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Violence is Currency

Understanding Gang Violence in Prison

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Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato



NGA TŪMANAKOTANGA
Turning the tide on prison violence



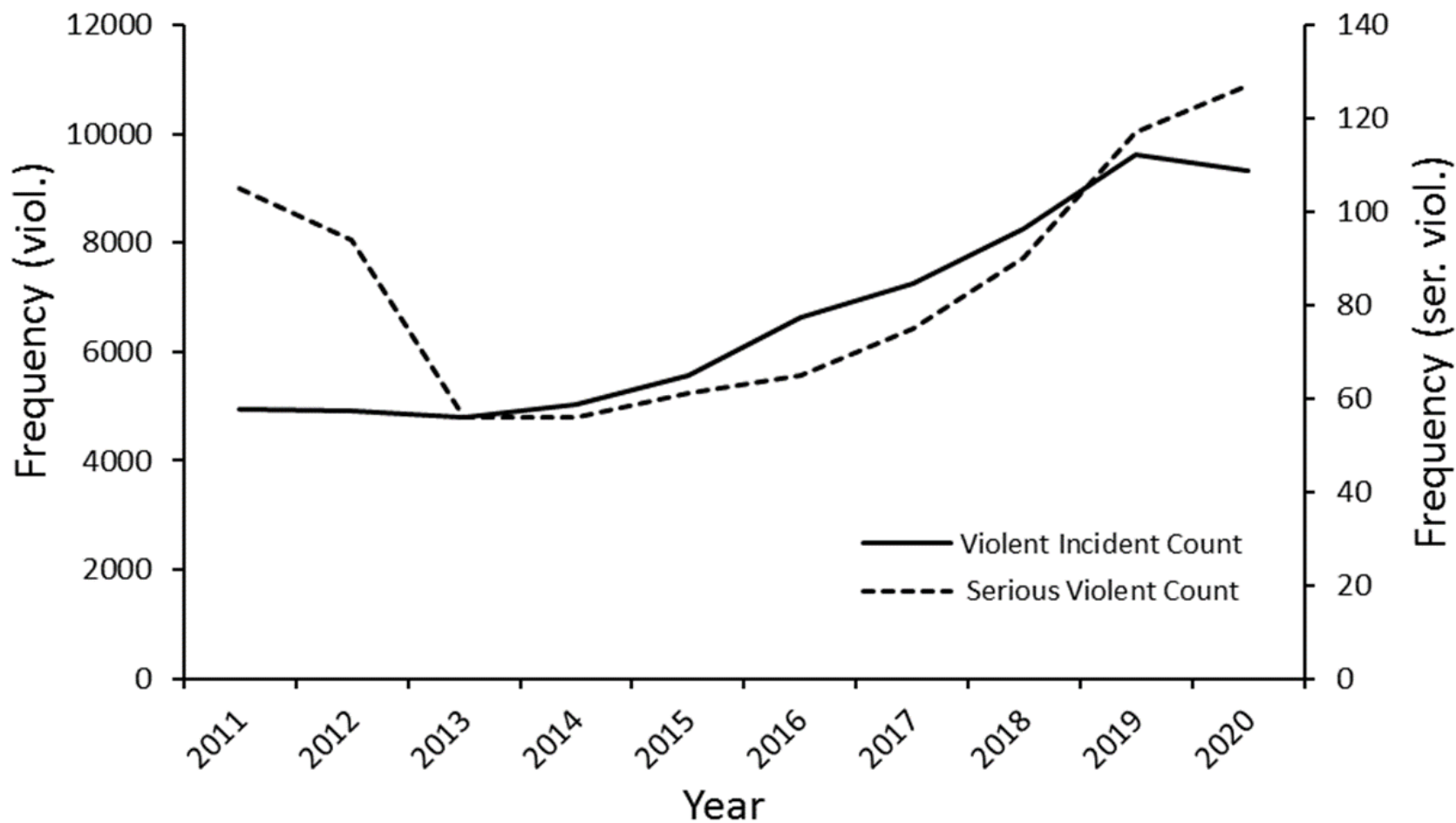
**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,
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HIKINA WHAKATUTUKI



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“[Violence is] The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.” (WHO, 2002, p.5)

Recorded violence and serious violence in NZ prisons (2011-2020)



Gang violence in prisons: A scan of the literature

(Tamatea & Henry, in preparation)

- Empirical studies of violence in prisons that include 'gang(s)'
- $N=20$ published studies since 1991
- Definitional issues
 - “Gangs”
 - “Violence”
 - “Prisons”
- The general picture: *Gang-affiliated prisoners are disproportionately involved in violence*

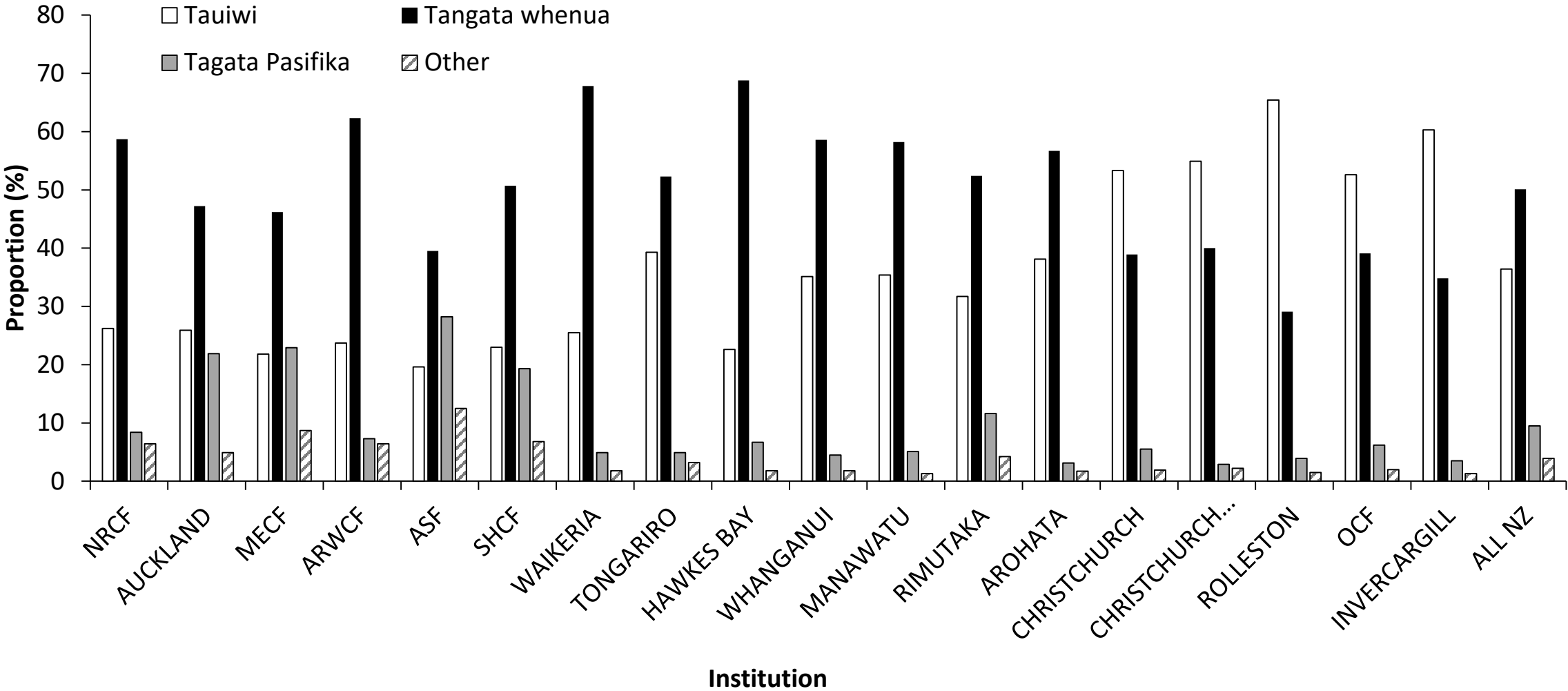
Theories about gang violence in prisons (Henry & Tamatea, in prep)

Author	Theory	Mechanism
Fong & Buentello (1991)	Classifying oneself as a member of a specific group > basis of social identity > promotes self-stereotyping + adoption of normative, in-group behaviours	Self-categorization (I/D)
Ralph & Marquart (1991)	Disobedience > Threat of death > 'Inspires' > Gang violence	Negative reinforcement (S/D)
Gaes, Wallace, Gilma, Klein-Saffran & Suppa (2002)	Gang membership > [embeddedness] > violence	Gang embeddedness (I)
DeLisi et al (2004)	Gang membership (+ other factors) > Violence	Behavioural continuity (I)
Ruddell, Decker & Egley Jr (2006)	Unpredictability of prison environment > [tolerance for uncertainty + perceived vulnerability = stress] > Gang affiliation	Stress reduction (D)
Griffin & Hepburn (2006)	Gang membership > Exploitation of other prisoners > Violence	Opportunity/Predation (S/D)
Cunningham, Sorensen, Vigen & Woods (2010)	Gang membership + Racial tensions > Prison violence	Membership + tension (S)
Worrall & Morris (2012)	Presence of more than one gang > perceived threat + need to dominate > tension > violence	Territoriality ('defend the neighbourhood'); Competition for resources (S)
Tewksbury, Connor & Denney (2014)	Gang membership + Prior prison terms > Infractions	Membership (I)
Ganapathy & Balachandran (2019)	Adopts norms, customs, values, and culture in general of the penitentiary > adaptation > violence as part of adapting to the prison environment	Prisonization (i.e., socialisation/ adjustment to gang norms) (D)

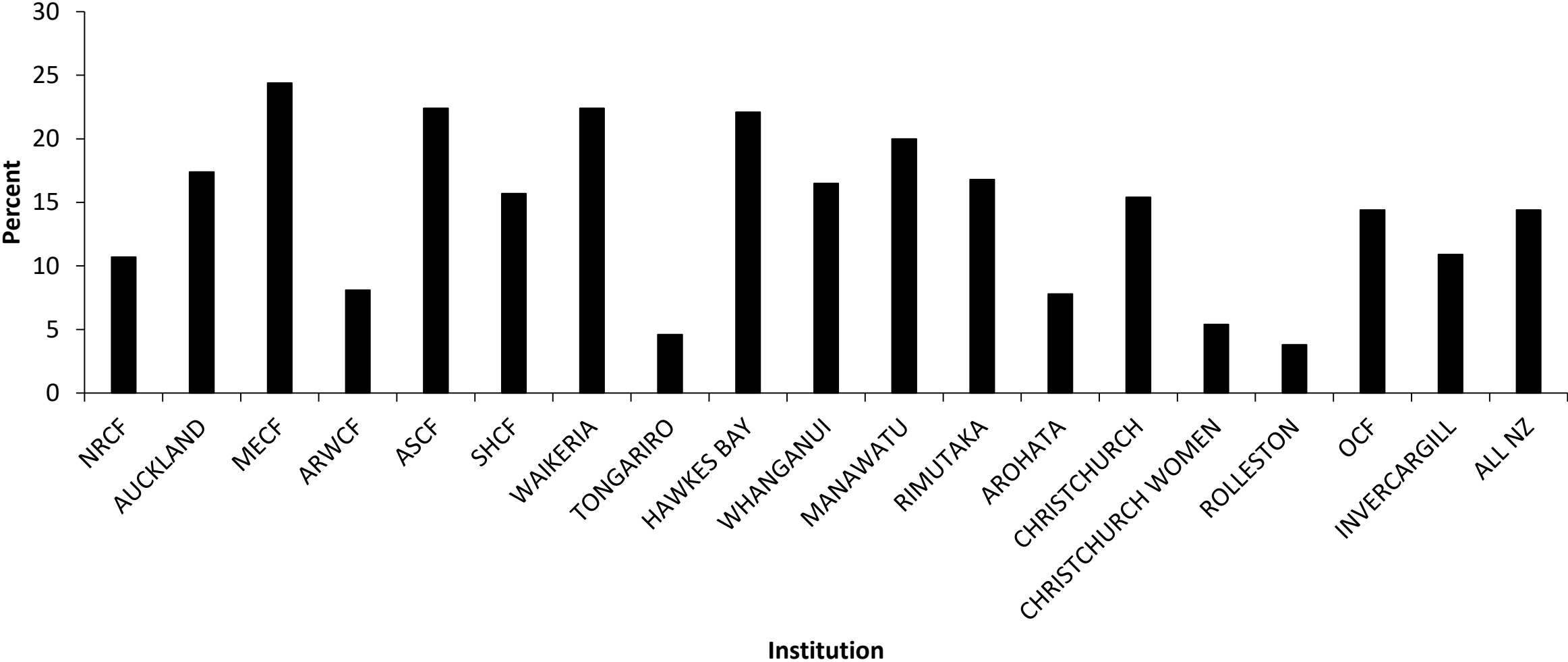
Gang violence in prisons: What do we need to know?

- Drivers for violence in NZ context
- Gang culture and prison culture
 - Practices
 - Processes
 - Products
- Indigeneity
 - Colonisation

Ethnic Composition of New Zealand Prisoners (2011-2020 Average)



Gang Affiliation of New Zealand Prisoners (2011-2020 Average)



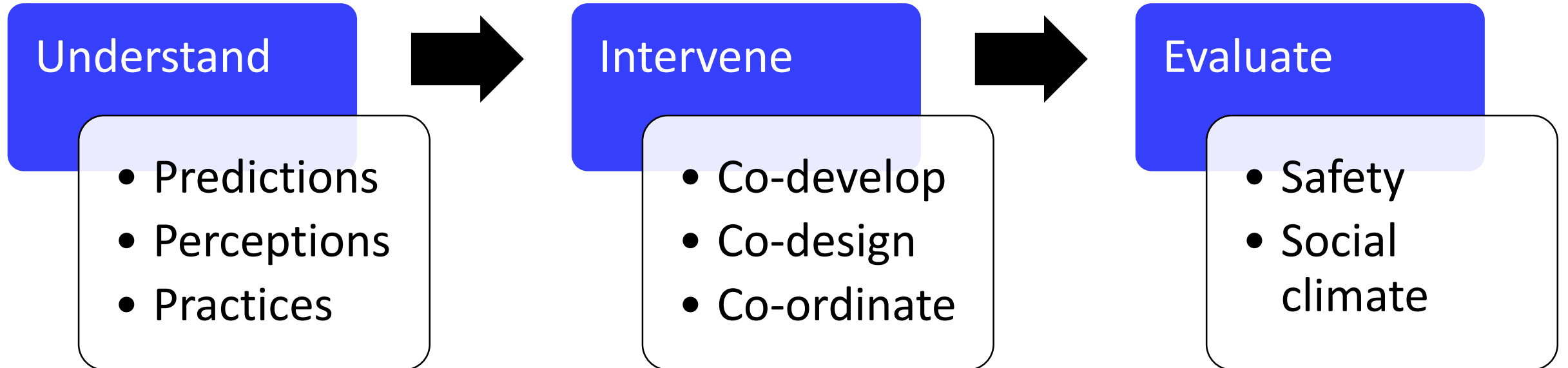
Nga Tūmanakotanga: What are we trying to achieve?

- ‘Understanding’
 - What factors contribute to the *cause* and *control* of violent behaviour in prison?
- ‘Reducing’
 - What will help to control, reduce and *prevent* future violence in NZ prisons?

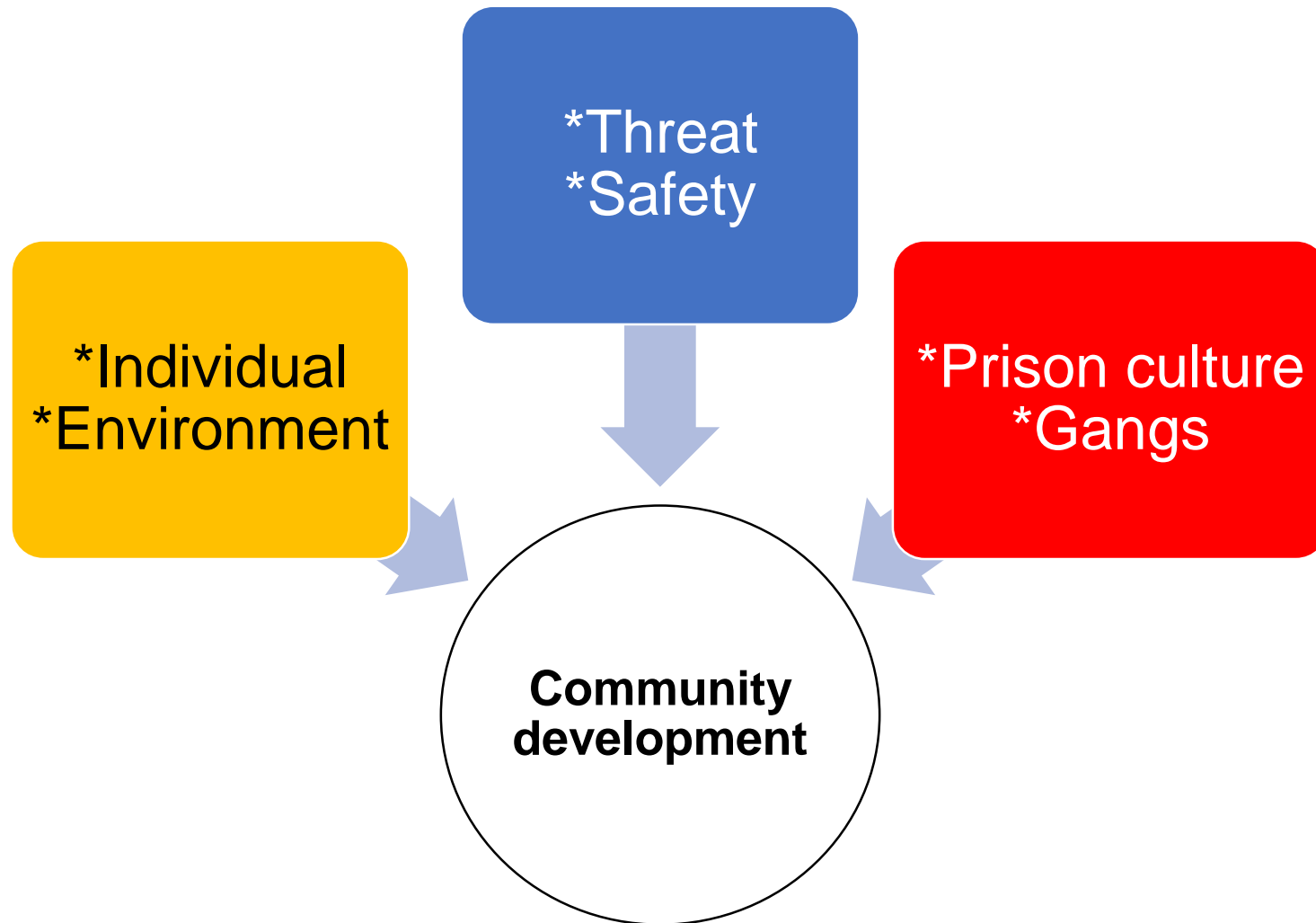
Prison violence: An ecological perspective

Personal	What are the individual factors that contribute to violence in prisons?
Social	What social and cultural aspects (e.g., actual or perceived) contribute to violence in prisons?
Spatial	What spatial elements and physical features of a given site contribute to violence in prisons? What do we know about the role of the 'silent' features: Geographical, spatial, and structural context?
Local	What contributes to violence in a particular subsystem (site/unit)?
Institutional	What contributes to violence in prisons? Why do people act violently in prison? How do police, courts, and the corrections system contribute to violence?
Societal	What contributes to violence in the general population? Why do people act violently (in general)? What are the wider societal values and attitudes that support violent behaviour?

Research programme 2019-2024



Research programme 2019-2024



What are the rules and codes that enable or prevent the use of aggression and violence in NZ prisons?

- Values / beliefs / norms
 - *“What does it mean to work/manage/live in prison?”*
- Structure / organisation / order
 - *“How do things work around here?”*
- Conceptualisation
 - *“Why do you think violence occurs here?”*
- Functions
 - *“How is violence enabled / controlled / avoided?”*
- Solutions
 - *“What do you think would help to reduce violence here?”*

Method

Subject matter experts

Prison management ($n=4$)

Staff ($n=10$)

- Custodial
- Non-custodial staff

Prisoners ($n=23$)

- Gang-affiliated
- Non-affiliated

Analytic strategy

Grounded theory

- Data collection
- Coding
- Analysis
- Theoretical sampling
- Substantive/formal theory

Findings and insights

- Values / beliefs / norms
- Structure / organisation / order
- Conceptualisation of violence
- Functions of violence
- Solutions

Violence and gang engagement is connected to status and power. Those who can control the spaces can control the ability to move freely about. What this means is that a gang has the power to mitigate and instigate violence dependent on what can be accomplished through the violent or the non-violent actions itself.



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Mauri ora!

THANK YOU!
