HOME: HERE TO STAY

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Pani me te Rawakore: Home-making and Māori Homelessness without Hope or a Home

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Abstract

The authors draw from interviews with Māori homeless people and relevant local and international literatures to show homemaking practices by Māori for those living on the streets. The proposition is that Māori cultural practices shape a person's efforts to retain a positive sense of self and place, and to engage in home-making while dwelling on the streets. We consider colonialism and societal developments that have impacted whānau (extended family) economically, culturally and socially, contributing to high rates of homelessness among Māori today. We argue that homelessness is endemic to experiences of colonialism, not only at the personal, but also at the iwi (tribe) level where many Māori have experienced over 150 years of being rendered out of place in their hau kāinga (tribal homelands). Finally, we present a case study entitled 'Maia' to show common aspects of various Māori people who are homeless and who access services in Auckland.

Keywords: migration; home-making; Indigenous; homelessness; Māori

Introduction

As in other countries, the homeless population in New Zealand is made up of diverse groups of transgender people, men and women of various ages, ethnic backgrounds and sexualities. Māori are over-represented among this population due to ongoing processes of colonisation and socio-economic exclusions (Groot et al. 2011). Research suggests that homeless people experience a profound sense of attrition through constant exposure to wet and cold conditions, the unrelenting threat of violence and associated lack of sleep aggravated by the stress of vigilance, and bodily decline, including the loss of teeth (Hodgetts et al. 2007; Ellis & Carroll 2005; Frankish et al. 2003). Māori and Pasifika peoples are statistically over-represented in several areas relating to housing and homelessness, such as residential overcrowding, substandard accommodation, boarding houses and rough sleeping on the streets (Ellis & McLuckie 2008; Gravitas Research and Strategy 2005).

In this context, our chapter focuses on how, with notable exceptions (Groot & Hodgetts 2011; Robinson 2005; Rivlin & Moore 2001), little attention has been given to issues around home-making and associated experiences of belonging as played out in the personal lifeworlds of homeless street people. Home-making is an important focus in exploring issues of homelessness for Māori and how people living on the streets maintain their humanity, and a sense of self as Māori (even when deemed to be out of place), can gain respite, and support each other (cf. Groot & Hodgetts, in press). Experiences of home are also associated with issues of being-in-the-world, and provide a fundamental basis for one's sense of self and belonging. When lacking, home can be associated with confusion, a sense of isolation, fear, loneliness and disruption (Robinson 2005).

Disruption

Māori people who are homeless have at some point lived in a house. However, for many people whose childhoods have been characterised by domestic violence, abuse, distress and poverty, their ability to form a conventional attachment to a domestic dwelling has been disrupted (Hodgetts et al. 2012; Smith 2008; Paradise &

Cauce 2002; Rivlin & Moore 2001). Both international and local literature suggests strong links between homelessness and domestic violence, abuse, child poverty and family dysfunction (Smith 2008; Paradise & Cauce 2002). While it is difficult to ascertain a direct causal relationship between dysfunctional home environments and homelessness, it can be surmised that for many homeless people being housed does not necessarily equate to home. Resolving the immediate problem of rooflessness does not in itself bring the experience of home (Rivlin & Moore 2001). These issues also require us to think more critically about links between home, the street and domestic settings for Māori experiencing street life.

Drawing insights from interviews with Māori homeless people and relevant local and international literatures, this chapter focuses on home-making practices by Māori for those living on the streets. In particular, we propose that Māori cultural practices can shape a person's efforts to retain a positive sense of self and place, and to engage in home-making while dwelling on the streets. Below we consider colonialism and societal developments that have impacted whānau (extended family) economically, culturally and socially, contributing to high rates of homelessness among Māori today. We would argue that homelessness is endemic to experiences of colonialism, not only at the personal, but also at the iwi (tribe) level where many Māori have experienced more than 150 years of being rendered out of place in their hau kāinga (tribal homelands) (cf. King et al. 2015). After considering such issues, we then present a case study entitled 'Maia' which was compiled from common aspects of various Māori homeless people who access services in Auckland; these organisations have long histories of catering to the needs and hopes of dispossessed groups, providing food, clothing, advocacy, and social and health services. The relational orientation of home-making on the streets is discussed through the concept of whanaungatanga (kin relations).

Indigeneity, Home-making and Homelessness

For those who are domiciled, having a home or a place to dwell is widely recognised as being fundamental to physical and

social wellbeing and a sense of self (Groot & Hodgetts 2011, in press). Rivlin and Moore (2001) outline some key qualities of an idealised home. These include relationships with family members; refuge from the outside world; security and control; acting upon and modifying one's dwelling; permanence and continuity; an indicator of personal status; and a reflection of one's ideas and values. Critical scholars have also proposed that these elements of a home are not necessarily bound to the nuclear family or domestic idyll (Jones 2000). Exclusively house-centric definitions of home are questionable when we consider the actions and experiences of Māori houseless people (cf. Groot et al. 2011; Mallet 2004; Manzo 2003). In the process, this requires a renewed consideration of people's emotional connections with a vast array of physical settings (including public spaces) that create a sense of belonging, identity, care and familiarity – a sense of home. Veness (1993) contends that home can encapsulate a wide range of inhabited spaces and involve the maintenance of a home-habitus. What remains unclear is how achieving a sense of home can be realised by homeless Māori. Insights can be garnered from writing on indigeneity and homelessness.

The situations in which many Māori find themselves today require us to extend official definitions of homelessness that overly privilege physical settings and ignore spiritual and affective dimensions of homelessness (Groot et al. 2011). For instance, Memmott and colleagues (2003) refer to 'spiritual homelessness' in an effort to explain situations in which Indigenous people are displaced from ancestral lands, knowledge, rituals and kinship relationships. These authors see as problematic the application of conventional notions of home and homelessness – which pervade the academic literature – to Indigenous people. They propose that in precolonial Aboriginal Australia home was not primarily associated with a domestic dwelling, but denoted affiliation with a cultural landscape, a repertoire of places and one's belonging within a tribal group. A person may develop a sense of 'home', and a sense of belonging to a landscape (or set of places). Despite not having access to a private domestic dwelling, they can find many of the

characteristics of a home, including recognition and acceptance, in such places (Memmott et al. 2003).

Such complexities surrounding homelessness, home and place are particularly apparent in emerging research on Māori and homelessness. For example, Groot et al. (2011) have demonstrated through the accounts of Māori who are homeless that tensions can be evoked between the profound sense of whakamā (shame and humiliation) at being dislocated from whānau (extended family) and hau kāinga (ancestral homeland), wanting to reconnect with such places and relationships, and affiliating with life somewhere new. While a common practice is to associate Māori strongly with ancestral places, we also need to recognise that ours is a history of human movement.

This human movement is reflected in the rapid emptying of rural tribal homelands through the flood of Māori to towns and cities which started in the 1930s (Wanhalla 2007; King 2003; Durie 1998; Pool 1991; Walker 1990; Schwimmer 1968; Metge 1964). Metge (1964) records that, in 1936, about 13 percent of the Māori population lived in urban areas. In 1951 the percentage rose to 23 percent. By 1981, 80 percent of Māori were living in urban regions (Metge 1995). At the last national census, 84.4 percent of Māori lived in urban areas (Statistics New Zealand 2006). Along with the socio-economic marginalisation brought upon Māori by continued colonisation, such migrations have contributed to the over-representation of Māori among homeless populations in urban centres such as Auckland. Links to those places left behind were reconfigured. The values, beliefs, customary practices, and strategies useful for everyday life were translocated and tried out in new and different ways that were useful and adaptive to urban spaces and city life (cf. Nikora 2007).

While Māori have relocated from hau kāinga to occupy urban spaces, many, over the course of their lives, move between the two (Nikora et al. 2004), becoming conduits for flows of information, experiences, resources, advice, relatedness and care. The more people engage the 'betweenness' of places departed and their urban homes, the more likely they are to be remembered and remain

as important resources across multiple spaces and places. Through engaging the between, they metaphorically invigorate their ahi kā (keeping the home fires burning). Relationships with people in their tribal homelands are enlivened and nurtured. They maintain a place to stand, at home, in their tūrangawaewae (a place to stand). Māori who live their lives through them, along with that of their hau kāinga, claim a new space. This gives rise to multiple relationships and ways of belonging, and to the reality of many homes even when, for some, that home is on the streets of Auckland.

The passages above highlight the need for understanding Māori homelessness in the socio-economic and cultural contexts of history, collective and personal lives, and in a manner that transcends dualisms between home and homelessness (Moore 2007). Further, contemporary research into street homelessness raises the importance of fostering home-making and experiences of belonging among homeless people (Groot & Hodgetts 2012). To illustrate these issues, we constructed the composite case of Maia from our direct research interactions with 24 street homeless Māori who access services and support provided by non-government organisations in Auckland (for methodological information on this study see Groot 2011).

Disruptions to Home: How Maia Came to be Homeless

The case presented in this section was constructed to mirror issues related to home-making which were common to the accounts of the Māori participants. In the space below we focus on disrupted relationships with whānau that contribute to Māori homelessness. Maia is 35 years old and has lived on and off the streets since adolescence. She has moved between state care facilities for children, the streets and prison. After being removed from an abusive household by child protection services at age 10, Maia experienced a profound sense of disconnection from her hau kāinga. She has developed a number of mental and physical ailments as well as significant substance misuse issues. Maia recounts experiences of abuse in her family as part of an exploration of how she has been denied a home and, as such, became homeless:

> I'm a product of rape and I do believe that's why my mother hates me. I have a clear memory of sitting behind a couch playing, listening to my mother and my father sitting there saying how much they hate me and how they wished I had never been born. That pretty much was the beginning of my life. It also set the tone for how I felt about myself for many years. I was sexually and physically abused for most of my childhood. That's why I walked out of home at 10, because I thought how much worse can it be out on my own? If these two people that are supposed to love, nurture, and look after me can't do it, then why the hell would anybody else out there take care of me?

In recounting the example of her mother and father's contempt for her, Maia invokes the dilemma faced by many young people to either suffer in silence or leave the situation of abuse (Groot et al. 2011). The whānau constitutes the basic foundation that supports all other aspects of Māori society, without whānau there could be no hapū (sub-tribe) or iwi (tribe). The traumatic nature of being forcibly severed from a toxic whānau relationship has for Maia fuelled a desire for connection and a sense of home, which must be fostered elsewhere, the streets.

Maia is not the only member of her whānau who lives on the streets either, with several cousins and nieces residing on the streets alongside her. Maia reflects on this, 'I've got a cousin that's been on the streets here for 30-something years. He sleeps outside that door [points to agency doorway] at the moment, like the caretaker of this place.'

Further, being unable to find refuge in the conventional home-scapes of a domestic dwelling has meant a difficult reconfiguring of her relationship with her own children and the desire to protect them from similar experiences:

> I'm a mother of seven, I've had seven alive and two miscarriages. Eldest girl is 15 and my youngest, she will be one year old this month. All my kids were taken away because I was on the street, I didn't want to take that back to them, didn't want

> them to know anything about it. Their grandparents look after my kids, their fathers' parents. I did rehab for seven months, but I walked out on the programme and I lost my baby when I walked out. CYFS [Child, Youth and Family Services] took her, and I didn't want her going to a foster home because I've been in and out of foster homes, before I was 11. I just kept running away from them, and I rang CYFS and asked them could the brother keep the baby, and they said that was all right. I don't trust foster homes, don't like foster homes, don't trust the foster parents; they should be with family. I just tell my kids I love them and will see them when I'm straight.

In the excerpt above, Maia directs our attention to how abusive relationships between the state and youth in need intensify the hardships young people face, and shame and degrade people (Hodgetts et al. 2013). As a result, for people living in such circumstances they are (dis)placed from the relationships that are central to home-making, such as that between a mother and her children. Ideally, a home provides a stable social and material environment, and a spatial and relational context in which the routines of life can be performed and intimate relationships can be forged. On the street, a sense of belonging and acceptance is central to Maia's ability to create a home. The emphasis on the relational nature of home-making provides a core theme for threading together this chapter.

Whanaungatanga

Maia's efforts to transform landscapes of despair into a home. This section explores the ways in which Maia presents herself via references to other Māori homeless people with whom she is connected. The ways in which other people are presented and their importance to Maia's sense of self, place and notions of home are interpreted through the lens provided by the concept of whanaungatanga. Much of Maia's retelling of her life on the streets is of the people with whom she shares bonds of association and obligation through the enactment of whanaungatanga. In talking of homeless people, Maia demonstrates her insider status and familiarity with street routine, and how people try to make a home for themselves on the

streets despite material adversity and punitive regulations that serve to render homeless people out of place. In understanding home-making practices we need to understand the broader relationships that can either disrupt or facilitate the cultivation of a sense of place and belonging that is central to home:

> I escaped [as a child] with a whole lot of people that I was in the girls' homes with and they were all street kids and prostitutes. There used to be a Māori Community Centre, it's gone now, that was a good place because they used to take in street kids. It was all done through Ōrakei Marae. Oh, there is not many of them around now, most of them are gone, most of them died, they've moved on. You've got to look at it as no one lives forever, man, it would be good if we did. I don't know, sad for the ones that are still on the street. I look at it this way, the older ones here are fucked, the young ones coming through now, maybe there's an alternative for them so they don't go down the same track that we've gone down.

For many homeless people, experiences of youth detention facilities, foster homes and graduating to adult prisons constitutes a core life trajectory towards street life (Groot & Hodgetts, in press). Our research into homelessness suggests that a sense of community and home often emerges among groups of homeless people. These group affiliations provide a basis for growing friendships and mutual support for accessing services, learning skills necessary for surviving the street, and ensuring personal safety (cf. Lindsey 1992). Particular people in these groups emulate parental roles, especially in relation to newly homeless people. Maia also reflected on such domiciled family structures that she has enacted towards younger whānau members living on the streets. These processes are associated with home-making and the sense of support and belonging that a home affords:

> It was hard coming to the streets and seeing my own people living this way, it was very hard. A lot of them just had a hard life, brought up hard, brought up in different areas like Ōtara, and Mangere and a lot of them had run away from home.

> The kids that I met, yeah, broken man, they were broken. So my heart really goes out to them and I can relate to them. I know where they're coming from. We had a lot of young girls on the street, so we started a kapa haka group [contemporary Māori performance groups]. I was really concerned, just really young girls on the streets and they end up being working girls [sex workers], but like I couldn't stop them because that's how they survive. So I said to them, 'Do you know how to do kapa haka?', and they said yea. Oh well come on, come and practice. We need to do something, kapa haka, and they get to know their culture. We were having a good time and keeping out of trouble. It was good while it lasted.

This role is firstly about the transfer of knowledge, histories and customary practices, from and between generations of homeless people. Maia discusses her role as a mentor as it is located within the process of whanaungatanga. This forms the fabric of whanaungatanga, of relatedness that obliges or gives rise to manaakitanga (caring relationships). However, such efforts are fragile and fleeting against a backdrop of deprivation and adversity.

In this chapter, we have proposed that Māori cultural practices can shape a person's efforts to retain a positive sense of self and place, and to engage in home-making even while dwelling on the streets. We have argued that homelessness is irrevocably linked to experiences of colonialism, at a national, iwi, hapū and personal level where many Māori have been displaced from their hau kāinga for over 150 years (cf. King et al. under review). Māori homelessness is structural and exacerbated by personal vulnerabilities that come with poverty. Homelessness for Māori people is harsh, unhealthy and conducted within what has been termed a broader landscape of despair (Stolte & Hodgetts 2013). Māori are not passive in the face of such upheavals. Maia reflected on how Māori have had to renegotiate home and the relationships we have with one another in such spaces:

> I used to sleep in this paper bin. There was this Māori actor who walked past once and I was embarrassed, but he gave me some

> cash and bought me some food. He could have just turned his back on me, but he gave something back to another Māori, he didn't have to, he could have just turned around, but he didn't. It made me feel happy. They know all the issues. They know the story of why people are in that position, but it's not an embarrassment to them. Foreigners that come to New Zealand they don't know the story, they come to see Māoris playing in the All Blacks, doing the haka and stuff like that.

Maia's account evokes tensions between the intense whakamā (shame and humiliation) she experienced after being removed from her hau kāinga as a child and having to recreate home somewhere new, a paper bin. Within a marae (sacred meeting place) context, the mana (prestige) of a tribal group is assessed not only by the way in which they formally welcome and honour their guests in the marae setting, but also by the way in which they create a home for guests and feed them (Pere 1982). In the excerpt above, we see how such relationships and home-making practices extend beyond that of the physical structure of a marae. Such accounts, where the social distance between housed and homeless Māori are reduced, foreground obligations of care that whanaungatanga augments. The passer-by recognised his obligations of manaakitanga towards whanaunga (kin relations) who are pani me te rawakore (those without hope or a home, who truly have nothing). People have to consent to being the recipients of care. Being a consenting recipient of care endorses and affirms the mana of both the provider and the receiver. Such local exchanges of care provide clues to how home is spatially expressed and emotionally realised for a Māori woman experiencing home(less)ness.

Conclusion

For most housed people, home as a domestic dwelling represents a significant space for their emplacement and being. Homelessness is presented in public accounts as the opposite of having such a place. We have shown that the situation is more complex. While it is important not to overlook what homeless people lack in terms of

resources and amenities, it is also essential to not reproduce binary distinctions that associate domestic dwelling with home-making and street life with a lack of home-making. The complexity of defining homelessness and issues of home, place, and belonging are particularly apparent in emerging research on Indigenous homelessness, which also contributes to the broader agenda of decolonising responses to Māori homelessness.

The case of Maia illustrates how homeless Māori can engage in home-making while they are living on the streets. Maia's account contains traces of a sense of history, belonging, routine, respite, and safety which she associates with certain places. Maia encounters varying degrees of exposure to tribal history and customs within a range of contexts and participatory experiences that have helped to shape and define her reality. This occurs regardless of being physically dislocated from tribal roots by time, space and distance. Finally, in this chapter we have shown that a sense of home-place constructs, strengthens and upholds Maia's sense of cultural identity. Wherever Māori are, strong and meaningful associations to local places and community can occur that provoke the same feelings of security, belonging and connection that are related to being home. We should recognise that home-making is an ongoing process.

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Glossary

Te reo Māori me ngā tikanga	English
ahi kā	keeping the home fires burning
hapū	a sub-tribe