

Marginalised: An Insider's View of the State, State Policies in New Zealand and Gang Formation

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Abstract Following the annexation of Aotearoa/New Zealand by the British in 1840, Māori, as the Indigenous people of that country, experienced loss of sovereignty through the imposition of and application of new and transformative policies, including the law and unfamiliar legal and social codes. This paper considers the state and the influential legacy of an imposed, Settler-state social welfare and criminal justice system on Māori. An explicit, insider narrative will highlight how suppression, disconnection and abandonment, made manifest through particular and abusive state policies, has informed and constructed the life pathway of a member of a culturally and socially-submerged population, the Mongrel Mob gang.

Introduction

This article is focused on socially constructed fractures of Aotearoa/New Zealand society. Racial and ethnic bias, gross inequalities, the unequal distributions of power and blunted life-chances as well as ill-conceived and abusive state policies inform the analysis of this work. Crime and “the present day processes of criminalization”, according to Walton and Young (1998, vii) “are rooted in the core structures of society, whether its class nature, its patriarchal form or its inherent authoritarianism.” Within contemporary critical criminology are various schools of thought. Two of these strands—cultural criminology and convict criminology, plus a nascent Indigenous criminology (Ross 1998; Webb 2003, 2011; Cunneen and Tuari 2016)—have a direct influence on this article. Cultural criminology is concerned with the daily life pathways of criminalized and associated

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individuals' and the intersections by social and cultural forces of control, justice and the media. According to Ferrell (2003, 71) "Cultural criminologists emphasize the role of image, style and symbolic meaning among criminals and their subcultures, in the mass media's representation of crime and criminal justice, and in public conflicts over crime and crime control." Included in this are the media constructions of moral panics and the notion that groups of people such as gang members are seen as a threat to mainstream society (S. Cohen 1980; Kelsey and Young 1982). As a school of thought, cultural criminology is heavily informed by subcultures and the narratives of those who dwell on the outskirts of conventional society (see, also, for example, DeKeseredy 2011).

At the heart of convict criminology are prisoners' everyday lived experiences of crime and punishment. Such inside knowledge is embedded in ethnographic narratives of authenticity and the subjective phenomenological experiences of those on the margins (Richards and Ross 2001). Through convict criminology, personal experience is at the centre of how we understand criminology, criminal justice and punishment. Such experiences create their own critical space. The ethnographic account in this article is brutal and hard-edged. It is the consummate jail/gang viewpoint, one which is based on considered, reflective thought on the state and its processes and manifestations that are considered to be not only myopic but also socially and culturally destructive.

Indigenous criminology is both critical and resistant to administrative and mainstream criminology that has supported and continues to support colonial and neo-colonial practices. Criminology at a theoretical and applied level is still drawn on to support policies that marginalise, criminalise and confine Indigenous peoples. As Agozino, in his article on the need for the decolonization of criminology, notes that criminology "is a social science that served colonialism more directly than many other social sciences (2004, 343). The normalisation of the over-representation of incarceration of Indigenous peoples in the Settler states of the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand speaks in part to policies that have been founded on criminological traditions of the need for social control and containment of 'problem' populations.

Setting the Stage: Colonisation and the Construction of the Marginal Māori

... "the language of law and order is sustained by moralisms. It is where the great syntax of "good" versus "evil", of civilised and uncivilised standards, of the choice between anarchy and order constantly divides the world up and classifies it into its appointed stations" (Hall 1979: 19).

The continued marginalisation of Māori, as the Indigenous tangata whenua (the original people of the land) of Aotearoa/New Zealand,¹ continues to be prevalent in discourse, both in popular public discussion and in the academy's research agenda. Concomitant with such a broad theme are the activities of the state and the study of the margins, wherein live the outcasts, those blunted and marginalised by the state (and society), as the lens through which oppression, political, economic, cultural and social inequality and power relations are expressed, defined and understood.

¹ Aotearoa is the Māori name for New Zealand. In the body of this article, Aotearoa will be used together with the Pākehā name for the country, hence Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Since the British Crown annexed Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1840, Māori as tangata whenua have always resisted the pressures of colonial, post-colonial and Settler-state policies—once assimilationist; then bicultural and allegedly autonomous—and have sought to demonstrate and give fully independent voice to their own social, political, economic and cultural viewpoints. This has been particularly evident in countering European attempts to assimilate Māori into Pākehā² policies and European ways of seeing, knowing, doing and being in the world.

One stark reality of the ethnocentric British and their annexation of Aotearoa/New Zealand was the establishment of the unilateral doctrine of state sovereignty in which Māori were controlled through the law and the legal process, which included the powers of punishment (Sharp 1990). While legislation and court decisions underpin the Aotearoa/New Zealand coloniser's concept of sovereignty, sovereignty is not just confined to the coloniser. It is also part of the fabric of the Māori response to colonisation, and is reflected in their distinct and unique philosophies, values, social and political institutions. The Māori way and the Māori world confronted, collided with and resisted the position of cultural superiority as expressed by the British.

The Māori concepts of tikanga (law, correct and proper practices), of tino rangatiratanga (absolute authority and power) and the significance of collective ownership of land by Māori were virtually ignored by the British and were in conflict with the coercive British legal code. Notes Asad: "Western legal discourse participates in processes of power by creating modern realities of a special kind...The realities are special in part because they define social relationships...in terms of legal "rights" and "duties" within the modern state" (1991, 321). The colonial/coloniser's power to take control of land and resources repeatedly brought Indigenous people, Māori included, into confrontation with the British legal and judicial process.

The colonial past has informed, and continues to inform, the post-colonial present and the blossoming of Indigenous renaissances, articulated daily in social relations, in identity and in discourse. The dominant ideologies and approaches of the mainstream focus on those with less power. The strong arm of the state, made manifest in the law, the police and the pedagogical institutions of courts and jails, continually coerced, and coerce, the masses into consenting to the ruling class' activities and aspirations.³ Such organisational methodologies corral and perpetuate the existence and the isolation of the marginalised (and demonised) 'other', and in turn, reveal and amplify that those on the fringes resist and construct cultures and lives in which hope, possibility, identities and life pathways are informed, shaped and pursued. Friere's (1970) well-documented Marxist analysis of the relationships between the colonizer and the colonized is particularly apposite scholarship in relation to this discussion.⁴

The dominant paradigm of the Aotearoa/New Zealand state's Pākehā majority still gives rise to different types and forms of abuse and marginalisation and therefore to the development and construction of differing and varied behavioural patterns and ways of being in the world as employed by the marginalised 'other.' There are well-documented

² Pākehā is a Māori term commonly used to refer to non-Māori people and is used to refer to New Zealanders of European descent.

³ Such institutions pursue correctional education in which positive, transformative outcomes and the reduction of offending are the priorities. And, of course, the particular pedagogy of the jail teaches the prisoner about the specific regimes in which new language, codes of behaviours and exercises of power reside.

⁴ See, also for example, Gramsci (1971) and Heywood (1994) for more in-depth critical thinking concerning hegemony as a core component of the social and the cultural.

examples of this legacy of the state-sponsored subjugation of Indigenous people through the suppression and eradication of their culture: within Aotearoa/New Zealand, for example, the Tohunga Suppression Act (1907). According to Stephens (2001), the Act was positioned as a benevolent measure passed to improve Māori health; in reality it was a political weapon used to allay Pākehā fears that Māori would try and reclaim political power and voice lost through colonisation. And, more recently, Māori were subject to heavy-handed, orchestrated, over-policing measures following the Bastion Point land occupation of 1977–1978 and the Urewera ‘terror’ raids of 2007 (Keenan, 2008). Both incidents reflect not only the blatant exercise of state power but also can be situated within the deployment of violence as a key of the control-pacify-subsume strategy of the post-colonial Settler state. Today, certain state-sanctioned policies and approaches, which include political representation, language revitalisation, and marae-based courts for youth offenders, may go some way in creating the perception of a progressive, inclusive and benevolent state: a mirage of freedom and emancipation. Yet the reality is that Māori continue to be over-represented in every negative social indicator. Following the consolidation of the Settler-state society, imprisonment, social harm and victimisation in a variety of ways is still writ large. As Ross (1998, 3) notes: “Today, Native people are not free; they are a colonized people seeking to decolonize themselves.” Tauri (2014, 24) writes that the ‘Māori problem’ is the recipient of “high rates of surveillance...by the institutions of social control, and political attention to the vote winning potentialities of addressing the wicked problem of Indigenous crime.” The other agencies that administer the Settler state today—the health, education, welfare and employment sectors—are also complicit actors in managing Indigenous people ‘differently’ (Tauri 2014, 24). The wide parameters of the criminal justice system, in particular, are “a key colonial project within the armoury of the Settler colonial state” (Tauri 2014, 25) and, as structural and institutional violence, reflect the on-going processes of Settler state colonization—writ large through policies, policing and practices. Part of this project of state crime was removing young Māori from their whānau (family), and therefore their culture, and housing them in prison-style institutions like the Epuni Boys’ Home, where the administration of Settler-state discipline, cultural suppression and compliance was paramount.

The State: Neutral? Abusive? ... But a Site of Resistance

The abuse of human rights is a defining component of state crime: Green and Ward (2004, 4) describe it as “state organisational deviance involving the abuse of human rights.” Stanley and McCulloch continue with this further and elaborate “...state crimes are far more serious and harmful than other crimes. The capacity of state officials and state institutions, particularly through the police and military, to kill, maim, exploit, repress and cause widespread human suffering is unsurpassed” (2013, 1).

Resistance to such state crime takes many forms and assumes many applications: for example, from the single and personal to the numerous and many, from active to passive, from violent to non-violent. In the context of this article resistance is expressed through the self and with agency. It is active, violent, open and physical. It is communicated through assertive, self-confident acts that define gang behaviours: violence, drug use and abuse and tattooing as self-expression and self-harm. All combine to convey personal messages that amplify social and cultural resistance to the controlling state and its life defining social policies.

The state (which includes the government and the Crown) in Aotearoa/New Zealand might be considered as the most pure application of the country's mainstream ideologies and administrations in the crime and justice sectors in that it is central in the "political acts of defining 'crime' and responding to those identified as 'criminals' or 'victims'" (Stanley and McCulloch 2013, 1). The state amplifies and consolidates its powers of control and domination over the individual through an array of systems, policies, judgements and processes. As the powerful and most central institution in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the state has been, and continues to be, involved in regulating and changing the lives and activities, and hence life pathways of the collective and thus the individual.

As such, identities are constructed and shaped at both the personal and at the shared level by the state's ministrations, which underscore the need for control, order, discipline, authority and repression. These are reflected, for the purposes of this paper, in an array of care and control facilities (foster homes and foster carers), the court system, and in the manifestations of a burgeoning carceral system—from the former periodic detention centres and borstals to the current regime of low, medium and high security prisons (See Cohen 2011; Jackson, 1988; Maxwell and Morris 1993; Pratt, 1992; Quince 2007; Tauri 1996). For example, the doctrine of *parens patriae* or 'the state as parent', had been employed in the country's state-run foster homes and foster care regimes, particularly from the 1950s to the 1990s, and in which a murky legacy of physical and sexual abuse was created (Cohen 2011, 60).

State sanctioned behaviour in Aotearoa/New Zealand from the 1950s to the 1990s saw in excess of 100,000 young people, many of whom were Māori, being deemed to be needed to be locked away by government departmental policy (Cohen 2011, 22). The legacy of this abuse continues to blossom—the offspring of these children are also found in the statistics of the criminal justice system today.

Stan Coster—Outcast: Not Only Cast Out by the State But Also Cast Out by Himself

The following narrative draws on the life of Stan Coster. His life is one that is complex and has been writ by the state. A life shaped and informed by state institutions and the many forms of state confinement. His intimate and insider perspectives of foster homes, boy's homes, borstals and prisons are central to the following discussion. Stan is not a research participant but a research collaborator and is engaged in all elements of this paper including its broad vision so he is both *auteur* and author. He sees his engagement in such work alongside (state-funded) university based researchers as part of his talking back to the state. Stan shares his insights that have been produced under conditions of severe constraint in the hope that the benefit may accrue to the collective (McIntosh 2015).

One of the author's associations with him goes back to the 1980s while for the other author their collaborative working relationship has been active for the last four years. The research relationship goes beyond the simple insider/outsider research dynamic but rather looks at the way that power is exercised and articulated in such research collaborations and the way it informs the research process. It encourages constant mutual learning and "examining familiarity and strangeness and the experiences that make them familiar or strange which may tell us more about our own norms and allow a better understanding of the norms of others" (McIntosh 2011, 267). In speaking about norms, Stan recognises that marginality has been a feature of every aspect of his life: he was marginal in whānau

(family) settings, in children's homes, in his gang life, in prison and in life outside the wire. He is the marginal man.

The focus will be on Stan's formative years as a ward of the state spent in foster care and the Epunui Boys' home, his first confinement at Waikēria Prison and his membership of the Mongrel Mob. Stan has, through the Official Information Act, requested all information that the state holds on him. This material, which filled boxes, reinforces his statement that the state wrote his life.

One of the authors first met Stan in the late 1980s outside the High Court in Auckland. Together with other Mongrel Mob members, he was at the court to show support for the Mob's Auckland chapter, many of whom had been arrested following police Operation Ranger and charged with importing, possessing and supplying LSD. Stan has amassed 109 convictions ranging from the petty to a serious act of sexual violence. They encompass: theft of a motor vehicle, obscene language, theft, assault, attempted false pretences, burglary, possession of cannabis, carrying offensive weapons, resisting police, escaping from jail, shoplifting, threatening behaviour, driving offences, escaping from police custody, wilful damage, trespass, robbery, assault on a prison office, male assaults female, armed robbery and rape.

Stan has been incarcerated in the following Aotearoa/New Zealand prisons: Waikēria, Paparoa, Mt Eden, Mt Crawford, Kaitoke, Pāremoremo and Mangaroa. He has spent more than 25 years behind bars and of these, nine were spent in isolation, segregation and in being 'off privileges' (OP). When not in jail, he was still under the gaze of the state. He said: "When I was 15 I was being arrested around three times a week for nothing and then released around 3am the next day. Several years later I knew the system. The cops...how they worked. I could always get free lodgings and breakfast at the cop shop".

Stan (Ngāti Kahungunu), 55 years old at the time of writing, recognises how the state has become the over-arching and dominant force in his life and despite his intimate relationship with the state, which goes back more than 40 years on the directly personal level, its reach extends back to even before he was born, an association which began with his parents. His family had been known to the Child Welfare Division [of the Department of Education] with a "history of inadequacy" since 1955 (Parsons 1969, no page ref.).

Said Stan outlining his biological father's whakapapa (genealogy): "Ko Alf Coster tōku dad. Ko Pākehā, ko Greek ōna iwi. Ko Dunedin tōna whenua tipu."

[Trans: Alf Coster is my dad's name. He is Kiwi and Greek. He grew up in Dunedin.] Stan continues: "My biological father was a part-time seaman, part-time boxer and part-time "carnie"" (carnival/sideshow roustabout). He was also "a showman, bookie, scrap metaler, wharfie, boxer and women basher". A report from a Senior Child Welfare Officer from the mid-1960s discussing the possibility of Mr Coster having custody of his children noted that should Mr Coster "be allowed to have the children, he would take them around New Zealand as show exhibits" (Parsons 1969, no page ref.). Stan's mother bore several children from three de facto relationships and was also under the gaze of the Child Welfare Division. The state also intervened in the lives of Stan's older brother and sister and his younger brother though the experience and impact of the intervention was different for each of them. It is fair to say however that all experienced different degrees of social harm under state 'care'.

Stan's orientation to the world has been largely defined by foster care, boys' homes and prisons. He might be viewed by some as an embodiment of the 'Māori crime problem' and as a symbol of the over-representation of Māori in the country's criminal justice system. Such over-representation "While descriptively correct...its use and the experiences associated with it speak to a high level of social constraint and blocked opportunities"

(McIntosh 2015).⁵ Stan's membership of the Mongrel Mob, arguably the country's most notorious gang (Gilbert 2013, 37), and acknowledged as a gang which "exuded challenge and rebellion at every turn" (Payne 1991, 19), has also been crucial in constructing his worldview. The individual experience becomes the collective experience—made manifest in a lifetime of removal, dislocation, abandonment and deprivation. These determinants have been bolstered by expressive gang affiliations and the development of a new identity.

Colonisation and the suppression and submersion of an Indigenous cultural identity are causal factors in Māori over-representation in the Aotearoa/New Zealand criminal justice system (Quince 2007, 335). The author notes that colonisation "has, in fact, directly shaped the socio-economic position of Māori to such an extent that offending produced by poverty and other related demographics, and the sentences that such offending attracts, are connected to ethnic identity" (2007, 335. Emphasis in original). Indigenous Native American scholar Luana Ross (1998) in citing Robert Blauner (1972) noted that critical features of colonisation include the regulation of Indigenous (colonised) peoples' movements and the erosion, alteration and modification of their culture, including the loss of sovereignty. The coloniser "attempts to destroy the culture of the colonised" and thus culture itself becomes a method of control (Ross 1998, 4). Colonialism "as control and denial of culture" and the disproportionate number of Māori locked up in Aotearoa/New Zealand jails strengthens both Ross' and Quince's argument. The effects of colonisation and the centrality and dominance of state institutions and being a recipient of its processes emerge as common threads throughout Stan's narrative.

Stan's Early Days—of Family Loss, Foster Care and the Eponi Boys' Home

As indicated at the start of this section, Stan's navigation of life's pathways began with material and social paucity. A seminal moment in the defining of Stan's life, particularly in relation to women, was the death of his mother from cancer. He was nine years old. As he says: Why did I want to know about women? My mother left me...died. She left me. Is that what women do? I was an emotional child and I was left alone...the result: I didn't know shit from clay.

The expression of loss and abandonment and little or no adult supervision and socialisation skills from within the whānau (family) became cornerstones of a life defined by deprivation, dislocation and personal loss. His memories of those days are dark. Stan casts some searching and heartfelt comments about family and togetherness:

Whānau is about keeping together. I am the opposite. I push them away. I don't care. Never believed in that mother/father crap. I remember when I was about two or three, my old man gave mum some money. She bought an umbrella. He wrapped it around

⁵ Over-representation in prison has become a normalised concept and can be seen as an attribute of a particular group (McIntosh 2015). As such it becomes a cultural measuring tool by which such a group is judged. Over-representation, as a constituent of the criminal justice system (CJS), therefore becomes part of the social environments and life pathways of such groups. The normalising of such a notion establishes an untruth as a truth; misconceptions become universalised as truths. Bull (2009) writes that any examination of Māori and the CJS begins with their over-representation in that system and the discussion continues without questioning the notion of over-representation: the impact and role of criminogenic factors are ignored. (See also Carr and Tam (2013); Jackson (1988); Webb (2011); Workman (2011)).

her head. We were locked out while she was bashed. That's a recurring memory. That was that.

He continues:

At mum's grave site, my step-father and my biological father argued over the future of us kids. We were still staying in her (mum's) house. The next day after the funeral there were just us kids in the house. My sister took charge and made out all was normal. We weren't allowed to leave the house. One week later we ran out of food. I have no feelings for both fathers, either biological or the step-father. One created me and I respect him for that, but that's it. The other one, no.

Stan acknowledges that his childhood memories are unacceptable to him and difficult for others to understand. However, he stresses that his mother's whakapapa (genealogy) is alive and very much in his mind. "It is: Ko Te Whatuiāpiti te tangata; ko Kahurānaki tōku marae⁶; ko Joan Mary Rātima/Pākai tōku Mum. [Trans: Te Whatuiāpiti was our forbear; Kahurānaki is my marae; and Joan Mary Rātima/Pākai was my mother.] That is what I knew about her and is an acknowledgement to Māoridom".

Stan's formative years were trauma-riddled and, furthermore, punctuated by emotional and physical violence—as a recipient and, as already seen in the case of his mother, as a witness and spectator. Violence would continue to inform Stan's life when in state care, when in the Mongrel Mob and in jail and he came to see the use of violence as a tool that he could employ as a form of resistance against further victimisation. Violence as a self-defence mechanism of an abused and disenfranchised person, became embedded within Stan. As a rational response to the world around him, violence informed, and continues to inform, his life choices and pathways. It fills a vacuum created by the absence of family, mistrust of adults and the impossibility of creating a relationship with a father-figure. Violence is a recurrent theme in his world.

Following his mother's death, Stan was made a ward of the state and was shunted from private foster carer to private foster carer. The Child Welfare Division of the Department of Education, who oversaw children put into state care, wanted to keep the siblings together. Already fragile, rejection, isolation and an awareness of violence became components of Stan's socialisation. So did feeling like a commodified object when placed in the foster-care environment. A report from a senior child welfare officer noted that "Stanley is still emotionally insecure and the least little "tiff" or harsh word upsets him for many hours...it is hard to know if he is completely at ease at his home because he cannot sit down and talk about things (Parsons 1969, no page ref.) Another child welfare officer notes that "their foster mother telephoned to say that...Stanley...has changed. The foster mother reports that Stanley has been thieving—low IQ, stolen goods being found in the same room as usual" (McNicoll 1970, no page ref.).

Initially, Stan and his siblings went to stay with whānau. He acknowledges he and his siblings "horrors." "We were not allowed into the house until it was dark...in summer we sat in the trees until it was dark. Our only escape was to go to the Mormon Church. The family worked us like dogs around the house". Time with whānau did not last long, a "couple of months", recalls Stan, who said "they were then kicked out into the wilderness."

The first foster care placement saw Stan and his brothers and sister move to the home of a Presbyterian Church minister. Notes Stan:

⁶ The marae is the sacred meeting place of a Māori kinship group where people gather for important, formal occasions such as tangi (funerals) and hui (meetings).

He talked about 'bad' and 'sin' at his services. I knew that I wanted to experience first-hand just what bad is. I didn't like this family. They weren't my culture. Be polite...why? I was never shown what to do. I thought I was a hori [derogatory term to describe rough Māori] and this is the way horis grow.

Stan's construction and development of a criminal and criminalised identity began to flower when his guardianship as a ward of the state was terminated by the Department of Education. Following incidences of petty theft, truancy and alcohol-related offending—his introduction to the police—he was released into the care of Epuni Boys' Home, "a place where nothing happened...where I didn't think about it, didn't worry about it, where I didn't know about the outside, didn't want to know about the outside...where I just wanted to know the four walls. I sat there and wondered what's going to happen to you".

Epuni Boys' Home, situated near Lower Hutt, Wellington, was one of 25 other short-term correctional facilities around Aotearoa/New Zealand whose task was to assess boys and young men in relation to their future care. They had been adjudged by the state as threats to the social order. The Epuni residents were of varying ages, from seven to 16 according to Stan Coster. Some were at Epuni for care and protection issues; others were sent there from the youth courts and who were actively pursuing criminal careers. According to Cohen (2011, 39), about half of the home's 350 residents were state wards. Some were there because their guardians had voluntarily signed them into Social Welfare Department custody while others were referred by the courts. Cohen, himself, was referred to Epuni by the courts at the age of 13. He brings together, through participatory accounts and observations, insider experience, archival research and state policy, a narrative of the social history of the facility.

Observed Cohen:

Epuni is as much a holding pen for an overloaded youth justice system as any lofty setting for therapeutically based observation of the wards who live for up to eight months at a time...A majority of these inmates will remain in an officially supervised environment for the remainder of their early years, with a significant number going on to lengthier stretches of long-term training, borstal and jail... (2011, 39–40).

If Stan's introduction to the police was formalised through petty theft, being a resident in Epuni brought the state, particularly the police, even more into Stan's life in a specific, non-negotiable and institutionally-laden way: the state had the power to order that the names of boys' home residents be gazetted by the police so that their life trajectories, work-related and otherwise, could be monitored in adulthood at the whim of the state. Being a resident in a boys' home for a minor infraction became a lifetime penalty. Stan was now under the permanent and ineradicable gaze of the state.

The mix of residents in Epuni's experiment in institutional child care was generating future work for the police and the courts because, as Cohen writes, "The economics of the place meant that housing different individuals according to their experience and problems was out of the question. So somebody with a relatively stable disposition, including those sent down from the courts for fairly light offending, would therefore find himself in the daily company of others with serious criminal records" (2011, 150). Such an intimate environment for Stan and for others became a seminal influence in the creation of a future criminal identity.

Stan accepts being sent to Epuni in a resigned way: "I was placed there and that was it". He recalls that his arrival at Epuni was marked by being painted in a thick lotion from head to toe to kill head and body lice and then three days in a secure block

to learn to mellow out and to suck up to the system. I didn't talk...at all. In the third week I bashed the kingpin, a fat kid who thought he controlled the place, and I took over. I had figured everything out in three weeks. It was easy. I was already institutionalised. I didn't have to think, to worry, do anything. I had no feelings about Epuni and me being there...no, nothing.

The themes of confinement, institutionalisation, the use of violence, the creation of an insider/inmate identity, resistance to all forms of legitimate authority and the ongoing erosion of the possibility of a future of hope and opportunity were all established elements of his narrative by 15. In a year where institutionalisation was no longer within a care and protection frame but more unambiguously within a punishment frame, Stan was sent to Waikēria Prison's Hillary House for first offenders for two years for what he calls "petty crime"...'you know, shoplifting, theft of my cousin's car, crashing the car...stuff like that'. He was released after one year but was recalled to finish his two-year term following another shoplifting conviction. "You know," he said, "I wanted to join the army when I was 15 but I had my first conviction so goodbye army...I found the poor man's army...jail".

On the Path to the Big House (aka jail)

"Ko Hori tangata tōku iwi. Ko te whare herehere tōku marae. Ko Dokta, this is I." [Trans: Hori is my tribe. Jail is my marae. I am Dokta.]

Looking back, Stan describes Waikēria Prison, built in 1911, as "a strange place. It was a learning centre...a migration of the school system. Jail was the same—from kindy [kindergarten] to university. I was there to learn and I did. The jail system taught me to keep to myself and to control things".

The Epuni Boys' Home and Waikēria Prison experiences, for Stan, reinforced the behavioural traits that had become more and more pronounced in his early life—being submerged and suppressed as an individual made him insular and withdrawn. He preferred isolation and chose being away from other people. This continued the trend of normalising him to an institutional life punctuated by confinement—and violence—in the then-awaiting criminal justice system. Yet paradoxes emerge in his narrative: for example, Stan's overall opposition to Waikēria is countered by his "playing-the-game" of undertaking daily routines on one hand and refusing to save money and being 'off privileges' and seeking isolation on the other. Such relationships and encounters are not purely oppositional and sites of resistance on their own. They are, as Abowitz (2000, 883) correctly points out, to be understood "as shaping both future encounters and the nature of the conflict itself." Stan's resistance and opposition must also be considered as being also situated in wider historical and socio-economic memories, whereby being poor, Māori, deprived and disconnected are located in the loss of ethnic and cultural identity and the impact of colonisation.

Throughout his life Stan has been socialised in the company of males, including the Mongrel Mob lifestyle, which has dominated his world through self-action, expression and communication. Consequently, he has constructed a particular way of expressing his masculinity and what it means to be a man, the top dog, in the pressure controlled environment of jail and gang. Stan, as an individual with an identity, has been a recipient of state intervention and institutional discrimination. Such forces and pressures have directed him to embrace the gang (and the prison) worldview and create specific and particular identity markers. Through self-action informing his cultural choices, Stan displays his true inner identity. This is revealed as a cultural identity which has been guided and shaped by

marginalisation and one created in response to authoritarian and legitimated regimes, policies and processes (Abowitz 2000).

It's time to join. Join what? Mongrel Mob...the jail system

Stan said that he first heard about the Mongrel Mob when he was 15, in the latter days of his stay at Epuni Boys' Home. He recalled: "A pioneer Mongrel Mob leader was whānau (Ngāti Kahungunu). He said to me 'boy, how old are you?' I said 15. He said 'it's time to join.' Join what? Mongrel Mob...the jail system..."

The Mongrel Mob, as a collective and through the individual as member, confronted, and still confronts, mainstream New Zealand culture and society head-on and in an unflinching and unapologetic way.

Membership of the social and cultural environment of the Mongrel Mob requires and produces certain types of behaviours and attitudes. A particular and personal re-acculturation process involving the adoption of new symbols, symbolic forms, rituals and rites of passage takes place. As Goffman (1961) points out, the views and opinions of outsiders (the public, the state) as to why gang (and prison) behaviours occur, how they are interpreted and judged are different both inside and outside the gang/prison. He suggests that inherent in this is the process of "mortification": "Upon entrance, he (*sic*) begins a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations and profanations of self. His (*sic*) self is systematically, if often unintentionally mortified" (1961, 14).

Said Stan

The Mongrel Mob was as a hapū (sub-tribe) of Ngāti Kahungunu. Hastings is the founding chapter. When I joined it was radical and against everything, including drugs...not alcohol though. We were a drinking club, yeah. This is in the 1970s, 1980s...We were the Master Race because we had freedom...we were the protest-against-all-society mob...I'll show you what the Mongrel Mob is about...I disrespect you...I don't accept you...I disrespect the system...I don't accept the system...just want to hurt...cause pain...kill. Madmen...no fixed abode...I liked that. Walking the dog [wearing the patch] made you feel special. We dressed in red. The red on the patch, in our colours, meant beware, blood, danger. Watch out. Loud. In your face. Can't see red at night, eh? Walking the dog 24/7 made you act as a barbarian, a savage, a non-communicator, doin' disgustin' behaviour.

He continues

Mongrelism [the state of being a Mob member] was a way of life. You could waddle around and be at one with yourself and your creator. The enemy was the system...the system made us...we were a bunch of people trying to teach ourselves. We liked to travel. Get the dole [unemployment benefit]...gas money...get on the road...we did whatever we had to do to survive. We were a bunch of louts...drink...fight...jail...Sieg fucken' Heil...and I'd do it all again. I was not a good soldier until I hated and was hated by all. That's dedication. Then you're on the path...wherever that ends...eventually death. Today, I have no friends. My only connection to the Mongrel Mob was the bulldog and I talked to the dog 24/7. Today, the bulldog is still in my head and I will die with it.

I'll tell you what Mongrel Mob, Mongrelism and the patch stand for. This is the [Mongrel Mob] Bible...this stands for everything...the 10 Commandments:

M is for the mongrels that we are;
 O is for the offensive things we do;
 N is for the nights and bloody rumbles [fights];
 G is for the growl from the bulldog;
 R is for the rejects that we are;
 E is for the everlasting patch;
 L is for the lags [jail terms] we do with style

M is for the many blocks [forced group sex with women] we have;
 O is for the outcry from the public;
 B is for the boots we drink from
 You are the patch. The patch is you. Sieg fucken' Heil. (Andrae 2004).

Stan said he had no regrets whatsoever about joining the Mongrel Mob. He said his fellow “dogs” were “a bunch of loose cannons who all had problems”. He said he could fit in and get lost within that group. “All my problems, all my hate, all my anxieties...these were all locked away and safe. All I had to do was say the words ‘Sieg fucken’Heil’, ‘Sieg dog’ and so on”.

We were warriors of the system and we taught ourselves to be freedom fighters. Going to jail, we were prisoners of war, therefore we should try and escape...I looked at it all like that. The Mob taught you to bash and be bashed. Not to run away...to get the story right. There was no such thing as running [away]. Mongrel Mob was a job. Spread the word. You could go around the country and show them what the Mongrel Mob is about. It is about hate and self-hate. I hated myself. It is about the abuse of and self-hate of women. They let us down. They'd have multiple partners...a new man here...a new man there...bash them. The Mongrel Mob was not here to be your friend...but we were one in the common cause...for the bulldog.

Stan has provided some full, frank and explicit insights into the early Mongrel Mob, its meaning of membership and what the gang means to him. Multiple marginalities driven by notions of alienation, exclusion and abandonment are powerful threads weaving through Stan's narrative. So, too, is the sense of *communitas* that gang membership offers. Such *communitas* provides Stan with status, empowerment, fulfilment and real sense of belonging. Yet he also recognises that even within the gang structure he was often a man set apart. His early life experiences meant that his marginal status always remained a feature. However, being marginal in the Mongrel Mob given the early ethos of the gang was not an impediment to membership.

The consistent societal themes of alienation and institutional marginalisation emerge in Stan's explanation as to why the gang was formed. Other contributors also emerge including the trauma of British colonisation, post-colonial dominance and the loss of cultural identity, both collectively and individually. Indeed, the factors and influences contributing to continuing Indigenous subjugation and disempowerment have been the focus of sociological and criminological inquiry by Māori (and non-Māori) scholars including, for example, Jackson (1988), Poata-Smith (2001), Tauri (2011), Spoonley (1993), Walker (1990), Ward (1974).

Many unanswered questions abound for Stan. He said

I don't know the Māori ways. There were two world wars. They took the old people...no-one left to teach us. Our own people fucked us over 'cos they sold out and gave away to the Pākehā.? The Pākehā system? The only system I know, the old way, the hori [poor Māori] way, was do whatever we wanted when we wanted. There

has been a migration from Māori to colonialism. New cultures have been created. Mongrel Mob and Mongrelism is one of these. I never recognised the Pākehā system...never been part of it. Why listen to the white man? All he does is steal and lie. By accepting the white man's regime, we have accepted the bringing of colonialism into our world. Mongrel Mob rejects the British and their colonialism.

Stan continues and the conversation moves to the bulldog, the central, defining image of the Mongrel Mob and of being a 'dog.' "Know why we chose the bulldog? 'Cos it symbolises England. We're English aren't we? If you want to hurt people you take something they like and respect and then rubbish it". The bulldog is a reference to John Bull, a cartoon character who personified Great Britain in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. He wore a Union flag waistcoat and was accompanied by a bulldog, the national animal of the United Kingdom, in his portrayals. When a Mobster puts on his patch, this is known as 'walking the dog.' The Mongrel Mob appropriated the bulldog and then added a Stahlhelm (a German steel helmet from World War II) as an extra insult to the colonial masters (Andrae 2004). The German insults continue: the city of Hastings, the birthplace of the Mongrel Mob, is known as The Fatherland and members use "Sieg fucken' Heil" as their greeting to each other.

Stan said: "The kraut lid [helmet] rubbed it in even further. Those English damaged Māori" (Andrae 2004, 109). He continued

Mongrel Mob and Māori don't go together...Mongrel Mob didn't like our people 'cos they gave away our land...just as bad as Pākehā. New cultures have been created because of colonialism. Mongrelism is one of these. The patch is something the Pākehā gave you...the dog is inside you. You can't take the dog out of you. Mongrel Mob are First Nation people. We are our own Aotearoa ethnic gang. Everyone else has to pay homage to Mongrel Mob or else we'll lose our identity. The motto 'Hate Yourself Bro'...Make Them Pay' still exists...carrying on the dream. The Mongrel message is to tell your Queen to take her flag and shove it and leave my country...treason. Did the Pākehā ever feel remorse for ripping us off? Taking our land? No. Did the Pākehā ever feel compassion for the things they did to Māori? No. Colonialism and unhappiness are the enemy...all this written by the white man.

Stan states the case that Māori cultural identity has been side-lined through the loss of land and the imposition of things British and the creation of the Settler-state, all this at the expense of the Indigenous nation culture. Ideas of expansion and reaction, domination and resistance, violence and retaliation pepper Stan's narrative. As such, it is a discourse that repeatedly tells an internalised version of colonialism and it is one that repeatedly underscores an unwillingness to be a passive victim. The dialectics mentioned in the previous sentence, of course, reflect a transformation, an immutable change where the old was being replaced by the new and such change is not piecemeal and temporary but all-pervasive and permanent. Yet Stan's narrative is germane in that it focuses a lens on the lived consequences of the postcolonial present—consequences that inform, through discourse and practice, an individual's life pathway, habit choices and world view.

Stan's Symbolic and Ritual World with His Skin as His Canvas

To the state, the public and other fellow gang members, facial tattoos depicting gang or gang-related insignia must be acknowledged as arguably the most pure example of self-labelling. They are boundary markers which not only reinforce who the individual is but

also situate the wearer (permanently) outside the rest of the social mainstream. For Stan, his Mongrel Mob symbolism (the bulldog, the words ‘sieg heil’) is made an inseparable and permanent part of his self—made manifest in blue ink permeating his dermis—and so the referents represented by the symbols become qualities embedded within his psyche. His relationship to the gang is forever a statement about his personal identity, his separation and freedom from the mainstream, his warrior status, and his chosen (and imposed) environments. As such, and while facial tattoos can be considered artistic self-expression, they also relate to issues of power, marginalisation, injustice and resistance. **The figures and words that adorn Stan’s face, head and neck, among the other sites on his body, are texts that can be read and interpreted and reflect the locus where the public self is existing in tension with the private self.** Crowe, writing about women’s self-injurious behaviour in response to abuse, notes: “The body acts as a surface upon which the subjective meaning can be inscribed and those inscriptions are then open to interpretation by both the subject and her object” (1996, 1008).

As McAllister (2003) further acknowledges, the skin is the canvas for inscribing cultural experiences. It is a site where the dialectic of the public-self exists in tension with the private-self. The body is the individual and the central place of one’s sense of self and one’s subjectivity. Yet the binary interplay between one’s environment and the self may create tensions and perhaps such tensions cannot be articulated or verbalised so the person acts instead—with facial tattoos, for example, providing an answer to the tension and contestation.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand prisons in the 1970s and 1980s gang tensions were high (Gilbert 2013, 253) and inmates were banned from wearing or displaying gang insignia. Yet people decided to confront the ban and tattooing became impossible to control. Stan chose to tattoo his face starting with the words ‘Mongrel Mob’ in the middle of his forehead. He takes up his narrative

One pākehā screw (prison guard) who was a bully said to me: ‘If I catch you doing any tattooing, I will charge you. I said ‘OK.’ I decided to take him on. That was when I did my bottom lip. He had to have seen me. I knew I’d be charged. Spent three months in segregation and a week in the pound...’.

After the forehead it was two bulldogs on the cheeks. Done with a sewing needle and Indian ink. They were done by a member from Mongrel Mob Rogues chapter. I filled out a P119 grocery list form to get the ink and needle. It took about an hour. I wanted to be recognised as Māori. No-one had this stuff on their faces back then. I didn’t want to cover them up. I wanted them out there...that was the thought in my head. My stuff was the predecessor of the gang tā moko. You can take our patch and try and stop us...that’s the white man’s way. You can’t take our face...that’s the Māori way. I thought I could die for our cause...the Māori cause.

He continues

We began to analyse and the beginnings of gang tā moko. They wanted to stop us wearing gang patches. How could we beat them? Do your faces. Mark them up. But tattooing should only be done on the marae...our marae was jail. We were becoming entrenched in the philosophy of freedom fighting. Jails were seen as POW (prisoner of war) camps. They tried to break you...I was the first with the dirty big M on my nose. Stood out like dog’s balls. This represented my iwi, my hapū. M is for mongrelism. Then it was M13 M [Mighty Mongrel Mob]...the word Notorious before that chapter of the gang was even formed.... The bricks there represented jail. I also

have the traditional rays of life either side of my nose. The breath of life. What God put into my nose. sieg heil is my kaupapa.

All my tattoos tell the story of my journey. I wanted them to be seen from a distance. I wanted to be looked at different. I wanted people to see me from far away. Not to come too close. Everyone is a danger. I don't want to be accepted...ugly words make me safe. A lot of people wanted to be accepted in/by society but you can alienate yourself.

Some Concluding Remarks

Stan Coster's discourse as expert is important on several grounds not least of which is that it highlights not only instances of myopic, shameful state policy and institutional discrimination in the decades between the 1960s and the 1980s and their on-going effects, but also it provides information to assist in the provision of answers and solutions. Stan, and others like him, has been denied equality in his everyday life. He has experienced unrelenting structural and systemic frustration (Galtung 1969) and the result is that any aspirations he may have had have been completely ruptured. Stan has now been out of prison for over 15 years. He continues to navigate life outside the wire with what he refers to as his prison mind. His is not the redemptive story of the life turned around. It remains the bare life (Agamben 1998). For him, prison and the "free" world are all part of the same social landscape that has systematically denied, at an individual and collective level, the right to self-determination and a legitimate part of the social.

As an insider of foster care, gang and jail, Stan has privileged knowledge. Stan is an expert about those institutions and related processes that have been so culturally and socially dominant in his world and that have shaped his world view. He believes that this experience can inform Indigenous interventions that have at their centre others with expertise like himself. He sees this experience as being able to be used to generate new knowledge at the same time as providing an evidence base to counter the ongoing damage of much of state policy.

The Settler state and its policies has played a major role in the development of Stan's social and culturally identity and has embedded systems and constellations of exclusion, disengagement, disenfranchisement, stigmatisation, rejection and submersion. His narrative starkly reflects monumental dissatisfaction and anger: a poor Māori identity is indeed a marginal identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand and his marginalisation has been reinforced in the collective consciousness through his visual appearance, prison status and gang membership.

Stan's accounts of institutionalised knowledge, gleaned from more than 25 years in jail, of Mongrel Mob life and of foster home "care", of suppression, of missed opportunity and of negative life influences are important in that they contribute to the greater knowledge and understanding of processes and policies which need to be continually evaluated, changed and adapted to suit the needs of all communities. His is a prime voice in the construction of the power-less marginalised outsider, in whom paucity of chance and opportunity are cemented through deeply-entrenched, harmful, life-defining state policies. Individual human rights have become state shame. Aotearoa/New Zealand once championed the welfare state; now it is the flag bearer for the punitive state.

Underpinning such an evocative personal ethnography is the importance and relevance of how events from the colonial past, reflected in biased Pākehā Settler-state theory and

practice, continue to inform and define contemporary social and cultural relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors have no potential conflicts of interest.

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