

The Aspirations of Maori: An exploratory study

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A questionnaire study of 225 Maori respondents investigated the effect of a number of variables on their educational, occupational and income aspirations. Multiple regression analyses revealed that education aspirations were predicted by parental education aspirations and age; occupation aspirations were predicted by parental occupation aspirations; and income aspirations were predicted by iwi settlement status. Overall, however, the Treaty of Waitangi settlements do not yet appear to have had much effect on Maori aspirations. It is hoped that the present study will provide a basis of comparison for related future research.

As we begin the 21st century, the government settlements made in recompense for breaches to the Treaty of Waitangi may herald a major change for Maori. The settlement process is by no means complete and those claims that have been settled have only been so quite recently. Nonetheless, it is not too soon for an initial examination of the effects of Treaty settlements may have had on providing Maori with new found ability and means effectively to pursue and realise their aspirations and goals.

The primary aim of the research was to investigate the influence of a range of contextual and personal variables on the education, occupation and income aspirations of Maori. This research is considered exploratory because, to date, relatively few iwi have completed the settlement process. As a consequence,

there is a paucity of research concerning the implications of the Treaty settlement process on a number of psychological and social indices relating to Maori. This includes the study of Maori aspirations.

Kurt Lewin described key characteristics of aspirations, which Katona (1975) summarised as follows:

1. Aspirations are not static; they are not established once for all time.
2. Aspirations tend to grow with achievement and decline with failure.
3. Aspirations are influenced by the performance of other members of the group to which a person belongs and by that of reference groups.
4. Aspirations are reality oriented; most commonly they are slightly higher or slightly lower than the level of accomplishment rather than greatly different from it" (p. 154).

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Glossary

Kaitiaki - one who guides or protects

Tangata Whenua - the people who are the land (see *Bulletin* No.84:9)

Te Reo (Rangatira) - the Maori language - the language of leaders

Tikanga Maori - social practices and protocols, priorities

Wairua -spirit, taha wairua - spirituality (Nairn, 1997)

Notes

1. I have chosen to use the word "holocaust" in the title of this column because, like the Waitangi Commission, I accept that it describes the impact of colonisation on Maori people. Further, mass media made the word the focus of their coverage of the Hon. Tariana Turia's address to the 2000 conference at Waikato, where she challenged us, as psychologists, to ensure that we were helping rather than wounding as we worked with the sequelae of colonisation. The word was not chosen to offend and I hope that it will not deter anyone from engaging with this column.

2. For readers who were not present at the 2000 conference or who have forgotten what the Minister said, the text of her address was published in: *The Bulletin*, No. 99 (September 2001), 27-28.

Arthur Grooby was the recipient of the Society's 2001 President's (Maori) Scholarship. He completed his M.Sc. degree at the University of Canterbury in February and has recently commenced employment in Wellington with Te Puni Kokiri, HO. As a condition of the Scholarship, Arthur also presented this paper on the findings of his Masters thesis, at the Society's Annual Conference in Christchurch, August 2002

Method

The main study was preceded by in-depth interviews with 10 Maori respondents about their aspirations and the influences on them. These interviews were used to hone ideas and questions for the main study. The questionnaire contained a number of questions and statements about their aspirations that were responded to on 7-point rating scales. Three questions asked respondents how important it was for them to have aspirations for their education, occupation and education. Five questions asked how respondents thought their aspirations had been affected by their personality, the types of goals they set, their socio-economic status, the supportive nature of their family, and Treaty settlements that may have been made to their iwi. Further questions asked about their parents' aspirations for their education and occupations and how supportive their parents had been of their educational and occupational aspirations.

The five broad dimensions of personality known as the Big-5: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and intellect (Goldberg, 1992) were measured with five 3-item scales. Participants were also instructed to record whether their iwi had received Treaty settlements by circling 'yes', 'unsure' or 'no'. All participants were of Maori descent. Participants were sourced in two main ways utilising either the snowball sampling procedure or random selection from the Maori electoral roll.

Results

This sample contained 111 male and 114 female participants. The minimum age was 18 years and the maximum age was 71 years. The mean male age was 38.3 years and the mean female age was 33.6 years. The majority

of participants (125) affiliated to one iwi, but 60 affiliated to 2 iwis, 19 to 3, and 10 to 4 or 5. Eleven participants did not identify an iwi at all. Eighty-six participants recorded that their iwi had received Treaty settlements, 75 participants were unsure of the settlement status of their iwi and 64 participants recorded that their iwi had not settled. The employment status and details of participants are presented below.

Examination of the socio-economic status and educational qualifications of the sample suggested that it over-represented participants having high levels of socio-economic status and education. Thus, 5% of the sample were in managerial, and 27% in professional occupations, and 35% of the sample either had or were currently pursuing university qualifications. Similarly, 19% of the sample stated they had incomes of greater than \$60,000 per annum.

Participants were instructed to rate on a scale from 1 (= very affected) to 7 (= not affected at all) how they thought their aspirations had been affected. Mean ratings for the whole sample were 1.9 for the rated effect of personality, 2.1 for the effect of one's own goal setting, 2.4 for the effect of family support, 2.7 for the effect of SES and 5.5 for the effect of iwi settlement. A repeated measures ANOVA found a significant difference between the means ($F(4,896) = 270.48, p < 0.01$). Post hoc testing using the Tukey HSD method showed that iwi settlement had significantly ($p < .05$) less effect on the aspirations than any of the other four variables. In addition, SES and family support were rated as having significantly less effect than one's personality or one's own goals.

Participants rated how important it was for people to have aspirations for their education, occupation and income. In descending order; 214 participants

(95%) rated education aspirations as either 'very important' or 'important' to them; 184 participants (82%) rated occupation aspirations as either 'very important' or 'important' to them; and 124 participants (55%) rated income aspirations as either 'very important' or 'important' to them. Overall, these results suggest that the sample regarded their aspirations, and particularly those for education, as of considerable personal importance. The results also indicated a close relationship between education, occupation and income aspirations. Pearson correlations were 0.44 between occupational and educational aspirations, 0.34 between education and income aspirations and 0.63 between occupational and income aspirations (all $p < .05$).

A set of three multiple regression analyses examined the influence of a number of independent variables on the education, occupation and income aspirations of participants. The independent variables included the five personality dimensions, parental support for that aspiration, and iwi settlement status. Participant settlement status was scaled as 1 = iwi has settled, 2 = unsure if iwi has settled, 3 = iwi not settled.

Education Aspirations

The first multiple regression examined the influence of ten independent variables on the dependent variable, education aspirations. The independent variables were: parental education aspirations for participants, parental support of education aspirations, iwi settlement status, gender, age, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and intellect. Overall, the multiple regression equation accounted for 7.5% of the variance in educational aspirations. Significant ($p < .05$) effects were obtained for one's parents' educational aspirations for the respondent ($\beta = 0.22$) and the respondent's age ($\beta = -0.22$) but of none of the other independent variables.

Occupation Aspirations:

The second multiple regression examined the influence of ten independent variables on the dependent variable, occupation aspirations. The independent variables were: parental

occupation aspirations for participants, parental support of occupation aspirations, iwi settlement status, gender, age, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and intellect. The equation accounted for only 4.0 % of the variance in the occupation aspirations. There was a significant effect of parents' occupational aspirations ($r = 0.21$) but of no other variable.

Income Aspirations:

The third multiple regression examined the influence of eight independent variables on income aspirations. The independent variables were: iwi settlement status, gender, age, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and intellect. The regression equation accounted for 4.4 % of the variance in income aspirations, and there was a significant effect of iwi settlement status ($b = -0.15$) but of no other variable. The effect is interpretable as higher income aspirations for those affiliated to iwi that had not yet settled or those who did not know whether their iwi had settled.

In response to other variables, spiritual well-being was considered either 'very important' or 'important' by 126 of the participants (56 %). In contrast, only 24 participants (10.7 %) rated spiritual well-being as either 'not very important' or 'unimportant'. When participants were asked to rate how important their cultural identity was to them, 160 participants (71.1 %) rated their cultural identity as being either 'very important' or 'important' to them. In contrast, only 10 participants (4.4 %) rated their cultural identity as being either 'not very important' or 'unimportant' to them. Thus, the participants considered both spiritual well-being and cultural identity as important factors in their lives.

Participants were also instructed to rate their agreement in relation to the statement: "It is likely that as more iwi settle Treaty claims over time, that Maori will set higher goals and aspirations for themselves". Ninety-two participants (40.9 %) either 'strongly

agreed' or 'agreed' that there would be an increased likelihood of Maori setting higher goals and aspirations for themselves, as more iwi settle Treaty claims over time. In contrast, only 22 participants (9.8 %) either 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' with the likelihood of this happening. Thus, overall the sample felt that Treaty settlements would likely result in Maori setting higher aspirations for themselves.

Conclusions

The major goal of this exploratory research was to examine the influence of a range of contextual and individual variables on the prediction of education, occupation and income aspirations for Maori. These variables included: personality, personal goal setting, socio-economic status, family environment, parental education and occupation aspirations, parental support for education and occupation aspirations, age, gender and Treaty of Waitangi settlements.

Previous research (Schoon, 2001; Marjoribanks, 1995, 1998) suggests that the aspirations of parents for their children are influential on their children's aspirations for themselves, and the findings with respect to Maori educational and occupational aspirations are completely in line with this earlier research. Maori parents appear to be important influences on their children's educational and occupational aspirations just as parents in other cultures are.

The role that personality plays in determining these aspirations is, by contrast, rather less clear. Although the respondents generally believed that personality was the most important of the five variables we measured in affecting their aspirations, none of the three regression analyses found a significant effect of any of the five personality variables we used as predictors. Perhaps people exaggerate the effect of their own personality as a predictor of aspirations or perhaps the personality variables which are important in this regard are not those

measured by the "Big Five".

The Treaty settlements seem to have had little impact on the educational and occupational aspirations of our sample. Moreover, the respondents rated the importance of Treaty Settlements for their aspirations of much lower significance than one's own goal setting or even one's socio-economic status. The one significant effect found, that income aspirations were higher for those respondents whose iwi had not had a recent Treaty settlement or who were unsure of the settlement status, suggests that some at least may have unrealistic expectations about what settlement might mean financially.

On the other hand, it would be very premature to conclude that Treaty settlement may not make a major difference to Maori aspirations in the future. The process of Treaty settlement has only recently begun and is by no means concluded. It must be noted that the sample as a whole expected that the settlements would have a major effect.

Finally a very simple feature of the results is worth stressing. That is, the Maori surveyed had very strong educational and occupational aspirations. They were clearly concerned to advance themselves and Maori in general. Thus, the research indicates that the Treaty settlements will not need to be used to raise Maori aspirations, which are already high. Rather the task will be to help more people to realise them.

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