

Te Turangawaewae o te Whakaohoho Mauri: The Conceptual Home-Place of the Re-Awakening Indigenous Spirit

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Abstract

Resilience of Indigenous identities, life-ways and knowledge is the topic of my doctoral thesis. To enable the holistic unity of Indigenous being, feeling, thinking, and doing to become visible and meaningfully viable to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within and without the empirically dominated domain of academic positivism, a cosmologically sourced, ethnographically supported *turangawaewae* or conceptual home-place has been developed. An Indigenous space of meaning to investigate and provoke a discursive continuum of Indigenous resilience that enables resilient Indigenous identities, and the multiple phases they embody to be conceptualised and incorporated, while also embracing notions of Eurocentric resilience

and the comparative psychological implications these unearth. To illumine the global process of re-emerging Indigenous identity resilience by exploring how Indigenous people experience the process of personal and collective reconnection to their ancestral Indigenous identities, tikanga Māori, Mana Wahine philosophies, and kaupapa Māori methodologies complete the home-place developed to receive and care for the research collaborators, and question. A place that enables ethical and congruent cultural interpretations of Indigenous identities and the liberation of Indigenous thought, practices, and discourse. This paper traces the developmental terrain of this *turangawaewae* or conceptual home-place.

Keywords: Māori, Indigenous resilience, Ancestors, Mana wahine, Kaupapa Māori

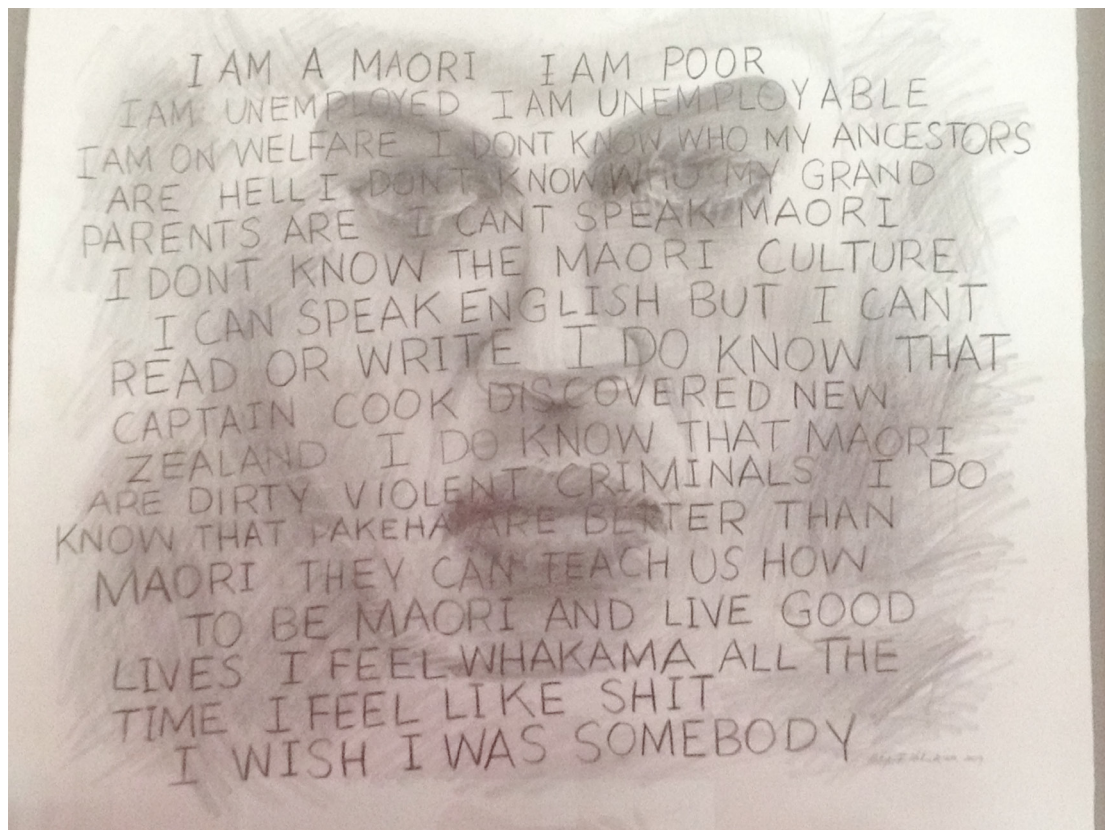


Figure 1. Robyn Kahukiwa "Somebody" (2009).¹

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'Somebody' Doing Psychology

Robyn Kahukiwa's artwork "Somebody" (2009), introduces the voice of Māori who, uprooted from ancestral systems of being, thinking and living, are marooned on a desert island of enforced and alien influence, a place seemingly far removed from the Indigenous realities and roots that anchored our ancestors across eons. As early as 1946, some of New Zealand's first psychologists portended a recession in what were then, resilient Māori states of physical and mental well-being (Beaglehole & Beaglehole, 1946). The denuded and disenfranchised existential position occupied by many Māori, alienated from both 'mainstream' and Māori worlds, and living 'entrapped lifestyles' (Durie, 1989) as exemplified by disproportionate 'treatment' of Māori within our mental health system (Browne, Wells & Scott, 2006), is approached in the first instance.

How were the Beaglehole's (1946) so accurately able to predict the mental and physical demise of Māori? Why did Māori health deteriorate from robust wellbeing and resilience to disproportionate deficit in less than 70 years? What are the influences that sourced previous states of enduring Māori physical and mental wellbeing? Are these influences reflected in our current systems of psychological knowledge and treatment?

Collective Recollections and Dispossessions

In contrast to this land of "Somebody's" indifference, Māori have known, sung, spoken and written about a place, a "state of natural grace (that) would be hard to find, not because it wasn't there, but because its expression was either outlawed or transformed. Yet it existed humming in the background like a subliminal harmonic, out of tune with the Western world" (Mike Smith, as cited in Ihimaera, 1998, p. 250). As a Māori mokopuna (grandchild) of colonial history, raised a good Catholic daughter of urbanisation and 'get ahead' grandparents and parents, a 'conscious knowing' of this resonant Māori home-place was not always mine, this was to change as I moved closer to Te Ao Māori (the Māori world).

At a 2003 wānanga (Māori traditional learning process for holistic wisdom rather than information accumulation) two types of re-connection took place. As a kuia re-enacted her young whangai (fostered) life

with her kuia, whom she had been placed with at birth to activate and unfurl innate gifts (Te Awhimate-Tait, personal communication, 2003), a portal opened to a time barely remembered by few and long forgotten by most. The re-enactment of their everyday life and love portrayed a time of oneness and connection with all; a time touched, but not yet fractured by the imposition of Western mind and technologies. I was able to participate, for a moment, in *Te Kotahitanga*, the unbroken oneness of relational existence that was our ancestors' existential inheritance and given daily normality.

The second reconnection was of a different nature. On entering a darkened room filled with the haunting call of the purerehua (traditional instrument), images of our ancestors being hung, hanging, starving, in rags, homeless, herded, empty eyed and staring into the camera played across the wall (Takawai Murphy, personal communication, 2003). The experiential reality of their devastation soaked into our eyes, ears, minds, skin, hearts, souls and beings. I was reconnected and re-collected to the existential death and destruction so few of our ancestors survived (Smith, 1999); a devastation that severed my modern ancestors, whānau and self from the given of the unbroken wholeness our ancestors naturally lived.

Re-connection to an unbroken original wholeness, and to the hurt that eclipsed 'modern' re-recollections of this original state occurred. While I had previously experienced flickers of both, without the light of group affirmation and re-collection, these experiences remained vague, unformed and allusive. Previously, like "Somebody", I was suspended in an isolated state of unknowing. Through wānanga, restoration to a conscious and visceral reconnection to the states of hurt, and of wholeness that continue to profoundly influence Māori today occurred. Figure 2 illustrates these changes.

Pre-Wānanga State

Unknown	Vague
Disconnection	Recollections

Post-Wānanga State

Wholeness	Hurt	Known	Visceral
Oneness	Colonisation	Disconnection	Reconnection
			Wholeness

Figure 2. Pre – post wānanga relationship to the original condition of wholeness and to colonisation.

Ahakoia He Kiri Ma: A Fire in Our Blood

Journeys of resilient reclamation through adversity were also mirrored in my master's research (Roestenburg, 2010). Some of the mechanisms underlying the "positive embracing of identity which is the driving force of the current regeneration of Māori culture" (Walker, 1989, p. 50) were revealed. I spoke with six Māori women, who strongly identified as Māori yet were unidentifiable as Māori by physical appearance alone. Irrespective of the diverse socio-cultural conditions experienced by the women, a tipuna presence felt deep within was the force and source that anchored, embraced, guided and impelled their ongoing development of positive Māori identities. A tipuna-mana-Māori-centric force lay at the heart of their positive Māori identities (Roestenburg, 2010). Despite legacies of devastation and diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, harmonious collaborations with intimate, personally experienced tipuna, reinforced by whakawhānaungatanga (Māori family networks), re-sourced and restored their resilient Indigenous identities (Roestenburg, 2010). Unlike "somebody", their lives, like my own and many, perhaps even most Māori, echo a journey of resilient reconnection through alienation and adversity, to vital Indigenous origins and identities, a pattern similar to that in Figure 2.

Literature Terrain

Resilience is a burgeoning multidisciplinary construct. "Resilience may well be one of the most heuristic and integrative concepts to appear in 21st century thinking in the social sciences" (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010, p. xi). An unqualified search of resilience on Web of Science drew 20,686 responses. Psychology accounts for 2,023 of these. However, the largess of resilience responding does not translate into psychological interest in Indigenous resilience. Of 672 trans-disciplinary articles related to Indigenous resilience generated since 1985, psychology contributed only 29.

Overall Indigenous resilience is a relatively new and popular area of study. Indigenous resilience searches conducted under key word searches of Indigenous resilience, Native resilience, Aboriginal resilience, and First Nations resilience on Web of Science unearthed 672 articles. The first article published in 1985, related to the durability of native cottons (Iyer, Nacharne &

Patil, 1985). Over the next thirteen years a slow increase in Indigenous resilience articles saw the number rise to 14 by 1999, with most articles related to either the environmental or biological entities, not Indigenous peoples or their life-ways. However by 2000, there were 49 articles, and by 2005 this more than doubled to 126 articles; an exponential increase occurred over the next five years with 397 Indigenous resilience articles arising in 2010. By 2012 there were 672 listings related to Indigenous resilience. Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing are increasingly included.

Psychology has not kept pace with this burgeoning trans-disciplinary interest in Indigenous resilience. The dawning of psychology's interest occurred twelve years after general interest began (Pharris, Resnick & Blum, 1997). Over the next decade, only a further seven articles were generated (Austin, 2004; Cummin, Ireland & Resnick, 1999; Hobfoll, Bansal, Schurg, Hobfoll, Johnson, Young & Pierce 2002; Iwasaki, MacTarvish & MacKay, 2005; Nikora, Rua & Awekotuku, 2007; Stone, Wilbeck & Chen, 2006; Thomas, 2006). In comparison to the 680 general Indigenous resilience articles produced up to 2012, psychology has produced only 29. Over the last five years, an average of 80 Indigenous resilience articles have been produced across other disciplines each year, psychology produced an average of two articles per year.

Psychological Resistance

Why is the burgeoning trans-disciplinary interest in Indigenous resilience not evident in psychology? Is psychology disinterested in Indigenous resilience? Is psychology unable, or unwilling to explore the relationship between Indigenous peoples and resilience? Does the dearth of psychological engagement in the resilience of Indigenous peoples' mental health and wellbeing indicate a hegemony that allows only for the pathologising of Indigenous people and life ways? The observation has been made that the "only purpose of western-based assessment instruments, after more than 500 years of colonization, is to assimilate what's left – the psych [of the Indigenous]" (Hill, Pace & Robbins, 2010, p. 23). In comparison to the pathologising of Indigenous people and forms, interest in the resiliency of Indigenous people seems to have little traction within psychology. Given the apparent relational or intangible sources of resurgent Māori

vitality and identities in today’s world, why has psychology, arguably the discipline best positioned to apprehend the resilience of the Indigenous spirit and people, failed to engage?

The Spirit of Indigenous Resilience

Outside of psychology, research on the resilience of Indigenous people is trans-disciplinary and geographically extensive; spanning the continents and some of the peoples of North and South America, Hawaii, the Philippines, Australia, the Arctic, India, West and South Africa and of course Aotearoa New Zealand. Methodological approaches were diverse, ranging from single participant case studies to studies considering group, tribal, peoples of nations, the ‘human family’ and global levels, and some articles considered all levels. The research utilised case studies on the singular and collective levels; interviews, semi-structured and informal; traditional learning circles; auto-ethnography; and quantitative analysis of national health data. One study utilized the MMPI psychometric tool (Hill, Pace & Robins, 2010). Some articles were theoretical discussions and did not involve participants. Qualitative studies predominated.

Interpreting the Terrain

While expansive geographical and cultural diversity is represented in the literature, some key characteristics feature in the international Indigenous resilience terrain, a landscape that in its most recent past is commonly marked by a scar of systemic global violence. A cluster of principles or themes persistently emerged. I have expanded on Fenelon and Hall’s (2008, p.1869), foundation of four “issues that exemplify Indigenous resistance to the force of globalization and revitalization of cultural traditions” to arrive at an Indigenous resilience schema.

Indigenous Resilience

1. Persistent ‘Kin-to-all’ cosmology – to be a good relative
2. Ancient, global and spiritual ‘kin-centric’ language and knowledge systems
3. Ancient, global, spiritual, yet localised ‘kin-centric’ socio-political, economic and environmental institutions
4. Deep and lasting application of ‘kin-centric systems’, producing sustainable wholeness, relational balance and harmony
5. Adversity of colonisation – existential devastation
6. Restoration of ancient, global, ‘kin-centric’ systems of Indigenous being, knowing and synergistic co-existence with the human, natural and supernatural worlds.

Combining the elements of an original and ongoing Indigenous resilience together with the recent adversity of colonisation that represents, for modern times, the focus of much contemporary Indigenous resistance, the fullness of Indigenous resilience that the thesis seeks to approach begins to come into view. Figure 3 displays the Schema of Indigenous resilience.

A pattern of original wholeness, disturbed but not broken by European conquest, flows as an ongoing global phenomenon of Indigenous resilience from ancient times into today. This continuity is mirrored in the lives of many global Indigenous people. From such a perspective the recent onset of systemic colonial trauma remains important, yet becomes a brief disturbance across a timeless landscape. “Compared to the presence of our tupuna, the white intrusion in Aotearoa is but a blink in the eternity of time” (Awatere, 1982, p. 29). How might psychological theorisation and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand change to enable this flow of vitality “to improve individual

Persistent Cosmology	Wholeness	Wholeness	Wholeness	Fracturing	Wholeness
Kin to all	Kin-centric	Kin-centric	Kin-centric	Individual	Kin-centric
	Knowledge Language	Institutions Endurability	Eons Practice	Colonisation	Restored
	Existential Vitality			Existential Devastation	Existential Vitality

- time -

Figure 3. Schema of Indigenous Resilience.

and community wellbeing” (New Zealand Psychological Society, 2013) of Māori?

Comparative Conceptual Frames

While psychological resilience formulations remain a contested and shifting domain (Becker, Cicchetti & Luther, 2000; Hall et al., 2010; Kilmer & Tedeschi, 2005), a three-stage pattern is common across the literature. An original pre-trauma condition, that is disturbed or ruptured by adversity, and followed by a final period of recovery or restoration. On the face of it, psychological resilience and Indigenous resilience appear similar, yet are very different when considered against the original Indigenous condition of wholeness, the extensive place, time, space continuum of global Indigenous generational systems, and the recent socio-political sources of trauma that is the Indigenous resilience span.

Non-Indigenous resilience has been described as “too individualistically formulated to take into account the significant social and cultural factors” (Freedman, 2004, p. 377) that impact a collective. Psychological resilience literature “has been almost totally devoted to Western samples, and Western individualistic thinking” (Hall et al., 2010, p. xiv), that predominates a de-contextualised suffering individual (Drury, Cocking & Reicher, 2009; Freedman, 2004; Ungar, 2010) from a deficit, problem or pathology focus (Tedeschi & Kilmer, 2005; Walsh, 2007), fixated on a ‘history-less’ present, that precludes “pervasive ongoing effects of dislocation, depression, deprivation, and discrimination” (Danieli, 1998, p. 673). Such positioning precludes politically motivated social sources of suffering that have targeted collectives of people’s (Danieli, 1998; Hall et al., 2010; Hernandez, 2002, Hernandez-Wolfe, 2010, 2011; Ungar, 2010; Walsh, 2007). Psychological resilience conceptualisations occlude Indigenous resilience considerations.

It has been noted that truncated resilience conceptualisations “may reduce the range of information sought and considered, limiting the clarity of the picture painted...and emphasizing negative aspects of the individual and situations” (Tedeschi & Kilmer, 2005, p. 230). Little room is left to consider contemporary or ancestral Indigenous realities or the ‘colonial gash’ so central to the ‘modern’ condition of Indigenous dispossession. Disturbingly, like the socio-historical suspension of “Somebody”, the source

of suffering and also the source of resilience are ontologically disallowed. “Resilience as we see it, takes time to unfold. Furthermore, there are many bumps along the way, periods of life when people look anything but resilient. If we fail to keep the camera rolling past the point of an illness episode, we then miss capturing the evidence we then seek” (Hall et al., 2010, p. 15). Fixation on the de-contextualised present based ‘pathological Indigenous individual’, such as the ‘Māori problem’ or the ‘Indian problem’, occludes vital Indigenous sources and manifestations of past, present and future resilience.

Global Re-Indigenisation

Regardless of the presence or absence of psychological Indigenous resilience conceptualisations and practices of colonisation, Indigenous people’s resistance to adversity, and restoration of vitality is occurring at individual and collective levels across the globe (Fenelon & Hall, 2008). This resilient wave has been named the “continuum of whakapapa” (Emere Karaka, as cited in Hilliard, Lucie-Smith & Mane-Wheoki, 2005, p. 36), the “continuum of positive Māori identity” (Kahukiwa as cited in Kahukiwa, Hilliard, Lucie-Smith & Mane-Wheoki, 2005, p. 15), finding “the native within” (Alford, 2002, p. 23), the “cultural maintenance approach” (Hovane, 2012, n.p.), “the cycle of survival” (Obah, 2011, p. 1), and “de-colonisation” (Murphy, Takawai, personal communication, 2012).

While it is true, subsequent to the perturbation of colonisation, that ‘modern’ Indigenous people now share societal positions of dispossession, poverty, powerlessness, and, until very recently an almost complete and profound political muteness across the globe (Awatere, 1982; Bomberry, 2008; Gone, 2011a; Hernandez-Wolfe, 2011; Hill, Pace, & Robbins, 2010; Lemelin, Matthews, Mattina, McIntyre, Johnston & Koster, 2010; Royal, 2010; & Starn, 2011), psychological conceptualisations and practices may exacerbate rather than alleviate these conditions. The ongoing occlusion of the socio-political sources of this suffering, and the collective, timeless sources of healing by the very professionals charged to heal trauma, powerfully inhibits, not enhances Indigenous resilience, disqualify rather than facilitating trauma recovery.

Just as “Somebody” and I, from our individually isolated positions, were occluded from the very best and worst of our intergenerational

pasts, psychology's theoretical occlusion places attribution for Indigenous people's 'modern mental health ills' at the feet of the socio-historical, political and inter-generationally de-contextualised Indigenous individual. An individual disproportionately represented as a burden in mental illness statistics and services (Duran, Firehammer & Gonzalez, 2008; Durie, 2011; Gone, 2011a; Hernandez-Wolfe, 2011; Hill et al., 2010; Robbins, Hill, & McWhirtier, 2008). Theoretical frames and diagnostic procedures are unable to locate causation for this imbalance anywhere but within the primary and persistent Anglo-American frame of the pathological individual (Duran et al., 2008; Durie, 2011; Gone, 2011b; Hernandez-Wolfe, 2010, 2011; Hill et al., 2010; Robbins et al., 2008; Walters, Mohammed, Evans-Campbell, Beltran, Chae, & Duran, 2011).. Examination and explication of Indigenous resilience from an Indigenous center is likely to disturb this problematic fixation, opening up space to consider and allow ancient sources of vitality and well being from and to the collective.

The roots of both Indigenous suffering, and the vitally transformational potential are currently occluded by psychological resilience considerations. It is hoped the doctoral work this paper comes from will contribute to correcting this optical delusion of modern mental ill-health consciousness. As a budding or actual mental health professional I ask you to consider, "(h)ow does one put one's self together when you can't put yourself in?" (Tamanui, 2012, n.p), especially when all that is good and vital about you and your people is left out?

"Today's Māori are living proof of the continuum of whakapapa, the power of our achievements and the survival of an intact dynamic culture. We will always be the tangata whenua of Aotearoa" (Kahukiwa, Hilliard, Lucie-Smith, & Mane-Wheoki, 2005, p.36).

Waireti (Michelle Roestenburg) is a Nana, a Mama, and active member of Ngati Pahauwera and Ngati Kahungunu ki Wairoa, she also has whakapapa (genealogical) ties to Nga Puhi, Dutch, Scottish and Irish ancestry. Critically emerging knowledge and experiences of reconnecting to a vital consciousness of 'our' enduring, ancient Indigenous legacies of healing, wholeness and innovation is her passion. She is in her third year of PhD study.

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