people in Aotearoa, New Zealand, to lower youth crime rates. The New Zealand government should consider the services now provided for youth and assess how they might be made more accessible. Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction (2018) highlight that improving mental health issues can be beneficial in reducing criminal acts as well as violence in Aotearoa, New Zealand. However, there are a number of suggested changes in order for this to be achieved. This information also highlights that by addressing drug and alcohol issues, crime can be reduced, as currently, a high portion of criminal acts have been connected to substance abuse. The most critical issue highlighted by Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction (2018) is a need for a shift between stigmatising mental health issues and addiction towards viewing these as health issues that require attention and support. The Office of the Children's Commissioner (2022) provided suggestions from young people about the changes they felt would create better lives. Among these suggestions was ensuring the wellbeing of their families. According to Spier and Wilkinson (2016), group conferences are already in place in Aotearoa, New Zealand. However, it would be wise to take into account mental health services that can be provided before young people commit crimes. It is important to note that there are several options available in Aotearoa, New Zealand, for those requiring assistance with their mental health. Aotearoa, New Zealand, has free helplines dedicated to youth requiring mental health assistance, such as Youthline and What's Up. There are also helplines dedicated to specific

issues, such as the Depression helpline, Suicide Prevention helpline, and Alcohol Drug helpline (Health Navigator New Zealand, 2022). Young people in Aotearoa, New Zealand, also have access to online resources such as The Lowdown and Sparx. In circumstances where youth require counselling or psychotherapy, their doctors may provide them with a referral (Health Navigator New Zealand, 2022). Based on the findings of this research, there needs to be increased youth awareness of the services already available to them. We need to ensure that young people at risk of engaging in offending behaviour are aware of how to access mental health services and rehabilitative programmes available to all youth, no matter their circumstances.

Burson et al. (2019) and Maxwell (2017) concur that youth support networks must be strengthened. Youth must be made aware of the value of social support to address this finding. This could be accomplished by educating them in school programmes on how to uphold healthy connections with their family, friends, and peers. Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki (2019) found that young people in New Zealand need stronger support systems in place from their school systems, ensuring this would increase youth wellbeing based on the opinions of young people. Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction (2018) expands on this, indicating that youth with a keen sense of wellbeing are less susceptible to issues like substance abuse which can result in youth crime. Youth must put in the effort, as well as others in their circles, to ensure that good relationships are created with individuals who are significant in their lives for stronger support structures to function as a prevention approach. Youth may find it challenging to ask for help, so it is essential to reassure them and teach them that doing so is appropriate when they need it. Additionally, it is critical that parents offer youth strong support. As stated by Barnert et al. (2015), youth agree that strong support and love from those in their lives are protective factors against engaging in crime. They may do this by being involved in their children's life and motivating them to be the best versions of themselves. Youth support networks need to be addressed as they could connect young people with those who can steer them away from criminal behaviour.

Another prevention tactic is mentoring young people. The Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Development, and Child Youth and Family fund three youth mentoring programmes: Fresh Start Therapeutic Youth Mentoring, Check and Connect, and the National Māori and Pasifika Mentoring Service (New Zealand Government, 2016). Effective youth mentoring could be accomplished either by setting out a specific amount of time for young

people to spend with mentors or by scheduling frequent meetings for them. As an optional extracurricular activity, youth mentoring could also be offered. It would be necessary for mentors to undergo training and ensure they do not constitute a threat or risk to the young people they would be working with if mentoring were conducted by those who had committed crimes. Research done in New Zealand on the effectiveness of youth mentoring as a prevention strategy has been of inconsistent quality. Only a small percentage of known, current mentoring programmes in the country have undergone evaluations of their programmes' usefulness for mentees (New Zealand Government, 2016). However, it is suggested that youth mentoring has the potential to reduce crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand (New Zealand Government, 2016).

To lower youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand, additional research should be done on the advantages of creating alternative spaces. One participant within the current study described an example of what a controlled environment could look like, suggesting a controlled environment where boy racers have access to large, paved areas where they can have fun in their cars, enjoy the scene and the culture of the group without endangering the public. This model could also be applied to designing spaces where youth can explore activities involving fire or places where they are encouraged to express art that is otherwise considered vandalism. Crime Prevention Through Environment Design (CPTED) (Campbell, 2023) supports that rather than designing spaces where crime can be committed in a controlled environment, areas where crimes frequently occur should be redesigned to make crime less easily committable. In Aotearoa, New Zealand, CPTED offers a paradigm for integrating crime prevention within high-quality urban design by concentrating on lowering the potential to commit crime and subsequently lowering the motive to offend (Ministry of Justice, 2005). However, the current research suggests that youth will engage in crime no matter what is put in place to deter them. For this reason, the findings of this research contradict current plans for deterring crime. It would be beneficial to put consideration into different areas where young people could act out in a safe and supervised environment. Alternative spaces might be accomplished by setting up venues where youth can routinely participate in non-competitive sporting activities. Youth would have options for participating in activities inside the community if these kinds of alternative spaces were introduced, hopefully discouraging them from engaging in crimes. Participants in the current research suggested activities such as basketball, soccer, and hands on crafts. These areas ought to be open to everyone whenever possible to prevent the social youths' class from excluding young

people from them. Local fundraising efforts could be used to make sure that all young people continue to have access to these possibilities.

6.3 Limitations

The following section will discuss the limitations of this research. Discussion of limitations is an essential aspect as these limitations may have an impact on the results and conclusions of this research.

Braun and Clarke (2021) identify the main limitation of this study as the fact that research utilising qualitative methodologies is constrained by the data gained during the research. This meant that the interpretation of the data could only be based on what the participants said, and that any interpretation of the data had to be supported by what the participants within this research had said. The adoption of a qualitative methodology was the most effective strategy to address the goals of this research, even though this can be considered a constraint. The information gathered using a qualitative methodology served as the most significant information source for this study while preserving the authenticity of the participants' voices.

A potential limitation of this research is the use of a small sample size. This study used a sample of twelve participants, similar to a limitation suggested by Lount et al. (2017), who had eight participants; this may be a limitation in this research. The sample for this research was primarily female, in contrast to Lount et al. (2017), whose research focused solely on young males. Although it was determined by the primary researcher that this sample size was adequate, a larger sample would yield a more extensive data set. A larger data collection might have produced more conclusive results and might have revealed themes that were either overlooked or underdeveloped for consideration in this research.

Based on Moon and Blackman's (2014) work, it was decided by the primary researcher to use a subjectivist epistemology for this study, as this would suggest each participant's view of reality is unique, and so is reality itself based on this epistemology. Though participant responses often shared specific themes, the researcher also had to consider that participants in this study had different conceptions of reality because this research adopts the subjectivist epistemology. This posed a potential limitation for the research as it makes it difficult to assume that participant knowledge is founded on shared worldviews. The meanings underlying participant responses might have provided different

understandings of the topics addressed in this research if an objectivist epistemology had been adopted in this study.

Lastly, it is crucial to recognise that there are limitations relating to the researcher of this project. It is plausible that themes were overlooked or that the researcher omitted participant questions that might have elicited stronger responses to the research objectives due to this being the researcher's first project of this size and scope. This type of analysis and methodology was also something the researcher had not engaged in previously, so it is also possible that the researcher may have been inexperienced when conducting a project of this magnitude, a limitation also suggested by Braun and Clarke (2021). For this reason, it was vital that the researcher studied and familiarized themselves with the methodology and analysis procedures. In addition, the researcher for this project was limited to their own cultural viewpoints as well as their own life experiences, making it possible that the researcher was unable to perceive unfamiliar cultural perspectives that were shared by a significant percentage of participants in this study. In order to address this, the researcher attempted to set aside their own beliefs and understandings, focusing specifically on what the participants had said. The researcher attempted to make unbiased notes on participant responses and made comparisons across transcripts. The researcher ensured to keep their review of the literature in mind during analysis to aid in shaping their understanding of the data.

6.4 Recommendations for Further Research

An increase in young people participating in ram raids⁸ has been observed in Aotearoa, New Zealand, during the past twelve months (Todd, 2022). Future research on the public's perceptions of the youth offending rates in Aotearoa, New Zealand, could go further, given the level of media attention that this topic has received. If participants in a study like this discuss the types of crimes, they think young people are more likely to commit, the research may produce different results than those provided by this study.

Due to the sampling of this research, it is not appropriate to generalise the results beyond the perceptions of those who participated in the research. A larger sample size would provide more reliable results and allow space to further build on the results of this research and help develop the body of knowledge on public perceptions of youth crime. Further

⁸ "The act of driving a car, usually a stolen car, through the front window of a shop so that the contents of the shop can be stolen" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)

research could focus on a different age group of university students or use a sample of the same age group who have not engaged in tertiary education.

There was little discussion of the impact of media on public perceptions of youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. This was due to the issue of media influence being unrelated to the study's research aims. However, in order to address the factors that affect how the public perceives youth crime, further study on the role of media in public understanding of youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand, would be beneficial. According to other studies, the media worsens views of issues such as youth crime (Halsey & White, 2008). Participants in this study suggested they learned a lot of what they knew about youth crime from the news and social media. Further research into this subject may shed light on the veracity of information about crime that is posted online and any implications this may have for how the public perceives the crimes that young people in Aotearoa, New Zealand, are committing.

CHAPTER SEVEN – CONCLUSION

This section will conclude the thesis by restating the purpose of this research, how the research was approached, and providing a closing summary of the research as a whole.

Addressing Research Aims

This study aimed to investigate university students' perceptions of youth crime and interventions for preventing youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The research adopted a subjective epistemology and an interpretive theoretical framework. The research used a qualitative research methodology with a focus on grounded theory (Lewis-Beck et al., 2003). The use of semi-structured interviews allowed space for participants to share their knowledge and expand upon ideas they felt were important while also providing a chance for the research aims to be addressed thoroughly. The use of thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2021) allowed for the identification of recurring themes among participant responses. These themes provide the information required to answer what university students understood about crime, their perceptions of youth crime, and intervention strategies within the context of Aotearoa, New Zealand. All participants in this study were enrolled at Massey University; this was done to ensure the results of this research had a clear focus on university student perceptions. The participants in this research were located across Aotearoa, New Zealand, rather than limiting participants to one location within the country and were aged between 18 and 25.

Closing Summary

By examining the perceptions of university students in Aotearoa, New Zealand, this study intended to understand youth crime and preventions. The study investigated the definition of crime among university students as well as their perceptions of youth crime, the causes of youth crime, and potential prevention strategies. The study discusses the areas where viewpoints differ from those of previous studies and supports a number of their conclusions. The study's findings aid in filling the gap of public voices in the existing literature.

This study found that university students' understanding of crime was related to laws outlined by their government and that actions contravening these laws were, therefore, criminal. Within this study, crime was typically understood as actions relating to theft or violence. When it came to university students' understanding of the New Zealand criminal justice system, there was a distinct lack of knowledge surrounding current procedures for

handling youth who engage in crime. Where participants did have an understanding, it was typically first-hand knowledge or information shared by peers. While there was a lack of knowledge among participants about the justice system, there was a general consensus among participants that the current system is failing. Participants were equally divided on whether punishments for youth were appropriate. Amongst this sample, there was a strong indication that youth crime rates in Aotearoa, New Zealand, are high. Three main themes occurred within this research on the crimes youth engage in theft, property destruction, and drug related crimes. Participants suggested that youth engage in crime due to family or peer influence, thrill seeking, mental health, out of desperation, or due to a lack of stability. When addressing preventions, the following suggestions were made; more effective mental health services, education, ensuring stronger support systems, youth mentoring, and alternative spaces.

The implications of this study suggest the importance of increased mental health services. When considering creating a stronger support system for young people, youth need an understanding of the importance of a strong support system and how to create one. It is also essential to ensure that families understand the importance of being a strong support system for youth. When considering the implications of educating youth, having the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education working together appears to increase the success rate of education in lowering youth crime rates. It may also be beneficial to ensure that families of youth are equipped with adequate skills in caring for youth. Youth mentoring could be more actively introduced into school systems or as an optional activity for youth who would benefit from the experience. It would need to be ensured that those mentoring youth were appropriate for the position. Lastly, local communities may benefit by providing youth with alternate spaces where they can engage in group activities or engage in otherwise inappropriate behaviours in a controlled environment. These areas would need to be made available to youth no matter their financial circumstances; therefore, they may benefit from local fundraising to ensure they remain free or low cost.

Despite the limitations of this research, the researcher carefully considered all of the options before proceeding to ensure they gained results that best addressed the aims of this project. These limitations included the research using a small, focused sample size, the use of an epistemology that suggests that knowledge is subjective, that there was limited research for this project to build upon, and lastly, the researchers' lack of experience as well as their limited life perspective.

This study shines new light on community prevention strategies relating to alternative spaces for youth. The findings of this research were typically reflective of current literature. However, with the sample used to address the topic of youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand, these findings aid in bridging a gap in the currently available literature. Some of the findings challenged current literature, highlighting the need for further research on ideas such as youth engaging in crime out of boredom or for revenge. This research also highlights the need for further study into public views on the appropriateness of current consequences for youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent Form

Why and What Can We Do? University Student Perceptions of Why Young People Offend.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Information Sheet attached as Appendix I. I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

1. I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.
2. I agree/do not agree to the interview being image recorded.
3. I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.
4. I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.
5. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
6. If I withdraw from the study, I agree/do not agree to the use of my data being used anonymously.

Declaration by Participant:

I _____ hereby consent to take part in this study.

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix B: Information Sheet

Why and What Can We Do? University Student Perceptions of Why Young People Offend.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Ethics Number: 4000025818

Researchers: Primary Researcher: Tayla Ellison
Research Supervisor: Associate Professor Julia Ioane

You are invited to take part in this research project. This Participant Information document contains detailed information about the research project and aims to explain to you as openly and clearly as possible all the procedures involved in this project. Please read this information carefully, and feel free to ask questions about any information in the document. You may also wish to discuss the project with a relative or friend. Once you understand what the project is about and if you agree to take part in it, you will be asked to sign a Statement of Informed Consent form. By signing the statement of consent, you indicate that you understand the information provided to you and that you give your consent to participate in the research project. You will be given a copy of this Participant Information document to keep.

AIM

The aim of this research is to gain an understanding of university student perceptions of why youth offend and to develop ideas on how we can reduce youth offending. Much research focuses on perceptions of youth offending from the offenders themselves, their families and their victims, this research will provide another view on the issue of youth offending.

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

To participate in this study, you must be between the age of 18-25.

To participate in this study, you must be enrolled in tertiary education.

To participate in this study, you must reside in Aotearoa, NZ.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. You will be asked a series of questions by the researcher relating to youth offending and any causes you believe are associated with youth offending/re-offending. You will also be asked what you think can be done to prevent youth offending/re-offending. You may at some points be asked to clarify any of your answers to avoid the researcher assuming or misunderstanding your responses.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

Decline to answer any questions.

Withdraw from the study before participation, during the study or before results are released.

Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.

Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher.

Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is included.

Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Data from this study will be utilised to improve the understanding and causes of youth crime in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Identifying information about you, or provided by you during this research, will not be disclosed without your written permission. Findings will be disseminated to the scholarly community in the form of a Master's thesis. There will be no information that could be used to identify you as a participant. A summary of the findings will be made accessible to participants who wish to know the conclusion of the research at the end of the study.

All data from this study will be securely maintained in compliance with the regulations prescribed by Massey University. Data will be coded so that only the researcher will know who the participants are. De-identified data will be stored in a secure location by the researcher and only accessible by the researcher and research supervisor.

BENEFITS, COMMITMENT AND WITHDRAWAL FROM PARTICIPATION

As your involvement in this research is entirely voluntary, **you are free to withdrawal at any time and for any reason.** You are not required to provide an explanation for your decision if you choose to withdraw, and you may request that any unprocessed data acquired from you be erased from the database. It should be highlighted that your connection with Massey University will not be harmed if you do not participate in the study, withdraw from the study, or withhold data. As a thank you for your participation in the research and the time involved you will be given a \$40 gift voucher.

ETHICAL CONDUCT OF RESEARCH AND COMPLAINTS

Please feel free to discuss your participation in this study with the project staff, who can be contacted as follows:

Tayla Ellison: [REDACTED]

Julia Ioane: J.ioane@massey.ac.nz

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

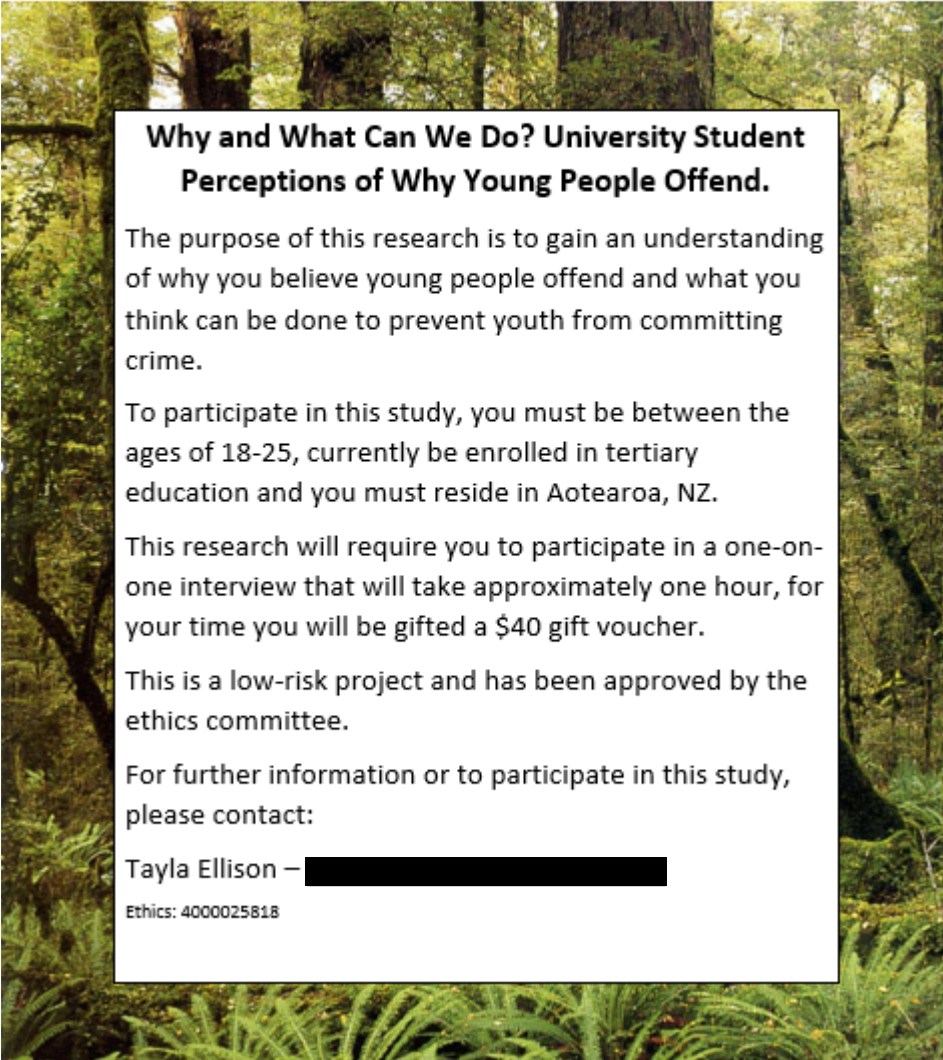
If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Prof Craig Johnson, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 85271, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz

Thank you for your time and interest in volunteering. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Appendix C: Advertisement



COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

A photograph of a lush green forest with tall trees and ferns in the foreground, serving as the background for the advertisement text.

Why and What Can We Do? University Student Perceptions of Why Young People Offend.

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of why you believe young people offend and what you think can be done to prevent youth from committing crime.

To participate in this study, you must be between the ages of 18-25, currently be enrolled in tertiary education and you must reside in Aotearoa, NZ.

This research will require you to participate in a one-on-one interview that will take approximately one hour, for your time you will be gifted a \$40 gift voucher.

This is a low-risk project and has been approved by the ethics committee.

For further information or to participate in this study, please contact:

Tayla Ellison – [REDACTED]

Ethics: 4000025818

Appendix D: Scheduled Questions

Personal Questions

Before we begin, are you happy for this interview to be recorded for transcription purposes?

For description of participant sample, can I please ask your age and which gender you identify with?

For description of participant sample, have you ever been a victim of youth crime?

Questions Specific to Crime

What is your understanding of crime?

What sort of actions do you think are criminal?

Are there any crimes you think should be overlooked or actions that are overlooked but should not be?

Do you think the levels of youth crime are high or low?

What influences your understanding of youth crime levels?

What do you know about youth sentencing?

Do you think sentences are too harsh or not harsh enough? Why do you think this?

Youth and Their Crimes/Causes

What type of crimes do you think youth are more likely to participate in? Why do you think this?

What circumstances do you think lead youth to offend?

What do you think about youth crime where the family and home life is stable? (If they suggest instability as a reason)

Prevention of Future Crime

What actions do you think can be put in place to prevent reoffending by youth?

Do you think there is anything that can be done to prevent youth from committing crime in the first place?

What do you think the New Zealand justice system is doing well in how they deal with youth crime?

What could be done to improve any issues in the way New Zealand deals with youth who commit crimes?

Closing Questions

Is there anything else you would like to add that you think may be useful for this research?

Would you like to be contacted with the results of this research?

At any point I may ask participants to further explain their answers.