Living Standards for Elders

Summary Report

The importance of dependence on place for older Māori on the East Cape

Elizabeth Butcher & Mary Breheny

2014

For further information, please contact Mary Breheny: M.R.Breheny@massey.ac.nz

Abstract

Attachment to place is an important component of ageing intertwined with an older person's identity. This study examined the ways that place influences identity for older Maori living on the East Cape. The principles of Kaupapa Māori research were used to analyse eight interviews with older Māori alongside notes from a research visit to the East Cape. Analysis took a holistic approach by considering the indigenous identity and history of Maori at both an individual and a collective level. Attachment to place and Māori identity in later life were intrinsically connected. Connection to the East Cape provided a platform where identity as an indigenous Maori citizen could be balanced by drawing on a comforting and comfortable dependence on land and whānau to enable autonomy in later life.

Place

'Te toto o te tangata he kai. Te oranga o te tangata he whenua.'- The lifeblood of a person is derived from food. The livelihood of a people depends on land.'[1]

Place is an anchor where the physical environment allows people to create and keep memories, emotions and expressions of identity (Easthope, 2009; Scannell & Gifford, 2009). Remaining near significant places in older age strengthens identity (Burholt & Naylor, 2005; Scannell & Gifford, 2009), making place an important component of later life. Place can inform both individual and collective identities as identity is both culturally and personally tied to place. Culture links people together through shared histories, values, experiences and symbols. Emotional connections are important for individual and collective identity. The impact of land alienation and displacement of indigenous groups such as Māori from significant places demonstrates the emotional connection to land (Durie, 1999; Kearns, et al., 2009). Colonisation has resulted in a severe displacement for Māori. Struggle can be seen in conflicts between Māori and the crown, within internal disagreements, and in attempts to settle Treaty of Waitangi claims including claims for land and place. This struggle influences Māori elders' ability to have a secure relationship with land, therefore influencing identity.

Māori have a strong historical connection to land. The connection is more than a physical and emotional connection; Land is a resource to gather food and provide for whānau. Kinship ties to land sustain the connection to place (McCormack, 2011). For Māori, place has spiritual and cultural connections and also represents struggle. Land alienation has resulted in feelings of displacement for hapū and iwi (Kearns et al, 2009; McCormack, 2011). The bonds Māori have with land and sites of cultural significance are affective in nature. The ability to maintain place attachment and links to place is vital to older Māori and loss of these

[1] Whakatauki as quoted in: Museum of Te Papa Tongarewa (n.d.). *Maori Land Rights.* Retrieved from *http://www.tepapa.govt.nz/whatson/exhibitions/sliceofheaven/exhibition/Maori/Pages/Landrights.aspx*

connections may have a damaging effect on identity. This research will examine how place influences the identity of Māori elders living on the East Cape.

Data Collection

Eight interviews with older Māori from one geographical location were analysed to concentrate on the unique experiences of Māori. This recognises the histories and culture of Māori that influence the way the participants make sense of their identity (Nairn, et al., 2006; Bierre, et al., 2007; Cunningham et al., 2002). Participants ranged in age from 66 to 79 years and were from the Opotiki District. All but one lived in the coastal township of Waihau Bay. The interviews and the field visit had ethical approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

Kaupapa Māori Research

Kaupapa Māori research is a general framework that resists ideologies of superiority and power imbalances that disadvantage Māori participants (Walker et al., 2006). A Kaupapa Māori approach involves acknowledging Māori worldviews and respects that knowledge should be protected through appropriate protocol (Henry & Pene, 2001; Walker, et al., 2006). Kaupapa Māori research is shared research; it does not belong to one person but belongs to everyone.

The participants were located in an isolated coastal village where traditional Māori values have remained strong (McCormack, 2011). A research visit to Waihau Bay was conducted in order to understand the participants' social and cultural context. This process also involved consultation with local Māori to determine the best research approach. The visit involved being immersed within the place and letting the area be the teacher. Principles of Kaupapa Māori research include respecting the integrity and culture of Waihau Bay and its people. The information shared through this research belongs to the locals and to the place itself. Receiving this knowledge has been treated with privilege and care. Lastly, careful attention has taken place not to unnecessarily dissect the data and to provide a holistic understanding of the participants in their context.

Setting

The setting has been described based upon observations and notes made during a two-day visit to the East Cape and the first author's personal connections growing up in the Opotiki area. The information shared by locals during this trip has been used to inform this description of the area. The trip involved driving from Opotiki to Waihau Bay, observing the natural features of the place, its culture and the implications of living in the area. The trip to Waihau Bay has been written like a story that reflects a journey through the Opotiki District, along the East Cape and around Waihau Bay (see Figure 1).

From the moment you see the Pohutakawa trees that overarch the road toward Opotiki you know you are in for a coastal adventure. The ocean is calm, the sky is blue and the atmosphere is relaxed and welcoming. The Opotiki township is full of wide streets and quiet roads. As you enter the town, you see the

sole supermarket that serves residents as far afield as Waihau Bay and Cape Runaway. The Opotiki township is home to several services that are a necessary part of daily living such as medical centres, a police station, pharmacies, Work and Income New Zealand offices.

Following the coastline from Opotiki to Waihau Bay I pass through several small coastal towns, each with a few houses dotted along the land and into the hills. Many Marae are spread along the way. A few of the small townships have old churches. In the small settlement of Torere, the historic Catholic Church neighbours the Torere Marae. The image of the marae and the church side by side is a symbol of biculturalism. Bicultural imagery can also be found on the schools scattered along the East Cape ('the coast' as commonly known by locals). Many of the small rural schools or Kura are adorned with traditional Māori carving indicating the importance of Māori culture in the area.

Like every good journey the trip would not be complete without an obstacle. For locals, this is the Maraenui Hill. Maraenui hill is the only way of getting through to Opotiki or Whakatane and is the site of regular slips and road closures. Approaching the bottom of the hill there is a large sign signaling road works and notifying road users of possible delays (See *Figure 2*). As I begin to travel the newly carved road the first challenge of living on the coast is clear. In several spots the road narrows to one way and there are no barriers protecting cars from the edge of the cliffside. The hill is one of the many obstacles faced by residents of the East Cape.

From the bottom of the Maraenui hill the road weaves in and out through forest and coastland. Soon homemade signs begin to appear on fences, trees and even houses displaying messages such as 'stop drilling', 'go home petrobas', 'kia kaha apanui' and 'honour the treaty'. These signs are a political protest against the government's decision to allow petrobas to begin drilling for oil on the East Coast[2]. This decision has been made despite strong opposition from local iwi and protests from the community and Greenpeace (Weir, 2011). As I travel further along the coastline, I spot houses where the exterior has been decorated with messages of protest (See *Figure 3.*). The signs indicate the immense hurt being caused to the community and the deep passion the local iwi have for their home and land. The signs are also a reminder of the ongoing political struggle for iwi to have tino rangatiratanga or sovereignty of their land and for the rights promised in the Treaty (Durie, 1994; 2005, Kingi, 2007). Passing through the coastal settlements that homes the Te Whānau-a-apanui iwi, the pain of their people can be felt.

After driving for an hour and a half I reach the village of Waihau Bay. The views are beautiful (*Figure 4* shows a photograph of the scenery at Waihau Bay). Houses are dispersed along the hillside. There is one small urban area with a cul-de-sac of houses; however, the majority of houses are scattered in pockets throughout Waihau Bay and Cape Runaway. Along the waterfront are a row of beautiful but mostly empty holiday homes. The houses edging the waterfront are extravagant in comparison to the modest housing belonging to Waihau Bay locals.

[2] East Cape locals are currently protesting against Government decisions to allow overseas companies to test for oil off the coast of the East Cape.

The town has many important services including Fire Brigade, ambulance, police station and a doctor's clinic. In the case of an emergency the ambulance will leave Waihau Bay and meet another ambulance halfway as the nearest hospital is 170 kilometres away. The village also has a rescue helicopter, which is used to transport patients to hospital. It has also been used to bring in groceries when the roads are closed. Waihau Bay has two Marae where community events are often based. Opposite the Raukokore School is the stunning Raukokore Church that sits overlooking the waters edge. The historic Anglican Church continues to hold a service every Sunday at 11am and has a small group of dedicated attendees. The inside of the church is decorated with plaques and memorials that explain its history and honour past church members. The Sunday service is conducted predominantly in Māori and is a piece of the history and culture that makes the area unique.

Figure 1. Map of Waihau Bay

Route from Opotiki to Waihau Bay

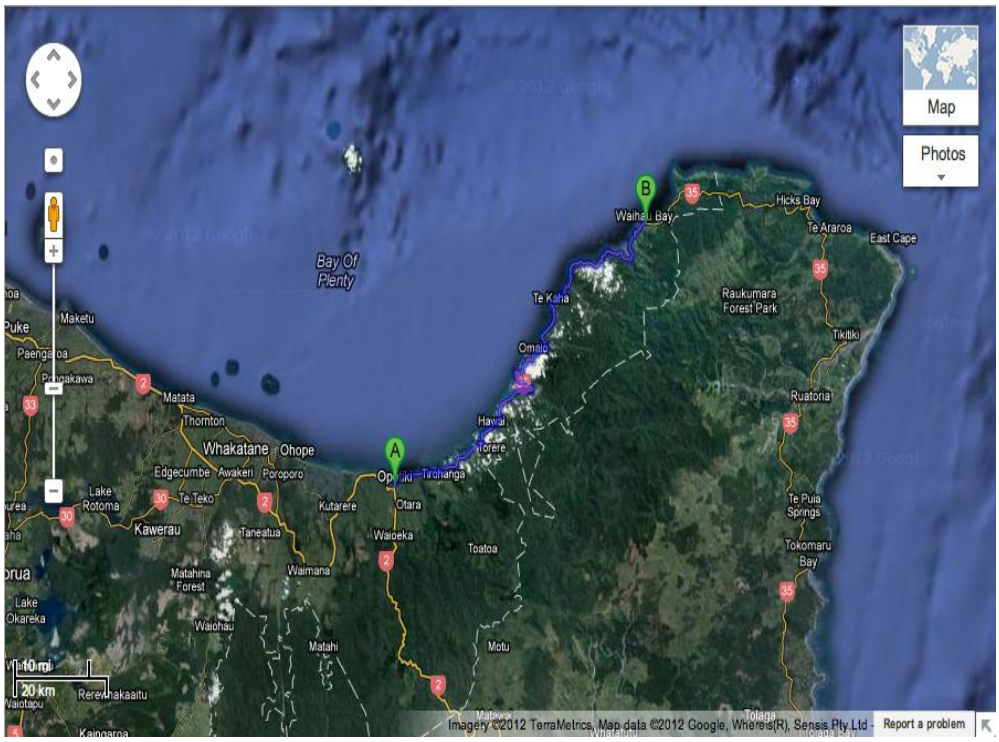

Figure 2. Construction on Maraenui Hill

This photograph illustrates the current state of the Maraenui hill road

Figure 3. Protest Sign

This photograph shows one of the many signs supporting the local iwi(s) who are protesting against oil mining in the area.

Figure 4. Waihau Bay

Scenery and shoreline at Waihau Bay

Dependence

This paper will focus on the theme of dependence identified in the interview data and through observations made during the research visit. Rather than concerns for independence, identity was based upon being able to rely on both the land and other people, for security and nourishment. Collecting crayfish and other kaimoana (seafood) is a way of life for many of the locals. Living off the land is part of the lifestyle including growing vegetables and raising livestock. Food is often traded or shared. The comparative isolation and unreliable access to outside resources contributed to the importance of being able to rely on aspects of place and local people for daily needs. These older people rejected the convenience of town and took pride in being able to provide for themselves and their families through other means.

Providing for oneself was not spoken about as a necessity determined by low income. Rather, it provided a sense of autonomy and control that contributed to a positive identity. In Waihau Bay, land offers the security of having food available at little or no cost. Embracing a dependent and self-sufficient identity allows the participants to have greater control over their life. Even in the context of limited economic resources, these older people can gather food from the ocean, grow vegetables, or trade for what they need. This gives them greater control over their accessibility to food and to access a range of resources. In this sense the participants build an identity where they are autonomous through dependence on elements of place. This dependence upon land aligns closely with the values that older Māori hold of being able to rely

on the land as a place for sustenance and nourishment. The natural resources of the land in this place offer older Maori the ability to age in this place and to participate within their society in a customary way (Morris, 2009).

Dependence on others within the whānau and/or wider community also contributed to identity for older Māori. Ageing literature typically talks about the importance of independence for identity in later life, with independence being linked to greater life satisfaction (Good, LaGrow & Alpass, 2008). Western understandings promote the importance of independence in older age (Ministry of Health, 2002). However, our results show dependence as important in identity for older Māori. This may reflect the fact that Māori and non- Māori have different values in later life. Autonomy is an important component of Māori identity. One way of achieving autonomy is through having control over ones own aspirations. This can be achieved through access to reliable whānau and dependence on the environment (Durie, 1999). Access to whānau, a relationship with land, and links to ancestors through living in the East Cape nourishes the autonomous component of Māori identity. These relationships provided comfortable ways of accessing necessary support for ageing in this place. In this sense this place allowed participants to maintain their identity as an "independent" older adult in the context of comfortable dependence.

Māori worldview and indigenous identity meant that the participants held unique values regarding later life. The way the participants described interacting with the world acknowledges the role of tikanga in guiding their behaviour as Māori citizens. Participants described notions of reciprocity, supporting whānau and friends and participating in the wider community as a collective responsibility and ingrained in their identity as Māori (Durie, 2005; Walker et al, 2006). Obligations to provide care, to support and nurture, and the feeling of collective responsibility toward family reflects Māori worldviews about what it means to be part of a whānau (Bishop, 1999; Cunningham, et al., 2005; Walker et al, 2006). Themes of collectivity were evident in shared understandings of this place and its community, in shared efforts to protect this place from exploitation, and in the traditions and values that maintained links between whānau and place. These values were related to security and nourishment from the land.

The way that elder Māori in this study talk about place reflects their unique history as an indigenous people. Older Māori born between 1930 and 1940 have felt the prolonged impacts of colonisation and the struggle of Māori as an indigenous people to protect their land, culture and heritage (Kingi, 2007; McCormack, 2011). This cohort has experienced continued betrayal of the Treaty of Waitangi and land alienation (Durie, 1994; Kingi, 2007). The political climate within this place remains unsettled, as shown by the numerous political protest signs that were posted along the cape (*Figure 3.*). The current protest against oil drilling off the East Cape (Weir, 2011) highlights the uncertainty of access to natural resource for Māori. The continual threat of loss of land and foreshore influences the identity of older Māori. Although older Māori want to depend upon the land and the community it supports, this is under threat.

Living on the East Cape supported closer participation with whānau and acknowledged ancestral links. Recognising the relationship between Māori and the land demonstrates the key importance of

ancestral links for identity in later life (Kearns et al, 2009; Panelli et al, 2008). As Māori belong to the land, it is not only culturally appropriate but promoted within Māori worldview for Māori to return to their homeland in later life (Durie, 2005; Kepa, 2007). Landmarks such as the Raukokore Church provided a historical connection to whānau. Like the ocean, these landmarks provided a source of nourishment that will continue to feed future generations. Identity of Māori elders was supported in this place, offering both a tie to history and ancestry, and also through the opportunity to protect whānau connections so that future whānau can also depend on this place.

Older Maori have a unique relationship with the land, valuing the ability to gain sustenance from the land, in particular the ocean. Sustenance from the land was not only gained through the provision of food but through the security of having a home to live in, land to build on, and a place of cultural sustenance (Panelli et al, 2008). Unique features of the East Cape enabled this connection, as the area remains fairly undeveloped the natural environment is relatively protected (Durie, 1999; McCormack, 2011). The preservation of the area in its natural form has positive benefits in terms of cultural identity and wellbeing (Durie, 1999). The rural seclusion of Waihau Bay has meant that traditional Māori values have been excluded from the pressure to assimilate. Understanding elder Māori involves recognition that indigenous identity is anchored in relationships with place.

Conclusion

For Māori, connection to place is a fundamental aspect of life that is deeply intertwined with identity. Living on the East Cape allowed access to resources such as security and nourishment necessary for a secure identity as an older Māori citizen. The physical context of the East Cape provided a platform where their role as Kaumātua and their obligations to whānau, hapū and iwi could be balanced by drawing on a comfortable dependence on land and family to enable autonomy in later life.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by a grant from the Foundation for Research, Science & Technology (now Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment).

Manuscript Submitted to Indigenous Psychologies: Our Past, Present, and Future Conference Proceedings
Based on a thesis by Elizabeth Butcher presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand:

'This is my ideal life' : the importance of place for how Māori elders understand a good life

Thesis available online from http://mro.massey.ac.nz/handle/10179/3937

References

Bishop, R. (1999). Kaupapa Maori research: an indigenous approach to creating knowledge. In L. Nikora & N. Robertson (Eds.), *Maori psychology: Research and practice* (pp. 1–6). Hamilton: University of Waikato.

Bierre, S., Howden-Chapman, P., Signal, L. & Cunningham, C. (2007). Institutional challenges in addressing healthy low-cost housing for all: learning from past policy. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand, 30,* 42-63.

Burholt, V. & Naylor, D. (2005). The relationship between rural community type and attachment to place for older people living in North Wales, UK. *European Journal of Ageing, 2,* 109-119.

Cunningham, C., et al. (2002). *Nga Ahuatanga Noho o te Hunga Pakeke Māori: Living Standards of Older Māori.* Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Social Development. Retrieved from http://www.msd.govt.nz/

Cunningham, C., Stevenson, B. & Tassell, N. (2005). *Analysis of the characteristics of whānau: A report prepared for the Ministry of Education.* Palmerston North, New Zealand: Massey University.

Durie, M. (1994). *Whaiora: Māori Health Development.* Auckland, New Zealand: Oxford University Press.

Durie, M. (1999). *Te Pae Mahutonga*. Paper to the Health Promotion Forum Annual Conference, Napier, NZ.

Durie, M. (2005). *Ngā Tai Matatū: Tides of Māori Endurance.* Auckland: Oxford University Press.

Easthope, H. (2009). Fixed identities in a mobile world? The relationship between mobility, place and identity. *Identities: Global studies in culture and power, 16,* 61-82.

Good, G., LaGrow, S. & Alpass, F. (2008). An age-cohort study of older adults with and without visual impairments: activity, independence, and life satisfaction. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness,* 517-527.

Henry, E. & Pene, H. (2001). Kaupapa Maori: Locating Indigenous Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology in the Academy. *Organisation Speaking Out, 8*(2), 234-242.

Kearns, R., Moewaka-Barnes, H. & McCreanor, T. (2009). Placing racism in public health: A Perspective from Aotearoa/New Zealand. *GeoJournal, 74,* 123-129.

Kepa, M. (2007). Tūrangawaewae: A place to stand. A Discourse of Cultural Awareness or Hope. *MAI Review, 2*(1). Retrieved from www.maireview.ac.nz

Kingi, T. K. R. (2007). The Treaty of Waitangi: A framework for Maori health development. *New Zealand Journal of Occupational Therapy, 54*(1), 4.

McCormack, F. (2011). Levels of indigeneity: the Maori and neoliberalism. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 17*(2), 281-300.

Ministry of Health. (2002). A summary of the health of older people Strategy. *Health of Older People Strategy Health Sector action to 2010 to Support Positive Ageing, (*pp.1-18). Wellington: Author.

Morris, A. (2009). Living on the margins: comparing older private renters and older public housing tenants in Sydney, Australia. *Housing Studies, 24,* 693-707.

Nairn, R., Pega, F., McCreanor, T., Rankine, J. & Barnes, A. (2006). Media, racism and public health psychology. *Journal of Health Psychology, 11*(2), 183-196.

Panelli, R., Allen, D., Ellison, B., Kelly, A., John, A. & Tipa, G. (2008). Beyond Bluff oysters? Place identity and ethnicity in a peripheral coastal setting. *Journal of Rural Studies, 24,* 41-55.

Scannell, L. & Gifford, R. (2009). Defining place attachment: A tripartite organizing framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 30,* 1-10.

Walker, S., Eketone, A. & Gibbs. A. (2006). An exploration of Kaupapa Māori research, its principles, processes and applications. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 9, 331-344.

Weir, J. (2011, September 7). Chilly welcome for Apache on East Coast. *Business.* Retrieved from www.stuff.co.nz