

Achieving Wellbeing and Prosocial Transformation Through Social Mobilisation: An Evaluation of a Gang Empowerment Strategy

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Abstract

Adult gangs hold a criminalised and deviantised position in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Further, a host of strategies have been enacted to remove or obliterate the 'gang problem'. These strategies' lack of efficacy and can be attributed to the imposition deficit-based criminogenic constructions on populations that are misunderstood and continually othered. The current study documents an evaluation of a gang-driven social mobilisation initiative. In contrast to past authoritative efforts of forced cultural assimilation, the success of the current initiative was attributed to the importance of the freedom gang members' and their families' had in engaging in a process of self-determination to develop their own transformational strategies.

Keywords: adult gangs, empowerment, evaluation, maturation, social mobilisation

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Introduction

Adult gangs hold a complex and marginalised position in New Zealand (Aotearoa). Despite a longstanding caution that gang attributions need be treated as relative and reflective of stakeholder motivations (Decker, 1995; Johnstone, 1981) they have been commonly associated with criminality (Office of the Prime Minister, 2014) and have featured poorly in regards to a number of anti-social indicators. These include high incidences of family violence, child abuse and neglect (Ministry of Social Development, 2016), intra-gang and inter-gang violence (Gilbert, 2013; Newshub, 2017; Roguski, 2017), problematic alcohol and drug use (Roguski, 2017), over-representation within incarcerated populations (Department of Corrections, 2017), poor access to primary medical care (Roguski, 2017), children's disengagement from formal education and / or training (Roguski, 2017), and low levels of prosocial employment (Committee on Gangs, 1981; Gilbert, 2013; Roguski, 2017). Within this discursive frame, gangs are positioned as the criminalised and deviantised *other* and anti-social indicators are used as a basis for justifying this othered position.

Gangs' criminally *othered* position is also reflected in a combative discourse that has sought to control and/or eradicate the perceived problem. Similar to other jurisdictions, the combative nature of this discourse is reflected in Aotearoa's reliance on discrete prevention, intervention and suppression strategies that have attempted to address the 'problem' (Gilbert, 2013; Maher, 2010).

As an object of eradication, these strategies have continually silenced the voice and realities of the population in question. Rather, since the first emergence of 'delinquent youth' in 1950s Aotearoa (Gilbert, 2013), responses to a perceived social ill have developed authoritatively, whereby powerful institutional and social bodies have acted to eradicate a social ill in isolation from the gang population in question. As such, the voice of gang members has been continually nullified. Nullification has occurred through a combination of paternalism and suppression.

Prevention strategies have most commonly focused on children and youth believed to be 'at risk' of future gang involvement and have utilised a variety of child and youth-centred activities and school-based programmes (see, for example, Chicago Area Project of the 1930s and the New York Mobilisation For Youth project and the 1990s emergence of the Gang Resistance Education and Training Program, GREAT). In contrast,

intervention strategies have generally developed in response to national or local pressure (Maher, 2010) and mirror Spergel's observation that the communities in which gangs develop often lack social opportunity and possess high levels of social disorganisation (Spergel et al., 1994). In response, intervention strategies have commonly focused on working with communities to reduce crime by targeting specific behaviours and generally involve the provision of resources and opportunities through interagency initiatives (Maher, 2010).

Paternalism is evident in prevention and intervention strategies in that they reflect a sense of benevolent wisdom imposed on the target group. Notably, the development of the various strategies has almost always occurred without gang representation, as it is the outsider who has defined the problem in need of mitigation and it is the outsider's wisdom that needs to be imposed. As such, prevention and intervention strategies reflect a dominant socially endorsed body that imposes change on another, lesser-perceived body. Paternalism is also strongly associated with intervention strategies in that exiting gang membership is a desired outcome (Maher, 2010). Understandably prevention and intervention strategies are commonly directed by non-government or not for profit organisations, bodies providing a 'service' to the identified other.

The third and most commonly invoked of the three strategies is suppression. Suppression arose internationally in the 1970s and has been the most commonly employed strategy since the 1980s (Spergel, 1994) and is generally viewed as the least successful approach (Decker, 2002; Klein, 1995; Spergel & Curry, 1990).

One of the key reasons for suppression's lack of efficacy is that the strategy has generally fallen to the singular responsibility of the police who have been found to pay more attention to serious crime (Spergel, Wa & Sosa, 2005). Low efficacy has also been traced to the strategy's financial impracticality and the lack of sustained impact (Sherman et al., 1998). Further, suppression has been heavily criticised as entrenching gang cohesion and group identity stigma can be embraced as a symbol of status (Klein, 1995).

In 1994, a growing concern about youth gangs in the United States led the Department of Justice to develop a collaborative process to respond to the growing gang problem (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1994). Led by Irving Spergel, the emerging Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and



Suppression signalled a move away from a reliance on one of the discrete tripartite strategies in preference for a multifaceted response. As such, Spergel stressed that the approach comprises interrelated strategies of:

community mobilization, social intervention, provision of social opportunities, suppression and organizational change, in a cluster of criminal-justice and social-service agencies, schools, and grassroots and other organizations working together to serve and control a target group of gang delinquents, as well as youth highly at risk for gang involvement (Spergel, Wa & Sosa, 2005, p. 11.1).

It could be argued that the US literature on gangs does not apply to the context of Aotearoa. Arguably, US youth gangs tend to demonstrate significantly less overlap in gang and family membership while gang membership is widely appreciated as including the wider family in Aotearoa. In either jurisdiction, the approach parallels dominant hegemonic discourses and maintains the framing of 'gangs' as a criminogenic *other*; justifying the ongoing nullification of their voices. This is especially evident in reference to the framing of community mobilisation which stresses reliance on:

police, probation, social agencies, schools, manpower agencies, community organizations (including local-agency and grassroots groups), as well as churches, block clubs, and political groups, along with local residents and even former gang members – must be involved and advise on problem definition, analyses, policies, planning, and program measures to be undertaken (Spergel, Wa & Sosa, 2005, p. 1.19).

Within this model, the absence of gang members is striking and speaks to the continued nullification of the target population's voice.

Despite the growing use of multifaceted approaches, the 'gang problem' continues to be viewed as a social and criminal concern. As such, an opportunity exists to think about alternative approaches. In contrast to the continued criminogenic focus, this paper argues that efforts to improve the social, health and economic wellbeing of any group are compromised when the population in question is defined as deviant and engaged as *other*.

Understanding Socio-Historical Reality

An alternative to a criminogenic epistemology is understanding the socio-historical realities of gangs. Within this frame, the majority of adult gang development in Aotearoa can be understood to have developed as a consequence of colonisation whereby Māori have been treated as expendable and attributed with a secondary societal status. Such practices included the loss of ancestral land, attempts to eradicate the Māori language, cultural subordination, the erosion of a host of protective structures that undermined the health and wellbeing of Māori and created a multitude of barriers that made it difficult for Māori to maintain independence (Walker, 1990).

While colonialism has been described as creating a foundation for the marginalisation of Māori (Quince, 2007), economic development throughout the 1950s and 1960s exacerbated marginalised status through a process of urban drift. During this period, large numbers of Māori moved from rural areas to urban centres, generally motivated by the promise of employment, with many Māori settling in low-income city areas (Thorns & Sedgwick, 1997) and urbanisation intensified the cultural losses initiated by colonisation (Meredith, 2000). Similar experiences of cultural loss and dislocation were experienced by Pacific peoples who began migrating to Aotearoa in the 1950s (Walker, 1979; Dunsford et al., 2011).

Economic development coincided with the emergence of the State's removal of children identified as 'at risk' and the placement of these children in State care; either through foster parent arrangements and/or young people's institutionalisation within correctional settings, such as boys' homes (Stanley, 2016). As a consequence, rather than identities associated with culture and family structures, these young people's identities often developed through metaphorical family structures, rather than biological affiliations, that were unified through a history of State care, a combination of criminalised labelling, a resistance to authority and social exclusion. It was within this context that the Mongrel Mob and Black Power developed, classed as Māori and Polynesian ethnic gangs by the 1981 Committee on Gangs. Initially identified as 'youth gangs' in the 1970s, the Mongrel Mob and Black Power evolved to comprise a predominantly adult composition with the advent of the need for a commitment to lifetime membership.

Over the following decades, this positioning was reinforced through negative societal labelling and resulted in the continued marginalisation of gang members and their families. This, in turn, created a cycle of continued



social exclusion. It is this exclusion that has provided a context for criminal offending and the entrenchment of a number of negative social and economic indicators along with gender structures that placed women in a subordinate position to men (Roguski, 2017).

Although rare, some intervention strategies have been trialled in Aotearoa. The most well-known, the Group Employment Liaison Service (GELS), arose out of the 1981 Committee on Gangs' finding that a variety of social antecedents contributed to gang membership, the most significant of which was unemployment. Importantly, GELS did not aim to eradicate gangs but encouraged the various members to work together in a belief that prosocial engagement would erode the various antecedents to criminal activity and result in crime reduction. However, despite initial positive outcomes, namely prosocial employment and a decrease in intergang conflict, a change in government and a growing scepticism of a less than punitive approach resulted in the initiative ending after two years (Gilbert, 2013).

Following the end of GELS, Aotearoa's approach to gangs has predominantly been one of suppression. This has coincided with the intermittent use of the 'gang problem' to elicit moral panics to herald government stances of being 'tougher on crime' and its expansion of police powers (Roguski, 2017). Most recently, suppression has manifested in the development of a cross-government national Gang Action Plan aimed to reduce harms caused by Aotearoa adult gangs and transnational crime groups (Office of the Prime Minister, 2014).

The Emergence of Waka Moemoeā

Excluded from criminogenic discourses is an appreciation that gang members and their whānau (extended family) may want improved wellbeing and social and health-related outcomes. This is most clearly reflected in the incremental development of a relationship between the Black Power and Mongrel Mob that culminated in the establishment of Waka Moemoeā as a Trust in 2012, an initiative supported by Pita Sharples, the Minister of Māori Affairs between 2008 and 2014, who supported government funding of Waka Moemoeā in acknowledgment that the membership, through a process of social mobilisation, were best placed to respond to their own needs. In contrast to Spergel, Wa & Sosa's (2005) framing of social mobilisation, the Trust engaged in a process that reflected a belief that sustainable positive

change needs to be initiated and driven by the respective membership and whānau. Inherently this approach acknowledges that the community comprises its own leadership and accountability structures and that it is essential to work within these structures.

The Trust was formed to provide governance and operational direction and support to the whānau development coordinators, comprising Black Power and Mongrel Mob leaders, who were employed in the regions of Northland, Auckland, Wellington, Hastings and the lower South Island. The appointment of presidents/leaders as coordinators resulted from the acknowledgement of the strong influence that leaders have within each of the membership and, as such, were best positioned to engage their members and drive required changes. The whānau development coordinators' primary activities included establishing strong relationships across the wider chapter members, their partners and children associated with a particular president or leader, engaging whānau, facilitating group vision-setting exercises; and, establishing linkages with local providers to assist whānau in meeting the identified goals. The initiative focused on education, training, employment, health and housing as core areas of change.

The project was initially scoped to run over a three-year period, culminating with a combination of an outcome evaluation that aimed to identify key intermediate whānau outcomes arising from the initiative and key issues that could inform the continuation of the initiative. A secondary aim was assessing the overall approach and how this might contribute to our understanding of how to work alongside our gang communities, to achieve improved wellbeing.

Approach

The study relied on an in-depth qualitative design that was guided by an empowerment methodology. The need to engage in an empowerment-centred methodology was essential to the study's design because of the socio-political history in which gangs are embedded. In this sense, empowerment methodology stands in direct opposition to deficit models and reframes inquiry from deficits to competence, illness to wellness and weaknesses to strengths. Similarly, empowerment research opposes models of individualised deficit or blame in favour of an appreciation of environmental influences (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995; Roguski, 2017). Further, empowerment methodology positions participant voices as central, regarded as valid and reliable accounts of the individual realities, an approach that



counters a deficit-based view that brings into question accounts of those labelled as ‘criminal’.

The interviews explored the initiative’s emergence and the various outcomes that had emerged from participation in Waka Moemoeā. Interviews were initially unstructured and exploratory in nature. As the study neared completion, interviews adopted a more structured approach in line with a confirmatory line of questioning.

The fieldwork occurred throughout the first half of 2015, in three of the five pilot locations, Northland, Lower Hutt and Christchurch. In total, thirty-five people participated in a series of formal interviews. Two interviews were carried out with Waka Moemoeā staff members best positioned to discuss the programme nationally. A further thirty-three people were interviewed at a pilot site level. Complementing the desire to include multiple perspectives, participants included Waka Moemoeā Black Power and Mongrel Mob whānau development coordinators (n=3), wāhine (female partners of patched members) (n=13), patched chapter members (n=5), kaumātua (Black Power and Mongrel Mob elders) (n=5), government agency representatives (n=3), and local not-for-profit providers (n=4).

The evaluation used a grounded theory approach to analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Through a process of constant comparative analysis, interview data was analysed to identify patterns and themes relating to the evaluation objectives and wider contextual issues. Throughout the process, emerging findings were consistently tested to determine the extent to which they were common across participants. This process of constant comparative analysis provided an opportunity to explore, in greater depth, reasons underlying emerging patterns.

Whānau Culture

Similar to Petersen (2000), participants were asked how they defined themselves. In contrast to societal depictions, participant narratives stressed their humanity and reflected membership within a cohesive group, founded upon whānau structures, albeit metaphorical or biologically defined whānau membership. Participants rarely used the term ‘gang’ as a descriptor and generally only as a reflection of how outsiders viewed them. Most common terms were whānau, in reference to the membership as a family, and rōpū (wider association), in reference to the wider membership associated with a particular president or leader. Rōpū included chapter

members, their partners and children. Emerging from either use of the terms were descriptors of loyalty, resilience and warmth.

When you start getting labelled with stuff, and there are a whole lot of outrageous things that we are labelled with, you feel like shit. The thing is, we hear how the police and everyone talk about us but to us, we are just a family. When you dig a little bit deeper and we are people, we are human beings. But you start getting labelled with stuff like gang members, activists and stuff that people don't understand properly, but if you dig deeper you start to get a sense of who that person or those people really are. (Wāhine)

One problem arising from the criminogenic focus of the majority of gang definitions is that group membership can be elevated so the very labelling can reinforce gang structure and identity, thereby acting as a cohesive influence (Bullock & Tilley, 2008; Esbensen et. al., 2001; Smithson et al., 2012). Reactionary cohesiveness was identified by Gilbert (2013) in the 1970s when the Black Power and the Mongrel Mob were in their formative development. Contemporaneously, rather than cohesion arising from negative social labelling, Black Power and the Mongrel Mob participants identified their familial and membership cohesiveness as a primary strength and traced cohesiveness to the concept of whānau, a critical element within Māori culture whereby the self is identified in relation to the collective (Love, 1999).

Notably, participants' constructions of self were embedded within a socially marginalised space. This space had been created by exclusionary processes and necessity; having been forced upon whānau as a result of their criminogenic othering and as a natural response to the whānau need for safety. As such, various institutional and societal responses that have oppressed and isolated whānau from wider society had created a desire for whānau safety that has led many whānau to be socially isolated. In this sense, social isolation provided whānau with a sense of safety that can be likened to self-preservation. Within this context, whānau were described as living in restricted social systems.



Many of the whānau have formed their own barriers over years ... it is self-preservation. It is a learned behaviour where they live in a cocooned world and they don't see beyond that ... they are wary of leaving their home and meeting strangers ... The one thing the whānau have in common is that they are hard to reach. By that I mean there is a lack of trust, there is poverty and so they are struggling to make ends meet. Some of the families don't give a fuck about anything. They don't care about the neighbours, what is happening up the street, they don't vote when it comes to the election. They care about what is in front of them. It could be a box of Tui [beer]. They live day-by-day. It's too much of an effort for them to try and be what society calls normal. (Kaumātua)

Understandably, social exclusion manifested as a form of resistance, a discourse threaded throughout participant narratives. Resistance was expressed as self-protection, underpinned by wariness of authority figures, State intervention and those external to the group. Resistance was also reflected in an “*us versus them*” dichotomy whereby whānau were combatively positioned as *other*. Within this context, whānau can be understood as living in restricted social systems, commonly described as ‘cocooned’ and government and community-based organisations are treated with caution and act to solidify to whānau exclusion.

Social mobilisation was integral to the initiative's success. Social isolation contributed to the development of strong membership hierarchies, whereby each chapter (local male members) adhered to the importance of leaders and the acknowledgement of gang hierarchies across chapters. These structures played a crucial role when a growing number of ageing members began seeking alternative and improved lifestyles. This shift coincided with increasing age and maturity and a strong desire for improved outcomes for members' grandchildren and following generations. Maturation (Rocque, 2014) provided a fertile environment to explain why so many members had embraced the initiative and underscored the desire for Black Power and Mongrel Mob members to cease inter-gang conflict, and create better opportunities for whānau and to cease the culmination of intergenerational conflict.

We had already been through bad things our whole lives and we wanted a different picture. We're sick of the prison cells, Courthouses and the police coming to our houses. I wanted to change my life and my whānau's life. As you get older you get wiser and you aren't just thinking about ourselves and our kids. We started thinking about the next generation and the next generation and how we need to make it safe for them. Because we don't want to leave our raruraru [conflict] there, we have to try and fix it so there's not going to be any more damage. (Whānau Development Coordinator)

Further, Black Power and Mongrel Mob hierarchical structures provided a means to harness lifestyle dissatisfaction and develop a collective strategy for improvement. The success of the initiative rested on the rangatira status (someone of high rank) of each of the whānau development coordinators, namely their status within each of the members and the wider membership. In part, the importance of each of the three participating whānau development coordinators' status was deemed critical because of the hierarchical nature of the two organisations, a hierarchy common to tribal cultures. Rangatira were positioned as leaders with considerable influence to create change and multiple reports were provided whereby whānau development coordinators' established required behaviours within their memberships through issuing directives.

Intermediate Outcomes

A number of programme success-related outcomes were identified for the four participating rōpū. These include foundational outcomes, gender roles, health, education, employment, and family violence. The various programme outcomes are interrelated but are presented discretely for the sake of discussion.

Foundational Outcomes

The attainment of whānau safety and the engagement of members and the wider whānau were identified as pivotal outcomes, without which the various other emerging outcomes would not have been achieved. The initiative had been premised upon the belief that whānau development is contingent upon member and whānau safety, that the provision of safety is a prerequisite to improved wellbeing. As such, significant efforts were made



to support the adoption of prosocial mechanisms to address inter-gang conflict. With the attainment of safety, chapter and whānau members described being better positioned to focus on whānau transformation, namely, education and training, employment, non-violence, health, housing and overall whānau wellbeing.

*Once you get safety out of the way shit just grows. It's your dad, your brother, your mum. It is everybody's safety.
(Whānau Development Coordinator)*

An end to inter-gang violence led whānau members to attain a heightened sense of safety in their homes, an outcome that was directly related to reductions in stress, and provided freedom to freely engage in a variety of daily activities, without fear of repercussion. This was significant as historically movements had been restricted to designated 'gang' territories which had reinforced a sense of isolation and intensified inter-gang hostility.

*Now my wife goes, "I feel safe now". I say, "Why's that?" She said, "It's because you're talking to X. The Black Power and Mob used to fight all the time. Now you fellas are connecting".
She feels safe. (Chapter member)*

The second pivotal outcome was engagement with chapter members and whānau. In light of past Black Power and the Mongrel Mob hostilities, the majority of members, and the wider whānau described being initially sceptical about the collaboration and participants assumed that the initiative would fail.

From my perspective, from the outside looking in when Waka Moemoeā first started, it was like, "Oh this isn't going to work". Our history, all the stuff that we had done against each other, I just thought there was no way that they would be able to get over that, there was some pretty nasty stuff. The foundations on which our groups were built ... well, we thought there was no way that barrier would come down because there was too much history involved. And when I say history I mean, violence between each other, between each other's families, between the kids, because you know that all of this stuff is inherited: all the stuff the parents hate the kids will hate too,

your mokos [grandchildren] will hate them. So, when we first heard about Waka Moemoeā the impression was, “No this is not going to work”. (Wāhine)

Despite initial suspicions, participants viewed the continued and improving relationship between the Black Power and Mongrel Mob chapters as an overwhelming success, quickly leading to an end to violence between the two gangs. This was especially important, as a lack of tangible successes would have resulted in a withdrawal of the membership’s support. In this sense, the dual attainment of safety and continued engagement contributed to the initiative’s sustainability.

If there are no outcomes or success stories they have every right to say, “What the fuck are you up to?”, but they’re not because they are seeing the success too and they just jump on board. (Whānau Development Coordinator)

Gender Roles

Similar to Sánchez-Jankowski’s finding that women associated with gangs “were considered a form of property” (Sánchez-Jankowski, 1991, p. 146), female participants reported having held a subordinate position in relation to their male partners and chapter members. Such gender subordination was reinforced through a strong demarcation of gender roles, women’s silencing and isolation, the normalisation of family violence and the burden of parenting and domestic-related activities falling to the responsibility of women only.

If you look back, twenty years ago we were just shit in the room, men first and women last. It was the culture aye. Like, we wouldn’t be here now. We wouldn’t have been allowed to be here [allowed to participate in an interview]. We would have been at home. We were spoken to. We didn’t speak. If my tane [man] said, “no” then it was no. (Wāhine)

Shifts towards gender equality were regarded as the most significant outcome and were attributed to the initiative’s whānau-centric focus, namely an emphasis on whānau development and an increasing appreciation of the role of women within the whānau, all of which resulted in a realignment of gender roles. This occurred as an outcome of a recasting



of traditional hierarchical structures that placed patched members above whānau and their partners. With a focus on family development, as opposed to gang membership, women began to be viewed as significant voices and contributors to whānau wellbeing.

The influence of us all coming to this table [members], since Waka Moemoeā has been involved, has loosened things up for our women. They can actually see the picture too and they are participating and handling in their kōrero. Any other time they'd be restrained from saying anything but now the tables have just opened for everybody and anybody 'cause they are the ones that had our kids and they're the ones who's brought them up, so they know our kids more than we do... so we gotta give it back to them and that's gotta be connected to all the women. (Chapter member)

Multiple examples were offered to evidence moves towards gender equality. These included chapter members engaging in, and sharing, domestic responsibilities, becoming active parents, acting as role models for the immediate family, and women having gained the freedom to participate in gatherings. The relaxation of gender restrictions provided female partners with the freedom to develop supportive relationships with other female rōpū members. This led to increased levels of support and significant decreases in reports of women's isolation.

Gender roles have changed. His role was being outside, he had nothing to do with inside [of the house]. He never had to clean the house, do the dishes, dry the dishes, pick up after himself. He's doing that now. Yeah, picking his clothes up from the floor. Cooking a meal for the family. Hanging the clothes out on the line. He does it with me. He puts his clothes in the washing machine, he vacuums, he does the dusting. And when the bros come round, he'll make them a feed, he'll make them a coffee. (Wāhine)

Health

Prior to Waka Moemoeā, whānau reported having been disengaged from general health practices and other community-based health care services, only accessing hospital emergency departments in times of crisis. The high level of disengagement was attributed to a combination of social isolation, stigma associated with gang associations, transport-related barriers and the cost of accessing health care.

I think the barriers for the whānau are obviously around judgement, that's the biggest barrier for the whānau that I felt. And judgement is about the patch [gang insignia]. So the barriers were just your normal barriers associated with stereotyping a gang and not looking past that and seeing that we actually have children and mokopuna [grandchildren]; that we are mothers, fathers, grandfathers and grandmothers that want to do right by their whānau. (Wāhine)

Disengagement was also attributed to a lack of knowledge about prevention and intervention, and this was often reinforced by traditionally masculine attitudes towards health that contextualised ill health as something to 'suck up'.

We thought we could heal ourselves. Just have a whiskey and then the cold will go away [laugh] or the attitude was, "just harden up". It's that He-man stuff, "I don't need to go to the doctor. I'm all right". That's what we used to tell ourselves when really we weren't all right. (Chapter member)

On another level, some participants related that health, as a component of whānau wellbeing, ranked as a low priority. As a result, few adults sought an annual health check or viewed health as an individual or whānau priority. Each of the four areas implemented a series of health days, based on a carnival theme, which had the dual purpose of engaging their membership whilst providing access to primary health care. The use of a carnival was chosen in acknowledgement of historical barriers to accessing health and the need to provide the health days in an environment that was perceived as safe. This meant that a variety of health services were pepper potted amongst whānau activities such as pony ride, games and sporting competitions.



The health days were a significant turning point for the whānau. Firstly, they were regarded as a success because a large proportion of whānau, who had no prior contact with primary health care, were now enrolled with a primary health care provider. Success was also discussed in light of increased knowledge about health and a sense of pride gained from actually accessing healthcare and providing wellness related care for one's whānau. Next, because of the dual Black Power and Mongrel Mob whānau participation, the health days effectively reinforced the collaborative aim underpinning Waka Moemoeā's vision. Finally, the hui encouraged whānau to think about whānau wellbeing. A focus on health naturally resulted in thinking about the future of their whānau and reinforced a commitment to a range of prosocial behaviours; leading to discussions and strategies that placed the whānau as central to all discussions and led to the establishment of whānau-centric planning. For many, this was the first time that future-focused thinking had occurred at any significant level.

It was huge for us. It was a turning point because we never went to the doctors ever. It changed our thought patterns so now we think about our whānau health. (Chapter member)

Educational Engagement

The majority of chapter and whānau members reported having disengaged from formal education at an early age and attributed their 'school failures' to their childhood experiences with various forms of othering. Multiple examples were provided of poor educational interactions with a common thread of having negative stereotypes placed upon them, based on ethnicity, familial connections and having been labelled as having behavioural problems. The internalisation of childhood 'failures' had a rippling effect with their own children and manifested in a lack of engagement with their children's education. Finally, it was common for participants' children to have experienced gang-related stigma and received labels of behavioural or conduct-related problems. These experiences culminated in few adult members and whānau holding formal qualifications and a high degree of stand-downs, truancy and complete disengagement from formal education amongst school-aged children.

Because of the kids' gang affiliations they were being pushed out of school. It's stereotyping... it happened to me when I was in high school and it happened to two of my sisters. (Wāhine)

Educational success was one of the core objectives of Waka Moemoeā as it represented a means of securing employment, financial security and as a foundation to participate in civil society. Each of these factors was viewed as potentially ending intergenerational cycles of criminality.

So now we want a better future for the kids I suppose. We want them to be financially secure and they need education to be able to get there. I don't want them sitting on the dole when they're 18, I want them to be out there getting a good job. (Wāhine)

And education is the way to get a good job, not a hard labour job like we all had to do. I don't want my grandchildren to be doing hard labour all their lives for pennies. When they can get a good education, good brains, get a good job, and do whatever they want in life. And be happy too. Not end up on the streets or in jail or a gang member or a dole bludger. I totally don't want my mokos or my children being like that. So one is education and that is what we're pushing on our kids. (Chapter member)

Directly attributed to Waka Moemoeā was school-aged children's engagement with formal education. Engagement was attributed to a number of factors. First, leadership stressed the importance of education and actively encouraged children to attend school. Next, engagement was reinforced by many parents simultaneous engagement in training and/or employment. As such, young people were provided with a type of role modelling that prioritised the importance of education. Finally, positive role modelling was complemented by the whānau having identified educational environments that were better suited to the needs of young whānau members; environments devoid of societal stigma and the negative social labelling. It was through young people's placement in these environments that young people were able to engage in education. This led to incremental levels of educational success, resulting in a growing sense of confidence and visions of future employment. Notably, the combination of parental engagement and



appropriate educational environments resulted in a high proportion of young people's full engagement within formal education environments and a high degree of success in attaining high school qualifications.

The high school didn't want my daughter, so we had to find alternative education for her. And then she went to the Sports Academy and it's more like twenty kids to four teachers, where at the college unless you're naughty, they don't know you. My children have excelled well at the smaller school, than at the bigger school. It's just a more relaxed environment. School goes until lunchtime then it's sport after that. (Wāhine)

Employment

Prior to Waka Moemoeā, the majority of members and whānau had been unemployed and employment had not been seen as an aspirational option. This was attributed to the low wages that unskilled labour can command and a lack of an appreciation that whānau can benefit from regular income and prosocial engagement. This can be especially appreciated in light of the financial rewards associated with selling methamphetamine. For the remainder, unemployment had been a choice. Understandably, the status quo was maintained by a lack of formal education and marketable skills and the impact of intergenerational unemployment. In this regard, unemployment had become a cultural constant.

The members have got [child] maintenance debt, and they were too scared to go to work because they'd end up with hardly anything once their child support is paid. So they had no motivation. (Kaumātua)

There was no hope. Our people, in our membership, seemed to be doing the same old bloody things to get by. That's all they knew. Grow dak [cannabis]. Seasonal work. And just carry on day-to-day with no other options. They couldn't see anything outside of that. (Whānau Development Coordinator)

Intergenerational cycles of unemployment were initially disrupted by the adoption of shared educational aspirations. This occurred through a variety of group educational programmes, some of which meant that educational

institutions provided tertiary level courses in settings that the whānau felt safe, such as local marae (cultural gathering place) and in people's homes. In other situations education focused on immediate needs, namely securing drivers licenses. Importantly, no matter what level of educational attainment, all members reported gaining increased confidence with each layer of success, inspiring them to progress into further education and/or training.

A lot of the guys have gone and got trained, in regard to trade training and getting certificates and drivers' licensing courses and employment training. And because of that they actually have employment, which means that their financial position is better, which means that they can afford things without having to steal them, which is something on the criminal side that has toned down. So the reduction in crime has been noticeable in this area because of the changes that have been made by family members. (Whānau Development Coordinator)

With the attainment of qualifications and increased confidence, a high proportion of chapter members became employed full-time. For example, of the 40 chapter members across the three sites 16 (40%) were employed prior to the initiative. This number increased to 35 (88%) employed two years after the initiative began.

Almost all of my membership have jobs. Some of them have driver licences now that they never had because we had the drivers' licence course some of them were able to succeed and get their licence. When one time out of nine members there was only three members with licences because most of them had lost their licence or just didn't have a licence. And even some of the wāhine now have licences. (Whānau Development Coordinator)

Well on my side anyway a lot of the people that never had jobs have got jobs now... they've been sitting in a cell or being a number and now they've given that up, and they're working and they're earning a good wage to bring back the bacon to put it on the table. And to me, that's a success 'cause knowing



these guys they were just ratbags like all of us, loved going to jail ya know, yeah things like that. (Chapter member)

While qualifications were a prerequisite to employment, increased employment was linked to the sense of safety arising from an end of inter-gang tensions. Safety provided members with the freedom to travel to attend the necessary courses. Further, complementing the shift from male privilege to family wellbeing, a large number of women began to engage in education and this naturally led to employment. This was viewed as a significant cultural shift as women's historical subjugation precluded the need for education and work outside the home, activities incongruous with whānau culture.

Three years ago none of our women were in paid employment. Because their job was in the house and that was it. That was the mentality. Now all of our wāhine are employed. They have been working through courses and getting educated. (Whānau Development Coordinator)

In the main, employment was facilitated by a shared agreement that paid work represented a means for the membership to attain improved wellbeing, namely adequate housing and prosocial lifestyles removed from crime and activities that have had a detrimental effect on whānau. Further, the dual attainment of education and employment resulted in the wider membership thinking positively about their futures and led to a focus on whānau wellbeing and a focus on homeownership. In less than three years the membership had embarked on an aspirational journey of owning their homes.

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Crime reduction and dissidence

All patched and whānau participants reported significant reductions in criminal offending. Further, crime reduction was further evidenced by two not-for-profit representatives' descriptions of a reduction in Court appearances.

I work in the Courts quite a bit and I haven't seen the gang members in there for a while. (Not-for-profit representative)

On one level, a reduction in criminal offending was linked to a focus on whānau wellbeing and as a result of the various rōpū members' engagement in training and/or employment. Next, crime reduction was reported to have occurred amongst younger members and prospects because chapter presidents and leaders had created prosocial environments and actively discouraged criminal offending. This was especially noteworthy amongst younger members who were more likely to be resistant to the leader's decision to work cooperatively between the two memberships.

When they work with the young people, the youth is recruited and not prospected. If they want to prospect they have to go to college and get a certificate. So they don't come in with proof of a crime, they have to come in with a trade certificate. That is what the education component has taught the leaders, to offer choices. (Not-for-profit representative)

Even though he was unsupported, those members in Petone are not coming to Police attention as much as they used to. Those young guys he has under his banner were coming to the attention of the police every five minutes. But it's not happening like it used to. (Not-for-profit representative)

Finally, similar reductions in reoffending were reported to have occurred amongst whānau members. In these situations, participants linked their dissidence from reoffending to support received from the wider rōpū. This can be appreciated in that Waka Moemoeā had reduced experiences of isolation and had led to the development of strong support structures that circumvented precursors to offending.



I've got over 130 convictions, and since I've been involved with Waka Moemoeā I've got none. Since I've been under these fellas I've been trying to change my life. Rather than going to commit a crime to feed my family I can just ring them up and say, "I need bread, butter and milk". Now I have support from the whānau. Whereas, before I was too proud and that. I would just go out and steal and whatever to feed my family. Sell drugs. And now, I've got support I can call upon when I need bread, butter and milk. (Wāhine)

Participants attributed reductions in burglary, drug manufacturing and distribution to the membership's employment. In addition, whānau members drew attention to significant and sustained reductions in family violence as an indication of the way in which the families were transforming. Family violence was described as a historical artefact, common amongst the Black Power and Mongrel Mob membership. Violence was contextualised within intergenerational exposure to violence and the assumption that family violence was an appropriate response. Further, violence was associated with stressors related to low income and poor housing. Overarching problematic alcohol and drug use were also identified as a common precursor.

It was 24/7, seven days a week. It was unspoken of, but the violence was there. And all of that comes from the stress, it all goes back to the low education, housing and income and health aye. Everything goes back to those three subjects aye. It was stressful for myself and a lot of other families. There was so much violence. (Whānau Development Coordinator)

With the advent of Waka Moemoeā, family violence-related assaults were reported to have decreased significantly while reports of violence to the police increased in some areas.

Before Waka Moemoeā the police were called out on a regular basis to certain places that were often classified as gang members. So there would be a call for service by police because neighbours had rung about a domestic violence incident happening in their neighbourhood. When Waka Moemoeā first started a lot of members decided that domestic

violence wasn't acceptable anymore. Since Waka Moemoeā the police have told me there has been a very noticeable drop in family violence amongst the members. (Not-for-profit representative).

After speaking with one of the women who has been involved in Waka Moemoeā who has been out of domestic violence lifestyle for the last two years... One of the comments she made to me was that "I'm loving this new lifestyle. Before when he lifted his hand I used to think I was going to get a smack. Now when he lifts his hand I think he is high fiving me or just saying, "Stop, I'm not going to discuss this anymore" and he just walks away, so the conflict dissolves immediately. So for her, the change that she has noted is that she trusts that she isn't going to get hit. So for her it is a real big turn-around. She found it really difficult to trust it because it wasn't happening like it used to. She found it really enjoyable. The conversations they were having were more evenly spread. It wasn't a dictatorship anymore. She found he was asking questions rather than telling her. When I talked to him he thought about making the change and he decided to start with his own family first. (Not-for-profit representative)

Reductions in actual violence and increased reporting coincided with increased freedom to discuss family violence, members attending non-violence programmes and the encouragement amongst members to report family violence directly to the police.

Our tane [men] are breaking the cycle. They are getting anger management now. They are learning not to be like their fathers. And it is talked about a lot more. And we [wāhine] have been encouraged to call the police. In the past, that was a definite no, no. I think the reporting of family violence has increased because we have a safe environment now. So people can talk about it. (Wāhine)



Discussion

Multiple examples of whānau transformation were identified. Pivotal to the initiative's success was the attainment of safety, achieved through an end to gang hostilities. Increased safety had a rippling effect. These included significant moves towards gender equality, access and utilisation of primary health care, educational engagement and the attainment of formal qualifications, employment and a reduction in criminal offending, of which participants proudly showcased a large reduction in family violence. Notably, these achievements occurred over a relatively short time period of three years. Such successes highlight the need for an alternative approach to a criminogenic focus.

The attainment of short-term successes acted to reinforce engagement in the initiatives and led to the development of longer-term whānau development strategies and goals. Effectively the initiatives engaged in a reinforcement process, whereby initial short-term successes led to a desire to establish longer-term goals. In this regard, the pilots' foci were reminiscent of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954) that predicates that self-actualisation can only be achieved once a number of prerequisites are attained, the most foundational being the securing of physiological needs. As such, the establishment of longer-term goals was predicated upon a number of basic needs being addressed. Once secured, the attainment of higher-level outcomes was incorporated.

The low level of efficacy associated with criminogenic gang strategies can be attributed to their epistemological basis, the imposition of deficit-based constructions on populations that are misunderstood and continually othered. Such criminogenic responses have historically been met with resistance and can risk entrenching members into a position of the excluded *other*, reinforcing membership and leading to continued social exclusion and a lack of civic participation.

In contrast, Waka Moemoeā provides an example of population-driven social mobilisation. In contrast to popular invocations of social mobilisation to refer to dominant, socially endorsed bodies that mobilise to impose change on another lesser-perceived body (Spergel, Wa & Sosa, 2005), population-driven social mobilisation requires a rejection of deficit and criminogenic epistemologies in favour of a holistic appreciation of the people in question. It is through a focus on people's socio-historical selves that behaviours and attitudes can be understood in context. In reference to the Black Power and

Mongrel Mob, a contextual understanding highlights the impact of intergenerational social isolation and social exclusion. Within this context, a combative discourse is an illogical response and stands as a discourse that can only be challenged and transformed by the excluded themselves. It is within this context that social mobilisation needs to be initiated and driven by the people in question.

A number of factors contributed to the success of Waka Moemoeā's population-driven social mobilisation. Firstly, whānau had their own leadership and accountability structures, as such a hierarchical structure provided a mechanism to engage the membership and act to reassure the whānau during a potentially tumultuous period of attitudinal and cultural change when efforts were made to no longer view the opposing gang as adversaries. Next, Waka Moemoeā comprised an intergenerational membership and family structures that have been in existence for a number of decades. As such, the age of the older members contributed to a process of maturation and the realisation that the membership wanted to transform and provide the younger generations (and the following) with alternative, and improved, lives. This contrasts with the youth and street gang focus of studies emerging from the United States.

External to the whānau, a small number of people, associated with government, had the insight to listen to whānau realities and appreciated the social and cultural needs of the whānau. In this sense, people like Pita Sharples, the then Minister of Māori Affairs, did not view 'gangs' as a criminal body but as families and wider social units. Through this form of holistic appreciation, whānau were encouraged to engage in their own transformative processes, with assistance when the whānau deemed it necessary, as opposed to institutional dictates.

Rather than being entrenched within a criminogenic response the findings of this study issues a challenge to those who perceive gangs as a problem. The challenge is to reject outmoded criminogenic constructions and associated strategies, and listen, and appropriately respond, to the lived realities of the people in question.



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