

**SECTION TWO:
NATIVE
DISRUPTION: MĀŌRI
AND THE PRECARIAT**

INTRODUCTION

**BRIDGETTE MASTERS-AWATERE
AND NATASHA TASSELL-MATAMUA**

Titiro whakamua kia anga whakamuri

To know where you're going, you must first know where you've been; to know where you've been, you must look to your past. Māori often refer to these words as a way of providing advice to those seeking solutions and guidance amid dilemmas.

Within this section, the authors encourage the reader to look back into history and then consider the future. We are invited to re-examine deeds from this country's past. To immerse ourselves in a narrative that may be different to the one we have been taught in school, or heard among our friends and family. Through their stories we can see multiple narratives. Readers are invited to understand, embrace and own the past. By recognising and accepting the past — our collective histories — we can determine our collective present and future.

This section of the book provides descriptions of the lived experiences of some who fit within Guy Standing's description of precariat¹ — who also identify as Māori. Māori living with insecure housing, employment, education and/or access to health services are described throughout as the 'Māori precariat'. What binds the following chapters together is a focus on how social, economic, political and cultural structures contribute to the maintenance of precariousness for Māori. However, rather than be bogged down into perpetuating a negative rhetoric about Māori, these chapters do more than look at

‘what is broken’; they provide inspiration in the face of adversity. In this way, the authors speak to a ‘native disruption’ of the dominant hegemony.

The first chapter in this section is by Thomas Stubbs, William Cochrane, Lynley Uerata, Darrin Hodgetts and Mohi Rua. Using data obtained from Statistics New Zealand’s Te Kupenga survey of Māori wellbeing, this team provide what they call a ‘demographic silhouette’ of the Māori precariat, which outlines numerical evidence of the number of Māori living in precarious circumstances in this country. It also speaks to the variety of ways precarity manifests for Māori, including through experiences of discrimination and stigma, as well as cultural isolation and disengagement. This chapter serves an essential function by helping readers to get an idea of what precarity for Māori living in present-day Aotearoa New Zealand looks like and how it is experienced.

Many of these experiences can be directly attributed to intergenerational trauma, inequity and the appropriation of native resources (such as land, minerals and water) that have so unfortunately defined much of the Māori experience for nearly two centuries. Some argue that the historical context that led to such experiences is also guilty of shaping present-day policies and social norms that have instigated and even ‘legitimised’ the disproportionate number of Māori accessing social services.

In their chapter, Delta King, Mohi Rua and Darrin Hodgetts discuss how the social structures generated as a result of the historical and ongoing colonisation of Aotearoa New Zealand have created a perceived ‘dependency’ of Māori on social services. But this so-called dependency is by no means as easy as common perceptions (or, more accurately, misperceptions) would have many believe, and navigating these often punitive services can foster a sense of hopelessness that leads to further ‘dependency’ on the system. The authors speak of the real-life case of Miriama, whose experiences with a variety of services highlight how arduous the journey of access can be, both for those requiring the services and for those advocating on their behalf.

The theme of adversity associated with accessing social services is continued in the chapter by Felicity Ware, Mary Breheny and Margaret

Forster, which focuses on the Young Parent Payment (YPP) for young mothers. Given the disproportionate number of teenaged mothers who are Māori, the YPP has particular implications for child-rearing practices. The authors discuss how the YPP feeds into and reinforces common stereotypes about having a child at a young age — many of which are based on white, middle-class values — and implicitly disregards the value placed on women (of any age) as the *whare tāngata*, the bearers of new life.

While Felicity and her team issue a clear challenge to services that target Māori, Bridgette Masters-Awatere forces us to take a look at the inequity of resources distributed to government health providers in comparison to Māori health providers. The ongoing government bail-out of district health boards (DHBs) has implications for Māori service providers who are not afforded the same latitude. While the uneven playing field is presented as a modified child’s game of Slides and Ladders to lighten the seriousness of the situation, Bridgette’s understanding of the tools that feed the inequity has ongoing implications for government purchasing of services. The discriminatory practices thrust upon Māori take centre stage in this chapter.

The last chapter within this section, by Shiloh Groot, Tycho Vandenburg and Darrin Hodgetts, highlights some key issues related to Māori youth homelessness. The authors speak to how historical factors have influenced the present-day circumstances of Māori youth, which in turn have served as catalysts for homelessness. Verbatim narratives from homeless Māori youth powerfully illustrate their lived experiences of precarity. The authors highlight how being homeless for Māori young can fuel the desire for cultural connection to resist being lost to the streets, and conclude that any nationally coordinated response to Māori youth homelessness must of necessity be culturally informed.

The chapters within this section emphasise the importance of understanding the diverse present-day experiences of Māori. New Zealand’s past is characterised by disruption to native places and spaces — both physical and non-physical. It is also characterised by disruption to native ways of being, through the process of colonisation — the impact of which is continually evidenced through the Māori precariat.

PRECARITY

Each of the authors is implicitly stating, ‘This is not OK.’ Within their chapters, they point to ways in which we can all make a difference — from the everyday act of recognising the challenges associated with being a Māori teenage mother, while also acknowledging the inherent sacredness of motherhood from a Māori perspective, through to a strategic change at policy level, such as ensuring the incorporation of a Te Ao Māori (Māori world) perspective into local and national responses to Māori youth homelessness — we can contribute to the native disruption of the precariat.

1 Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2011).