



CULTURAL RESILIENCE

Alternatives to Incarceration

Studying protective factors in the Cook Islands

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12 August 2011

OVERREPRESENTATION

2267 PER 100,000

- When we see that Indigenous Australians have an incarceration rate 14 times higher than non-Indigenous people, we know one thing.
- People do not go to prison because they are bad!
- Overrepresentation of one community in prison clearly shows us that social factors are of prime importance – unique risk factors for Indigenous people include colonisation and all that implies.



PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Homel, Lincoln & Herd, 1999
- Indigenous people and protective factors
- Attachment bonds
- Self-confidence
- Cultural Resilience

- What exactly is cultural resilience?



CULTURAL RESILIENCE



HOW DOES A CULTURE BUILD RESILIENCE?

- Resilience is not a **trait** that some children or some cultures have. Resilience **develops** through interpersonal and social mechanisms that compensate for risk.
 - Put simply, relationships and social networks can change the course of a child's life and the way a community functions.
 - Teachers can take a child to sports practices and keep him/her away from alcohol & other drugs.
 - Indigenous communities with strong leadership and less experience of racism have less crime.
- McCausland and Vivian (2010)



THE COOK ISLANDS THEN AND NOW

- A self-governing state created by colonisation
- Associated with New Zealand, citizens, aid
- 2 million square kilometres of ocean, 15 islands
- Maori language, Christian missionaries 1825
- Schools on every island, high schools on some
- Annexation by NZ, English compulsory 1901
- European business owners, married local people
- Hotels, pay \$5 per hour, CI people go to NZ
- Tourist industry creating inequality



TE MAEVE NUI



CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

- Missionary blue laws (no holding hands)
- Prisons on islands in 19th century
- Compulsory road work

- Theft and burglary
- Hungry children, neglect, abuse, run away
- Steal food, money, alcohol, iPods, laptops

- Family violence, domestic violence, fights



THE COOK ISLANDS

- One small prison, 30 prisoners
- Rate was said to be 126 per 100,000
- Colonised country, still associated with NZ
- Population decimated by European diseases
- Missionaries attempted to destroy the culture
- Language weakened by compulsory English
- Land leased by Europeans \$1 per year
- Once for plantations, now for beachfront hotels
- Wage labour weakened primary production



RISK, CULTURAL RESILIENCE AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE COOK ISLANDS

- Risk factors
- School failure and/or expulsion
- Parents abusive and/or neglecting child
- Child drinking, smoking marijuana

- Community protective factors
- The feeding child/relative caring for child
- School, church, sports and cultural activities
- Work, agricultural activities still possible
- After offending, probation/prison mentors



ALTERNATIVE PROSOCIAL GROUPS

- Family means extended family and is the first level of protection for the child. This was deliberately broken down in Australia.
- School is the second level of protection. This is where a child learns that s/he belongs to the community. No child should ever be expelled.
- Cultural activities provide an opportunity to learn identity, spirituality, arts and crafts
- Sports programs can divert young people into positive, prosocial groups
- Employment is the third level of protection and one family farm provided that – feeding pigs



PLANTING TARO



COMMUNITY FACTORS

- Racism is almost unknown in the Cook Islands
- Europeans married into the community, or left
- Also a few Chinese businessmen married ...
- Until recently, no other foreigners on the islands
- That is not to say that there is no racism!
- But, usually, Cook Islanders only experience racism when they go to Australia or Aotearoa
- One young man said that he laughed when they called him a Coconut in New Zealand
- Another was upset when he was called a Negro



LEARNING CULTURE AT SCHOOL



WELCOME FOR NZ VISITORS



CHURCH IS IMPORTANT IN THE ISLANDS



COOK ISLANDERS LOVE RUGBY



COMMUNITY AND CULTURE



PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF BELONGING



THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

- The justice system can act as a fourth level of protection if the staff act as mentors/counsellors instead of merely punishing behaviours
- Police who come from the same community
- Probation officers and prison officers also from the same community as prisoners
- These are our children, we don't want them to go to prison – community meeting on marijuana
- Probation officers took offending young people on a camp to teach them life skills – need funding



ARORANGI PRISON FARM



LOCKING UP THE CHILDREN

- There are no juvenile detention centres in the Cook Islands and there is no one under the age of eighteen in prison or detention at the moment
- Building of a children's home was proposed and vetoed by the leaders of the community
- Most children are well cared for by members of the extended families or feeding parents
- Those who fall through the net are cared for by the police, probation and prison officers!



ARORANGI PRISON



MY FAMILY IS THE PRISON

- The Police and the Prison Officers know the prisoners as members of the community
- They are all related/connected in some way
- For some of the young people, the prison is their family and the place that they get food and work, friendship and adult support
- It was very clear that most of the young people were well supported by their families, and by the various youth groups, church, sports and dance
- It was when the family and community groups failed that substance abuse/offending occurred



LAUGHTER INSIDE THE FENCE



CROSS CULTURAL RESEARCH

- Showed that risk factors apply
- Families with substance abuse problems
- School difficulties are the first sign of trouble
- Exclusion from school may lead to offending
- Protective factors in this community.....
- Closely bonded family networks
- All Cook Islanders study their own language
- Children learn cultural dancing , music at school
- School reinforces community spirituality
- Church and hereditary leaders, wisdom speakers
- A psychological sense of belonging



SUBSTANCE ABUSE



INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS SCHOOLS CAN BUILD RESILIENCE

- Learning who you are, where you belong
- School must not be a place of foreign culture
- Primary school should be for the learning of language and culture as much as for reading, writing and arithmetic
- A S Neil proved 50 years ago that children can play all through primary school and still catch up with academic work in high school



SCHOOLS CAN ENSURE THAT CHILDREN ARE READY FOR EMPLOYMENT

- Staying at school means learning work skills
- Children who fail at school often use drugs
- If some trauma has occurred and the child has become anxious and depressed, mental health services need to be associated with schools
- Substance abuse issues must be resolved before the young person will be ready for employment
- School is not only for healthy children, it is the place to intervene to restore health
- All of this is possible given adequate funding



INEQUALITY IS THE KEY

- Wilkinson & Pickett 2010, economic inequality maintains the gap between groups of people with regard to health and social outcomes
- Research based on United Nations statistics
- The more unequal people's incomes are.....
- The more unequal their life expectancy
- The more unequal their mental health
- The more unequal the incarceration rates, etc
- Sweden and Japan have created equal societies
- It is only our greed that stands in the way.....

