



Young mothers at Te Tipu Whenua o Pa Harakeke talk about what makes a house a home

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Although every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and reliability of the information contained in this report, neither the authors nor any of their employees shall be held liable for the information and views expressed in this report.

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Glossary

iwi	tribe.
manaaki	hospitality.
moemoeā	dreams.
taonga	treasures.
tupuna	ancestor(s).
whakapapa	genealogy, lineage, descent.
whānau	extended family, kin collective.
whanaungatanga	kinship, sense of family connection.
whenua	land.

Source. Te Aka Māori-English English-Māori Dictionary online (www.maoridictionary.co.nz)

Executive Summary

Finding out from young mothers what makes a house a home can help guide housing policy and strategy to ensure that young mothers and their whānau (kinship collective) have accommodation that not only meets their requirements for how they want to live but supports them to grow into their full potential as a whānau. In this study, young mothers at Te Tipu Whenua o Pa Harakeke, Flaxmere, Hawke's Bay took part in housing discussions towards the end of 2020. This small study trialled the HOMING method. This is an innovative technique designed by Dr James Berghan that uses blocks to help people to articulate what makes a house a home for them and allowed us to work with young mothers to get an insight into what they value in a home.

The first session of the study involved four young women at Te Tipu Whenua o Pa Harakeke using the HOMING method to describe what made a house a home for them, what they valued most, and whether or not they had the things they valued in their current accommodation. The second session was a facilitated discussion of housing and home with seven young women at Te Tipu Whenua o Pa Harakeke, including three from the first session.

The research found that there were three critical dimensions to a sense of home: the people (e.g., their babies, their whānau), the resources which allow them to support togetherness in a dwelling (e.g., cooking, furniture), and the liveability of a dwelling, in particular the general cleanliness of their accommodation. For three of the young women, the things they valued were largely present in the houses they currently occupied. Even so, they said they had limited choices around their accommodation. The young mothers found that finding a place of their own was inhibited by dealing with prospective landlords who they felt often judged them negatively for being young mothers.

This theme of discrimination and stigmatisation was evident throughout the research. Some of the young women despaired that they would ever get out of emergency or transitional accommodation and into their own rental accommodation. The characteristics of what makes a house a home in the group discussion were similar to those highlighted in the first session. The introduction of some different scenarios for them finding good rental accommodation or being able to buy their own home demonstrated the value of future research that inquires about potential pathways to a home for young mothers and their young whānau.

1. Introduction

Becoming a mother can be a milestone for a young Māori women that prompts decision-making about what she wants for herself and for her whānau, including where they will live.¹ A place to live can be just a shelter—a roof over their heads—or it can be somewhere they call ‘home’.² This report examines young Māori mothers’ aspirations about housing and homemaking, and their perceptions of the constraints on their decision-making and choices. This introduction examines literature on young mothers and housing to shine a light on some of these constraints and their impacts. The present study is then described, followed by the presentation and discussion of the study findings.

Good quality housing supports the health and wellbeing of young mothers and their children.³ However, due to high house prices, young Māori mothers have little opportunity to gain good quality housing through the purchase their own home.⁴ It is unlikely that young Māori mothers will have housing experiences like those of their grandparents’ and great-grandparents’ generation. In the 1930s, nearly three out of every four Māori (70.5%) lived in a house that was owned by someone in their household. At the 2018 Census, this had dropped to fewer than half (47%) of Māori.⁵ This decline in Māori home ownership has its roots in the alienation of Māori land over the past 200+ years and the barriers that have prevented Māori from building housing on what land remains.⁶ In the past 20-30 years, this decline in home ownership has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in the proportion of Māori living in rental accommodation.⁷

When we asked young Māori mothers in the *E Hine* study⁸ about renting a home we found that it was important to them that the community they lived in was safe and a good place for them to bring up their children.⁹ Feeling safe is as much about being comfortable in familiar surroundings and having a sense of belonging as it is about physical safety.¹⁰ For example, outdoor play areas close to their home are good for children, as well as beneficial for their relationships with parents and caregivers.¹¹ Young mothers in Canada described the importance of a family friendly neighbourhood where they felt safe and accepted as part of a community. This was often the opposite of their experiences of judgement and stigma when they lived in communities that had little understanding of or empathy for them.¹²

¹ Pihama, 2012.

² Boulton et al., 2022.

³ Howden-Chapman, Baker, & Bierre, 2013; Taskforce on Whānau-Centred Initiatives, 2010

⁴ Morrison, 2008

⁵ Stats NZ, 2021.

⁶ Boulton et al., 2022; Johnson, Howden-Chapman & Eaqub, 2018.

⁷ Stats NZ, 2020.

⁸ Lawton et al., 2013.

⁹ Adcock, Cram, & Lawton, 2021.

¹⁰ Boulton et al., 2022.

¹¹ Fu, 2015; Tremblay et al., 2023.

¹² Tremblay, Kingsley, Gokiart, Blums, Mottershead, & Pei, 2023. Also Fonda, Eni & Guimond, 2013.

The young Māori mothers in the *E Hine* study also had definite ideas of what sort of rental property they wanted. They wanted to find their own place where they could make decisions about how they lived and raised their children. They also wanted to be close to support people, such as their whānau and friends and others in their community.¹³ Within Māori culture, well-functioning support systems are considered essential for helping children and young parents thrive.¹⁴ Having the emotional and possibly financial support of their parents can allow young mothers to continue their education, navigate moving into adulthood and being a parent¹⁵ and can strengthen their confidence as young mothers.¹⁶

Even when they lived independently, young parents in the UK reported that they continued to receive support from their extended family.¹⁷ This support can improve the wellbeing of young mothers and the physical and emotional wellbeing of their children.¹⁸ However, as Wright and colleagues described from their research with young Latina mothers, family can both hinder and support housing independence as young women move from adolescence to adulthood. Young mothers reliance on their extended family and support networks was often a “tradeoff between their obligations to the family unit, need for stable housing, and/or pursuit of independence.”¹⁹ This was also the case for the young Māori mothers in the *E Hine* study.²⁰

Most of the accommodation that whānau rent is owned by private landlords, trusts, or businesses.²¹ The cost of rental accommodation – often a third or more of a household’s income – is no guarantee that a house will be warm and healthy,²² or that whānau will have tenure security.²³ The private rental market has not delivered adequate housing for young whānau, despite government assistance to increase the affordability of private rentals.²⁴ Young Māori mothers also experience what they perceive to be discrimination in the housing market, where the negative stereotypes that prospective landlords hold about them (for example, thinking poorly of them because they are young, Māori and/or have children) can mean that they are denied rental accommodation.²⁵ Such experiences can also negatively impact the health and wellbeing of young mothers and their children.²⁶

¹³ Adcock, Cram, & Lawton, 2021.

¹⁴ Metge, 2014; Pihama, 2011.

¹⁵ Wright, Shuey, Zaika, Mims, & Leventhal, 2017.

¹⁶ Adcock, Cram, & Lawton, 2021.

¹⁷ Martin, Sweeney, & Cooke, 2005.

¹⁸ Cutts, et al., 2011; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008.

¹⁹ Wright et al., 2017, p. 63.

²⁰ Adcock, Cram, & Lawton, 2021.

²¹ Stats NZ, 2020.

²² Johnson et al., 2018; Stats NZ, 2020.

²³ Berry, et al., 2017; New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2012.

²⁴ Marks, Somerville-Ryan, Walker, Devlin, Chen, Atatoa Carr, Berry, Smith & Morton, 2021; Rankine, 2005.

²⁵ Apatu, 2022.

²⁶ Priest, Paradies, Stevens, & Bailie, 2012.

If they do obtain rental accommodation, landlords continue to be important. The young Māori mothers interviewed by Ana Apatu described some landlords as supportive and some as scary.²⁷ Young mothers in Canada said that a supportive landlord was important if they were to retain their autonomy and stability.²⁸ Housing stability, in turn, also supports good health, social, educational, and economic outcomes for children.²⁹

Other aspects of rental accommodation can challenge the autonomy and stability of young Māori mothers, including a lack of tenure security, overcrowding and/or a desire to live somewhere else because their rental accommodation is unsuitable. These aspects can mean that whānau move more frequently than they want to. For a young family, moving may mean children shifting schools and all family members having to re-establish community ties. More than three moves in a child's lifetime (i.e., high mobility) can impact their wellbeing³⁰ and undermine the sense of connection a whānau feels to their local community.³¹ An Australian study about young mothers and housing mobility found that high mobility can disrupt the social, healthcare, and education relationships of children and young people, with consequent negative impacts on their emotional development and wellbeing.³²

During times of accommodation pressures and changes, living with their whānau may be an option for young Māori mothers. This is more likely to be a good arrangement if young mothers feel their family is supportive of them following the birth of their baby.³³ Some young Māori mothers reported that living with their whānau was a good decision as they were able to retain their independence and also benefit from cheaper board or rent.³⁴ Young Latina mothers said that this housing support for them often came at cost; for example, being required to do household chores, care for siblings, or deal with household chaos. For these young mothers, the short-term relief of having housing needed to be weighed up against any challenges to their sense of autonomy and their ability to achieve their own long-term goals.³⁵

If they are unable to obtain rental accommodation in the private market, the expectation is that Kāinga Ora will provide social housing, but this has not been the experience of young Māori mothers.³⁶ Other options, like couch surfing, living in overcrowded homes or being in transitional or emergency housing, when they cannot find rental accommodation, pose other problems for young mothers. In Auckland, young mothers living in emergency motel accommodation reported feeling constantly unsafe due to the violence in motel public spaces and harassment from other guests.³⁷ For the young Māori mothers in Ana Apatu's study, frequent shifts between living with whānau,

²⁷ Apatu, 2022.

²⁸ Tremblay et al., 2023.

²⁹ Fu, 2015.

³⁰ Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008; Dockery, et al., 2014; Taylor & Edwards, 2012.

³¹ Stats NZ, 2020.

³² Taylor & Edwards, 2012.

³³ Gordon, Chase-Lansdale, Matjasko, & Brooks-Gunn, 1997.

³⁴ Apatu, 2022.

³⁵ Wright et al., 2017.

³⁶ Apatu, 2022.

³⁷ E Tipu e Rea, 2021.

rental accommodation and emergency accommodation left them and their children feeling unsettled and longing for their own home.³⁸

In summary, young Māori mothers often aspire to live in their own place, where they can raise their children and make their own decisions. Having supportive whānau and friends living close and being in a community where they feel they belong are protective factors for young mothers. Ideally, this journey would be available and affordable for young Māori mothers and they would be able to make a home for themselves and their whānau without trade-offs or the judgements of others. In reality, this is not easy to achieve in our current housing market. Gaining insights into the experiences of young Māori mothers can help community and government agencies understand more fully their aspirations and what needs to be done to support young Māori mothers to gain the home they long for.

1.1 This Study

There is a need for more research in this area in order to better support young mothers as they move into parenthood in a way that is culturally responsive and good for them and their whānau.³⁹ As reported by the Māori Women's Housing Research Project,⁴⁰ "home provides security in a distinctly Māori way."

A Kaupapa Māori (by, with, for Māori) inquiry paradigm sees being Māori as normal or ordinary, with researchers seeking to understand people's lived realities alongside the barriers or challenges they experience to reaching their full potential.⁴¹ Kaupapa Māori researchers therefore seek out research methods that aim to let people express themselves without a pre-determined framing or set of assumptions about who they are and how they live their lives.⁴²

The present Kaupapa Māori study explored what a small group of young Māori mothers valued in a home and the constraints they experienced on their choice of accommodation and their homemaking. The study took place in 2021 in Hawke's Bay at Te Tipu Whenua o Pa Harakeke, the teen-parent school located within the Flaxmere College campus.

³⁸ Apatu, 2022.

³⁹ Bailie et al., 2006.

⁴⁰ Māori Women's Housing Research Project, 1991, p. 16.

⁴¹ Smith, 2012.

⁴² Cram et al., 1997.

2. Research methods

HOMING⁴³ is a research method developed by James Berghan that allows people to explore what makes a house a home for them (see Figure 1). HOMING uses blank blocks to encourage both reflection and play. People are asked what they value in a home, without making assumptions about what's important for them. Once they have inscribed the blank blocks with what they value, they are asked to stack or arrange the blocks to showcase what matters the most to them. They may also be asked to arrange the blocks on 'traffic light' blocks (green, orange, red) to illustrate whether or not their current accommodation has little or none of the things they value (red), some of the things they value (orange), or a lot of the things they value (green).

This method was used in the first study meeting with four young mothers at Te Tipu Whenua o Pa Harakeke. After introductions and an overview of the study, the young women looked over the information sheet, asked questions and signed consent forms. They were each then given 10 blank blocks, the traffic light blocks, and two sharpie pens. Their instructions, sitting around a table, were to write or draw something on each block that they made a house a home for them. This took them around 15 minutes.

They were then asked to arrange the blocks so the things that were most important to them were on the top of their arrangement. Each then spoke about the arrangement they had made, describing each block, why they had arranged the blocks as they had and why they had prioritised the most important items/blocks. The next task involved the traffic light blocks, with the young women asked to arrange their blocks according to what their current accommodation offered them – little/none, some, a lot – of the things they valued. They then described their arrangement and spoke about their current accommodation and their housing aspirations.

Three of the young women at the first meeting then attended a second study meeting at Te Tipu Whenua o Pa Harakeke, along with five others. At this hui (meeting) they were asked about what makes a house a home for young mothers and young whanau. This discussion was led by one of the young women who also wrote notes on the whiteboard as a record of what was said.

For their participation in the study, the young women were thanked and each given a \$50 voucher each of the two study times. We also had a shared lunch following our sessions together, with groceries purchased from the study budget.



Figure 1. Inscribed & stacked HOMING Aro Rākau blocks Source. J. Berghan

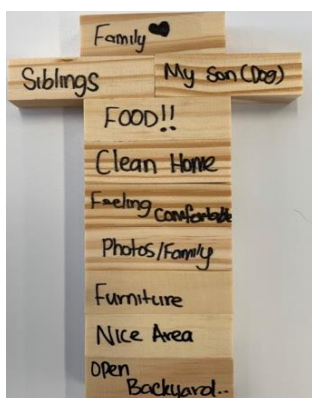
⁴³ The first three letters of HOMING stand for Home Of Mine, while the 'ING' represents what people feel, think and do that makes a dwelling a home for them.

3. What Young Mothers Shared

3.1 Session 1 – Things that make a house a home

From the first session, the characteristics that make a house a home along with how these were prioritised by each of the young women is described below (see Infobox 1). The picture of each set of blocks illustrates the range of what the young women valued, along with how they prioritised these. Italics are used in the written descriptions when the young women's own words are quoted. Some commonalities are then discussed.

Infobox 1: Examples of block arrangements from Session 1



Living with whānau, aged 15

My family is obviously on top because they're my main priority and my siblings and my son. My son is my dog and he makes you feel at home.

[Food and a clean home followed next.]

Feeling comfortable and photos, family photos, furniture, nice area and backyard.

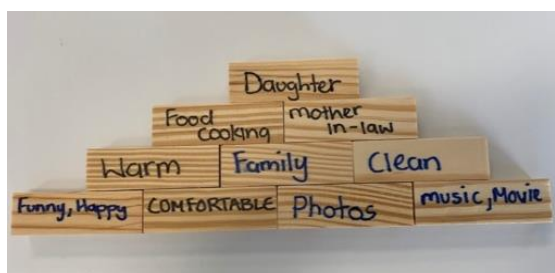
Just like, feeling comfortable in your own home – like you're at home.

In emergency accommodation, aged 19

My daughter; she's my number one priority. So she's way at the top, she's above my family and all. But that's why I put her at the top 'cause I'm always with her, we're side-by-side all the time. There's not a day where, oh probably every Saturdays, but, yeah, I'm always with her.

And then my second ones I've put my mother-in-law because she's a big part of my life, she is another mother figure to me, and as she cooks our food all the time so that [home cooking] has to go there. And warm down because... when I like getting new things and it feels nice and cosy; and our house is nice and warm. It just feels loving, just not when the negativity comes.

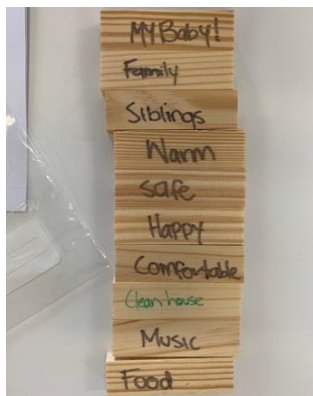
And then my family goes in this little bit of area because not my whole family is there for me and it's just my partner's family that's there for me but they're just in between everything at the moment. And clean also comes in that way because everything has to be clean around my daughter, only as she has a health issue and what not, and...I'm a bit of a clean freak when it comes to my own environment when my baby's being around. And I stole comfortable from my girl over there, and only because the same as her, you have to have a comfortable environment to feel homely and what-not. And then funny and happy comes from in from, like, the funny comes from me, and the happiness comes from my baby and from everyone. Life is when we're happy with one-another. I only put photos there because photos are everything to me, especially with my mum, my biological mum. It doesn't mean anything why it's last. And then music keeps me calm and it makes me do things, and I always watch movies. That's my whakapapa.





Living with whānau, aged 15

[Family is on top,,,,] yeah, because that's the most important and we've always got to make sure we're safe. It's not a house without being happy. And a nice area, like you don't always want to be always just worrying – that's not a home really. And like for me, comfortable is like when you walk in somewhere and it just feels homey. Like you just feel relief; it's just like 'ahhhh, I feel safe here'. That's what a home is to me, that's what I mean by comfortable. And then it's always got to be open because we need lots of room at my house. Everyone likes to be outside doing something, playing some kind of sport.



Living with whānau, aged 18

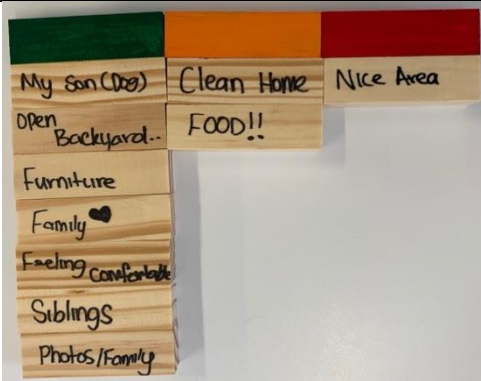
This young woman inscribed her blocks and created a tower, putting her baby on top followed by her family and her siblings. In this way, she prioritised her whānau. Then it was important for a house to be warm, safe, happy, comfortable and clean. Music and food were the remaining two characteristics about what made a house a home for her.

Being with whānau, especially their own children, was prioritised by these young mothers. This whānau may also include siblings, in-laws, and pets. They all contribute to what makes a house a home. The presence of important people in their lives was also part of what made a house comfortable and warm, along with the physical characteristics of the house.

The cleanliness of their house was something the young women had control over, and that they were able to ensure as a way of keeping their babies healthy. The importance of their home being in a safe neighbourhood was also included in their descriptions, along with the house having space outside that they could use. Other characteristics included music and food, furniture and the presence of photos. These characteristics were also about people being together and sharing, as well as remembering others that could not be with them.

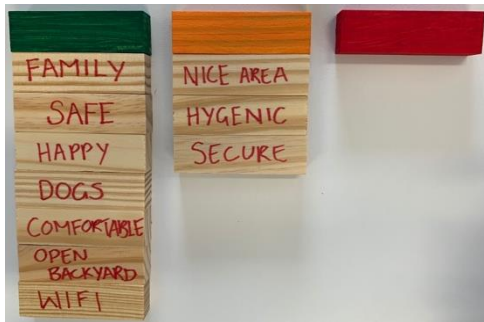
The young women then moved on to aligning their blocks with the traffic light blocks. Three of them were willing to share the result of thinking about whether their current accommodation had the characteristics they valued in a home (see Infobox 2).

Infobox 2: Examples of traffic light blocks



We don't live in a very nice area but we do have a good backyard though. We've got enough furniture. We don't always have a clean house – we've got so many kids in our house.

My Dad's not always cooking for us – [I'm not cooking] well not for a big family anyway. I like cooking for myself. I've got five siblings. But you're not going to cook for them? Not all the time.



Because we do have lots of all these things, but this one, like nice area – yeah, it's alright to live here but there's just a few people that I can't trust. And you just have to be careful of like those who are around. So, like the area's nice, I reckon it's just some of the people who are in it.

And, like, hygiene – I'm not saying that my house is dirty. It's just that we rent and our landlords need to fix, like, a few hazards. [My daughter] has to stay out of certain areas because it's a little bit dangerous if she goes in there. That's what I mean by this one [secure]. So if she touches some lose wires or something like that, like cables under the house.

Because if we didn't have our dogs we'd still be getting robbed and suff. That's why I put this one here [dogs].

We're just a dog family. The dogs are like our other children.



My daughter and my mother-in-law, and then once the house becomes clean it becomes warm and comfortable and that's when I get to do these two things [music, movie].

I've only got a few photos of my mum.

My mother-in-law doesn't cook 24-7, but then she does cook. Sometimes she works late.

And then my red one is my family, because as I said before, they're not always part of me.

Although the young women described how they had most of the things that made a house a home for them in their present accommodation, there was also a lack of options around their housing for at least one of them. One young woman had been going in and out of emergency and transitional housing with her young daughter for at least two and a half years and really wanted a house of her own. She was not finding this easy to achieve however.

“It’s tricky, it’s hard... I’ve got no family members I can go live with. The people I go stay with if I do get kicked out or have to leave the emergency housing... they already have a lot of people there in their two-bedroom... and we get ho-ha... It never works out when I go [stay] with other people; I need my own space.”

They talked about their age (19 years old or younger), not having any previous tenancy experience, and having baby/ies as potential barriers to them being able to find their own place. One had been told by a prospective landlord that babies ruined houses and found this hard to get around as she thought it was a judgement about her parenting. To these young women, such feedback was about them being young parents who were wrongly seen by others as irresponsible and not taking good care of their babies.

3.2 Session 2 – Getting a house that’s a home

In the initial part of the discussion the young women were asked about what it was like to be looking for housing. Some of the first issues described were about the availability and affordability of housing. They described it as “really hard getting housing” when they did not have much of an income. The housing that was available to them was depressingly expensive and was spoken about as if it would never be able to be a home for them and their children. This made some of those around the table express their gratitude that they had a good home with their parents.

“There’s not much available or, depending on our circumstances we have a criteria we have to fit. Like for my family, I’ve got two children and I’m only entitled to a two-bedroom home ...until my children are seven, then I’m allowed to go for a three-bedroom because I’ve got a boy and a girl... and there’s not much two-bedrooms around or, if so, they’re like \$450 [a week] for rent so I feel like it’s not worth it – paying \$450 for a little box, and then it’s not even nice or in a nice area.”

Even if they wanted to rent this kind of housing stock, they said they were not often looked at as potential tenants because of their age. As one young woman shared, “You get kind of looked at, or not even looked at because you’re young... a young mum.” Another young woman explained,

“Because of my age...and not having a previous renting record, just boarding... it’s real hard for me because I’m a solo mum now... I went to one house viewing... and I was wearing a blouse and a skirt, like a number one gear... and then my partner and baby came along and my partner had just finished sports...and he was in his farming gears... and [the landlord] was a farmer and he ended up offering my partner a job instead of asking us for more information about the house...”

She then said they queried her mothering ability and because she did not have much background material backing up her ability to be a good tenant she felt they did not want to engage with her. The landlord even disregarded the ‘Ready-to-Rent’ certificate she had gotten after doing a Ready-to-Rent programme, claiming it was meaningless to them. This was also seen as part of the discrimination and judgement they felt they received as young mothers. They anticipated that this

judgement might not be the case if they had more of an income and were seen as being able to afford to pay rent on a good quality house.

One young woman who was studying felt like she did not even get looked at when she went to viewings because she looked very young. She had been in transitional housing for five months and despaired about ever getting into her own place, even though she described herself as being happy where she was. She knew someone who had only just been offered a Kainga Ora house, after two-and-a-half years in transitional housing. The group also talked about people being moved out of seasonal worker accomodation that was being temporarily used as transitional housing. The arrival of seasonal workers meant that they needed the accomodati, as the housing was intended for who were arriving in Hawke’s Bay to pick fruit.

They have learned from experience to be careful about what they said when they inquired about rental properties. The advice they gave one another was along the lines of, “Speak about you and your family, but don’t go too much into detail ...so don’t even bring up anything about [lifestyle choices like drugs or alcohol].” Their reaction to one young woman who said she was “drug and alcohol-free” at a viewing was that she probably put ideas into the landlords head, and that she should not have said anything.⁴⁴

When the discussion then turned to what makes a house a home, the young women came up with a list similar to the characteristics identified in the first session (see Figure 2). There was a bit more emphasis on cleanliness and the introduction of discussion about house rules. They also talked about the things they would need if they moved out of emergency or transitional housing and into their own place. This was something of an imagination space; that is, being able to imagine what moving into their own place would be like and how they would replace their existing homewares with new things as well as getting other appliances and furnishings. For those who had things in storage, they looked forward to getting this out and into their own place and perhaps getting some new things.

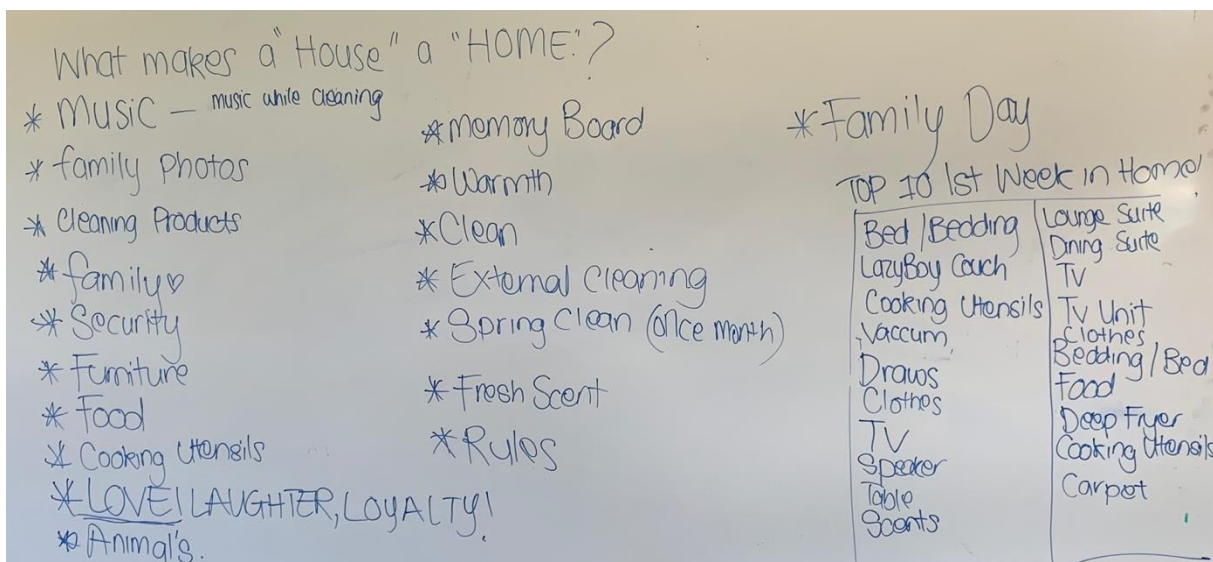


Figure 2. Whiteboard of characteristics that make a house a home

⁴⁴ After the group discussion, one of the young women practised what she should say to prospective landlords – checking in with the researcher that what she had come up with sounded alright.

“I’m happy where I am... but it’s just... I’ve got all my housing stuff already but I’ve just got no house to put it all up in... All I need is a [new] lounge suite [because my one is faded from being in the sun]... I bought all my stuff three years ago and I still don’t have a house.”

The young women did not think that homeownership was a real option for them to aspire to. Yet they were willing to consider options of shared housing for a time if at the end of it they could afford to buy their own house. One young woman described another possible scenario of putting another house onto the section where they were living with their parents in a whānau-owned home. Such scenarios may make opportunities for home-ownership real for young mothers and prompt them to consider how they might achieve homeownership; for example, finding someone who could support them to build their own mini-home.

4. Discussion

This study examined young Māori mothers' aspirations about housing and homemaking, and their perceptions of the constraints on their decision-making and choices. The HOMING method used in the first session with the young women put them firmly in charge of describing what makes a house a home for them, and in the second session they were encouraged to do so by one of the young women who was also at Te Tipu Whenua o Pa Harakeke who, whiteboard pen in hand, led them in a well-facilitated discussion of housing. Using inquiry methods that put young mothers firmly in the 'driving seat' like this means that we are more likely to hear about what makes a home for them and their children (Cram et al., 1997). The young women at Te Tipu Whenua o Pa Harakeke were also open to hearing about other options that could support them with rental accommodation and supports, and even to buy their own home. Such scenarios can make options more real for young mothers and facilitate discussion of whether they think options might work for them and their whānau. This discussion section seeks more understanding of what the young women shared and ends with some consideration of the study's methodology.

4.1 What makes a house a home?

People

The young mothers in this study prioritised people in their selection of things that make a house a home. They identified their child/ren, their whānau and others who were special to them as those whose presence brings warmth, laughter and happiness to a home. The young mothers in the *E Hine* study also described the importance of being connected to their support networks,⁴⁵ although this was not without tensions as they also wanted their own space. This was especially evident when their accommodation was crowded and tensions arose among household members. Moving out of crowded conditions into their own space, in turn, often improved their relationships with their whānau.⁴⁶ While crowding may have also been an issue for the young women in the present study, they still talked with fondness about living with and being supported by whānau. When housing split up an intergenerational whānau, with the young women's grandparents remaining in emergency accommodation while her and her parents moved into social housing, she spoke about the separation as an undesirable trade-off that was made so that some of her whānau could get into more permanent housing.

The people they live with can provide young mothers with a wider web of support that is considered essential for children and young parents to be able to thrive.⁴⁷ One of the young women who said her own family was not really part of her life, talked with fondness about the importance of her mother-in-law in her whakapapa of home. When Māori informants talked about what makes a house a home for whānau, they largely talked about the importance of people and place and the relationships to both that give meaning to their lives.⁴⁸ When Māori are surrounded by people they want to be in relationship with, and in a place that connects and grounds them in relationship with

⁴⁵ Adcock, Cram, & Lawton, 2019.

⁴⁶ Adcock et al., 2021.

⁴⁷ Pihama, 2012.

⁴⁸ Boulton et al., 2022; Cram, 2020.

the whenua, they draw from these relationships a sense of ontological security. In other words, a sense of security drawn from a world that is known to them and that supports their existence and identity *as* Māori.⁴⁹

The importance of people for making a house a home also recognised child rearing as a collective endeavour rather than an individual or nuclear unit responsibility,⁵⁰ although this may create tensions if young mothers feel their decision-making about how to parent their children is undermined by others in their household (e.g., their own mothers).⁵¹ Further research about how their children are parented might shine more of a light on how young mothers negotiate this when they share a house with their own parent(s).

The house rules discussed in the second session may also help facilitate engagement within a household, with the young women alluding to the impacts on their happiness if these rules are not followed. This may indicate that house rules help ensure that people respect one another and behave well when together in a house. It also speaks to there being times when house rules have not been followed and the potential impact this may have had on their feelings of comfort or safety.⁵² Having house rules may therefore be an expression of the young women's desire for spatial autonomy—in other words, having their own space within which to parent—or, at the very least, their desire to be able to predict how people will behave when they are in the same space as them and their children.

The people providing more formal supports were not mentioned – such as those at Te Tipu Whenua o Pa Harakeke and social workers. Although the provision of such support services is important for helping ensure the wellbeing of young mothers,⁵³ they may be ringfenced by them as existing outside the home rather than as something that contributes to making a home. This may also apply to the friendships young mothers form with one another at Te Tipu Whenua o Pa Harakeke and the socialising they do together outside of the kura.⁵⁴ More inquiry is needed to confirm this, including whether the HOMING method and other questions asked implied that formal supports and/or their informal social networks should not be included.

Resources

In their whakapapa of home, the young women included the things that nurture relationships among people in a household, such as cooking, food, family photos, and furniture. These aspects also enable a household to host others in their home, with cooking and the provision of food being an important aspect of manaaki (hospitality). Family photos and other taonga (treasures) on display can be both talking points as well as reminders of the whakapapa connections between hosts and visitors. This “constancy of surroundings”⁵⁵ – of people and resources – in a house fosters a sense of security in those living there. Those living in rental accommodation, however, could find this sense

⁴⁹ Laing, 1964.

⁵⁰ Pihama, Simmonds, & Waitoki, 2019.

⁵¹ Adcock et al., 2021.

⁵² Boulton et al., 2022, p. 49.

⁵³ Dale, 2013; Williamson-Garner, 2019.

⁵⁴ Williamson-Garner, 2019.

⁵⁵ Dupuis, 2012, p. 156.

of security challenged by tenancy agreements that put restrictions on the number of people able to live in accommodation and/or on what is able to be displayed (e.g., hung on walls).

When household members spend time together, then characteristics of a home such as laughter, happiness, comfort arose from these engagements. The space to do this – be it a backyard or a safe neighbourhood – were also seen to be important. The young women talked about their desire to live in neighbourhoods they perceived to be safe. If they could not do this, then they have balanced the trade-offs they have had to make to get a house with the addition of dogs that provide companionship as well as security. The dogs then become like whānau and may be described by them as ‘other children’.

In the 2018 General Social Survey, Māori, sole parents with children, and those living in non-owner-occupied housing were among the respondents who were less likely to rate their dwelling as ‘very suitable’ compared to the population as a whole. Sole-parents also reported that they felt significantly less safe in their neighbourhood after dark, and those living in areas of high deprivation were less likely than others to consider the location of their home suitable or very suitable. Those who are Māori, those who are young (15-24 years) and those not living in owner-occupied housing also rated their neighbourhood’s attractiveness (i.e., the attractiveness of buildings, roads, pathways, green spaces and parks) at around 6.5-6.7 out of 10. These shortfalls in the suitability and safety of their housing or the area in which they lived may challenge young Māori mothers’ sense of security and may also increase their mobility, especially if they cannot be countered through homemaking efforts and the presence of people who make a house a home.⁵⁶

Cleanliness

Hygiene and cleanliness was the third theme described by the young mothers for what makes a house a home, saying in the second session that spring cleaning regularly and also keeping the exterior of a house clean were important. Liveability was therefore dependent on cleanliness, with them doing a lot of work to try and achieve a standard of cleanliness that makes housing into a home for them.

Their focus on cleanliness may also be an expression of their desire for spatial autonomy; namely, that the space they and their children are occupying is hygienic. This may also be an act of resistance in the face of stigma about their parenting and/or house-keeping abilities.⁵⁷ While two of the young women said they only had some of the ‘clean home’ and ‘hygiene’ they thought was important for making a house a home, their attention to assessing this and the inclusion of ‘cleaning products’ in the list generated in the second session strongly suggest that their standards are reasonably high for the cleanliness of the environment they occupy. Acknowledging that a house is not always clean because there are a lot of children present implies they know that children often make a mess and that cleaning products are necessary for cleaning up after them.

Cleanliness may also be connected to the other sensory elements the young women listed for what makes a house a home. This included sound (music), taste (food), visual (stuff), smell. In addition to

⁵⁶ Stats NZ, 2020.

⁵⁷ Bev James, personal communication, August 2021.

being an important health related activity, cleaning would presumably also create a home that looked and smelt fresh and therefore also have a sensory payoff.

4.2 Getting a house that can be a home

The young women in this study were only really thinking about rental accommodation options if they were not living at home. If they were seeking to rent in the private rental market then they would be dealing with landlords or property managers who may be prejudiced against Māori.⁵⁸ The young women had found that these same people were often also prejudiced against young people, and more-so against young mothers. The administrator for Te Tipu Whenua o Pa Harakeke searched for accommodation that would be suitable for the young mothers and only put places where the rent was less than \$500 a week on the noticeboard. Looking at the small, ordinary places that were being rented for between \$380 to \$500 a week was disheartening. What was even more disheartening were the stories of young mothers who kept applying for such places and were turned down, time and time again, sometimes without even getting a viewing.

To try and counter discriminatory views, some of the young women have learned how to approach prospective landlords. Yet even though they present themselves as good potential tenants by what they wear and what they say, they are still hard-pressed to be considered. In addition, the private rental market exposes these young women and their children to housing that is in poor condition (e.g., lacking insulation, hard to heat),⁵⁹ particular in Hastings where the TPU is located).⁶⁰ Young Māori are particularly vulnerable in this market as they may be required to accept poorer housing just to gain a tenancy.⁶¹

Spinnewijn and Robert argue that economic recovery in the European Union following the COVID-19 pandemic “can be built on effective, inclusive and sustainable regulation of housing markets.”⁶² We need to consider this pathway in Aotearoa New Zealand, where a mythology of the housing ‘crisis’ is that we just need to build more housing. Rather than the bluntness of housing volume, we need a housing market that provides quality, affordable and secure housing options for all, especially those being asked to navigate an increasingly inhospitable and unaffordable rental accommodation.⁶³ It is increasingly difficult for prospective tenants to find rental accommodation close to the people and places that provide them with a sense of community and social protection, along with peace of mind.⁶⁴ In 2015, Mills and colleagues concluded, “the future does not look favourable for vulnerable people seeking secure and appropriate housing”.⁶⁵ Today we are seeing this prediction played out in a number of contexts, including for young whānau.

Finally, their pathway to homeownership seemed a distant dream to the young women in this study until possible scenarios were mentioned. These were just discussion ideas in the second session but the interest of the young women in other pathways and opportunities for homeownership as well as

⁵⁸ Saville-Smith & Saville-Smith, 2018.

⁵⁹ Kiro, et al., 2019.

⁶⁰ HUD, HDC & MSD, 2019.

⁶¹ Amore, Viggers, & Howden-Chapman, 2020.

⁶² FEANTSA & Abbé Pierre Foundation, 2021, p. 4.

⁶³ Mills, et al., 2015.

⁶⁴ Thorns, 1992.

⁶⁵ Mills, et al., 2015, p. 20.

good quality, affordable rental accommodation, strongly suggests that future research with them would benefit from the discussion of such scenarios. It is important, however, that any scenario is actually attainable for them and not just another dream that they might aspire to but not expect to ever achieve.

4.3 Reflections about the study methods

In this final section of the discussion we reflect on the methods that were used in this study. According to James Berghan, the developer of the HOMING method,

The blocks are like a physical manifestation of your 'whakapapa of home'. If we think about 'whakapapa' as being the act of layering, of placing things in layers, we're trying to identify the different layers of what makes a home, and then attempting to go through that process of layering/building a tower to physically depict your 'whakapapa of home'.⁶⁶

The HOMING method allowed the young women to demonstrate their own whakapapa of home, and to be explicit about whether or not their current accommodation aligned with that whakapapa. When one of them described a causal relationship between the things she valued (that is, cleanliness leads to warmth and comfort which, in turn, sets the scene for her enjoyment of music and movies), it highlighted for us the importance of understanding the relationships people see between different elements of what makes a home.

The other learning from this small study is that even when someone is in charge of describing what makes a house a home for them, an explicit depiction of whether or not their current accommodation is a home for them may be difficult to contemplate and/or share. We cannot say for sure why one young woman did not want to share the alignment of her home characteristics across the 'traffic light' blocks. It did, however, highlight the need for more sensitivity in the use of this method when those participating may not be in good housing circumstances. As it was, the invitation to share was made with no expectation, and hopefully no pressure, that the young women would do so. We also take away from this experience the need for us to develop an information sheet of contacts and support websites that participants may find useful if they need support with sorting out housing issues. This is something we would work on in collaboration with the organisations that host us for this research, to help ensure that the information is locally appropriate and useful.

The hui method worked well as one of the young mothers took over and led a discussion around the whiteboard about what makes a house a home. She got us back on track after our round-table discussion got slightly side-tracked after half an hour, delving into a ten minute discussion of hair removal. While ostensibly not about housing or home, this discussion could be seen as being about bodily autonomy and the young women exerting decision-making control over the look and feel of their bodies. As Anna Adcock has described,⁶⁷ the body is a space that a woman is able to exert agency over to create comfort when her home space may not provide comfort. Following up on this lead may be a worthwhile future research pursuit.

⁶⁶ Berghan, July 2021, personal communication.

⁶⁷ Adcock, July 2021, personal communication.

5. Conclusion

This small study highlighted the characteristics that young mothers feel make a house a home for them and their whānau. Many of the characteristics they described make for a ‘warm’ home. The people in a house may generate warmth through whanaungatanga (kinship) and their love for one another. These shore up occupants’ sense of identity and security. However this can also be undermined by socioeconomic constraints (e.g., financial hardship), as well as by the ongoing stress of housing insecurity. Warmth is also about a home not being physically cold⁶⁸ and in a good location. All these elements of warmth—physical (house), social, cultural, and community—are important for the health and wellness of young children and the adults in their household.⁶⁹

This study also highlighted the frustrations experienced by young mothers in making their aspirations for a home a reality in the face of others’ expectations of, surveillance of and stereotypes about them. Private landlords who dismiss their efforts to look like, sound like and be (e.g., through their attendance at programmes like ‘Ready to Rent’) good tenants are probably not the audience this report can speak to, because they have already made up their minds and have a commitment to racism and prejudice that stems from the colonisation of this country rather than from some individual quirk.⁷⁰ Rather, the audience for this report is the Iwi (tribes) and post-settlement groups whose Treaty of Waitangi redress has returned to them land and resources that now feed their housing moemoeā (dreams) and actions. If they have not already done so, these Māori collectives should commit to securing the future for coming generations through housing solutions today that provide quality and affordable housing—and houses that can be homes—that meets the needs of young whānau and keeps them truly warm.

⁶⁸ Howden-Chapman et al., 2013.

⁶⁹ James & Saville-Smith, 2010.

⁷⁰ Cram, Te Huia, Te Huia, Williams, & Williams, 2019.

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