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A Cup of Tea to Keep Warm: Food-Related Practices in Aotearoa New Zealand for Survival while Homeless

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Abstract

The way people source, prepare, and consume food is deeply interconnected with social practice. Drawing on theories of everyday life and social practice, we consider the everyday food-related practices and tactics for survival of six people experiencing homelessness. In doing so, we identify ways in which the realities of homelessness force people to conduct domestic activities in public view and discuss how the inability to engage in simple and taken-for-granted practices such as making a cup of tea is psychologically detrimental. This research documents the oft-overlooked ways that people experiencing homelessness demonstrate tenacity and resourcefulness and the agentive ways in which they respond to difficult circumstances. Our analysis broadens understanding of the disruptive mechanisms of homelessness as they pertain to food-related social practices. Additionally, we present new considerations of the ways in which people who previously experienced homelessness do their best to 'mend' disruptions through processes of 're-mooring' and adopting tactics for survival.

Keywords

homelessness, everyday life, cooking, meals, social practice theory

Introduction

The way people source, prepare and consume food is deeply interconnected with social practices (Graham et al., 2016). Food, and its related social practice, works to connect people to their past histories (King et al., 2015), their cultural identities (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002), and locates people within space and place (Bell & Valentine, 1997). Everyday food-related practice is thus associated with a sense of belonging and sustains connections to both people and place. Experiences of homelessness disrupt everyday practices of homemaking (Groot et al., 2011), particularly those surrounding sourcing, preparing, and eating meals. In Aotearoa, New Zealand (NZ), homelessness is defined as "a living situation where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing are: without shelter, in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation with a household, or living in uninhabitable housing" (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). In this paper, we utilize the term 'street homelessness' when specifically referring

to persons who are without shelter. Homelessness in NZ occurs in conjunction with the multi-generational trauma associated with colonization (Groot et al., 2011), poverty and related adversity (Hodgetts et al., 2015), and structural violence enacted by government departments tasked with 'helping' citizens (Hodgetts et al., 2014a). People experiencing homelessness have a high rate of interaction with health, justice, and welfare-related services (Pierse et al., 2019), yet understanding of their food-related interactions remains limited.

Homelessness is associated with insufficient access to food (Baggett et al., 2011) and an increased incidence of food insecurity (Dong et al., 2018). Nevertheless, little is known about the everyday food-related practices of people experiencing homelessness in NZ (Faneva, 2017). NZ-based research with homeless groups predominantly focuses on aspects of street homelessness such as rough sleeping and vagrancy, or on more visible aspects of homelessness such as ill-health, anti-social behavior, and substance abuse (Bellamy, 2014). The ordinary experiences of people experiencing homelessness with regards to provisioning, preparing, and consuming food items are not well-documented. Sitting uncomfortably alongside this absence of food is the reality that NZ is a wealthy food-producing nation. Analyses conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic found that nearly one in five (19%) children (Ministry of Health, 2019) and 7.3% of all households experience severe food insecurity (Ministry of Health, 2012). Food insecure households are more likely to have insecurity of tenure and to live in rented dwellings (Carter et al., 2010; Ministry of Health, 2019). Achieving food security in NZ will require addressing the security of housing and equitable access to food (Graham et al., 2019). This article explores aspects of food insecurity from the perspective of people experiencing homelessness, a point of view often overlooked in both health policy and in the food insecurity literature. We bring to the fore aspects such as how being homeless forces the utilization of less socially desirable food sources and brings new challenges with regards to eating meals.

Numerous articles considering the intersection of homelessness and food focus on quantifying the perceived 'failure' of people experiencing homelessness to eat 'properly.' Such studies utilize skin-fold thickness measures, muscle mass measurements, and blood tests. Based on this research, we are informed of homeless people's deficiencies; that they are too thin (Langnäse & Müller, 2001), or too fat (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2013), and have inadequate nutrient intakes, such as insufficient Vitamin C (Malmauret et al., 2002). Similar measures of dietary habits emphasize their nutritional inadequacies, such as being "high in saturated fat and deficient in fiber and certain micronutrients" (Seale et al., 2016, p. 143). In this literature, eating and food-related practice are reduced to the nutritional contents of provided soup kitchen meals (Sisson & Lown, 2011), measures of individual serves of fruits and vegetables (insufficient) (Jenkins, 2014), and sugar-sweetened soft drink consumption (too high) (Crawford et al., 2015). While basic nutrition is important for all people, including homeless citizens, there is more to food than nutrition (Graham et al., 2016). Food has important social, communal, and emotional functions that exist beyond hand-to-mouth survival. The processes involved in preparing and eating a meal formulate a sense of belonging that is vital to retaining a sense of self and returning to domiciled life.

Our article takes a social practice orientation to food and eating. In doing so, we foreground the everyday practices of homeless people as they engage in ordinary activities, such as making a cup of tea, against a backdrop of hunger and exclusion. The organization of everyday life (de Certeau, 1984) refers to that which is visible (for example, eating a meal), and the symbolic meanings and values (such as reconnecting with a cultural heritage). The latter can be difficult to adequately articulate because it is a deeply intuitive and subjectively felt occurrence. Meanings and values can be elucidated and inferred through the interpretative dialectics of place, practice, and existence (de Certeau et al., 1998). De Certeau's scholarship shifts ordinary socio-cultural practices, such as preparing a daily meal into the foreground of critical attention. In writing about people's mundane routines, de Certeau deftly centers on paradoxical ideas, such as the power of the powerless, the activity of the passive, and methods for escaping grim realities without physically leaving a place. de Certeau's work provides a theoretical base for exploring the

paradoxical realities of homelessness, the interplay of power and agency, and methods for psychological escape when physically unable to leave the streets.

Social practice theory considers the assemblage of concrete interconnected components that arise from a person's previous socio-cultural traditions, and which are (re)actualized in everyday life across ordinary, socially visible interactions (de Certeau et al., 1998). The elements referred to are "forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, things and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249). A way of cooking, such as, for example, preparing a dinner meal, forms an assemblage wherein each of the individual elements that comprise each activity (such as peeling and chopping vegetables) relies on the existence and specific interconnectedness of the other (for example how vegetables will be cooked and eaten), yet cannot be reduced to any single one of these. These mundane and unremarkable activities are organized via a "multiplicity of collectively shared practices" (Halkier & Jensen, 2011, p. 103). In this way, social practice theory moves us beyond simplistic, individualistic notions of transactional food-related behavior into considerations of the ways in which food provisioning and consumption is "entangled in webs of social change and reproduction in everyday life" (Halkier & Jensen, 2011, p. 105).

The social and physical practices surrounding food constitute a nexus of activity and representations that are coordinated by shared understandings, procedures, and engagements (Warde, 2005). For example, there is a social and physical practice in NZ where casual social functions come with the instruction to "bring a plate". The shared understanding is that this social function will occur around a 'pot-luck' style meal and that everyone who attends the function will bring with them a prepared dish (on a plate) to be placed on a communal table for sharing with all who attend. Much amusement has occurred at the expense of those who have newly arrived in NZ who have misunderstood the surrounding social and physical representations encompassed with the simple phrase of "bring a plate". Social practices do not simply emerge from individual mental impulses, nor are they dictated to by cultural scripts. Rather, social practices are the everyday mutually shaped and agentive activities of human beings (Warde, 2005). A simple practice such as purchasing a hot hand-held meat pie for lunch is organized by understandings of eating (hot food satiates hunger pains), by procedures for eating (ready-made with no requirement for utensils or heating), and by engagements in eating (tastes good and feels like a full meal).

In drawing together theoretical considerations of everyday life and social practice, we utilize de Certeau's (1984) conceptualizations of strategy and tactic. The essential difference between strategy and tactic is the way in which each relates to aspects of everyday life. The strategy works as a method to create a predictable, familiar environment that reduces the complexity of the 'outside world', whereas tactics are the approach taken when one is unable to take control of the vagaries of everyday life (Buchanan, 2000). Tactics are practices that are utilized in subversive ways to challenge the power of dominant and dominating spaces (Buchanan, 2000). In this way, the space of the tactic is the space of the other (de Certeau, 1984). Of particular interest to this paper is the use of tactics to navigate the unpredictability of life on the streets, and the way in which tactics are used to subvert and challenge the constructions made by dominant groups with regards to people who experience homelessness. Our focus on survival tactics means that our paper moves beyond just describing food-related practice or the experience of food insecurity into considerations of the socio-cultural meanings of food and wider impacts of disruption. These wider impacts include the ways in which the experience of homelessness erodes the sense of self, severs social relationships, and leaves a lingering sense of distrust and exclusion.

Methods

This paper is based on research that took place in Hamilton, which is an inland city in NZ with an estimated population of 176,500 residents (Statistics New Zealand, 2020). Our analysis is based on interviews (n=13) from 6 case studies:

Karl[1] (3 interviews), Leonard (1 interview), Michelle (1 interview), Peter (2 interviews), Roimata (3 interviews), and William (3 interviews). These case studies are part of a wider research project where the first author undertook a series of one-hour interviews with previously people experiencing homelessness on their experiences of homelessness, food, and managing everyday life. To preserve anonymity as much as possible, identifying characteristics are only broadly described. Participants were middle to older aged adults, with ages ranging from mid-'30s to 60+, Pākehā (NZ European) and Māori (NZ Indigenous), male and female. Demographically, the 6 cases drawn on in our analysis reflect the demographics of the wider research project. Research interviews were semi-unstructured, and conversations covered a variety of topics. Taking a less structured approach allowed for food-related experiences and recollections to be explored at the participants' pace and in their way. It is also congruent with appropriate research practices for interviewing people who have experienced homelessness (Hodgetts et al., 2015). Aspects of interviews related to everyday food-related practice and tactics for survival were typically scattered in snippets across recordings. Part of our analysis process involved organizing this 'lumpy data' into a cohesive whole.

Caseworkers from The People's Project in Hamilton identified potential participants who met our inclusion criteria (rehoused for 12 months or more by The People's Project), who were interested in engaging in research interviews, and whose stories exemplified the realities faced by people who experience homelessness. The criteria regarding being rehoused were to ensure participants had established themselves in their home and had time to reflect on their food-related practice once domiciled. Homeless populations are relatively small compared with the wider population, are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and are often understandably reluctant to engage with unknown persons (Groot & Hodgetts, 2012). Recruiting via a known and trusted caseworker meant that this commonly "hard to reach" population group felt supported to share their experiences with the research team with minimal risk of harm. Roimata, Karl, and Michelle all elected to meet in the domestic space of their home, with William, Peter, and Leonard requesting to meet at The People's Project. Each participant was given the option of up to three interviews, with the interviewer being sensitive to each interviewee's needs. Leonard, for example, wanted to tell his story, but requested that his caseworker be present for the first part of the interview. Having trusted support persons present gave Leonard confidence to speak freely about his experiences. After one interview, Leonard expressed that he had shared what he wanted to share.

Limitations of our approach are that we spoke only to persons who had 'successfully' transitioned out of street homelessness, who were currently domiciled, and who had a positive relationship with their People's Project caseworker. The experiences of persons for whom these three criteria were not the case are not included within our research. The lived experience of homelessness is one that is textured with trauma and chaotic situations, and there are ethical challenges when interviewing people who are currently homeless. In order to limit the potential for harm (such as the possibility of re-traumatizing participants), we intentionally worked with participants who had strong support networks (e.g., a positive relationship with The People's Project caseworker) and distance (12 months) between their current circumstances and their times of homelessness. Engaging with participants as they reflect on their past experiences provides equally as valuable (if different) knowledge as engaging with those who are currently experiencing homelessness. Another limitation is that of case studies in general, which is a relatively small and localized sample size. Nevertheless, each case offers insights into responses to homelessness and hunger that are of significance beyond their personal lifeworlds (Ruddin, 2006).

For research participants, the experience of eating while homeless was both unremarkable and indescribable. It is difficult to talk of everyday life, and even more so when homelessness has ruptured previous experiences.

[1] A pseudonym. Pseudonyms are used for all participants throughout this paper.

Typically, available language is insufficient to adequately convey the depth of feeling and emotion. Analyzing inalienable experiences that are difficult to communicate requires 'looking within and beyond that which is at once invisible and re-supposed (Hodgetts et al., 2014b). Our analysis of participant interviews considers these aspects alongside the broader socio-political environment and existing literature on homelessness. Additionally, our positionality as university-based researchers who are domiciled, Pākehā (NZ European), and without lived experience, ourselves meant we worked closely with The People's Project to ensure our analysis reflected wider realities of homelessness. The People's Project staff are intimately familiar with homelessness in Hamilton. Our ongoing conversations throughout the project meant that our analysis both centered on participant reflections and reflected the wider realities of homelessness. This process is particularly important given the wider research context that has historically examined homelessness through a domiciled, middle-class lens, resulting in actions of those experiencing homelessness being misinterpreted and maligned (Hodgetts et al., 2014b). In response, we intentionally center participant experiences.

In accordance with our social practice theoretical stance (as discussed in the Introduction), we took an interpretative dialectical approach to analyze interviews. Dialectical interplay aims to make explicit the specific ways in which actions and activities contribute to cultural expectations, as well as to clearly highlight the experiences of persons "whose status as the dominated element in society (a status that does not mean they are either passive or docile) is concealed" (de Certeau, 1984, pp. xii). This analysis method is congruent with our stated intent of considering the wider cultural implications of everyday life and of foregrounding oft-ignored experiences of homelessness. Specifically, our interpretative dialectical approach involved a thorough reading of interview transcripts by the first author for snippets of conversations involving food and related practice. These snippets were collated, re-read by all three authors, and a series of robust conversations were held regarding commonalities of experience across participants, connections to prior research, and ways of communicating difficult realities in a dignifying manner. Throughout the analysis process, we sought to bring the micro-moments of the inalienable participant experience into conversation with both existing literature and the macro of the socio-political environment.

Findings and Discussion

The accounts shared by Karl, Leonard, Michelle, Peter, Roimata, and William exemplify the ways in which life becomes subverted, re-imagined, and re-constructed in the face of difficult circumstances. The unsayable of extraordinary circumstances (Benjamin, 1936/1999) can make it challenging for people to adequately describe their experiences and survival mechanisms when the only language available to them is that of domiciled groups. The housed typically do not understand and have little frame of reference to the deep hurt of homelessness. Subsequently, in this paper, we draw on conversations with mentioned participants as exemplars of challenges faced. In presenting quotes from participants regarding the ways in which they sourced food to survive, the reader might assume that quotes came easily during interviews. This was not the case. Participants preferred to converse on their life now they are housed, giving high praise to The People's Project and their caseworkers. Tactics for survival were typically mentioned in fragments or hurriedly brushed past. Where in-depth conversation happened, such as with those quoted in this article, it was after multiple interactions and a high trust relationship had been established. Even then, such stories were not shared with a sense of pride, but rather with a sense of grim pragmatism regarding their necessity for survival. Additionally, we do not present participant quotes here to condone unlawful and socially inappropriate food-sourcing methods. Rather, quotes are utilized to provide a wider context to the realities of homelessness and to argue that, in addressing the underlying drivers of homelessness, we must also address the associated survivalist practices commonly framed as 'anti-social behavior'. The situation of poverty and homelessness provides limited options for people who do the best they can with what is available. Findings are

presented in three sections: firstly, homelessness as a disruptor of public-private spaces, which discusses the challenges faced when activities usually consigned to the private space of the domestic dwelling must be conducted in public spaces; secondly, navigating the practicalities of cooking and meals, which explores the challenges faced and creative solutions undertaken when sourcing hot meals or making a cup of tea while homeless; and thirdly, survivalism and tactics of resistance which documents the ways that participants enact their agency as a form of resistance and survival.

Homelessness as a Disruptor of Public-Private Spaces

The life circumstances of being homeless forces people to engage in mundane food-related activities that are usually conducted in the domestic space of the home in public view. Engaging in activities that are deemed 'private' such as sleeping, cooking, and drinking in public spaces is perceived as disrupting the public-private distinction (Laurenson & Collins, 2006). In response, those charged with maintaining the socio-spatial order insist that such activities are out-of-place (Cresswell, 1996). Homeless individuals who cook ordinary meals in urban parks and other places are constructed as the 'Other' due to their professed disrespect for societal boundaries (Cresswell, 1996; Laurenson & Collins, 2006). It is not uncommon for domiciled people to implement local ordinances to justify imprisoning those who disrupt the social order in this way (Barrow, 2015; Groot & Hodgetts, 2015). Prohibiting sleeping or cooking meals in public spaces has relatively little effect on domiciled people who have access to alternatives (Laurenson & Collins, 2006). Yet, such laws act as further constraints on people experiencing homelessness trying to eke out an existence in whatever spaces they can occupy.

In Hamilton, local bylaws such as the Hamilton Safety in Public Places Bylaw 2014 seek to move the 'other' out of the central city. This bylaw has seen panhandlers relocate to suburban areas, which are typically further away from the charities and social services assisting people experiencing homelessness. Accounts by Peter reference this move to the outer suburbs. In the suburban location, Peter became much more reliant on, and appreciative of, the random acts of kindness and thoughtful generosity of the people he encountered:

> *"I used to stay up at [suburb] in the library out there and have people coming up to me, dropping off ten dollars or twenty dollars here and there, or come over with a bit of food and all that, saying, 'Oh here's a drink and a pie for you', 'Oh cheers thank you for that', and you get you know people from like Pakistan or India, 'Oh here you go mate, here's some curry and all that, I seen you out here for the last few days, sitting here'. I said, "Oh yeah". - Peter*

Peter's presence on the street as a rough-sleeper near the public space of the library disrupts the public-private distinction. He is reliant on locals to 'allow' him to continue to sleep rough in the suburb and appreciates their generosity in the provision of food. Peter appreciates the re-humanizing nature of being able to engage in mundane social interactions and enjoy a simple meal, such as a 'pie and a drink', or a 'curry and that'. He expands on this below:

> *"I had one lot of the cleaners come, the cleaning lady that used to come clean the library, 'Morning mate how are you?", "Coffee and a cigarette is it?", "Thank you" and they'd come out sit down with me for ten minutes and have a coffee and a cigarette with me, and I thought, you know, least you got the balls to come talk to me. - Peter*

Mundane, ordinary small acts of decency, such as sharing a coffee and cigarette, represent the rudimentary humanness of people, even in extraordinary circumstances (Hodgetts et al., 2015). Peter's last sentence indicates that he is aware of his social status and that male persons experiencing homelessness such as himself are typically perceived as threatening by domiciled persons (Groot & Hodgetts, 2015). Despite his dehumanizing circumstances, including being deemed 'out-of-place' by local ordinances, the ordinary act of sharing morning greetings and a coffee with another person assists Peter in retaining his humanity while on the street.

The everyday social practices associated with preparing and consuming a meal are intimately connected with dwelling and material practice

(Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Engaging in the act of cooking a meal re-creates a sense of home (Bell & Valentine, 1997) and reconnects people with broader socio-cultural identities (Warde, 2005). The act of cooking in public while homeless is concurrently an act of necessity (the need to eat), a way to enact agency, engage in the ordinary food-related practice (cooking a meal), and a potentially dangerous tactic of resistance to the dominant socio-spatial ordering of public-private boundaries. In the quote below, Karl describes how he was able to make himself a small meal after creatively sourcing additional finances for a small gas cooker:

> *"Towards the end there though, I did have a little cooker … the canned food and the potatoes, carrots that they put in those pātaka [open food pantry] became helpful, because then I made me a vegetable soup … I brought me the cooker and gas thing just to have a hot drink and even just a hot drink at night-time. I would park the car so I'm facing out to the road and have my cooker at the back so if anyone came down I would just hop out of the car and then go around to the back, open up the boot and then put my cooker in there so you couldn't see it." - Karl*

Karl enjoyed being able to agentively cook a hot meal. However, to do so he must navigate the public-private divide. Cooking a meal from a cooker precariously placed on his car risks being 'outed' as homeless and thus as "other". Karl navigates these challenges by constructing his 'kitchen' in such a way that he can easily disguise it should a stranger (or a potential enforcer of the public-private distinction) walk past. Despite his transient circumstances, Karl's small act of making a vegetable soup re-creates a sense of home. This simple meal, cooked in the public space of a carpark, becomes a tactic of resistance to dehumanizing constructions. For people who experience the 'othering' of marginalization, being able to agentively engage in simple practices such as a 'hot drink at nighttime' re-humanizes their sense of self (Simmel, 1910/1997). A hot drink evokes the familiarity of mundane domiciled routine and brings a sense of comfort that transcends current realities. Karl's attempts to engage in ordinary food-related activities while homeless brings us to our next section, which considers the wider challenges of making a cup of tea or preparing a meal without a private dwelling.

Navigating the Practicalities of Cooking and Meals

People who are experiencing homelessness typically have limited capacity to store, prepare, or cook food (Bowen & Irish, 2018). Being without a domicile to call home also means limited access to taken-for-granted items, such as stoves, small appliances, and cooking utensils (Share, 2019). Paul Thomas (2004) notes the challenges inherent in food provisioning for homeless groups:

> *"food…needs to be edible with little or no preparation and needs to be in packaging that is opened easily. Homeless people may not have the resources to simply open a can and it can be expected that they will not have preparation and cooking facilities". (p. 18)*

These realities are exemplified in the experiences of Karl. Prior to his purchase of a small cooker (discussed above), Karl was unable to utilize donated items from foodbanks or local food pantries that required preparation and/or heating to be edible. A locally provided public barbecue area was also inaccessible. Karl comments below:

> *"A lot of things like that canned beans and stuff I couldn't use. The majority of the times it was either a loaf of bread or buns … Got nothing to cook it on, you've got nothing to open it ... [local park] had a barbecue that is free. But all the birds had been on there. We're homeless, we ain't got the cleaning stuff to clean that off now! And if you leave tools there, they would've got pinched." - Karl*

The combination of limited finances and minimal storage space made purchasing the cleaning equipment and cooking utensils necessary for barbecue cookery impractical. Instead, food must be purchased close to the time of consumption and eaten as is, or with minimal preparation. These realities are also captured in the following comment by Michelle: "*I more or less just bought things, probably two things for a day or*

two. Just depends on the weather-wise. Because when I was homeless it was winter so I could buy hot pies." In NZ 'hot pies' is an inexpensive, meat-filled, pastry-wrapped snack readily available from local bakeries for a few dollars. Typically maligned by health professionals as '*too high* in cholesterol and salt (and thus constructed as 'unhealthy choices') (c.f. Kourouniotis et al., 2016), hot pies nonetheless provide a form of warmth and comfort during a brutal winter's day. A hungry person in NZ in search of hot food can more readily – and affordably – access hot chips or a pie than soup or a rice-based dish (Rockell et al., 2011). Affordable and accessible alternatives to hot pies within NZ remain unavailable from convenience-type stores (Rockell et al., 2011). Michelle and Karl's difficulties in accessing affordable hot food are not uncommon for people experiencing poverty and homelessness. The claim that people experiencing homelessness have errant food '*choices*' and lifestyles, especially when seen to be consuming 'convenience' foods such as hot pies, reinforces the tendency of wealthier groups to deny people experiencing homelessness access to resources and public spaces. Awareness of the broader dimensions within which poverty and homelessness exist reminds us that the lives of poorer people are thwarted by low incomes and not improvidence.

While basic material needs are vital for human health and wellbeing, eating is not simply a matter of subsistence and survival. The British sociologist Peter Townsend (1962) used the example of a cup of tea to illustrate how an item with no nutritional content per se still functions as a vital cultural object for social practice within British society:

> *"Tea is an even better example, for it has little or no nutritional value. Should any allowance be made for this in the minimum diet? Drinking tea is a widespread custom in Britain … True, in another society, she [sic] might prepare coffee or open a bottle of wine, but this is what she will generally do in Britain. The reciprocation of small gifts and services, and sharing the enjoyment of them, is one of the most important ways in which an individual recognizes and maintains his [sic] social relationships." (p.217)*

A cup of tea, then, is about more than physiological functioning in that it also acts to satisfy fundamental social and psychological needs. Being able to have a hot drink and eat a hot meal during winter are taken-for-granted aspects of everyday life easily overlooked by people for whom such activities are commonplace (Graham et al., 2018). Michelle notes her technique for procuring a hot drink while homeless and without access to kettles and cups:

> *"When I wanted a coffee, I'd go to the hospital and just pretend that I know someone there to get a hot coffee … You kind of think about those things when you're really cold and you've got nowhere else to go." - Michelle*

In posing as a visitor to the hospital, Michelle shows resourcefulness in finding ways to stay warm while remaining invisible to dominant groups. The need to remain invisible, as inferred by the pretense of visiting a family member, is a result of dominant groups enforcing the socio-spatial order. That is, domiciled personnel at the hospital rule that hot drinks should only be available to visitors, with everyone else deemed out-of-place and unwelcome. Michelle's need to find somewhere warm to be, where she can engage in the ordinary practice of having a hot drink, drives her to subvert the socio-spatial rules to meet her physical (warmth) and psychological (hot drink) needs.

Finding ways to maintain a feeling of warmth while living rough were mentioned by William and Leonard (Leonard's experiences are discussed later). Having a dwelling place of sorts (a marked-out area beneath the bridge) means that William can draw on his survivalist skills. These skills include creating a hearth and fireplace, knowing how to start a small fire, and being able to heat water for a cup of tea. Below, William explains his technique for keeping warm while living under the bridge:

> *"I used to go and make a little fire. Two bricks. Put them together and just use leaves. Brown leaves … That is how I used to keep myself warm underneath the bridge … light up a little fire under the bridge and just put whatever you want to eat. Make my drink from those plants, the koromiko, and you boil them up or have a little*

lighter and burn the pot and heat it up … my grandfather had taught me how to do it." - William

The plant (koromiko) that William references is an indigenous plant that has a long history of medicinal use for Māori. During interviews, William demonstrated detailed knowledge of the healing properties and physical appearance of three indigenous plants: koromiko, kawakawa, and kumarahou, as learnt from his Indigenous (Māori) grandfather. William described where to find koromiko, what time of year to collect leaves (when the blossoms fall), which leaves gave the best tea (young shoots), and the manner of steeping required to brew a tonic to settle the stomach:

"If you get an upset stomach, drink about that much [gestures with fingers to show amount] of kawakawa or koromiko, koromiko [is] the strongest one, just drink about that much [measures with fingers] and in five minutes you won't have a sore stomach." – William

In making himself a cup of koromiko tea, William (re)connects with his histories, retaining a sense of belonging beyond the here and now. The dehumanizing nature of street life can lead to homeless people 'losing themselves to the streets' (Snow & Anderson, 1987). The realities of living rough can erode the identities associated with connection and belonging to a place (Hodgetts et al., 2015). Identifying familiar flora and their medicinal properties recalls the knowledge that William learned as a young child from his grandfather, thus reaffirming his sense of connection to his past self. The act of making a hot cup of koromiko tea (re)connects William with his past, which in turn anchors him in his present circumstances. This form of remembering as ordinary practice (Graham et al., 2016) keeps William from losing his sense of self at a time when other forms of social practice are increasingly challenging to maintain.

Considering Lefebvre's (1991) work on the dialectics of place, it is these small, emplaced acts, such as making a cup of tea, that reproduce a sense of home and belonging. Without access to a home or a facility to engage in these forms of ordinary, domiciled practice, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a sense of self and of being in the world. Part of a person's task when moving out of homelessness is to rebuild a sense of place, home and belonging typically associated with domiciled life (Hodgetts et al., 2015). The process of re-situating and reconnecting one's identity to a new place and a new system of support is termed 're-mooring' by Deaux (2000). For people who are experiencing homelessness, this process of re-mooring can be progressively more difficult as support systems withdraw. The disruption of homelessness and associated extraordinary circumstances can be mitigated through engaging in mundane, ordinary practices, such as making a hot drink.

Survivalism and Tactics of Resistance

In this section, we explore tactics for resistance as exemplified in descriptive quotes from Roimata and Leonard. When circumstances require, tactics can become acts of resistance that develop as crucial practices against power mechanisms and strategies of dominant groups (Bargh, 2007). Acts of resistance form a type of tactic that can by employed by the powerless in responding to the imposition of institutional disciplinary demands. Power is realized during everyday mundane encounters (Karner, 2004). Practices for everyday life can thus provide a mechanism for acts of resistance, which work to distort the strategies of the powerful (Yilmaz, 2013). In doing so, they leak into strategies and act as mechanisms for eroding power. Regarding modalities of power and resistance, de Certeau describes tactics as operating on territory that belongs to the powerful other (Karner, 2004). Tactics take the form of "clever tricks" to score temporary "victories of the 'weak' over the 'strong'" (de Certeau et al., 1998, p. xi).

We see an example of how tactics for everyday survival while homeless can become acts of resistance in the following quote. Roimata explains how she and her fellow homeless associates managed to source food in less-than-legal ways: "*You make do with what you get. I've seen my bro's jump fences that you weren't supposed to jump just to get food because they are hungry.*" The '*jumping fences*' activity that Roimata and her bro's (friends) engage in refers to what is colloquially known as '*dumpster diving*' or the practice of sourcing still edible food from garbage skip bins (Sharp et al., 2016). In NZ, supermarket

skip bins are typically fenced off from public access behind 2-metre-high chainmail fences. In the above quote, Roimata is alluding to the illegality of jumping these chainmail fences to access discarded-but-edible food. Dumpster diving has long been constructed as a survival strategy for people living in poverty (Carolsfeld & Erikson, 2013). More recently, dumpster diving has become an act of transgression and resistance (Sharp et al., 2016). Here, the act of dumpster diving is a deliberate tactic to proactively reduce waste (Vaughan, 2018) while concurrently challenging accepted social norms regarding current food systems (Carolsfeld & Erikson, 2013; Sharp et al., 2016). A growing awareness of the need to address unsustainable food waste practices has seen the rise of food rescue organizations. Such organizations collect expired and unsellable food directly from supermarkets and food producers and redistribute such wasted resources via foodbanks and 'free stores' (Dombroski et al., 2020). While accessing expired food from a free store is somewhat more socially acceptable and arguably easier for those lacking the physicality necessary to jump fences, the gentrification of dumpster diving in this manner implies a manner of societal control over waste food that is missing from the dumpster diving acts of resistance.

Tactics for survival, such as shoplifting, can be viewed as yet another agentive response to difficult circumstances. As well as the tactic of dumpster diving, Roimata collaborated with her homeless associates to steal food. The below exchange details this survival mechanism and the subsequent disruption of social norms while sourcing groceries:

> *"Roimata: You know sometimes you go to a shop and you do the five-finger discount, aye? I got barred for it. Yeah. You get barred from one shop and you get barred from the other … It is mainly food.*
>
> *Interviewer: If you don't mind me asking, what was the easiest stuff to get when you were using you five finger discount? What was some of the stuff that was accessible?*
>
> *Roimata: Tins. Not chips because they were too rattling. Dairy products sometimes. Minced meat, yip. They were easy. If you were pregnant, if you've got a pram, if they didn't have any cameras on … Depends on how many there were of yous. One, you had to be really – get in, get out. If there was a few of yous, well, use your noggin. Work as a team – you go and do that aisle; you do that aisle. Some of them got caught because they were meant to get caught. Some got away with the goodies. Back in the day, you could get away with smokes and beers and all sorts, and a loaf of bread and butter. That is what they wanted – a loaf of bread and butter and milk. It is still hard to get that today. That is just for a common bloody family.*

The '*five-finger discount*' Roimata references is a colloquial term for shoplifting or stealing. Stealing food as a tactic for survival when homeless and hungry is a timeless and common practice (Anater et al., 2011; Booth, 2006). As people become increasingly hungry and desperate, they turn to ever-more illegal means of acquiring food and resources for food (Kempson et al., 2002). Research on food insecurity details a range of tactics for sourcing food, such as exchanging sex for food, selling controlled substances (Whittle et al., 2015), and stealing items to sell for money for food (Pollard et al., 2011). Poverty and homelessness force difficult choices. For Roimata and her collaborators, the shoplifting described is a response to marginalization and poverty. Not only is it a way to provide food for their families, but it is also a way to 'score a victory' over the dominant socio-economic system that rejects their presence and frames their group as failed citizens. In collaborating together, Roimata and her acquaintances collectively refuse the framing of dominant power structures and exert agency over their food choices.

Tactics are impermanent and subject to disciplinary action by those charged with defending the strategies and socio-spatial boundaries employed by powerful (dominant) groups (Karner, 2004). We see this process in Roimata's quote where being caught shoplifting resulted in disciplinary measures, such as 'getting barred from the shop'. Here, 'being barred' refers to being refused entry to the store by security personnel or receiving a trespass notice from the police. Roimata's '*back in the day*' remark infers that she no longer participates in

these activities. Indeed, socially unacceptable food-sourcing practices tend to be left behind once a person has the ability to source food in more socially appropriate ways (Tarasuk et al., 2005). In this manner, both dumpster diving and shoplifting are impermanent responses to a transient situation. The responses by people experiencing homelessness, such as Roimata and her associates, to the inhumanity of homelessness and hunger, are all too often weaponized against them by persons who have never experienced street life or constant hunger. That is, people are forced into socially inappropriate food sourcing practices and are then framed as 'undeserving' of assistance for actioning the few resources available to them.

We shift our focus now to Leonard, whose attempts to stay warm while living rough resulted in additional challenges. Living rough means limited access to domiciled comforts such as a warm bed, a hot shower, or a warming cup of tea. In response, Leonard turned to other substances to meet his need for comfort and warmth:

> *"When I was on the streets, I used to be solvent abusive to keep me warm … it's just solvents to keep me warm, and now it's got me addicted. And it's not an illegal thing, I don't mind doing it! [Laughs]. I mean the police don't want to see what you've been up to hey, but um, as long as you're in your house you can, as long as you're in your house you can do it. I mean, not can do it, but um, your addiction's doing it, as long as you're not doing it in public." - Leonard*

In the above quote, Leonard indirectly references the public-private divide and the value of a private dwelling space within which to engage in activities typically coded '*private*'. During interviews, Leonard also described being denied access to local free buses (a public space used by rough sleepers to stay warm and dry) because his clothing was wet from sleeping rough. With few available resources, using solvents (sniffing paint) became a way for Leonard to escape the inhumanity of his situation and to '*feel warm*'. Leonard has since been housed, but continues to use solvents – indeed, our interview was the first time his caseworker heard Leonard refer to it as an addiction, representing a significant break-through. This pathway of providing a person with a place to live and then addressing addiction issues, corresponds to the approach argued by Housing First proponents: house the person and addressing addiction will follow on from there (Collins et al., 2013; Padgett et al., 2006). The abuse of solvents and other illegal drugs come with their own challenges and pitfalls, which are well documented. What is of relevance to this paper is the human need for comfort and warmth and the role of housing in providing these. One wonders if Leonard had a home to dwell in, would he still have turned to solvents for comfort and to stay warm.

Conclusions

Social practice theory draws on ideas and commodities provided by the dominant socio-economic order in indeterminate ways, thus allowing for the construction of autonomous meaning, the exercise of agency, and the possibility of (symbolic) resistance (de Certeau, 1984). We see these in each of the case studies described in this paper. William drew on his traditional knowledge of survival skills and gardening to create meaning for himself and resist dominant constructions of people experiencing homelessness as 'lazy'. Karl creatively and agentively found ways to cook himself a meal while retaining a sense of privacy in public spaces. Michelle found warmth in a hot cup of tea in the hospital lounge. Peter resisted the dehumanizing nature of homelessness through ordinary interactions with passers-by. The anti-social acts recounted by Roimata (dumpster diving, shoplifting) and Leonard (solvent abuse) are both organized and chaotic, pre-planned and ad hoc. Tactics like shoplifting and solvent abuse are a paradoxical response to poverty, at once both intentional and reactionary, rational and senseless (de Certeau, 1984). Similarly, many of the tactics described by participants for surviving their period of homelessness are both deliberate and disorganized. Rarely do tactics for survival inherently contain cultural or social phenomena worth retaining. Now domiciled, participants have not retained their survival tactics. For example, Karl no longer uses a small cooker to cook from the boot of his car, instead of cooking meals in the kitchen of his home. Similarly,

Michelle makes herself a cup of tea in her home rather than travel to the hospital. Peter enjoys interactions with neighbors rather than strangers on the street. Tactics in difficult circumstances are a mechanism for survival to retain a sense of self and identity beyond the deficit-orientation of dominant groups who frame experiences of homelessness as failures unworthy of dignity and respect. Typically framed as inappropriate or anti-social behavior, the acts described by participants in this study are in response to a society that has deliberately deprived them of sufficient resources – and have been discarded now that they are no longer needed to construct meaning, exercise agency, or as a form of resistance.

The key themes in our paper (homelessness disrupts the public-private divide, the absence of a home leaves creates practical challenges for cooking, and surviving homelessness requires tactics for resistance) connect homelessness to acts and activities beyond the physical domicile and connect food-related practices to meanings beyond nutritional values. In focusing on food and related social practices we highlight the ways in which homelessness disrupts the taken-for-granted social connections that occur over meals and cups of tea. It is not just that cooking outdoors upsets the public-private divide (after all, many domiciled families use public outdoor cooking facilities such as the barbecue described by Karl), but that homelessness disorders the assemblages of interconnected components associated with cooking and eating. Once (re)domiciled, participants (re)actualize their socio-cultural traditions and associated interactions in more socially acceptable ways. Utilizing social practice theory moves our analysis beyond the visible components of cooking into considerations of the wider symbolic meanings (such as how planting a garden maintains a sense of self through a connection to cultural heritage). Our findings also have implications for addressing homelessness and meal provisioning. Simplistic, individualistic, transactional approaches are insufficient. What is needed is sustainable food provisioning that supports social interaction and enables the reproduction of cultural practices in everyday life.

Our research addresses the gap in the literature with regards to everyday food-related practices and tactics for the survival of people experiencing homelessness in NZ. This paper identifies some of the ways in which homelessness disrupts social practices as related to food and cooking. We extend understandings of food beyond nutrition into considerations of how people who experience homelessness do their best to 'mend' social disruption through processes of 're-mooring' as well as identifying tactics for survival. Being rehoused requires more than just obtaining shelter, it also means reconnecting people socially and assisting with re-engaging in social and food-related practices. This process includes providing sufficient resources, for example, to allow a person to purchase cooking equipment and utensils. Our paper considers how the wider meanings of everyday life are disrupted during periods of homelessness and the ways in which people do their best to mend these ruptures and retain a sense of self. Familiar practices such as making a cup of tea may seem insignificant, but they act as conduits for reconnection and work to preserve a sense of self that is at threat of being lost to the streets.

Nutritional advice aimed towards general population members is not realistic when it comes to the life circumstances of those experiencing homelessness or who have been recently re-housed. This has implications for health-related policy with regards to improving nutrition; it is not enough to utilize blood tests to determine nutrient intakes. Rather, understandings of food security must extend to moving from surviving to thriving. Survival eating creates a disconnect to nutritional advice for a variety of practical reasons, including the absence of cooking utensils, insufficient finances, and specific constraints (such as cooking in the boot of a car). Participants described practices of sourcing leftover food from supermarket dumpsters and food pantries and 'making do' with what edible items can be found. There is little room in such practices to consider nutritional content (or lack thereof). As mentioned in the Introduction, NZ is a wealthy food-producing country with sufficient food. Indeed, there is so much food people give it away to people experiencing homelessness, donate it to food pantries and community meals, and throw edible items away. Nevertheless, it is clear from participant accounts that access to food and

meals is not equitably shared across the populace. There is a need to conceptualize new ways to ensure access to food and meals still occurs when families are impoverished, people experiencing homelessness, or access to cooking utensils is constrained.

We have documented the dialectical interplay for participants with regards to food and eating. The hardship, insecurity, and stigma of homelessness reflect the extent to which one's dignity is tied to the need to find and eat food. We argue that, beyond calories and nutrition, our food practices encompass an intricate dance of what is needed to sustain one's sense of self and what is needed to sustain one's physical body. These two competing demands are far more complex and problematic for a person experiencing homelessness. Difficult trade-offs are routinely made between deprivation of the body or of the self. As a globally leading food producing and exporting nation, we in NZ can certainly do more to find ways to provide food for people that nourish their psychological self as well as food to nourish their physical self.

damage of homelessness.

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