



Understanding Maori ‘lived’ culture to determine cultural connectedness and wellbeing

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Abstract Maori tribal authorities have sought to measure the wellbeing of their people as a baseline for determining the extent to which their economic, social, and cultural goals are being achieved. In recent years, data from government-administered social surveys and/or censuses have become a significant source of information. Using the tribal authority of Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu (TRONT) as a case study, this paper explores and compares data concerning Ngai Tahu wellbeing contained in two recently completed TRONT reports: the Ngai Tahu State of the Nation 2015 report (a quantitative study derived from government-administered survey data); and, the preliminary findings from the Ngai Tahu Whenua Project (a qualitative study undertaken by TRONT). Both studies present similar results regarding levels of tribal economic wellbeing, however, they show different results in regards to levels of cultural wellbeing. The qualitative study reveals reasonably high levels of cultural engagement among participants. Conversely, the quantitative study demonstrates reasonably low levels of cultural engagement. The difference is explained in each study’s approach to understanding culture. The quantitative study viewed culture as engagement in ‘static’ cultural practices, whereas the qualitative

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study viewed Maori culture as a ‘lived’ set of deep networks and connections between individuals, their whanau (extended family), and places of symbolic cultural importance (particularly land and water). It is argued that measuring ‘lived’ culture would provide a better means of ascertaining cultural wellbeing. It is suggested that a useful means of measuring Maori lived culture would be to determine the quality and depth of relational networks.

Keywords Historical trauma · Land loss · Colonisation · Ngāi Tahu Māori · Health and wellbeing · Identity

Introduction

Colonisation significantly disrupts Indigenous peoples’ ways of life and their long-established relationship with their lands. For Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the loss of traditional lands has resulted in intergenerational material poverty, under-education, unemployment, and dependence on social welfare (Gracey and King 2009; Tribunal 1991). Similar social and economic challenges have also been reported for displaced Indigenous peoples in other parts of the world (Adelson 2005; Cernea 2004; Cooke et al. 2007; Gebre 2003). However, the effects of colonisation, particularly of land loss and forced displacement, go far beyond material poverty and economic marginalisation.

In recent decades, health researchers and practitioners have come to realise that mass traumatic events, such as displacement and land loss from colonisation, generate chronic, as well as acute, collective psychological suffering for Indigenous peoples (Atkinson 2002; Brave Heart 2003; Duran and Duran 1995; Evans-Campbell 2008; Walters et al. 2011). Scholars such as Strathern (1988), Bird-David (1999), Strang (2004), Ingold (1995) and Willerslev (2007) explain that this is partly because Indigenous people view themselves as a part of the natural world, not apart from it; that is, their worldview is one of mutualistic relationships with both humans and non-humans. These relationships have been built over time and across generations, and permeate all aspects of Indigenous being and living. Thus, more than merely the loss of a material or economic resource, the loss of land is also an assault on the essence of Indigenous culture and ways of being. For Maori, culture and identity are fundamentally built on the reciprocal relationships formed with *whanau* [extended family] and *whenua* [land/place]. Thus, the loss of *whenua* during colonisation not only created intergenerational economic problems for Maori, but also compromised cultural and psychological wellbeing. Such consequences continue to be felt by Maori (Gracey and King 2009; King et al. 2009; Tribunal 1991).

Increasingly, Maori tribal authorities have sought to measure the status of wellbeing of their people as a baseline for determining the extent to which their economic, social and cultural goals are being achieved. In recent years, data from government-administered social surveys and/or censuses have become a significant source of information for tribal authorities. However, there has been no consistent method of measuring wellbeing beyond the economic or material, resulting in a

variety of reports that present a range of sometimes confusing data, particularly for social and/or cultural aspects of wellbeing. Furthermore, these existing data sources can be marked by systems of logic and methods of enumeration and categorisation that do not fully capture the sorts of data significant to *iwi* [tribal] cultural development in particular, or that are congruent with Maori ways of being in general (Kukutai and Rarere 2013, 2015; Kukutai and Walter 2015). This issue has also been noted for Indigenous peoples in other parts of the world (Axelsson and Skold 2011; Hamilton and Inwood 2011; Ziker 2011). Given that dependence on secondary data sources can be limiting, the Ngai Tahu people, through their tribal authority, have initiated research programmes and projects that aim to gather in-depth, primary source data. Using the tribal authority of *Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu* (TRONT) as a case study example, this paper explores and compares data concerning Ngai Tahu wellbeing contained in two recently completed TRONT



Fig. 1 Map of Te Waipounamu, the South Island of NZ

reports: the *Ngai Tahu State of the Nation 2015* (State of the Nation) report; and, the preliminary findings from the *Ngai Tahu Whenua Project*.

Ngai Tahu Maori: a background

The Indigenous inhabitants of Aotearoa/New Zealand, collectively referred to as Maori or *tangata whenua* [people of the land], consist of a diverse number of *iwi* [tribes] and [clans]. One of the largest *iwi* both demographically and geographically is Ngai Tahu, located in *Te Waipounamu* [New Zealand's South Island] (see Fig. 1, for map).

Ngai Tahu trace their *whakapapa* [genealogy] back to Paikea, who came from the Polynesian homeland of Hawaiki, through to his descendant, Tahu Potiki, from whom they take their tribal name. In the seventeenth century, Ngai Tahu migrated south from the North Island's East Coast, eventually crossing the Cook Strait to the South Island. By the end of the eighteenth century, through both conflict and inter-marriage, the Ngai Tahu tribe eventually established its authority over most of the South Island (Anderson 1998).

Ngai Tahu's tribal structure was quite loose, with five primary hapu ruling with relative independence in their regions. The bonds between these often warring hapu were strengthened when Ngati Toa leader Te Rauparaha invaded in the 1830s. The *iwi* who bore the brunt of the incursion along the northern half of the South Island's east coast, Ngati Kuri at Kaikoura and Ngai Tuahuriri at Kaiapoi, sought the aid of their cousins to the south, Ngati Irakehu and Ngati Huirapa, who had grown wealthy through trade and had muskets and ships. Eventually, Ngai Tahu repulsed Te Rauparaha and, by 1839, peace was negotiated (Anderson 1998).

Colonisation and land loss

A year later, British and Maori representatives, including Ngai Tahu leaders, signed the Treaty of Waitangi. The English version established their sovereignty across New Zealand. The Māori treaty merely gave the British authority to control their own countrymen. By 1864, Ngai Tahu had sold 34.5 million acres of land, believing this would strengthen their burgeoning political and economic relationship with the British. The Crown promised schools and hospitals to justify the low prices paid for the lands and promised substantial reserves in addition to their settlements, including food gathering sites (O'Malley 2014). However, the Crown failed to provide the schools and hospitals and offered marginal, miniscule reserves. Within a generation, Ngai Tahu were landless and impoverished while settlers were provided with cheap, wide-ranging estates (Tribunal 1991; Evison 1997).

When it became clear the Crown would not honour its promises, Ngai Tahu petitioned the government and a Commission of Inquiry investigated and largely upheld Ngai Tahu's claims. Consequently, largely worthless, inaccessible and unuseable land in the inhospitable south was returned in the 1900s (Evison 1997). Ngai Tahu continued to petition the government, receiving limited financial compensation in the 1940s that did not quell the drive for compensation (Tau 2000).

The Ngai Tahu Treaty settlement

By the 1970s, the Crown could no longer ignore pressure from Maori leaders and protestors, Maori MPs, the judiciary, and a supportive section of Pakeha. Before the Labour Government suffered electoral defeat in 1975, Maori Affairs Minister Matiu Rata enacted the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, which established a permanent Commission of Inquiry, the Waitangi Tribunal, to inquire into Maori claims against the Crown. Initially limited to claims regarding Crown actions from 1975 onward, when Labour was re-elected 10 years later, the Tribunal's reach was extended back to the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 (Orange 2014). Consequently, there was a rapid increase in the number of claims, and the system soon became overloaded. The Waitangi Tribunal only held powers of recommendation and it was the Crown's responsibility to resolve Maori claims so, as the claims increased, the Crown realised it needed a coordinated policy (Ward 1999).

The Treaty of Waitangi Policy Unit (ToWPU) was established in 1988 to develop a settlement strategy and lead direct negotiations (Hill 2009). By 1993, a Minister-in-Charge of Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations was established at the Cabinet level and the ToWPU was renamed as the Office of Treaty Settlements in 1995 (OTS). Ngai Tahu was among the first to submit their historical claims to the Waitangi Tribunal in 1986. The Ngai Tahu claim was heard from 1987–1989 to 1991–1995, with four reports published by the Tribunal. Negotiations between Ngai Tahu and the National Government began in 1991, breaking down between 1994 and 1996 before concluding with a Deed of Settlement in 1997 and legislation formalising the agreement in 1998 (Fisher 2015).

Ngai Tahu's Treaty settlement was worth \$170 million but due to a number of enhancing mechanisms, its real value was far greater. In addition to the baseline \$170 million quantum, Ngai Tahu negotiators also obtained (Ngai Tahu Deed of Settlement 1997):

- A relativity mechanism that allowed for 'top ups' if future settlements with other iwi saw the Crown go over its initial total settlement amount;
- Interest on the unpaid sum that was worth approximately \$25 million;
- Right of First Refusal (RFR) which provided Ngai Tahu the first right to purchase Crown lands when they became available for privatisation;
- Deferred Selection Process (DSP) that allowed Ngai Tahu to purchase certain valuable Crown properties, such as schools and police stations, that would be leased back at market rates to government departments;
- Dedicated seats on Conservation boards;
- The return, in fee simple, of sites of cultural significance such as Tutaepatu Lagoon, Lake Waihora (Ellesmere) and the Crown Titi Islands;
- Legal instruments to provide Ngai Tahu a voice in resource consent and conservation processes;
- Crown Apology and Historical Account; and,
- The establishment of a governing body with a legal personality: Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu—The Ngai Tahu Council.

The State of the Nation report

The *State of the Nation* report was commissioned by TRONT, the tribal governing body for Ngai Tahu, to assist the tribe in assessing their progress in realising their goals for tribal recovery and further development following the Treaty settlement. It is the first report of its kind for Ngai Tahu. The report draws heavily on available secondary data sources, mainly from the 2013 *New Zealand Census* and *Te Kupenga 2013*, the first New Zealand-wide post-census survey of Maori wellbeing conducted by Statistics New Zealand. Although both the 2013 *New Zealand Census* and *Te Kupenga 2013* present comprehensive information on Maori, the following discussion focuses on data that Ngai Tahu found crucial to their tribal development, as reflected in the *State of the Nation* report.

Economic wellbeing

Since 1998, Ngai Tahu have grown the value of their settlement to over NZ\$1 billion. The benefits of the settlement flow to individual members of the tribe through personal and *papatipu runanga* [constituent councils] distribution schemes. Annual grants are provided to the 18 *papatipu runanga* as well as educational, sports and hardship grants for the young and elderly. Over NZ\$350 million has been distributed for tribal development since the settlement. In addition, retirement schemes such as Whai Rawa have been established and successful *whanau*- and *papatipu runanga*-oriented businesses such as Ngai Tahu Pounamu have blossomed (Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu Annual Report 2015).

Data from the *State of the Nation* report show that many members of the tribe now appear to have average to high levels of material wellbeing relative to the rest of the New Zealand population. In particular, the report notes the following. First, Ngai Tahu are a young, growing population, with over 30 % under 15 years of age (see Table 1).

Second, increasing numbers of Ngai Tahu are achieving higher levels of education and professional training. Third, the majority of Ngai Tahu are in employment—73 % are engaged in the labour force, and the median actual household income for Ngai Tahu is the same as the median actual household income for the rest of New Zealand, at NZ\$81,000 (data not shown). Fourth, 42.3 % of Ngai Tahu own or partly own the home they live in, compared to 49.8 % of all New Zealanders. In sum, the report shows that Ngai Tahu now experience relatively high levels of material wellbeing and living standards: younger generations of Ngai Tahu are well educated; the majority are in gainful employment; and household median incomes and levels of home ownership are almost on par with the rest of the New Zealand population (see tables in “Appendix”).

Cultural wellbeing

While the data show that a considerable number of Ngai Tahu *whanau* have had significant improvements in their material wellbeing, the findings for Ngai Tahu

Table 1 Distribution of Ngai Tahu population by age groups and sex, 1991–2013

Age group	1991		1996		2001		2006		2013	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
0–14	3447	3261	5082	4836	7032	6867	8325	8154	9036	8706
15–44	4686	5166	6252	7458	7665	9942	9483	12,156	9933	12,603
45–64	1380	1527	1980	2277	2721	3210	3774	4704	4782	6147
65–84	348	450	483	711	702	945	1062	1431	1482	1929
85+ years	12	33	21	39	30	66	30	75	66	135
Total population	9876	10,437	13,809	15,321	18,147	21,033	22,674	26,517	25,293	29,523
Male (%)	48.6		47.4		46.3		46.1		46.1	
Secondary school quals. or higher (%)	–		–		–		71.4		76.9	
In labour force (%)	–		–		–		–		73.0	
Living in rohe (%)	58.1		53.6		49.6		49.0		48.9	
Home ownership (%)	–		–		–		–		42.3	

Source: NZ Census (2013)

cultural wellbeing are not as clear-cut. For example, cultural data indicate that only 37.2 % of Ngai Tahu believe that it is very important to be engaged in Maori culture, while 26.9 % believe it may be somewhat important, and 35.9 % believe that it is not at all important (see Table 2).

However, further data also indicate that 84 % of Ngai Tahu claimed either very strong (51.8 %), or moderately strong (31.5 %), connections to their ancestral *marae* [meeting place] as *turangawaewae* [traditional homeplace]. On the one hand, reports of such strong connections are not surprising—the findings of Maori researchers confirm, for example, that for many Maori, the *marae* remains a place of significance (Kukutai and Rarere 2015). On the other hand, figures showing the level of importance given to engagement with Maori culture by Ngai Tahu do not seem to align with this. Qualitative findings from the *Whenua Project*, however, explain some of the deeply held Ngai Tahu views on culture and wellbeing.

Whenua Project

The *Whenua Project* catalogues extended, open-ended narratives that detail the family and life histories, as well as the collective and personal concerns and aspirations, of 80 Ngai Tahu tribal members residing in different locations across the South Island. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the main purpose of the *Whenua Project* is to conceptualise and explore the historical trauma of land loss, in order to find culturally relevant solutions to effectively support Maori health and wellbeing. Following the principles of *Kaupapa Maori* research [Maori research philosophy] that specify the adoption of a critical and participatory approach to research on Maori (Smith 2013), a *hui* [meeting] involving health and welfare professionals, project team members, Ngai Tahu tribal leaders, and tribal members

Table 2 Ngai Tahu views on Maori culture

	Ngai Tahu			Total Maori		
	Percent	Confidence interval		Percent	Confidence interval	
		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper
Population distribution	9.0	8.0	9.9	100.0	100.0	100.0
Importance of being engaged in Maori culture						
Very/quite	37.2	31.9	42.5	46.3	44.9	47.6
Somewhat	26.9	22.0	31.8	24.2	22.9	25.6
A little/not at all	35.9	30.6	41.2	29.5	28.3	30.7
Strength of connection to ancestral <i>marae</i>						
Very strongly/strongly	51.8	44.6	59.0	67.1	65.2	69.0
Somewhat	31.5	24.0	39.0	23.0	21.2	24.8
Weakly/very weakly/not at all	16.7	11.6	21.8	9.9	8.6	11.2

Source: Te Kupenga (2013)

was first held to discuss the project. Suggestions and ideas that were raised during the *hui* were incorporated into aspects of the project. Interested *whanau* and key tribal members then facilitated the identification and establishment of a network of individuals and extended family willing to help and/or participate in the project either as key informants/storytellers or as field interviewers and community researchers. Next, visits were scheduled between Ngai Tahu project participants and Ngai Tahu community researchers, where unstructured interviews involving open-ended conversations, narratives and storytelling, or *purakau*, were held, enabling the participants to communicate and share their family life histories and lived experiences. This took place over a period of 20 months. After the completion of this process, common themes and patterns, as well as unique features, were then drawn out from the stories. For the first stage of analysis, qualitative thematic content analysis was used. Patterns and trends across the 80 project participants were then examined in conjunction with an analysis of historical and social contexts. Updates and feedback on the status of the analysis, and of the project as a whole, were then regularly circulated between project researchers, community researchers, and interested research participants and tribal members for their input, until complete findings are able to be finalised and presented formally to the tribe for action and feedback.

In sum, the *Whenua Project* gathered stories from 80 Ngai Tahu key informants/storytellers from across five locations in the South Island, specifically: North Canterbury; Banks Peninsula; Christchurch; North Otago; and, Southland. Of the 80 project participants, 51 (63.7 %) were female, and 29 (36.3 %) were male. All were between the ages of 21 and 85 (see Table 3).

All of the 80 key informants/storytellers belong to at least one of 8 *whanau* involved in the study; however, many of them have historical connections and/or long-standing kinship ties to several other locations, *whanau*, *hapu*, and/or *iwi* not directly included in this study. Many of the key informants/storytellers also have long-standing historical links and/or kinship ties with each other.

Material wellbeing

The *Whenua Project's* qualitative findings on trauma and recovery from material poverty broadly confirm the data on material wellbeing presented in the *State of the Nation* report. The *Whenua Project* participants explained that earlier or past generations of their *whanau* had experienced prolonged and extreme levels of

Table 3 Research participants by age group

Age group	Number of participants	Percent
21–35	20	25
36–49	17	22
50–59	22	27
60 and older	21	26
Total	80	100

Source: Whenua Project (2015)

poverty. These experiences included, but were not limited to, very poor housing and living conditions, joblessness and chronic lack of economic stability, and lack of educational opportunities. They pointed out that these unacceptable conditions are no longer experienced by the current generation to the same extent; although a number of older-aged Ngai Tahu shared that they still needed to find creative ways to make ends meet.

Summary findings from the *Whenua Project* show that the occurrence of narratives about personal or family experiences of material poverty has steadily decreased across age groups: that is, younger participants who shared stories about family or personal poverty were fewer compared with older participants who shared the same. This suggests that, over time, living conditions may have improved among families to the extent that material poverty has become less of a focus of concern for the current generation of Ngai Tahu.

Cultural wellbeing

Findings from the *Whenua Project* indicate that reciprocal relational links with *whanau* and *whenua* constitute a core cultural value and are seen by the majority of project participants as key to their cultural and psychological wellbeing. Of the 80 participants involved in the *Whenua Project*, 82.5 % mentioned maintaining links with *whanau* as a source of wellbeing, and 76.3 % mentioned access to, and continual relational links with, *whenua* as vital to their cultural and psychological health. Essentially, the vast majority valued *whenua* and *turangawaewae* [family connections], and *matauranga* [knowledge] associated with this sense of place (see Fig. 2).

More specifically, the narratives showed that the participants valued the building of reciprocal relationships with extended kin and with their traditional lands and waters, and the place-specific cultural knowledge and practices that form part of these relationships. For example, they repeatedly mentioned *mahinga kai* [traditional hunting and food gathering] and spending time in the bush or on the shorelines, alongside remarks about family and *kaitiakitanga* [guardianship]. They also described in detail some of the skills taught to them by their elders, and recalled

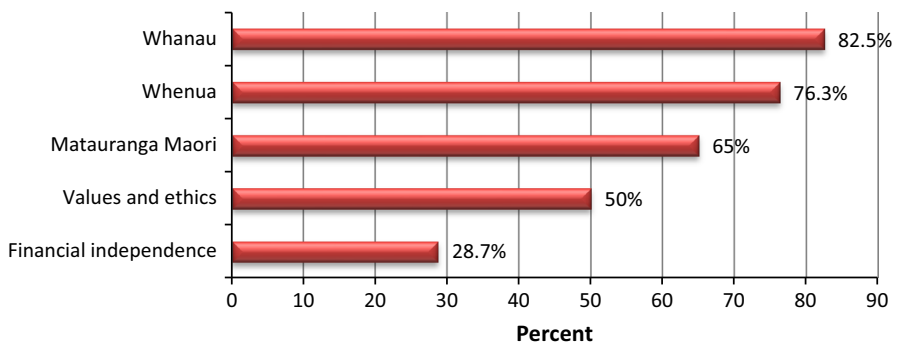


Fig. 2 Sources of cultural and psychological wellbeing. *Source:* Whenua Project (2015)

the stories passed on to them about sacred sites and burial grounds and significant family events. Statements such as the following were typical:

The best place for us was out there [on the land]...It was what was close to our heart. We would go up in the forest...[and] you could pretty much go anywhere...We would spend our days roaming around and going swimming or playing in the rivers and not coming back until dark... [My father] he would talk about his life growing up...and what it was like for him, and that's also how you started to know different places...He'd talk about the different urupa [family burial grounds] that were there... So in the harbour you'd have

Table 4 Ngai Tahu cultural practice in the previous 12 months

	Ngai Tahu			Total Maori		
	Percent	Confidence interval		Percent	Confidence interval	
		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper
Population distribution	9.0	8.0	9.9	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cultural practice						
Used a Maori greeting	79.9	75.1	84.7	83.8	82.3	85.3
Watched a Maori television programme	65.9	60.6	71.2	74.9	73.5	76.3
Discussed or explored whakapapa or family history	61.8	56.7	66.8	60.5	59.0	61.9
Sang a Maori song, haka, gave a mihi, or took part in Maori performing art and crafts	53.5	48.0	59.1	56.3	55.0	57.6
Wore Maori jewellery	53.2	47.4	58.9	49.1	47.7	50.6
Taught or shared Maori language with others	45.4	39.8	51.1	45.8	44.4	47.2
Had contact with Maori through social media	36.5	30.5	42.4	43.6	42.3	44.8
Read a Maori magazine	33.1	28.4	37.8	25.0	23.9	26.2
Learnt culture at a library, museum, or Maori website	31.5	26.4	36.5	27.4	26.2	28.7
Went to a Maori festival or event	28.1	23.2	32.9	37.2	35.7	38.6
Went to a hui (meeting)	26.1	21.7	30.6	39.1	37.7	40.5
Did something else that involved learning the Maori language or culture	25.5	20.9	30.0	25.4	24.2	26.6
Listened to a Maori radio station	25.3	21.0	29.7	34.4	33.2	35.6
Wore Maori branded clothing	24.5	19.0	29.9	34.6	33.2	36.1
Acquired a ta moko (Maori design tattoo) at any time	8.8	6.0	11.7	15.0	13.9	16.0
Took part in traditional Maori healing or massage	7.3	4.4	10.2	10.9	10.0	11.7
Was involved in any other practice	17.6	13.3	22.0	17.2	16.2	18.2

Source: Te Kupenga (2013)

different areas for lookouts, so that whanau would live in that place...
[Female, 35]

Statements from a number of younger participants also clearly outlined the relationship between being able to retain access to their *whenua* and being able to maintain and grow their *whanau* ties. One participant, for instance, mentioned that:

You need whanau... and even though every year our family grows, we still like to be tight... So all of our kids and all of my brothers and that, and my sister's kids, are close. That's what I learned from our grandparents because they kept their kids close and that... We all used to live in town, [but] we still used to go out there [to the land] all the time... It helps. That's home... [Male, 33]

This is obviously reflected in part of the data contained in the *State of the Nation* report, which indicate that a majority of Ngai Tahu possess strong connections to place and family gathering points (e.g. *marae*). However, if we accept that *whanau* and connections to place are core elements of Ngai Tahu culture, then the data suggesting that nearly two-thirds of Ngai Tahu see no value in their culture, or are ambivalent about it, needs further explication.

Developing Ngai Tahu measures that capture culture as relational and embodied

Notably, the measures of cultural practice used in the *State of the Nation* suggest that culture is to be understood as 'activities' outside of oneself and, therefore, as something to be engaged in, or participated in for a time, but which is not necessarily an ongoing or complete 'way of being'. This is evidenced in other parts of the survey data where cultural practices are listed as activities in which a person engages (see Table 4).

Hamilton and Inwood (2011) point out that various aspects of census and/or survey design, such as the construction of questions, the process of enumeration and the tabulation of results, and inherent limitations of quantitative research, can have an impact on the nature of the data collected; in this case, a design which measures Maori engagement with a set of practices or activities can pose a challenge. That is, given that culture and/or cultural identity for Ngai Tahu (and for other Maori as well as other Indigenous societies) are embedded within multiple layers of networks and ways of being, government-led census and/or social surveys that attempt to measure and quantify this complexity run the real risk of imposing census categories that are prescriptive and not entirely congruent with Maori 'ways of being' (Axelsson et al. 2011; Kukutai and Walter 2015; Ziker 2011). One way of resolving this is to consider culture as a fundamental aspect of identity and self-concept.

Culture, according to Geertz's (1979, p. 89) classical definition is "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which [people] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life". It is, in short, a 'way of life'. Yep (2004, p. 71) defines cultural identity as "a social construction that gives the individual an ontological status [a sense of 'being'] and expectations for social behaviour [ways of 'acting']". Culture as an identity, then, gives an individual an understanding of self, a sense of belonging, a system of meaning and a way of acting (Tajfel 1981). The *State of the Nation* report, in measuring culture as simply 'activities' or 'ways of acting' with little consideration to congruency with cultural understandings of self, sense of belonging, or systems of meaning, would have missed this significant link between 'acting' and 'being'.

To examine and understand cultural wellbeing, culture should be considered not just as an outward practice or compendium of activities, but must be understood as having an internalised component that connects to how people understand who they are and how they belong (Ingold 1995). The restricted practice-oriented delineation of 'culture' in current reports of cultural health and wellbeing is even more concerning because it is an outcome of what is commonly referred to in the postcolonial literature as 'othering', where an Indigenous culture is problematised and trivialised by the coloniser to the point that the Indigenous cultural identity is no longer the intrinsic understanding of self or sense of belonging, but rather, is seen as an atavistic auxiliary of extrinsic practices and symbols (Bhabha 1983; Said 1979; Smith 2013). 'Othering' is opposed to an understanding of culture as a 'way of being'—or culture as 'embodied' (Duran and Duran 1995). In effect, through the process of 'othering', the Indigenous cultural identity becomes a 'thing' rather than a 'way', something to be 'engaged with' rather than 'lived as'.

For many Ngai Tahu, the metrics framed as 'cultural activities' in the *State of the Nation* report have not resonated with their understanding and experience of Ngai Tahu cultural identity, resulting in data which show that almost two-thirds of Ngai Tahu are ambivalent about, or see no importance in, engaging in Maori culture, despite more than half reporting strong connections to *marae* and *turangawaewae*. Findings from the *Whenua Project* indicate that localised food gathering practices of hunting and fishing, being in and from a place (*whenua* and *turangawaewae*), and *whanau* are considered important foundations to Ngai Tahu culture and identity. Consequently, it is suggested that in order to better measure and examine cultural wellbeing, a reframing of culture is necessary, moving culture from merely an activity that is engaged into a 'way of life located in place' that is also a core component of identity (Bird-David 1999; Ingold 1995; Willerslev 2007).

The development of measures for assessing the quality of relationships within and between *whanau* and *whenua* or places of belonging are likely to reveal the level and condition of Ngai Tahu 'lived' culture. Furthermore, determining the various aspects of connection to *whenua* and *whanau* will also help reveal the

strength of cultural identity and, in turn, personal identity, and related levels of cultural and psychological wellbeing. By understanding that culture is a ‘way of life’ and a core component of identity, and examining it through a relational epistemology, Maori can develop measuring tools that are able to provide an interconnecting set of results that can more accurately inform cultural and psychological wellbeing. We consider that the main mechanism for measurement would involve determining the quantity and depth of connections between individuals, whanau, and places of symbolic importance.

Summary and conclusion

Colonisation has resulted in significant loss of land for Maori in general, and for Ngai Tahu in particular. Nonetheless, *whenua* or land/place continues to be at the core of Ngai Tahu and Maori culture and identity. Ngai Tahu (and Maori) wellbeing is intimately linked with land/place. While much is known about the impact of the loss of land on economic wellbeing, the long-standing impacts of land loss on cultural wellbeing, and how they may be alleviated and remedied, remains little understood.

Despite significant gaps in organised scholarly knowledge of the impacts of, and solutions to, land loss since the Treaty settlement, Ngai Tahu have determinedly proceeded with efforts to revitalise and develop their culture and economy, and have met with notable levels of success. Data from the *State of the Nation* report show that material wellbeing for Ngai Tahu has improved significantly. Likewise, the narratives from the *Whenua Project* show that the economic impact of land loss on Ngai Tahu through colonisation has been significant; and, that there are ongoing impacts of land loss on cultural and psychological wellbeing. However, from the data and findings of both the *State of the Nation* and the *Whenua Project*, it is clear that there is a need for more nuanced work in the area of cultural and psychological wellbeing. Explicating and developing measures to account for Ngai Tahu experiences of connections to *whenua*, places of symbolic importance, and *whanau* will likely better reveal the vitality and health of ‘lived’ culture, and, in turn, the strength of cultural identity. A means of measuring lived culture would be to determine the quality and depth of networks and connections between individuals, whanau, and places of symbolic importance.

Appendix

See Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Table 5 Ngai Tahu aged 15+ years, educational achievement expressed as highest qualification achieved, 2006–2013

Highest qualification	Ngai Tahu			Total Maori			Total New Zealand		
	2006	Percent	2013	2006	Percent	2013	2006	Percent	2013
No qualification	8814	28.6	8121	144,501	37.5	129,528	708,429	26.6	628,377
Level 1 certificate	5412	17.6	5967	68,217	17.7	70,818	394,596	14.8	389,910
Level 2 certificate	4053	13.2	4848	46,569	12.1	54,885	306,330	11.5	320,388
Level 3 certificate	3240	10.5	4146	37,185	9.6	47,046	247,674	9.3	289,062
Level 4 certificate	3126	10.2	3624	34,599	9.0	38,178	286,599	10.8	291,975
Level 5 or 6 diploma	2478	8.0	2892	24,756	6.4	27,225	268,362	10.1	278,094
Bachelors/level 7 qualification	2769	9.0	4029	23,247	6.0	33,372	315,846	11.9	408,441
Honours degree/postgrad diploma	477	1.5	810	3282	0.9	5826	55,461	2.1	86,601
Master's degree	348	1.1	561	2820	0.7	4353	59,706	2.2	83,949
Doctoral degree	81	0.3	147	489	0.1	819	16,770	0.6	22,314
Overseas secondary school qualification	117	0.4	141	1779	0.5	2091	172,590	6.1	201,519
Total	30,918		35,289	387,438		414,141	2832,357		3,000,633

Source: NZ Census (2013)

Table 6 Ngai Tahu aged 15+ years, employment status by functional age and sex

Age	Employed full-time		Employed part-time		Unpaid family worker		Unemployed		Not in labour force		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
15–44	6168	4959	969	2976	69	135	714	1098	2088	3564	5652
45–64	3651	3366	312	1299	63	87	171	258	648	1221	1869
65+	354	192	177	255	33	27	9	6	1002	1608	2610
Total	10,173	8517	1458	4530	165	249	894	1362	3738	6393	10,131

Source: NZ Census (2013)

Table 7 Number of Ngai Tahu families by household income, 2013

	Couple-only household		Single-parent family		Two-parent family		Multi-family	
	Actual	Jensen adjusted	Actual	Jensen adjusted	Actual	Jensen adjusted	Actual	Jensen adjusted
Loss	18	18	6	9	12	12	6	6
Zero	12	9	21	21	18	15	–	–
\$1–30,000	537	531	876	912	285	654	117	306
\$30,001–50,000	1206	1200	522	543	801	1794	282	495
\$50,001–70,000	1068	1071	249	195	1497	2076	318	621
\$70,001–100,000	1701	1713	156	156	2304	2073	537	732
\$100,001–150,000	1308	1317	51	51	2157	1233	810	543
\$150,001+	717	717	30	27	1344	549	828	198

Source: NZ Census (2013) and Ngai Tahu State of the Nation (2015)

Table 8 Ngai Tahu aged 15+ years, home ownership, 2013

	Ngai Tahu		Total Maori		Total New Zealand	
Own/partly own usual residence	15,579	42.3 %	138,273	31.2 %	1,590,546	49.8 %
Do not own usual residence	21,276		305,172		1,603,011	
Total	36,855		443,445		3,193,557	

Source: NZ Census (2013)

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