

Nobody knows me even though I'm always there: Why Māori men Do exist - in all the wrong places

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*Pouturuki
Te Whare Wananga O Awanuiarangi*

*I am a one in ten a number on a list,
I am a one in ten even though i don't exist.
Nobody knows me, even though I'm always there,
A statistical reminder of a world that doesn't care*

UB40: One in Ten.

In the study of psychology, Māori men are often only seen as the perpetrators of the problems. There is very little focus on finding solutions for Māori men, with Māori men. In the top eight causes of death for Māori males aged 15 to 24 are car crashes, homicide, and suicide. With respect to car crashes, there is a close link between alcohol-related car crashes and suicide. As a nation, we should be concerned with all of the above issues, as each of them is preventable. Invariably, we fail see the deaths of these young men as warning signs of much wider issues about why they wanted to die, or why they felt the need to kill someone close to themselves. The argument tendered in this paper is that the same way in which Māori as a group have been researched, as being “the problem”, equally applies to the way in which Māori men have continued to be have been researched: Māori men are only ever portrayed as “the problem” and are never portrayed as part of a solution subjected to this process as well. The lyrics of a well known song by UB40, One in Ten, exemplify this notion of being unknown, even though Māori men do exist in Aotearoa.

It was not long ago that Colonial soldiers rode through villages north of Wairoa and cut the ears off our people and left them to bleed on Wāhi tapu as they used those Māori ears for necklaces. This practice is still used by some of the elite military forces in this country and in the United Kingdom where it started. The whānau from Wairoa WILL not forget what the Colonials did to their Tipuna and nor will we. Ironically it was only a few years ago that Tariana Turia was denigrated for comparing the impact of Parihaka to that of the Holocaust. I stand here today to support her message, which if anyone had read it (as opposed to RED [necked] IT) they would have found that Tariana had some powerful analogies and a secure argument. Standing here today in support of her, at the

same place and at a Psychology conference similar to one that she spoke at, is my very small way of taking back some of the wairua that “KKK New Zealand” tried to purloin from one of our heroines.

As this article is being written (post-conference), a Police Officer supported and judged by his peers is found not guilty of murdering a young Māori man from Waitara. The Police Commissioner, in what seems like a move to detract away from his staffing rumbles in Auckland about more pay and low police numbers and accusations that he is merely a politician dressed in uniform, announces the desire to NOT have private prosecutions brought against Police Officers in the line of duty. In Whakawhiti, Māori housing and self-help development in the North is set

alight by arsonists, and Māori are denigrated for using a legal and peaceful means of registering wāhi tapu in Tauranga moana. Furthermore, Joris de Bres the Race Relations Conciliator is denigrated for comparing the colonisation of Māori to that of the Taliban. Ironically the later issue is vigorously denied and attacked by the very people who are the perpetrators/benefactors of such acts, Māori (the intended victims) sit silently in their homes nodding their heads in affirmation of Mr de Bres and his statements.

When you consider all of the above issues, you have to admit that there are times when you have to applaud our people's patience and fortitude, in that seemingly every peaceable road is denied, or obstacles are put in place so that Māori issues are subjugated further. As one Māori journalist commented to me recently, there are the beginnings of racial dissent amongst our people, where they are starting to feel that the only way to effect change is through what they describe as "direct action". Whether we accept it or not, direct action has been the mainstay of many indigenous peoples movement in the world. This includes the Mau Mau movement in Samoa, Parihaka in Aotearoa, Sitiveni Rambuka in Fiji, and in some ways the alleged killing of Scott in Nuie in 1953 (after what his alleged killers stated was the result of an individual exercising cruel behaviour on behalf of a tyrannical New Zealand State).

Our people make moves to deal with all issues in a peaceable manner, and the result is clear. It makes you question our role as academics: why the hell can't we get it together and organise a strategy to offset the assault on our world, in a way that addresses the Māori view in a colonised, discombobulated society. It is critical to outline the political and socio-economic environs within which Māori are interfacing within society today. It is this backdrop that influences the lives of Māori men in Aotearoa.

Mana Tane

Many of the negative things related to Māori as group are seemingly created and perpetrated by Māori men. At every turn there seems to be an existing problem that

is magnified to show Māori male ineptness, whether that be in education, justice, or health (Butterworth & Mako, 1989; Pomare et al., 1995; Jackson, 1988) or socioeconomic status (Spoonley, 1993). With respect to incarceration alone, Māori men make up 51% of the prison population and are 7.6 times more likely to be sentenced to imprisonment than their Pākehā counterparts (Te Puni Kōkiri 2002). At every point there seem to be rednecks and ethnocentric Nazis waiting to point their fingers at the brothers.

Perusal of the wellbeing of colonised indigenous men internationally reveals the same predicament. Now this is important, because we all too often assume that we are the only ones affected by such issues. We tend to take it all too personally. However, if we start to contextualise these impacts in terms of both national and international backdrops, a differing delineation is unveiled. In the main it has been the demands for the re-emergence of indigenous men's movement, as seen in Ecuador (Adams 2000), and as articulated in Louis Farrakhan's (1995) now famous statement at the Million Man march in which he called for unity and healing of the plight of Men of Colour in the United States:

And now, I want to say, my brothers -- this is a very pregnant moment. Pregnant with the possibility of tremendous change in our status in America and in the world. And although the call was made through me, many have tried to distance the beauty of this idea from the person through whom the idea and the call was made.

With regard to where a million men of colour marched through the streets of Washington DC, what was achieved was a United States wide recognition of issues operating at a structural / institutional level to the detriment of men. Furthermore, that there was a desire for those men to take responsibility for their actions, and challenge those who were in control of their oppression.

This paper is part of the fight back, in terms of giving another version of the world

as it turns for Māori men in 2002. More importantly though, we as Māori men have to make a stand and say that our health is different from many other men's experience. Okay so we all have a penis, that's a start, but our world view and the way that we have experienced the world via raupatu, education (or de-education viz a viz belittling of Māori pedagogy), justice and health is markedly different. Our commonalities are contained within Mana Tangata not within the notion of being "One New Zealand". I am not the same as a Pākehā New Zealander, something that Pākehā New Zealanders are all too happy to remind me of when a brother gets into trouble.

Under the principle of Mana Tangata our bipartite partners are achieved through Mana Wahine. Mana Tangata in a sense can not exist without it. Now, this in itself is critical in examining both the strategies and the direction of Mana Tane. This requires a shift in our people's minds: in terms of how we as men have to understand the duality and the complimentary roles that Mana Tane and Mana Wahine have. Further to this bipartite arrangement is the tripartite arrangement of Mana Atua, Mana Whenua and Mana Tangata (Sykes, 2001). This advances more the context of who and what we all are in today's world. What we do today and tonight as individuals either contributes to, or negates, Mana Tangata as much as it contributes or negates Mana Whenua or Mana Atua. Food for thought isn't it.

Keri Lawson-Te Aho made a statement in her presentation earlier today that her tipuna in Kahungunu were 7 foot tall, of course every one felt that was funny, and in a way we believed that that could not have been so. But I ask you this, why could that have NOT been the case? We have got so used to sickness and disease that we can't accept that they were 7 ft tall. For some reason we see ourselves as unhealthy and well short. You only need to look at the Huata whānau from Kahungunu and you might change your views: huge blokes, and blokettes.

In terms of employment and work, some of the latest statistics from the census are suggesting that Māori unemployment is falling for Māori women, and increasing

dramatically for Māori men. In fact unemployment is running the risk of spiraling out of control for Māori Men. Māori men have had to work for years in jobs they hate: going to jobs that belittled their intelligence or their mana, or where they were maligned by a White boss who never understood them, but called them his boys. They went to their jobs because they were socialised into believing that that was what they should be doing. This brought about this notion of work-rich and work-poor. The view that even though you were financially rich, or better off, by going to employment, you were also poverty stricken with respect to whānau, because of the way that you were disenfranchised from yourself, your whānau and your culture.

Tama Ora

In terms of Māori men's health, it appears that little has changed since 1997, when we were highlighting the issues at the Public Health Association Conference in Waikato. For Māori men living in the Mercer to Cape Reinga region the future is bleak in health terms, of health statistics:

1. Māori women are more likely to live longer than Māori men. Māori women's life expectancy is 73 years, whilst Māori men's life expectancy is about 68 years. Why is it that people easily accept this issue as if it was an unchangeable process?
2. The top 10 causes of death for Māori men for this region from January 1988 to December 1992 are: heart disease, circulatory system, motor vehicle crashes, lung cancer, other cancers, diabetes, stroke, CORD¹, and suicide.
3. Even though heart disease is ranked at number one for Māori men, hospital discharge and admission rates suggest that it is number ten. What this says to me is that Māori men are presenting at a much more advanced stage than what is needed in order to implement life saving prevention measures. In contrast, non-Māori men for all ages also have heart disease as the number one killer, yet their admission and discharge rates suggest that it is at number four. This tells us that non-Māori men are presenting a lot earlier for heart disease

¹ Chronic Obstructive Respiratory Disease

which allows more time for that life saving preventative medicine to be implemented.

4. Suicide is the tenth major killer of Māori men of all ages, and furthermore, 20% of all deaths for the 15-24 year old age group were from suicide.

5. The levels of alcohol abuse amongst Māori men are at a high level, and at even more alarming rates are the deaths through drunk or alcohol-impaired crashes. At present, deaths from motor vehicle crashes feature at number three for all ages.

6. Many Māori researchers in the field of alcohol related motor vehicle crashes believe that suicide and alcohol related crashes are closely linked.

7. The biggest killer of Māori men aged 15-24 years old is Motor vehicle crashes, and the second biggest killer is suicide. Combined these two factors accounted for approximately 74% of the deaths for this age group from January 1988 – December 1992.

8. The first admission rates (age specific rates per 10,000) to Psychiatric Hospitals in 1970 was higher for Māori males than females, only in the under 15 year age bracket 65 year old age brackets and the total rates being 18.6 per 10,000 for Māori men and 20.3 for Māori women. In 1992 Māori men heavily outnumbered Māori women in all age groups except for under 15 year olds and the rates per 10,000 were 23.2 for Māori men and 18.0 for Māori women (Pomare, et al., 1992).

The Social Construction of Violence and Māori Men.

It is very easy to attribute violence to Māori men, yet ironically this same group features disproportionately in both the perpetrator and the victims of such crimes. This later point, of featuring as the victim, is just as important.

The social construction of Māori men and violence seems an indolent and overall simplistic reasoning favoured by the defeatist in order to end what is a more complex argument. Don't get me wrong, violence by any name is unacceptable. Yet this country, which disparages Māori male violent perpetrators, still kills Terence Thompson and Steven Wallace, and mobilises trained government killers through military operations in Iran, Iraq,

East Timor, and Afghanistan. So who determines legal and non-legal violence by individuals and individuals representing the state? If someone invades a Pākehā person's home, Pākehā people are more than happy for Māori to stand in between them and save them from physical abuse. Those same people are just as pleased to call those Māori males their saviours. So then, when Pākehā people build prisons on your Wāhi tapu in Ngawha, on your Kaitiaki in Waikato, and on your Maunga in Tauranga Moana, what then do we call them?

Heroes

We currently live in a world of hero barren worship, so much so that our boys and our men are more likely to understand the lyrics and dressage of Snoop Doggy Dog than of Titokowaru or Te Rauparaha. Not enough of our real male heroes are celebrated. And even then, when some are tendered we are all too quick to disregard them for something that we believe they have done. I read with pride an announcement from Dr Pita Sharples who comments on the new directions and intentions of the Māori Education Foundation and its intentions. I know that Pita has worked tirelessly for the Māori Education Foundation, Kura Kaupapa Māori, Kōhanga Reo, Whare Kura, Taiaha Wananga, Te Rōpu Manutaki, and Hoana Waititi Marae for decades. He's gotta be a hero. I saw the other night on television an old friend, Tuari Dawson, a Māori man from the North, who is so talented that in the prophetic words of Jim Moriarty "Tuari is like so many Māori men, he is potentially brilliant at so many things, what the hell do we focus on?" (Moriarty, 2002). Chris Wikaira, who is a Public Relations consultant, he won the Treaty of Waitangi Fisheries Commission Journalist Award in 1999 for reporting on the highly complex and controversial issue of the Māori fisheries settlement with the Crown. He also won the Bill Toft Memorial Fellowship at the 2000 Qantas Media Awards - the premiere award for radio journalism. His greatest self-proclaimed accomplishment to date has been the arrival and birth of his and his partner's first child. Throughout any day in at least my life, I am surrounded

by Māori men who have and are continuing to achieve great zeniths in their lives, yet sadly we hear very little of their achievements in the mainstream media.

We need to continue to celebrate our men's achievements, and celebrate them in a way that we rejoice in our men moving forward. A quote from Pauline Hopa (2002) sums up the argument well "our young Māori men need good role models, they need to see them and they [the Māori role models] need to be upfront".

Concluding Comments

The main purpose of this paper was to highlight some of the issues surrounding Māori men in the new millennium. Many of these issues are ever increasing warnings of issues that are far deeper and more complex than many would dare or care to venture in to. What I propose is a process whereby we start building the wellbeing of Māori men and follow that with challenging the social construction of Māori men in general. It goes without saying that if we continue to blanket blame Māori men for the actions of a very few, all that we would achieve is to perpetuate the existing state of Māori men's ill-being and disease.

After reviewing the issues that were raised here, we need to ask ourselves in what ways are the discourses that denigrate Māori men similar to the past discourses that denigrate Māori in general. If it is that they are aligned, then we as Māori men need to take that step forward and make a stand for progressive and positive development of Mana Tane, and take our place in Mana Tangata, with regard to Mana Whenua and Mana Atua.

Professionals Moving Forward

So what could be the aspirations of the Māori Community for Psychologists?

1. We ARE the norm, build on the theory around us.
 2. Real world versus Psychological World.
 3. Voice of the people – how does that happen, who speaks for the people in the Castle of the Elite.
- Who speaks out for Māori men, for Wāhi Tapu?

One of the awesome things about working in a Whare Wananga is that you

get to build a foundation of education from a set of building blocks that are brown, rather than ones that are made in foreign countries, designed to benefit those in foreign countries, or to benefit foreign people in our country. Any builder would support the notion that a solid is the best foundation, tools and high quality materials are critical in constructing a whare that will last a long time. In other words, you can't build a brick shithouse on weak foundations. So, when you are able to start with Māori building blocks for a home, there is a different way of looking at the world. The mainstay is this, WE ARE THE NORM.

Now if you take that view as your base, WE ARE THE NORM, it means that the whole world orientates around us, which would be good for a change. One of the biggest problems is convincing our people that what we actually do is okay, rather than spending all of our time justifying our actions within Pākehā constructs. Yes, we need to prepare our people for the ongoing millennium; additionally we have to remind ourselves that Pākehā people and Pākehā culture do not have a monopoly on progress, economic development, and social theories. In essence, our people have to feel confident that the culture they are from has immense qualities to offer our society.

As psychologists, as academics, and as Māori, what we need to be doing (in my humble opinion) is maybe to discard the academic, empirical, and personal inferiority complexes that we have and start forging the road for the Māori norm. As a result, out the window will go the cultural hate disguised as critique, and hopefully so will the perpetrators of those self hate theories.

This certainly leads on to the issues that many Māori academics face, how to address the real world in a psychologically orientated worldview. Sometimes we get a little too tied up in our elitist academic world of the "expert defined", that we actually lose sight of who and what we are. In our drive to become the real world translators for our people, we essentially become those who we warn our people about. How does that phrase go again – if you lay down with dogs, you get fleas.

Nevertheless, this translation, by Māori academics such as us, is actually quite important. How we manage that, whilst at the same time maintaining the mana and the dignity of our people, is the key. If we

work from the foundation that we can only ever win, then that certainly puts a different spin to the whole thing too doesn't it?

Anei te korero, **E kore au i ngaro, He kakano i ruia mai i Rangiatea.**

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