A Maori homeless woman

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What is This?

Ethnography

A Māori homeless woman

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Abstract
Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in homeless populations in many countries. As part of a larger ethnographic project, this case study draws upon interviews and photo-elicitation projects with a homeless Māori woman, Ariā. The actions of this Māori woman exemplify how Indigenous cultural practices can shape a person's efforts to retain a positive sense of self and place while homeless. Māori cultural concepts relating to caring, leadership, unity, relationships, spirituality, history and place provide a basis for interpreting Ariā's actions. This article demonstrates the appropriateness of cultural concepts indigenous to a group for conducting ethnographic research into homelessness within that group.

Keywords
Māori, homelessness, identity, Indigenous cultural practices

Many Indigenous societies have been adversely affected by colonization and processes of cultural, social and economic domination (Enriquez, 1995; Kingfisher, 2007). In such contexts, Indigenous people die on average seven years younger than members of settler populations, and are more likely to experience a range of diseases, poverty and homelessness (Hanselmann, 2001; Waldram et al., 2006).

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In New Zealand many urban Māori live in impoverished and overcrowded conditions and, as a result, are overrepresented in the homeless population (see Gravitas Research and Strategy Ltd., 2005; Kearns and Smith, 1994). However, with notable exceptions (Hanselmann, 2001; Kingfisher, 2007; Memmott et al., 2003), previous research into street homelessness has all but ignored Indigenous histories, circumstances and worldviews. To address this omission, we focus on a homeless Māori woman, Ariā, whose life reflects, in part, broader processes of colonization. This article employs Māori cultural concepts as a conceptual framework to explore how specific everyday places, objects and actions constitute this woman's everyday life on the streets of Auckland. Our ethnographic case-based methodology enables us to illustrate how a sense of self and place for a Māori homeless woman (Ariā, a pseudonym) is enhanced through her participation in cultural practice.

Our engagements with Ariā are part of a four-year ethnographic project investigating the cultural, material, spatial and relational contexts of homelessness (Hodgetts et al., 2008). The authors bring both etic and emic elements to this work in comprising two Māori women, one European man parented by his Māori grandmother, and one European woman. Our work is based in an Indigenous research unit and engages with homeless people recruited from the Auckland City Mission (ACM), where staff facilitated our access to participants and enabled us to conduct the study in a manner sensitive to the needs of the participants involved. Staff and clients form an advisory group central to the larger project, which included substantial periods of fieldwork, direct observations, participation in service planning, and ongoing interactions with clients, local residents and passers-by.

While it is common practice to associate Māori strongly with specific places, we also need to recognize that ours is a history of human movement and displacement. The emptying of rural tribal homelands through the flood of Māori to towns and cities has been a prominent and rapid feature of colonization (Metge, 1964; Pool, 1991; Walker, 1990). Many of these new migrants to urban areas ended up flooding the homes of relatives, or occupying substandard dwellings and sometimes living in slums that no one else wanted (Schrader, 2005). At the last national census, 84.4 percent of Māori lived in urban areas (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Through such movements, links to places left behind have been reconfigured. Values, beliefs, customary practices, and strategies for everyday life have been translocated and adapted to urban spaces and city life (see Nikora, 2007). While Māori have relocated from their *hau kāinga* (tribal homelands) to occupy urban spaces, many, over the course of their lives, move between the two locales (Nikora et al., 2004), becoming conduits for flows of information, experiences, resources, advice, relatedness and care. The more people engage between places departed and their urban homes, the more likely they are to remain important resources across multiple places. Through engaging the between, they metaphorically invigorate their *ahi kaa* (tribal home fires): where relationships with people in their tribal homelands are enlivened and nurtured. They maintain their *tūrangawaewae* (place of strength and identity). Māori who live their lives in between claim a new space giving rise to

multiple relationships and ways of belonging, and to the reality of many homes even when, for some, that home is the streets.

Although structural intrusions have clearly posed challenges to Māori wellness, it is crucial to note that we are not passive in the face of socio-political upheavals. Māori are resilient and adaptive (Nikora et al., 2007). Claims to, and the affirmation of, cultural identities and practices by Indigenous peoples are common responses to histories of oppression, and offer authenticity, a sense of belonging, and the basis for gaining human rights, and reclaiming suppressed histories (Dudgeon and Fielder, 2006; Smith, 1999). For many Indigenous women, processes of colonization have undermined their value as equal partners in tribal society (Te Awekōtuku, 1991; Waller et al., 2008). Writers such as Te Awekōtuku (1994) and Mahuika (1992) have attempted to redress this omission by pointing to suppressed histories and, in particular, challenging the widely held assumption that Māori women did not fulfil mentorship roles in pre-colonial society. While many historical roles and functions remain in some form or another, colonization has reduced their familiarity for many Māori, and contributed to processes of dislocation that, in turn, enhance the risk of homelessness.

Living on the streets

One common pathway into homelessness for many young people is escape from family abuse and violence (Paradise and Cauce, 2002). Once on the streets people learn how to survive, often engaging in 'risky activities' such as prostitution, drug use and crime (Hatty, 1996; Kidd and Davidson, 2007; Waller et al., 2008). The literature concerning single women makes a number of useful points regarding the range of problems they face when living on the streets (Wenzel et al., 2000). Women '...are more likely to experience involuntary sex, physical or sexual violence, unmet health needs, a sense of insecurity and fear, cycles of repeated homelessness after initially experiencing domestic abuse...' (Radley et al., 2006: 438). Research also suggests that homelessness constitutes a fundamental threat to personal identity (Boydell et al., 2000; Hatty, 1996; Snow and Anderson, 1987, 1993) and can undermine the dignity and well-being of homeless people (see Miller and Keys, 2001). Homeless people become disconnected from family, employment and home – social spheres that are generally regarded as critical anchors for the construction of identity. Those affected 'struggle to maintain a viable and authentic sense of self' (Hatty, 1996: 415). Studies of identity among homeless people highlight the negative impact of dislocation, fragmentation and loss on their ability to maintain a coherent sense of self (Boydell et al., 2000; Hatty, 1996; Snow and Anderson, 1987, 1993).

While we do not seek to downplay convergences in the experiences of homeless women or the threat to self often posed by homelessness, it should not be assumed that pathways into, risks from and responses to homelessness are universally constant. For example, Indigenous people experiencing homelessness can maintain and cultivate a strong sense of self and purpose through maintaining and engaging in cultural practices (see Te Awekōtuku and Nikora, 2007; Waller et al., 2008).

Further, the literature on pathways to homelessness and associated risks does not provide an adequate picture in terms of the socio-political context and lived realities of many Indigenous homeless people. Thus, a perspective informed by an Indigenous world view is crucial for developing our understandings of experiences of homelessness among such peoples.

The situation in which Indigenous people find themselves today requires us to extend how we understand homelessness and the development of culturally based roles and identities on the street and beyond. 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 problematize the application of conventional notions of home and homelessness – which pervade the academic literature – to Indigenous people. They propose that in pre-colonial Aboriginal Australia 'home' was not primarily associated with a domestic dwelling, but denoted affiliation with 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 place (or set of places), and recognition and acceptance in such places, but nevertheless not have any 'conventional' accommodation (Memmott et al., 2003).

The experience of being housed for many women contrasts with the meaning of home as a place of safety, solitude and security. For those experiencing homelessness the achievement of a safe and secure residence has always been, and continues to be, a long way from reality (Tomas and Dittmar, 1995). In other words, the lack of a house or apartment does not necessarily entail loss of a home. In the context of the lived reality of Indigenous people, the problematic nature of notions of home and homelessness takes on new significance. We go further in proposing that the street can in fact be equated with a greater sense of 'home' and identity for Ariā than many domestic dwellings in which she has been housed. In fact, some research on homelessness has moved to expand notions of home to incorporate movement, social relations, performance, daily practice and a sense of history and belonging (Hodgetts et al., 2010b; Sheehan, 2010). This work needs to encompass Indigenous worldviews.

Previous research into homelessness, even when dealing with issues faced by minority women (Prince, 2008) and Indigenous groups (Kingfisher, 2007; Memmott et al., 2003), rarely employs cultural concepts germane to these distinct groups in an interpretation of their experiences, lived realities, and needs. This is counter to the emphasis in contemporary ethnography on participants being able to recognize themselves and their own cultural frames in research about their lifeworlds (Anderson, 2009). Indigenous scholars have also promoted the use of Indigenous cultural concepts to develop research strategies (Nikora, 2007; Pe-Pua, 2006). We will document the relevance of Māori cultural concepts for understanding Ariā's relationships and her efforts to cultivate a positive sense of self and place based on her identity as Māori. Using Māori cultural concepts as conceptual elements in our research contributes to an interpretation more germane to Ariā's lived reality than is currently offered by research on homelessness.

Central Auckland is more than a physical setting for the ACM and this research. It is an 'appropriate' location because it features in media framings of homelessness and the cultivation of public expectations regarding this socio-political concern. When New Zealanders think of homelessness we often think of such central business districts and images of begging on Queen Street, populating media reports for almost a century (Cooper, 2001). The area in which the ACM is located has the highest population density and the most residents with high poverty index scores in New Zealand (Hodgetts and Stolte, 2009). The ACM has a history of catering to the needs and hopes of dispossessed groups (Ball, 1997), providing food, clothing, advocacy, social and health services (Auckland City Mission, 2006).

This article draws on a case study that speaks to the empirical reality of one woman, whilst also providing insights into broader socio-cultural patterns that both contribute to her homelessness and allow her to thrive and be resilient (see Small, 2009). We are informed by Simmel's (1903/1997) approach of looking locally in order to understand systemic elements of the socio-cultural world within which people reside. In other words, this case can tell us something about 'street life' for Indigenous people in a post-encounter society. This case was selected because in many respects Ariā does not fit the archetypal characterization offered in previous research into homelessness among women (Radley et al., 2006; Wenzel et al., 2000). For example, Ariā does not appear to be at threat of losing herself to the streets and in fact uses a positive sense of self as a Māori woman to sustain herself. This case illustrates how human action is contained and shaped by certain situations, and how people can also craft their situations in positive ways.

Ariā

At the time of this research, Ariā was 53 years old and had recently returned to the streets of Auckland. Throughout her life Ariā has been socialized by strong Māori women who acted as guides and mentors. She reflects on a childhood immersed in the teachings of her grandmother in *tikanga Māori* (customary practices), particularly in the use of *rongoā Māori* (Māori healing remedies and practices). Despite her grandmother's efforts to provide a safe environment, several children, including Ariā, turned to street life as a means of escaping abuse at the hands of other family members. Ariā took to the streets of Wellington at age 12. By the age of 17 she had made the streets of Auckland her home. Ariā still struggles with the pain of childhood abuse, not just for herself, but also for her siblings, cousins, and the generations that followed:

> The parents, it's uncles, aunties alike interfering with you, and then expecting you to shut up and hide things. And then they go to church and you're sitting in church wondering why are they doing that and the very next day they go and do something different. It sticks in here and it hurts. We suffer through it, day in and day out . . . I was on the street cracking it [prostitution] to make money for myself because I'd run

away from my family for that reason – sexual abuse – and your family not bothering to listen to you.

Ariā recounts experiences of abuse in her family as part of an exploration of how she became homeless. In recounting the example of family members being 'good' Christians in church and in public, Ariā invokes the dilemma faced by many young people to either suffer in silence or leave the situation of abuse. On the streets, Ariā was cared for by drag queens in Wellington and an older Māori homeless woman named Ma in Auckland. This support led to Ariā training as a nurse aide and working in the rural Far North with isolated elderly Māori. A considerable portion of her subsequent life was spent domiciled before she returned to the streets of Auckland in late 2007. Her move was a response to the death of her partner and family requests for her to assist *whānau* (family) living on the streets.

We utilized a case-based ethnographic research strategy to capture some of the relational and cultural elements of Ariā's life on the streets. Our approach is informed by Miller's (1997: 12) observation that:

> Ethnography tends to lead to a much deeper involvement in people's lives than just what they say about themselves. Ethnography used in material culture also tends to emphasize careful observations of what people actually do and in particular do with things.

Here we respond to calls for social scientists to produce context sensitive research that includes a focus on situations, places, events and material objects that are important to research participants (Anderson, 2009; Griffin and Bengry-Howell, 2007). Our analytic task was to encourage Ariā to communicate how she conducts her life by showing and telling us about relationships and daily practices of importance to her. Data collection began with ethnographic fieldwork at the Auckland City Mission. Ariā took part in several casual conversations and an initial biographical interview. She was given a disposable camera on two occasions (two months apart) and asked to produce images of homelessness and her everyday life. In subsequent photo-elicitation interviews, Ariā's photographs were discussed along with her life on the street. A follow-up interview was conducted to gain further insights into emergent themes and to close off our formal engagements with Ariā. This combination of methods is particularly suited where the research requires a narrative that retains a strong sense of context and where the intent is to create a safe context for participants to engage in deep reflection (Hodgetts et al., 2010b).

The still photographs created by Ariā are anything but still, and consequently provide insights into the evolving relationships and Māori cultural practices central to her life. The most prominent feature of note in Ariā's first photo-set is that all 24 photographs feature homeless people and their daily activities. Photo-set two contains 26 photographs depicting both homeless people and staff at two service agencies. Ariā positions herself as existing between both groups and functioning in both worlds: as an insider who knows street life, and as a *kaumatua* (age-related

leadership) trying to help others survive, function and leave the streets as she did in the past. The images also portray Māori cultural practices, sites and objects. Ariā's selections comprise the raw materials of a case which we construct to exemplify links between her homelessness, culture, relationships and identity. All photographs used in this article are disguised and pseudonyms are used to protect the privacy of participants.

As part of the larger project, we workshopped several cases, including Ariā's, with ACM staff with a view to informing service developments. The use of photographs is important in this context because images render experiences and perspectives tangible and can raise issues and solutions that were unanticipated by staff. We were able to use our research findings to support the actions of ACM staff when developing strategies for working with clients by creating a shared space in which theory and research could meet practice (Freire, 1970/1993). As researchers we involved ourselves in place-making activities because '. . . ethnographic places are not simply made in the moments that they are lived. Rather, they are crafted over longer periods of interaction and intellectual activity' (Pink, 2008: 190). Experienced practitioners also helped us engage with the implications of the materials that had been constructed in dialogue with Ariā. As is discussed later in this article, a key outcome from the workshop focused on Ariā was a commitment to integrating *tikanga Māori* into the running of the ACM.

In essence, *tikanga Māori* encompasses 'the Māori way of doing things – from the very mundane to the most sacred or important fields of human endeavour' (Williams, 1998: 2). *Tikanga Māori* is built upon a set of cultural concepts, values, standards and norms. There are a number of core guiding concepts upon which *tikanga Māori* is formulated. While different writers emphasize different elements, we agree with Ritchie (1992), that five particular core concepts might comprise a useful framework. *Whānaungatanga* (the process of tying people together in bonds of association and obligation through kinship ties, or relatedness), *manaakitanga* (reciprocal caring), *wairuatanga* (the notion that everything in the Māori world is spiritually connected), *rangatiratanga* (leadership and getting things done) and *kotahitanga* (unity in complex relationships between status, history, kinship, and the human need for affirmation and esteem) form a conceptual framework that allows us to explore the interrelationships between facets of everyday life for Māori people (Nikora, 2007). These concepts are abstractions that represent the atmosphere within which people enact and give meaning to their lives (Nikora et al., 2007).

How Ariā enacts a Māori leadership role provides a core theme for threading together the three sections of our analysis. The first focuses on key relationships between Ariā and other homeless people through the enactment of *whānaungatanga*. The second explores the way in which Ariā, as an aging Māori woman, enacts age-related leadership roles through practices such as blessings that are associated with *wairuatanga*. This leads to a discussion in section three of Ariā's efforts to span the conventional distinction between the clients and staff of social agencies via her efforts to care for others associated with *manaakitanga*.

Whānaungatanga: Familial and relational dimensions to homelessness

This section explores the ways in which Ariā presents herself via references to other Māori homeless people with whom she is connected. The ways in which these people are presented and their importance to Ariā's sense of self, place, and notions of home are interpreted through the lens provided by the concepts of *whānaungatanga* and *manaakitanga*. References to culturally shaped processes of inter-generational knowledge transference enable Ariā to present herself as an insider to street life, and as a link between kin relatives living in her tribal homeland and those living on the streets of Auckland.

Ariā presents herself as a *kaumatua* (elder leadership role) through the continuation of the work of female predecessors. *Whānaungatanga* is initially foregrounded when Ariā speaks of Ma, an elderly Māori homeless woman who mentored her in Auckland. Upon Ariā's return to the street, she learnt that Ma had been placed in a rest home, a joint decision made by 'streeties' and agency staff to protect Ma as she aged and faced challenges to her health. Ariā identifies Ma's absence as a loss of leadership and cultural continuity and presents herself as someone who fills the void. This is a two-way process in that other people also call on her to fill the role:

> ...Beautiful *mana* [status, integrity] that one. Her *ahua* [character, personality] was, huge for everybody, didn't matter whether you were black, white, purple, it's not the way she was, she was never prejudiced...And they [streeties] are all missing her...She used to take her own pots and gas burners down to the square and around town to feed the alkies [alcoholics]. It is hard, when I look at them today, and, now I know what Ma was talking about...and, the *aroha*, the love that she gave, in her way...

Although Ma is no longer on the street, she continues to provide a reference point for *rangatiratanga* (leadership) and *manaakitanga* (reciprocal caring) for Ariā. It is important to Ariā that the streeties know Ma's story because her experiences on the street constitute an important component of what gives Ariā the legitimacy to position herself as a caring leader. As Ariā states: 'the help that was given to me, if I can give it to them, I'm going to'. This is firstly about the transfer of knowledge, histories, and customary practices, from and between three generations of streeties. Ariā discusses her role as a *rangatira* (leader) as it is located within the process of *whānaungatanga* (in short, relatedness), and the way in which Ma has influenced her life. Through Ariā we can see that *whānaungatanga* is about both lineal *whakapapa* (genealogical links) and lateral relationships. Her lineal *whakapapa* is through Ma; her lateral is out to her own *whānau* (family) on the streets and to streeties in general. This forms the fabric of *whānaungatanga*, of relatedness that obliges or gives rise to *manaakitanga* – caring relationships.

Ariā's pictures are of the people with whom she shares bonds of association and obligation through the enactment of *whānaungatanga*. In taking photographs of homeless people, Ariā demonstrates her insider status and familiarity with street routine. Few other people would be permitted to take these photographs:

> All these are just photos taken after dinner and they're all hanging out at the square on the steps of Queen Street where we always hang out and relax...He's a carver and this is him and his woman here [Figure 1]. Well she stays with her sister, but she comes out because he's on the streets. She comes to sleep by him at night.

When asked why the man lying down in Figure 1 was on the street Ariā provides an account that asserts a common history of family problems. In the process of talking about others in such pictures, Ariā talks about her own experiences and place on the streets. A key feature of her account relates to her experiences of being mentored by other women. In the extract below Ariā illustrates the ways in which she in turn attempts to mentor a younger relative:

> This is me and my grandniece [Figure 2]...Her grandmother is my first cousin and that one there is the worst out of all the streeties [rough sleepers]. She's got the biggest mouth and she's pregnant and she has no ears. Her criminal record is longer than her arms and I'm telling her she has to slow down...'You're on the streets and you've

Figure 1. Streeties relaxing after dinner.

Figure 2. Ariā (left) and her grandniece (right).

had eight children!' I've asked her midwife to see if they can counsel her properly because she'll fly off the handle if she's in a group session.

Such photographs and associated commentary evoke the day-to-day relationships and interactions Ariā has with family members. This is about the obligations of care that *whānaungatanga* augments. People have to consent to being the recipients of care. Being a consenting recipient of care endorses and affirms the *mana* (prestige) of the provider, endowing them with the mantle of leadership. Ariā is then able to make expressions of *rangatiratanga* (leadership) which in turn brings about *kotahitanga* – unity in balance. These relationships are endorsed through such concrete experiences as Ariā taking photographs of her family re-contextualizing the streets as a place where family members live, and where she can provide direct support to them, thus reinforcing familial bonds.

Ariā invokes familial links central to her identity, which connect both domiciled existence back in her *iwi* (tribal) homeland and the streets of Auckland. Ariā positions herself as a conduit spanning this divide and keeping family ties alive. References to her niece and grandniece illustrate how Ariā works to maintain familial connections. Ariā's grandniece provides a physical attachment to the ancestral land and relationships from which they both come as descendants. Links between places such as ancestral land, and where people enact their familial ties and obligations, are central to a Māori world view and where *whānaungatanga*

(relatedness) embraces *whakapapa* (genealogical links). Throughout her account, Ariā invokes a tradition of women working to keep family members connected through supporting and caring for others. This is particularly evident in how Ariā talks about her grandmother visiting *whānau* (family) on the streets:

> I told my grandmother, 'This [the Auckland streets] is where they run to. They [Ariā's family on the streets] think they're alright here', because she was being very judgmental. When she got to see them all, she got a fright. I said 'See, they're all here'. I said 'I'm at home [on the Auckland streets], it's our *whenua* [land], I'm *tangata whenua* [person of the land, Indigenous], and I'm still here'. And then she understood. I can talk to them [streeties] about their family back there [ancestral land] because they miss them and like hearing about them. And because I've been back there they want to go back now. But it's taking time, just talking to them, just like you and I are, and just letting them listen.

For Indigenous peoples, spiritual homelessness can occur when one is separated from one's ancestral land, family and kinship networks (Memmott et al., 2003). A *tūrangawaewae* (place of strength and identity) is something that is engaged with, nurtured and sustained through *whānaungatanga* (relatedness) and *ahikaa* (keeping the home-fires burning) – connections that are lived in the present rather than vicariously. Without *whānaungatanga* and *ahi kaa*, the notion of *tūrangawaewae* collapses. One can have multiple homes, or multiple *tūrangawaewae*, but one has to engage with them and be seen to be engaging with them. Ariā's account indicates tensions between *whānau* members who have fled their home because it was not safe but now want to return to their ancestral home. Ariā's family have urbanized, and have taken their histories, relationships and customary practices with them. They use these resources when enacting their lives on the streets (see Nikora, 2007). Ariā remains staunchly Māori and *whānau* oriented. She is the *kanohi ora* (the living face) that embodies the place and people from which she has come, and maintains the home fires between her *hau kainga* (homeland) and the streets. Ariā's grandmother is comforted by the 'warmth' of Ariā's presence on the street, just as Ariā is warmed by her grandmother's presence at home.

The above section illustrates the relatedness of Ariā's sense of self and the relevance of the idea that the people we interact with complete us (Hodgetts et al., 2010a). Ariā and others in her family who are living on the streets of Auckland may be dislocated from their homelands. However, they can still centre themselves around family-based relationships enacted in a new place, Auckland. In the process, they can maintain a sense of cultural identity and mitigate feelings of *mokemoke* (loneliness). The presence of Ariā's grandmother represents a strong physical embodiment of the connection between those living on the streets of Auckland and members of their family who live on their ancestral land. This is what provides continuity across places despite the dislocation they can experience as homeless people. Ariā transcends the distance between 'here' (Auckland) and 'there' (ancestral land). The street becomes a place of strength and responsibility, a place where

Ariā can stand with confidence – her *tūrangawaewae*. We see how home is spatially expressed and emotionally realized for a Māori woman experiencing home(less)ness.

Ko te kuia te rangatira: A spiritual dimension to Ariā's leadership

Here we explore Ariā's appropriate and age-related presentation of self as a guardian and teacher of cultural knowledge regarding health and spiritual care. With references to her interactions with other Māori homeless people, Ariā constructs herself as having a role to play in guiding others and affirming bonds between people. Ariā works to legitimate herself as an appropriate person to enact various leadership roles appropriate to her age and background. The lens provided by the concept of *wairuatanga* (spirituality) shapes our interpretation of her account.

Kaumatua (elders) have always been revered in the Māori world, in part, for their vital role in the transfer of knowledge across generations. *Kaumatua* model behaviour, provide tutelage and guidance, particularly with regard to common and more specialized age-related knowledge (Ritchie, 1992). The latter is taught, cared for, employed and passed on by specialists. To have such knowledge carries both responsibility to serve and prestige. Ariā carries knowledge of *rongoā Māori* (healing and herbal practices) taught to her by her grandmother. She now uses this knowledge to care for her street *whānaunga* (kinship-like relationships):

> Some of it [plants] is to heal sores or cuts...We call it *runaruna* [*Daucus carota*], you leave it on for two days only and it will pull out the poison. And you just wrap it up...There are a lot of different things in the ground that you can use.

Experts in *rongoā* have always been few. Their interventions occur only when the source of affliction requires appeasing, or when a specialized healing method is needed. Ariā is recognized for her knowledge, and accrues *mana* (prestige) for the skills she retains and the service she offers others. This reflects the deeper meaning of *manaakitanga* (reciprocal caring) constituting more than compassionate care; it is also about observing the *mana* and dignity of others (Ritchie, 1992). In doing so, all parties involved grow in *mana*, bringing about a sense of togetherness and security in the presence of someone they can go to for support (Nikora, 2007). This process of care is embodied by *rangatiratanga* (leadership).

In her role as a *kaiwhakaora* (healer), Ariā also acts as a guardian for the spiritual welfare of her street family. Māori women are gifted with the ability to mediate the boundaries between *tapu* (sacred) and *noa* (profane) (Te Awekōtuku, 1991). Ariā recognizes the need to take steps to ensure she is adequately prepared for such responsibilities (Nikora, 2007). One way in which Ariā uses *whānaungatanga* to enable her leadership (*rangatiratanga*) role is by aligning herself with other people on the street who have *mana* (prestige) from engaging in Māori cultural practices – like the carver pictured in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Carver.

> He did a carving for Gary and I blessed it because it's a *taonga* [treasure]...It's been
> carved from wood. It needs to be blessed because what's been put on that piece of
> wood can affect that person if they take it out of the country...

This is a crucial point: gender roles within Māori culture are fluid, complementary, and alter over the life course. Ariā's ability to mediate the boundaries between the sacred and the profane through the enactment of *wairuatanga* (spirituality) is an important component of her identity. There is also an issue here relating to the material basis of cultural practices among Māori homeless people. Objects such as carvings are woven into a network of relationships, histories, and cultural practices that determine their placement in communal life (see De Vidas, 2008). They provide a focal point for the practice of Māori culture in which Ariā can position herself as a valuable contributor. Cultural relationships and roles are crystallized around such objects. The fact that the streeties have someone from whom they may seek cultural wisdom, advice, and guidance is crucial in understanding Ariā's life on the streets (Nikora, 2007).

Figure 4 further illustrates Ariā's ability to perform the appropriate duties expected of a *rangatira* (leader) with specific knowledge. The couple pictured draw upon Ariā's knowledge and leadership:

Figure 4. A couple for whom Ariā provides spiritual guidance.

. . . These two are trying very hard to get themselves together . . . Because his *wāhine* [woman] is a schizophrenic and so she is having problems coping . . . Because they believe a lot in our Māori way of life . . . they think that something's been put on her. Because a couple of nights back she freaked out . . . They came to me at breakfast the next morning and asked me to bless the *taonga* [treasure] she's wearing . . . It's been gifted to her by her sister's father-in-law. She was brought up by him. And I blessed it, and then today . . . she came and kissed me and said 'I feel wonderful'.

All cultures have their seers and shamans (Ingold, 1994). The young woman in the picture has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, a diagnosis that often misconstrues the emphasis and value Māori place on spiritual connectedness and communication with ancestors. Consequently, Māori have been over represented with this diagnosis and have had to endure enforced institutionalization (Taitimu, 2008). In the Māori world, *matakite* (seers) are held in awe for their capacity to connect the everyday and ordinary with the sacred or other worldly. Objects like the *taonga*, mentioned by Ariā and depicted in Figure 4, are designed to be circulated amongst the living, absorb some of the previous wearers' spiritual status (*mana*) and or the accumulated *mana* of succeeding generations (Te Awekōtuku, 1996). In the hands of a young woman sensitive to spiritual reverberations, objects like *taonga* can invite *tapu* (unwanted risks). Ariā works to remove the *tapu* in order to return

the *taonga* to a protective state of safety (*noa*) and to convey the *wairua* (spirit), *aroha* (love), and *tautoko* (support) of those who have passed on the *taonga*.

A childhood steeped in *tikanga Māori* has made Ariā an invaluable member of the Māori street community, as she can act as a conduit, connecting others to their own *wairuatanga* (spirituality) and therefore strengthening *whānaungatanga*. Much of Ariā's identity is oriented towards a desire to help, support and mentor other people on the streets. Ariā's efforts to position herself as someone streeties can turn to for help and advice are consistent with an interpretation of the identity of Māori women as *whare tangata* (house of humanity). Te Awekōtuku (1994) describes the way in which Māori women are primarily defined within Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) as *whare tangata*, even if they do not have children. The responsibility and role of women as *whare tangata* ensures that through collective and individual wisdom, in whatever decisions they make and in everything they do, women carry a responsibility to ensure the survival of the living and succeeding generations. For Ariā, a sense of self manifests within the responsibility she holds towards others. *Whānaungatanga* affirms and transcends tribal identity, linking members together whether through blood, adoption or fostering. It is the process by which family ties and responsibilities are strengthened, and supports the commitment family members have to each other. *Whānaungatanga* is energized and enacted through other concepts like spirituality (*wairuatanga*), as demonstrated in Ariā's presentation of self as a healer. This opens up the possibility for Ariā to take on the role of a key worker for an agency, a desire of Ariā's explored in the following section.

Nga wāhi: A place to become a carer, not just a client

Our attention turns to how Ariā's presentation of herself crosses the conventional line between homeless client and service provider. This transition is invoked through her talk about helping others and visually when Ariā takes us on a tour through photograph set two, like a worker showing people around the workplace. It also reflects the double layering of care for Māori engaged with ethnically generic services and drawing on traditional caregiving relationships and resources. Ariā's entire second photograph set is located within the premises of the two main service providers she utilizes, particularly the ACM. Ariā retextures the generic service agency space of the ACM as a marae, or site for Māori daily life and socio-political negotiation.

A theme that runs throughout Ariā's account is the presentation of herself as someone with the potential to be more than a 'client'. Ariā presents as someone who can work in collaboration with social workers to mentor others. Ariā may be able to help others move on from street life:

> That's what I'd like to do with the time I have left . . . It would mean a lot, if we could get them off the streets . . . Dick [Figure 5], when I took a photo of him he was very ill. They ended up bringing him to the hospital . . . At some stage when he's well enough

Figure 5. A cousin with a long street history.

> I want to take a personal interest in him because he's in the same age bracket that
> I am . . . He came on to the streets when he was 12 to 13, and he's never been off the
> streets . . . They're starting to come to me. They all end up back at the Auckland City
> Mission and that's where I catch them.

Ariā constructs a version of herself through talk of caring for others, acting as
an advocate and highlighting how others have sought her support. Her account
accentuates her understanding of *manaakitangata* or hands-on caring and support
for others. Through the presentation of Figure 6 and several other photographs of
service providers, Ariā takes us on a tour of the service facility, pointing out
the various staff members and clients and discussing her role in the organization.
Her tour provides a means of exploring the place and relationships she sees as
central to her life today:

> This is Monday morning and this is the new boss. That was a rainy morning that one
> and they were running out of the rain and he said to me I take a better picture if I'm
> looking at you front on! He's a lovely guy. This is the receptionist office, this here is
> Peter, and he works right alongside Maude. He's a volunteer; he's a lovely man . . .

Ariā is looking to collaborate with staff so as to assist and support the younger
streeties. She is even pictured (Figure 6) behind the counter with staff who are

Figure 6. Ariā with staff at the Auckland City Mission.

serving food to the streeties. This is significant in that typically streeties are not allowed behind the counter in order to maintain boundaries between staff and clients. Ariā presents herself as someone for whom these boundaries between client and social workers are more fluid.

Concepts of *mua* (front) and *muri* (back) are significant locatives that designate spatial zones of ritual within the context of *marae*. 'Out the front' delineates the formal roles assigned to those who occupy these spaces, and who are often elders. 'Out the back' designates the spaces for workers whose responsibilities include providing for guests (*manaakitangata*). *Marae* are run and governed from the back. The back is where the engine room of a *marae* is located. Typically people occupy more than one role on a *marae*. Notions of *mua* and *muri*, and of specific roles, break down, and we can see them as dependent on the presence and willingness of people to contribute. This is encapsulated in the following saying, '*ka tika ana a muri, ka tika hoki a mua*', which translates to 'get the back right, and the front will be a success'. Within Māori society, learning to work out the back is part of the process of apprenticeship and an important part of *manaakitanga*, which over a life-time will see one's role change and move from the back to the front of the *marae*. Ariā is looking to move from the back to the front through her efforts to establish herself as an elder and leader and by aligning herself with staff. In this way, the notion of home-place is internalized and conveyed by Ariā as a lived part of her daily life that shapes her interactions and secures her identity.

Briefly, Ariā's talk about the service agency constructs it as a *marae* and a site for connections between clients and staff. A *marae* is where community business is conducted, and in this sense it is not just a set of buildings. It is a communal meeting place where people feel comfortable carrying out their daily activities. Te Awekōtuku (1996: 35) describes the *marae* as:

> [A] pivotal site of Māori political and economic negotiation. It is also the location of ceremony and celebration; it is a place to rest one's feet, to make a stand, to claim one's rights. It is a place that pulsates with the mauri, the essential spirit or metaphysical sense of being part of the community and of the land.

Wherever Māori people gather for the purposes of community business with the right intentions and appropriate protocol a *marae* can be formed. For Ariā the street is her *whenua* (land) and the service agencies function like *marae*. The importance of the ACM in Ariā's everyday life is as a place of social interaction where local ties that contribute to a sense of belonging can be fostered. The efforts of Ariā to appropriate spaces like that of the ACM contribute to a homely life in an un-homely environment (see Vaiou and Lykogianni, 2006). Within the *marae* context, the *mana* of a tribal group is assessed not only by the way in which they welcome and honour their guests formally into the *marae* setting, but also by the way in which they create a home for guests and feed them (Pere, 1982). Ariā visualizes herself within the context of an expanding mentorship role and so welcomes the streeties into the ACM. As a communal space, the ACM is in no way fixed or complete, and is shaped through daily practice. Ariā tests and learns new roles within this space, and in doing so contributes to the formation and shaping of the ACM as a *marae*.

In making her life on the streets, Ariā embraces Māori cultural concepts and practices. Ariā highlights the importance of connections to *whenua* (land and place), *whānau* (family) and knowledge of *tikanga Māori*, in providing her with a strong sense of history, place, spirituality and self. This case study exemplifies the importance of such cultural concepts for understanding Indigenous homeless people. Our research relates to recent work in ethnography that emphasizes the relevance of participant perspectives and cultural frames (Anderson, 2009) and how participants shape social spaces through their daily actions (Pink, 2008). Through our own cultural lenses researchers also develop understandings of homelessness. If these understandings are to reflect the lived realities and identities of Indigenous peoples, then research should be informed by the very concepts germane to such groups (Anderson, 2009; Pe-Pua, 2006).

Resilience and agency

Studies report that homelessness is a major traumatic life event that results in threats to identity (Boydell et al., 2000; Hatty, 1996; Snow and Anderson, 1987, 1993). This does not appear to be the case for Ariā. Although her current

transience is undoubtedly hard on her sense of self, as well as on her physical health, it has not been experienced as a major traumatic event. This means that the loss of identity anchors described by Hatty (1996) and Snow and Anderson (1993) have not occurred for Ariā. Ariā grasps opportunities to anchor her sense of self within Māori cultural practices that transcend homelessness. To understand Ariā and her preservation of self, we have made reference to these cultural resources that shape who she is and what she does in everyday life. Ariā reflects on a tradition of strong Māori leadership throughout her interviews, and consistently uses her notions of customary practices as a basis for describing her life and relationships. She gains authenticity through her culturally based claims to being an Indigenous woman who is enacting a legitimate leadership role as an elder, mentor and caregiver. Ariā effectively constructs a viable and positive identity for herself as someone who cares for others. Notwithstanding the material hardship of homelessness, street life is associated for Ariā with a sense of belonging, safety, and familiarity that is often associated with a home (Tomas and Dittmar, 1995). A sense of home-place constructs, strengthens, and upholds Ariā's sense of cultural identity. Māori move between *hau kainga* (tribal homeland) and the streets of Auckland and in maintaining links across these locales, people such as Ariā transcend the homeless/housed distinction framing the international literature. People can have multiple *tūrangawaewae* (place of strength and identity), as is evident in Ariā's enactments of links between *whānau* (family) back home and those on the streets of Auckland.

Ariā does more than simply survive homelessness. She engages in social interactions and in many respects grows and develops as a person while engaged in street life. Her actions reflect what social scientists often refer to as resilience. This concept is used to explain how people can live rewarding lives despite adversity and in some respects rise above adverse life circumstances (Prince, 2008; Williams et al., 2001). Sanders et al. (2008) propose that resilience encompasses more than an individual trait or coping strategy. Resilience is the product of dialectical relationships between personal attributes, familial ties and built (e.g. parks, buildings, streets) and social (relationships, supports, civic engagements) environments that result in the cultivation of a raft of protective factors that influence personal lifeworlds, choices and actions.

For Māori, resilience manifests and is enacted through *whānaungatanga* (social bonds and kinship), *manaakitanga* (reciprocal caring), *wairuatanga* (spiritual connection), *rangatiratanga* (leadership) and *kotahitanga* (unity in complex relationships). Resilience is often grounded in places such as *marae* and is associated with a sense of belonging, *tūrangawaewae*, and efforts to ensure *ahi kaa* (tribal home-fires). Resilience is tied up in cultural expectations and practices that bind people in everyday life (Nikora et al., 2007). If Māori did not cultivate resilience through the preservation of cultural practices and the fostering of ethnic identities and affiliations, they would not be able to resist continued colonization by the settler society. Resilience can be shared, as when Ariā provides cultural support to Māori homeless people and, in doing so, fosters a sense of belonging and affiliation.

Associated collective responsibilities held within the group activate obligations, supports and resources (Nikora et al., 2007). When enacted communally in this way, resilience renders the streets more habitable. Objects such as the young woman's *taonga* and carvings become symbols of cultural resilience and survival that crystallize support and care (De Vidas, 2008; Nikora et al., 2007).

Documenting resilience and agency in the lives of people such as Ariā problematizes racist discourses regarding Indigenous homelessness that associate dark skin with stupidity, drunkenness, lack of motivation, poor self-discipline and violence (Gowan, 2002; Kingfisher, 2007). We have shown that street life is negotiated in culturally patterned ways. Our analysis ruptures negative stereotypes that focus on deficits and supports efforts to encourage agencies to incorporate client strengths and capacities into responses to homelessness. We conducted a workshop with staff from the ACM based on Ariā's case. Of particular interest to staff was the function of the mission as a *marae* and how this might shape the ways in which staff interacted with Māori clients. In communicating Ariā's perspective to staff we promoted the retexturing of the ACM as a *marae*. Staff had noticed Ariā's efforts to help find accommodation and broker health care for other streeties. We entered into a discussion about existing rules where clients cannot become staff. It was agreed that this rule may need to be reconsidered and that having a staff member with Ariā's cultural skills might strengthen the organization's efforts to provide appropriate support for Māori clients. This case study informed the adjustment of existing services to encompass cultural practices and to better meet the needs of Māori people.

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