Violence is Currency
Understanding Gang Violence in Prison

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“[Violence is] The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.” (WHO, 2002, p.5)
Recorded violence and serious violence in NZ prisons (2011-2020)

Understanding gang violence in prison

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Gang violence in prisons: A scan of the literature
(Tamatea & Henry, in preparation)

- Empirical studies of violence in prisons that include ‘gang(s)’
- $N=20$ published studies since 1991
- Definitional issues
  - “Gangs”
  - “Violence”
  - “Prisons”
- The general picture: *Gang-affiliated prisoners are disproportionately involved in violence*
# Theories about gang violence in prisons (Henry & Tamatea, in prep)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Mechanism</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fong &amp; Buentello (1991)</td>
<td>Classifying oneself as a member of a specific group &gt; basis of social identity &gt; promotes self-stereotyping + adoption of normative, in-group behaviours</td>
<td>Self-categorization (I/D)</td>
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<td>Griffin &amp; Hepburn (2006)</td>
<td>Gang membership &gt; Exploitation of other prisoners &gt; Violence</td>
<td>Opportunity/Predation (S/D)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cunningham, Sorensen, Vigen &amp; Woods (2010)</td>
<td>Gang membership + Racial tensions &gt; Prison violence</td>
<td>Membership + tension (S)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worrall &amp; Morris (2012)</td>
<td>Presence of more than one gang &gt; perceived threat + need to dominate &gt; tension &gt; violence</td>
<td>Territoriality (‘defend the neighbourhood’); Competition for resources (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tewksbury, Connor &amp; Denney (2014)</td>
<td>Gang membership + Prior prison terms &gt; Infractions</td>
<td>Membership (I)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ganapathy &amp; Balachandran (2019)</td>
<td>Adopts norms, customs, values, and culture in general of the penitentiary &gt; adaptation &gt; violence as part of adapting to the prison environment</td>
<td>Prisonization (i.e., socialisation/adjustment to gang norms) (D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gang violence in prisons: What do we need to know?

- Drivers for violence in NZ context
- Gang culture and prison culture
  - Practices
  - Processes
  - Products
- Indigeneity
  - Colonisation
Ethnic Composition of New Zealand Prisoners (2011-2020 Average)

Understanding gang violence in prison

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

Institution

Percent

Understanding gang violence in prison #ICPAOnline2021
Nga Tūmanakotanga: What are we trying to achieve?

• ‘Understanding’
  • What factors contribute to the *cause* and *control* of violent behaviour in prison?

• ‘Reducing’
  • What will help to control, reduce and *prevent* future violence in NZ prisons?
## Prison violence: An ecological perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>What are the individual factors that contribute to violence in prisons?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>What social and cultural aspects (e.g., actual or perceived) contribute to violence in prisons?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial</td>
<td>What spatial elements and physical features of a given site contribute to violence in prisons?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do we know about the role of the ‘silent’ features: Geographical, spatial, and structural context?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>What contributes to violence in a particular subsystem (site/unit)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>What contributes to violence in prisons? Why do people act violently in prison? How do police, courts, and the corrections system contribute to violence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal</td>
<td>What contributes to violence in the general population? Why do people act violently (in general)? What are the wider societal values and attitudes that support violent behaviour?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research programme 2019-2024

Understand
- Predictions
- Perceptions
- Practices

Intervene
- Co-develop
- Co-design
- Co-ordinate

Evaluate
- Safety
- Social climate

Understanding gang violence in prison
Research programme 2019-2024

- Individual
- Environment
- Threat
- Safety
- Prison culture
- Gangs

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

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

Subject matter experts

Prison management ($n=4$)
Staff ($n=10$)
- Custodial
- Non-custodial staff
Prisoners ($n=23$)
- Gang-affiliated
- Non-affiliated

Analytic strategy

Grounded theory
- Data collection
- Coding
- Analysis
- Theoretical sampling
- Substantive/formal theory
Findings and insights

• Values / beliefs / norms
• Structure / organisation / order
• Conceptualisation of violence
• Functions of violence
• Solutions
Violence and gang engagement is connected to status and power. Those who can control the spaces can control the ability to move freely about. What this means is that a gang has the power to mitigate and instigate violence dependent on what can be accomplished through the violent or the non-violent actions itself.
Mauri ora!

THANK YOU!