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TOI ORA, WHATUORA

Exploring whatu pedagogy and wellbeing

Hinekura Smith*

Abstract

This article explores whatu as a Māori arts pedagogy, focusing on how it extends beyond traditional practice into a space of oranga for practitioners and learners alike. Drawing from qualitative interviews with three experienced wāhine kaiwhatu, the study examines their early learning experiences, teaching methods and reflections on how their pedagogy has evolved over time. The findings reveal that whatu pedagogy is deeply embedded in intergenerational transmission, cultural identity and creative practices that contribute to Māori community wellbeing. The research highlights the importance of critically reflecting on how Māori arts practices are taught, emphasising that pedagogies should be adaptive and responsive to the learner's needs while preserving cultural integrity. By theorising whatu as a pedagogy for oranga, the article contributes to the under-researched field of Māori pedagogies and advocates for broader engagement with Māori creative arts as a vital component of flourishing Māori futures.

Keywords

intergenerational teaching transmission, Māori pedagogy, toi Māori, wellbeing, whatu practice

Introduction

Whatu is the toi Māori (Māori arts) practice used to create whatu kākahu. Internationally renowned for their '"craftswomanship", whatu kākahu are held in museums around the world as evidence of the Western ethnographic obsession with collecting and documenting the exotic "other" (Roth, 1924; C. Smith & Laing, 2011). In Aotearoa New Zealand, haka, raranga and whatu form part of a toi Māori resurgence to promote oranga practices that revitalise and transmit ancestral knowledge, foster cultural identity and support Māori community connections through

creative practice (O'Connor, 2016; Pearse, 2023; Pihama et al., 2014). The Māori cloak weaving practice of whatu, centred in this article, is more than practice and artefact—it is a sacred act that weaves together threads of culture and identity (H. Smith, 2017, 2019, 2021).

This article extends the practice of whatu beyond its well-documented practice, and more recent scholarly theorisations as a methodology (H. Smith, 2019, 2023a, 2023b) to consider whatu pedagogy as an oranga or wellbeing practice. Taking time to consider our pedagogical approach to practice—the *how* and *why* we teach and

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learn—is important. As we continue to revitalise toi Māori practices that connect us to ancestral knowledge, it is also possible to unconsciously reinscribe colonial thinking and ways of learning in our pedagogy. How we teach toi Māori is inevitably influenced by how we were taught. Critically reflecting on how we teach "old" knowledge (H. Smith, 2019) in "new" ways to the next generation extends toi Māori practice into pedagogical thinking that places importance on the oranga aspect of toi Māori that brings us closer to our ancestors.

I am a Te Rarawa and Ngā Puhi woman, mother, teacher, kaiwhatu and Kaupapa Māori researcher. I encountered whatu as an 18 year old when I learned raranga from my Te Rarawa relation in a community night class. My creative Māori self felt closer to my whakapapa through the language and knowledge of raranga, where I found joy in the practice of learning, making and gifting. My developing teenager identity, reo and tikanga wove together with my whakapapa and my passion for teaching and learning. I became a secondary school te reo Māori teacher who, even in my early career, was intensely interested in the art and methods of teaching. My PhD research (H. Smith, 2017) and subsequent publications about whatu theory (H. Smith, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023a, 2023b) contribute to scholarship around the growing toi Māori practice and methodology. Now my creative Māori theorist self extends its research curiosity to think about toi Māori pedagogy.

Supported by a one-year Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga grant, this article is one of three woven strands that form a scoping study about toi Māori practice "as teacher". A collaboration between three established Māori arts scholar-practitioners, we think and write in to the under-researched field of Māori pedagogies to highlight how toi Māori contributes to flourishing Māori futures. Together, we are developing pedagogical theory (Goldsmith et al., 2024) across three embodied art forms—whatu, raranga and haka—to complexify thinking about our creative forms as more than the production of artefact or cultural performance. Prompted by eminent Māori educationalist Wally Penetito's (2010) critical question in *What's Māori About Māori Education?*, this scoping study considers what is Māori about how we teach toi Māori and how might contemporary ideas about toi Māori pedagogy support whānau Māori wellbeing.

Our collaborative theorisation contributes to scholarship around Māori pedagogies for wellbeing, Māori and Indigenous arts and education scholarship, and broader kaupapa Māori goals of enabling flourishing Māori futurities through our own kaupapa Māori arts-based research lens. The resurgence of Māori arts practice over the past 50 years offers a timely opportunity for practising toi Māori scholars to extend our creative practice to include a theorisation of our art and its pedagogy, entwining theory with practice to develop a Māori arts praxis for wellbeing. In doing so, we hope to encourage other Māori and Indigenous a/r/tographers (R. Irwin, 2004; S. Irwin & Springgay, 2009)—that is, the intertwined identity of artist, researcher and teacher—to critically reflect on, then articulate, their pedagogical practice.

This article forwards a developing theorisation of whatu pedagogy, drawing on qualitative interview data gathered from three experienced kaiwhatu. Ethically consented, one-on-one interviews were conducted with three wāhine who are teachers and highly regarded practitioners of whatu. Each wāhine kaiwhatu agreed to be identified by their first name and iwi affiliations. Semi-structured questions explored their early learning experiences of whatu—how they learned and from whom, how much of their learning experience they recognised as embedded in their teaching pedagogy, and how and why their teaching has evolved. I begin with a brief overview of pedagogy literature from both Western and Māori thought, then provide some context for theorising whatu pedagogy as an oranga strategy. I introduce the three wāhine kaiwhatu, before sharing a selection of themes that emerged from their storied interviews around how and why they teach whatu the way they do.

At the intersection of Māori creative arts and Western pedagogical thought

Western pedagogy is understood as the deliberate processes by which knowledge attitudes or skills are conveyed (Miller & Findlay, 1996), the systemised learning principles or "methods" of teaching (Good & Merkel, 1973), or the *how* and *why* we teach and learn the way we do. Internationally renowned pedagogy theorists Piaget, Vygotsky, Brunner and Freire shaped Western teaching pedagogy and, therefore, the ways that we teach and learn in the Western-predominant education system in Aotearoa. Goldsmith et al. (2024) offer a unique kaupapa Māori literature review of pedagogy through a Māori arts lens to intersect these ideas with Māori pedagogies (Hemara, 2000). Despite a groundswell of interest in and attention on "Māori arts", particularly Māori performing

arts, they conclude that there is a dearth of literature at this intersection with pedagogy and further encourage other kaupapa Māori arts researchers, practitioners and teachers to write into this gap.

Thinking about teaching and learning is not new to Māori, yet Māori pedagogy remains under-researched from a kaupapa Māori research perspective (Hemara, 2000; Pihama et al., 2004; H. Smith, 2017). Almost 25 years ago, Hemara's book *Māori Pedagogies* (2000) scanned a broad range of sources to canvas historical and contemporary approaches to teaching and learning in Māori education, including principles that guide Māori pedagogies, key findings on what works and the challenges to Māori education in the early 2000s. Of relevance is that Māori arts pedagogy is afforded one line in the book: "because the arts are considered particular forms of individual and collective expression they are linked to imagination, thinking and feeling" (Hemara, 2000, p. 57). The aim of developing whatu pedagogy, as an element of a broader toi Māori pedagogy, is to encourage toi Māori practitioners and Māori teachers more broadly to elevate toi Māori from practice, product and performance to include a focus on how and why we teach and learn through our arts practice.

Te reo Māori terminology holds key clues as to how Māori pedagogy might be better understood. The pluralistic term ako means to both teach and learn (Hemara, 2000; Lee, 2008). The terms tuākana and tēina are often used to describe familial older or younger siblings (Williams, 1997) but also to acknowledge the teaching and learning exchange that flows both intergenerationally and intragenerationally. Both terms suggest a shift away from egocentric and meritocratic individual learning to a collective beneficial learning approach that is reciprocal and iterative (Goldsmith et al., 2024). Other examples such as teaching and learning through whakapapa, waiata, whakataukī and whaikōrero (Derby, 2023; Hemara, 2000; Pihama et al., 2004;) offer creative, oral and artistic pedagogical approaches to learning. Important questions to consider are what makes a pedagogy Māori and what are our cultural assumptions? Penetito (2004) suggests three fundamental ideas: (a) a sense of belonging to place, (b) a relationship of cohabitors between themselves and their environment, and (c) embodying ways of knowing and being with an imbued "conscious union of mind and spirit" (p. 6). Notions of toi Māori pedagogy are best understood through our reo and concepts.

Beyond this scoping research we intend to wānanga further with mātanga reo to develop a te reo Māori term that encapsulates toi Māori pedagogy. Words such as āhuatanga ako and pūtoiako that already exist in Māori education are used to describe pedagogy more generally. We are interested in advancing a term that speaks specifically to the creative arts approaches to teaching and learning that centre mātauranga Māori, reo, tikanga and Māori aspirations to live flourishing lives through the arts.

In the mid to late 19th century, whatu practice was closely observed and documented by early Pākehā ethnographers (C. Smith & Laing, 2011) who viewed our culturally bound practice through a colonial, and almost always, male gaze. One hundred years later, Māori male scholars such as Te Rangi Hiroa (1924) and Hirini Moko Mead (1990a, 1990b) created meticulous diagrams to document weaving processes, and photographed and catalogued a wide range of whatu kākahu (Henare, 2005; C. Smith & Laing, 2011) as the knowledge and practice of weaving traditional cloaks shrank to small pockets of expertise across Aotearoa. While these historical records have played an important role in revitalising whatu practice (Evans & Ngarimu, 2005), there are few, if any, observations that document explicitly the pedagogical underpinnings of whatu. We are left to wonder: What pedagogy was at play? Did learners ask questions or did they rely on watching and listening? Was whatu practice a skill for survivance or a space of oranga? Importantly, how do we now want to purposively teach and learn whatu in ways that continue to revitalise the practice as well as providing oranga space that connects us to ancestral knowledge?

The first hui of the national Māori and Pacific weavers held in Tokomaru Bay in 1983 (Te Awekotuku, 1991) provided a pivotal moment in the revitalisation of whatu practice and led to the establishment of a national weaving collective, Te Roopu Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa. Since then, publications and photographic catalogues, "how to weave" books and community "cloak making classes" have proliferated. Thanks to this wide range of scholarship and practice, whatu is no longer in danger—except from commercialisation, cultural appropriation and capitalism, but that argument is reserved for another article.

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (1991) documented this first gathering in her article "We Will Become Ill If We Stop Weaving". It was a timely reminder that mahi toi and oranga are inextricably linked— to lose one is to gravely endanger the other. Almost 40 years later, with toi Māori practices no longer on the precipice, Māori scholars are extending our

thinking beyond practice to explore the methodology (Campbell, 2019; Te Kanawa, 2022) and now pedagogy of toi Māori. The attention given to Māori pedagogies as legitimate ways of teaching and learning resists the reification of Western pedagogy that risks dismissing Māori knowledge and our learning practices and processes as inferior (Bishop, 1996). Yet little attention has been paid to toi Māori practice as pedagogy—how we teach and learn our practice and why. The next section shares themes that emerged from interviews with three wāhine kaiwhatu who have years of teaching and learning experience both in formal institutional settings and in community- and marae-based learning environments. Their insights about how they teach and learn offer ways to think about the pedagogy of whatu and, more broadly, developing toi Māori pedagogical theory.

Introducing the kaiwhatu

Paula Rigby was raised in Ōtautahi with whakapapa connections to Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu ki te te Wairoa, Ngāi Tūhoe and Ngāti Ruapane, and describes herself as having her "fingers and toes just about everywhere" in the South Island. Paula's experience learning to whatu speaks to her connection to her cultural heritage. Her grandmother's influence was significant, with vivid memories of her weaving shaping Paula's understanding of, and connection to, her arts practice. For Paula, whatu is a way to connect with her ancestors, providing a sense of continuity and belonging:

> I remember watching my grandmother weave and the pride she took in her work. For me, weaving is a way to connect with my past, to honour my ancestors, and to find peace and relaxation in my busy life.

Edna Pahewa comes from a long line of highly esteemed master weavers, which meant Edna and her twin sister were "weaving before we could walk". She grew up in Rotorua at Whakarewarewa, where tourism provided their "bread and butter" family income:

> Weaving was what the tourists liked to buy. So that was what we had to do. My nanny believed that when you were old enough you had to contribute to the family, which for us was making piupiu. That was a big part of our upbringing. Going down to the ngāwhā to boil flax. You could see the Pākehā almost cringing with pity at these poor little kids boiling harakeke in the hot pools because they thought it was unsafe. Our livelihood was weaving.

> It was something we had to do. There were no ifs and buts or "I want to go and play"; it was "get and do your mahi" to help pay the bills.

Te Hemoata Henare was raised in Te Tai Tokerau and had whakapapa connections to Ngāti Kurī and Ngāti Kahu on her father's side and Ngāti Hine, Te Kapotai and Te Whakatōhea on her mother's side. Te Hemoata learned from her aunty and her grandfather, and her narrative shares the practical and purposeful nature of toi Māori. Weaving, along with other cultural practices, was more than aesthetic, serving essential functions within the community, which highlights its role in daily Māori life and cultural preservation:

> Growing up, weaving was not just something beautiful to look at; it had a purpose. Whether it was making clothes or other essential items, everything we did was deeply connected to our way of life and our cultural practices.

Early toi Māori learning experiences

The three wāhine kaiwhatu, from different regions of Aotearoa and different childhood backgrounds shared their early memories of toi Māori learning that has influenced the way they now teach. Edna's teaching approach, for example, was formed by childhood experiences with her grandmother, who encouraged watching and doing, and gave minimal direct instruction. This hands-on "look and listen" approach encouraged practical engagement, close observation and listening skills in order to take up tacit knowledge:

> In the old days, we learned by watching and doing. You didn't ask questions. You watched and listened. Today, I try to be more supportive and understanding of my students' struggles, adapting my teaching to fit their needs while still preserving the essence of our traditional methods.

Decades of teaching in formal and informal contexts has honed Edna's pedagogy to be adaptive and responsive, embracing more inclusive teaching methods that accommodate ever diversifying and increasingly complex learner needs. Edna's pedagogy reflects a critically conscious balance between preserving traditional methods and adapting to contemporary educational paradigms. Her narrative is deeply embedded in the cultural heritage and ancestral connections that define her identity as a weaver:

> Weaving was a part of our daily lives. My

grandmother taught us the skills, and it was our responsibility to contribute to the household. It wasn't just about making things; it was about preserving our heritage and staying connected to our ancestors.

Her grandmother, a pivotal figure in her upbringing, played a crucial role in teaching her and her siblings the art of weaving. This intergenerational transmission of skills and knowledge underscores the importance of familial bonds and ancestral heritage in Edna's weaving practice.

Paula shared how her creativity was also nurtured by her grandmothers—one Māori and one Pākehā—who taught her in different ways:

When my Māori grandmother was alive, I watched her do tāniko. She would enter the Māori Women's Welfare League competitions. I remember once, she lent Mum a pōtae she had woven and she said, "Don't lose it," because she was putting it in the competition. We went to the beach and the hat fell off Mum's head so we all had to chase it before it got into the sea! While I have vivid memories as a child of her weaving, I never had the opportunity to learn off her because she passed away when I was quite young.

Paula's Māori grandmother provided her first memories of toi Māori and her Pākehā grandmother nurtured her creative making—an approach she now takes up in her own practice:

I've had a creative bent right from my childhood. My Pākehā grandmother invested a lot of time and energy teaching me how to sew, embroider and crochet. I only found out when I was older that a lot of the time she was only one step ahead of me! She would say, "So what's the next project?" And I would say, "Oh, I want to learn to crochet." So she'd go to the library to get books out and teach herself and then teach me the basics of everything, which was beautiful. I like that whakaaro to teach the basics and let the person develop and grow their own creativity as they learn more. I guess I teach like that too.

Te Hemoata's experiences reflect a life immersed in toi Māori. Her upbringing in a Tai Tokerau rich environment where kapa haka, being at the marae, working at tangi and weaving were integral parts of daily life. Toi Māori was not taught as discrete lessons or classes as we might think of teaching now, but was integrated into practical and communal aspects of being part of,

and contributing to, community life. Learning to raranga as a child was to adorn a carving that was to be unveiled. Making piupiu was to support the local haka group. Weaving baskets was to hold food for the hāngī. Each toi Māori "art" practice was practical and practice based.

It should come as no surprise that grandmothers, aunts and other extended whānau play a role in how we develop our own toi Māori pedagogy, given that parents were, and are still, often occupied with providing for the whānau. If we consider that our childhood experiences of toi Māori learning emerge from a particular socio-historical time and place—for these three wāhine kaiwhatu the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s—it is interesting to ponder how the prevailing societal pressures around Māori language and culture, prosperity and employment, the place of toi Māori and the place of women, for example, influence how they were taught.

Reflecting on their own pedagogy

Each wāhine kaiwhatu appreciated the opportunity to reflect on their toi Māori pedagogy—explained to them as the why and how they teach the way they do. Paula remarked, "No one has ever asked me that before," a sentiment echoed by Edna, who mentioned that people often asked her *who* she learned from but not *how*. The wāhine kaiwhatu were asked to reflect on how they learned to whatu and how their learning experiences now influence their own teaching pedagogy.

Like Edna, Te Hemoata learned through observation and minimal conversation. Her learning experiences with her aunt were characterised by a "look and listen" approach, through which learners observed and practiced with little explicit instruction:

We learned by watching and doing, not by asking questions. Today, I teach in a similar way, focusing on building relationships and understanding the cultural context. It's not about perfection; it's about connection.

Te Hemoata's pedagogy emphasises the importance she places on whanaungatanga in the transmission of cultural knowledge, focusing on the process of fostering deep cultural connections rather than the product or achieving technical perfection.

Paula's whatu pedagogy is built on incremental learning and inclusivity. She advocates starting with basic whatu techniques and gradually introducing more complex skills. By initially using

contemporary materials such as mop string and wool, Paula ensures that learners are not discouraged by the time-intensive nature of preparing traditional materials. Important to note here is that graduating to using traditional materials is always the goal:

> I believe in starting with the basics and using materials that are easy to handle. Once my students are comfortable, we move on to traditional natural materials. This way, they build confidence and stay motivated to learn. I've seen wāhine discouraged trying to extract muka from harakeke. It takes time and skill to master, which they do eventually, and once you get them past that, they find the joy in it. I want them to love mahi whatu.

Paula's pedagogical approach reflects my teaching approach, which has. developed over years of teaching rangatahi. I want to build connection to, and confidence within, the learner to support their sustained interest in whatu, which naturally leads them to want to use natural materials. Even with her experience of being surrounded by traditional materials and teaching practices, Edna also spoke to the value of beginning with contemporary whatu materials:

> We were taught on wool; we weren't taught with muka. Even back in Nanny's and Mum's time. A lot of Mum's pieces were made with wool because she was so busy and travelled a lot. It wasn't until after you developed your skills that you advanced eventually to muka. But for the learner, I swear by the contemporary wool in learning the techniques first, and then you get into muka once you know the process and you've got the techniques down.

Paula's whatu pedagogy of understanding learners' motivations and tailoring her teaching to individual needs underscores her inclusive approach, fostering a supportive environment for skill development and nurturing a love of the art through a sense of achievement. There is varied opinion about the use of "traditional" or natural materials versus contemporary materials in teaching whatu. I do not argue that one way is more correct than the other. Instead, I encourage those who teach whatu to reflect on what motivates their *why* they choose to initiate learners using either set of materials and where this *why* comes from.

Edna's approach to teaching whatu is inextricably tied to her weaving upbringing. Her grandmother's teaching influence instilled a strong work ethic, discipline and a focus on crafting excellence, which Edna carries into her own teaching and practice. These early experiences developed in her perseverance in and dedication to mastering traditional arts. The responsibility Edna feels to sustain toi Māori practices was clear throughout our discussion as she spoke about connecting to her ancestors and her commitment to passing on her knowledge. She views weaving as a way to honour her heritage and contribute to the preservation of Māori culture:

> My grandmother was very strict, but her teachings instilled a discipline in me that I carry forward in my own teaching. Weaving is a way to honour my heritage and ensure that our traditions are passed on. It's really hard for me to put myself back there and to think how was I taught because after 50 years you've just got it down to a fine art and can do it blindfolded! Back when I was learning we didn't get a whack if we were wrong. Instead you would look up and Nanny would be watching and quietly shaking her head saying, "Kao, kao." [no]. Not like teaching nowadays. We'll show learners how to do just about everything one-on-one and explain it over and over, whereas with Nanny it was you watch and then you could have a go.

Edna shared an interest in developing her pedagogy while teaching at Polytech, where she was required to complete a Certificate in Adult Teaching (CAT).

> Mum was dead against it. She said, "What's a CAT course?" I explained it's a course on adult teaching. And she said, "Who are they to tell us how to teach our arts? Just teach them how we taught you." I said, "Mum, they're teaching us a way to reach the learner," but she couldn't see it. When I did the course, it was really quite interesting because it was everything we did anyway. Showing and explaining and then getting the learner to do it. I did the CAT course. And that was what I reckon changed me to be more aware of the learner and the struggles that they were having.

Even as an expert weaver, Edna's openness to be a learning teacher reflects a commitment to developing and evolving her pedagogy.

Challenges and changes teaching

The wāhine kaiwhatu discussed challenges that influence how and why they teach whatu, such as the ongoing colonisation of our knowledge, including language loss, cultural appropriation and commercialisation. Edna raised the challenge of enfolding Māori weaving into institutional

assessment frameworks to award degrees and certificates as presenting both opportunities and challenges to an oranga-centred toi pedagogy. Edna's mother, esteemed weaver Emily Schuster, opposed the formalisation of traditional toi Māori practices, fearing it would dilute their cultural integrity. Edna said:

> Institutionalising our traditional arts has its challenges. While it can provide structure and recognition, it's crucial to ensure that we don't lose the essence of our cultural practices in the process.

Despite these concerns, Edna acknowledges the need to adapt and evolve teaching modes and methods to fit contemporary educational contexts while preserving core cultural values and practices. Like Edna, Te Hemoata and Paula have a wealth of teaching experience across institutional, community, school and marae learning environments. All three are examples of reflective and responsive whatu pedagogues with the ability to balance cultural integrity and adapting to modern educational requirements to adjust to the ever-changing dynamic of teaching toi Māori.

Paula raised the challenge of global access that social media enables for teaching and learning toi Māori. While social media and online learning platforms can provide new opportunities for learning, they also pose challenges related to the commodification and appropriation of toi Māori:

> Social media is a double-edged sword. It can help spread awareness about our art, but it can also lead to misrepresentation. We need to be vigilant about preserving the authenticity of our practices and how these are taught.

It is possible to teach the practice of whatu online, making our art form available to the world through free YouTube clips and online fee-charging teaching platforms. While our tūpuna may never have imagined it possible, whatu is being practised by people all over the world, some of whom have never set foot in Aotearoa, engaged in our language and culture or held within their hands traditional weaving materials such as muka and harakeke. Such a global open access pedagogy raises questions about cultural appropriation and the selective uptake of Māori ancestral knowledge absent of the important whanaungatanga that the three wāhine kaiwhatu discuss in depth. The impact of teaching toi Māori online is a subject that warrants further research to explore what

motivates and informs this "new" toi Māori pedagogy when the narrative and relationship to ancestral knowledge may not be safely maintained.

Te Hemoata reflected on the effects of colonisation on toi Māori and on teaching practice over time. One such effect was the loss of traditional practices, including the suppression of toi Māori, particularly after the passing of the Tohunga Suppression Act 1907, which was intended to stop people using traditional medicines, practices and beliefs that had a "spiritual" element. For example, Māori carving was classed as "demonic" anti-Christian idolatry. Legislating to limit Māori cultural expression had a profound impact on the transmission of cultural knowledge—a government approach that is being played out again 120 years later:

> Colonisation and the suppression of our arts have had lasting impacts. It's important to reclaim and revitalise our traditions, adapting them to fit contemporary contexts while staying true to their core values.

Despite the historical and contemporary challenges, Te Hemoata's pedagogy works to reclaim and revitalise traditional weaving arts alongside its language. She shared a sadness that much of the whatu terminology that she was taught is not specific to Tai Tokerau but comes from early publications using weaving terms from other areas in Aotearoa. Te Hemoata and her whānau are actively rebuilding a Tai Tokerau weaving lexicon by researching and recalling "old" weaving terms. Even more exciting is that they are creating "new" language to describe the process of weaving:

> I often sit with my son and his partner and say "Okay, watch me, and describe what I'm doing." Because he's a composer matatau i te reo and kapa haka, he can put words to my actions. In this way we sit down and come up with kupu and ideas that I then take to my students.

Keeping toi Māori practices alive is not only about what we make. It is about keeping vital all aspects of toi Māori, such as its language, practices and pedagogy. Whatu terminology is deeply embedded in maternal knowledge, for example, the aho is the same term as the umbilical cord that connects mother to child. The vertical strands or whenu hold the same name as the placenta that nurtures the child in utero. The term kahu refers to the amniotic sac we carry our babies in before they are birthed into the world, after which we continue

to cloak them both tangibly and metaphorically in our protection (H. Smith, 2017, 2020). To revitalise toi Māori practice absent of its embodied and storied language is to do only half the job.

Toi and ora

Te Awekotuku reminded us over 30 years ago that we will become ill if we stop weaving. How then might exploring how and why we teach whatu weaving keep us well? Here, the kaiwhatu share their thoughts on the connection between learning whatu and oranga as wellbeing. Paula discussed an oranga connection beyond personal wellbeing:

> It's deeper than just being well or happy. It's a connection to your tūpuna because we are using the same techniques that they passed down to us. Sitting in the same way. Why did I start weaving? Well, I didn't have a close relationship with my grandmother but I wanted to connect to her more so I thought if I learnt to weave . . . it was a way to connect, and even now that she's passed, I can still feel that connection to her. I hope that she's proud of what I've done. I don't think people understand or value the hauora or the rongoā that comes from being creative because we are all creative beings

Paula's vivid memories of her grandmother's weaving provide a rich context for her own practice. Weaving is more than craft to Paula; it is a passion that provides a sense of connection and oranga:

> Seeing my students develop their skills and connect with their heritage brings me immense joy. Weaving is not just a craft; it's a passion that provides a deep sense of connection and fulfilment.

Paula speaks to the creativity, resilience and emotional fulfilment that comes from practising a whatu pedagogy that she has developed to help others connect to ancestral knowledge.

Teaching for purpose, perfection or excellence

An unexpected theme emerged from the three wāhine kaiwhatu around their pedagogical approach to addressing learners' mistakes. Edna shared a childhood learning experience of making a tāniko pari under her grandmother's tutelage:

> I get to the end of a pari and show it to my nanny. I was beaming because I had finished! She looked at it and she was happy for me too. And then right at the top she saw a mistake. I had to take that whole pari off right to the top. I was so deflated. Nanny said, "You take it right back to there; you weren't concentrating on your pattern." The mistake wasn't in the aho tapu; it was further down. Somehow it should have put my whole pattern out, but I had managed to cover it up and carry on mistakenly because I didn't know until she pointed it out. That's probably the hardest lesson in my learning. But it's a good part of my teaching because I tell my students now, if you make a mistake anywhere, you'll be taking it off.

Edna's experience might seem harsh in today's modern learning context, but it served as an unforgettable reminder to Edna that being focused and present with your whatu practice is a form of oranga in our often distracting and multitasked contemporary lives:

> My own mokopuna last night was doing his tāniko piece and he saw a mistake up further because he was busy watching the [King Charles] coronation. I gently reminded him you've got other things on your mind and you've made a mistake because you're not focusing on what you're doing.

Te Hemoata learned from her grandfather that relationships or whanaungatanga made through learning to whatu was as important, if not more so, than the perfection of the product:

> Weaving something is the bonus—it's the whanaungatanga that comes with it that was more important for my grandfather. It's about being in space together, it's about the kōrero that comes out. It's about the story that's being woven into this kākahu.
>
> Some people find a mistake and they'll undo two months of work. My approach is that it's all part of the story. If you can learn from that mistake and you change your approach, then that's part of your story. Other kaiwhatu have different approaches to that; for some, if there's a mistake in the tāniko, it's all got to come off if they want it to be perfect.

My whatu pedagogy is undoubtedly influenced by many years as a secondary school teacher. Being student-centred meant making learning engaging, challenging, sometimes fun and always achievable. In my experience, teenagers were best motivated when they felt a sense of achievement. Therefore, my teaching was intentionally scaffolded with clearly explained and attainable goals while also offering opportunities for them to experiment,

be creative and learn from their mistakes. More important to me than the perfect whatu—whatever that means—is the knowledge that learners love the art form and all that it entails.

Paula discussed a similar approach to encouraging rangatahi into whatu space that is a safe place to learn from mistakes:

> It's about letting them have a tutu. We talk about the Māui in everyone, the haututū in everyone and I'm pretty sure our tūpuna made a lot of mistakes before they actually knew how you do it. So we need to embrace that, maybe not celebrate it, but embrace it and allow it to happen. And it's not a big deal. Like oh, okay, well, that didn't work this time. What can we do differently? What have we learned from it? What do we learn from there? How can we do it differently? So that it becomes achievable.

There is no right or wrong binary to either carry on weaving or unpick. Instead, interrogating ideas of perfection and excellence in toi Māori offers a useful place to reflect on how and why we teach whatu the way we do, what or who is at the centre of our pedagogy, and what of our own learning experiences may have influenced our pedagogy.

Conclusion—tying off the threads

This article centres whatu as part of a developing toi Māori pedagogy theory that weaves across three art forms: raranga, whatu and kapa haka. The aim is to promote a wider range of kaupapa Māori practices, and an exploration of their pedagogy, that support holistic whānau wellbeing woven through with reo, tikanga and mātauranga Māori. Together, we consider the important creative pedagogy of how these art forms are taught in ways that contribute to whānau wellbeing through the intergenerational transmission of language, values, beliefs and aspirations to thrive as Māori.

Pedagogical reflections from these three wāhine kaiwhatu contribute to a small but growing literature on Māori pedagogy and help to theorise toi Māori pedagogy for wellbeing. From them, we learn that for whatu to remain vibrant and vital, how we teach it must hold on lovingly to those strands of ancestral knowing and doing that were handed to us. At the same time, how we teach needs to be adaptive and responsive to contemporary learners, especially our rangatahi, as they are the next generation to take up and continue our practices, lest they once again become endangered.

The kaiwhatu remind us that why we whatu changes over time, and therefore, so should how we teach. From a practical activity necessary to provide for the whānau or to connect with and contribute to community, whatu is now perhaps more likely an oranga space for kaiwhatu to come together in toi Māori space in order to grow closer to their ancestors. If engaging in whatu is understood as an oranga or wellbeing space, then how we teach and learn in that space must also support well ways of learning and being. Developing toi pedagogy encourages other artists and teachers to consider their toi pedagogy, the how and why they pass on ancestral knowledge of their practice in the way that they teach.

Glossary

aho	weft threads; umbilical cord
aho tapu	sacred first line—the first line in weaving that sets the rest of the pattern
āhuatanga ako	the principles of teaching practice that are of vital importance in the education of children
ako	teach; learn
Aotearoa	New Zealand
haka	posture dance performance
hāngī	food cooked in earth oven
harakeke	flax
hauora	wellbeing
haututū	mischief, naughtiness
hui	meeting
iwi	tribe
kahu	cloak; amniotic sac
kaiwhatu	weaver
kākahu	cloaks
kao	no
kapa haka	a group performing haka/waiata/poi
Kaupapa Māori	Māori based topic/event/enterprise run by Māori for Māori
kōrero	discussion
kupu	word
mahi	work
mahi toi	art; creative practice
marae	tribal meeting grounds
mātanga reo	language experts
matatau i te reo	language expert
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
Māui	a demigod
mokopuna	grandchild
muka	fibre

ngāwhā	boiling spring, boiling mud pool
ora	health
oranga	wellbeing
Ōtautahi	Christchurch
Pākehā	a person of predominantly European descent
piupiu	grass skirt
pōtae	hat
pūtoiako	pedagogy
rangatahi	youth
raranga	flax weaving
reo	language
rongoā	medicine
tangi	mourning rituals
tāniko	finger weaving
tāniko pari	woven bodice
tēina	younger brothers (of a male), younger sisters (of a female)
te reo Māori	the Māori language
tikanga	customs and practices
toi Māori	Māori arts
tuākana	elder brothers (of a male), elder sisters (of a female)
tūpuna	ancestors
tutu	creative play
wāhine	women
waiata	singing, song, chanting
wānanga	ideate
whaikōrero	formal speech, oratory
whakaaro	idea
whakapapa	genealogy, ancestry, familial relationships
whakataukī	proverb
whānau	family; nuclear/extended family
whanaungatanga	relationships
whatu	weaving (garments, baskets, etc.), fibre-weaving
whenu	vertical strands

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MĀORI NAVIGATING GUT SYMPTOMS

"I mean, who gets cramp that often in their puku?"

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Abstract

Gut diseases are a major cause of morbidity and mortality in Aotearoa New Zealand, with higher rates of these conditions in Te Waipounamu. Māori experience both worse outcomes and different patterns of incidence in gut diseases than non-Māori. Overall, Māori have lower life expectancies than non-Māori and experience barriers to accessing determinants of health. We aim to illuminate how Māori understand the gut and navigate the health system when the topic is the gut and gut disease, based on interviews with Māori participants in a wider study of gut symptoms. Participants explored a range of issues related to gut disease, including interactions people had with healthcare providers surrounding these conditions. They frequently felt "brushed off" or disengaged from healthcare, which could contribute to delayed diagnosis. Results indicate there may be value in promoting more widespread uptake of existing cultural competence models designed for healthcare practitioners. Findings have implications in New Zealand and other postcolonial environments.

Keywords

gut disease, primary healthcare, Māori

Introduction

Gut disease is a major cause of morbidity and mortality in Aotearoa New Zealand. Gut diseases include cancers (e.g., colorectal cancer), coeliac disease, Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, among others. New Zealand has, for some conditions, the highest rates in the world, with specific issues evident. First, there are high rates of colorectal cancer (Health Quality and Safety Commission, 2017), inflammatory bowel disease (Gearry et al., 2006; Su et al., 2016), coeliac disease (B. Cook et al., 2004; H. B. Cook et al., 2000) and

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functional gastrointestinal disorders (Barbezat et al., 2002). Māori are diagnosed at a later stage and have higher mortality than non-Māori for colorectal cancer (Gurney et al., 2020; Sharples et al., 2018). Māori have lower rates of inflammatory bowel disease (Coppell et al., 2018; Gearry et al., 2006) and lower rates of diverticular disease, but present at significantly younger ages (Broad et al., 2019; Varghese et al., 2021). Outcomes for gut cancers are poor in Aotearoa compared with other countries (Alafeishat et al., 2014), with increasing incidence and mortality in people aged less than 50 years (Chittleborough et al., 2020; Gandhi et al., 2017).

Diagnosis can be challenging (Esteva et al., 2013; Shahid et al., 2016; Vavricka et al., 2016). Treatments, including medical and surgical options, are often more effective when commenced earlier (Lee et al., 2017). However, before investigation and any treatment can begin, patients need to recognise and report their symptoms. People sometimes put off having symptoms of bowel or gut disease investigated, and this can cause delays in diagnosis and treatment (Brown et al., 2017; Hall et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2018; Oberoi et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2012). Not everyone has smooth access to healthcare and an easy route through the health system (Björkman et al., 2016; Casiday et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2017; Lesnovska et al., 2017; Vavricka et al., 2012, 2016). This situation is particularly acute for Māori.

It is well documented that Māori continue to experience a range of barriers to accessing and receiving appropriate and timely healthcare at all levels of the healthcare system (Espiner et al., 2021; Graham & Masters-Awatere, 2020; Rahiri et al., 2018; Slater et al., 2013). Māori health inequities are often framed as individual failure rather than a failure of structures and institutions set up to serve non-Māori, while systematically disadvantaging Māori (Reid et al., 2017; Smith, 2012). Research suggests, for example, that Māori have poorer access to the determinants of good health, and are subject to institutional racism within the health system, which affects both access to and quality of care for them (Gurney et al., 2019). New Zealand's primary healthcare policy and delivery for Māori was subject to an extensive inquiry by the Waitangi Tribunal (2019). Findings show that inadequate funding of Māori primary healthcare providers has disproportionately affected Māori, with many reporting unmet need for primary healthcare due to cost. The importance of taking time to establish a connection with Māori patients was also raised as an issue by Māori service providers, who noted that the mainstream funding model did not take this into consideration (Waitangi Tribunal, 2019).

In this paper we aim to illuminate how Māori understand the gut and navigate the health system when the topic is the gut and gut disease. Because of the often vague, intermittent and sometimes embarrassing nature of gut symptoms, timely diagnosis of gut diseases relies on thorough and sensitive clinical care. Therefore, the experiences Māori have when accessing the healthcare system for gut-related issues may be important in identifying factors that contribute to inequities. We also discuss the ways that the health system could be more responsive to Māori.

Methods

This paper is based on data from interviews with 16 Māori participants recruited into a larger study designed to qualitatively investigate understandings of gut disease and experiences of care seeking in relation to gut health. In the larger study, we interviewed 44 people around Te Waipounamu, including 28 people with gut disease (oesophageal and bowel cancer, Crohn's disease, diverticulitis, coeliac disease, irritable bowel syndrome, reflux, gastritis or gall bladder disease). Most had been diagnosed within the past two years. Five other people had a history of symptoms suggestive of gut disease and had undergone investigations but had never had a formal diagnosis. We also talked to 11 people without any symptoms or gut disease diagnosis. Some of the people with diagnoses were referred by hospital specialists and cancer nurses from district health boards in Te Waipounamu, and the remainder were identified through community contacts. The people without a diagnosis were all located through researcher community contacts. Ethical approval for the study was received from the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee (Health) [No. H21/039].

Both lead authors-interviewers identify as Māori and are experienced Kaupapa Māori researchers with a commitment to improving hauora Māori. For the sampling and interviews, we followed Māori processes of engagement (Smith, 2012) with participants, for example, beginning an interview with karakia and mihi if appropriate. Generally, AH, who is a Māori male, carried out interviews with Māori men, and CM carried out interviews with Māori women.

Participants were interviewed in their own homes or other location of their choosing. Interviewers spent time on whanaungatanga (building a shared connection with participants) before beginning questions about the topic. The

interviews were semi-structured and followed an interview schedule designed to explore the experience of gut symptoms, diagnosis and disease with Māori. The interview guide enabled participants to talk in depth about their experiences. Participants were given a $20 voucher as koha, and kai. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed by a professional transcriber who had signed a confidentiality agreement. All participants were offered their transcriptions for checking before analysis, and two Māori participants took this opportunity. All transcripts were read and discussed by members of the team, and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was carried out. The themes were generated inductively, and AH and CM led this Māori-specific analysis, with a focus on allowing the Māori participant voice to emerge in relation to our research question.

Results

This paper is based solely on the 16 interviews with Māori participants. Participants ranged in age from 20s to over 65. We interviewed two people who did not have any symptoms. The remaining 14 participants had cancers, coeliac disease, diverticulitis, reflux, gastritis, irritable bowel syndrome or other gut symptoms but no formal diagnosis. Several lived rurally. We do not provide any demographic information about this group in the quotations included in the paper, due to the potential for individuals to be identified. Quotations pertain mainly to experiences of the primary care system.

Inductive thematic analysis generated three major descriptive themes: talking about the gut and deciding to seek care, being brushed off and breaking the cycle and healthcare relationships in mainstream systems.

Talking about the gut and deciding to seek care

To come to a point of deciding to seek care, people first needed to describe to themselves, and sometimes others, what was going on with their gut. People had a range of ways of talking about the gut. Not everyone liked or related to the word *gut*, but it was a starting point for conversation. People used Pākehā words to talk about the gut, but puku was also widely used by Māori. For some this meant the whole gut, and for others just part of it. Some saw *puku* as a term that you grew out of using as you grew older. Some people used *nono* as well. Not everyone felt comfortable talking about the gut, either in their family or in healthcare settings. For some this was to do with

seeing the body as sacred and other survival needs taking priority:

> The body is something that's sacred and not really discussed about . . . Growing up we never really talked about gut health, but having a healthy puku, I think, growing up, was more like, you're fed—if you're fed, then you're healthy . . . We weren't educated on what's good for our health, for our puku. We were educated on how to gather kai, how to cook it and how to be grateful for it.

Describing symptoms to a doctor could be awkward, especially at first. Many participants commented that bowel function was not "the easiest thing" to talk about. Overcoming the awkwardness was more difficult for men in general. The discomfort associated with discussing gut issues, when they were deemed sensitive, was reportedly not confined to patients:

> I think just because doctors are medically trained doesn't make them very good at talking to people about sensitive issues, and it can take quite a lot of assertiveness and a long relationship with the GP [general practitioner].

Participants raised a number of issues about their confidence when talking to doctors. For some this was to do with mana and voice. Some felt much more confident at this point in their lives, but this confidence had been hard to build:

> When you're in that survival mode and you're trying to search for yourself or you might not have any mana, but once you find your voice and you feel you have confidence to actually speak up . . . I can do that quite easily now. Whereas before, when you don't have mana or you don't have any probably confidence or self-esteem and all those sorts of things, 'cause you've being spat out of a system, it's hard to speak up, if that makes sense.

Some needed encouragement from trusted friends:

> We're in a . . . club and one of the men was just sitting around the table and having a beer. And he just piped up and he says, "Do you guys go and get a men's check ever?" Everyone's looking around, and going, "What? Hey?" "No, no," and . . . he said, "You need to go once a year and get a check-up, because you know, otherwise it's too late," and all that. I thought about it when I came home and I thought, oh, yeah, he's right. I thought I might go and get one.

They ran that out of the marae. So that came up and then that had me, because it was real bad at that time for me, and so had me thinking that, you know, I was seeing other Māori men, Pasifika men go and do these tests that maybe, maybe it'll be okay. This will be about a year later of passing blood. I ended up having some courage to go to the doctors.

Others described more explicitly managing what they saw as the hierarchical positioning of medicine, elitism of doctors and the desire not to "expose yourself" within that context. Working out when to go to the doctor was complex and mediated by an array of other considerations, some of which were quite subtle. For example, some participants talked about the ways they had developed an understanding that they should not complain. They recognised the tension between seeming to always have to be well and uncomplaining, and the importance of acknowledging body problems and vulnerability. This seemed especially significant for Māori men:

We're the staunch ones, the strong ones, the, you know, protect the whānau and so forth, so there can't be anything wrong with us in this, you know, or yeah, if it's something like irritable bowel, then that's something that you just tolerate. I think there is that perception there, and I'm certain it's worse for Māori.

Participants talked about many practical details that might prevent them from seeking healthcare, including pressing family responsibilities and being too busy to take time off work. Others talked about the ways Māori in general (and they themselves) had been poorly treated in and by the healthcare system, leading some to see the health system as a last resort:

[It is] the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. So you don't want to go unless something's really, really wrong.

Another said:

I was also raised, I don't know why, but you're only to go to the doctor if you were seriously ill. So that was something that I was raised on as a young boy, and by listening to, you know, how the system treated our people, my experiences of my grandparents or my mother growing up in this country—so as a young boy, I was raised only to go to the doctor unless you're about to die basically.

Some also directly raised the issue of racism in the system, which manifested through condescension and rudeness:

Oh, apart from the racism that's out there when you're in the system sometimes, but you find that everywhere in the system. There are some really lovely people in there, but there's still racism in there. I've had it all my life . . . Yeah, just learnt to handle it. Like pause is a great one, if someone's been really condescending and rude, or patronising and all of that, you just pause. Or I'll actually turn and walk away . . .

The intermittent nature of some problems created anxiety as people were not sure if their problem could be so easily investigated if it was not "flared up" at the time of consultation:

No, 'cause it's, like every time I think about it to go to the doctor, by the time I get in it's like, well are they going to be able to do anything because I haven't had any symptoms for a while?

I was getting stomach cramps, bloating, constipation—go from diarrhoea then turn into constipation and then nausea . . . It was almost like every two months . . . In the first year I would go [to the GP] every time . . . Often it was hard to get an appointment, so by the time I'd get into them all the symptoms had gone. The response was just, "Right, we've done everything," you know, [the symptoms were] passing over, like that's all that was done.

Being flared up was also a concern, for example, for those who had adopted a gluten-free diet that they felt mitigated their abdominal issues to some extent. To allow for diagnostic biopsy, they would need to be eating gluten. The resulting symptoms can be inconvenient enough to affect one's ability to work, and can be a barrier to diagnosis:

My problem is I'm a bit worried whether they will be able to take a sample, or whether they actually need it to be flared up, so I don't want to go down that road . . . I want to be able to work.

There are a wide range of issues to do with talking about and acting on gut problems. While some of these may be shared with non-Māori, some of them relate to the ways colonisation continues to have an impact on Māori in ways that have the potential to harm.

Being brushed off and breaking the cycle

Having decided to seek care for a gut issue, participants frequently felt "brushed off", and as a result, their diagnosis took some time. Research shows that Māori experience a different quality of care compared with Pākehā across a range of medical and surgical conditions (Gurney et al., 2020; Mazengarb et al., 2020; Rahiri et al., 2018). Cram et al. (2003) found that Māori patients often needed to be more persistent and assertive to obtain what they needed from the healthcare system:

> [I]t was just shrugged off when I said I had bowel problems, like diarrhoea or constipation, and I had that off and on for years. And it was just shrugged off.

> I can remember telling her about it and she said, "Oh, it's just cramp in your stomach." I mean who gets cramp that often in their puku . . . It's quite funny because we talk a lot about how Māori people just seem to be either too whakamā to speak up or being just pushed aside . . . One of my best friends [went with me to the doctor] and she said to the doctor, "I fear the people down here are just getting shoved aside, people not listening to us." You know, she sees it every day and she said, "And I want. . ." She always calls me auntie. She says, "I want auntie to have a scan for her puku." What do they do? They send me a letter. "We'll send you a letter for when you can get your appointment [to see whether she was eligible for a scan]." Yeah, so I just threw it in the rubbish. I thought, how long am I going to sit here . . . to see if I'm eligible to have that scan?

After having felt brushed off for many months of repeat visits and self-treating with medications left over from a sports injury, one participant was cast as a drug seeker. This casting may reflect personally mediated racism as a result of the participant's age, gender and ethnicity, and resulted in this person ceasing to try to access primary healthcare:

> I didn't even go because what stopped me was a conversation that I had with the GP where I asked for tramadol, because it was the only drug where I knew that would numb the pain, and I got a brochure around drug abuse and drug addiction. I never went back after that . . . When I reflect, I think that perhaps raised red flags for them because I'm asking for a drug I'd never been prescribed before . . . from her anyway . . . [this went on for about 8 months] until it [bowel] perforated . . . It's the most painful thing that I've ever had in my life . . . Then

within maybe 12 hours of being in hospital, I was told that I was going to have surgery to remove part of the bowel, which would leave me with a colostomy bag.

The cycle of feeling brushed off was broken for the participant above by an emergency hospital admission, but for others it was broken by seeing a different clinician:

> [I thought it was] something I'd picked up [overseas] kind of infection or something. And it didn't really get any better, so I went back again. I thought, this still isn't right, so I went back again. And there was a student there . . . So, I told her, "I've been here several times and it's not right, and I think there's something more going on" . . . And so he got onto it, and I think it was the fact that I'd gone back and there was another person there sort of propelled him to realise that it was more serious.

There were also examples of primary care doctors trying to push the system in unorthodox ways to have people who they were concerned about seen by specialists:

> It wasn't 'til I went to the doctor [a different doctor] recently, where he was quite concerned that this had been going on for so long . . . and I got turned down for a colonoscopy . . . so it sort of was like, nothing can happen now. I can't really do anything more . . . He [the doctor] said to me, "Look, I'll write you out a referral. Just go down there and see if they can see you." . . . And so, I went down the hospital here . . . "Your doctor can't do that. He knows what he's meant to be doing. You shouldn't be coming down here.". . . [Participant went back to work, then home and thought] No, bugger it, I'm going to the hospital . . . I ended up staying in A & E overnight . . . the next day they got me into the CT scan. That's when it come up that about 10 cm of my bowel is inflamed and that's where I got the diagnosis [of diverticulitis]. So that was a lot of relief because it was like, okay, it's not bowel cancer. So the doctor was really good. He went through what it meant.

In some cases, the cycle was broken when symptoms worsened in ways that alarmed a clinician ("red flag" symptoms); such as gagging on food:

> Well, I had bad gastro problems with reflux, and then it got to a point where I was gagging on everything I ate and drank. They kept giving me pills to

help with the reflux, but it wasn't curing anything. So, I kept going back until they gave in and put a camera down and found what they found . . . It was over a couple of years. But it's when the gagging came on, that changed the whole emphasis, so that's when they probably realised there was something more happening. And to me, I thought there was something wrong right through it. You put your faith in professionals, I suppose.

Feeling brushed off is not necessarily confined to Māori. It may be entirely appropriate for a clinician to suggest watching and waiting, but ideally such watching and waiting should not leave the patient feeling as though they have no ongoing support for their symptoms nor continuing care for their wellbeing. Given the significant inequities in Māori wellbeing and outcomes, it is pertinent to engage an extra level of caution with Māori patients. Māori presenting recurrently with the same (or worsening) symptoms should prompt doctors to reconsider presumed diagnoses, especially if multiple different doctors have been consulted by the patient.

Healthcare relationships in mainstream systems

Though Kaupapa Māori services do exist in many parts of Aotearoa, none of the participants mentioned accessing these. They were therefore using "mainstream" services. It is not the case that all experiences of care were negative. In practical terms, participants who had private health insurance generally reported smoother trajectories and more supportive relationships with healthcare staff. One participant explained how important it had been that their workplace provided private health insurance, which made them feel well looked after:

Oh they're really, really good with family comes first and your health, your wellbeing . . . They're all really big on that, there's a big emphasis on whānau . . . They're an old company . . . been around for a long time . . . They've got quite a few Māori . . . working for the company . . . a lot of Filipinos, so across the board really . . . That's the other thing with this company, they've set us up. I get free medical care insurance.

Yet private health insurance is unaffordable for many, and several commented that they had to stop their insurance due to cost. Only 20% of Māori adults, as compared with 37% of Pākehā

adults, have private health insurance (Ministry of Health, 2016).

As found by other authors (Cram et al., 2003; Graham & Masters-Awatere, 2020; Kerr et al., 2010; Palmer et al., 2019), relationships and meaningful connections with healthcare providers were especially important to participants. Participants lamented how primary healthcare providers had changed in ways that sometimes made it hard to develop helpful relationships with a GP:

I actually knew our doctor, I knew their name, knew their whānau. So, when we talk about that continuity of care, we actually knew them and they knew us. They knew our whole family. Whereas it's a lot different now, where I have to go and I actually don't really know that person. I do know in that primary care space . . . it's a really time-limited consult, when sometimes, also us, being Māori, sometimes we have multiple needs.

In the day, you went there and you could tell them everything. But now, "Make another appointment." Another $30 or something like that, you know . . . it's about trusting, when you talk with people, trusting them. How can you if you only have 15 minutes? Well, I don't even know the person. I'm not coming back.

Several participants had surgery for their gut condition. One recalled good experiences with being consulted about what they would like done with removed body tissues; however, no kaumātua support was available in hospital:

I did mention that in there, but, "Well, do you want someone?" "No, no, no. I just thought you might have a service." It's a huge public hospital here, I'm sure I'm not the only tanned person in there.

Another participant found the communication following surgery extremely poor, to the extent that they did not know they had a diagnosis of diverticulitis when they left hospital. No assistance was provided with emotionally adjusting to the colostomy, though they were offered assistance with its physical care:

I didn't know how to manage it psychologically. Like there's no kind of discussion around that aspect of what's happening in your hinengaro . . . 'Cause suddenly kakā from my stomach is now, like it bulges through your clothing . . . which I really struggled with.

Cram et al. (2003) found that Māori valued doctors who took the time to get to know them and created an environment in which they felt respected. In spite of the problems identified above, many (though not all) of the participants, had eventually identified doctors and other healthcare providers who better met their needs. Participants reported positive relationships with both Māori and Pākehā doctors and other allied health practitioners, though some much preferred Māori healthcare providers:

> It hasn't been until I've seen a Māori GP that the things that I've been talking about have been taken seriously . . . It's felt like she's the first GP that's ever really got me and that I haven't had to become exasperated with to be heard and for steps to be taken. Which has felt really validating.

People especially valued not feeling rushed, that their concerns mattered and that they would be able to be involved in decisions about what any next steps might be:

> So, [he] sat down with me, and this is the first GP I ever found who's done this and asked, "How do you actually feel?" . . . So, he took the time to do all that. So, I've never found a doctor who's done that . . . when you've got some underlying issues, and a lot of them, and it's not easy. You do need to take time to actually go through them, and [he's] the one GP that I've found who's done that.

> They listened to what you said when they asked a question, 'cause sometimes they don't, but mine all did, and they answered questions and they allowed me to have my say when I wanted to—like, "Oh I'm not sure that I'll have that or not. I'll think about that." And they didn't look surprised.

> But when I was there they were very welcoming and standard and just did what they did and were, compassionate and very thorough . . . Yes, and he even rang after hours to check in to see how things were, and if he got results back . . . So that was the first time ever from a GP, ringing Sunday evening to see how things were.

Participants valued staff who took the time to ask about pronunciation of names, for example, thus showing some humility. But the ways relationship and respect played out were not always straightforward. One participant valued the ability to overtly argue with her doctor, which is in many ways a step on from just being involved in decisions about care that are framed by the clinician:

> I would always want to do the more natural way of doing things and he'd go, "Oh." I'd be like so frustrated and I think the reason I stayed with him 'cause we could have good rows . . . I frustrate him. Banging his hand on the thing and I say, "No, I'm not going there." He goes, "But you could have that solved. I'd have it solved for you. You know, this year," and I said, "Well, you can get seaweed and use it as a shake too," and he goes, "Augh." . . . Yes, he's been brilliant.

Participants had often experienced lengthy periods with less-than-ideal care as they tried to resolve their gut issues. There are some challenging aspects to some of the experiences noted here. For example, having a known and trusted family doctor was viewed as positive. But some people felt this trust was breached when they received delayed diagnoses with conditions that might have had better outcomes if diagnosis (and therefore treatment) had occurred earlier. Seeing a different clinician, even though they might not yet be known and trusted, acted like a circuit breaker in some cases and generated referrals to secondary care. Given the importance of relationships with a known and trusted clinician, making this shift, and seeing another clinician, would be a hard decision to make. In some cases, however, changing clinician could lead to a much more satisfactory and supportive relationship. Shifting clinicians is, of course, somewhat harder to do in rural and underserved areas.

Discussion

To summarise our results, three themes identified from participants—talking about the gut and deciding to seek care, being brushed off and breaking the cycle, and healthcare relationships in mainstream systems—contribute to our knowledge about how Māori understand the gut and navigate the health system when experiencing gut symptoms and disease.

Successfully recognising and articulating gut issues and navigating healthcare is key to early diagnosis and treatment, as is having access to a health system with the responsiveness and capacity to meet Māori needs. Participants identified many barriers to coming forward with gut symptoms, some of which are unsurprisingly rooted in deep-seated mistrust of what and who the mainstream health system is for, and the difficulty of engaging and protecting their mana

in that system. Māori can find the healthcare system disempowering and dehumanising, due to staff failing to attempt to build trust (through whanaungatanga) and provide mana-enhancing care, the brevity of GP appointments, and the lack of discretion and warmth in clinical settings (C. Harris et al., in press). The accusation of drug-seeking behaviour experienced by one of our participants in relation to managing gut pain correlates with a finding by Ellis et al. (2024) that 40% of their sample of Māori women were accused of drug-seeking behaviour in relation to pain from endometriosis. The experience of racism affects engagement with the health system and contributes to unmet need (C. Harris et al., 2024).

Our results have focused predominantly on primary care. This is not surprising as primary care, in whatever form it takes, is the first point of contact with the health system in Aotearoa, through which people must pass prior to being referred for the investigations required to diagnose gut disease. It is therefore a crucial nexus at which people may be delayed. It is not the case, of course, that everyone who presents with gut symptoms must automatically be referred on for further investigations. In many cases further investigations are not warranted and can themselves carry risks, and so referrals need to be justified (Arora et al., 2009; Esteva et al., 2013; Kyriakides et al., 2022). There are, however, many examples in our research of Māori participants with problematic issues accessing appropriate care, delayed diagnoses, and significant health and wellbeing burdens that could have been reduced or avoided.

Several authors (Ramos Salazar, 2018; Wright et al., 2007) have argued that people should self-advocate for the care they think they need, and in fact, a number of the participants also said this. We are concerned at placing the burden fully on patients and an individual's health literacy (one's knowledge of how to access, understand and use information to optimise health), which fails to acknowledge health system factors such as power relations (World Health Organization, 2024). We acknowledge the potential usefulness of developing resources so patients may better advocate for themselves. However, this should also be accompanied by a focus on organisational health literacy and the responsibility of organisations such as health services to empower individuals with the skills and knowledge to navigate health (U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). R. Harris et al. (2024) found that Māori women receive variable but often unsatisfactory information about contraceptive options

and gynaecological procedures from healthcare providers, and that sexual health information was rarely acquired through reliable sources. The authors concluded that services need to ensure Māori are well informed about their sexual health and treatment options. This need extrapolates to other areas of healthcare and is important in improving cultural safety.

Attention to cultural safety in healthcare is not new but often falls short of achieving the goals intended. Part of this failure is attributed to the ways the concept has been depoliticised (Curtis et al., 2019; Lokugamage et al., 2021) by ignoring or marginalising discussions of power and disempowerment. This was a fear held by the concept's originator, Irihapeti Ramsden, and discussed in her doctoral thesis (Ramsden, 2002). Depoliticisation can take the form of softening language by using terms such as cultural "awareness", "sensitivity" or "competence" (Lokugamage et al., 2021). While these terms may not seem problematic, they can serve to place the focus solely on what a practitioner might know, rather than also attending to how care is received. That is, these approaches do not address whether care feels culturally safe to the recipient (Ramsden, 2002).

Frameworks, such as the Hui Process (Lacey et al., 2011) and the Meihana Model (Pitama et al., 2007), originally developed for use in medical student training, may help closer movement towards culturally safe healthcare at the practice level. The Hui Process provides a structure designed to do more than give a tokenistic guide to a clinical consultation. The structure places strong emphasis on whanaungatanga to build trust. This includes greeting and making connections, incorporating relevant self-disclosure on the part of the clinician, attending to the clinical matter at hand and concluding the encounter with attendant next steps (Lacey et al., 2011). This first step of this process is particularly important and sets the tone for what else may be achieved in the consultation. The Meihana Model works alongside the Hui Process to better understand individual Māori beliefs, values, and current and past experiences, including within the health system (Pitama et al., 2007). This latter model allows for a more thorough appreciation of a patient's situation (mentally, physically, spiritually, historically) beyond just their symptoms. Approaches like this allow practitioners, in the case of the gut, to delve into how people understand the gut as well as how aspects such as institutional racism may inhibit care seeking. Gaining knowledge such as this can help clinicians tailor interactions in ways

that better meet needs and increase comfort with and in clinical interactions.

At the level of policy and health system organisation, the disestablishment of Te Aka Whai Ora, the Māori Health Authority, which was a move towards Māori control of Māori health, is deeply concerning and fails to honour te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations on the part of the government (Pitama et al., 2024). Also concerning is the current government's rhetoric that health services should be based on need, not "race". The evidence clearly states that "ethnicity is a strong marker of health need in New Zealand and is an evidence-based way of targeting healthcare resources" (Loring et al., 2024, p. 11). A recent decision to reverse the age of bowel cancer screening for Māori from age 50 to 58 is a step backwards for Māori health and will continue to exacerbate health inequity (Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, 2025).

Decolonising healthcare and systems to more adequately and equitably provide care to those with gut symptoms requires moving beyond business as usual with a dash of "cultural competence" towards addressing institutional racism in the New Zealand health system.

Glossary

Aotearoa	New Zealand
hauora	health
hinengaro	mind, consciousness
kai	food
karakia	prayer(s); chant(s) and incantation(s)
kakā	inflammation
kaumātua	Māori elder
Kaupapa Māori	Māori based topic/event/enterprise run by Māori for Māori
koha	gift, token, pledge
mana	authority, status
Māori	Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa
marae	tribal meeting grounds
mihi	speech of greeting, acknowledgement, tribute
nono	anus
Pākehā	a person of predominantly European descent
puku	stomach, centre
tangata whenua	people of the land
te Tiriti o Waitangi	the Treaty of Waitangi: founding document establishing rights, responsibilities and relationships between the Crown and tangata whenua signed 6 February 1840
Te Waipounamu	the South Island of New Zealand
whakamā	shy, embarrassed
whānau	family; nuclear/extended family
whanaungatanga	relationship, kinship, sense of family connection

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LESSONS FROM TE TAI TOKERAU TAIOHI FOR TEACHERS WHO WANT TO SEE AND CHANGE THEIR RACIAL BIASES

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Abstract

In this article, four taiohi Māori of Te Tai Tokerau provide critical insights into their experiences of racism and their perspectives of school, teaching and education systems in Aotearoa New Zealand. Participants in this project all positively identified as Māori but have very different ways of conceptualising that identity. Western schooling in Aotearoa has, since its introduction, been a site of cultural contestation. Schools are also highly visible locations where Indigenous and Western epistemological differences play out with real-life impacts and consequences. Many education professionals are aware of the potential positive identity has in education settings for students, but there are few opportunities for teachers to stand in their students' shoes or to sit in the discomfort many students experience on a daily basis. This article provides unique and honest glimpses of high school racial biases as experienced by taiohi Māori of Te Tai Tokerau.

Introduction

There is ample evidence of students experiencing racial bias in Aotearoa New Zealand's education system (Alansari et al., 2020; Blank et al., 2016; Children's Commissioner, 2018; New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2021). Bias is known to harm students' self-esteem, engagement and academic success, especially the success of taiohi Māori as tāngata whenua (Allen & Webber, 2019; Turner et al., 2015; Webber et al., 2013).

A report by the New Zealand Human Rights Commission (2021) points to the prevalence of racism in our communities, noting, "The impacts of racism are extensive and span across all aspects of wellbeing … The drivers for racism are broad and deeply embedded within institutions, society, and individuals" (p. 9). Inquiry into racial bias and racism in education continues to concern many academics and researchers in Aotearoa.

Turner et al. (2015) revealed strong correlations

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between teacher expectations, ethnicity and the long-standing achievement gap that persists for Māori learners. Bishop and Berryman's (2006) study exposed substantive gaps in teacher relationships with Māori students and their whānau, which led to a long-running culturally responsive, effective teaching professional development programme (Bishop & Berryman, 2009).

MacDonald (2018) subsequently examined ways the racial discourse of silencing marginalises and denies violent colonial histories in education. MacDonald (2018) also interrogates the state narrative of biculturalism that supports the idea of harmonious race relations while privileging settler-colonial priorities. Many researchers in Aotearoa who seek to better understand impacts of racial bias and racism in education first acknowledge they exist, then centre the experiences and narratives of Māori students, teachers and whānau to find solutions.

Teachers are increasingly tasked with acknowledging their racial biases and the resulting impacts on their students' learning and wellbeing. A key motivation for teachers to confront their racial biases is the extensive evidence of the significant role biases play in perpetuating disadvantage for some groups, simultaneously affecting educational performance and opportunities (Blank et al., 2016). However, anti-bias trainings are typically generalised, passive-learning experiences which have little effect (Bezrukova et al., 2016; Paluck, 2016; Reiter & Davis, 2011). Evidence also suggests that implicit biases are a cognitive reflection of systemic racism (Payne & Hannay, 2021), yet opportunities for education professionals to address the link between racial bias and systemic racism continue to be largely non-existent.

Through wānanga with taiohi Māori of Te Tai Tokerau, the project reported in this article identified incidents of racism and shone a light on taiohi Māori experiences of racism in Tai Tokerau schools. It is intended that the power of taiohi voices and perspectives will support teachers and schools to surface and transform deep-seated racism. As illustrated by taiohi Māori in this project, racism is engrained in education settings in Te Tai Tokerau. Through their engagement with educational processes and programmes, taiohi Māori experience both implicit and explicit racism, from both students and teachers.

Research design
Indigenous and anti-racist methodology
The key research question posed in this project was:

In what ways do taiohi Māori experience racism in Aotearoa schools?

To explore this question in culturally safe ways, this project engaged methodologies that can be described as decolonising. Kaupapa Māori and anti-racist theories provide frameworks of decolonisation, self-determination and social justice (Smith, 2012) with which to explore and address historical injustices that continue to impact on education in Aotearoa. These methodologies are counter-hegemonic and privilege Indigenous knowledges, voices, experiences and forms of analysis, besides acknowledging that research is always a moral and political undertaking (Denzin et al., 2008; Smith, 2005).

Denzin et al. (2008) also describe Critical Indigenous Pedagogy (CIP) as a theoretical framework that challenges taken-for-granted Western research practices. CIP is an amalgamation of critical and Indigenous methodologies that seek to redress social injustices faced by Indigenous groups. It does this by employing research practices that are informed by Indigenous ways of knowing. Indigenous knowledge systems, and specifically Māori ways of engaging with power relationships, continue to affect everyday interactions in Aotearoa and refine Kaupapa Māori theory.

As Pihama (2015) points out, critical theory has its origins in Western notions that were conceived to deal with and explain Western problems, whereas Kaupapa Māori theory derives from te reo, tikanga and mātauranga Māori. In this way, CIP aligns with Kaupapa Māori theory in that the latter presents localised and specific theoretical foundations to engage with, and seek solutions to, issues that are real and relevant to Māori. Denzin et al. (2008) also argue that research guided by CIP principles must be dedicated to the goals of equity and justice. Our chosen methodological frameworks enable this research to interrogate wider social, political and cultural spaces that foster or shut down racial biases. They also validate the spotlighting of taiohi Māori experiences of racial bias in schooling in order to improve education experiences for Māori.

Dei (2005) explains that anti-racist research assumes that institutional racism is inherent in dominant social science research because Western methodologies, concepts and topics have been privileged. This privileging has validated, reproduced and disseminated very specific knowledges. Education is but one site dominated by institutional racism, the effects of which can be seen in the types of knowledge that are validated and

reproduced by the education system. The effects are also illustrated by the types of narratives that dominate education thought, and whose stories get to be told.

Whanaungatanga

The project described here was conducted by Māori and guided at every point by various members of the local Māori community and the wider Māori research community. Central to this research are taiohi Māori, their knowledge and their unique perspectives of the world. All knowledge generated in this project was produced by and alongside taiohi Māori. This strengthens our te ao Māori conceptual research framework by centring the experiences of Māori and taking for granted Māori knowledge (Hetaraka, 2020). Taiohi Māori took part in group wānanga, with follow-up consultation taking place throughout the duration of the project. All participants were known to each other through whanaungatanga connections and were also associated with the research team through various whanaungatanga links.

Indigenous- and Māori-centric research approaches challenge the false notions of value-free research and the pretence of mitigating researcher bias; therefore, these whanaungatanga connections deepen our research practices and findings (Smith, 2012). Whanaungatanga is at the heart of wellbeing for taiohi Māori, who place a high value on a plethora of whanaungatanga connections, especially as they navigate contexts of distress, social hardship and colonisation (Hamley et al., 2023). Prior to engaging in the project, participants already had trusting whanaungatanga relationships with each other and the research team.

Whanaungatanga created a space in which participants felt safe to share their truths, and from which to speak their realties. Hamley et al. (2023) describe this space as he wā pai, a place and time in which contexts influence meaningful connections. In this project, such conditions enabled participants to express their individual, collective and often painful lived experiences of racial biases. Schoone et al. (2023) contend that "students have critical insights into the education system" (p. 923), further arguing that their voices should be privileged in school improvement considerations. He wā pai (Hamley et al., 2023) was created in this instance through whanaungatanga that honoured the mana of individuals as well as the extant contexts and connections between them, enabling taiohi to contribute powerfully into the collective space. This approach has the potential to ensure taiohi perspectives and voices become benchmarks for school improvement processes and for change in systems, curricula or policies.

Because of the wā pai that was created through whanaungatanga, taiohi were frank in their discussions with each other. They did not shy away from speaking their truths about their experiences of racial bias, which will be confronting for some. Their honesty may cause discomfort, but allowing discomfort to prevent honest discourse about racial bias and racist systems in schooling only serves to maintain the constructs of Pākehā privilege and the status quo (Borell et al., 2009). The purpose of this project was not to dwell on the negative—rather it was to harness the strength taiohi demonstrate on a daily basis to manage what are traumatic events. Taiohi perspectives hold crucial messages for education professionals, and their ability to manage the discomfort caused by both systems and people is exemplary.

Tikanga

Before advertising for participants, the research team held an open community hui, with a specific invitation to local hapū and iwi to inform them of the project, and to also seek their permission to work with their young people. Doing so ensured that localised tikanga were put in place as safety mechanisms to support the research team in our work with taiohi Māori and in our community. The research topic did cause discomfort for some schools, however. These issues were addressed by clarifying the intention of the research, which was not to vilify schools but to amplify taiohi voices to improve their education experiences.

Kaumātua were also consulted to advise our next steps in relation to the discomfort expressed by some schools. Had kaumātua told the team they did not want this discussion to be had with young Māori people, the project would have ended there. Kaumātua were happy for us to proceed. This was an example of the ways tikanga Māori can be utilised as a research approach to guide interactions and safeguard engagements with people, places and information (Hetaraka, 2023).

Participants

Participants self-selected to take part in this project. All taiohi positively identified as Māori and attended high schools in the Tai Tokerau region. Despite the instances of racial bias participants reported in this project, they all had successes at school that manifest in various ways. Some participants held school leadership roles, some attended multiple high schools, some now have

young children of their own, and all are experiencing successes as taiohi Māori. It is important to note that the participants in this project all come from whānau who have high expectations of them as taiohi Māori.

All participants belong to whānau who are educated in Western and Māori forms of education. Coincidentally, they were all also raised by single mothers who made sure they were children of their respective kāinga. While it is beyond the scope of this project to determine if these factors play into the resolve these taiohi demonstrate to live confidently and successfully as Māori, the findings of Webber and Macfarlane (2017) support an argument that they are indeed contributing factors. The research team is very aware that far too many young people have similar experiences of racism at school but may not have the internal or external resources to manage in ways that this particular group has.

Data collection and analysis

Our original research design proposed to explore taiohi experiences of racism through the visual arts. As the project progressed and the final group came together, we decided the best approach was to conduct wānanga. Mahuika and Mahuika (2020) describe wānanga as spaces that encourage critical thought, repetition, debate and whakapapa, performance, and normalise the centrality of emotion. Wānanga was selected as an appropriate approach to this project as it established a space from which taiohi could share their experiences and also garner support from each other as they traversed this topic that has been an intergenerational source of trauma.

During the analysis phase of the project, the team realised that what taiohi had shared with us was so clear, poignant and powerful that we had to explore ways of allowing their voices to be heard with a minimal overlay of (potentially distracting) academic analyses that tend to emphasise researchers' perceptions of data. Archibald and Onwuegbuzie (2020) promote the use of poetry in research as a transformational meaning-making process to open up new methodological, epistemological and theoretical spaces.

A debate around using poetry in research exists on a spectrum that ranges from the belief that anybody can engage in the creative process of poetry writing through to the argument that only scholarly experts with in-depth training have the ability to produce "good" poetry (Lahman & Richard, 2013). We agree with the approach that Lahman and Richard (2013) take when they see their research poems as "good enough". However, because the research team lay no claim to the poems that have surfaced from this project—they are the words of taiohi Māori—we might also expose our bias and argue that the works are in fact good poetry.

The approach utilised in this project was "found poetry", or research poems created from words of participants as they appeared in the transcripts. The research team analysed which words told certain stories or made particular meanings, but the words largely appear in poems as they do in transcripts. Some poems are part of group discussion; some are the words of individuals—in all cases the research team have altered minor words only slightly for connection or flow. Some titles came from the discussion; others were invented by the research team. Fitzpatrick and Fitzpatrick (2021) describe found poetry as poetic conversations and argue that such conversations allow the disruption of the traditional research practices that maintain problematic power relationships. This method of analysis (and dissemination), used in ways that support participants and readers to dismantle systemic, implicit and overt violence, aligns with the way Mahuika and Mahuika (2020) define wānanga as a research methodology.

The process of creating found poems in this project resonated with Richardson's (1994) reflection that "writing up interviews as poems honours the speakers' pauses, repetitions, alliterations, narrative strategies, rhythms, and so on. Poetry may actually better represent the speaker than the practice of quoting snippets in prose" (p. 522). In many ways, using poetry as a meaning-making tool in this project also reflected Māori-developed creative tools for analysis and dissemination that highlight participant voice, such as pūrākau, pūkōrero and tauparapara (Hetaraka, 2020; Lee, 2008).

Poetry became a way for the research team to return power to participants as they expressed their experiences of racism in institutions charged with preparing them to succeed in the world. Fitzpatrick and Fitzpatrick (2021) remind us that complex, nuanced, creative and poetic expressions of knowledge have been part of the repertoire of Indigenous scholars, elders and artists since time immemorial. Perhaps the connection these taiohi Māori have with their whakapapa provided the conditions that made poetry the logical form of expression in this work.

Ngā whakahua

Following is a selection of poetry organised into themes identified by the research team as (1) Identity, (2) Teacher talk and (3) Equity. Each section includes poems and short accompanying analytical narratives to illustrate links the research team made to themes of racial bias. The experiences taiohi Māori shared are challenging, and the research topic is one we hope will eventually become irrelevant. For now, though, racial bias remains a far too common injustice experienced by many people on a daily basis. Transforming racial bias should be the responsibility of everyone in our society.

There is not space here to include all the poems because they occupy approximately 20 pages. However, it is hoped that they will all be published eventually as a resource to benefit teachers, schools and other young people navigating their experiences. We have included a selection of poems that illustrate key ideas that were important to taiohi Māori in relation to their experiences of racial bias in schooling. While racial bias is generally understood as an individual's expressions of racism, it is important to note that taiohi often pointed out the systemic racism that causes individuals to act or speak in racially biased ways. Throughout the wānanga and poetic conversations, it became clear that taiohi were acutely aware of the insidious ways embedded institutional racism impacts unconscious biases.

Identity

Webber (2012) argues that positive racial-ethnic identity is an essential element in raising resilience in taiohi Māori, supporting them to feel more comfortable at school and therefore encouraging them to hold high academic aspirations for themselves. A strong and recurring theme in this project was the construction of Māori identities at school. A feature of the Tai Tokerau context significant to this project is that 61.1% of teachers identify as Pākehā compared to 26% who identify as Māori. At the same time, 53.4% of students in Te Tai Tokerau identify as Māori, much higher than the nationwide average of 25% (New Zealand Government, 2024). Therefore, more than half the student population of Te Tai Tokerau is Māori but only a quarter of teachers identify as Māori, with the vast majority claiming to be Pākehā. Comparing teacher-student demographics in the Northland region provides a rather obvious reason for the feeling taiohi Māori express here of having their identities guessed at based on a host of identity markers and presumptions.

Taiohi, even a few years removed from high school age, still struggled to verbalise expressions of their identities as Māori schoolchildren. The source of much of this complexity was feeling that being Māori wasn't valued by others in their school communities. Taiohi Māori expressed that they feel their identities are (re)constructed by teachers who often believe they know students but who can only guess at Māori identities and assemble them through lenses coloured by realities that are different to those of students themselves:

How do they know I'm Māori?
It's hard
It's a hard question
Because I have to imagine what they see
When they look at me

I'm brown
Brown eyes
Brown skin
Strictly Māori

But some people think I'm White
They only know I'm Māori because
My
Mum
Pushed it
I was a Māori-speaking boy

I do kapa haka
They see me and expect me to mihi
To karakia
To karanga

But they don't care enough to learn any
Tikanga that goes with those things
They don't care if I feel ashamed
Because I don't have my language
They expect me to know

It's hard to look at yourself
From other people's perspectives
And try and see what they see

Taiohi Māori also experienced confusing and demoralising impacts on their sense of identity by school systems that restrict choice in curriculum, specifically by positioning te reo Māori and Māori-based subjects as non-academic, and generally through unhelpful timetable clashes. Systems such as these have been described across generations and continue to be highlighted by taiohi Māori in regions outside of Te Tai Tokerau (Smale, 2024). At a crucial time in the development of positive

racial-ethnic identities, taiohi were engaged in complex fluxes between feeling proud to be Māori while intuiting others' stereotypical packaging of Māori identities. This example of institutional racism has been experienced by generations of Māori, including members of the research team:

it was a choice
you are put in a position where you are forced
to choose between the two,
                              a passion or your culture
you may love art and you have to choose
                              art or Māori
like it's a choice
it was a choice
between going through school as mainstream
or be one of those Māori kids who have
to take the Māori class
                              all the way through
who has been identified as a naughty kid
the choice is even harder
because it's not just the choice
              "what i love to do and my identity",
it's also the labelling that comes with
                              my identity
knowing if i choose that path
everyone
is
gonna know
who i am as that Māori
then that makes it hard to choose.

Despite the multitude of research on the invaluable impact positive cultural and ethnic identity has on student success (Allen & Webber, 2019; Turner et al., 2015; Webber, 2012; Webber & Macfarlane, 2017), taiohi continue to report feeling that in order to succeed in their schooling they must leave important and special features of themselves and their culture at the school gates:

Block
There's so much that happened at school
It's hard to sift it all out
It's hard to untangle it all
It's hard to know what bits of the racism was intentional
Or what was just jokes
And I know that stuff has happened
But I remember at the time having to be like
Block it out and
Just keep going
Even if it wasn't racism toward me
In terms of structural inequity or bias
I had to block it out

And keep going
I had to block it out
To succeed

Strongly linked to the capacity schools have to support students developing positive racial, ethnic and cultural identities is the notion of Mana Ūkaipō, as theorised by Webber (2023). Mana Ūkaipō in school is generated for taiohi when they know they have a place at school, that they are valued and that they are valuable to the school structure. Taiohi shared narratives that illustrated ways school structures could create either a sense of belonging or a feeling of exclusion. School structures often worked to make these taiohi feel isolated and at times ashamed of their identity as Māori:

an empty exam room
i was in the Māori class
                              so that meant that i was Māori
there was no one who wanted to
learn Māori who was
       who was non-Māori
                              yeah, it was **just** Māori kids
it starts as a whole classroom
and then you get to year 13
       and then there's only one person
       in the exam room

Experiencing Mana Ūkaipō in schools also extends to feeling culturally safe. Webber (2023) contends that Mana Ūkaipō is cultivated in students when their cultural knowledge systems, identities and histories are prominent and valued at school. Taiohi Māori in this project emphasised the potential for real harm to be caused when schools either do not have enough knowledge and understanding of Māori practices or proceed without the guidance of cultural experts:

that's a culturally unsafe space
they don't help us as a culture at school
                      but they're quick to ask
                      for help when they want us
                      to welcome people into the school
i was the oldest Māori student and
i had to do the karanga
                      but they didn't even ask me
they assumed that i could speak Māori
                      but i couldn't speak Māori
they chucked some White girl in there
with me to karanga
                      but they didn't even bother
                      learning the tikanga

around that
very strange
yeah, a really unsafe   space

Another recurring theme related to identity that surfaced in wānanga was a perception that teachers and students saw taiohi Māori as different, and not in ways that engendered positive feelings. Stracuzzi and Mills (2010), in their study with youth living in rural Coos County, New Hampshire, reported school connectedness was one of the central features in prompting socioemotional wellbeing for young people. Being made to feel different and disconnected from school was a common experience for taiohi, and it came up at multiple points during wānanga:

That School is a Joke

i was just looked at differently

coming from a Māori school
and just being affirmed as Māori
everyone embraces it
                    then you go to **that** school
            and you don't wanna embrace it
            in front of your classmates

        just constantly looked at differently

        students and teachers
        who kind of give you
        that vibe
because i come from a
Māori school
just to expect the least
        i just feel out of place

Teacher talk

A range of studies have found that teachers have systematically lower expectations of taiohi Māori and judge their academic performance more harshly than that of Pākehā students (Meissel et al., 2016; Rubie-Davies & Peterson, 2016; Turner et al., 2015; Webber et al., 2013). Teacher expectations and perceptions of student ability and achievement have been closely linked to teacher beliefs and perceptions about student ethnicity (Turner, 2013). The Education and Training Act (2020) charges teachers with affirming student identities as a key aspect of their professional role. It is therefore disheartening to hear the dejection taiohi Māori experienced when they felt what was being constructed about them was based not on

"truth" or shared lived experience, but on flawed perceptions and assumptions about their ethnicity.

Often when taiohi Māori described interactions between themselves and teachers, they recognised that these interactions were regularly coloured by sociopolitical influences on teachers. The sociopolitical example in the following poetic conversation highlights that some practices in education are so racially biased that they have been completely normalised. Many teachers, board members, parents and students will be very familiar with the reporting of Māori student achievement. For a generation, reporting on achievement according to ethnicity was done publicly and without a cautionary thought, perhaps due to a distorted belief that this was conducive to student-centred learning and supporting priority learners (Education Review Office, 2012). Following is a taiohi experience of this type of reporting:

the national average
my teacher says
"here is all the data,
here is where all the Māori sit"
"for the Māori students that are in this classroom,
you were in this bracket"

in front of the whole class.

"based on ethnicity,
your average sits here"
"this is where you sit"

in front of the whole class.

I say
so, if that is where I landed,
after a year in your class
then what the f_ck is wrong with you?
I'm asking questions of you,

in front of the whole class.

Taiohi also grappled with the different relationships they had with Māori and non-Māori teachers. They discussed many non-Māori teachers with whom they had positive experiences and interactions with, but they also expressed sometimes uncomfortable relationships with non-Māori teachers who assumed a closeness with students. The next poetic conversation reflects findings (Basford & Schaninger, 2016) that self-serving biases can make people overconfident, cause blind spots and ensure people remain unaware of what they need to learn. Here taiohi unpack

the differences in relationships between Māori and non-Māori teachers,[*] describing the over-confidence some teachers have in their relationships with taiohi Māori:

I think they mean well
Miss Maryann would call us Drongos
She would call us Drongos and stand on our toes
Literally, with her big, clunky-ass shoes

Miss Maryann would ask us if we had dope in
    our bags
People would carry around their bags
She'd be like "Why are you carrying your bag?
You got dope in there or something?"

She's just straight up
She's a bit too straight up
It's uncomfortable

Whaea Mereana looks at me as the same and not
    different
It's comfort
It's like whānau
It's like Aunty and Uncle vibes

She's still hard on us, she's strict
She knows it's not a good thing to say I have dope
    in my bag
She knows a joke
And our people like to joke

Miss Maryann does have a good heart I think
She's just not able to understand. She just doesn't
    understand.
Whaea Mereana
I don't know, she just understands

Taiohi also reported instances of interactions with teachers and students that appear to be outrightly racist. As part of this particular discussion, one participant disturbingly wondered why some teachers seemed perfectly comfortable making negative, sweeping comments about taiohi Māori and Māori practices in front of them. It was encouraging to hear the decision-making processes, the generosity of spirit and the courageous response of taiohi Māori here:

Push Back
When we do some of those things our cultural
    heroes do
Suddenly the racism shows

When we are vocal
It confronts them

When we actively try to create safer spaces for all
    students
They don't want to dig too much

They feel confronted about
Themselves

They push back on it

Sometimes the whole class would hold the
    teacher to account:
"Miss, we forgot to do karakia this morning"

The teacher would blatantly say
We don't need to do that silly stuff

They push back

You could go through school ignoring it
Avoiding it

But when we choose to Push Back
We say this is for us, this is what we are doing
And we offer our Māoritanga for everyone to
    participate in

Embrace it

Taiohi Māori also expressed a deep gratitude and aroha for teachers who, in their words, could see them. The final contribution to the poetic conversation was a retort to the argument for staying in school. It serves as a reminder of the ever-present tension that exists for too many taiohi who see little reflection of their positive cultural identities at school and therefore see little relevance or value in school. The following is an ode to Māori teachers; taiohi sentiments here align to Lee's (2008) findings that Māori teachers do make a difference for taiohi Māori:

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[*]   Teacher names have been invented here. At times taiohi spoke of specific teachers; at other times they spoke in general about
    differences in relationships. The two teacher names have been inserted to denote a non-Māori teacher and a Māori teacher,
    respectively.

The Māori teacher
It was nice to have her
She wasn't even my teacher
But just having her at school
Made a difference
She's a Māori teacher

He's a Māori teacher
He had a bigger voice
And an open office
He made sure we were heard
He could talk to kids and stop them dropping out

… But there's nothing wrong with dropping out …

In the course of the wānanga, relationships, teacher talk and pedagogical practices were often discussed as parts of a whole. Taiohi Māori surfaced their perceptions of the interplay between teacher assumptions about students and their pedagogical practices and decisions. Gorski (2019) reminds educators that racism-infused misperceptions of students' cultures cannot justify the failure to create racially just schools. Yet taiohi discussed multiple experiences of teachers who appeared to have little insight into their own contribution to instances of conflict in classrooms.

Unfortunately, the types of situations taiohi referred to would often end with students being disciplined for unacceptable behaviours. Disciplinary decisions such as these are made based on racial biases and attributed by education professionals to cultural defects in students (Rudd, 2014). Importantly, teacher pedagogies were identified as a key barrier to taiohi accessing curriculum content, yet in many instances it was students, not teachers, having to absorb the impact of poor teacher practices:

My teacher called me a hoodrat
I remember once
The maths teacher
He made my whole class cry
When you get singled out
When they call you to the front of the class
That's when I just gave up on school

They label us as disruptive
But no wonder!
He had no cultural awareness
He's just a maths teacher
He just writes on the board

How am I supposed to understand
If you're not talking or helping?

Then they ask why I don't go to class
It's coz my teacher called me a hoodrat
Equity

Notions of equity and racial biases are often locked together in an uncomfortable dance across societies. Taiohi reported being subjected to racial biases across a number of schooling experiences that caused them to perceive inequities in relationships, school systems, pedagogical practices and outcomes. Taiohi described some features of "equity" they had experienced in schools in ways that align to deficit ideology, which seeks to "fix" students of colour by attributing disparities to their communities while simultaneously ignoring the role of racism (Gorski, 2019):

White Saviour
There's this funny thing between equity and like
… now this just feels racist
They've identified a group
They've identified the needs
But that hasn't been done with us
Or for us

It's just what the system thinks we need
… and it's always based on deficit
Always

It's never positive
Just the framing of it

There's a weird thing about it
They're targeting this certain group
… and they're the problematic group
I get the intention behind it
But it makes me feel uncomfortable

It's not about who you are
What you want to do with your life
It's just shifting you into this box
Because they think that's what is good for you

There are teachers who care about you
Who took the time to know who you are
To support you
Who saw your potential

But when they only see a number
And think help is ticking boxes
And feel glad they have done that
That gives big White Saviour vibes

Gorski (2019) argues that "racism is a tangled structural mess of power, oppression and unjust

distributions of access and opportunity" and that the "mess cannot be resolved with greater cultural awareness alone" (p. 58). Taiohi discussions illustrated their awareness of tensions in access and opportunity. In wānanga, they discussed the opportunities they were offered at school. Many of these opportunities helped to shape their lives, but they were also coated with a bitterness. Taiohi named the precarious potential for access and opportunities to be felt as racism dressed as equity:

There's a spot for a Māori
It was unusual, aye?
You'll get that spot because you're the good Māori
You'll be the Māori Head Student
You'll fit because there's always like a Māori
    Head Student
Right?

There's that thing where they
alternate
One year there will be a Māori Head Student
The next it will be a White kid

You're only gonna get it
Because you fit the Māori thing
Like that's a little provisional thing
Because there's a little equity spot
For you

Disregarding the work you've done
Disregarding your own merit
You're the token Māori
So you're gonna get that spot

And there can only be one.

So it's you.

And I should be grateful I got it

Conclusion

Meyer (2008) argues that racism, colonisation, power, hegemony and oppression are all symptoms of acts of denial that flourish when unawareness is encouraged in society. If the words of these taiohi Māori can make just one teacher aware of their conscious or unconscious biases, we will be one step closer to combating institutional racism and transforming experiences for all taiohi. To understand the ways we contribute to any situation first requires a deep examination of our beliefs and our assumptions. A crucial message presented by taiohi Māori about acts of racial bias

in schools is that even well-intentioned teachers who perhaps have good relationships with taiohi Māori can still contribute to experiences of racial bias. It is anticipated that this stark realisation will activate in teachers a deep dive into their assumptions about what they think is happening in their everyday interactions with taiohi Māori.

Dei (2005) contends that uncritical methodologies deny the existence of oppression. This level of unconsciousness has enabled deficit theories to underpin educational and social policies that have actively encouraged cultural exclusion from the education system for generations (Ford, 2013). The design of this research project purposefully sought to highlight experiences of institutional racism and has opened space to unravel injustices. Critical analysis of these experiences in turn has allowed for the exploration of solutions that will repel racist structures. It also offers education professionals space to examine any self-serving biases that may be causing them to overlook their limitations (Basford & Schaninger, 2016).

As Māori, as parents, as youth, as human beings concerned with justice, it is heartbreaking to know children and young people are subjected daily to racial discrimination in Aotearoa, sometimes in situations where perpetrators are unaware of the impact of their actions and words. These taiohi Māori were shaped, but not defined by, their experiences of racial bias. They sit comfortably in their mana. In situations that have attempted to make them powerless, they have knowingly and wilfully held on to the power that is rightfully theirs. Taiohi Māori illustrate this when they speak of their cultural heroes. The research team certainly consider all taiohi involved in this project our cultural heroes:

We can name our heroes
Our parents and grandparents
Have an ability to do well in both worlds
They can be in academia
And in their culture

They are movers
They are the people you see in photos and in
    museums

They are so humble
They've done all these amazing things
They are my heroes
And they are so humble

They would sacrifice everything
For the collective

Our Taua is
A White-passing Māori lady
Staunch in her Māoritanga
She uses her White-passing privilege for
Our family
For our peoples' benefit
She knew what she needed to do
She plays the game
She is undoubtedly Māori in her whakaaro
She stands up for what is right

Our cultural heroes are
4th Gen Ngāti Kuri
HĀ
We're surrounded by people doing something in
    their field
These are things that are
Just amazing

The fight our heroes have done
Is for us
To take the next step
We're in a place where we can progress
We're not having to sacrifice as much
Like their sacrifice

We're able to grow
Do things that have not been done before
This generation is doing all the things
That those generations
Made possible

Acknowledgements

Glossary

Aotearoa	New Zealand
aroha	love
HĀ	acronym for education provider History of Aotearoa; lit. "breath"
hapū	kinship grouping
hui	gathering/meeting
iwi	tribal kinship grouping
kāinga	home/village/ community
kapa haka	Māori performing arts; a group of Māori performing artists
karakia	prayer
karanga	a call, usually the first voice heard in ceremonies
kaumātua	tribal elders
Kaupapa Māori	Māori theory/ philosophical framework
mana	authority/power/prestige
Māori	Indigenous peoples of New Zealand
Māoritanga	"Māori-ness", a broad expression of Māori identity
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge systems
mihi	speech of greeting, acknowledgement, tribute
ngā whakahua	expressions/outcomes
Ngāti Kuri	tribal group from the northern-most region of New Zealand
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
pūkōrero	narrative that maintains the speaker's voice as much as possible
pūrākau	narrative, story
taiohi	youth
tāngata whenua	Indigenous people
taua	grandmother (South Island dialect)
tauparapara	prophetic verse
te ao Māori	Māori worldview
te reo/te reo Māori	the language/the Māori language
Te Tai Tokerau/Tai Tokerau	Northland, New Zealand
tikanga	Māori sociocultural values and practices
wānanga	discussion and knowledge sharing
whaea	female relative who has given birth
whakaaro	thought
whakapapa	genealogy
whānau	family grouping
whanaungatanga	kinship/connection/ relationships

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THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF PASIFIKA ANATOMY STUDENTS LIVING IN ŌTEPOTI AND STUDYING AT ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA

A talanoa

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Abstract

Many Pasifika students in Te Tari Kikokiko at Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka face challenges while living in Ōtepoti and studying in our department. We conducted online talanoa with 24 Pasifika undergraduate students to gain feedback about their experiences. Students reported having challenges in living independently, culture shock, and academic struggles while living in Ōtepoti. Reasons for choosing our institution and studying anatomy were discussed. Students reported challenges in adapting to learning styles for anatomy, workload content, personal barriers, lack of culturally competent support, difficulties in essay writing, and tutorials (timing conflict, delivery method). They also were reluctant to seek feedback from academics about their work. Students recommended extracurricular support (e.g., writing workshops), improving staff–student communication (e.g., for information on scholarship), and increasing Pacific presence (e.g., more Pasifika staff, visual signs). Institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand, including ours, should explore strategic ways to improve academic outcomes of Pasifika students.

Keywords

Introduction

In Aotearoa New Zealand, about 8% of the population are Pacific people and the population is only expected to increase in the coming years (Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2024). The term "Pasifika" has been used to describe "peoples who

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have migrated from Pacific nations and territories. It also refers to the New Zealand-based (and born) population, who identify as Pasifika, via ancestry or descent" (Airini et al., 2010, p. 49). Given the increasing population of Pacific people, enrolment in universities in Aotearoa is expected to rise as well. However, Pasifika people in Aotearoa have always been underserved by the education systems (Boon-Nanai et al., 2017; McDonald & Lipine, 2012; Reynolds, 2016; Theodore, Taumoepeau, Kokaua, et al., 2018; Theodore, Taumoepeau, Tustin, et al., 2018), and universities need to improve Pasifika student support to promote Pasifika excellence.

Various factors may contribute to the disparity in academic outcomes for Pasifika students in Aotearoa. For example, universities in Aotearoa are built primarily on Western frameworks and often do not take into account Indigenous approaches in education. Western pedagogy tends to be more individualistic, whereas Pacific people value a holistic approach in education (Alkema, 2014; Chu et al., 2013). Consequently, Pasifika students may struggle in adapting to the Western approach in education. In addition, the number of Pasifika academics in universities is low (Naepi, 2019), proportionally much lower than in the general population. The low number also means that few staff are competent in Pacific cultures. Lack of cultural competency may be a barrier for Pasifika students to approach academics.

As ethnic minorities, Pasifika students may experience social anxiety when interacting with the ethnic majority (Fakapulia et al., 2023). Studies in other countries indicate that ethnic minority students may perceive discrimination (Nora & Cabrera, 1996), and their perception of the university environment (Wei et al., 2011) and anxiety symptoms (Manzo et al., 2022) mediate the association between minority stress and academic outcomes for higher education students. Additionally, many Pasifika students come from low-decile high schools (Sopoaga et al., 2013), and may not be as well equipped as students from higher decile schools. Furthermore, many ethnic minority students are first-generation tertiary students (Zalaquett, 1999), meaning they might not have somebody to guide them through the university system.

Te Tari Kikokiko at Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka is involved in anatomy education for healthcare professional programmes, undergraduate science courses, and postgraduate courses (University of Otago, 2025). While a majority of students in our department are New Zealand European (NZE), there are also students of other ethnicities, including Māori and Pasifika. Since cadavers are used as learning tools for many courses, the department holds the whakawātea ceremony to provide spiritual safety for students (Māori and students of other ethnicities) and acknowledge the significance of the tūpāpaku in society (McClea & Stringer, 2010; Nicholson et al., 2011).

Among the undergraduate sciences courses, approximately 90–100 Pasifika students are studying at second- and third-year levels. Our team recently conducted a five-year review of 10 anatomy courses, and we found that for *all* courses, Pasifika students are more likely to achieve lower marks than NZE students (Time et al., 2023). A similar finding was reported in a study on first-year anatomy students at the Auckland University of Technology (Brown et al., 2018). These findings highlight the ethnic disparity in anatomical sciences education.

Cultural factors may influence anatomical learning. Some topics in anatomy may be tapu for Pasifika students (Madgwick et al., 2024). For example, Pasifika students may not be comfortable dissecting the head region because the head is considered a sacred body part. They may also feel uncomfortable viewing genitals in lectures or labs. Learning styles may differ between Pasifika and NZE students, as noted in a past study that found differences in learning strategies for anatomy topics in other cultures (Mitchell et al., 2009). Asking questions to academic staff may vary between cultures (Levinsohn, 2007). Pasifika students may be reluctant to seek help from academics (Chu et al., 2013), especially if there is a lack of student–lecturer relationship.

The aim of this study is to gather information on the experiences of living in Ōtepoti and studying at Te Tari Kikokiko that can help to further enhance Pasifika student support. We hope to use data from this research to improve the support infrastructure in our department. Other departments and institutions in Aotearoa may use data from this research to better support Pasifika students locally. They may also consider conducting talanoa sessions with their students to gain a better understanding of how they can support them.

Methods

Kakala methodology

In this study, we used the kakala methodology as previously described by Johansson-Fua (2023) and Thaman (1993). The kakala methodology refers to a research approach that resembles the

making of kakala. The kakala presents three main aspects/processes:

1. *Toli*—Toli refers to gathering fragrant flowers, and it symbolises the data collection phase in this study. In this stage we selected our target group: second- and third-year Pasifika anatomy students. It also reflects our process of developing the questions, obtaining ethical approval, and Māori consultation through the Ngāi Tahu Research Consultation Committee. This research was approved by the Human Ethics Committee (D21/245) from Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka. Additionally, we sought feedback from Pasifika students from the Biomedical Otago Pacific Students Association (BOPSA) to ensure that the questions were appropriate and relevant to Pasifika students. Participants were recruited and we assembled information through talanoa.

2. *Tui*—Tui is the process of making the garland. This phase represents the stage of data analysis. We conducted thematic analyses based on the responses gathered from the participants. Themes were identified, and the findings were summarised.

3. *Luva*—Luva means giving away the completed kakala to someone with sincerity and humility. Within the context of this research, this stage symbolises giving back to the people that we worked with throughout this research project (Vaioleti, 2013). First, our participants received a koha of a $40 gift voucher. More importantly, this stage also reflects how findings from this research will be used to inform our department about how to better support their Pasifika students and foster culturally appropriate spaces. A copy of the published article will be sent to the participants' university email addresses.

Talanoa method

To capture the students' lived experiences, data were obtained through talanoa sessions and thematically analysed. The talanoa sessions were recorded and held over Zoom. Initially, we planned to conduct the talanoa sessions in person; however, there was an outbreak of COVID-19 virus variant Omicron in our campus during the first few months of recruitment, which made us decide to conduct them online. For consistency purposes, we conducted the remaining sessions online.

Using the talanoa method developed by Vaioleti (2013), we examined the nature and root causes of significant challenges faced by Pasifika anatomy students, and evaluated the effectiveness of measures designed to support these students. The talanoa was conducted by the first author, who is a Tongan female student and approximately the same age as the participants.

Although participants were informed that the talanoa sessions might last between 30 and 45 minutes, we kept the time frame flexible to ensure that we stayed true to the meaning around talanoa and that the participants did not feel pressured by a time cap.

Recruitment

Pasifika students at both 200 and 300 levels in Anatomy were contacted via email inviting them for a talanoa session. In this study, we invited students who identified as at least one of the following "Pacific Peoples" categories in our institution database: Cook Island Māori, Fijian, Sāmoan, Niuean, Tongan, Tokelauan, or Other Pacific Peoples. Students who identified as Fijian and Indian were also invited, but we did not invite students who identified as Indian because the university system did not indicate whether they were from Fiji or elsewhere.

A majority of participants (15 out of 24) were also participants of a survey on Pasifika students experiences in 2021. At the end of that survey, they agreed to participate in a follow-up talanoa. An additional nine participants were recruited in 2022, and this was done by us contacting the Pasifika students in anatomy via email. Additionally, BOPSA helped advertise the talanoa to their members via their social media platforms. The only requirement for participants of this study was that they had taken at least one anatomy paper at either the 200 or the 300 level in the 2021 or 2022.

Demographic questions

Before the talanoa, participants completed a short demographic questionnaire online via the Research Electronic Data Capture database, hosted at the University of Otago. The demographic questions asked about year of birth, ethnicity, gender, levels of anatomy papers they had taken, place of birth, place where they grew up, and relationship status.

Questions for talanoa

The questions for the talanoa were constructed by our study team and related to Pasifika students' experience (see Appendix 1). The participants were asked to first introduce themselves, and then explain why they chose to study at the University of Otago and their reasons for choosing anatomy

papers. They were then asked to share any challenges in adapting to life in Ōtepoti. Students were also asked various questions on ways that the Department of Anatomy can better support them in terms of essay writing, receiving/seeking feedback on assignments, and how to foster a culturally responsive and appropriate learning space. Additionally, students were asked to share how the Pacific students' liaisons could further support them and how to involve more Pasifika students in research.

Data analyses

Demographic data were summarised using descriptive statistics. Thematic analysis was done using the framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Responses from each question were coded at the semantic level and themes were identified by the first author. The reporting was centred on the experiences as described by the participants. Direct quotes were transcribed verbatim and used to support relevant themes and responses that did not correspond to a theme not covered in this study.

Results

Demographics

In total, 24 Pasifika students who had taken at least one anatomy paper completed our talanoa sessions. The majority of participants were female (70.8%) and from Aotearoa but outside of Ōtepoti (83.3%), and all had completed 200-level anatomy papers (see Table 1). On average, they were 22 ± 2.1 years

Table 1. Demographic data of participants in this study.

Variables	N	%	M	SD	Range
Age	24		22.5	2.1	19 – 26
Ethnicities					
Pacific peoples, not further defined	2	8.3			
Samoan	7	29.1			
Cook Islands Māori	4	16.6			
Tongan	8	33.0			
Niuean	2	8.3			
Tokelauan	1	4.1			
Fijian	6	25.0			
Solomon Islander	0	0			
Māori	2	8.3			
New Zealander European	6	25.0			
Asian	2	8.3			
Other ethnicity	0	0			
Gender					
Male	6	25.0			
Female	17	70.8			
Aka'vaine	1	4.2			
Anatomy papers taken					
200-level papers	24	100			
300-level papers	12	50			
Place of birth					
Dunedin	1	4.1			
New Zealand, other than Dunedin	21	87.5			
Pacific Island	2	8.3			
Other	0	0			
Place grow up					
Dunedin	1	4.1			
New Zealand, other than Dunedin	20	83.3			
Pacific Island	2	8.3			
Other	1	4.1			
In a relationship					
Yes	10	41.6			
No	14	58.3			

old. Overall, the top three ethnic groups in this research study were Tongan (33%), Samoan (29.1%), and Fijian (25%). Six out of 24 (25%) of the participants identified as male (25%) and one identified as akava'ine (4.2%). Their reasons for choosing to study at the University of Otago are included in the supplementary data.

Challenges in adjusting to life in Ōtepoti

Three main themes were identified when participants were asked about their challenges in adjusting to life in Ōtepoti: struggles with self-managing, culture shock, and academic adaptations.

Theme 1: Struggles with self-management. Participants faced challenges with having relocated far from home and self-management:

> Definitely trying to adapt to this place as an independent person has been hard, like in terms of, you know, reaching out, getting support and also just keeping on top of things because there's not anyone in my ear ringing every day telling me what to do. (Participant 15)

> Starting uni itself is such a major life change but when you add to that moving and living away from family for the first time, living with other young people for the first time, it can be quite overwhelming . . . I did struggle without my family. I'm really close to my family. I struggled without their [family] support and just how much I had to self-manage, just with the high work demand and nobody really keeping tabs on you. (Participant 2)

Theme 2: Culture shock. This theme emphasises the participants' experience of culture shock after arriving in Ōtepoti, where there are not many Pasifika people and no significant Pacific cultures:

> I feel like in your first year, just moving down. Like a really big jump from Auckland, from a really populated Pacific community to the bare minimum. (Participant 9)

> Coming into like the drinking culture was a shock and I tried to fit in a bit, and I missed the reason why I was there in the first place. (Participant 22)

Theme 3: Academic challenges. This theme represents the struggle participants had with adapting to the academic workload and new learning style. Many participants felt that secondary schooling did not prop them up well for tertiary level. For example:

> First, was coming from NCEA [National Certificate of Educational Achievement] to university, NCEA did not prepare me in any way, shape or form. (Participant 3)

> I definitely think the biggest challenge with moving was mainly the different style of study that you kind of had to adapt with university. (Participant 5)

Reasons why students chose to take anatomy papers

Three key themes were identified when participants were asked why they chose anatomy papers: they were interested in the papers, they either enjoyed or achieved better grades in their Health Sciences First Year programme, which provides some introduction to anatomy topics, and they wanted to use it as a pathway or it was a prerequisite for their course of choice.

Theme 1: Interest

> I just found it really interesting. (Participant 1)

> I found it quite interesting, relating it back to my actual body and stuff. (Participant 18)

Theme 2: Human Body Systems (HUBS) paper

> I was most comfortable doing HUBS191 and 192. Those two papers were also the best. (Participant 6)

> I did better on my HUBS papers so then I thought it'll make sense to do anatomy just because that seems like something, I'm all good at. (Participant 10)

Theme 3: Pathway

> My goal of this whole BSci journey was to get myself prepared for when I do get into medicine, that everything in med just goes nicely. (Participant 14)

> Anatomy 241 is a prerequisite for Pathology 201, and I wanted to do Pathology 301. (Participant 20)

Challenges that students found in studying papers in anatomy

Two themes were identified when participants were asked to share the challenges that they found in studying anatomy papers: learning adaptations and lack of culturally competent support.

Theme 1: Learning adaptations. This theme represents the challenges participants found in the learning style as well as the workload in the anatomy papers that they took. For example:

Those two papers . . . contain extremely tapu/ sacred, forbidden topics that we have to talk about openly and that's something that my Pacific self, who was raised in a Christian church, just really struggled with and still struggles with today. (Participant 6)

Probably the fact that they're very content heavy. A lot of the time you don't have time to really be behind on your studies because it's just back-to-back-to-back. Those are the challenges I've been having lately. (Participant 22)

Theme 4: Lack of culturally competent level of support. This theme pertains to participants' struggle with the lack of support and culturally competent approaches that comes with doing anatomy. For example:

The anatomy degree is not catered to Māori and Pacific at all. Just the structure of it, the way things are run, it's like we don't even exist, or we're not considered in the planning of the curriculum . . . Just the cultural incompetency shown . . . Two of the papers I wasn't able to attend the labs in person because of the passing of my friend and they were like "oh, can you provide a death notice or a letter from the family" to like prove that. (Participant 7)

I know it's for Pacific students, but it's like the type of support is the same to everyone else, like "oh, just email us". (Participant 10)

How the Department of Anatomy can better support Pasifika students in their study

Three main themes were identified when participants were asked to share how the Department of Anatomy can better support them in their studies. Themes included extracurricular support; staff approaches to teaching, students and their learning; and Pasifika representation.

Theme 1: Extracurricular support. This theme refers to participants who identified a need for extracurricular support outside of labs and lectures. They mostly wanted to achieve one-on-one sessions to gain better understanding of the topics or having that constant support in the form of tutorials. For example:

Have these one-on-one sessions . . . that way we're confident enough to ask questions in front of people we know and we're able to orientate and ask, and we have a much better idea. (Participant 3)

I guess providing extra support during labs or maybe having like extra classes where they discuss the lab materials. (Participant 24)

Theme 2: Staff approaches. This theme represents issues raised by participants with the way that teaching and learning were conveyed, and key areas that they would like to see more support in. For instance:

[Participant's reference to working with cadavers and human materials considered tapu] What they could do, whether it's a talanoa or kind of prepare us for that a bit more, just acknowledging that it's a very different thing to grasp as Pacific people. (Participant 4)

Have staff that actually care about us and don't just want the title, I don't know how they could ever get the results that they want for us, if they don't care in the first place. (Participant 7)

Theme 3: Pasifika representation. This theme refers to the desire of participants to see more Pasifika representation in the Department of Anatomy, such as having Pasifika lecturers:

How having staff that are actually Pasifika would be a big difference. (Participant 10)

Another thing that would help would be having Pasifika lecturers, that would be nice. (Participant 3)

Additional information on how Pasifika student liaisons in the department can provide better support, and participants' opinions about essay writing, feedback about approaching academics for help and research engagement are included in supplementary data.

Factors that would help Pasifika students attend the tutorials

Two main themes were identified when participants were asked to share ways to increase Pasifika student engagement or attendance at the tutorials provided by the University's Pacific Islands Centre. These themes were identified as: teaching delivery and timing convenience.

Theme 1: Teaching delivery. This theme is about the way the content was delivered as well as the desire to have options open for participants to join not only in person, but also online via Zoom:

I wonder if the online delivery options would be helpful or even doing both of them at the same time. So, we have an in-person venue, but you also stream

it on Zoom so that students who aren't able to make it to the location at that time can still benefit from that learning. (Participant 2)

I guess one way to improve and to help increase the numbers is having a structure. Some tutors have structures of how they tutor, but some don't. They just come and they're like "ok, what do you want to do today?" You can throw people off because they're like "oh why wouldn't you have something ready for us?...Put up worksheets", I guess the first week so that people know, this is what they're going to talk about. (Participant 24)

Theme 2: Timing convenience. This theme refers to the issue around the timing of the tutorials:

Time. I think one of the tutorials are at five o'clock or something. Maybe if it happened a bit earlier in the day, that would be better. (Participant 3)

A lot of why I couldn't attend tutorials came down to just logistical timetable issues where I couldn't get there in time or I was too far away or had something soon after. (Participant 2)

How the Department of Anatomy can be more welcoming to Pasifika students

Four main themes were identified when respondents were asked about ways that the Department of Anatomy could be more welcoming to Pasifika students: a welcome fono, Pacific visuals, Pacific representation, and culturally competent workshops.

Theme 1: Welcome fono. This theme is about hosting a welcome fono for the Pasifika students in the department that would aid in relationship building and familiarity:

I think the fono idea's really nice, holding that space for us as students to kind of having that one-on-one interaction with them and talanoa with them. (Participant 4)

A welcome fono is incredibly important for Pacific students at the start of the year, I think that should be for both undergrad and postgrad students. (Participant 6)

Theme 2: Pacific visuals. This theme pertains to having Pacific arts and visuals (e.g., signs) around the department, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity for Pasifika students:

It's always nice to go in and to see our patterns or our materials in a space like the Department of Anatomy, it's just a way of them acknowledging our presence and I guess significance in the department. (Participant 4)

Pacific art, that'd be beautiful. (Participant 12)

Theme 3: Pacific representation. This theme is about increasing more Pasifika faces in the department:

I think that more Pacific representation is really important. (Participant 2)

Probably like a Pasifika face in the department. (Participant 9)

Theme 4: Having culturally competent workshops. This theme refers to suggestions by participants that academics should attend cultural competency workshops:

Maybe it would be nice to start doing some cultural competency workshops where staff gets to learn about students and students get to learn about staff. (Participant 21)

I think it's really important to network at the start of a like of a degree or of a year. It feels a bit of like a safer environment to acknowledge the different cultures of students that come to study here Otago and the anatomy department. (Participant 23)

Discussion

In this study, we gathered information on the experiences of Pasifika students living in Ōtepoti and studying at Te Tari Kikokiko. Participants shared information about the difficulties they faced adjusting to life in Ōtepoti, reasons they chose to study anatomy courses at Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka, and the difficulties they encountered while studying anatomy. Additionally, students shared ways that the department could better support Pasifika students academically, factors that they perceived would increase tutorial attendance, ways in which Pasifika students' liaisons could better support them, and how the department could encourage more Pasifika researchers.

Why anatomy?

After completing the Health Sciences First Year programme, the reasons they elected anatomy papers included that they enjoyed studying the topics, achieved good marks in their first-year papers that had anatomy components, or the academic pathways (e.g., medicine, or a

prerequisite for other programs) they planned to pursue require anatomy knowledge.

Challenges at institutional level

New learning environment. For high school graduates, the transition to university takes place in late adolescence and is typically intermingled with navigating a sense of personal, cultural, and spiritual identity as well as figuring out a career path (McKinley & Madjar, 2014). This transition can be more challenging when students move to a new location where they are an ethnic minority. Participants reported experiencing a few challenges with adjusting to life in Ōtepoti. First, they may have faced culture shock because the majority grew up in neighbourhoods that had a higher proportion of Pacific and Māori people. Pasifika students from other studies have also noted how it is already daunting enough to be in a university setting as a Pasifika, but to walk into a lecture theatre or laboratory and realise "that you are the only brown person there" can be quite intimidating (McKegg, 2005). Often, academic staff may not realise the difficulty for Pasifika students entering a tertiary education setting as an ethnic minority (McKinley & Madjar, 2014). Thus, connecting them to a Pasifika community as early as possible is critical for their academic journey.

Academic adjustment. Undoubtedly, learning and assessment types change from secondary to tertiary education. Though Pasifika students enter university feeling eager to learn, they may not be well prepared for aspects of learning at tertiary level (McKinley & Madjar, 2014), such as the heavy workload. The secondary schooling system fails to adequately set up their Pasifika students for higher education (Leenen-Young, 2020; Sopoaga et al., 2013). Overall, Pasifika students are disproportionately represented in low-decile schools (Education Counts, 2023) and may not have had access to the same educational opportunities as other student groups (Alkema, 2014). Therefore, universities should collaborate more closely with secondary schools as a strategy to ensure that students are well equipped for the tertiary level (Theodore, Taumoepeau, Kokaua, et al., 2018).

The majority of students regarded the anatomy papers as particularly content heavy and requiring rote learning rather than comprehension. Of more concern were papers that involve working with tūpāpaku in the laboratories or discussing reproductive biology. Often, participants responded with hesitation or uncertainty because these can be considered tapu. In Pasifika culture, the tūpāpaku (especially the head region) and topics around sex are considered extremely tapu (Bender & Beller, 2003). How to approach tapu topics is important to take into account because Pasifika people are motivated and guided by these values, which may affect how they view these topics (Young et al., 2022). One student noted that carrying out a whakawātea ceremony (Martyn et al., 2013) can help to mitigate disconnections and experiences for Pasifika and Māori students.

Lack of Pasifika support. The lack of culturally appropriate support in the department was another challenge participants found. Students noted that the support was not Pasifika focused; they did not have a chance to build a vā with their lecturers. These findings are similar to those of Fletcher et al. (2011), in that students found that their teachers were not supportive because of a lack of cultural empathy. Strengthening the lecturer–student relationship is crucial and involves lecturers demonstrating respect for what their Pasifika students contribute to the learning space as well as showing care for them socially and academically (Fletcher et al., 2011; Hawk et al., 2002). Thus, the university needs to be more aware of cultural sensitivities when dealing with issues related to underrepresented groups.

Challenges at individual level

Pasifika people often value a collective perspective of the world, but when residing in an individualistic society and institution, such principles can become compromised (Ioane, 2017). Time management (e.g., managing bills, living and studying) was an obvious challenge for some participants. Students struggled with knowing how to study and managing their time. Furthermore, some participants reported difficulties transitioning from their parents' stricter household to attending university in Ōtepoti, where there was much more freedom.

Recommendations on how to better support Pasifika students

Using information from this talanoa, we provide suggestions on how Te Tari Kikokiko could better support their Pasifika students. Being aware of the difficulties faced by Pasifika students alone is insufficient; action, beginning at the institutional level, is required moving forward.

Culturally responsive teaching. Pasifika students

may approach learning differently when concepts are not taught through their own cultural and experiential perspectives (Gay, 2002), which highlights the importance of culturally responsive teaching. Participants noted that one way to increase Pasifika student engagement is by applying the lecture content (wherever lecturers can do so) to the realities of Pasifika people. Implementing a programme such as the Pacific Immersion Programme—which enables medical students to learn about health within their own social and cultural contexts—is one example of effectively implementing culturally responsive teaching (Sopoaga et al., 2017). Doing so enables Pasifika learners to draw on their realities and find some common ground.

Relationship building. Many participants felt a gap between themselves and their university lecturers because they perceived them to be superior figures in the department. Pasifika students are taught from a really young age to respect those in positions of authority (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2022). Thus, such a relationship gap in the university setting may become a barrier to their learning. This leads into why few participants in this study reached out for feedback from their lecturers. Institutions should prioritise building horizontal rather than hierarchal relationships that will empower students (Freire, 2020).

Pasifika students tend to link their academic success to the quality of their relationships with their lecturers or tutors (Chu et al., 2013). Students noted that even minor efforts, such as remembering their names, using a Pacific greeting at the beginning of a lecture, incorporating Pasifika values and perspectives into teaching, are conducive to their overall success. Participants believed that lecturers who exhibited these attributes tended not to come across as being judgemental or to make students feel like they were wasting their time. Unfortunately, there were a few participants in this study that had negative interactions with academic staff, which led them to stop seeking for help from them. This emphasises the importance of providing a welcoming environment for Pasifika students.

While institutions need to be responsive to Pasifika students' needs, participants also play a key role in their academic success; that is, they still need to put in the effort of being proactive in their learning. This can entail reviewing course content, creating a supportive peer group, making use of extracurricular resources the university offers, and setting short- and long-term goals.

Pasifika representation in the Department of Anatomy. Having Pasifika representation encourages a sense of belonging and inclusivity. When students were asked about this, many noted that having more Pasifika staff in the department is important because they would be more relatable and understanding of Pasifika values and worldviews. Currently, the number of Pasifika academics across Aotearoa universities remains extremely low (Naepi, 2019); in our department there is only one Pasifika academic, who is from Fiji. This highlights the urgent need for institutions in Aotearoa to recruit more Pacific academics.

Often, citing the lack of Pasifika people who have doctorates is a typical response to this issue. However, Naepi (2019) identified areas within the Aotearoa university system in which many opportunities to employ Pasifika academics are being missed and advocated for a system-wide approach that places the responsibility on institutions to promote Pasifika success within academia. Having more Pacific academics may help bridge the gap and enhance the quality of lecturer–Pasifika student relationships.

Extracurricular support. Findings from our study indicated that many participants struggle with essay writing, the main issue being structure. For this reason, the department should implement essay-writing workshops designed to help students develop the skills that they need to effectively structure essays appropriately.

In terms of tutorial attendees, many participants found that the tutorial times (early evening) were not convenient. Thus, evening tutorials should consider providing kai for students who turn up. Since this talanoa was done, tutorial times have been changed to early afternoon to promote student attendance. Developing thought-provoking and interactive learning may potentially help increase student attendance as well. Tutors could, for example, hand out worksheets for students to complete before the tutorials to identify areas where the students may require more support as well as give students an idea of what that tutorial will be about. Overall, fostering culturally safe spaces and tutorials that do not replicate another lecture format is a step in the right direction.

Transitional support. There are disparities in academic outcomes in anatomy education between NZE and Pasifika students (Time et al., 2023). Consequently, these outcomes limit Pasifika students from entering into healthcare professional programs or pursuing postgraduate studies.

One respondent highlighted that "it's the idea of being able to help insulate Pacific students a lot better as they transition into 200-level anatomy study. And from there to then insulate them once again as they travel into 300-level study." Those transition periods are potentially a crucial target for education intervention or initiatives because the learning strategies and assessment types are not the same in all levels.

Interactivity. Te Tari Kikokiko can be more welcoming to Pasifika students in several ways. For example, a welcome fono for Pasifika students should be implemented annually as a way to start building those relationships early. Giving staff and students the opportunity to be in the same space and interact over food creates the ideal conditions for establishing such bonds early on. Additionally, including Pacific art around the department could physically promote inclusivity and Pacific cultures. Moreover, the Pacific student liaisons should raise greater awareness about who they are and how they can serve our Pasifika students.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to our research study. Only 24 students took part in this study, and it may not be completely representative of the large cohort of Pasifika students in the Te Tari Kikokiko each year. Thus, there may be themes that were not captured in this research. Furthermore, the term "Pasifika" is an umbrella term and does not reflect the diversity of Pacific cultures (Airini et al., 2010). Another potential limitation is the uneven numbers between males and females; that is, more female students in this study than males. Thus, there may be themes from male students that we did not capture. Our previous study found that male students experience a higher degree of stress related to academic expectation than female students (Fakapulia et al., 2023). Lastly, our talanoa sessions were held online rather than in person. Being face to face is essential in Pasifika culture and talanoa sessions are typically held in such manner. Thus, the difference in methods may have led to participants responding differently than if they were held in person.

Conclusion

Though mitigating academic outcomes for Pasifika students remains a challenge, it is still an issue that can be resolved by using holistic, inclusive educational strategies that are Pasifika specific (Alkema, 2014). This implies that Pasifika values, culture, perspectives, and encounters are incorporated into educational processes at the institutional, programme, classroom, and learner levels. Pasifika students have long been underserved in the academic space, and it is time to place the onus on institutions to implement changes that promote Pasifika success.

Acknowledgements

Glossary

akava'ine	transgender people of Cook Islands Māori descent
fono	meeting, gathering
kai	food
kakala	garlands made of Tongan fragrant plants
koha	gift, token
luva	gift
Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka	The University of Otago
Ōtepoti	Dunedin
talanoa	a Pacific concept that refers to open and respectful dialogue or conversation
tapu	sacred, forbidden, taboo
Te Tari Kikokiko	The Department of Anatomy
tūpāpaku	cadaver
vā	connection
whakawātea	clearing of the way

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MĀMĀ MĀORI

Teenage Māori mothers' experiences of support for their holistic wellbeing and success

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Abstract

The study presented in this article is underpinned and guided by Kaupapa Māori theory and research principles (G. H. Smith, 1997; L. Smith, 2015). The purpose was to explore support systems comprising health, social, financial, education and whānau that exist for teenage Māori mothers/māmā Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. Research participants were sourced from one Teen Parent Unit and are Māori who became mothers as teenagers. Effectiveness of support was assessed in terms of contribution to holistic wellbeing and success for māmā Māori. Holistic wellbeing and success were measured using Durie's (1984) Te Whare Tapa Whā model, which represents four dimensions of health as the walls, or taha, of a house: taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha wairua and taha whānau. This study sought to empower participants by focusing on and promoting only positive experiences of support. Māmā Māori contributing and sharing their insights was considered a tool for change, growth and empowerment. While education and whānau were found to be effective supports, māmā Māori experiences of health, social and financial support were often variable, less effective and, in some cases, damaging. In articulating the study findings, this article presents an opportunity for readers to consider how we currently support this precariat group, and the ways in which we can do better.

Keywords

holistic, māmā, Māori, mothers, support, teenage

Introduction

Ongoing colonial narratives have perpetuated myths of Māori as flawed human beings, leading to systematic injustices maintained by racist rhetoric. In direct opposition to this view, the study presented here was concerned with dismantling these myths by exploring and strengthening supports to enable māmā Māori holistic wellbeing and success in Aotearoa New Zealand. Intergenerational trauma and a cycle of poverty persists for many Māori as a direct result of colonisation and land, language and cultural theft (Carter et al., 2018). While Western society has historically viewed young and/or unwed mothers with a negative lens, Māori traditionally view motherhood and the birth of a child as taonga (Jenkins & Harte, 2011). This study

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focused on māmā Māori for several reasons, but the key reason relates to issues of equity for Māori, particularly in relation to health, social, education and financial outcomes. The relationship between poverty and holistic wellbeing and success is made visible in the study findings regarding financial support.

There is broad consensus in the literature from Aotearoa that health, social, financial, education and whānau support are essential for achieving positive outcomes in life (Adcock, 2016; Allen & Clarke, 2019; Boulton & Gifford, 2014; Clifford-Lidstone & Ryan, 2013; Graham, 2018; Ministry for Women, 2018; Moeke-Pickering, 1996; Pio & Graham, 2016; Rawiri, 2007; Ruwhiu, 2009, 2019; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012). In addition to this, several researchers have acknowledged and investigated the challenges faced by māmā Māori. Consistently highlighted are challenges such as stigma, judgement and discrimination (Adcock, 2016; Allen & Clarke, 2019; Clifford-Lidstone & Ryan, 2013; Māori Cultural Responsiveness Project Team, 2010; Ministry for Women, 2018; Pihema, 2017; Pio & Graham, 2016; Rawiri, 2007; Ware, 2014, 2019).

The study reported in this article shines a light on effective areas of support for teenage Māori mothers. The purpose is to empower research participants in sharing their personal story and further enhance their mana by having their story contribute to Kaupapa Māori research. Tihei mauri ora! The research question underpinning the study was: *What supports are provided for young māmā Māori that are effective at strengthening their wellbeing holistically and support their success within and beyond one Teen Parent Unit setting?*

Method

In Aotearoa there are 24 Teen Parent Units (TPUs), which provide education and wraparound support for teenage students who are pregnant or who are already parents. Research participants were sourced from one TPU located in a large rural town in the lower North Island. All māmā are Māori and became mothers as teenagers. Following a period of whakawhanaungatanga at the TPU, the eligible research participants engaged in self-selection and agreed to participate in the study. Pseudonyms were selected by the participants and are used here to maintain confidentiality.

Underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) and aligned with Kaupapa Māori theory (G. H. Smith, 1997), this qualitative study took the form of narrative inquiry (Clandinin et al., 2015; Elliott, 2005).

By taking a narrative inquiry approach, it is possible to acknowledge the varied and diverse perspectives that individual research participants bring as well as the contextual underpinnings of each person's experience. Kaupapa Māori theory and interpretivist theory do not seek to quantify the human experience; instead, they look within and beyond that which can be measured statistically. In contrast to a positivist approach, this research explores the multiple truths and realities of research participant experiences through an interpretivist lens and qualitative research approach (Edwards, 2010).

A qualitative methodology naturally aligns to Kaupapa Māori research (G. H. Smith, 1997), where respect for the person and the mana of the person or research participant underpin research practice. Some tensions were experienced when using a Western framework of meaning-making with a Kaupapa Māori methodology. For the most part, however, tensions were absorbed by the kairangahau.

Four research participants completed in-depth individual interviews, resulting in the creation of individual pūrākau. As a sole Māori researcher was involved, sample size was determined by the practicalities of managing data. Additionally, sample size was impacted to a small degree by data collection occurring at the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews were then explored through thematic analysis (Ary et al., 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings that highlighted the most positive/effective areas of support in relation to holistic wellbeing and success are presented in this article.

According to Indigenous researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2000), "There are sound reasons why we are interested in education, employment, health, and history. Each of these domains situates us in crisis" (p. 232). Māmā Māori experiences of support in health, social, financial, education and whānau domains were explored within their pūrākau. Durie's (1984) Te Whare Tapa Whā health model was overlaid upon the pūrākau. The four domains—taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha wairua, and taha whānau—were used to measure holistic wellbeing and success. Durie's (1984) model is well recognised in the health sector. It is acknowledged for its holistic approach, which is considered an essential element for culturally responsive practice in Aotearoa (Cherrington, 2009). Data were collected and stored securely, and coding and thematic analysis were undertaken by the sole kairangahau.

Findings

The areas of support that were explored in the study were health, social, financial, education and whānau. During the coding process, the pou inherent in Te Whare Tapa Whā were overlaid to make holistic wellbeing visible. Thematic analysis was completed on the transcribed interviews, which were the sole source of data for the study. Thematic analysis revealed three main themes: (a) Health, social and financial support: Access, quality and level; (b) Education support: Holistic support and relationships; and (c) The importance of whānau support.

Health, social and financial support: Access, quality and level

The study revealed that most māmā Māori experiences relating to health sector support were negative, challenging, or included both positive and less positive experiences. Only two of the research participants could relate positive experiences, and they did not cover all four domains of wellbeing explored. Two māmā Māori could not relate positive experiences in any of the domains.

When looking at young māmā Māori experiences of health sector support for strengthening taha tinana, the interview data indicated variable experiences, both positive and less positive experiences. For example, Jade thought health professionals "were very supportive", and Walker said the TPU midwife "prepared us for labour and delivery . . . She demonstrated everything, she was really good." Some challenges were indicated, however. Amelia felt that taha tinana was not positively impacted by health sector support, stating that "no one would help". She added: "They basically just took over . . . talking *about* me, not *to* me." The data highlighted variable levels and quality of health sector support. This ranged from Amelia reporting "they were useless" when sharing her general experience of health sector support through to Jade feeling "well catered for [and receiving] all the support I needed". Health support connections being made through links to education (school or the TPU) were highlighted by most of the research participants. Walker made the comment that her school "connected us to Youth Services and then TPU". Jade also stated that her school "referred me straight to the Teen Parent Unit". She added that once there, "all the support was at my fingertips".

Health sector experiences that positively impacted taha hinengaro were not always apparent. Amelia felt health sector staff "don't care about anyone's mental, physical or any of it", while Walker needed a second midwife because "my first one was horrible [and] didn't communicate well with me". In contrast, when speaking of health sector support connected to the TPU, Jade stated, "They really impacted me positively because they lift you up [and] reassure you of your capability as a mum." She added that she experienced "more of a connected relationship . . . We get to know them, they get to know us, they know our family."

When exploring health sector support in relation to taha wairua, positive experiences did not feature strongly. Jasmin felt "let down a lot", and Amelia felt that support in this domain was all "pretty much negative". Walker stated that "they didn't really do much". Jade expressed disappointment that cultural aspects such as whakawhanaungatanga were overlooked by health professionals: "It was more Pākehā portrayed." She went on to say that she missed "opportunities I could have had that I didn't get", referring to traditional Māori birthing practices.

Looking at health support in relation to strengthening taha whānau, impact on this domain appears to have been minor. However, Jade did say that she liked having her mum attend medical appointments with her. Her mum was "there for support and if I didn't know what they were talking about, I know she would." Jade went on to say that it was her mum who provided much of the support: "My mum is my rock. She was there to just understand everything that was happening with me and baby."

Walker indicated that taha whānau was impacted more at the TPU, believing that "being here with the girls that are going through this" was the biggest support. She went on to say, "There was no one from the health sector to check on my health and wellbeing, just my mum." Amelia and Jasmin felt relatively unsupported too. Jasmin commented, "I don't think relationships have been positively impacted by health support." Amelia's comment was congruent with Jasmin's: "They didn't do anything."

More positive results were found in relation to social sector support than health sector support. Although māmā Māori shared examples of positive experiences in at least one area of holistic wellbeing, the experiences tended to be mixed—both positive and less positive. Sometimes, experiences were negative or challenging. This was most commonly the case when exploring social sector support in relation to taha whānau.

When asked if experiences of social sector support positively impacted taha tinana, Walker felt it was a case of "some people more than

others". Walker went on to say that social services offered reassurance around becoming a teenage mum, adding, "We weren't made to feel bad." Amelia saw the benefits social support afforded her in "getting me out of the house", and sometimes "they would shout a feed". Amelia then quantified those statements, adding, "You just have to get the right person." Jade felt that "you don't get the support unless you reach out for it", while Jasmin reported a lack of "follow through", adding that her experience was "stressful, and I was made to feel belittled by them". Although most māmā Māori reported generally good experiences, it was clear that social sector support was accessible due to their connection to the TPU. Jade said, "Going beyond that and having to do it yourself was a bit difficult." Amelia, who was not connected to a TPU with her first child, stated that "there was social support, but they weren't really supportive". Now connected to social support through the TPU, Amelia commented that "they were good . . . much better".

Generally, research participants felt social support was helpful in relation to taha hinengaro. Walker stated social support at the TPU helped her feel "secure . . . like we belong here [and that] the support was here anytime I needed it". Tempering that notion, Jade lamented that when she was not attached to the TPU, "it was all on me, I had to do that myself . . . had to navigate my way through that . . . I'm still young and learning."

In relation to taha wairua, most social support experiences were positive. For Jasmin, the impact was positive "because of knowing the support was there". Jade shared her positive experience of support: "They focus on a lot of Māori aspects . . . They helped me quite a lot. They made my curtains . . . and made sure me and my son and partner were warm, and our house was." Although Walker's experience was predominantly positive, she did experience feeling "a little judged by social services" at times.

This study found taha whānau support from the social sector was not strong overall. Amelia said that social services were "not involved in that bit". This was the case generally, whether māmā Māori were connected to the TPU or not. Most felt that either TPU or whānau support had a greater and more positive impact on their family and social relationships. Walker stated, "I didn't really get social support; it was more from my whānau." Jasmin's comments further attest to the idea that taha whānau support was found in other spaces: "If anything, it would have been the TPU. They were all pretty supportive." Jade,

who experienced a good deal of support, felt that "social services focused on the whole whānau. They wanted to help our wellbeing as a whānau." Jade added that social services "came to my home, and they wanted to meet my whānau . . . The way we communicated was like whānau." The study found that while some participants received a good quality and level of social support, others had to rely on support from other domains (e.g., education and whānau).

The study saw mixed results in relation to the financial support received by the māmā. Two of the research participants, Amelia and Jasmin, related predominantly challenging or a mixture of both positive and less positive experiences related to financial support. Jade's and Walker's experiences were predominantly positive. Jade acknowledged that financial support made it possible for her to "go out and do things with my son . . . [and] afford food and nappies", and Walker felt financial assistance was "quite a relief". Conversely, Jasmin did not believe her experience was positive because she "had to struggle", highlighting the critical nature of financial support in providing a basic quality of life. All māmā Māori shared examples of financial assistance being required to meet their basic human needs for food and shelter, with Jade relying on financial support to "pay for rent and power".

Experiences of financial support in relation to taha hinengaro were also varied. Jade and Walker reported financial support as having a positive impact, affording some financial stability and reducing stress for them. Walker even considered financial assistance "a bit of a bonus". Amelia and Jasmin felt quite differently about accessing financial support and the level of support provided. Amelia indicated that the level of financial support was barely adequate. She felt she was "surviving really; it's not enough". Jasmin echoed this sentiment, saying, "Rent is more than what my actual benefit is." Financial challenge persisted, with Jasmin highlighting the difficulty in "having to live week by week. It shouldn't be like that." In terms of the impact on taha hinengaro, Jasmin felt financial services "make things hard. It causes stress, and you feel like you are failing as a mum."

Financial support experiences were more positive for Jade and Walker, and both identified that they had strong whānau support. Both were living with extended whānau in their family homes. Walker stated that the financial support afforded her "a little bit of freedom [and] meant low stress". Not paying rent meant Walker could

save: "I think I got $300 a week. I would save two and then only spend one."

When looking at financial support in relation to taha wairua, participants' experiences were mixed. While Jasmin made the comment that "having to struggle doesn't feel good", Amelia saw financial support as both "good and bad". She added that it was good as "it lifts your spirits [but] the bad is relying on it". Jade and Walker saw the financial support more positively. Jade mentioned being able to "do the groceries for the whole house", adding "having that feeling of knowing I could provide was good". Walker shared this sentiment, saying, "It's always a good feeling when you can provide." For Walker, the financial support "made me feel like an adult. I could do adult things." The study found that, overall, access to a good level of financial support positively impacted taha wairua for māmā Māori.

All research participants indicated that taha whānau were positively impacted by the financial support they received. For Jade, she felt able to contribute by "being able to do the groceries for my household . . . It helped with my whānau and social relationships." Jasmin commented that financial support meant "being able to do things as a family". Amelia reinforced this: "You're able to go out and do stuff . . . spend time and money with the people you love."

Overall, the study found access, quality and levels of support to be variable in the health, social and financial sectors.

Education support: Holistic support and relationships

The study found that all māmā Māori experienced positive experiences of support in education, and that education support was effective for strengthening holistic wellbeing and success for this group. Jade stated that education support was "the biggest factor for me in my life". Jasmin considered that education "help[ed] with a lot of our young mums", and Walker believed she "learned more here [at the TPU] in my three years than I ever did, anywhere". Each of the research participants revealed their reluctance to come to the TPU when they were first pregnant. Jade described her transition from not having "a good mindset coming here" to "maybe a couple of months went by that I started engaging myself, and they started offering the support needed, and it was great". She went on to say:

> Everything that I needed, that I wanted to study, was right here. That was awesome. When I look

back on it, it was what I needed. They supported me with everything at the Teen Parent Unit . . . and I still come back here to this day, and they still help me.

In viewing education in relation to strengthening taha tinana, the results were positive. Jade said that "looking back at the opportunities, it was awesome . . . We did PE everyday . . . We competed in a few netball tournaments." Walker fondly recalled that she "loved to just feel young, young and fit". Many of the māmā Māori talked about relationships and connections made at the TPU. Jade commented that "it was great socially with friends and teachers". Walker felt she "could be myself around people that I could relate to about what was going on, everything that was happening". Several TPU teachers were identified by the research participants as building strong relationships and connections with students. Many of the former TPU students continue to visit and connect with their TPU teachers. Jasmin said the TPU teachers provided "a lot of motivation, always pushing us to be successful". In hindsight, she realised that she had not taken full advantage of this: "I just wish I was more into it while I was here." Even Amelia, who was the only research participant still enrolled at the TPU, conceded that compulsory PE was "alright", adding, "I've come to okay it."

When looking at taha hinengaro within education, māmā Māori also experienced positive support. The one exception was Jasmin, who was negatively impacted by COVID-19 mandates, which stymied her attempt to follow her preferred tertiary study path in social work. Jasmin shared only positive experiences related to her experiences within the TPU. Jade felt education support in relation to taha hinengaro "was the one that impacted me the most". All research participants' responses contained a sense of hope in the future, through an education pathway. Amelia was determined to "find a decent job, that you're into". Jasmin is following a business studies pathway, Walker pursuing a teaching career, and Jade accounting. Jade's interview highlighted the positive impact on taha hinengaro for her:

> I thought when I was pregnant, I wasn't going to have the same opportunities as someone young without a baby. I thought that I wasn't going to be able to achieve much, that I'll just be a stay-at-home mum on a benefit. And they [the TPU] changed my perspective of that. They told me I could be much more, I could be anything I wanted, I could give

my son whatever I wanted. They helped my mental wellbeing immensely; that's a big impact on my life.

Walker commented, "I think having female teachers—they became like your second mum . . . They were another mother-figure-type support." Jade referred to one of her teachers, saying, "They weren't there for just school; it wasn't just teaching. She wanted to know about you. If you weren't coping on a specific day, she understood that, and it wasn't just shrugged off." The study found holistic support evident within the TPU. This was made visible by māmā Māori reporting positive education support experiences in relation to taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha wairua and taha whānau. A focus on relationships and connection was also clear, with Jade's words summing up a common sentiment: "It was awesome. It was great socially with friends and teachers."

Taha wairua featured prominently in the research participants' experience of education support. Jade talked about the TPU encouraging students to set "goals and aspirations in life". She later added that she felt attending noho marae impacted her taha wairua positively: "A lot of Māori students here took leadership and that was awesome. That connected us." Walker thought taha wairua was being supported within the TPU, saying that "it was great having all the support we needed . . . It made us feel great, like we belonged here. We felt safe." Jasmin also felt taha wairua was supported within the TPU. For her, "It was like a comfortable space, felt like my second home." She also acknowledged that education support has "helped my confidence a bit as I suffer from PTSD and quite bad anxiety".

When looking at education support in relation to taha whānau, holistic support was made visible in this study. Amelia believed that "it's made me closer with my family". Jade, meanwhile, has "created lifelong friendships with the girls [and believes] that's all because of being here". Jasmin's experience was similar, and she felt the TPU was instrumental in developing and strengthening taha whānau. She put it down to "having to all work together . . . It brings everyone together as one." Not only have Jasmin's social relationships been positively impacted within the TPU setting, but her relationship with her mum has also improved. Jasmin commented that "being here matured me, and being a mum matured me . . . Now me and my mum don't even argue." Walker also mentioned TPU involvement in supporting taha whānau: "They even helped my partner. Helping partners is

helping us." Jade agreed, saying, "The TPU helped with that, a lot of it was building relationships."

The importance of whānau support

Māmā Māori experienced predominantly positive experiences in relation to whānau support. Overall, results showed more positive experiences of whānau support than in the other kinds of support explored in the study.

Amelia and Jasmin revealed that there was an initial lack of support, but that changed to be much more positive during their pregnancy or following the birth of their first child. Amelia shared her experience: "They found out I was pregnant, and it was chaos. They weren't supportive at the start, but they eventually came around. The second time around they were definitely better—it was completely fine." Amelia and Jasmin revealed that there had been challenges in their relationships with whānau prior to attending the TPU. Jade and Walker mentioned several times during their interview that their experiences of whānau support were positive. Jade said, "You have other support systems, but I think whānau is the main one that you need."

When looking at taha tinana in relation to whānau support, the impact was positive for all the research participants. Walker said, "That kind of support is very normal in my family", and she expressed gratitude for whānau support: "There are so many mums that don't get any support, or can't do anything." Amelia shared her experience of whānau supporting taha tinana: "When I was living there, Mum cooked, and Dad, and me." For Jade, whānau support included "being able to do stuff with whānau . . . It always makes it more fun with family." Jade saw whānau supporting taha tinana in sharing meals too: "I think that's a way of feeling connected with Māori . . . being able to share kai and being able to come together. And yeah, have a laugh." Jasmin's experience of whānau supporting taha tinana is illustrated in the following comment: "Me and my aunty both wanted to go to the gym and having each other meant we could go together . . . We're both able to be each other's motivator." Whānau support was particularly important in this instance, as Jasmin explained: "My aunty, we both, well, all my family suffer from anxiety." This study illustrates the importance of having whānau support and the positive impact it has on taha tinana.

Taha hinengaro was positively impacted by whānau support. Jade shared an example: "You have your odd days where you don't feel too good or you have self-doubt, but my whānau are always

there to support me." Jasmin felt assured "just knowing I have their support". Amelia expressed similar thoughts: "I guess it's good having family support. I just feel like my mental side is much better now because of it." Walker believed taha hinengaro to be well supported by whānau: "We get so much love, we can give it away . . . pay it forward."

When looking at taha wairua in relation to whānau support, most participants reported a positive impact on their wairua. Jasmin did not have good whānau support with her first child and found the impact of this made for "one of the hardest times of my life". Since having her first child, whānau support has improved for Jasmin: "It's been good since then." Amelia articulated whānau support of taha wairua simply: "Having the support makes you feel like, I don't know, it's just good." Jade believed her taha wairua had been impacted significantly by whānau support. Referring to traditional Māori birthing practices, she said, "With whānau they have given me opportunities, made me realise things could be different."

Taha whānau was found to be positively impacted by whānau support. Just one research participant indicated that there was both a positive and a negative aspect to this. Amelia felt the positive aspect was that whānau "help with situations". The negative aspect was that "they overstep sometimes". Jade, Jasmin and Walker relayed only positive aspects of whānau support for the wellbeing of family and social relationships. Jasmin said, "We're definitely a close family, and definitely a lot closer now. Becoming a mum helped." Jade considered taha whānau to be positively impacted by whānau support and enjoyed "just being connected, being together, filling your cup up". She added, "You have your disputes here and there, but they're always going to be there, through school, through life, obstacles, achievements. They're always there."

Discussion

Health, social and financial support: Access, quality and level

This study found the access, quality and levels of support experienced by māmā Māori in health, social, and financial sectors to be variable. In the context of this discussion, access, quality and level of support relates to research participant experiences of health, social and financial sector support only. In terms of access, this study found these three areas of support were accessed through either whānau or education. Findings suggest

equitable access to health, social and financial support is possible within the TPU setting and that it strengthens holistic wellbeing and supports māmā Māori success. Access to support outside of a TPU is unknown and was not the focus of this study.

The critical nature of holistic support for Māori health and wellbeing is recognised by many researchers (Adcock, 2016; Allen & Clarke, 2019; Clifford-Lidstone & Ryan, 2013; Graham, 2018; Ministry for Women, 2018; Pio & Graham, 2016; Rawiri, 2007; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012). Access to support is the starting point, and it is fundamental to achieving successful outcomes for this group.

In discussing these variable quality and levels of support in the context of Aotearoa, it is worth considering them in terms of culturally responsive practice within the health sector (Māori Cultural Responsiveness Project Team, 2010). Culturally responsive practice was almost non-existent in the experiences shared by the māmā Māori involved in this study. In addition, study findings reinforce the idea of wraparound support being important (Allen & Clarke, 2019; Ministry for Women, 2018; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012). Financial support was found to significantly strengthen māmā Māori holistic wellbeing but was only accessible through whānau or education. This suggests connecting links between different areas of support are necessary. The fact that holistic, wraparound support is delivered at variable levels must be of concern when considering the effectiveness of individual sectors of support.

Adcock's (2016) research makes the link between empathetic, respectful relationships and positive outcomes in health sector support. The findings of this study reinforce this. Where relationships and connection were central to the support, experiences were positive. When support sector staff did not prioritise their relationships with māmā Māori, research participant experiences were not positive. In addition, some māmā Māori did experience discrimination and judgement, as evidenced in the personal examples shared within their pūrākau. Support provided must involve high-quality practice that is free of discrimination and judgement (Allen & Clarke, 2019; Ministry for Women, 2018).

Education support: Holistic support and relationships

Māmā Māori experiences within education show that holistic support and relationships featured strongly. Graham (2018) suggests that "the success

of young Māori mothers within environments of supportive whānau, extends to their success in social, health, education and employment opportunities" (p. 235). The importance of holistic support is therefore clear. When considering holistic support in the context of this study, it consisted of health, social, financial, education and whānau support. Hauora, when considered in terms of Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1984) and in the context of Māori health and wellbeing in Aotearoa, must be holistic.

Taha tinana, taha hinengaro, taha wairua and taha whānau were all positively impacted by experiences of support within education. Relationships featured strongly within education sector support. The study found that relationships within the education sector, and within the TPU specifically, were central to positive experiences for māmā Māori. The positive correlation between education sector support and relationships was clear through this study.

Holistic support and/or relationships have been found to be important factors in realising successful outcomes for māmā Māori (Adcock, 2016; Allen & Clarke, 2019; Clifford-Lidstone & Ryan, 2013; Graham, 2018; Ministry for Women, 2018; Pihema, 2017; Pio & Graham, 2016; Rawiri, 2007; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012). This study asserts that where education support is evident, a positive foundation for holistic wellbeing and success is created.

The importance of whānau support

The importance of whānau support and its value in strengthening māmā Māori holistic wellbeing was evident from this study. For Māori, the importance of whānau is a cultural tenet: "Ko te whānau ko au, ko au ko te whānau — I am the whānau, the whānau is me" (Moeke-Pickering, 1996, p. 9). The importance of whānau support is critical to successful outcomes for māmā Māori (Graham, 2018; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012). Historically, and from a te ao Māori perspective, whānau support represents collective support in relation to raising tamariki (Moeke-Pickering, 1996). This study found that the greater the whānau support, the greater the holistic wellbeing and success experienced by the māmā Māori involved.

This study reaffirms the critical importance of whānau support. The existing literature supports this and suggests the importance of whānau cannot be underestimated (Allen & Clarke, 2019; Boulton & Gifford, 2014; Strickett & Moewaka-Barnes, 2012; Ware, 2014). Boulton and Gifford (2014) found that the success and wellbeing of tamariki and mokopuna is a driving force for Māori parents in raising them. Ware (2014) agrees, taking this idea a step further by creating an approach to support Māori parents to successfully parent. The Whānau Kōpepe approach (Ware, 2014) sees successful parenting through a mātauranga Māori lens and situates whānau as integral and central for success.

This study found that connecting links exist between whānau support and other areas (i.e., health, social, financial and education support). In addition, the study showed that whānau support positively impacts *all* four holistic wellbeing domains that were investigated. The critical role whānau play in supporting māmā Māori holistic wellbeing and success is clear from the study findings.

Conclusion

The findings of this study clearly show that education and whānau support were effective in strengthening holistic wellbeing and success for māmā Māori. However, an in-depth look at māmā Māori experiences of health, social and financial support revealed these to be variable and less effective overall. The study also highlights a need for a holistic, wraparound and integrated approach to support for māmā Māori.

Historically, Māori have demonstrated strength in continuously resisting colonial oppression, highlighting a strong survival instinct (Boulton & Gifford, 2014; Durie, 2006). In the face of challenge, the māmā Māori who took part in this research were working to further their education. They were increasing their capacity to provide opportunities for themselves, their tamariki and their whānau. Findings presented in this article add to an ever-increasing body of Indigenous research undertaken in Aotearoa that highlights inequities for Māori and a need for change (Adcock, 2016; Allen & Clarke, 2019; Boulton & Gifford, 2014; Clifford-Lidstone & Ryan, 2013; Graham, 2018; Pihema, 2017; Pio & Graham, 2016; Rawiri, 2007). It is hoped that the study presented here will encourage more research on the wellbeing of māmā Māori, beyond the walls of one TPU. The findings should prompt us to consider how we currently support this precariat group, and the ways in which we can do better.

Glossary

Aotearoa	lit. "land of the long white cloud"; Māori name for New Zealand

hauora	health and wellbeing
kai	food
kairangahau	researcher
kaupapa	plan, purpose
Kaupapa Māori	a "by Māori, for Māori, with Māori" approach to research
māmā	mother
mana	personal power
Māori	Indigenous peoples/ cultures of Aotearoa
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
mokopuna	grandchildren
noho marae	overnight stay at a Māori meeting ground, or marae
pou	pillar, post, support
pūrākau	narratives, stories
taha hinengaro	mental and emotional (side) health and wellbeing
taha tinana	physical (side) health and wellbeing
taha wairua	spiritual (side) health and wellbeing
taha whānau	whānau and social relationship (side) health and wellbeing
tamariki	children
taonga	treasure
te ao Māori	the Māori world; Māori worldview
tihei mauri ora	lit. "the breath of life" (te ao Māori concept related to the creation of humanity)
whakawhanaungatanga	the process of developing familial relationships
whānau	holistic approach to family that is wider than immediate family members

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THE WHO, WHAT AND WHY IN THE PROVISION OF NON-GOVERNMENT SERVICES TO KOEKE AND KAUMĀTUA

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Abstract

Little is known about non-government services (hereafter "service providers") for elderly Māori. As part of the research project Kaumātua Futures, a case study of kaumātuatanga in Ngāti Whakaue—an iwi from the Rotorua District of Aotearoa New Zealand—a service provider scoping exercise was undertaken in the summer of 2019–2020. The purpose of the exercise was to garner an understanding of the number of service providers and their services available to koeke, including kaumātua, in the Rotorua District, the home base of the iwi. What the survey showed was no lack of services but a need to further develop existing services that respond to the specific needs of koeke. The scoping exercise also showed that elderly Māori make better use of those services they identify as having cultural benefits for them as Māori, and none are specific to the needs of kaumātua.

Introduction

The population of Aotearoa New Zealand is ageing, and Māori are following this national trend albeit at a much slower rate than non-Māori. According to Stats NZ (2018), the Māori population aged 65 years plus more than quadrupled from 1991 to 2018, and projections predict that cohort will make up 10% of the total New Zealand population in 2038, compared with 6% in 2013 (Stats NZ, 2017). In light of this, a critical examination

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of non-government services (hereafter "service providers") is necessary to ensure they reflect and are responsive to the needs of this particular ageing population. The urgency of such an examination is not new: Durie (1999) cautioned that the ageing trend calls for deliberate collaborative planning between iwi, policymakers and planners to address not only socioeconomic disparities but also cultural alienation, which has clear implications for individual health and wellbeing.

Because of colonisation and assimilation interfering in the cultural process of knowledge transmission, older Māori may lack the cultural skills to fulfil kaumātua roles, which in turn may result in reciprocal care and respect from whānau being less forthcoming (Durie, 1999). Moreover, Waldon (2004) emphasised sector-wide planning as necessary "to guarantee older Māori a positive place in society" (p. 178), while other scholars refer to the global context of living longer, and the call for policies and strategies that support active and healthy ageing (Wright-St Clair et al., 2017). Further, Millar (2014) discusses the need for planners and local councils to plan ahead for kaumātua housing to provide for the ageing Māori population. Against this backdrop, this article reports the findings of research that explored the provision of services for koeke and kaumātua in Rotorua.

A service provider scoping exercise was undertaken by the first author in the summer of 2019–2020 as part of Kaumātua Futures, a three-year case study of kaumātuatanga in Ngāti Whakaue—an iwi from the Rotorua District of Aotearoa. The case study was a collaboration between Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga | New Zealand's Māori Centre of Research Excellence and the Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit (Keelan et al., 2023).

The scoping exercise revealed a diverse range of services available to koeke. Further to this discovery are questions of why these services are needed, when these services are accessed, who handles ensuring the provision of such services and what is best practice for maintenance and dissemination of information for these services. In order to adequately answer these questions, one must understand the function of the services on offer. The purposes of the different services vary and they fulfil different needs for their users. For example, activities provided could be directed towards physical wellbeing, such as exercise classes, or towards those with a common interest, such as photography. Services could also be for those with diminished ability, such as koeke requiring a volunteer to help with grocery shopping or meal preparation. Furthermore, there are the more comprehensive services such as rest homes, which are not a "regular once a week" provider.

Thus, just as there are many service providers, there is a vast array of koeke and elderly needs. Therefore, for ease of discussion, the function of service providers has been divided into two broad categories: (a) *activities providers*, where those attending will partake in some form of activity; and (b) *support services*, where those utilising the service are experiencing some form of diminished capacity or require support in some way. This could be said to be a simplified approach to an investigation of the provision of services; time constraints on the research prevented a comprehensive analysis. First, it is necessary to provide some background on why we use the word "koeke" in addition to "kaumātua", prior to giving an explanation of the method used in the survey.

Koeke or kaumātua?

Ngāti Whakaue are quite specific about who kaumātua are: for the iwi, they are not every elderly Māori person. Rather, they are elderly Māori who provide a service and deliver on a role of leadership, especially on more formal iwi occasions. In Ngāti Whakaue, kaumātua are both male and female with some knowledge of the Māori language. They know the tikanga, genealogy and stories of the iwi and how to use these appropriately. Kaumātua also provide advice and make themselves available to appear for and to represent the iwi whenever they are called upon, no matter the importance of the occasion or indeed its size. Generally, Ngāti Whakaue refer to all of their elderly as koeke and those koeke who provide the services listed above, especially in the context of more formal occasions (e.g., pōwhiri), as kaumātua. This distinction is respected in this article, with "koeke" being used for elderly Māori in general and "kaumātua" for a specific group of elderly Māori who provide a particular set of services for their whānau, hapū and iwi.

Method

The scoping exercise was undertaken by the first author as part of a Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga Raumati Internship in the summer of 2019–2020. Data collection began with an internet search for "services for the elderly in Rotorua", which returned prominent providers in Rotorua, albeit a small number. An additional search for "services for kaumātua in Rotorua" returned limited fruitful

information. However, a comprehensive list of health-based services for kaumātua and koeke was located. Notably, the list was outdated, illuminating Adelberg et al.'s (2019) assertion of directory maintenance as being low-priority, especially for many non-government organisations. Having exhausted this avenue, the next step was to brainstorm organisations that navigate people towards services, such as Mokoia Community Association, Rotorua Lakes Council and the Citizens Advice Bureau, among others. Without at least some local knowledge, finding service providers may have proved more difficult, highlighting the significance of both service promotion (Wiles et al., 2019) and consultation with koeke and kaumātua in meeting their requirements for conveying information (Cox, 2001). One cannot access a service if one does not know it exists. Further, these organisations not only navigate people to services but also act as service providers themselves in varying roles. Therefore, organisations with this dual role are referred to as Service Provider Navigators (hereafter "Navigators").

Following visits to multiple Navigators, where brochures, leaflets, newsletters, booklets and advice were gathered, the enormity of the task became obvious. For example, one booklet alone, aimed at those 50 plus, had more than 220 "options" within its pages. So, when the information gathering was saturated, it was a matter of going through everything and removing those service providers not considered to be koeke- or kaumātua-specific, such as those whose services were advertised as "all ages welcome" and did not focus on koeke or kaumātua. Data collection provided a list of service providers to visit but, notably, visiting all of them was impossible within the given time, so an effort was made to visit a diverse sample of providers to gain a better sense of the breadth of services available.

In total, 18 Rotorua service providers were visited, including those that act as Navigators. One was contacted by telephone, and the information gathered on another was entirely from its website. One Māori service provider contacted did not provide services to koeke and kaumātua per se but did offer mirimiri, which is relevant to koeke. It was not possible to visit this provider due to it not having a physical building as a base—its activities were held at various venues, including people's homes—and so it was "virtually visited" via videoconferencing.

During visits, a meeting was held with at least one staff member to whom a letter of introduction was provided before any conversation commenced, and any information that had already been obtained about the provider was verified. While in those spaces, the first author observed any connections to te ao Māori by way of images, art, language or cultural practices. In addition, information about services that were important to them was collected from kaumātua in a series of wānanga organised as part of the Kaumātua Futures case study.

Why are these services needed?

People's need for services varies widely and is determined by a multitude of factors, including living situation, whānau support, health status, capabilities, lack of transport and income, among many others. Significantly, the focus here is not only on the "why" but also on the "why not". Multiple barriers impede or prevent koeke and kaumātua from accessing services, and this is widely acknowledged in the literature (Abraham et al., 2018; Hirini et al.,1999; Simpson et al., 2016). For example, research by Hirini et al. (1999) found that despite older Māori having the worst health overall in Aotearoa, their GP service utilisation was the lowest. The authors cite many factors, including institutional racism and discrimination, colonising histories and experiences, and the under-representation of Māori healthcare workers (Hirini et al.,1999). Simpson et al. (2016) found that palliative care brochures did not meet the cultural needs of koeke or kaumātua and whānau, which negatively affects Māori utilisation of palliative services. This finding offers insight into why this demographic have the lowest understanding of services offered by providers.

Furthermore, through a study conducted in a New Zealand emergency department, Abraham et al. (2018) identified barriers unique to koeke and kaumātua, including language and practices lacking cultural sensitivity, prompting recommendations for more culturally responsive staff. From a broader perspective, Reid et al. (2019) critically examined the inequities in health outcomes of not only Māori but Indigenous peoples around the world. The authors emphasise histories of colonisation and also highlight the need to "recognise how colonial systems, power structures, policies and attitudes" (Reid et al., 2019, p. 123) sustain the status quo in reproducing inequitable health and wellbeing outcomes for all Indigenous peoples. In order to disrupt the status quo, Reid et al. (2019) suggest 12 projects which fall under the broader categories of human rights, freedoms, processes of healing, full participation and self-determination.

These are all poignant themes pertinent to this discussion.

Bearing these themes in mind, when a need has been identified, an important question for a koeke or whānau to ask of themselves is "What is my main purpose of engaging a service provider?", or "What am I aiming to achieve by engaging a service provider?" The answers are seemingly endless, some of which the service user may or may not be aware of, and there can be multiple reasons why koeke, kaumātua or whānau wish to engage a service provider. While by no means exhaustive, the following list highlights possible reasons that have emerged from a review of the relevant literature:

- social connectedness (Wiles et al., 2019)
- a sense of identity (Wiles et al., 2019)
- mental stimulation
- a sense of happiness (Dulin et al., 2012)
- improve health and wellbeing (Wiles et al., 2019; Wright-St Clair et al., 2017)
- a sense of purpose, something to look forward to (Wiles et al., 2019)
- a sense of being valued/needed
- cultural connection (Wiles et al., 2019)
- meeting people with a common purpose/ interest (Wiles et al., 2019)
- being a contributing member of the community (Meza & Kushner, 2017; Ministry of Health, 2018)
- harness and pass on valued knowledge and skills
- foster resilience and independence; support agency and the ability to stay in one's home (Ministry of Health, 2018)
- help and support due to diminished ability
- obtaining advice (Wiles et al., 2019)

These examples show the diversity of needs, and just as there can be many reasons for engaging a service provider, it follows that service providers can address multiple needs. For example, Oranga Tinana o Ue offers a "gym friendly" exercise programme aimed at both Māori and non-Māori elderly aged 60 years plus (Citizens Advice Bureau Rotorua, 2022; Rotorua Lakes Council, 2019). Aside from the obvious physical benefits, the service also provides social connectedness, a sense of identity and belonging, improved wellbeing, a sense of purpose, and the opportunity to meet others with a common interest (Wiles et al., 2019). Notably, this particular service is an activities provider rather than a support service, but a support service can similarly address multiple needs. Age Concern's volunteer visiting service, where volunteers visit an older person once weekly, highlights this capacity because it fosters social connectedness, a sense of identity and belonging, improved wellbeing, something to look forward to (Wiles et al., 2019), a sense of being valued, and an opportunity to pass on valued knowledge.

Importantly, when a need has been identified, there are two aspects that require careful consideration. The first is that culture is significant when evaluating service providers and the nature of the services provided. Wiles et al.'s (2019) research into Age Concern's visiting services noted that a cultural match with their visitor was more important to Māori, Pacific and Asian elderly, and that some preferred group activities with others from the same cultural background. Further to this, Wright-St Clair et al. (2017) assert that activity choice and subjective importance of activities are likely influenced by ethnicity and culture. Cultural considerations can include evaluation of service providers and the alignment of their services with cultural values or significant cultural needs.

The second aspect to be considered is the importance of establishing activities most meaningful to elderly themselves (Wright-St Clair et al., 2017). This is supported by Meza and Kushner's (2017) assertion that elderly are disempowered when they lack control; they argue that the autonomy of elderly is a salient goal. This finding is an important consideration for whānau who have the best intentions for their koro or kuia but who inadvertently leave them out of the decision-making process. What may be a preference for whānau may not be a preference for their koeke.

When are these services accessed?

Koeke needs for services are diverse, and an individual's unique situation directly influences not only their needs but also when a service is accessed. The accessing of a service follows the identifying or recognising of needs, which is achieved by understanding a koeke within their socioeconomic, cultural, whānau, living and health contexts. Decisions to access services are grounded in a cultural worldview (Wright-St Clair et al., 2017) and arguably embody two additional important considerations: (a) who specifically has identified the needs and (b) whether the service is to be accessed for enjoyment or support. The latter relates directly to the two categories of activities provider (enjoyment) and support services (support) mentioned above.

In terms of the first consideration, the needs of koeke can be self-identified or identified by a health

practitioner, whānau member or, for that matter, any person with whom they interact, but one would assume the first three feature prominently. The identifier of the need could potentially be met with resistance. The need itself could be one of necessity (e.g., incapacitation) or one recognised by a koeke themselves. What is significant here is the locus of control. Qualitative research by Meza and Kushner (2017) introduced above explored the views of five Pākehā adults aged 85 years plus about autonomy and independence and found the participants relished control over decisions in their daily lives, with one expressing frustration at pressure from whānau in decision-making. The research also identified good communication from health professionals as important, so as not to undermine elderly autonomy and independence (Meza & Kushner, 2017). Significantly, the authors note the lack of Māori participants, and therefore the lack of a Māori worldview (Meza & Kushner, 2017), which highlights the need for more Māori-specific research in this area. Significantly, Butcher and Breheny (2016) found that a connection to place enabled koeke to be comfortable in depending upon family for continued autonomy as they aged. Therefore, in the context of Ngāti Whakaue koeke, living within the tribal boundaries or a place they have known and lived in for some time would provide a level of comfort even if living with whānau.

Waldon (2004) examined research conducted on older Māori and highlights the burden of kaumātua responsibilities felt by some older Māori, which has both risks and benefits to their health and wellbeing. Reciprocity is a central element. Kaumātua—recall that Ngāti Whakaue do not regard all elderly of the tribe as kaumātua—have an expected leadership role, and in return they are respected and helped by whānau (Durie, 1999; Waldon, 2004). Furthermore, Waldon (2004) comments that kaumātua involvement in marae activities correlates positively with self-reported good health and that kaumātua have an optimistic outlook on ageing. That said, the responsibilities carried by kaumātua are not responsibilities non-Māori must contend with, and the demands consume time and physical and mental energy (Waldon, 2004). Tangihanga, marae meetings, and Tiriti o Waitangi claims and settlements (Stephens, 2002) are uniquely Māori spaces where kaumātua play a pivotal role, and the many hours spent there take their toll on health and wellbeing. Durie (1999) describes the role as arduous at the very least, which is supported by Dulin et al. (2011). This may determine when services are accessed,

and perhaps serve as a signifier of need for those who carry out the role of kaumātua that may not apply to all koeke. Whānau may bear witness to the diminished energy of kaumātua through marae demands, for example, and suggest not only much needed rest but a service to address their particular needs such as transport, which also consumes a lot of time, energy and resources. That is not to say kaumātua and koeke are a homogeneous group—not all koeke are connected to their marae—but to draw attention to the lived reality some inhabit, which in turn influences when services are accessed and the types of services needed.

With regard to the second important consideration, whether a service is being accessed for enjoyment or support is not always easy to identify because some services may accommodate both enjoyment *and* support. An activities provider in the context of this article is considered a source of enjoyment by providing services that facilitate things such as interests, hobbies or outings. Support services, meanwhile, help in some way, such as assisting with housework or meals, which occurs in rest homes.

In summary, we can see that an individual's situation, along with their activity preferences (Wright-St Clair et al., 2017), their barriers to accessing services, their cultural worldview, the identifier of the need, and the need itself synthesise to decide when a service will be accessed. How these elements interact will influence whether engagement with a provider occurs. Based on the existing research, one could argue that a koeke may be more likely to engage with a support service because the decision is more likely to be their own (Meza & Kushner, 2017; Wright-St Clair et al., 2017), compared with a whānau suggestion of "fun outings" with an activities provider. Thus, deciding when services are accessed is complex, with multiple factors requiring consideration. However, the desire of koeke to be self-determining is continuously heard.

Who is responsible for providing koeke services?

As noted at the start of this article, our population is ageing, and the changing age demographics mean there are fewer people to care for the growing number of elderly (Stats NZ, 2015). Consequently, the demand for services will inevitably increase. With this firmly established knowledge, where does the responsibility lie for providing koeke services now and into the future? Also, are the services kaumātua require different to those for koeke in general?

Chalmers's (2006) reminder not to forget how the past moulds the present and future, calls to mind te Tiriti o Waitangi. Article Two of te Tiriti guarantees Māori tino rangatiratanga over their taonga, which encompasses intangible taonga such as health and wellbeing and includes koeke and kaumātua. Article Three provides Māori with rights equal to those of the British, now represented by the government, which in this context refers to equality of health outcomes and of access to health and social services (Waitangi Tribunal, 2001). On this basis, the government has an obligation to provide services, or at least a choice of services, that encompass a Māori worldview, embody tikanga Māori, are Māori-led (Hirini et al., 1999), and normalise Māori cultural practices. This is supported by the Waitangi Tribunal's (2001) report on Napier Hospital and Health Services. The report outlines te Tiriti principle of options, which "assures Maori of the right to choose their social and cultural path" (p. 65).

In terms of equal health outcomes and access, the Waitangi Tribunal (2001) suggests an integrated approach while also emphasising the need to address socioeconomic and environmental determinants. Consultation with Māori is also stressed (Hirini et al., 1999; Waitangi Tribunal, 2001). Reid et al. (2019) reinforce these ideals through their call for "full participation", asserting Indigenous peoples have a right to meaningful involvement in decision-making about their health and wellbeing, fair access and outcomes from health services, and access to culturally aligned health and wellbeing practices. Further to this, the need for collaboration between whānau, hapū and iwi and relevant government agencies, stakeholders and local councils reverberates throughout the literature (Durie, 1999; Hirini et al., 1999; Millar, 2014; Office for Seniors, 2019; Waldon, 2004; Wright-St Clair et al., 2017).

In response to the ageing population, the Ministry of Social Development through the Office for Seniors | Te Tari Kaumātua (2019) launched Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034, a strategy with a vision to ensure "[o]lder New Zealanders lead valued, connected and fulfilling lives". The strategy explicitly says that central government, local government, non-governmental organisations, whānau, hapū, iwi, social enterprises, businesses, community groups and individuals all play a role in achieving its goals. Importantly, specific mention is made regarding "the needs and aspirations of kaumātua" (Office for Seniors, 2019, p. 4), and the strategy states that consultation and collaboration with Māori will be prioritised, with te Tiriti o Waitangi guiding strategy development and implementation to reflect kaumātua (and koeke) needs.

In addition, the strategy adopts a comprehensive approach, recognising that individuals' diverse lived realities impact how they age. The benefits of a whānau-centred approach are also acknowledged. Moreover, five key areas have been identified for action: (a) financial security, (b) healthy ageing and improving access to services, (c) housing, (d) social connectedness and participation, (e) and age-friendly environments (Office for Seniors, 2019, pp. 24–43). It would seem the Better Later Life strategy encompasses critical aspects of kaumātua (and koeke) lives that require addressing, while acknowledging the significance of te Tiriti obligations and the necessity for consultation with Māori throughout. Furthermore, according to the Office for Seniors (2019), everyone from the individual right through to government is responsible for the ageing population of Aotearoa, and it therefore follows that the provision of services is similarly distributed.

What is best practice for maintenance and dissemination of information?

An often overlooked but crucial element of service provision is providing a consistently updated directory of services available. As noted above, Adelberg et al. (2019) found that provider directories are often inaccurate, and the maintenance of directories is designated as low-priority. Given the technological age we inhabit, directories are often accessed via the internet, but paper-based directories of services for the elderly are also commonplace in the form of brochures, leaflets and newsletters. The Office for Seniors (2019) acknowledges the importance of digital inclusion in the Better Later Life strategy, noting that many older people are tech-savvy but not all, with some choosing not to use the internet for fear of being scammed. In fact, the Kaumātua Futures study found that many kaumātua did not have the technology to be able to access web-based information (Keelan et al., 2023). Instead, they generally relied on relatives for this. It is safe to say that this would be the case for koeke in general. Relying on others to be able to engage in anything online compromises the ability of koeke and kaumātua to maintain independence.

Clearly there is a need for varied modalities in promoting service providers and issuing directory information, which in turn requires consistent monitoring for updated information. Therefore, service providers have a responsibility to nominate

an employee to regularly check and update directory information, regardless of medium, and despite the task's lowly status (Adelberg et al., 2019).

Furthermore, service promotion is also a significant consideration. Wiles et al.'s (2019) research on Age Concern's befriending service found some elderly were not aware of the service yet expressed interest in taking part, resulting in some recommending "greater promotion of the service" (p. 781). This foregrounds the need to consult with koeke in regard to assessing the best way to issue service provider information, as lack of promotion or utilising inappropriate mediums can create a further barrier to service access.

Cox (2001) posits that directory users should be identified as stakeholders of an organisation, highlighting the importance of talking to them and assessing their needs. Lack of consultation could result in the inadvertent disregard of service users. For example, transitioning from a paper-based directory to an online one without user consultation could, despite the potential for wider reach, exclude some of the intended audience due to poor communication of the transition, user resistance to change, users' limited technological know-how, or users' preference to not use the internet (Office for Seniors, 2019). Hence, service provider promotion of directories, along with regular maintenance, is a critical part of koeke and kaumātua service provision. It would seem intensified engagement with users is needed to find ways that best convey updated service provider details to them.

Services for kaumātua

As noted earlier in this article, Ngāti Whakaue define kaumātua as a group of koeke who provide a specific leadership role for their whānau, hapū and iwi. It could be said there is no difference in the needs of kaumātua for services and the needs of koeke in general. During the wānanga data collection phase of the larger research project, however, the kaumātua named needs specific to their role. These were in relation to learning te reo, whakapapa, whaikōrero, karanga, and the stories and history of the tribe. It was important for them to constantly educate themselves about these in order to represent the tribe in an informed way and to be able to pass the information on to their tamariki and mokopuna. They also identified a need to be heard and appreciated for the services they provide for the iwi and the city as a whole, in partnership with kaumātua from other iwi.

The current kaumātua of Ngāti Whakaue are of the generation whose parents thought it was vital for their children to speak English if they wanted to succeed. They have recognised that although they have an important role in upholding the kawa and tikanga of their marae, their lack of fluency in the Māori language does mean they are often challenged by younger members of the tribe who are fluent and who also believe their fluency privileges their voice. This is more so for female kaumātua, whose lack of language is more noticeable.

The kaumātua reported attending language and waiata classes and having to leave after being laughed at and denigrated by the young and usually male tutors. They have a need therefore for such learning to happen in a safe and supportive environment. This would allow them as kaumātua and leaders who engage in their responsibilities to confidently stand for their whānau, hapū and especially the iwi whenever they are called upon (which is often). Their primary need, therefore, is for language learning. Having been raised at "the pā", they are comfortable in their knowledge of tikanga, kawa, waiata, whakapapa and tribal stories. This need may not be necessary in future because the current group of kaumātua are confident that the fluency of emerging kaumātua means the role is reasonably safe insofar as the language is concerned. They are, however, worried about tikanga and the ability of future kaumātua in their role as tikanga knowledge holders in general, and of the tikanga related to manaaki specifically. They believe that the tribe has a responsibility to provide the services ensuring these Whakaue essential responsibilities are not lost.

Another issue they spoke about generally was in relation to feeling underappreciated for the services they provide. Specifically, this was in relation to kaumātua being consulted on various issues and often standing for the iwi at major events. Often the output from those consultations and events showed that the kaumātua had not been heard. For them, this was a major issue because although they were consulted by various organisations, notably the council and the many iwi-related ones, the actions by those various bodies did not reflect any input from them. Two examples they spoke about were being required to limit the number of kaumātua who could attend "official" events and the sometimes insufficient remuneration for their services.

On the issue of limiting their attendance numbers, the attitude of the kaumātua was that if they were providing a service for an organisation at an event being organised by that body, then all the kaumātua who act in the role of kaumātua should

be invited, and not just a select few. On the issue of remunerating them for their services, they did acknowledge that payment is made to one of the iwi organisations and distributed as grants to the various marae. That, however, does not take into consideration that they individually might have had to pay out of their own pocket to provide the services requested, and, as superannuitants, that may end up being costly to them.

Three years on, has anything changed?

In 2024, three years after the completion of the Kaumātua Futures study, the situation in the Rotorua District had not changed much at all. Information both online and in print still falls short of currency, with koeke and kaumātua relying on word of mouth from those who are informed. Such a reliance affects their ability to remain independent for as long as possible because engaging in services has the potential to prolong their autonomy. There continue to be limited services with Ngāti Whakaue cultural content for koeke in general or kaumātua specifically, including services provided by iwi agencies already doing their best within the limits of their constitutions. That is not to say that services in general do not exist, but they are not well known, not easily accessible given that information about them is limited, and are not usually culturally informed. What is provided by the iwi agencies is often not specific to koeke and kaumātua and usually generic in application to whānau and marae.

When considering what kaumātua (as opposed to koeke) need, those who took part in the Kaumātua Futures study named issues specific to their role in the iwi. One was a need for tikanga and reo wānanga in a safe space. Kaumātua, the participants said, must continue to learn those aspects of their role so they can perform meaningfully and in an informed manner when needed. Another was their desire for safe spaces where they can improve their knowledge. We saw above how some had been laughed at by younger members of the iwi who were leading te reo and waiata sessions, causing them to never return to those classes again. Such an outcome is the very thing Durie (1999) spoke about—the possibility that kaumātua may in future find care and respect from whānau being less forthcoming because of a lack of competence in te reo and a lack of knowledge of those aspects important to the iwi's culture. The kaumātua also raised the issue that their role and function was often undermined by many services not making a clear distinction between koeke and kaumātua. They felt this undermined their role in the iwi. They wanted the distinction between the two groups to be more formally acknowledged by services rather than the status quo in which, when it suits, all elderly members of the iwi are called kaumātua and both kaumātua and koeke are informally referred to as koeke.

In conclusion, the scoping exercise and the data from the Kaumātua Futures study raised a number of issues in the provision of services to Ngāti Whakaue koeke in general and kaumātua specifically. The information provided, whether online or in print, is seldom current and there is a real need to find ways to remedy the situation so that when koeke and kaumātua access the information it is current. Koeke generally respond better when a service is culturally relevant, and there are relatively few of this type in the Rotorua District. Existing services, therefore, need additional funding from government to provide culturally safe environments so koeke and kaumātua utilise the service providers they are most comfortable with. Elderly Māori men, it was found, do not access services, which shows a need to enquire what their needs are and to provide for them as a group.

The services that kaumātua—as defined by Ngāti Whakaue—need are specific to their diverse and demanding roles as leaders in the delivery of rituals and tikanga and their responsibility for ensuring these are maintained for the future. Such provision could be delivered by one of the several iwi agencies in the district, who could support marae whānau. Although some marae are doing this, the greater needs of kaumātua are not being met. Koeke and kaumātua need those who consult with them about services to prove they have been heard in the delivery of those services, like housing being near marae, making it easier for them to attend events on marae, perhaps resulting in a greater number of koeke attending said events, thereby increasing the number of kaumātua available. Kaumātua need to be recognised in different ways for their service to their whānau, hapū and iwi, and they do appreciate all the acknowledgement they receive. Koeke and kaumātua need coordinated support from those service providers who serve their communities and iwi. The services themselves need ongoing financial support and long-term investment in planning and strategic thinking. Although the Māori population is ageing relatively slowly, that planning needs to happen now and not at some distant point in the future when the need is even greater. Doing so would support the Better Later Life – Hei Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 strategy.

Acknowledgements

Glossary

Note: Some meanings provided are specific to Ngāti Whakaue; some words may have different meanings to other iwi.

Aotearoa	Māori name for New Zealand
hapū	large kinship group made up of related whānau groups
iwi	tribal federation made up of hapū
karanga	ceremonial call of welcome
kaumātua	an elderly person (male or female) of status within an iwi
kaumātuatanga	a stage of human, social and cultural development acknowledging the status of elderly Māori
kawa	marae protocol
koeke	elderly person
koro	elderly man
kuia	elderly woman
manaaki	hospitality, support
Māori	person who is a descendent of the first inhabitants of New Zealand who created the first language, the first lores, and the first laws of the land
marae	complex of buildings around the open area in front of the usually carved wharenui or meeting house
mirimiri	Māori form of massage
Mokoia	island in the middle of Lake Rotorua
mokopuna	grandchildren
Ngāti Whakaue	iwi found on the shores of Lake Rotorua and at Maketu a small community on the coast of the North Island of New Zealand
Oranga Tinana o Ue	"gym friendly" exercise programme aimed at both Māori and non-Māori koeke aged 60 years plus; lit. "your physical health"
pā	village
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
pōwhiri	a formal ritual of encounter usually enacted at a welcome
rangatira	chiefs
raumati	summer
reo wānanga	(Māori) language-learning seminars
Rotorua	city in the middle of the North Island of New Zealand
tamariki	children
tangihanga	grieving ritual
taonga	treasure
te ao Māori	Māori world(view)
te reo	the Māori language
te Tiriti o Waitangi	the Treaty of Waitangi, signed between rangatira Māori acting for their hapū and Governor Hobson on behalf of Queen Victoria in 1840; the founding document of New Zealand
tino rangatiratanga	leadership, sovereignty
tikanga	correct procedures, customs
waiata	songs, chants
wānanga	seminars, forums
whakapapa	genealogy
whaikōrero	oratory
whānau	family

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COMMENTARY

"HELP, MY RECORDS LOOK LIKE A SUDOKU PUZZLE!"

Jeremy Le Comte*

Abstract

Client information and records should be a sacred taonga yet are often devalued and end up resembling a sudoku puzzle—where readers must fill in the gaps. Despite record-keeping being crucial to decision-making and service-users' experiences, practitioners often are not taught how to keep good records (particularly in time-poor environments). This knowledge gap is then compounded by organisations not articulating a structure for their documentation or expounding how their values and cultural responsivity should be expressed. This commentary provides practical assistance as to how practitioners can complete case notes in time-poor situations by collating case-noting methods, drawing on four models developed by Western researchers. It also explores my reflections about what being a tangata Tiriti meant for my documentation and includes two illustrative examples that I created so my records are more culturally responsive and honouring of te Tiriti o Waitangi and of the client.

Keywords

case notes, documentation, culturally responsive, time efficient, writing templates

Introduction

In my own personal journey, I have been exploring what it means to be a practitioner who is tangata Tiriti. After thinking about what it means for when I am kanohi ki te kanohi with clients, I challenged myself to go further and ask, "What does it also mean in my documentation?" In my consultations with others, I discovered that not only was there a dearth of information about how case notes could be completed expediently, there was also a vacuum around how documentation could express culturally responsivity and the organisation's values.

I hope that by sharing my own journey I will encourage others to initiate a positive dialogue about what can be done so that records are not only completed expeditiously, but also honour the people who entrusted their stories to us.

Background

Looking back on my career, I recognise that it would have been invaluable to have learnt earlier about how to write case notes, emails and reports that are comprehensive while still being time efficient. As a practitioner, I experienced

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the pressure of large caseloads and the inevitable impact on my documentation. In private practice, I experienced how spending time on paperwork eroded profitability. As a supervisor, a manager and an auditor I have concluded that the issue of ensuring comprehensive documentation in a time-poor sector has been largely unaddressed—let alone how to complete it in a way that is culturally responsive and which honours the client's story.

I have not met a single colleague who ever said, "I wanted to be a social worker so I could write case notes and reports." While professional standards (e.g., Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2019) require the maintaining of accurate records, there is uncertainty as to how this can be done and a tension with the persistent narrative among practitioners that paperwork is a bureaucratic requirement that steals time from "real" work.

Social workers are pressed for time and assist people in dire circumstances. They are also increasingly under scrutiny and need to be accountable in their practice. My experience as a supervisor and auditor is that there is limited dialogue about how documentation can be completed, let alone enhanced. Considering that Lillis et al. (2020) found that social workers spend between 68% and 95% of their time writing, I want this commentary to encourage discussion about documentation so that records do not look like sudoku puzzles—where other staff must guess and fill in the blanks—and instead truly honour the work that staff do with clients.

Value of recording

If we want to improve the quality of paperwork, we must first critique our attitude towards it and understand the purposes of documentation. I have found case notes to be immensely valuable in prompting my own memory of what I discussed or agreed with a client. When you have back-to-back meetings or an unexpected crisis and are about to rush out the door, it is a relief to be able to look through your notes and reorientate yourself.

While most workers are aware how records can help them remember, I have been astonished at the paradox that case notes also "help you to forget". I have found that the act of documenting my work and actions required serves as a method of self-care. The process clears my mind, alleviating my subconscious need to continue to remember for fear of failing to do something I am responsible for.

Early in my career, experienced colleagues taught me the importance of documentation and taking CARE (Cover A***, Retain Employment). While this acronym is crass, case notes do protect practitioners by recording what was done, offered and advised—all of which are vital if there is a complaint, serious incident or audit. The adage "If it is not in the notes then it didn't happen" stems from the reality that auditors and colleagues will not know what happened if it is not recorded and you are not around to ask. Recording therefore not only assists continuity of care when the practitioner is not available, or when working in multidisciplinary teams, but also means that clients do not have to be re-traumatised (or disrespected) by having to repeat themselves.

Quality records strengthen analysis and increase the viability of interventions and relapse prevention/safety plans. Staniforth and Larkin (2006) quote Kagle (1993): "A case record documents the evolution of a case worker's diagnostic thinking" (p. 15). I would go further, however, and say case notes are themselves an agent in that evolution. That agency can be biased and fallible, though, without considering what is recorded.

Cautions about colonisation, power and fair representation

Case notes, reports and emails are not neutral artefacts. They are an expression of professional knowledge and (un)conscious organisational and social contexts and biases. I advocate that organisations critique how their documentation reflects their values rather than just their contractual obligations. Social workers often pride themselves on being strengths-based and emphasise the importance of people's mana, yet records are silent or under-proportionate in detailing this. When practitioners can speak about amazing transformations (or even "small changes") but have not recorded them, they do a disservice to themselves, their organisation and their clients.

It is therefore important to ask whose voice is being heard or silenced within records and how this affects decisions. We give a voice to the voiceless when we honour people by recording their experiences and perspectives in "their" records.

Taiuru (2018) explores the issue of documentation ownership and whom data should be accessible to, advocating that any data about a person is a sacred taonga. When we view records as treasure belonging to clients, then our handling of information becomes the outworking of respect. To respect someone's mana and the information that pertains to them (and their whānau), we should regularly consult with the client about what gets recorded rather than relying on our role as a

mandatory service or on an initial consent form that was signed at the first engagement. White and Epston (1989) have long challenged traditional positioning and documentation ownership by advocating therapeutic letters. Writing with or to the client not only assists in making case notes respectful but is also a great strategy for practitioners struggling with writer's block.

Making records time efficient and comprehensive

While those in the people-helping professions might agree with the rationale for having good documentation and have an aspiration to be respectful with client information, there remains the question of how this can be satisfactorily completed while also being time efficient. This is a current problem, but it is by no means a new one. As long ago as 1964, Weed identified physicians would say they did not have time for records, and rebutted this as an excuse:

> It is no excuse to say that the problems are different, the emergencies greater and the patient cannot wait. Indeed, the greater the emergency and the more complex the problem … the greater the discipline [of accurate and scientific record-keeping] needs to be. (p. 276)

Weed (1964) also, however, asserted that record-keeping needed to be expected and taught. Leon and Pepe (2010) bemoan that "despite the importance of documentation skills, many undergraduate social work programs do not provide sufficient curriculum content on client record keeping" (p. 362).

McAllister et al. (2019) and Naepi (2019) found that Māori and Pasifika, respectively, continue to be disproportionately excluded from university positions within New Zealand, with the number of Māori academic staff remaining consistent at circa 5% from 2012 to 2017 and their Pasifika making up only 1.7% of the academic workforce. The number of Māori and Pasifika academic staff does have a bearing on how te ao Māori and Pasifika worldviews are expressed in curricula and how students in the people-helping professions learn about being culturally responsive. It is likely, therefore, that in New Zealand the marginal amount of training that students do receive in record-keeping will be taught from a te ao Pākehā perspective.

In delivering training, I have discovered that many practitioners have not been introduced to any methods (regardless of a cultural lens) to assist documentation. As the Johari Window (Luft & Ingham, 1955) teaches, "You don't know what you don't know." Instead of organisations blaming staff for substandard or missing documentation, they need to critique their organisation's culture towards record-keeping. Do their practitioners see documenting a client's records and progress as a sacred taonga or as an administrative function? Has the organisation deliberately exerted its autonomy, giving thought to how records will embody and express its values? If it has not, practitioners will just be left to their own accord, resulting in a variety of competencies, and after an audit, the organisation will have to assimilate the homogeneity dictated by the contract funders. If organisations have decided what they want to express, including their unique therapy characteristics, have they then adequately supported the documentation of these through training, administration time allocation, templates and technology?

Staff are aware of requirements concerning the timeliness of documentation but often cannot do this with their workloads or when the system (which in this day and age includes templates, software platforms and the organisation's expectations) is cumbersome. Staniforth and Larkin (2006) introduce the acronym FACTS (Factual, Accurate, Complete, Timely, System). While there has been a focus on FACT, little attention has been given to systems. Staniforth and Larkin (2006) cite SOAP (see below) as a system example but note that it does not address all situations.

As there is a dearth of guidance on how to write case notes, in this commentary I have collated four models developed by Western researchers, and two inspired by te ao Māori that I created to assist me in being more culturally responsive.

Western-centric models
SOAP

This health sector model was created by Lawrence Weed in 1964 and is particularly helpful in establishing what the problem is and succinctly recording what will be done.

> **S**ubjective: What have you been told (e.g., by the client or referral form)?
> **O**bjective: What are the facts?
> **A**ssessments: What is your analysis ([dis]prove the hypothesis)?
> **P**lan: What are the client and you going to do?

STAR

Created by Development Dimensions International in 1974, STAR was the first case note structure I learnt. *Astoundingly, this wasn't until four years*

into my career! As a case manager I often changed the "Result" to "Rationale" so I could cite why a particular pathway was chosen.

> **S**ituation: Ascertain the problem/opportunity
> **T**ask: Identify tasks (goals or options)
> **A**ction: Record actions taken
> **R**esult: The outcome(s)

SBAR

In the early 2000s, this US Navy model began being promoted in the health sector (Leonard et al., 2004).

> **S**ituation: What is the client experiencing?
> **B**ackground: Relevant vital information (e.g., contributing factors/history)
> **A**ssessment: Information pertinent to the "here and now" and options
> **R**ecommendation: Best course of action

Results-Based Accountability

Results-Based Accountability (RBA) is a way of thinking and acting to improve entrenched and complex social problems. Developed by Mark Friedman in the United States, RBA is used by the Ministry of Social Development (2017) and asks three simple questions to get at the most important performance measures:

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- Is anyone better off?

A common critique of file reviews is that it often looks like practitioners have not done much because they have failed to record the effort/time involved. Having a prompt of "How much did we do?" is useful to mitigate this (e.g., "It actually took four visits or half a day to ...").

This structure also reminds us to record the difference that therapy or an intervention has made, which is often only asked in a post-service survey. Yet, this question acts as a therapeutic intervention itself, shifting focus to what is working/changing. While this structure does not include the rationale for why things are done, this could be easily added.

Models inspired by te ao Māori

Although the above systems have enhanced my work and saved me time by teaching me how to structure my records, none of them overtly prioritised cultural responsivity. In my journey of learning about being tangata Tiriti I have wondered how this also could be apparent and congruent in my documentation.

In the Pōwhiri Poutama model, Huata (1997) and Drury (2007) explore how the stages of a pōwhiri could be used as a metaphor when working with Māori whānau to connect spiritually and relationally prior to identifying and working through issues, and highlighting the importance of closing sessions safely. While Huata (1997) affected my practice from quite an early stage, it is only in the last couple of years that I have been exploring with cultural advisors how my commitment to being tangata Tiriti should also be apparent and congruent in my documentation. I recognise my limits in being tauiwi and include the examples below not as a definitive list but simply as an illustration of my own journey and as an encouragement to others to consider how they too might begin to express their values in their documentation. I note that te reo words can have multiple meanings. "Ringa", for example, can be translated as "hands" and "weapons"; likewise, "māngai" translates as "mouth" and "barrel of a gun" (Moorfield, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). This reminds practitioners of the need to listen and understand rather than rushing into an intervention, lest we do harm.

These definitions are translated as relevant to this context and have been informed by colleagues and *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*.

Kōrerorero—dialogue-based example

Kōrerorero is a dialogue-based model that guides structured, safe and inclusive discussion, particularly when there are multiple parties present.

> **Karanga:** A process used in a pōwhiri to assist with safety; determining who parties are and the reason you are there.
> **Kōrerorero:** What was discussed and possible solutions?
> **Kupu whakaae:** What we collectively agreed.

Rongo—senses-based example

The Rongo model supports deeper relational engagement by focusing on sensory and emotional awareness. This model encourages practitioners to slow down, tune in and co-create solutions that affirm the client's autonomy and cultural identity. It is particularly helpful during home visits or assessments.

> Ngakau (Heart) We connected…
>   *Without rapport and mutual*
>   *commitment, endeavours*
>   *are annulled.*

Kanohi (Eyes)	I observed…
Māngai (Mouth)	I asked… *We need to check our understanding and sensitively explore relevant issues for example, safety.*
Pokotaringa (Ears)	They said… *If we are to act in accordance with the Treaty of Waitangi principles of 'partnership' and 'participation', then rather than dictating what will happen we instead need to affirm people's autonomy and contribution to design solutions.*
Ringa (Hands)	I/They/We did… *Recording agreed actions.*

Conclusion

Many tertiary-trained practitioners, let alone other staff or volunteers in the people-helping professions, have not received sufficient training in documentation. Sometimes an attitude exists that paperwork gets in the way of the "real work". Rather than records being dismissed as bureaucratic requirements, documentation should be prioritised and perceived as a practice tool that improves analysis and services. If records are a sacred treasure that clients have entrusted to us, then our treatment of records should be an action of respecting the client. Therefore, organisations need to proactively critique their culture towards documentation and how they systemically hinder or assist succinct recording.

As there is a lack of record-keeping training, I hope that this commentary benefits practitioners by giving them practical examples of structures that will assist them to be comprehensive in their record-keeping while still being time efficient. Furthermore, I hope that my reflections about how as a practitioner I am considering what being tangata Tiriti means for *all* elements of my practice—including my record-keeping—encourage other practitioners and organisations to consider how their records can espouse their own values, do justice to the efforts of staff and honour the client's story.

Glossary

I acknowledge that words often have multiple meanings (and depths). These definitions are only rudimentarily translated below as relevant to the context of this article. These translations have been informed by colleagues and *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*.

kanohi/kanohi ki te kanohi	being together in person; face-to-face
karanga	ceremonial call of welcome to visitors onto a marae; metaphorically, an activity to greet each other and ascertain who parties are and the reason you are there
kōrerorero	conversation, discussion
kupu whakaae	agreement, consent
mana	integral value of someone
māngai	mouth/speaker, barrel of a gun; metaphorically, the good *and* harm of what we and clients say
ringa	hands, weapons; metaphorically, the good *and* harm of what we and clients are capable of
tangata Tiriti	New Zealanders of non-Māori origin who have a right to live New Zealand under te Tiriti o Waitangi
taonga	treasure
tauiwi	foreigner, non-Māori
te ao Māori	the Māori world
te ao Pākehā	a foreign perspective; Western culture
te Tiriti o Waitangi	the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of New Zealand
whānau	family

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HE TĀTAI WHETU KI TE RANGI, HE RANGATAHI KI TE KĀINGA

Rangatahi Māori pathways to safe, secure and affordable homes

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Abstract

Amid Aotearoa New Zealand's housing crisis, rangatahi Māori face unique challenges in accessing not just houses but kāinga—places that nurture whānau and cultural identity. Using Kaupapa Māori research, He Tātai Whetu ki te Rangi, he Rangatahi ki te Kāinga (2020–2024) explored rangatahi realities and aspirations for kāinga in Tāmaki Mākaurau. Findings reveal that rangatahi struggle to secure appropriate housing while navigating discrimination, intergenerational impacts of land alienation, and invisibility in housing policy. These systemic barriers cascade into effects on mental health, cultural identity and whānau formation. Despite these negative impacts on rangatahi well-being, research participants envisioned transformative futures in which safe, secure and affordable housing enables them to thrive. This research challenges policymakers to move beyond treating Māori housing as a subcategory of general provision. We argue for targeted housing support and resources to improve access to long-term, secure housing for rangatahi Māori and their whānau.

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Introduction

Rangatahi Māori are a strong and vibrant part of the youth that make up the diverse population of Tāmaki Mākaurau, Aotearoa New Zealand. According to Auckland Council (2020), the median age for the Māori population in Tāmaki Mākaurau is 24.9 years, indicating that the Māori population is young compared with the total population, which has a median age of 34.7 years. This article is about rangatahi Māori and our aspirations to live in our ancestral homeland of Aotearoa as Indigenous youth. Based on a four-year research project titled He Tātai Whetu ki te Rangi, he Rangatahi ki te Kāinga: Rangatahi Pathways to Safe, Secure and Affordable Homes, we explore the realities of rangatahi Māori and the aspirations they have for kāinga in Tāmaki Mākaurau, Aotearoa. Hence, the phrase "He tātai whetu ki te rangi, he rangatahi ki te kāinga" encompasses the idea of rangatahi Māori looking upwards to the stars in pursuit of their aspirations while still being grounded in their kāinga. This concept acknowledges that despite the challenges they face, rangatahi have real aspirations and need support, guidance and pathways to achieve them. Despite the cultural aspirations we hold for rangatahi Māori, the current housing outlook is bleak.

Today, rangatahi Māori residing in Tāmaki Mākaurau are being priced out of home ownership, living longer in private rentals, ending up on extensive public housing waitlists, and experiencing concerning levels of housing deprivation and homelessness, leaving many unable to access adequate housing that meets their needs (Paul, 2022, 2023; Paul & Ratana, 2022; Stats NZ, 2020). Despite these trends, there has been little research surrounding rangatahi Māori and housing in Aotearoa. It remains unclear why rangatahi Māori are disproportionately affected by the housing crisis in Tāmaki Mākaurau and how their diverse, unique experiences, needs and aspirations shape their navigation of this challenging housing landscape. Research has not yet explored the various factors contributing to housing inequities for this population, nor has it sufficiently captured the voices and perspectives of rangatahi Māori themselves in understanding the complex issue.

This study examined the critical housing issues affecting the livelihoods of rangatahi Māori in Tāmaki Mākaurau and explored the hopes, dreams and visions for their futures. We define rangatahi Māori here as Māori aged between 17 and 35, encompassing late teenage years through early adulthood, a time that can include significant life transitions.

The overarching research question that frames this study is "What are the realities and aspirations of rangatahi Māori for kāinga, and how can rangatahi Māori be best supported to navigate pathways towards an affordable, safe and secure home in Tāmaki Mākaurau?" To explore this topic, we interviewed rangatahi Māori through a series of interviews and wānanga. This article provides an overview of this study, with a focus on six key themes that emerged from interviews. These are (a) rangatahi understanding of kāinga, (b) perceptions of rangatahi and housing, (c) housing support, (d) challenges and barriers, (e) housing and kāinga impact on rangatahi well-being, and (f) rangatahi aspirations for kāinga. The discussion section situates these findings within the broader context of existing literature and highlights the study's contributions and limitations.

Background

Aotearoa is grappling with a severe housing crisis that is disproportionately affecting rangatahi Māori, as evidenced by alarming rates of homelessness and rapidly declining homeownership among this demographic. This is particularly the case in Tāmaki Mākaurau. In this section, we briefly highlight the concerning trends to shed light on the severity of the housing crisis for rangatahi Māori.

Rangatahi homelessness

Rangatahi homelessness is a major concern, and growing in Aotearoa. The statistics on severe housing deprivation in Aotearoa reveal a deeply concerning pattern that disproportionately affects rangatahi, particularly those from Pacific and Māori communities (Amore et al., 2021). Nearly half of all individuals experiencing severe housing deprivation are under the age of 25, highlighting the urgent need to address this crisis and its effects on the younger generation. In a report prepared specifically for Manaaki Rangatahi ki Tāmaki Mākaurau Youth Homelessness Collective (Paul & Ratana, 2022), a scoping study about youth homelessness in Tāmaki Mākaurau, the ongoing legacy of this systemic destabilisation is evident in the disproportionate housing deprivation experienced by Māori young people and children, who are among the most severely affected by homelessness in Aotearoa. Māori homelessness is neither new nor an individual issue, but a result of deep-seated structural inequities that are rooted in the impacts of colonisation and historical events that devastated and disrupted traditional Māori

social structures, kinship networks and systems of support.

Rangatahi homelessness is a breach of te Tiriti o Waitangi. In May 2023, the Waitangi Tribunal released its report Kāinga Kore: The Stage One Report of the Housing Policy and Services Kaupapa Inquiry on Māori Homelessness (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023). The Waitangi Tribunal is a commission of inquiry that makes recommendations on claims brought by Māori concerning Crown actions that breach te Tiriti o Waitangi. The tribunal found major shortcomings in the Crown's response to the housing crisis facing rangatahi Māori; in particular, forcing rangatahi experiencing homelessness into adult systems, such as placing them alone in motels, often does more harm than good. The tribunal recognised the complete lack of data on the true extent of rangatahi homelessness. By failing to protect this group of rangatahi experiencing homelessness and collecting proper data to inform policies, the Crown has breached Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The tribunal clearly states:

> With specific regard to rangatahi homelessness, we find that the Crown has breached the principle of active protection in its failure to take vigorous action to protect such a vulnerable group. We also find that the Crown has breached the principle of good government through its failure to obtain adequate data on rangatahi homelessness. (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023, p. 195)

Overall, the tribunal's analysis shows the Crown's response has been deficient, requiring urgent and dedicated action tailored to rangatahi needs. The tribunal concluded the Crown must significantly improve its efforts to support rangatahi Māori experiencing homelessness.

Declining Māori homeownership

Along with the increase in Māori homelessness, Māori homeownership has significantly declined over the 20th and 21st centuries (Boulton et al., 2021; Cram & Munro, 2020; Ratana, 2023; Rout et al., 2021; Whitehead & Walker, 2021). Research by Thorns (1995) showed that in the early 1900s, Māori had relatively high homeownership rates, especially in urban areas. The 1936 census recorded that over 70% of Māori dwellings were occupied and owned by the residents, who mainly lived in rural areas. The proportion of Māori who owned their homes declined significantly over the following decade, dropping to 54.8% by 1945 (Goodyear, 2017). This correlates with

the migration of Māori from rural areas to cities in search of work and education. Between 1945 and 1986, the population of Māori living in urban centres grew from 26% to nearly 80% (Meredith, 2015), causing a massive shift in social, economic and cultural structures for Māori (Ratana, 2023). During this period, Māori homeownership continued to drop as Māori moved to the cities, and many lived in slum-like conditions in inner city suburbs (Rout et al., 2021). By 1961, the rate of Māori homeownership had fallen below 50%, and by 1981 only 45.3% of dwellings classified as Māori were occupied and owned by the residents themselves (Goodyear, 2017). While there was a slight increase in homeownership during the mid-1980s due to the establishment of the Department of Māori Affairs loan scheme, which gave Māori access to cheaper, state-provided mortgages, the neoliberal reforms introduced by the government in the early 1990s caused a dramatic decline in homeownership across the entire New Zealand population and a steady increase in house prices (Ratana, 2023; Rout et al., 2021).

Declining rangatahi Māori homeownership

Today, rangatahi Māori homeownership rates in Tāmaki Mākaurau continue to decline (Whitehead, 2023). In 2006, 10% of rangatahi Māori aged between 17 and 35 owned their own home. By 2013, this rate had dropped to 8%; in 2018, it was just 4%. This level of homeownership is even more concerning when contrasted with rates for young Pākehā in the same age group over the same period. In 2006, homeownership rates for young Pākehā (15–34 years) in Tāmaki Mākaurau were higher than for rangatahi Māori at 18%. By 2013, the European rate dropped to 15%; by 2018, it was 10%. While there was still a significant decline in homeownership for European young people over this time, the disproportionate rates are concerning and indicate significant barriers to homeownership attainment for rangatahi Māori.

Homeownership is often seen as a step towards financial security, household wealth building, better life prospects for whānau and well-being outcomes (Eaqub & Eaqub, 2015; Herbert et al., 2013; Ratana, 2023). This inequality compounds with each passing year that rangatahi Māori continue to face disproportionate challenges and barriers to accessing housing and social benefits. Thus, urgent and meaningful policy responses and interventions are critical to close this gap between rangatahi Māori and young Pākehā (Paul, 2023). Understanding the specific challenges for rangatahi Māori and improving access to homeownership

should be seen as a priority area if Aotearoa is committed to honouring te Tiriti o Waitangi and equitable outcomes.

Methodology and methods

We adopted a Kaupapa Māori approach for this study emphasising a "by, for and with Māori" perspective (Henry & Pene, 2001; Pihama et al., 2002; G. H. Smith, 1997, 2003; L. T. Smith, 2012; Te One, 2018). The study aligns with key principles of Kaupapa Māori theory, including tino rangatiratanga, which promotes Māori autonomy and decision-making power to ensure Māori have control over their culture and aspirations (Bishop, 1999; G. H. Smith, 1997). Additionally, it incorporates "kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kāinga" (the principle of socio-economic mediation), aiming to address the disadvantages faced by Māori and support ranga-tahi to improve their social conditions, and ako Māori, which recognises the unique knowledge and teaching and learning practices of Māori (G. H. Smith, 1997).

This study is not only about rangatahi Māori but is also carried out by, for and with rangatahi Māori, allowing rangatahi to be the subjects, the researchers and the participants, and ensuring rangatahi Māori have control and autonomy over this research. We refer to this approach as "Kaupapa Rangatahi" because the study was undertaken by four rangatahi Māori researchers who themselves were experiencing the impacts of a lack of affordable and appropriate housing in Tāmaki Mākaurau and are navigating oppor-tunities for better housing solutions not only for themselves but for their peers and respective communities.

Kaupapa rangatahi is a crucial aspect of this study's methodology, as it ensures that the research is not only relevant to rangatahi Māori but also empowers and enables them to take control of the research design, process and outcomes. In a study by Groot et al. (2017), the researchers built strong relationships with their participants, leading to more authentic and insightful data collection and analysis. In their research, they provide verbatim narratives from rangatahi Māori experiencing homelessness, who powerfully illustrate their lived experiences of precarity. Our study took this approach a step further by having rangatahi Māori researchers, who themselves are navigating housing challenges, conduct the research. This unique perspective allows for a deeper under-standing of the issues faced by rangatahi Māori and fosters a collaborative and empowering Kaupapa Māori research environment. We argue that Kaupapa Rangatahi is important because of the unique space that rangatahi create to relate with one another, in this case, in Kaupapa Māori research.

This study employed a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis; the primary data collection methods were pūrākau (Lee, 2009) through individual kanohi ki te kanohi interviews (O'Carroll, 2013) and wānanga (Mahuika & Mahuika, 2020). This article presents the results from interviews ($n = 12$) and four wānanga ($n = 23$) undertaken with rangatahi Māori living in Tāmaki Makaurau, recruited through a whanaun-gatanga approach (Rewi, 2014). All participants self-identified as Māori and were aged between 17 and 35.

A collective thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012) was employed to analyse the qualitative data, aligning with Kaupapa Māori principles. The research team, consisting of four Māori women, all identifying as rangatahi, are experienced in Kaupapa Māori research prac-tices and approached the analysis through several wānanga to identify key themes from the collated data provided by rangatahi.

Pūrākau

This study employed pūrākau as one of the primary methods of gathering in-depth qualitative data through kōrero with rangatahi Māori participants. Pūrākau was adapted by Lee (2009) to build on the methods used within Kaupapa Māori research as a decolonising research practice to assist in the intergenerational transmission of histories, kōrero, events and tikanga Māori. Lee (2009) describes pūrākau as a narrative research method "to be constructed in various forms, contexts and media to better understand the experiences of our lives as Māori—including the research context" (p. 1). Similarly, Elkington (2011) describes how "*Pūrākau* allows practitioners to keep themselves nurtured in things *Māori* by using *Pūrākau* concepts to ensure a more aligned practice to *tikanga*" (p. 31). Aligned to a Kaupapa Rangatahi approach, a pūrākau method also ensures those who are the subject of research have a voice and agency over their stories (Elkington, 2011; Lee, 2005, 2009). Using this method of storytelling, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were undertaken to understand the housing experiences, needs and aspirations of rangatahi Māori. Interviews were conducted in a manner that prioritised whanaun-gatanga and tikanga Māori and ensured that they felt safe, seen, heard and valued. A koha was also

provided to reciprocate the knowledge shared and their contribution to the study.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted using open-ended questions, which enabled participants to expand on their pūrākau if desired. Each of the 12 individual interviews was approximately 60 minutes and was audio recorded and transcribed.

Wānanga

Wānanga were an important part of the methodological process and were specifically employed to gather in-depth qualitative data through kōrero from rangatahi participants. Mahuika and Mahuika (2020) describe wānanga as a Māori concept encompassing various aspects of knowledge sharing and education.

To explore the housing experiences and aspirations of rangatahi Māori in Tāmaki Mākaurau, four wānanga were conducted in August 2022. Each wānanga was 3 hours in length and was hosted at the Ngā Wai a te Tūī office in Tāmaki Mākaurau at Unitec (also known as Te Pūkenga). There were 23 rangatahi Māori participants in total: nine aged between 17 and 23, six between 24 and 29, and eight between 30 and 35. The rangatahi participants lived in diverse housing situations, including renting, boarding and home ownership. Of the 23 rangatahi participants, six were parents. The predominant method of recruitment was through social media; however, one wānanga was set aside specifically for those rangatahi who had experience with housing deprivation or homelessness and these rangatahi were recruited through an existing relationship with Manaaki Rangatahi. Most of this group identified as aged between 17 and 23.

The audio recordings from four wānanga sessions were transcribed. The team collectively engaged in an initial wānanga to discuss the data, share observations, and identify codes and overarching themes from the kōrero. Each member coded the full transcript dataset using a deductive approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Reconvening in a second wānanga, the team collectively reviewed the coded data, discussed interpretations, and conducted further analysis to refine and define the overarching themes. An iterative process ensured the final themes represented rangatahi perspectives and experiences, encompassing areas such as whānau and community, belonging and identity, stability and security, home ownership and pride, as well as housing memories and emotional impacts. This collaborative approach to coding, discussion and refinement through wānanga allowed for Kaupapa Māori analysis adhering to Kaupapa Māori principles while applying robust thematic techniques.

Findings

The findings have been grouped across six key themes: exploring definitions of house, home and kāinga; negative stereotypes of rangatahi in housing; lack of awareness of existing housing support; systemic challenges and barriers; and impacts of housing on rangatahi well-being and future aspirations for kāinga.

Exploring definitions of house, home and kāinga

Rangatahi participants were asked to describe their understanding of a house, a home and a kāinga. Their responses showed they perceived distinct differences between these concepts. Almost all of the rangatahi agreed that a house is more physically oriented, a home is more emotionally oriented and a kāinga incorporates both, along with a specifically Māori worldview centred on whakapapa, whenua and tikanga. Furthermore, the concept of kāinga was also described as facilitating intergenerational knowledge transfer and providing a secure base for identity, offering stability and emotional security. One rangatahi captured this sentiment, stating

> Kāinga would be my roots for me. For me it's maybe being back home sort of thing. I would love to be able to go home one day, if I could uplift my work and take it up there, I'd be home tomorrow. (Tane, 31)

Kāinga were seen as places that create a sense of whānau, hapori and intergenerational connection, whereas a house was perceived as a structure or property that merely provides a roof or shelter. Houses were viewed as temporary, something occupants and tenants pass through without the ability to put down long-term roots, with little or no connection to identity. Generally, the rangatahi agreed that many houses lack a communal atmosphere or arrangements and instead promote individualism. In contrast, kāinga represented a sense of belonging, collective living, cultural roots and identity, especially for Māori relating to whenua Māori and ancestral lands.

Expanding on these distinctions, rangatahi participants argued that owning a home, compared with renting a house, instils greater pride, investment and the ability to actively shape the space

to reflect their Māori identity. These factors contributed to a preference for homeownership among rangatahi, reinforcing the notion that homes provide the space to create memories and emotional meaning over time through lived experiences shared with loved ones in the space. This is also due to the security that homeownership ensures, which allows young people to put down roots and create spaces that they connect to without the risk of having to move out. In contrast, because living in houses tends to be short term, they do not accrue this same sentimental value or security. In sum, the emerging central themes highlight that rangatahi see houses as structures and shelters, while kāinga cultivate socio-emotional ties, security, stability, pride and cultural identity through being with whānau, creating memories and lived experiences over time.

Negative stereotypes of rangatahi in housing

The overwhelming response from rangatahi is that they felt that they are negatively stereotyped in the housing sector. When participants were asked about how they think rangatahi Māori are perceived in the housing sector, it was evident that they were aware of and had many experiences of racism and discrimination when trying to access housing. The rangatahi described experiences of stereotyping, stigma and bias, negative narratives, being judged and undervalued, and being given conditional housing support as rangatahi. The pervasiveness of misconceptions and biases among housing service providers reveals the deeply entrenched barriers that rangatahi Māori face in accessing support. This observation resonates with our research team's firsthand experiences, underscoring the urgency of addressing these systemic inequities. There were several accounts from rangatahi describing their experience of discrimination during housing searches because they were Māori and young, making it a much harder challenge to access housing. One rangatahi participant noted:

> I'd make an inquiry online, or I'd speak to someone on the phone, in my phone voice, and I thought it was going really, really well, and then I'd meet them, and it would all change. Part of me felt like it was because I've got a white name, and I had a white voice, and then they'd meet me, and I was in a hoodie and jeans and was brown with my brown baby attached to my hip. I definitely felt like there were assumptions and stereotypes and stuff like that. (Wahine, 29)

This rangatahi experience of a positive initial phone interaction, followed by a dramatic change in attitude upon meeting in person, highlights the biases rangatahi face based on race, age and parental status. This rangatahi observed that her "white name" and "white voice" initially worked in her favour, underscoring the ingrained nature of these prejudices. It was evident that even when rangatahi participants had secure jobs, were financially stable and had whānau support, they still felt that being young and Māori negatively affected their experiences with real estate agents, landlords, bank employees and government agencies due to racist and ageist presumptions. The consistency of these accounts across rangatahi participants, who represented all tenure types, highlights the systemic nature of the problem and the urgent need for housing providers and support services to address and eliminate these biases.

Lack of awareness of existing housing support

While there could be more housing schemes and support that meet the diverse needs of rangatahi, a range of existing support systems, both formal and informal, are available. Several government agencies and housing organisations such as Kāinga Ora, Oranga Tamariki, the Ministry of Social Development, the New Zealand Housing Foundation (NZHF) and various iwi, hapū or marae support services offer assistance through emergency housing, transitional housing, homeownership schemes and grants. However, when we asked about the types of housing services and support rangatahi know of or access, we found a lack of awareness about what already exists for rangatahi trying to access housing in Tāmaki Mākaurau. One of the rangatahi knew only of Work and Income NZ (WINZ). Another participant was clear that there is not enough information available for rangatahi, stating:

> Hell no, not at all [not enough info]. I think that there needs to be more though, for people our age. When you go out, you don't really know where you are going. All you know is that you have to take a quote to WINZ and that's it. (Wahine, 19)

One participant who accessed the NZHF's shared equity scheme when buying her home said that "without the support of the Housing Foundation, or the Māori Trustee, we would never be able to purchase a house and have a mortgage, and especially for the price that we pay for our mortgage currently" (Wahine, 32). However, she

also noted that she only knew about the scheme because her sibling had bought a house through the NZHF in a previous development. Several rangatahi pointed out a need for more visibility of and education about organisations such as the NZHF that can help with the homeownership process.

Informal community and whānau networks are crucial sources of support. Friends, neighbours, church groups and extended whānau provide temporary accommodation, shared living arrangements and guidance in navigating the housing system. Additionally, financial literacy and positive role models who can pass on knowledge about homeownership, budgeting and the housing market were emphasised as essential factors. Rangatahi who have successfully obtained housing, be that rental, homeownership or otherwise, often had guidance from personal support, such as whānau members, mortgage brokers or dedicated WINZ staff who helped navigate the complicated application process. As one participant shared,

> Once we had learnt to go through a mortgage broker, we started to sort of learn things, and they sort of helped us along the way. Stuff that we were unsure about they were able to sort of clear up with us. That made the process so much easier having a mortgage broker for sure. (Tane, 31)

Having someone guide you through the complicated application processes makes housing access more achievable than trying to do so on your own. It was also evident that being guided by someone who was Māori helped them trust the system more, as one participant explained:

> The bonus was that the lady who was helping us from the Housing Foundation was Māori … having that kind of guidance is massive because it takes some stress out of it … there is all the discrimination stuff that comes with it, so when you have got someone Māori who is advocating for you in that space, it's huge. (Wahine, 32).

Systemic challenges and barriers

Systemic barriers and a lack of affordable housing options create significant challenges for rangatahi in securing stable and appropriate housing in Tāmaki Mākaurau. Participants indicated clearly that existing policies, processes and eligibility criteria have not been designed with Māori worldviews in mind and fail to accommodate the realities of rangatahi lives. This, combined with intergenerational poverty and economic exclusion stemming from colonisation, positions many

rangatahi at a disadvantage from the beginning. The housing process is described by rangatahi as difficult, and many expressed that safe, secure and affordable housing would not be possible without third-party assistance.

Rangatahi who are living in emergency and transitional housing, such as lodges, are in dire need of targeted support as most have little to no autonomy, which hinders their ability to feel safe and secure. One rangatahi shared her experience of living in a lodge, saying, "In a lodge, you have a visiting hour, you are not allowed any sleepovers, you are not allowed any visitors past 7, that's how bad it is" (Wahine, 19). She went on to describe the conditions in the lodge she is living in:

> I stay in a lodge full of adults who go through drugs, and who go through addiction … We have to share toilets; females and males share toilets in this lodge. We've tried to ask them if they could separate it for female and males, but they share toilets, so it's hard for me and my twin as young girls to be walking out of the lodges to go to the toilet at nighttime, or to go for a shower … People will keep us awake from night, all the way through morning 'cause you have people who do crack, you have people who drink overnight, and it's just not enough space for us, and it's not safe either. (Wahine, 19)

Her experience depicts how inappropriate and unsafe the majority of transitional housing options are for families, single parents and especially rangatahi, who are left vulnerable among older residents who are engaging in risky and sometimes dangerous activities. The challenges and barriers rangatahi experiencing housing insecurity face include, but are not limited to, inadequate access to appropriate housing, a lack of privacy and autonomy, and minimal connection to support networks, including whānau. Lodges such as the one described can have a severe impact on their sense of security, safety and future prospects.

Low incomes tied to precarious employment circumstances make covering housing costs difficult for some rangatahi. Unaffordable rents and bonds prevent access to rental properties, while challenges in saving for a deposit or securing a mortgage obstruct homeownership. Balancing the high cost of living in Tāmaki Mākaurau with other expenses such as childcare compounds housing insecurity. Many of the rangatahi spoke about the high cost of living, such as in this quote:

> Different stresses now, eh, with the cost of living. The cost of living is so bad, inflation, so bad. All the

misinformation that is out there as well is causing a lot of people to not get the right supports that they need. (Wahine, 30)

Gaps in financial literacy and planning capability also play a role. One rangatahi noted, "I didn't really know where to start, I didn't know about having a 10% deposit and using your KiwiSaver and all that kind of stuff, like all those little things, but they are big things" (Tane, 31). Rangatahi grapple with complex housing application processes, a lack of culturally appropriate housing options and unrealistic expectations that further complicate their housing search.

Urbanisation, as a result and part of the processes of colonisation, has also displaced many Māori from ancestral land connections and housing practices. Consequently, existing housing systems fail to accommodate rangatahi Māori cultural needs and realities. This disconnection drives distrust in systems and expertise that do not reflect lived experiences. One rangatahi shared:

I also know that it's so hard, it's so hard when you're stuck in the renting cycle, it's degrading. It was almost demoralising when you would go to house viewings so many times. On paper, you are like, "I am literally the perfect candidate, I will look after your house, it will be clean", and then time after time, they'd decline you, just for simple things. (Wahine, 32)

Ongoing racism, ageism and stereotyping from landlords, property managers, real estate agents and neighbours directly discourage rangatahi housing applications. Rangatahi participants reiterated that the stigmatisation they experience for being young and Māori often overrides qualifications or housing history. Relatedly, the lack of Māori in crucial decision-making positions further limits advocacy and cultural understanding.

The intimidating nature of navigating fragmented and disjointed systems may contribute to internalised self-doubt and whakamā for many rangatahi, eroding their self-confidence in communicating needs or challenging norms when facing discrimination. On the topic of government support, one participant said, "Work and Income make me feel like I have to grab what I can get" (Wahine, 24). Collectively, systemic exclusion, economic limitations, cultural gaps, racism and confidence barriers converge to deny rangatahi housing justice.

Impacts on rangatahi well-being

Having access to a safe, warm, secure kāinga provides rangatahi Māori with a stable home base that grounds their developing identity and creates a sense of belonging. Quality housing allows them to safely explore autonomy and independence, serving as a gateway to maturity and adulthood, when they can learn new skills and responsibilities. It also enables rangatahi to connect with whānau across generations and uphold central Māori values such as manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga. As one rangatahi shared at a wānanga through a group activity, "Our housing circumstances impact our ability to exercise our values around manaakitanga. Not having a lounge meant we couldn't host or look after our manuhiri" (Wānanga participant).

Secure and stable housing can support rangatahi well-being across spiritual, physical, mental and relational domains. During the wānanga, in particular, rangatahi discussed the need for well-designed homes and kāinga that promote health through adequate space, light, heating and access to our natural environment. They also spoke of how homelessness and insecure, low-quality housing can negatively impact mental health, intensify socio-economic hardship and inhibit positive development: "The issues I'm having is overcrowding, cluttered spaces, different people means different rules" (Wānanga participant). Overcrowding contributes to the spread of illness, while lengthy commutes can limit employment, recreational and educational opportunities. The financial stress of unaffordable rent and inadequate transport access also takes a toll. Rangatahi cannot fully activate their potential and talents without housing that supports their needs, values and well-being.

Future aspirations for kāinga

Rangatahi Māori have a strong desire for secure, affordable housing that allows them to live according to their Māori cultural values and practices. Homeownership, particularly on ancestral lands, is seen as a pathway to achieving this aspiration, as expressed in this quote: "I would want to have a house, own my own home, my own land" (Wahine, 19). Generally, there was a strong desire to establish papakāinga that fosters intergenerational living, a connection to whakapapa and the revitalisation of tikanga in everyday life. As one rangatahi from the wānanga stated, "More papakāinga. Bring back traditional ways of living, intergenerationally, increase in youth homeowners" (Wānanga participant).

Furthermore, kāinga aspirations encompass the creation of sustainable, self-sufficient living environments that reflect Māori philosophies and needs. This includes incorporating elements such as māra kai, rongoā, green spaces and facilities that accommodate whānau gatherings. As one rangatahi articulated, "I think the most important thing would be whānau and making sure our whānau feel welcome and comfortable in our whare, and having enough space for everyone, having enough food, and that's why I thought about gardens and stuff" (Wahine, 21). There is also a strong desire for housing solutions that promote financial literacy, collaborative communities and innovative pathways to home ownership, such as "rent-to-own schemes" (Tane, 30). Overall, these aspirations reflect a pursuit of mana motuhake and the ability to shape living environments that nurture Māori cultural identity, sustainable practices, and whānau and collective well-being.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that rangatahi Māori have a deep understanding of kāinga, which extends beyond physical structures to encompass emotional connections, intergenerational relationships, and cultural ties to whenua and tikanga. These findings have significant implications for addressing the housing challenges faced by rangatahi Māori in Tāmaki Mākaurau and highlight the urgent need for systemic change to dismantle the deeply entrenched challenges and barriers they encounter. The conceptualisations of kāinga by rangatahi align with the descriptions provided by Tapsell (2022) and Lee-Morgan et al. (2021), who emphasise the deep connections Māori have to their ancestral homelands, the importance of living spaces that support cultural ways of living, and the intergenerational and communal aspects associated with traditional Māori settlement patterns and papakāinga. These findings contribute to answering the question posed in the introduction regarding rangatahi Māori understandings of kāinga and its significance in their lives. Furthermore, the pūrākau from rangatahi participants provide evidence of the discrimination, stereotyping and bias they face when seeking warm, safe and secure housing. These findings shed light on the systemic barriers that perpetuate housing inequalities for rangatahi Māori and underscore the need for comprehensive strategies to address these challenges.

Additionally, the broader findings suggest that rangatahi Māori navigate complex systems without adequate cultural support or guidance from banks, real estate professionals and other commercial housing stakeholders. These financial literacy challenges, compounded by systemic discrimination, create additional barriers that prevent rangatahi from accessing homeownership and secure rentals. The disconnection between mainstream financial processes and te ao Māori approaches to collective wealth and whānau-centred decision-making further exacerbates these challenges, thereby highlighting the need for dedicated housing navigators. Navigators can bridge the financial and cultural gaps while advocating for and supporting rangatahi within commercial systems.

However, the limitations of this study leave some of the big questions unanswered. While the findings provide valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of rangatahi Māori, further research is needed to fully understand the scale and ramifications of the housing challenges and barriers they face. Future studies should aim to quantify the prevalence of these issues, further explore their far-reaching impacts on the lives of rangatahi Māori and identify evidence-based Kaupapa Māori interventions and solutions that can be implemented at a structural level. Extensions of this study's results could include longitudinal research to track the long-term outcomes of rangatahi who face housing challenges, as well as Kaupapa Māori evaluations of existing housing policies and programmes to assess their effectiveness in addressing the needs of rangatahi Māori specifically.

Additionally, future research could explore rangatahi-led innovative housing models (building on the scoping study by Paul & Ratana, 2022) incorporating Māori values and cultural practices, such as papakāinga, to provide culturally responsive solutions to the housing crisis. In essence, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on housing challenges faced by rangatahi Māori and highlights the importance of understanding and addressing these issues within a Kaupapa Māori theoretical framework and through a te ao Māori lens. By prioritising the voices and experiences of rangatahi Māori, this research lays the foundation for future work that can inform policy and practice to ensure that all rangatahi Māori have access to warm, safe and secure kāinga across Aotearoa.

Conclusion

This study's findings reveal harsh realities for rangatahi Māori seeking safe, affordable, secure housing in Tāmaki Mākaurau. Systemic barriers, a lack of accessible housing support and intergenerational

disadvantage all pose substantial obstacles to kāinga stability and ownership. However, rangatahi Māori maintain strong aspirations to establish safe and secure homes for themselves, their whānau and future generations.

This study underscores the urgent need for dedicated housing navigators and support programmes explicitly tailored to rangatahi Māori in the Tāmaki Mākaurau housing market. Targeted policy and community action must confront systemic disadvantages around access to credit, home loans and wealth transfers. We call for government, Māori, iwi, housing organisations and whānau to actively collaborate in establishing and funding pathways and programmes focused on realising rangatahi Māori housing aspirations in Tāmaki Mākaurau and nationwide. Intergenerational collaboration on closing wealth gaps underpinning housing barriers is foundational. Rangatahi Māori deserve focused efforts to fulfil their kāinga dreams and form stability for their whānau. The time for incremental measures has passed—assertive and transformative change led by, for and with Māori is critical to enabling housing stability and security for current and future generations.

Acknowledgements

Glossary

ako	to learn, study, instruct, teach, advise
Aotearoa	New Zealand
hapori	community
hapū	subtribe
iwi	tribal kin group
kāinga	homes, housing
kaitiakitanga	guardianship; cultural and financial guardianship; accountability
kanohi ki te kanohi	face-to-face
Kaupapa Māori	Māori approach, Māori principles, Māori customary practice
koha	gift, token
kōrero	discussion, conversation, narrative, story, statement
mana motuhake	sovereignty
manaakitanga	hospitality, kindness, generosity, support
manuhiri	visitor, guest
māra kai	food garden, cultivation
marae	tribal meeting grounds
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
papakāinga	traditional Māori communal land and housing, communal living arrangements
pūrākau	myth, ancient legend, story
rangatahi Māori	Māori youth, young Māori
rongoā	traditional healing plants
Tāmaki Mākaurau	Auckland
tane	man
te ao	the world
te Tiriti o Waitangi	the Treaty of Waitangi
tikanga	correct procedure, custom, cultural protocol
tino rangatiratanga	leadership, sovereignty
wahine	woman
wānanga	forum, seminar, conference, cultural gathering
whakamā	shame
whakapapa	genealogy, lineage, descent
whānau	extended family, family group
whanaungatanga	relationship, kinship, sense of family connection, networks and relationships
whare	house
whenua	land, homeland, placenta

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TE PAA HARAKEKE

A framework for supervision

Ange (Andrea) Makere Watson*
Ria Julian†

Abstract

Te Paa Harakeke is a metaphor for protection of Māori culture, pūrākau, whenua and whānau wellbeing. It is a framework for protecting children and an allegory for working alongside whānau to achieve oranga-ā-whānau, and it nestles in a Kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori space. Watson (2017, 2020) applied Te Paa Harakeke as a model for research through unpacking 10 components to the research setting; these are rito, awhi rito, tūpuna, pakiaka, kōhatu, pakawhā, kakau, kōrari, ngā manu and whenua. This article applies Te Paa Harakeke specifically to social work supervision in Aotearoa, with the inclusion of 10 key mātāpono—mauri, karakia, tapu/noa, tikanga, mana, whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, tino rangatiratanga, ako and awhi. Te Paa Harakeke acknowledges te ao Māori in supervision spaces that have, in the past, been exclusionary of difference and "othered" those who were not considered mainstream. Kaupapa Māori supervision is necessary for Māori social workers to ensure they remain well in social work and do not suffer from "brown face burn-out", a term referring to kaimahi being overworked because they are Māori through cultural expectations and supplementary responsibilites placed on them within mainstream organistions.

Introduction

This article discusses Te Paa Harakeke as a Kaupapa Māori model or framework of supervision practice in the social services in Aotearoa New Zealand. Below, a whakataukī regarding Te Paa Harakeke is offered and an explanation of the whakapapa of the whakataukī is presented, alongside a perspective of Te Paa Harakeke. Supervision in Aotearoa is charted, including the "othering" of non-mainstream supervision. Cultural supervision, bicultural supervision and Kaupapa Māori supervision are explored, with an emphasis on Kaupapa Māori supervision models. Current supervision practice guidelines in Aotearoa are divulged. The components of Te Paa Harakeke are revealed alongside the development and integration of the 10 mātāpono, and the relevance to the Kaupapa Māori supervision space is summarised.

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FIGURE 1 Photo of tui on Te Paa Harakeke beside Te awa o Manawatū (photo taken by Ange Watson)

Hutia te rito o te harakeke,
Kei whea te kōmako e kō?
Ka rere ki uta, ka rere ki tai.
Kī mai koe ki āu;
He aha te mea nui o te ao?
Māku e kī atu,
He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata!
Hutia te rito o te harakeke,
Kei whea te kōmako e kō?
Ka rere ki uta, ka rere ki tai.
Kī mai koe ki āu;
He aha te mea nui o te ao?
Māku e kī atu,
He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata!

*If the heart of harakeke was removed, where will the
    bellbird sing?*
It will fly inland; it will fly seawards.
*If I was asked, what was the most important thing
    in the world.*
*I would be compelled to reply, It is people, it is
    people, it is people!*

—Meri Ngāroto, Te Aupōuri

Te Paa Harakeke as a Kaupapa Māori supervision framework enables Māori social workers to be supervised by Māori supervisors using te ao Māori worldviews. In this context, Kaupapa Māori supervision is normalised and not othered, and the argument that all Māori social workers should receive Kaupapa Māori supervision to ensure they remain well and healthy in social work practice is applied.

Whakapapa of the whakataukī

The whakataukī presented above is about Te Paa Harakeke, and in Aotearoa, it is well known, especially the last three lines. Metge and Jones (1995) attributed this whakataukī to "a [wahine] rangatira whose relatives married her off to seal a peace but prevented her from having children. The saying is part lament, part warning" (p. 3). Peeni Henare (2016) outlined further that this wahine rangatira was from Te Aupōuri in the far north, and her name was Meri Ngāroto. Meri made the remark to her father, who was about to offer her to a rival tribe as a peace offering, knowing full well that she was unable to have children. Peaceful relations often involved the concept of hohou rongo, which "models a constructive means of conflict resolution without resorting to violence" (Florencio et al., 2022, p. 189). Meri was also aware that she would not be able to have children in this marriage, and the whakataukī speaks of her mamae and what she believes to be important in the world. If the harakeke plant dies then there will be no kōrari (flowers that produce nectar) and no nectar for the bellbird or tui—the birds will fly distractedly between the land and the sea, searching for somewhere to perch and feed. Metge and Jones (1995) further stated that "if the whānau ceases to produce and nurture children, it too will die. The saying concludes with the strongest affirmation of the value of people and thus of the whānau" (p. 4). The whakataukī speaks of all that is important in te ao Māori—the connection to te taiao; the environment, the link to health and wellbeing; oranga, hauora and mouri ora, tino rangatiratanga and wairua.

Tu Tama Wahine o Taranaki kaumātua kōrero regarding Te Paa Harakeke

Tu Tama Wahine (TTW) kaupapa is based on tikanga and values of te ao Māori; one of those values is Te Paa Harakeke, which relates to the reclamation and resurrection of our cultural and social descriptors. A kuia, Hinehau Millard, who Ria worked closely with in her mahi at TTW,

shared her pūrākau in relation to Te Paa Harakeke. The kōrero is about the marae and how Te Paa Harakeke surround the marae. The kuia described this as Te Paa Harakeke being a metaphor for protection of our culture, pūrākau, whānau wellbeing and whenua (H. Millard, personal communication, July 2017).

Explanation of Te Paa Harakeke

Te Paa Harakeke is a sacred plant. Māori have sometimes used the harakeke as a metaphor for whānau and often as a model of protection for children, and whānau structure and wellbeing (Metge, 1995; Pīhama et al., 2015; Turia, 2013; Watson, 2017, 2020). Melbourne (as cited in MENZA, n.d.) identified that the harakeke symbolises the unity of whānau and the importance of maintaining "close family connections, both between generations and among relations. The family of leaves remain within their cluster, just as people remain within their particular hapū or iwi." This denotes the close connection that whānau, hapū and iwi share. Further, the pakiaka of the harakeke are so entwined that they will stand or fall together (Metge & Jones, 1995).

The rito is the baby shoot in the middle of the whānau, and the awhi rito are the parent fronds that immediately encompass the rito. Surrounding this inner whānau are the tūpuna leaves.

Eruera and Ruwhiu (2016) highlighted the "tiaki mokopuna" principle in social work when using the analogy of the harakeke, and this principle "promotes the care, safety and protection of Māori children within extended whānau networks" (p. 2). The use of the harakeke as a support network ensures that all required supports are within the awhi rito and tūpuna fronds, be they whānau, community or service providers. Thus, the rito is supported and always protected.

Te Paa Harakeke descends from a te ao Māori framework that allows social workers, supervisors and researchers to utilise knowledge from their te ao Māori worldviews. Weavers hold much mōhiotanga regarding Te Paa Harakeke. Tikanga surrounds Te Paa Harakeke from before the seed can be planted to the harvesting of the rau. Some tikanga when harvesting the rau are not cutting the rau when it is raining, at night or when the kōrari is in bloom, cutting the rau at a certain downwards angle, and most importantly, "Waiho te whānau"—never ever cut the whānau in the middle (rito and awhi rito). When harvesting the leaves, only the tūpuna fronds are taken. If the whānau fronds in the middle of the plant are cut, the whole Te Paa Harakeke could die. Karakia
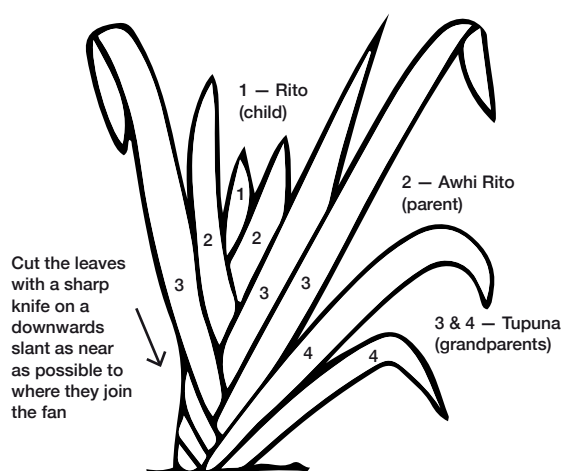
FIGURE 2 The whānau of Te Paa Harakeke
Note. From "Harakeke", by Christchurch City Libraries, n.d. (https://my.christchurchcity-libraries.com/harakeke/)

are used at different times, for example, when planting or harvesting the harakeke. Applying this concept to the supervision practice space ensures that tikanga is adhered to and followed when working alongside whānau Māori, and particularly for Māori social workers.

Supervision in Aotearoa

Supervision in Aotearoa has historically been monocultural, Western and focused on a Pākehā worldview (Elkington, 2014; O'Donoghue, 2010). There has been little cultural empathy and it has been an unsafe space for Māori—for supervisors, supervisees and whānau Māori with whom social workers work alongside. This was the case because dominant culture models and worldviews often prevail. Elkington (2014) asked how monocultural values and beliefs contribute to ineffective social service delivery, particularly when faced by high statistics of Māori service use (p. 72). Encapsulated in this patai is the notion that monocultural values and beliefs are in fact contributing to ineffective delivery of social services because Māori continue to be overrepresented in negative statistics as high users of services in every sector of society, including health, education, mental health, corrections and child protection. General stream supervision in Aotearoa has othered cultural, bicultural and Kaupapa Māori supervision and discounted their use for clinical or professional supervision (Elkington, 2014). Currently, Aotearoa is in a transitional space because the social services Oranga Tamariki, health, mental health and corrections

are undergoing huge change due to the current coalition government policies.

Current supervision practice guidelines from professional bodies and organisations

In Aotearoa, supervision guidelines are outlined in the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB, n.d.-b) competencies and Code of Conduct, the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW, 2023) Ngā Tikanga Matatika (Code of Ethics), and organisational/agency policies, protocols and procedures. Principle 2 of the Social Workers Registration Board Code of Conduct respects the status of Māori as tangata whenua and requires supervisors to "undertake supervision in a way that is culturally relevant if the supervisee is Māori" (SWRB, n.d.-a). It is not the case in Aotearoa that all supervisors are competent to meet these criteria. This article considers cultural, bicultural and Kaupapa Māori supervision next.

Cultural supervision

Cultural supervision in Aotearoa is a new construct that emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s as an innovative practice; it grew out of a need for those working alongside Māori to become culturally aware and have cultural competence. Dianne Wepa's (2005) work on cultural safety in nursing was a driving force in assisting nurses to become more culturally aware and culturally competent. Elkington (2014) stated that cultural supervision would address "Māori cultural issues in professional practice by those non-Māori for whom Māori culture might be an issue" (p. 71). Eketone (2012) outlined the primary focus of cultural supervision as ensuring staff and client safety and stated that non-Māori need cultural supervision to certify that they are practising safely. Originally, cultural supervision had a focus on ensuring that practitioners who lacked competency in Māori cultural practice were held accountable for their practice (Elkington, 2014). However, Eketone (2012) outlined that the focus of cultural supervision is not working alongside Māori culture specifically but working alongside any culture that is different from our own; consequently, supervision could be focused on such aspects as gender, class, education or religion. Therefore, cultural supervision is focused on general culture and, in the broadest context, aspects of identity such as gender, sexuality, faith and spirituality, political beliefs and education, and not just on ethnicity. Wallace (2019) highlighted that cultural supervision seems to have prospered in the past 20 years in New Zealand, and cultural supervision models have grown; however, cultural supervision seems more focused on competencies in social work than Indigenous accountability systems, for example, by iwi and hapū. Tervalon and Murray (1998) introduced a new idea over 20 years ago: that cultural humility may be more important than becoming "competent" in cultures. Cultural competence has been associated with tokenism and seen as a tick-box competency exercise (Abell et al., 2015), and the call has been made for cultural competence to be replaced with cultural humility (Abell et al., 2015; Greene-Moton & Minkler, 2020; Tervalon & Murray, 1998). However, Danso (2018) argued that cultural humility itself has received much criticism and that cultural competence can further develop as a transformational instrument for social work.

Bicultural/te Tiriti o Waitangi supervision may be a better term to describe what used to be coined cultural supervision.

Bicultural/te Tiriti o Waitangi supervision

In Aotearoa, bicultural supervision encompasses te Tiriti o Waitangi partners—tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti. Elkington (2014) suggested that it allows the two cultures to develop competency with each other in order to collaborate successfully and that it must include a "shared space where tauiwi are open to acceptance, challenge and negotiation of their own values in partner relationships with tangata whenua" (p. 67). Lisa King (2014) presented a bicultural supervision model of practice called KIAORA. Kōrerorero, ira atua–ira tangata, ako, oranga, rangatiratanga and āhurutanga are pou that are fundamental to King's KIAORA model. The pou are the epitome of te ao Māori. Together they represent mana-enhancing practices in supervision spaces whereby reciprocal relationships are encouraged. King (2014) herself is grounded in a Māori worldview; although her bicultural model respects cultural diversity, she strongly indicates that her interest is providing supervision to kaimahi Māori.

Elkington (2014) raised the point that within the supervision forum historically there has been no "acknowledgement of accountability to ngā atua (supreme forces), ki nga whānau (immediate and extended family), hapū (subtribe groupings), iwi (tribal groupings) or to tikanga-a-iwi (embracing difference among tribes). Nor are tribal worldviews considered for accountability measures as possible preferred codes of ethics" (p. 70). She presents another patai to ponder, "Are Māori interests, needs and preferences represented

in supervision? Whose voice is represented?" (p. 70). This patai leads us into the Kaupapa Māori space of supervision.

Kaupapa Māori supervision

Eruera (2012) highlighted that Māori worldviews are distinctive in comparison with other cultures and form the basis for Kaupapa Māori supervision. Kaupapa Māori supervision is a form of tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake that empowers Māori supervisees through having a Māori supervisor. It is a space where te ao Māori worldviews and practices are normalised. It is a space and place that grows Māori resilience, it is a culturally "safe space" for Māori and it pursues wellbeing. It is a space that provides cleansing, healing and rejuvenation. Kaupapa Māori supervision recognises that supervision can happen in alternative spaces in te taiao (Walsh-Tapiata & Webster, 2004). This could involve sitting or walking beside bodies of water (awa, moana or roto), being on marae, visiting historical places of significance, or being in the ngahere or on the maunga. Elkington (2015) discussed kaumātua supervision as an exclusive form of supervision that is important for Māori practitioners because kaumātua bring their varied lived experiences and knowledge. Elkington (2015) questions how kaumātua supervision may be more effectively recognised and acknowledged. P. T. O. Ruwhiu et al. (2008) discussed mana tangata supervision as an emancipation journey through heart mahi for healers. Wallace (2019) outlined that there are many models of Kaupapa Māori supervision.

Models of Kaupapa Māori supervision

Literature by Māori writers of Kaupapa Māori supervision has emerged. The approaches discussed include Awhiowhio (Webber-Dreardon, 1999), Kaitiakitanga (Webber-Dreardon, 2020), Ngā Mahi Wakakoi (Eruera & Ruwhiu, 2021), He Kōrero Kōrari (Eruera, 2005, 2012), Āta (Lipsham, 2012) Ngā Aroro (Wallace, 2019), Pakiwaitara (Elkington, 2015), Hoki ki tōu maunga (Murray, 2012) and many others.

Similarities among these Kaupapa Māori models are that they are grounded in te taiao, focus on oranga/mouri ora, focus on wairua and are "for Māori, by Māori, with Māori" (tino rangatiratanga). Te Paa Harakeke as a Kaupapa Māori supervision model of practice encompasses all these elements.

Te Paa Harakeke as a Kaupapa Māori supervision model of practice

The use of Te Paa Harakeke as a Kaupapa Māori model of supervision practice is outlined in this section. First, the 10 components of Te Paa Harakeke are defined and connected to supervision practice. Following this, the values of Te Paa Harakeke are delineated and then linked to the practice of supervision.

The components of Te Paa Harakeke

Watson (2017, 2020), in a research model, identified 10 components to Te Paa Harakeke—rito (baby), awhi rito (parents), tūpuna (grandparent fronds), pakiaka, kōhatu (for drainage), pakawhā, kakau, kōrari, whenua and ngā manu.
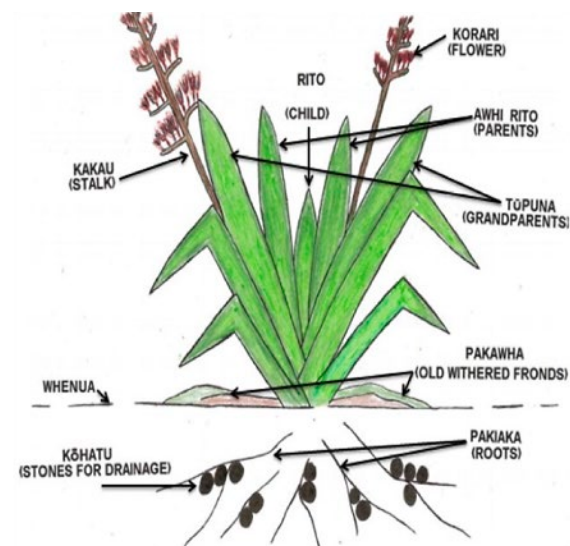
FIGURE 3 Components of Te Paa Harakeke (diagram by Hinemoana Watson-Pitcher)

The significance of these components to the supervision space is outlined further.

1. *Rito*. In Te Paa Harakeke model the rito is the pēpi. The rito needs to be nurtured and protected. In the supervision process, the rito is the supervisee.
2. *Awhi rito*. In the supervision space, the awhi rito is the supervisor and can also represent the supervisee's whānau and any other close whānau members the rito identifies.
3. *Tūpuna* represent extended whānau, hapū, iwi and organisations (including managers and colleagues) of the rito. Tūpuna can also include social work professional bodies (e.g. ANZASW, SWRB, Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association), the tertiary education institutions where supervisees have trained, and policies and laws that guide Aotearoa social work practice.

4. *Pakiaka* epitomise the supervisee's worldview, values and beliefs, grounding and foundation. These may include religion, cultural views and fundamental beliefs held by the supervisee. It is also imperative that the awhi rito working with the supervisee is aware of the supervisee's pakiaka, as well as their own pakiaka, and how they may be similar or different, and what the implications of difference will be for their practice alongside the supervisee.

5. *Kōhatu* denote the ethics or boundaries, dual roles and accountabilities, and conflicting cultural tensions that supervisees face. The kōhatu sit in the root system and because the pakiaka hold our fundamental values, beliefs and worldviews, it is here we face our biggest challenges and ethical dilemmas.

6. *Pakawhā* are the old fronds that begin to change colour and start to fall away from the plant as they age, eventually falling back to the whenua to replenish the earth surrounding the plant. They embody the experiences of the supervisee—positive and negative—and recognise that all experiences hold learning. Mā te hē, ka tika! (Give it a go and learn from your mistakes!)

7. *Kakau* symbolises the methods used by the supervisor with the supervisee and methods used in the supervisee's work alongside clients and whānau.

8. *Kōrari* are the flowers that grow from the kakau. These include the outcomes and learnings from supervision and from mahi alongside clients or whānau.

9. *Ngā manu*. Tui and kōmako are the birds that come to partake of the nectar of the kōrari. They represent the people who will feed off the kōrari, the people who will be affected by the positive experiences and interactions, such as clients, whānau, other practitioners, social work students and lecturers.

10. *Whenua* is the land where Te Paa Harakeke nestles. This is the connection to te taiao and Papatūānuku and our whakapapa in the Māori creation story. In the supervision context, it represents how the supervisee grounds themselves in te taiao—the significance of bodies of water (awa, roto and moana), maunga and ngahere. We are replenished and revitalised in te taiao. It is important that people have the chance to return to their ūkaipō to be rejuvenated and replenished. Te Paa Harakeke does not exist independently of the environment. The whenua also represents the conditions that can influence or slow down the growth of the plant. Detrimental conditions that may inhibit and limit the growth of Te Paa Harakeke are boggy soil or other plants or trees being overbearing.

In supervision, conditions can be identified as impeding the supervisee. We can frame the questions "What does Te Paa Harakeke require in order for it to grow and be healthy?" and "What does the supervisee require in order for them to grow and be healthy in their social work practice?" Te Paa Harakeke does not grow by itself, and supervisees do not practise alone—a network of support surrounds them to ensure they are safe and have healthy practice.

When Te Paa Harakeke is used as a supervision model of practice, the supervisee becomes the rito and the supervisor becomes the awhi rito. Hence, for the rest of this article, the supervisee is referred to as rito and the supervisor as the awhi rito.

Te ao Māori values intertwined in Te Paa Harakeke and the relevance to supervision

Te Paa Harakeke as a supervision model weaves together the traditional knowledge of the past with the present and the future (Eruera, 2005). Our tūpuna shared their knowledge from the past with their whānau, particularly with the rito. This is the transmission of knowledge and happens through events on marae, for example, tangihanga, where many stories are told while in the kitchen, doing the hāngī and preparing the kai, as well as on the paepae and in the wharenui. Te ao Māori values are the tools that allow this transmission of knowledge to happen.

The 10 te ao Māori values (mātāpono) that are presented in this section are mauri, karakia, tapu/noa, tikanga, mana, whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, tino rangatiratanga, ako and awhi.

1. *Mauri* is the first level of engagement and is about understanding the different mood levels and the way these moods may impact engagement in supervision. Being in a space of light will encourage effective engagement. In contrast, being in a dark space will require the skills of the awhi rito to uplift the mood to bring about change. It is important for the awhi rito to understand their own level of mauri, alongside the mauri of the rito, and ensure that processes for adjustment will happen. An example of this is when a rito had a heavy workload and personal issues going on at home, and was in a dark place (mauri noho). The decision was made to reinvigorate an actual māra, and the awhi rito and the rito went and bought plants and compost and worked in the māra. As they worked together in the māra, a notable shift in the mauri of the rito happened, and the
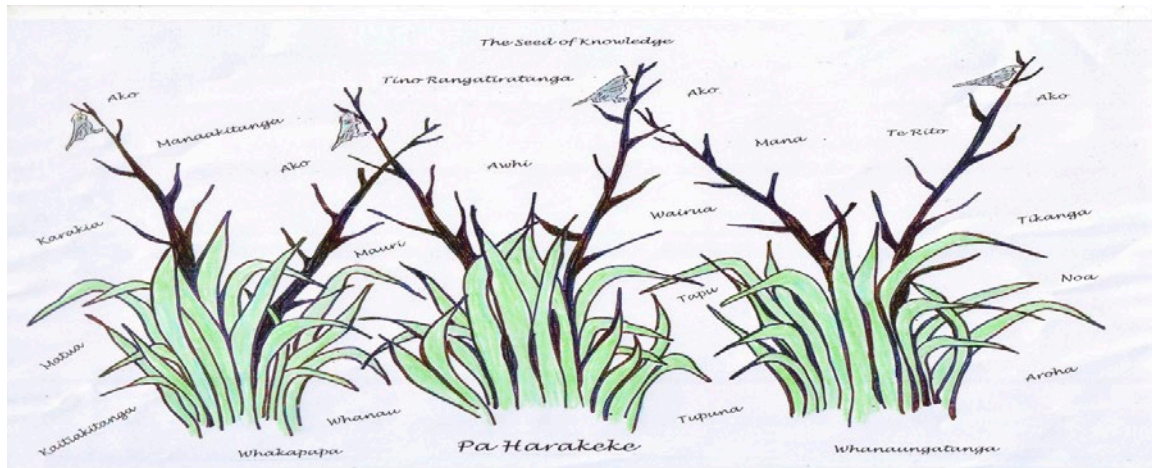
FIGURE 4 Ngā mātāpono o Te Paa Harakeke (diagram by Ria Julian)

kōrero flowed. This mahi in the māra was uplifting and brought about change in the mood, which opened the wairua and allowed it to flow. The rito was now in a state of mauri oho and mauri ora.

2. *Karakia*. Within the space of supervision, karakia sets the tone for the session. Karakia helps to create safe space—āhurutanga—for the rito and the awhi rito. Karakia usually happens at the beginning and ending of supervision, and may be required throughout the session. Karakia assists in bringing calm to the space. At the end of supervision, it is important to clear the space to leave any raru or hara behind so that the rito can leave the session feeling weightless and lifted.

3. *Tapu/Noa*. Tapu sets boundaries to ensure safety. Supervision is a tapu space where sharing of stories is confidential and not discussed outside of the supervision (unless safety is compromised). This highlights the importance of karakia in this space to transition into a state of tapu and then back to a state of noa. Kai and drink are often used to support these transitions between states.

The aspects of mauri, tapu/noa and karakia within the supervision space enable the awhi rito to guide the rito through states of mauri and allow for whakawātea (when needed), cleansing, healing and rejuvenation.

4. *Tikanga* is about correct and ethical practice. In the supervision space, it is essential to set boundaries and limitations and to outline the roles and responsibilities of both parties. This is often done with a written contract; however, it is more than a written contract. Tikanga encompasses principles of respect for each other and acting with integrity. In te ao Māori, the signposts for tikanga

are often marked using tika, pono and aroha, and in social work practice and supervision, they can be guides for practising ethically.

5. *Mana* is the retention of self-respect and recognition of each other's mana-enhancing practice to retain that mana. Te Mahi Whakamana is mana-enhancing theory and practice (L. Ruwhiu, 2016) that has grown out of te ao Māori practices and allows tangata whenua to embrace their Māori identity (P. Ruwhiu, 2019). Whakamana te tangata is believing in what the rito is saying while critically reflecting and challenging them in mana-enhancing ways. Tending to the mana of the rito, as well as your own mana (as an awhi rito) in the process, is essential in the supervision space to uplift and maintain everyone's mana, including the whānau with whom the rito works alongside. Te Mahi Whakamana is about applying a Māori spirit, a Māori heart, a Māori soul, a Māori mind and a Māori critical eye (P. T. O. Ruwhiu et al., 2008).

6. *Whanaungatanga* is about making connections, building rapport and trust, and relationship building. Whakapapa is included in this process. Eruera (2012) reinforced the importance of whakapapa as "a tool for engagement and rapport building between supervisor and supervisee by exchanging information about tribal links, whānau relationships and significant landmarks" (p. 13). It is important to know about the growing up experiences of the rito and how these may impact their practice, and where they are placed in their whānau of origin (mātāmua, pōtiki, tamaiti waenganui, huatahi, tuakana-teina). Where is their whenua and where are they from? If they are not on their own whenua, how does this impact the rito? How often do they go home? It can be isolating and unsettling for people being away

from their whenua, whānau, hapū and iwi. This can also give the rito a good understanding and empathy for whānau with whom they work alongside who are also having these issues. For them to work effectively with others, it is important that rito know who they are, where they are from and how their own journey impacts their mahi.

7. *Manaakitanga* encompasses the concept of manaaki ki te tangata, taking care of people. It is the responsibility of the awhi rito to manaaki—care for and grow the rito in the supervision space, listen without judgement and not take over the space. Giving time and space to the rito allows them to share openly. If the awhi rito takes over, the rito is likely to step back and not share, and nothing is resolved.

8. *Tino rangatiratanga* connects to all values. It is about self-determination and providing the space for the rito to make their own choices and decisions, rather than choices and decisions being made for them. This transfers into the practice of the rito, where they work in partnership with whānau to bring about positive change. An example of this is when a rito came from a patriarchal, hierarchical, dominant organisation into a space of a Kaupapa Māori organisation and initially struggled in this different environment. The rito identified in the supervision space that they found this difference challenging and were considering whether it was the right "fit" for them. The awhi rito spent more time with the rito, helping them to learn to listen, focus and move forward. This was done by allowing the rito to explore their own values and find where the fit in the organisation was, thus enabling them to work things through for themselves and become self-determining. This is an example of the awhi rito guiding, nurturing and empowering the rito to come to their own decision.

Whanaungatanga, manaakitanga and rangatiratanga have been broken down explicitly to the supervision space in this section. In the social work domain, these three pou are connected to SWRB Competency 1 (SWRB, n.d.-b) and the ANZASW Code of Ethics (ANZASW, n.d.).

9. *Ako* provides the opportunities for mutual learning between the awhi rito and the rito. In the supervision relationship, the awhi rito is the learner as well as the teacher, just as the rito is the teacher as well as the learner. Although the awhi rito brings different knowledge and skills to the supervision space, they are continually learning alongside the rito because the rito has input into developing the awhi rito thinking, ways of working and models of practice. It is a reciprocal relationship that requires a sharing of ideas, knowledge skills and experience. This ties in with the tuakana-teina model of practice whereby the relationship is about mutual learning. This also connects with awhi.

10. *Awhi* is the support networking aspect of supervision. The awhi rito encourages the rito, promoting good practice, helping them to believe in themselves, supporting rito taha hinengaro, taha tinana (through hugs, pats on the back, hongi, hariru, kisses), taha wairua and taha whānau. It is important that all taha are in balance and the awhi rito can provide guidance to ensure this happens. If the taha are not in balance, the rito will not thrive and will struggle in their mahi.

The inclusion of these 10 mātāpono in Te Paa Harakeke allows the Kaupapa Māori supervision space to be focused exclusively on issues relevant to Māori social workers and supervisors. There is often no place in social work where this can happen; therefore, Kaupapa Māori supervision is imperative for Māori social workers. It is also important that Māori social workers remain well and healthy in social work, particularly in light of "brown face burn-out" (Hollis-English, 2012, 2016; Moyle, 2014), which is the result of kaimahi Māori being overworked because of the cultural expectations and extra responsibilities placed on them, especially in mainstream organisations.

Conclusion

This article has argued that Te Paa Harakeke is a Kaupapa Māori model that can be used seamlessly in the social service supervision space. The model enables rito to be supervised by awhi rito in a Kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori space. Supervision in Aotearoa—including cultural supervision, bicultural/te Tiriti o Waitangi supervision and, particularly, Kaupapa Māori supervision—has been discussed. As a supervision model, Te Paa Harakeke consists of 10 components: rito, awhi rito, tūpuna, pakiaka, kōhatu, pakawhā, kakau, kōrari, whenua and ngā manu. The further development of Te Paa Harakeke model includes the 10 te ao Māori values of mauri, karakia, tapu/noa, tikanga, mana, whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, tino rangatiratanga, ako and awhi. The development of these mātāpono specifically within the Kaupapa Māori supervision space has been highlighted and explained. Te Paa Harakeke as a Kaupapa Māori supervision framework allows Māori social workers to be supervised by Māori supervisors utilising te ao Māori worldviews.

In this context, Kaupapa Māori supervision is normalised and certainly not othered. All Māori social workers should be receiving Kaupapa Māori supervision to ensure they remain well and healthy in the mahi of social work and that they do not suffer brown face burn-out.

Glossary

āhurutanga	warmth, comfort, safe space
ako	learning, study, teaching
Aotearoa	New Zealand
aroha	kindness, affection, love, compassion
awa	river
awhi	to embrace, hug
awhi rito	leaves that embrace the centre shoot of the harakeke
hāngī	earth oven; food cooked in an earth oven
hapū	subtribe
hara	wrongdoing
harakeke	New Zealand flax
hariru	to shake hands
hauora	health, vigour
hinengaro	mind, thought, intellect
hongi	pressing noses in greeting
huatahi	only child
hohou rongo	to make peace
ira atua	supernatural life
ira tangata	human element
iwi	tribe
kai	food
kaimahi	worker, employee, staff
kakau	stalk, stem
karakia	prayer; chants and incantations
kaumātua	elder
kaupapa	topic, basis; guiding principles
Kaupapa Māori	Māori approach, Māori agenda, Māori principles, Māori ideology
kōhatu	stone, rock
kōmako	bellbird
kōrari	flower stem of the flax
kōrero	speak, talk, discuss; discussion
kōrerorero	dialogue, conversation, discussion, chat
kuia	female elder
mahi	work
mamae	ache, pain, injury, wound
mana	prestige, status, authority, influence, integrity; honour, respect
manaaki	to support, take care of
manaakitanga	showing respect, generosity and care for others
mana motuhake	autonomy, independence, authority
manu	bird
māra	garden
marae	tribal meeting grounds
mātāmua	first-born, eldest
mātāpono	principle, value
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge handed down by ancestors
maunga, mounga	mountain
mauri	life principle, life force, vital essence
moana	sea
mōhiotanga	knowledge, knowing, understanding
mokopuna	grandchild
mouri	life principle, vital essence, special nature, a material symbol of a life principle, source of emotions
ngahere	bush, forest
noa	not sacrosanct, having no restrictions/prohibitions; free from tapu
noho	to sit, stay, remain
oho	wake up, waken
ora	life, health, vitality
oranga	health, wellbeing
oranga-ā-whānau	family health and wellbeing
paa harakeke	flax bush, generations
paepae	front threshold of meeting house
pakawhā	withered leaf (of flax or fern)
Pākehā	a person of predominantly European descent
pakiaka	roots
Papatūānuku	Earth Mother
patai	question
pēpi	baby
pono	truth, honesty
pōtiki	youngest child
pou	post, pillar, support
pūrākau	ancient legend, story
rangatira	chief (male or female)

rangatiratanga	self-determination, autonomy, the right of Māori te be self-determining
raru	problem, trouble, conflict
rau	frond leaves
rito	centre shoot, young centre leaf of the harakeke, new harakeke shoot
roto	lake
taha	side, part
taiao	natural world, environment
tamaiti	child
tangata Tiriti	people of the Treaty
tangata whenua	people of the land
tangihanga	funeral, rites for the dead
tapu	sacrosanct, prohibited, protected, restricted
tauiwi	foreigner, European, non-Māori, colonist
te ao Māori	the Māori world or Māori worldview
teina	younger brother (of a male), younger sister (of a female)
te Tiriti o Waitangi	the Treaty of Waitangi
tiaki	looking after, protection, safeguarding
tika	truth, correctness, directness, justice, fairness, righteousness, right
tikanga	customs and practices
tinana	physical
tino rangatiratanga	self-governing; having absolute independence and autonomy
tuakana	elder brother (of a male), elder sister (of a female)
tui	parson bird
tūpuna	grandparent
ūkaipō	place of origin where our whakapapa is nurtured
waenganui	middle
wairua	spirit, soul; attitude
whakamana	endorsement, confirmation
whakapapa	genealogy
whakataukī	proverb
whakawātea	clearing, freeing, expunging, purging, removal
whānau	family; nuclear/extended family
whanaungatanga	relationship, kinship, sense of family connection
wharenui	meeting house
whenua	land

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TE MANA O TE WAI

New concept, old words for governing freshwater in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

To address the freshwater crisis in Aotearoa New Zealand, regional councils must give effect to a relatively new term, Te Mana o te Wai, which is based on a very old word: "mana". While local understandings are emerging, questions remain among Māori about what Te Mana o te Wai means. This conceptual article reviews the literatures to discuss and define Te Mana o te Wai. Four types of mana emerge from the scholarship: mana comes from the atua; mana is a spiritual power; mana is a generative power, and mana is the authority to control. There is also a fifth aspect: mana is a power that can be taken. The answer to the question of what Te Mana o te Wai means lies in the old words. Māori must turn to them to define Te Mana o te Wai and push for mana to be restored across all dimensions.

Keywords

freshwater governance, Indigenous knowledge, mana, mātauranga Māori

I think those things which were taken from us should be restored under that treaty.
—*Tare of Ngāti Whātua, Māori Parliament at Ōrākei, Auckland, 25 February 1879*

This article examines a relatively new term, Te Mana o te Wai, which uses a very old word, mana. Te Mana o te Wai is the fundamental concept of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (hereafter "National Policy Statement").[†] In Aotearoa New Zealand,

the status of Te Mana o te Wai in freshwater policy, as it is prepared and implemented across the country, is significant. Internationally too, the centring of Indigenous knowledge in the decision-making frame is an important marker of Indigenous development in freshwater governance (see, e.g., McGregor, 2014). Te Mana o te Wai is to be given effect by regional councils who have statutory responsibility for promoting sustainable freshwater management under New Zealand's principal environmental legislation, the Resource

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† At the time of writing, the government was consulting on replacing the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020. The implications of these proposals are addressed at the end of this article.

Management Act 1991. The requirement to "give effect" means to "implement" and is "a strong directive, creating a firm obligation on the part of those subject to it" (see *Environmental Defence Society Inc v The New Zealand King Salmon Co Ltd* [2014] at [77]).

Giving effect to Te Mana o te Wai relies on defining the term. In the National Policy Statement, Te Mana o te Wai is articulated as:

> A concept that refers to the fundamental importance of water and recognises that protecting the health of freshwater protects the health and well-being of the wider environment. It protects the mauri of the wai. Te Mana o te Wai is about restoring and preserving the balance between the water, the wider environment and the community. (clause 1.3)

To implement the National Policy Statement and give effect to Te Mana o te Wai, tangata whenua, regional councils and communities must come to a localised understanding of Te Mana o te Wai. Accordingly, "Every regional council must engage with communities and tangata whenua to determine how Te Mana o te Wai applies to water bodies and freshwater ecosystems in the region." My own work as an adviser to a regional council on iwi engagement with the National Policy Statement told me that iwi and hapū are at different places with regard to defining Te Mana o te Wai. Some have done this work. Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku, for example, have developed an expression of Te Mana o te Wai that emphasises hauora, which for them means "fit, well, vigorous and robust" (Kitson & Cain, 2022). Others are still in the process.

This conceptual article enters that space and discusses and defines Te Mana o te Wai drawing on the Māori, Waitangi Tribunal reports, and other literatures about mana and water. Mana—"the authority of the author" (see Feekery & Jeffrey, 2019)—was a key factor in selecting the literature. Māori literature was prioritised first, privileging Māori scholarship on mana. The reports of the Waitangi Tribunal were prioritised second. As the commission of inquiry that hears claims by Māori against Crown breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi, the document that effected the colonisation of Aotearoa, the Waitangi Tribunal produces reports that contain a wealth of Māori evidence and analysis of Māori concepts, including mana. Literatures outside these two groups were prioritised third.

This article seeks to answer questions about Te Mana o te Wai circulating in te ao Māori by turning to the scholarship. These questions include "What is that concept?" "How does that apply?" "What does that mean on the ground?" (Reginald Proffitt, personal communication, 27 September 2023). A deep well of intellectual work about mana and water exists and we (Māori) should use it, because at some point non-Māori institutions will start telling us what Te Mana o te Wai is. To pre-empt or respond, we need to draw on our own knowledges, in the text and on the land. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021) reminds us that in turning towards ourselves to define concepts such as Te Mana o te Wai we engage in the political act of resisting being defined by others.

Such resistance might involve subverting colonising interpretations of essentialism and authenticity—for example, that the scholarship is less Māori than the on-the-ground experience, or that new terms, such as Te Mana o te Wai, are not really Māori. This article opens a space for Māori voices in the literature to speak alongside those that resound from the whenua, with each voice having their own authority. The written narratives confirm an essence of Te Mana o te Wai that is relational, connecting humans to the natural and spiritual worlds, and explaining our place and responsibilities in the cosmological order. This confirmation serves a strategic purpose, strengthening Māori claims to rights to environmental protection and a seat at the decision-making table; rights articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007; see, e.g., Articles 18 & 29).

Four elements of mana as it relates to water emerge from the literature: mana comes from the atua, mana is a spiritual power, mana is a generative power, and mana is the authority to control. A fifth dimension is also relevant: mana is a power that can be taken. This facet points to the words that Tare of Ngāti Whātua proclaimed in 1879, which are stated at the beginning of this article. They remain as relevant now, as they did then. A 2023 report by the Ministry for the Environment and Stats NZ revealed that more than two-thirds of Indigenous freshwater birds and 76% of Indigenous freshwater fish are threatened with extinction or are at risk of being threatened. Nearly half of freshwater lakes have poor or very poor water quality. Forty-five per cent of rivers are not suitable for swimming because of the risk of infection with *Campylobacter* bacteria, which cause vomiting and diarrhoea. Rightly, the co-chair of the Climate Directorate for the National Iwi Chairs Forum, Mike Smith, has

described the situation as "carnage" (Chittock, 2023).‡

In this space, where action and recovery are urgently needed, the question of what Te Mana o te Wai means, and what regional councils will be giving effect to, is critical. Taylor (2022) suggests that "progressive, potentially transformative concepts" like Te Mana o te Wai "might just provide the change in attitudes and behaviours that we need as a country to reverse degradation of our rivers and lakes" (p. 89).

Accordingly, this article concentrates on the four types of mana, discussing each of them in depth, before analysing how mana was and can still be taken using the law. This idea of taking is critical to thinking about restoration. There is hope that what has been taken can also be repaired, but there is also a warning to be vigilant. The article concludes with a definition and depiction of Te Mana o te Wai as a frame for understanding and governing water in Aotearoa New Zealand, and some encouragement to not be distracted by new terminology. We already have the knowledge of our own words.

Mana comes from the atua

Mana comes from the atua (Barlow, 1991; H. Smith, 2011; Waitangi Tribunal, 1997, p. 23). Atua, as defined by Barlow (1991), are commonly understood to be "the gods responsible for the creation of the universe: the planets, stars, sun and every living thing on the earth, including mankind" (p. 11). But in a discussion about Tangaroa, the atua of the sea, Royal (2012.) refers to Tangaroa as an "energy with all its forms, moods and expressions". For him, the translation "god of the sea" does not capture the full nature of Tangaroa. Here, I accept both explanations of atua: as personifications and as forces and entities that take shape in the environment and in the material realm.

In seeking the source of mana, the customary narratives provide a whakapapa, a genealogical order. Some narratives emphasise Io-Taketake, "the ground of being, root cause, creator" (Marsden, 1988, pp. 9–10), as the beginning. Others start with Ranginui and Papatūānuku, the sky and the earth, and their many children who brought into existence the natural and spiritual worlds. Either way, the origins of mana are supernatural, but connected through whakapapa to people and the ecosystems in which we live. For human and beyond-human beings, such as rivers, streams, lakes and swamps, mana is inherited.

In te ao Māori, the idea of sentient and non-sentient beings is perhaps irrelevant. Everything is descended from the atua and is thus endowed with mana and the other "essentials for life": hau and mauri (E. T. Durie et al., 2017). Elements of the natural world are considered tuakana, senior siblings to people, and all are part of a genealogical line stretching back to the gods. Whether these elements are personified as deities or regarded as vibrations and entities, they are understood as being able to feel things. The framing of whakapapa requires relating, and relating entails feeling.

Best (1924) documented Parawhenuamea as the atua of freshwater, but in other narratives the atua is Maru. For example, in the karakia below, which is said before eating to acknowledge the sources of food, Maru is acknowledged as personifying freshwater bodies and the foods they provide:

Nau mai e ngā hua	We acknowledge these fruits
O te wao	Of the forest
O te ngakina	Of the garden
O te waitai	Of the sea
O te waimāori	Of the lakes, rivers and streams
Nā Tāne	Belonging to Tāne, atua of the forest
Nā Rongo	Belonging to Rongo, atua of cultivated foods
Nā Tangaroa	Belonging to Tangaroa, atua of oceans
Nā Maru	*Belonging to Maru, atua of freshwater*
Ko Ranginui e tū iho nei	Woven to the celestial energies
Ko Papaptūānuku e takoto ake nei	Woven to the terrestrial energies
Tūturu whakamaua kia tina, tina!	Affirm it!
Haumi ē, hui ē, tāiki ē!	We are united and ready to proceed!

Parawhenuamea is the daughter of Hine-tūpari-maunga (also known as Hine-maunga and Hine-pari-maunga), the female representation of mountains, and Tāne-mahuta, god of the forests

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‡ The National Iwi Chairs Forum is an informal group of chairs of mandated iwi and hapū representative bodies. The purpose of the group is to "share information ... work collaboratively on key priorities of iwi ... and Advocate the collective priorities of iwi ... in discussion with others recognising the rangatiratanga/independence of iwi" (National Iwi Chairs Forum, n.d.).

and birds (Tangatatai, 2014; Te Whare Taonga o Waikato Museum & Gallery, 2020). According to Best (1924), Parawhenuamea married Kiwa, the guardian of the ocean, joining the rivers to the sea. Aroha Yates-Smith suggests that Parawhenuamea is also a representation of alluvial silt, with "para" meaning sediment, "whenua" meaning land, and "mea" being an ancient word for red (Te Whare Taonga o Waikato Museum & Gallery, 2020). Similarly, in Best's (1924) recordings, Parawhenuamea is identified as the "parent or origin of *oneparahua* and *onepu* (alluvial deposits, silt and sand)" (p. 167). These cosmological narratives weave the forces of nature to one other and to people by way of whakapapa, generating a framing that emphasises a holistic and relational view of the world. However, the narratives do not just prioritise relationships between physical processes and phenomena. They take for granted the presence and connective flow of wairua, of spiritual and supernatural energies, which in te ao Māori are a normal part of reality (E. T. Durie, 1994). One of these energies is mana.

Mana is a spiritual power

Mana is a spiritual power that comes from the atua and with which water is imbued. This spiritual power is evident in several ways. For example, water is a medium that can remove tapu. Benton et al. (2013) define tapu as

> a key concept in Polynesian philosophy and religion (along with mana and noa), denoting the intersection between the human and the divine. The term is thus used to indicate states of restriction and prohibition whose violation will (unless mitigated by appropriate karakia and ceremonies) automatically result in retribution, often including the death of the violator and others involved, directly or indirectly. (p. 404)

Hirini Moko Mead (2003, pp. 142–144) explains the use of water to remove tapu during tangihanga. Those who have attended the burial will, upon leaving the urupā or cemetery, sprinkle themselves with water to cleanse themselves of tapu. The final part of the tangihanga is a ceremony to lift the tapu from the house of the deceased. Termed takahi whare, or "tramping the house", the ceremony involves a tohunga sprinkling water and reciting karakia in each room to remove the tapu from the dwelling, making the house noa. Mead (2003) describes noa as a state at which "balance has been reached, a crisis is over, health is restored and life is normal again" (p. 32).

Consistent with the belief in the spiritual power of water, maintaining the purity of water was prioritised. E. T. Durie et al. (2017) set out the ways in which water was managed to sustain its wairua. Waste discharge to water was prohibited. Separate waterways were used for distinct tasks, for ceremonies, and everyday activities, such as washing clothes, to maintain spiritual and physical sanitation. Both types of cleanliness were important in daily life and sacred customs. Furthermore, different types of waterways were used in ritual. Flowing water was used in tohi performed over children. During tohi, the child would be immersed in or sprinkled with water. They would be dedicated to an atua to endow them with desirable mental and physical traits. Puna were highly valued for their purity. According to Rawinia Higgins (2013), when a rangatira was dying, they would often request "a particular food, or water from a particular spring ... These were the 'ō matenga', the death provisions that would sustain the spirit in its journey after death."

Waterbodies are guarded by taniwha, which the Waitangi Tribunal (1999) has defined as "revered water creatures of extraordinary powers" (p. 42). Best (1924) recorded that taniwha are descended from Parawhenuamea and, as such, are tapu. In the whakapapa, taniwha are surrounded and sheltered by their kin: horu and stones, gravel and sand, which are all protected by their ancestress, Parawhenuamea. Taniwha appear in multiple forms, such as *tuna*, rocks and logs. Taniwha on the Whanganui River, for example, can change the landscape and course of the river by thrashing their tails (see Waitangi Tribunal, 1999). They can be malevolent towards law breakers and outsiders who are encroaching on territory with bad intentions, and protective of the home people, guiding them safely on their river journeys. They can be ancestors in spiritual form, including those who were part of the migrations of Māori to Aotearoa. The presence of taniwha affirmed the relationship of the people with the reach of the river that they lived on. Disrespecting the water is therefore an insult towards the people and invites retaliation, whether that be environmentally, spiritually or legally.

Taniwha are kaitiaki, supernatural entities that facilitate a relational understanding of the river ecosystem; explain and warn of change in the river; emphasise a familial connection with past, present and future generations; bring attention to very localised connections that may get subsumed by a broader focus; and encourage a respectful and careful relationship with the water.

Perhaps Maisey Rika (2012) says it best in her song "Tangaroa Whakamautai [Tangaroa, Commander of the Tides]", when she describes Tangaroa in all his forms: "he kaitiaki, he taonga, he tipua, ariki, he taniwha"—a guardian, a precious treasure, a supernatural entity, a god of ancient realms, a water spirit. Tangaroa is all these things, and so are taniwha.

Mana is a generative power

The regenerative capacities of the natural world are also a manifestation of mana, making mana a procreative and restorative power. According to Barlow (1991), this type of mana was implanted in Papatūānuku, and is "associated with the ability of the land to produce the bounties of nature" (p. 61). In Māori thought, the land includes the water (E. T. Durie et al., 2017). James Ritchie referred to this form of mana as mana huaanga,

> which arises from riches, the possession of resource rich territories or resources, the fruits of the bush, its birds, the eels, gardens and waters, inland or oceanic. These not only sustained the iwi but with these good things they could make their mana material through the hospitality they could offer and the koha which they could carry when they travelled or joined others in celebration, or to mourn. (Waitangi Tribunal, 1999, p. 35)

In the Waitangi Tribunal's (1985) report on the Manukau claim, the riches of the Manukau Harbour and the tributaries that fed it are recalled:[Witnesses] referred to the harbour's once plentiful supply of flounder, mullet, pioke shark, skate, trevally, snapper, kahawai, kingfish, parore, tarakihi, moki, herring, stingray, lemonfish, hāpuku, limpet, crayfish, toheroa, pipi, scallops, mussels, paua, kina, pupu, oysters, toitoi, karengo and sea fungus, and to the eels, koura, trout, whitebait and watercress in the rivers and creeks. (p. 39)

There is a close relationship between mana, mana huaanga, and manaakitanga. E. T. Durie et al. (2017) refer to manaakitanga as "the key conceptual regulator of conduct" in relationships, and define it as "the reciprocal enhancement of the mana of each other when people engage" (p. 18). Mead (2003) also emphasises the special status of manaakitanga, asserting that "all tikanga are underpinned by the high value placed upon manaakitanga – nurturing relationships, looking after people, and being very careful about how others are treated" (p. 29).

Manaakitanga is a value and practice that is always important in relationships, regardless of context, but it is commonly demonstrated through hospitality. According to the Waitangi Tribunal (1999), "Mana was also at the heart of gift giving … Lavish presentations of food for important visitors were a powerful expression of the mana of the people providing them" (pp. 36, 38).

Customary fishing is a site where all three concepts—mana, mana huaanga, and manaakitanga—are practised. Through the memories of Sir Douglas Kidd, Huhana Smith (2011) demonstrates the interwoven nature of these values, and the ways in which they are lived and embodied in the people who are connected to the land and sea:

> Whole communities both Māori and non-Māori, would engage in customary harvest activities. Sir Douglas Kidd, a former minister of fisheries, grew up in Kuku, a predominantly Māori community in the southwest Horowhenua region of the North Island. As a young person in the late 1940s and early 1950s he would join the throng of local people, mainly family groups, who congregated for hauling or fishing at the local beach. He recalled one occasion when four strong young Māori men took a large net out into the surf using a long mānuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) pole. Others fed them the extensive net as they pushed into the waves to set it:
>
> 'The rope net was about thirty or forty yards and they used to get huge amounts of fish, including monstrous stingrays. All the kids would flee in terror when [a stingray] flicked its tail … [Y]ou peered through people's legs and I remember there would be a designated person assisted by men in their late thirties or forties (perhaps the chief's children) who would divide the catch, and everybody or every family present went home with fish. There was no cutting or cleaning allowed on the beach, the net was detangled, rolled up and heaved onto a truck, probably the only truck in the district. And everybody toddled off like nobody had been there.' (p. 159)

The narrative demonstrates that manaakitanga is inclusive and involves sharing the bounty of Tangaroa with others. Fishing is an example of a collective activity where everyone contributes for the benefit of the whole. All generations are involved, from children to adults. Tangaroa is respected; fish are not gutted on the beach and no rubbish, which might contaminate and disrespect Tangaroa's realm, is left behind. This single activity provides for intergenerational learning and connection to each other and to the environment.

The system of principles and rules that organises the activity is Māori.

Mana, as mana huaanga, is a generative power that enhances the mana of the people. It enables them to sustain themselves, and to manaaki others who, in turn, will reciprocate when the time comes. Mana supports the resource base, which sustains the people and enables the continuation of their values, practices and relationships. These relationships are not only reciprocal between the people but also between the community and their territory over time. This responsibility of the people, to the environment and to each other, past, present and future, is called kaitiakitanga. Merata Kawharu (2000, p. 355) refers to these obligations, respectively, as mana whenua and mana tangata. There is also a duty to the gods, which she refers to as mana atua.

Kaitiakitanga "is based on whakapapa (genealogy), lineage" (Minhinnick, 1989, p. 4). As such, it is to be carried out by the tangata whenua. Contemporaneously, however, kaitiakitanga must be supported by others (Kawharu, 2000, p. 367), without such others claiming that they are kaitiaki. Despite colonisation and land loss, kaitiakitanga remains "the practical exercise of ... rangatiratanga" (Kawharu, 2000, p. 367), or "paramount power and authority" (Mutu, 2011, p. 16). In the contact period between Māori and Europeans (1769–1840; see E. T. Durie, 1994), "rangatiratanga" emerged as a new word developed from the base word "rangatira" to convey Christian ideas about God's kingdom and Māori ideas of sovereignty, leadership and self-determination (see Kawharu, 2000, p. 350; Mead, 2003, p. 36). The old Māori word for these qualities is "mana" (see M. H. Durie, 1998, p. 1).

Mana is the authority to control

In a political sense, mana is the authority to decide and control how resources are used and managed (see E. T. Durie et al., 2017; M. H. Durie, M, 1998, p. 1; Waitangi Tribunal, 1988, p. 181). Mason Durie points to the use of mana in He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni | Declaration of Independence of the United Tribes of New Zealand. Signed in 1835 by 34 northern rangatira, the intention of the declaration, according to Manuka Henare (2014), was to say to the world: "These islands indeed belong to Māori people ... we are a free and independent people, we're open to discussions about trade, we will form a Parliament to pass laws on trade and justice and peace, and we are looking for partners." In effect, we are sovereign; we are in charge; we are an economic power seeking to grow and expand. Putting this intention into words, the text of He Whakaputanga states:

Ko te Kingitanga ko te mana i te wenua o te whakaminenga o Nu Tireni ka meatia nei kei nga Tino Rangatira anake i tō mātou huihuinga . . .

All sovereign power and authority within the territories of the United Tribes of New Zealand is hereby declared to reside entirely and exclusively in the hereditary chiefs and heads of tribes in their collective capacity . . . (Waitangi Tribunal, 2014, pp. 168–169)

The aspects and practical application of mana can be seen in evidence regarding the rangatira, Popata Te Waha, and his mana over the huge and highly organised shark fishing expeditions at Rangaunu Bay (see Waitangi Tribunal, 1988). In a reading before the Auckland Institute of the Royal Society of New Zealand, R. H. Matthews (1910) recounted in vivid detail an expedition he was invited to attend in 1855:

[T]he mana, or authority, over the *kopua* (the deep) was solely exercised by Popata Te Waha, who had inherited it from his ancestors. It was he who issued the *panui*, or notice, of the date of the *maunga* (or catching), and who fired the signal gun from his headquarters at Okuraiti to notify the camps at Te Unahi and Pukewhau that sharks would be caught that night . . . Popata Te Waha's *mana* over the *kopua* was acknowledged by all the surrounding tribes . . . and all the numerous kaingas or settlements within this boundary. Maoris from all these places were represented at the great *maunga*. (p. 598) Popata Te Waha's mana was not vested in an institution, demonstrating Edward Taihākurei Durie's observations that mana is embodied in and practised by people. Mana is "ascribed and achieved", meaning one's mana is inherited, but it can also be improved through the exercise of "mana enhancing traits". These qualities include "bravery, hospitality, eloquence, generosity, honesty, integrity, fearlessness, honourableness and scrupulous adherence to promises" (E .T. Durie, 1994, p. 37). Such attributes were to be employed for the benefit of others. Selfishness and individualism were discouraged and service to the collective was paramount. The task of the rangatira was to ensure that the people would survive and flourish.

Mana is an expansive concept that is used in many ways, but its meaning in He Whakaputanga

was clear: '[I]t spells out authority and control' (M. H. Durie, 1998, p. 2). As such, mana "confers a larger capacity than kaitiakitanga" (E. T. Durie et al., 2017, p. 30), which some have suggested is preferred by the Crown as a less threatening alternative. At the other end of the spectrum, mana may also include ownership, which Jacinta Ruru (2022) has called "arguably the most significant water issue facing this country" (p. 325).

In the pre-contact period, the people were the hapū, primarily. But post-contact and today, the people include Māori and everyone else. Te Atihaunui-a-Pāpārangi leaders who gave evidence to the Waitangi Tribunal during the Whanganui River inquiry accepted reasonable use of their river by the public, so long as their mana was respected (see Waitangi Tribunal, 1999). Their mana was exclusive to them, but it provided a frame within which others could be included. Conflict arose when settler-colonisers refused to recognise Te Atihaunui authority. In 1999, the year the Whanganui River report was published, the Tribunal pointed out that modern river management is so complex that cooperation is required. Twenty-one years later, the National Policy Statement opened up a space for such inclusion to be activated, but elected representatives have to push the button. Such representatives tend to be unwilling to share (see Rennie et al., 2000). This tendency is inherited from the early settler-colonisers.Mana is a power that can be taken

Colonisation had significant impacts on all of the dimensions of mana, incrementally dismantling and eroding it at all levels. Most notably, colonisation severed the relationships of Māori with their resources, such as water. Land alienation and the law facilitated political and physical exclusion, and drove a sea of environmental destruction and social, economic and cultural disruption, all of which have accumulated into disparity, inequity and loss. Mana as land ownership is irrecoverable across much of Aotearoa, and freshwater decision-making—mana whakahaere—is vested in others.

Water was central to colonisation. Along with land, the Crown needed water to facilitate settlement and promote land "improvement" as the engine of economic development in the new economy. Such improvement involved draining wetlands and clearing native forest to convert the land to pasture. In the eyes of the settler-colonisers, swamps were rank, unoccupied wastelands with fertile soils that were best drained and cultivated (Park, 2002). Forests stood in the way of progress (Brooking & Pawson, 2011) and, by the early 1890s, were "fast disappearing

before the settler's axe" (von Dadelszen, 1893). To effect this conversion of wetlands and forests to farmland, Parliament passed a chain of legislation that gave the Crown and other institutions control—mana—over water.

One of the earliest laws to grant powers in water to local authorities appears to have been the Highways and Watercourses Diversion Act 1858 (see Waitangi Tribunal, 1999; White, 1998). Under this Act, provincial councils could divert and dam rivers and streams, sell the beds of rivers and streams that were diverted, and build structures such as bridges and wharves on the beds and banks of waterways. Māori were not represented on councils, nor were they compensated when rivers and streams that they used and possessed as part of the wider tribal estate were modified, damaged, destroyed or alienated.

In 1876, councils were given wide powers under the Public Works Act to affect land and water for drainage purposes. Under this Act, any natural watercourse, except a navigable river, could be declared to be a public drain and under the control of the county council. Councils could take any land for drainage purposes, build new drains, widen, deepen or alter the course of any drain, and enter any land to take materials to build or repair a drain.

These powers were later transferred to drainage boards under the Land Drainage Act 1873.

Drainage boards were deemed to be local authorities under the Act and, as such, were elected and governed by ratepayers. White (1998) argues that this policy would have been prejudicial towards Māori, who by the 1890s were significantly outnumbered by Pākehā and had been dispossessed of 83% of their lands (see also M. H. Durie, 1998, p. 119). Few Māori paid rates, and those who did were clearly a minority who would have exercised little political influence, especially with severely diminished landholdings.

Along with drainage boards, river boards also had extensive powers over rivers, streams, and other waterbodies. Established under various local Acts from 1868, and then national legislation from 1884 (see Roche, 1994), river boards could take land without the agreement of the owner; divert, dam or take water; and change the course of any stream or river—all under the auspices of flood protection. River boards also had the status of local authorities (von Dadelszen, 1893) and were governed and elected by ratepayers. Like drainage boards, river boards could levy rates and raise loans to pay for flood protection works, and select the contractors who would build them.

With tribal land and their economic base fast disappearing, Māori worked as contractors for river and drainage boards building stopbanks and digging drains to make a living. One claimant to the Waitangi Tribunal's (2006) Hauraki inquiry remarked:

> We never got to participate in the new wealth that was supposed to result from the [drainage] schemes. Because we had so little land left the drainage schemes produced fewer benefits to us except as labourers. On the other hand we paid a high price in land and the loss of rich swamp and river resources. (p. 1148)

That Māori would one day work as labourers on their own land was predicted by Rewa, a rangatira who was present at the signing of the Treaty at Waitangi on 6 February 1840. According to Ranginui Walker (2023), Rewa and other rangatira opposed Governor Hobson's presence if it meant that their status, their mana, was deemed beneath his. Walker (2023) states that "Rewa told the governor bluntly to return to his own country. He even issued a prophetic warning that those who signed the Treaty would be 'reduced to the condition of slaves and compelled to break stones on the roads'." Other laws vested rights in water directly in the Crown. Under the Coal-mines Act Amendment Act 1903, the beds of all navigable rivers and the minerals in them were deemed to be "the absolute property of the Crown" (s 14(1)). In the same year, Parliament vested the sole right to use water in lakes and rivers to generate hydropower in the Crown under the Water Power Act 1903 (s 2(1)). The Crown could then grant this right to a third party, such as a council or corporation. The rights of the Crown in water were expanded under the Water and Soil Conservation Act 1967 to include "the sole right to dam any river or stream, divert or take any natural water, or discharge natural water or waste into any natural water, or to use natural water" (s 21(1)).

A suite of planning legislation vested the right to plan—that is, the designing or controlling of urban or economic development—in local authorities and government departments. The Town Planning Act 1926 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1953 required local authorities to prepare town and regional planning schemes. Schemes under the 1926 Act were to deal with sewerage, drainage, sewage disposal, and water supply. These matters were expanded under the 1953 Act to include harbours, navigable waterways and power generation. Neither Act made any provision for Māori or the Treaty of Waitangi.

In these words, in these laws, stretching back to at least 1858, we see the Crown taking the mana—the authority to decide and control how resources are used and managed—and vesting that authority in itself, a network of local institutions, and others. The taking did not happen all at once. It happened over a century, and was an endless chipping-away. The cold realisation of what had been taken, but not ceded, is evident in the Proceedings of the Māori Parliament at Ōrākei in 1879. Among others, Te Hemara expressed the bitter truth:

> The words of the Queen were that the *mana* of the Chiefs would be left in their possession, that they were to retain the *mana* of their lands, fisheries, pipi-grounds, forests . . . the pakehas . . . have taken the *mana* of the whole Island. They do not leave any *mana* over the land or the sea to the chiefs. (Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1879, p. 17)

In response, Tare declared: 'I think those things which were taken from us should be restored under that treaty' (Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, 1879, p. 25).

Taking and restoration, despair and hope

At the time of writing, the Crown is consulting on replacing the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management. The proposals include an option to completely remove Te Mana o te Wai (Ministry for the Environment, 2025, p. 16), thus continuing the legacy of the Crown taking mana through the means of law and policy. The words of Te Hemara and Tare ring true at this time: Attempts to take mana are ongoing, but restoration too remains possible. This section of the article considers these opposing forces—taking and restoration, despair and hope—in the context of implementing the four dimensions of mana within and beyond the structure of the National Policy Statement.

Beginning with mana atua, the seniority of freshwater in relation to people is recognised in the National Policy Statement in the hierarchy of obligations. This hierarchy prioritises the health and wellbeing of freshwater above human health needs and social, economic and cultural wellbeing. At every step of implementing the National Policy Statement, the hierarchy of obligations is to be applied. However, in October 2024, the government introduced a change to the Resource

Management Act to prevent local authorities from applying the hierarchy when making decisions on resource consent applications that affect water—a veiled attempt perhaps to exclude Māori from the consenting end of the planning process.

In response, various strategies emerge. As a priority, it is vital for regional councils to continue relationships with Māori, and to ensure ongoing Māori inclusion in plan development and implementation. The Māori voice throughout the planning process must endure. Second, councils can tighten the objectives and policies in regional plans to uphold Treaty settlement legislation and Iwi Management Plans that align with Te Mana o te Wai. Third, in policy and political circles, there is a role for advocates to promote the restoration of the original order of the hierarchy of obligations. The order is the line between the atua and the mundane, flourishing and decline.

Mana huaanga, the abundance of freshwater, is recognised in the compulsory mahinga kai value in the National Policy Statement. The compulsory status of mahinga kai requires that mahinga kai be managed under a National Objectives Framework across all freshwater bodies. The text of the mahinga kai value aligns with the narratives in the literature by stipulating that, for example, kai is safe to harvest and eat; knowledge about the preparation, storage and cooking of kai is able to be transferred; and the desired species are present across all life stages and plentiful enough for long-term harvest (Ministry for the Environment, 2024, p. 39).

An example of mahinga kai that demonstrates how mana huaanga might be applied through the implementation of the compulsory mahinga kai value is kōura (*Paranephrops planifrons*). Kōura are an important mahinga kai for Te Arawa in the Te Arawa lakes. Alongside others, Ian Kusabs, a Te Arawa fisheries biologist specialising in kōura, identifies sediment particle size as "the strongest driver of kōura abundance and biomass, with kōura populations increasing with sediment particle size" (Kusabs et al., 2015, p. 36). In the Te Arawa Lakes Environmental Plan, Te Arawa Lakes Trust (2019) has developed a narrative objective for kōura, which imagines that "the quality of the water is such that you can see the footsteps of the kōura" (p. 40).

Under the National Policy Statement, regional councils must go through a process of identifying values at place, outcomes for those values, attributes that enable progress towards those outcomes to be measured, and target attribute states. Regional councils must also develop action plans and set limits on resource use as rules in their regional plans to achieve the target attribute state. For kōura, as mahinga kai, these steps must be followed. It makes sense that attributes and target attribute states relating to fine sediments be developed, and that rules and action plans be prepared to control sedimentation in the Te Arawa lakes where kōura are found. Te Arawa Lakes Trust (2019) identifies "the removal of sediment from Te Arawa lakes . . . for the purposes of . . . habitat restoration for taonga species" (p. 59) as a policy in its Environmental Plan. Currently, only attributes for sediment in rivers are included in the National Policy Statement. To support kōura, attributes for fine sediments in lakes should also be incorporated.

Mana wairua is partially provided for in the wai tapu value in the National Policy Statement, which requires that wai tapu be managed in freshwater where they are present. In the National Policy Statement, wai tapu are defined as places where rituals and ceremonies are performed. The narrative states that "these places are free from animal and human waste, contaminants and excess sediment, with valued features and unique properties of the wai protected" (Ministry for the Environment, 2024, p. 40). Absent, however, are taniwha and conditions that support taniwha, such as restrictions on activities that cause riverbed disturbance in areas where taniwha are believed to exist. Furthermore, the spiritual potency of water, which extends beyond the spatial bounds of wai tapu, is not recognised in the National Policy Statement. Both, however, could be provided for through the inclusion of appropriate terminology in the wai tapu and human contact values.

Mana whakahaere is not compulsory under the National Policy Statement. Fierce resistance to the freshwater co-governance model proposed by the previous Labour Government (see, e.g., Porter, 2022) suggests that adding a mandatory component to the National Policy Statement to facilitate implementation of the mana whakahaere principle would be deeply unpopular. However, local authority discussions to form shared water services entities indicate that despite central government opposing co-governance (see Brown, 2023), councils are still engaging with iwi as partners in the establishment of the entities (see, e.g., Ellis, 2025). Even in difficult political conditions, the relationships that have developed out of previous collaborative efforts endure (Harmsworth et al., 2016), and can be reinforced by Treaty settlement legislation, such as that for the Whanganui River, which is a legal person under Te Awa Tupua

Mana atua—mana comes from the atua Generates a relational framing that requires people to connect to and feel for the elements of the natural world as beings, and to respect and look after them as fragile yet powerful entities who have seniority in the genealogical order.	**Mana wairua—mana is a spiritual power** Mana wairua is about careful management that treats water as a potent spiritual medium that lifts tapu and enables ritual, as an entity, and as the lifeblood that sustains entities. Avoiding or reducing pollution and maintaining and restoring the integrity of freshwater ecosystems are priorities.
Mana huaanga—mana is a generative power Emphasises life; a territory rich in diverse and abundant species, which supports practices and values associated with food harvesting, such as manaakitanga, sharing for the collective benefit, respecting the environment as the domain of atua, reciprocal relationships, and kaitiakitanga.	**Mana whakahaere—mana is the authority to control** Focuses on decision-making, and on Māori and regional councils partnering in relation to freshwater. Partnering at the decision-making level is necessary because it affects planning and management and the implementation of all the other aspects of mana in the framework.

Mana is a power that can be taken
Brings awareness to the fragility of mana, which can be dismissed through ignorance, destroyed or left to decline, and denied or usurped through the law. Under these conditions, restoration requires education, vigilance, advocacy and action.

Figure 1 Te Mana o te Wai – A Māori framework for understanding and governing freshwater in Aotearoa New Zealand

(Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017. With adequate resourcing, these relationships can be used as social capital (Bourdieu, 1977) to generate positive outcomes for the environment, Māori, and the wider community.

Conclusion

Te Mana o te Wai is a holistic and relational framework for understanding and governing freshwater that is grounded in te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori, and composed of four types of mana: mana atua—mana comes from the atua; mana wairua—mana is a spiritual power; mana huaanga—mana is a generative power, and mana whakahaere—mana is the authority and control. Each of the elements is connected to the others and contains a constellation of interwoven values, practices and knowledges. A fifth dimension of mana is also critical: mana is a power that can be taken. The aim of Te Mana o te Wai must therefore be restoration across all the dimensions of mana (see Figure 1).

The potential removal of Te Mana o te Wai from the National Policy Statement and the reversal of the hierarchy of obligations make restoration more difficult. But hope survives, flourishes even, in the interstices. Here, relationships, resistance, advocacy, strategy and action combine to be generative of life and positive transformation. The current may swirl overhead, potentially washing away the new words. But the old words have deeper origins, stretching back to the ancestors. Their roots are burrowed in the text and embodied in the land, too numerous to be ripped out. At times submerged, but always reaching towards the light.

Glossary

atua	god, goddess, deity; supernatural beings or forces that are personified as ancestors with influence over particular domains
hapū	kinship group, clan, subtribe
hau	vital essence, vitality (of a person, place or object)
hauora	health
Hine-tūpari-maunga	female personification of mountains
horu	red ochre
Io-Taketake	supreme being
iwi	extended kinship group, tribe, nation
kai	food
kaitiaki	guardian

kaitiakitanga	the responsibility of the people to the environment and to each other, past, present, and future
karakia	set form of words to state or make effective a ritual activity
Kiwa	guardian of the ocean
kōura	freshwater crayfish (*Paranephrops planifrons*)
mahinga kai	wild foods; wild-food gathering areas
mana	a spiritual power, a generative power; the authority to decide and control how resources are used and managed
mana tangata	the responsibility of the people to each other
manaaki	look after others
manaakitanga	hospitality, generosity
Māori	Indigenous peoples of New Zealand
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
mauri	life force
Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku	tribal group of the southern South Island
noa	free from tapu and restriction
Pākehā	New Zealanders of European descent
Papatūānuku	female personification of the earth
Parawhenuamea	female personification of freshwater
puna	springs
rangatira	chief (male or female)
rangatiratanga	sovereignty, leadership, self-determination
Ranginui	male personification of the sky
takahi whare	lit., "tramping the house", a ceremony to lift the tapu from the house of the deceased
Tāne-mahuta	male personification of the forest
Tangaroa	water spirit
tangata whenua	Indigenous people of the land
tangihanga	ceremonies of the dead
taniwha	water spirit

tapu	term used to denote a state of restriction or prohibition (e.g., over a person, place, process or object)
te ao Māori	the Māori world
Te Arawa	descendants of the crew of the *Te Arawa* canoe who form a group of tribes in the Rotorua-Maketū area
Te Atihaunui-a-Pāpārangi	tribal group of the lower Whanganui River area
tikanga	the customary system of values and practices that have been developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context
tohi	baptism or dedication rites
tohunga	skilled person, chosen expert
tuakana	senior sibling
tuna	eels
wairua	spiritual and supernatural energies
whakapapa	genealogy
wai tapu	places where rituals and ceremonies are performed and taniwha are present

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KIA WHAKATŌMURI TE HAERE WHAKAMUA

Applying an Indigenous qualitative method with rangatahi Māori and whānau

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Abstract

Many Indigenous-specific research paradigms are used internationally. Kaupapa Māori is one such paradigm that privileges and legitimises Māori knowledge, culture, language, customs and protocols. The qualitative Kaupapa Māori paradigm presented here includes establishing an expert advisory rōpū and a Māori-led research team, developing and pilot testing a Māori data collection method (wānanga interviews), conducting wānanga, and analysing the collected data. Two wānanga were held with groups of rangatahi and whānau. Wānanga 1 centred around components of hauora important for rangatahi Māori. This led to the creation of a provisional model, in which an atua Māori represented hauora rangatahi Māori. The findings from wānanga 1 were presented to participants in wānanga 2 to initiate discussion around the model. Kaupapa Māori principles informed the methods, analysis and resulting model, and inductive thematic analysis was applied to the wānanga data. This paper illustrates the importance of research being informed by Indigenous worldviews, knowledge systems and practices to produce meaningful, substantive, positive and transformational change.

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Keywords

Kaupapa Māori, adolescent, health, Indigenous peoples, research design, New Zealand

Introduction

> Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua
> *I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past*
>   — whakataukī; author and iwi unknown

Indigenous peoples have historically been researched on, rather than with or for (Harris et al., 2012; Pihama et al., 2014; Reid et al., 2019; L. T. Smith, 2021). Such an approach silences, oppresses and misrepresents Indigenous languages, knowledges, systems and cultures (L. T. Smith, 2021). For Māori, the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa me Te Waipounamu, this is no exception. Research on Māori is embedded at the deepest level of imperialist colonial history, systematically documenting and classifying Māori, positioning Māori as "other" and inferior, and misrepresenting Māori knowledge systems (Pihama et al., 2002; L. T. Smith, 2021). This misrepresentation and silencing has occurred in many knowledge areas, including hauora.

Prioritising Indigenous knowledge in research requires culturally relevant or appropriate research paradigms (including ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodologies) (Drawson et al., 2017; Pihama, 2010; G. H. Smith & Smith, 2018; L. T. Smith, 2021). One such Indigenous paradigm, specific to Māori, is Kaupapa Māori. Kaupapa Māori theory has been described as "by Māori, for Māori" (L. T. Smith, 1995) and "a fluid and evolving theoretical framework" (Pihama, 2010, p. 10). Kaupapa Māori research, informed by Kaupapa Māori theory, encourages researchers to engage with a research approach to data collection that is appropriate to the Māori communities with whom the research is being conducted (Cram et al., 2015).

There is no single paradigm or method to guide research with rangatahi Māori. The aim of this paper is to specifically describe the Kaupapa Māori research paradigm undertaken with rangatahi and whānau to demonstrate the importance of researchers engaging with culturally grounded methods to produce meaningful research outcomes. This paper is presented in four sections: Section 1 provides the context of Indigenous research paradigms, with a focus on Kaupapa Māori paradigm; Section 2 describes the specific Kaupapa Māori paradigm used in this research; Section 3 focuses on the study design;

and Section 4 presents reflections on the use of a Kaupapa Māori paradigm.

Section 1: Indigenous paradigms— ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodologies

Paradigms are a way of describing a shared worldview, and are informed by ontology (what can be known or the nature of reality), epistemology (how we can know what we know), axiology (researchers' values and positioning) and methodology (principles of carrying out research) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2002). Paradigms consequently inform the selection of specific methods to use (e.g., the tools of data collection and analysis). Diverse Indigenous research methods are used internationally (some examples are displayed in Figure 1), and Māori research often uses a Kaupapa Māori paradigm.

Māori paradigm: Kaupapa Māori

A Kaupapa Māori paradigm privileges and legitimises mātauranga Māori, asserts tino rangatiratanga, aligns to cultural values, and provides a safe ontological and epistemological space for Māori researchers (Henry & Pene, 2001; Jackson, 2015; Pihama, 2010; Pihama et al., 2002; G. H. Smith & Smith, 2018; L. T. Smith, 2021). Examples of Kaupapa Māori ontology, epistemology, axiology, methodology and methods are displayed in Figure 2 and further explained below.

Ontology of Kaupapa Māori research: A Māori worldview. Ontology can be understood as te ao Māori. Te ao Māori is what lies at the very heart of Māori culture, and includes elements such as te reo Māori, pūrākau, ancestral landscapes, whakapapa, karakia, waiata, mōteatea, pepeha and whakataukī, as well as values such as manaaki, aroha, āwhina and wairua (Jackson et al., 2018).

Epistemology of Kaupapa Māori research: Mātauranga Māori. From a Māori worldview, ways of knowing and being are entwined (Marsden, 2003; Stevenson, 2018). Mātauranga Māori does not refer to a specific theory or framework; rather, it is a modern term used to discuss a body or continuum of knowledge (Royal, 2012). Mātauranga Māori includes unwritten material

such as verbal, visual, pūrākau, waiata and mōteatea (L. T. Smith, 2021).

Axiology of Kaupapa Māori research: Māori research ethics and values. Axiology does not specify how to carry out research; rather, it provides cultural and ethical considerations derived from Māori worldviews and frameworks to facilitate good Māori research (Simmonds et al., 2014; Stevenson, 2018). L. T. Smith (2012) and Cram (2001) have outlined a set of seven research guidelines that assist researchers in ethical considerations when engaging with Māori in research. See Figure 2 (axiology).

Methodology: Māori research principles. The six principles of Kaupapa Māori methodology are presented in Figure 2. Specifically, the principles of whānau, ako Māori and kaupapa were applied in this research and are described in Section 2.

Section 2: The Kaupapa Māori paradigm in this research project

The intent of our research was to position rangatahi as experts of their own hauora, adept in describing concepts important to them. A Kaupapa Māori paradigm allowed us to privilege mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori, while also enabling historical, social and Indigenous-specific determinants of health to be acknowledged (Barnes, 2000).

As per a Kaupapa Māori paradigm, our research is positioned within a Māori-led research team (GM is the lead Māori researcher who undertook the research as part of her PhD, supervised by two Māori, EW and SC, and two non-Māori, TS and SD, senior academics), guided by a Māori expert advisory rōpū, with wānanga conducted by Māori researchers. The wānanga approach was informed by tikanga, mātauranga Māori, pūrākau, the expert advisory rōpū, the pilot wānanga and the supervisory team. The 17 CONSolIDated critERia for strengthening research involving Indigenous peoples (CONSIDER) (Huria et al., 2019) also guided this research.

Te ao Māori is embodied in this research through centring and normalising Māori beliefs, values and experiences. Mātauranga Māori is embedded in this research by providing a safe, legitimate and privileged space (Pihama, 2010; Royal, 2012).

Methodology principles applied: Whānau, ako Māori and kaupapa

As discussed, the Kaupapa Māori methodology principles of whānau, ako Māori and kaupapa are used in this research and are outlined below.

Whānau: participants and wānanga methods (Hui Process). Whānau is the principle of incorporating cultural structures that emphasise the collective rather than the individual (G. H. Smith, 2003). This principle was enacted through recruiting both rangatahi and whānau as research participants. Relationships were built with rangatahi and whānau in advance of the conducting of wānanga, ensuring connections were made and rangatahi and whānau felt comfortable and safe to participate in the project. Whakawhanaungatanga, an extension of the word whānau, was integral to conducting the wānanga (see HUI Process in Section 3).

Kaupapa: Expert advisory rōpū. Kaupapa is the principle of shared and collective vision or philosophy (G. H. Smith, 2003). Collectivist approaches were taken in planning, interpreting and disseminating this research. For example, a Māori expert advisory rōpū was established to provide guidance and support throughout the research, using wānanga as a collectivist method of data collection, and presenting themes and subthemes back to participants to ensure accurate interpretation of participants' perspectives.

The expert advisory rōpū were invited for their extensive experience and skills in areas relevant to the research project (e.g., in neonatal care, public health, wānanga, Māori health, rangatahi Māori health, health economics, mauri ora, whānau flourishing and kaumātua). The members were selected based on already established connections with the research team, and all members who were invited accepted the invitation. The rōpū, who met three times over the course of the project (in person and via Zoom), provided guidance on wānanga recruitment strategies, engagement, wānanga size, age of youth to be included in the study, the power of words, geographical location, where wānanga should be conducted, and culturally engaging knowledge-sharing strategies, interpretation and analysis of results. All considerations contributed to the development of the wānanga. Dr Paula King (a member of the rōpū) shared a safety plan she developed in her expertise working with rangatahi Māori (King, 2021), which informed the safety plan for this research. Fortunately, the

safety plan did not need to be used at any stage of the project.

Ako Māori: Pūrākau of Tāne. Ako Māori can be described as "the Māori way or agenda, a term used to describe traditional Māori ways of doing, being and thinking, encapsulated in a Māori world view or cosmology" (Henry & Pene, 2001, p. 236). Ako Māori informed the project development, data collection, data analysis and dissemination of results, specifically, in the use of pūrākau as a pedagogy (e.g., to validate wānanga methods, to present results to participants and to disseminate images to participants).

Pūrākau form "philosophical thought, epistemological constructs, cultural codes, and worldviews that are fundamental to our identity as Māori" (Lee, 2009, p. 1). Further, pūrākau are a way to express an essential Māori way of knowing, being and understanding (Ihimaera, 2020; Keelan, 2014; Lee, 2009; Pouwhare, 2016; Walker, 1996). There are no universal pūrākau; rather, they are dynamic and ever evolving, in the same way people and cultures are (Ihimaera, 2020; Keelan, 2014; Lee, 2009; Pouwhare, 2016). Therefore, the pūrākau used in this research are one narrative of many.

We drew on three pūrākau (see Table 1) that centralise Tāne to guide and inform the research. The connection Tāne has to the natural world, hauora and humankind serves as the foundation for his role as the central character in this research.

TABLE 1 Pūrākau of Tāne drawn on in the research project

Te Wehenga: The separation
The following account is an abridged version of the pūrākau as told by Witi Ihimaera (2020, pp. 47–61).
Ranginui clung to Papatūāknuku in an eternal embrace dooming his offspring to dwell in perpetual darkness forever. The children held a wānanga within the darkness between their parents, and agreed, with the exception of Tāwhiri-mātea, to separate their parents, like the forest, reach for light. After several attempts from the other brothers, Tāne was able to separate his parents by pushing his shoulders to the ground and thrusting his feet into Ranginui. He was successful and Ranginui was flung to the skies, allowing te ao mārama knowledge and intelligence into the physical world.

Ngā kete o wānanga: Three baskets of knowledge
In accordance with Māori tradition, three kete o wānanga were held in the highest heaven (Grey, 1885). They contained the wisdom and knowledge of all seen and unseen, with directions as to how the world should be and humans should behave (Williams & Henare, 2009). Tāne, chosen among his siblings was deemed to possess the qualities necessary to enter the heavens to retrieve them (Mataira, 2000). Tāne was then granted two sacred stones and three baskets of knowledge: 1. Te kete uruuru matua, 2. Te kete uruuru rangi and 3. Te kete uruuru tau (Mataira, 2000). For this deed he received the name Tāne-te-wānanga-ā-rangi, Tāne, bringer of knowledge from the sky.

Hauora
The following account is an abridged version of the pūrākau as told by Hiroa (1949, pp. 450–453).
Thirty-six atua (this number varies) including Tāne went to Kurawaka, where they molded a figure eventually named Hine-ahu-one out of the earth—a portion of Papatūānuku in resemblance of themselves. Each atua gave expressions of themselves to Hine-ahu-one, which we can identify in our own body. The lungs were provided by Tāwhiri-maatea, Tū-mata-uenga fashioned the muscles, Tangaroa provided water and fluids that flow through our body, and Tāne contributed to the creation of the mind and acquisition of knowledge. Not only were physical and external attributes gifted, but so were inner qualities. For example, wairua, manawa ora and toto were retrieved by Rehua and gifted by Io. It was then left for Tāne to instill the breath of life, pressing his nose to the nose of Hine-ahu-one and incantating "Tihei Mauri Ora". This created ira tangata, in the form of a female. Her name was Hine-ahu-one.

The pūrākau informed the research in multiple ways, including the use of wānanga, the emphasis on whānau, and as lessons on mātauranga Māori and the meaning of hauora. The connection between these components and the pūrākau is discussed below.

Wānanga. The origins of wānanga (the method used for data collection) are prominent in all pūrākau presented above, demonstrating how wānanga is an ancient knowledge. The first pūrākau discussed wānanga as a collective deliberation between siblings, a discussion on the future and a hard decision to be made. The second included ngā kete o wānanga—the baskets of knowledge. The third involved self-wānanga—internally deliberate or think deeply—about how and why to create ira tangata.

The concept of wānanga outlined in these pūrākau was applied to this research: (a) as a collective deliberation and discussion between participants (i.e., an ancient method of data collection), (b) as a Māori method to conduct research with Māori participants, (c) as a form of knowledge production and (d) to internally deliberate what was said (i.e., analyse).

Whānau. The first pūrākau depicts a story of a child growing up with their siblings, within the loving embrace of their parents, before creating space in the world for themselves. In the second pūrākau, whānau assisted Tāne with his epic endeavour to achieve the goal of retrieving ngā kete wānanga. The third pūrākau depicts how each whānau member contributed to creating Hine-ahu-one.

The importance of whānau outlined in these pūrākau applies to this research in three ways: (a) just like Tāne, our rangatahi participants are growing up within whānau structures, creating and navigating space for themselves; (b) the importance of collective effort—for instance, this research required the support of the expert advisory rōpū, a large supervisory team and multiple researchers to facilitate wānanga, and the support of whānau, marae and iwi; and (c) many atua contributed to the creation of the first human, emphasising how whānau are integral for hauora—that is, individual hauora cannot be understood without hauora whānau (Durie, 1985; Pere, 1997; Pitama et al., 2007), thus whānau were intentionally included as participants alongside rangatahi.

Mātauranga. The pūrākau also teach us lessons regarding mātauranga Māori. The outcome of Tāne separating his parents was te ao mārama.

Te ao mārama is often depicted by Māori as the potential for knowledge acquisition, enlightenment and realisation (Nicholson, 2020). The second pūrākau depicts ngā kete o wānanga and the ability for us to obtain and produce knowledge. The third pūrākau imbues us with the knowledge of hauora (see below).

The lessons of mātauranga are used in this research to (a) use wānanga as a tool to obtain and produce knowledge and (b) privilege mātauranga Māori (i.e., te reo Māori, pūrākau, whakataukī, karakia), Māori values (e.g., manaakitanga, aroha and whanaungatanga) throughout the research.

Hauora. Hauora literally translates to the "breath of life"—breath (hau) of life (ora) (Marsden, 2003). The last pūrākau explains how hauora extends well beyond the term health. Rather, hauora is woven into te ao Māori, the environment, the atua and the connection to all people. Further, this pūrākau shows how we are all imbued with the likeness of the atua (i.e., they helped create us); this connects us to these stories, the atua and the land.

For these reasons, Tāne was chosen as the figure to represent the rangatahi in the findings presented back to participants.

Axiology. As mentioned, Smith's (2012) and Cram's (2001) seven research guidelines were closely followed when engaging with Māori (see Table 2).

Section 3: The study design and methods

The study design is outlined below, including wānanga, participants, participant recruitment, ethics, the Hui Process, specific wānanga activities and analysis. The study design was refined through multiple discussions with the expert advisory rōpū and supervisory team. A summary of the methods timeline is presented in Figure 3, and further detail on the study design is provided in the subsections below.

Wānanga 1

The purpose of wānanga 1 was to investigate the views of rangatahi and whānau on what components contribute to hauora rangatahi Māori. The specific goals were to (a) determine components of hauora identified as important to rangatahi themselves, (b) determine components of hauora identified by whānau as important for rangatahi and (c) investigate what differences (if any) exist between rangatahi and whānau views on components of hauora.

TABLE 2 Application of Kaupapa Māori research guidelines

Research guideline	Implementation
Aroha ki te tangata	Ensuring a variety of spaces were available for participants. For example, Māori spaces (workplace and marae) and familiar sports ground. Allowing whānau to choose if they would prefer to participate alone or with other whānau. Grouping whānau together who were familiar with each other. This was vital as whānau give up their time and knowledge to participate in this research, which must be acknowledged.
Kia tūpato	Creation of a safety plan to mitigate any concerns that rangatahi might raise. Following tikanga and kawa, e.g., karakia at the beginning and end of the wānanga, whanaungatanga and kai.
Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata	Participants are the most important people in research. A second wānanga was conducted with one objective being to ensure the discussions from wānanga 1 adequately reflected or resonated with participants. Findings were disseminated to participants.
Kanohi kitea	Before wānanga, GM conducted face-to-face meetings with whānau and Māori staff at schools who were helping to organise whānau groups. GM had connections with teachers at multiple schools. Building these relationships ensured (a) rangatahi and whānau felt safe, allowing for relationship building; and (b) rangatahi and whānau could ask questions, be partners in the research, and stipulate their terms and comfort with the research.
Titiro, whakarongo… kōrero	It was important to observe what and how participants spoke in the wānanga and to listen to what they were saying to (a) ensure the kōrero was captured accurately, (b) ensure the questions being asked were relevant and important, and (c) as a sign of respect.
Manaaki ki te tangata	Manaaki ki te tangata was shown in three main ways: *Kai* was shared after whanaungatanga and before any questions were asked in the wānanga. For the Zoom wānanga, kai bags were dropped off at each house to continue to manaaki our participants. *Koha* (a gift to show respect and thanks for sharing their time and knowledge) was given to all participants (rangatahi and whānau) after each wānanga. We were flexible and accommodating of the busy lives of participants. We made it clear that all whānau were invited, even if they did not meet the age restriction (i.e., if participating rangatahi had siblings under 8 years of age); their children would be looked after and there would be games for them to play. If whānau had to cancel or reschedule, they could do so easily.
Kia māhaki	Participants were considered the experts, and data collection was conducted in this manner, e.g., we assumed participants had no prior knowledge of any topics and we spoke in lay terms rather than academic jargon that is often unclear for those outside of academia.

Wānanga 1 methods were initially developed in conjunction with the supervisory team and then discussed with the expert advisory rōpū, whereby advice and guidance was provided to further develop and aid the wānanga.

Participants

Rangatahi as well as whānau were recruited as participants because both perspectives are important to holistically conceptualise and understand hauora rangatahi Māori. Participants included any Māori person aged 8–17 years and their whānau living within Hawke's Bay or Otago. Whānau members included in the wānanga were determined by each whānau group, and were often diverse, having multiple rangatahi or multiple whānau members (e.g., parents, grandparents, uncles or aunties) making up one whānau group.

In te ao Māori, individual hauora and hauora whānau are equally important for attaining optimal hauora (Durie, 1985; Love, 2004; Pere, 1997; Pistacchi, 2008; Pitama et al., 2007). In te ao Māori, Māori children are often seen as a representation of their ancestors and the embodiment of all past and future generations (Pihama & Cameron, 2012). For example, the harakeke plant has been conceived by Māori as a representation of the whānau structure (Pihama & Cameron, 2012). The whole foundation is centred around the middle shoot, depicted as the rito (child), which is surrounded by its mātua, then kaumātua (Pihama & Cameron, 2012). This analogy illustrates how rangatahi are central to the whānau structure, surrounded and protected by other whānau members.

Participant recruitment.

Initially, whānau who were familiar with some of the research team through community and professional networks were approached. When relationships were not previously established, kanohi ki te kanohi meetings were held with key personnel, including whānau members and Māori staff of various secondary schools, who assisted in facilitating recruitment within schools of potentially interested rangatahi (and by extension their whānau).

Online advertising of the study (e.g., pānui and social media) also occurred between June and November 2021, and a snowballing method (Tracy, 2019) was employed with already-confirmed participants. Eligible participants included rangatahi aged 8–17 years and their whānau who resided in one of two geographical regions of New Zealand: Hawke's Bay or Otago.

Ethics and consent

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Otago Ethics Committee (H20/119) and consultation was undertaken with the Ngāi Tahu Research Consultation Committee prior to the research commencing (University of Otago, 2023).

Wānanga as a method

Wānanga were the main method of data collection. As discussed above, wānanga is an ancient Māori knowledge system, steeped in mātauranga Māori and Māori culture, providing a Māori grounding and framework for conducting research (Mahuika & Mahuika, 2020). The word wānanga according to *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, means to discuss, deliberate or consider (as a verb), and it refers to traditional cultural, religious, historical, genealogical and philosophical knowledge (as a noun) (Moorfield, n.d.).

Research wānanga facilitate collective conversation, a powerful method for storytelling and knowledge production. The purpose is to explore and pursue the creation of new knowledge and understanding through discussing, debating and analysing, and thus is an active process (Royal, 2005).

Pilot wānanga. The wānanga was pilot tested with three whānau well known to the research team. The pilot test provided feedback that changed the wānanga structure in three main ways: (a) numbers of whānau and rangatahi, (b) activity order and time, and (c) number of research team members present.

Wānanga and the Hui Process. Wānanga were conducted using the Hui Process (Lacey et al., 2011), which has four components: mihimihi whakawhanaungatanga, kaupapa and poroporoaki (Lacey et al., 2011).

Mihimihi is an informal way of welcoming participants into the kaupapa. Mihimihi begins with a karakia, followed by pepeha. Mihimihi introduces and connects researchers, participants and whānau, physically and spiritually through whakapapa, landscape and place. For example, in the wānanga, mihimihi provides an introduction, a welcome, an explanation of the purpose of the research, the role of the wānanga facilitators and an outline of the structure of the wānanga.

Whakawhanaungatanga is used as a means of establishing connections and was expressed in the wānanga through a group kēmu and sharing kai.

Kaupapa includes all the data collection components of the wānanga. First, informed consent

(verbal and written) and demographic information were collected from both rangatahi and whānau. Demographic information was collected in hard copy. Both te reo Māori and English versions of the forms were provided to participants. Any queries from participants were answered during this time, and it was made clear that questions were welcome throughout the duration of the wānanga.

Poroporoaki is the closing or finishing of the wānanga. In the wānanga, poroporoaki enables participants to ask further questions, and for the explanation of next steps in the research process, including discussing how the research will be disseminated. Clarifying available support for participants, providing a koha in recognition of the knowledge and insights shared by participants, and closing with a karakia are also carried out in poroporoaki.

Kaupapa: Wānanga. Rangatahi and whānau wānanga were held separately; however, they followed a similar structure, as described below. GM facilitated all aspects of the rangatahi and whānau wānanga. KM supported the rangatahi wānanga and EW supported the whānau wānanga.

A total of 40 participants from 12 whānau groups took part in the wānanga (23 rangatahi and 17 whānau members). Six wānanga were conducted in total—two in Dunedin and four in Hawke's Bay—and each wānanga comprised between one and three whānau groups in each wānanga.

Research warm-up. Rangatahi engaged in a general discussion about hauora, including the concepts encompassed by Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1985). Discussions were then held about various other hauora dimensions identified by participants, and the positive or negative effect of these dimensions on their hauora. Discussions were facilitated with magnets, which were labelled with various concepts relating to hauora. Rangatahi were invited to place the magnets on a board under the Te Whare Tapa Whā domains of hauora. The same discussions (without the magnets as guide) were held separately with whānau participants.

Main kaupapa—ingredient list. The "ingredient' list" (see Figure 4) was developed and designed for use within this research and was the main data collection activity. Rangatahi were given pens and printed copies of the ingredient list and asked to write down their own personalised ingredients that contribute to their recipe for positive and negative hauora. In addition, rangatahi were

given an audio-recorder and invited to record their thoughts about why each ingredient was important to them and what activities contributed to their various ingredients.

Whānau were asked to think about important components individually (i.e., on their own) of hauora for their rangatahi or rangatahi in general, and to write a list of or discuss the ingredients they thought contributed to positive and negative hauora. A series of open-ended questions about hauora in general were then discussed.

Analysis

With participants' consent, wānanga sessions were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim by a transcription service (wānanga 1) or by the lead author (wānanga 2). Inductive reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse and interpret the wānanga, allowing rangatahi and whānau voices to be prominent in all theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Kaupapa Māori principles (as explained above in Section 2) underpinned all aspects of analysis (Pihama et al., 2002; L. T. Smith & Reid, 2000). Tāne was used as an atua embedded in Māori epistemology and ontology to depict hauora rangatahi Māori (see Figure 5). The model depicts the rangatahi as Tāne, with each branch representing the concepts of hauora (both positive and negative) that rangatahi and whānau identified as important for hauora rangatahi, and the leaves depicting the specific examples (i.e., ingredients) for each component. In the completed model, the branches and leaves embody the themes and subthemes from wānanga 1, further refined in wānanga 2. Given that the focus of this paper is on the wānanga methods, the study findings are not presented here.

Expert advisory rōpū. Findings from wānanga 1 were discussed iteratively with the supervisory team and the expert advisory rōpū for collaborative interpretation. The expert advisory rōpū suggestions and main amendments and considerations are presented in Table 3.

The image was then adapted and a video created to capture and explain the provisional findings to rangatahi and whānau during the second wānanga. Again, the themes will be reported elsewhere.

Wānanga 2

To ensure the themes and subthemes from the provisional phase of analysis reflected and resonated with the rangatahi and whānau perspectives on hauora rangatahi Māori, the initial findings were presented in a subsequent wānanga (wānanga

TABLE 3 The expert advisory rōpū suggestions and main amendments to and considerations regarding the research project

Suggestion	Amendments and considerations
Tāne is not alone in the ngāhere, but rather is part of a complex system involving other trees, roots, wildlife and elements.	The image was modified to be situated in a larger ngāhere, one that includes elements (water, sun, wind), wildlife (native birds), a root system to portray the interconnectedness of the individual with other forest life and trees and atua, for example, Tāwhiri-mātea and Papatūānuku.
Branches can be broken and leaves can fall off (i.e., parts of our hauora may not be optimal at certain times), but a tree can regrow leaves and branches and become stronger.	Tāwhiri-mātea was added to depict the winds blowing leaves and branches down. Following the separation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, Tāwhiri-mātea waged war on Tāne with the intent to tear trees from their roots, blow the leaves off and damage Tāne. Additionally, the creation of a video was suggested to explain the pūrākau, the significance of Tāne, the collation of hauora rangatahi dimensions and how they are depicted in the image.
There are likely impacts that are negative on the ngāhere, such as stoats and rats. These can be likened to external negative impacts, such as adverse socio-economic factors, racism and discrimination that rangatahi may experience.	A stoat was added to represent adverse social determinants of health.

2). The three goals of wānanga 2 were to determine whether the following reflect or resonate with rangatahi and whānau: (a) the themes and subthemes identified (i.e., the branches or roots and leaves) from wānanga 1, (b) the Tāne pūrākau and (c) the Tāne model depicted in Figure 6.

Pilot test. Wānanga 2 methods were pilot tested with the same rangatahi and whānau who were involved in the pilot testing for wānanga 1. Wānanga 2 were held online (over Zoom) due to COVID-19 disruptions and wanting to keep participants and researchers protected from any inadvertent exposure to COVID-19. The pilot wānanga tested Zoom breakout rooms, multiple devices within one household, managing multiple rangatahi and whānau online, and the video and resources.

The methods in action: Wānanga. A poster hard copy of Figure 6 was sent to participants prior to wānanga to allow adequate time for consideration. Participants were also provided with a written explanation of the poster, colouring pens to draw on the poster, a consent form and kai. Additionally, access to adequate internet connection and multiple devices was confirmed.

The Hui Process was also used in wānanga 2. Mihimihi and whakawhanaungatanga were fostered through general discussions, karakia, obtaining consent, presenting the general outline of the wānanga and answering any questions. The kaupapa portion included discussing a summary of the work completed to date. A general explanation of the poster was given, along with a four-minute video explanation of (a) the pūrākau involving Tāne and (b) how hauora components discussed in wānanga 1 were conceptualised in the model.

Rangatahi and whānau were then separated into Zoom breakout rooms. The provisional hauora concepts were discussed to determine whether Tāne, the image, and the themes and subthemes adequately reflected or resonated with the views of rangatahi and whānau. The general line of discussion in both the rangatahi and whānau wānanga included (a) the specific concepts (i.e., themes or branches and subthemes or leaves) to ensure we captured all the main components important for

hauora rangatahi Māori; (b) the pūrākau of Tāne, for instance, what participants thought about Tāne, whether Tāne is a useful character to depict hauora rangatahi Māori, and whether the pūrākau of Tāne resonated with participants; and (c) the imagery of the poster and video, for example, whether the imagery resonated with participants and what participants liked or disliked about the poster and video.

Poroporoaki. A closing discussion allowed participants to ask questions or make further comments. The next steps in the research process were explained and the wānanga closed with a karakia. Koha were delivered to participants after the wānanga.

Analysis

Results from wānanga 1 and wānanga 2 were combined and discussed with the expert advisory rōpū. The developing Tāne model was finalised, and a Māori artist was commissioned to create the final image for dissemination to participants.

Section 4: Reflections of a Māori PhD student on the methods used

> Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua
> *I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past*
> 　　　— Whakataukī; author and iwi unknown

This whakataukī expresses how the past, present and future are intertwined—how our research can be informed by the ancient knowledges of our past, to have an impact on our flourishing futures. This section presents a reflection on the use of a Kaupapa Māori paradigm, highlighting the importance of reimagining pūrākau, use of wānanga for data collection and self-inquiry, and in how you know you've "got it right".

Reimagining pūrākau. Creative expression is essential to Indigenous knowledge (Battiste, 2002; Castellano et al., 2000). However, creativity is often constrained by notions of acceptability within Western institutions, and especially in scientific research. This research worked well because of its creativity. The ability to draw on mātauranga, te ao Māori and pūrākau to create methods that were engaging, relevant and culturally grounded was a strength. One outcome of these creative methods was the use of pūrākau, specifically of Tāne, to depict hauora rangatahi Māori. While not an original objective of the research, this model

emerged organically through the Kaupapa Māori paradigm process.

However, in the first wānanga of wānanga 2, there was confusion surrounding the use of Tāne, despite efforts to assume participants had no prior knowledge of the pūrākau (as advised by the expert advisory rōpū). This highlighted the importance of recognising the impact of colonisation and the loss of intergenerational knowledge resulting in many Māori growing up without pūrākau (Thom & Grimes, 2022). In subsequent wānanga, we then provided a more detailed explanation of Tāne and the reasons for his representation of hauora rangatahi Māori in subsequent wānanga.

Wānanga. Wānanga was not just a method of data collection; it was an approach to deep engagement, self-inquiry and collective knowledge creation. More than a "Māori method of data collection", wānanga served a method of self-inquiry to critically examine and reflect as a Māori researcher who happens to be Māori (Etherington, 2004; Irwin, 1994). Self-wānanga continually encouraged me to ask: What kind of researcher do I want to be? How do I uphold my responsibilities to my community? What is tika?

Knowing we got it right. Prioritising participants in research is vital to both address the historical imbalance of research experienced by Māori and produce meaningful and relevant research outcomes (Cram, 2001; G. H. Smith, 1992, 2003; L. T. Smith, 2021).

Collecting data in diverse ways (i.e., group activities, ingredient list, narrating into microphones, choice of participating in groups, one-on-one or alone) ensured that the methods fitted the needs of a diverse range of rangatahi, learning abilities and preferences. Presenting findings to participants in a follow-up wānanga increased ownership of the knowledge created (i.e., opportunities to provide feedback, reflect on the first wānanga, observe progression of the research and development of the provisional model), and increased the likelihood of the findings being of relevance (i.e. contributing to the credibility and trustworthiness of the themes). It also strengthened participant ownership of the outcomes, ensuring that the research was not just about them but also for them, with their voices at the core. Further, this fostered the production of research outputs in ways more relevant to rangatahi.

The success of the project is reflected in the wānanga where many rangatahi were forthcoming with their opinions; others drew all over the physical posters provided, adding in missing

ingredients of their hauora, and one rangatahi asked "Can we do this every year?" Whānau also discussed how effective they found the model and how it could be easily implemented into practice:

> Fantastic, I've really enjoyed … I just moved a few months ago to [Māori health service] … and … this would be really good for … the youth work going on … you could see it working straight away … and it's also that relationship building with the workers that work alongside the rangatahi … can I use it now? … If you need a pilot come back to us and we can pilot it.

This was supported by whānau participants who continued to provide feedback long after the wānanga concluded, which highlighted the meaningfulness of the results and the value of wānanga as a method for data collection:

> I used … the pikitia today … she had been going through a lot of raru … we had a look at what our pikitia can help with. And it benefited so well! We had to pin-point what we needed to work on at kura, around us and home.

Conclusion

Indigenous paradigms provide an approach to centre, legitimise and prioritise Indigenous worldviews, knowledge systems and practices. To obtain meaningful research outcomes for Indigenous groups, research must enact positive change, aim to build new pathways that include traditional knowledge systems, and enable Indigenous practices (Royal, 2009).

The Kaupapa Māori paradigm used in this research proved to be a transformative tool for investigating how rangatahi and whānau conceptualise hauora rangatahi Māori. This paradigm resulted in the development of culturally grounded and creative methods, images, a (developing) model of hauora rangatahi Māori, and pūrākau that resonated with rangatahi and whānau, and in rangatahi wanting to "do this every year". Prioritising participants, tailoring methods and dissemination to participants, and embedding the research in Māori knowledge and worldviews allowed these meaningful and relevant research outcomes to be actualised.

We have significant work to do to rectify the deficit-based lens and misrepresentation of Indigenous knowledge systems often presented in peer-reviewed literature (Drawson et al., 2017; Pihama et al., 2002; L. T. Smith, 2021).

Encouragingly, a growing body of literature is demonstrating that Indigenous paradigms and methods are increasingly strengths based to counter historical perspectives and approaches. This study illustrates how the use of a Kaupapa Māori paradigm can help address this imbalance.

Acknowledgements

Glossary

ako Māori	culturally preferred pedagogy
Aotearoa me Te Waipounamu	New Zealand
aroha	love
atua Māori	Māori deity
āwhina	help/support
harakeke	native NZ flax plant used for weaving
hauora	health and well-being
hauora rangatahi Māori	Māori youth health
Hine-ahu-one	the earth-formed maiden
ira tangata	the first human
iwi	tribe
kai	food
kanohi ki te kanohi	face-to-face

karakia	prayer	te kete uruuru tau	knowledge of war, evil and darkness
kaumātua	grandparent(s) or elder(s)	te reo Māori	the Māori language
kaupapa	collective philosophy, purpose of wānanga	tihei Mauri Ora	I awaken, the Breath of Life
Kaupapa Māori	Māori based topic/event/ enterprise run by Māori for Māori	tikanga	Māori customs
		tino rangatiratanga	self-determination
kawa	marae protocol	toto	blood
kēmu	game	waiata	songs
kete	basket	wairua	spirit, spiritual health
koha	gift	wānanga	deliberation, method used for data collection
kōrero	talk, narrative, discussion		
kura	school	whakapapa	genealogy
manaaki	care	whakataukī	proverb, saying
manaakitanga	generosity, hospitality, care	whakawhanaungatanga	establishing reciprocal relationships
manawa ora	breath of life	whānau	family health, extended family
Māori	the Indigenous Peoples of New Zealand		
marae	tribal meeting grounds	whanaungatanga	kinship, sense of family connection
mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge and knowledge systems		
mātua	parents		
mauri ora	well-being and vitality		
mihimihi	greetings and engagement		
mōteatea	traditional chant		
ngāhere	forest		
ngā kete o wānanga	three baskets of knowledge		
pānui	advertisement		
Papatūānuku	the earth mother		
pepeha	tribal saying		
pikitia	picture		
poroporoaki	farewell/conclusion of the wānanga		
pūrākau	tribal stories		
rangatahi	youth		
Ranginui	the sky father		
raru	difficulty, problems		
rito	young centre leaf of the harakeke		
rōpū	group		
Tāne	atua of the forest, birds, insects and humankind		
Tāwhiri-mātea	atua of the winds and elements		
te ao Māori	a Māori worldview		
te ao mārama	the world of light		
te kete uruuru matua	knowledge of peace, goodness and love		
te kete uruuru rangi	knowledge of prayers, incantations and ritual		

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COMMENTARY

TATAU

If you don't have one, shut up!

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Fa'amatalaga | Abstract

Sāmoan cultural motifs are more visible than ever. These motifs carry stories of our ancestors as they navigated the vast moana in search of new lands. Those same ancestors created the tatau to store valuable information of our people. Now, Sāmoan people and culture are internationally visible throughout popular culture, from Hollywood superstars such as The Rock Dwayne Johnson to NFL legends Troy Polamalu and the movie *Moana*. As a result, debates have increased on who should be allowed and not allowed to wear the tatau. Interestingly, much of the tatau discourse is led by non-Sāmoan academics or Sāmoans who do not wear the tatau. As Sāmoan researchers who bear these markings, we share our in-depth insights in this commentary. Through our lived experiences we decipher tatau myths and share our stories.

Keywords

Indigenous tattoo, Samoan motif, Tatau, Tattoo

Folasaga | Introduction

Sāmoan people and culture have long been visible internationally. They have been and are present throughout popular culture, sports fields, film screens and the music industry (Enari & Taula, 2022; Tuia, 2019). As a result, we have seen Sāmoan cultural motifs in various spaces such as museums, media, performing arts, advertisements, business logos and sporting events. Indigenous global movements and colonial resistance have meant that debates of Sāmoan cultural appropriation have started to enter the public discourse. Globalisation, capitalism and migration have raised questions on ownership of cultural knowledge and motifs (Forsyth, 2016).

Simultaneously, there are also debates among Sāmoan people as to who should wear the tatau and about its symbolism. The Sāmoan proverb "La

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ta muamua Ie gutu ae le'i to le tino" ("Tattoo your mouth before you tattoo your body") speaks to the significance of the tatau/malu and the integral requirement that those who want the honour of wearing the tatau/malu on their body should first fully commit to its symbolism.

Interestingly, these discussions have been led by either non-Sāmoan anthropologists, sociologists and historians or Sāmoan researchers and public figures who do not bear these markings. Their viewpoint is problematic in this debate because they have entered into the tatau space without being marked by the 'au (Sāmoan traditional tattooing tool). Despite this, their knowledge of the Sāmoan tatau has been heavily quoted in academia, and among those who are interested in the Sāmoan tatau. Being Indigenous Sāmoan researchers who also wear the tatau has given us deeper insight into what tatau is, beyond the commentary of non-Sāmoan researchers and non-marked Sāmoans. Through Indigenous epistemologies our personal narratives as Sāmoan researchers who are marked and honoured to bear the markings of tatau/malu, our relevant distinctive contribution is essential to include in this evolving subject.

Talaaga o le tatau | Story of the tatau

From a Sāmoan standpoint, tatau arrived in Sāmoa from the deities Taema and Tilafaiga (Natanielu, 2020). Where the Sāmoan tatau practice originated from is still a matter of debate among Sāmoans. Some believe it originated from Fiji and was taken first to Fitiuta in Tutuila (colonially known as American Samoa) then to Sāmoa. Others believe it originated from Fitiuta and was then gifted to the Su'a and Tulouena families, two prominent lines of Sāmoan tatau artists.

Carl Marquardt (1984) was the first foreign anthropologist to visit Sāmoa and capture tatau markings and events. He was also able to document designs of both the pe'a and the malu. Traditionally, in Sāmoan society, only men with the pe'a were permitted to serve in the house of a chief; those without the tatau were seen as minors (Maliko, 2012; Tavale, 1999). The introduction of Christianity to Sāmoa saw a decline in those receiving the tatau, as different denominations either discouraged or banned it. However, with the increase in global Indigenous cultural reclamation, decolonisation and indigenisation, tatau has experienced a revival in the islands and throughout the diaspora. As Rev. Tavita Maliko (2012) observes, "An increasing number of young Sāmoans who were born and live outside Sāmoa in countries like

America, Australia and New Zealand, have taken up the *tatau* as an inscription of identity on their bodies" (p. vi). Others see tatau as a cultural tool and a part of our living, bridging past, present and future (Wertsch et al., 1995). Scholarship on tatau includes photos of the different motifs (Mallon et al., 2023), interpretations of what they mean and using the tatau as a metaphor for educational frameworks (Wendt, 1996).

Ponton (2015) used the motifs of the malu to analyse her research data in the context of educational practice. Aia-Fa'aleava (2024) took this further and created a framework using motifs of the malu to explain their meanings through the stories she collected for her exegesis and documentary, which looked at fa'afafine and non-Sāmoan women with the malu. For the purposes of this commentary, we will use fa'agogo, which is a Sāmoan storytelling method and is also the word for a frigatebird, the symbol of navigation, guidance and hope (Mittermeier & Rylands, 2008).

Storytelling becomes the way to add essential critical reflection and analysis to challenge dominant data and add meaning that stems from lived experience. Informed by professional knowledge and personal experience, our insight creates validity and expertise. In this commentary, we share our personal experience of our tatau, as factual knowledge of knowing and being as Indigenous Sāmoans. Our fa'agogo are a window into our personal lives, and our journey of the tatau.

O maua fa'agogo | Our stories

Most of the current knowledge pertaining to tatau in the academic space can only go so far, as most authors are either not genealogically connected to the tatau or Sāmoans who have not personally gone through the journey of receiving the tatau. When looking at tatau, it is important to privilege and amplify the voices of those who wear these markings and have Sāmoan ancestry. For we are the ones who have the blood of Taema and Tilafaiga running through our veins. For we are the only ones who know what it feels like to receive these marks, gain wisdom from them and wear them from now until death. These are our fa'agogo.

Fa'agogo muamua | First story: Lefaoali'i Dion Enari

I had wanted a tatau my whole life. As a kid I would draw tatau patterns on my legs and dream of my completion ceremony many times over.

Everyone's timing and reasons for getting one are different.

For me, I chose to get it upon the completion of my PhD, which was in fa'a Sāmoa, and to mark myself as a life servant to my family, villages and nation. After finally getting the okay from my parents, we were good to go. The week leading up to it was one of the scariest times of my life. I didn't want to embarrass myself or bring shame to my family for not finishing. To calm my fear and nerves I told myself, "You will leave this journey in one of two ways. Either in a body bag or with a finished tatau."

The weeks leading up to it, I prayed and meditated over and over again. I had spoken to so many people with the tatau for advice. However, the words spoken by co-author Agapetos Aia-Fa'aleava stuck with me, and would be constantly repeated in my head: "Do not let the au defeat you. The first tap is Taema and Tilafaiga and the rest are our ancestors who paved the way for us." These words highlighted two things for me. One, that this will be the fight of my life, and two, even though it will be hard, my ancestors will guide the process.

As I woke up for my first session, I had mixed emotions. One side of me was excited. I had waited for this day my whole life. However, the other side of me was full of fear, as I knew this would be the biggest test of my manhood. As I laid in front of the tufuga ready to receive my first hit, I thanked Taema, Tilafaiga and my ancestors, and pleaded to God for his mercy over me, as I surrendered my body to be repeatedly beaten by the au.

So, what did the pain feel like? In a nutshell, it was invasive, humiliating and brutal abuse. It was the most torturous pain I had ever felt. They go from hitting your rib bones to opening your butt and shading it black. As Sonny Natanielu told me, "A man's life has not prepared him for this kind of pain and for this long." Constantly feeling the wrath of the au felt like death by a thousand cuts.

The pain journey took me to many places I had never been. I had confronting flashbacks of the past and encounters of the potential future. I saw family members that had passed on and was able to talk to them. The harder and longer the tufuga hit me, the more pain I felt, and the more these visions became real. I was torn, I wanted the pain to stop because it was unbearable, but I also wanted it to continue, so I could stay in the spiritual realm.

It took me three weeks to complete my tatau, and to call it a rollercoaster ride would be an understatement. From struggling to breathe when bloating my stomach out while they hit my belly button to feeling the love of my family and friends through song, prayer and kind words—it was a journey I will never forget, and one which has changed me forever, not only physically (with my tatau) but mentally too.

Now, I am forever connected to anyone else who has the tatau, whether I know them or not. It is a sacred bond I cannot explain, but one I will cherish forever and ever.

Fa'agogo lona lua | Second story: Agapetos Aia-Fa'aleava

I remember travelling to Sāmoa in 1996 for our family fa'amalologa from six years of ministry service. I was excited to go home, to my childhood, where I got to play freely with my cousins. As a young child, I was easily swayed by gossip and stories. I remember one of my cousins telling me that a 10-year-old just finished getting her malu. I could not believe it, and I wanted one straight away. I had three radical reasons why I wanted the malu. First, I wanted it because my heart was like, "I can handle this." Second, my ego kind of wanted to show off to my family that I am brave. Finally, tatau at the time was against our church by-laws, so I wanted to rebel against that. The idea of a malu was cemented in my head, and it trickled its way into my heart and solidified itself in my blood streams.

I mentioned this idea casually to my parents and my dad replied, "Alu e kā, siga kama'i pe'a i lou kigo pe mafai, oga kā lea o lau malu" ("Go and get a small tattoo on your body before you get your malu"). The next day, my aunty took me, my younger sister and my cousin to Apia. We somehow ended up in a tattoo parlour and I got myself a tattoo on my ankle. It has my initials "A.F." with a heart around them and "'96", the year I received my tattoo. Yes, I am that person who will *never* inscribe someone else's name on my body!

I was the type of person who spent a lot of time in my room, reading and minding my own business. I love being in my own company because it means I don't need to deal with humans. I had a facade of being social in public spaces, but when I got home, I was exhausted!

Fast-forward to 2001, and I wanted a major statement for my 21st. The age of big celebrations with friends, family, enemies and frenemies. I did not want a big celebration, because I did not want money spent on temporary events. Besides, if I invited one person, I had to invite their whole family, a decision I did not have the brain capacity to deal with at the time.

I remember I was at work, and my mother called to say that I was getting my malu done that weekend. I did not believe my mother, so I waited till I got home. We chatted but excitement did not hit me in the fatu. I told my parents that I wanted a full male pe'a, and I was told it was not respectful for a woman to get the male pe'a. Respecting my parents' advice, I did not go that far with that idea. Besides, the malu will look nice on my thick, muscly legs. I played a lot of sports in school, clubs (rugby union and basketball) and church, so I was sort of fit!

The rest was a blur. I remember, walking in with my sister. We sat down with Ala'iva'a, the tufuga, and chatted about life, school and whether I was ready for the malu. In my heart, I have wanted this since 1996.

I was on the mat waiting patiently for the tufuga to start his work. I asked if they would let me know when they started. I felt my first pinch, and I flinched. I looked over my shoulder and saw that the back of my calve muscles was all done and they were up to the back on my knees. I did not feel pain throughout the first part of my session. My first leg was done within an hour and a half. We rested, and the second was completed the same day within the same time.

I felt complete, excited and unable to believe I got my malu done. First in my family, first in my church and first among my first cousins on both my mother's and father's sides. I spent more time outside my room, wore shorts and wore two-piece bikinis to the beach. I was reckless, but I did not care because my strength was imprinted on my thighs.

Fast-forward to today, and I am wearing my malu with pride. I am a PhD graduate, and I wear my research on my skin. My PhD has allowed me to be more open in showing off my malu. I understand in depth the meaning of the malu and the reasons why we need to show it off all the time. Most days, even in Queensland's scorching weather, I wear whatever I feel like wearing.

I understand the cultural significance of the malu, and why our Sāmoan people (tatau-ed, and non-tatau-ed) are fiercely protecting our measina. However, as a malu wearer, I believe the malu is a tool that we can use to gain a better understanding of where it has travelled and the bodies it now occupies.

The malu has entered spaces and conversations that manifested organically. I also understand that only those with the tatau (Sāmoans and non-Sāmoans with the tatau) can discuss the stories of the malu among themselves. Those who do not have a tatau have no right to share their opinion because they are naked, unmarked or too cowardly to get their tatau. This makes the tatau discussions exclusive, and I am proud to be part of the "Dirty Knees" club.

I believe the first tap of the au is a call to our ancestors, Taema and Tilafaiga. The first tap is to inform them that the receiver has accepted their legacy; that they are willing to serve, and that their lives are given and dedicated to the au, to their family, village, community and country. Their legacy lives through the receiver. The second tap of the au is for my ancestors who have paved the way for me. I carry that pain with me. The completion of my malu is my commitment to my aganu'u. To tautua in any shape or form and to be the leader within my own chosen field. I live to serve, and I carry our Taema and Tilafaiga on my skin. I am their living legacy, their descendant, and I am their embodiment. My malu is the story of my Sāmoa and her tatau.

Aga'i i luma | Moving forward

Now we have shared our tatau journeys, it is our hope that many more Sāmoans who bear these markings also tell their stories and commit and honour the symbolism and meaning to the culture. We believe better understanding will be achieved if those with these markings are platformed to speak on them. To maintain cultural origins and value, the source of knowledge and expertise comes directly from Sāmoans who bear the tautau/malu—as opposed to those who have not gone through this journey but commentate from a Eurocentric anthropologic view, or as Sāmoans who do not have the tatau. Our parting words to our beloved Sāmoan people are that every person who gets the tatau is another chance tatau has of surviving. Not through the photos and the paintings, but through the bodies and the skin it is etched in, will tatau truly survive.

Ia manuia.

Glossary

aganu'u	culture
'au	tattooing instrument
fa'afafine	natal males who align with a third gender or feminine gender role in Sāmoa
fa'agogo	storytelling method; frigatebird
fa'amalologa	long service leave
fa'a Sāmoa	Samoan way

fatu	heart
malu	female-specific tattoo that covers the legs from just below the knees to the upper thighs
measina	cultural treasures
moana	ocean
pe'a	male-specific tattoo that covers the body from the waist to the knees
Taema, Tilafaiga	twin-sister deities who brought the art of tatau to Samoa from Fiji
tatau	tattoo
tufuga	tattooist

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"IT IS ABOUT ENABLING TINO RANGATIRATANGA AND MANA MOTUHAKE"

An analysis of submissions on the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Bill 2021 endorsing a Māori Health Authority

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Abstract

Indigenous leadership in healthcare is one way for Indigenous peoples to exercise sovereignty over their health. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the establishment of the Māori Health Authority (MHA) was grounded in a decades-long imperative to address Māori health inequities and operationalise te Tiriti o Waitangi within the health system. However, the populist National-led coalition government formed in November 2023 included the abolishment of the MHA in their first 100-day plan and eventually disestablished it in February 2024. This study analysed 155 public group submissions on the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Bill made in 2021 and representing health professionals, iwi, hapū, and community groups. Core themes endorsing the MHA as a statutory entity included honouring te Tiriti, advocating for Māori-led solutions to health inequities, decolonising health systems, and affirming Indigenous

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rights. The political decision to remove the MHA is antithetical to the explicit endorsement statements made by an overwhelming majority of group submitters with expertise in health organisational structures and healthcare provision. Our study has implications for future local and international research in documenting counter-narratives for Indigenous struggles in health systems.

Keywords

health, Indigenous, Māori Health Authority, racism, tino rangatiratanga

Introduction

The ramifications of settler colonialism and racism for Indigenous Māori health in Aotearoa New Zealand are evident in the enduring health disparities and barriers to accessing equitable culturally safe healthcare (Cormack et al., 2018; Reid et al., 2019). For decades, the healthcare funding model has disadvantaged Māori organisations with insufficient resources channelled towards designing and administering a system that adequately gives effect to tino rangatiratanga and promotes health equity for Māori (Kuka & Moxon, 2024). For instance, only about 22% of 2017–2018 capitation-based funding ($907 million) was allocated to Māori organisations and patients, and funding support for the establishment of Māori primary health organisations was often limited (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023). The Crown has acknowledged that undercounting of the Māori population may have skewed allocations under the population-based funding formula (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023).

Indeed, the 1988 *Puao-Te-Ata-Tu* report recognised that the issues facing Māori "resulted from failing systems of state provision underpinned by a broader context of colonisation, racism and structural inequity" (Boulton et al., 2020, p. 1). Boulton et al. (2020) note that although focused on the operations of the Department of Social Welfare, the Māori Perspective Advisory Committee stated that the discussions brought out "equally grave concerns about the operations of the other Government departments, particularly those working in the social area" (pp. 7–8), including health. Every major review over three decades has, without exception, identified profoundly failing state sector systems, stressing an urgent need for bold transformational change.

The introduction of the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 (NZPHD Act) was meant to have "introduced a major change to the public funding and provision of personal health services, public health services, and disability support services" (Ministry of Health [MoH], 2020, para. 1). However, "the reforms ushered in by the [NZPHD Act] . . . failed to ensure equitable outcomes for Māori health" (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023, p. 17). Therefore, the Waitangi Tribunal (2023) made two overarching recommendations to amend the NZPHD Act, to (1) include a new Treaty of Waitangi clause and (2) commit the Crown and the health sector to achieve equitable health outcomes for Māori (p. xvii). In relation to structural reform of the primary healthcare system, the Waitangi Tribunal made an interim recommendation that the Crown "commit to exploring the concept of a standalone Māori Primary Health Authority and, with the stage one claimants, develop its terms of reference" (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023, p. xxii). In 2020, the Health and Disability System Review (2020) charged with recommending system-level changes that would, amongst other things, lead to better and more equitable outcomes for all New Zealanders, recommended the creation of the Māori Health Authority (MHA | Te Aka Whai Ora) to sit alongside the MoH | Manatū Hauora and Health New Zealand (HNZ | Te Whatu Ora); it was envisioned "to not only be the principal advisor on all hauora (holistic health) Māori issues, but also to lead the development of a strengthened Māori workforce and the growth of a wider range of kaupapa Māori services around the country" (p. 5).

In 2021, the Labour-led government initiated a new legislative framework for health restructuring through the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Bill that purposed to protect, promote, and improve the health of all New Zealanders, including addressing health inequities amongst Māori (see Figure 1). The reform also included Iwi Māori Partnership Boards that were established to "strengthen the overall health system to ensure Māori voices are heard in decision-making that affects Māori health" (MoH, 2025).

The MoH would "continue to be the chief steward of the health system" (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2021, p. 1) in strategy, policy, regulation, and monitoring. The Bill created HNZ to replace district health boards and lead the health system, collaborating with a newly established MHA to design and provide

health services. The MHA would be responsible for driving improvements in hauora Māori and making decisions on commissioning services for Māori across all types and levels of healthcare. The Waitangi Tribunal (2023) welcomed the Crown's decision to establish the MHA as a "positive development towards both the provision of equitable health care and the realisation of the Treaty partnership and its obligations" (p. 178). It signalled the Crown's transformative change from a Crown health structure that "has not addressed Māori health inequities in a Treaty-compliant way" (p. 164).

Akin to other settler colonial nations where Indigenous populations grapple with affirming Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and institutional self-identification (Anderson et al., 2023; Brayboy, 2006), Māori as tangata whenua encounter persistent challenges in holding the Crown accountable for honouring te Tiriti o Waitangi and tino rangatiratanga (Jackson, 2020; Simon, 2016). Multiple te Tiriti breaches have been recorded since the signing of He Whakaputanga | Declaration of Independence of the United Tribes of New Zealand in 1835 and te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840, both of which warrant Māori sovereignty (see, e.g., Waitangi Tribunal, 2023, 2024).

In November 2023, a populist coalition government was formed between three right-leaning political parties which had plans to disestablish the MHA and redefine the Treaty of Waitangi principles (Treaty principles) in their first 100 days (Campbell, 2024). The decision to abolish the MHA has been labelled as "politically motivated" as it was not an outcome of a policy process and there was no consultation involved with hapū and iwi Māori (Kuka & Moxon, 2024). The National-led government has stated that the operation of the MHA is not the only way to improve Māori health outcomes but has not yet articulated in detail an alternative approach (Kuka & Moxon, 2024). Many health professionals, researchers and experts in hauora Māori have raised concerns about the impact of eliminating the MHA on Māori health outcomes and worsening existing inequities (Pitama et al., 2024). Lady Tureiti Moxon and Janice Kuka filed a claim with the Waitangi Tribunal (WAI 3307) in December 2023, alleging that the coalition government's intention to abolish the MHA violated te Tiriti o Waitangi (Kuka & Moxon, 2024). The government was called out by Moxon (alongside Māori political leaders) for not acting in good faith for first threatening to pass a Bill scrapping the MHA after the initial announcement of a Tribunal hearing (Natanahira, 2024) and then swiftly introducing and passing legislation disestablishing the MHA two days prior to

FIGURE 1 Outline of proposed national health system showing the roles of a new MHA and HNZ as at April 2021.
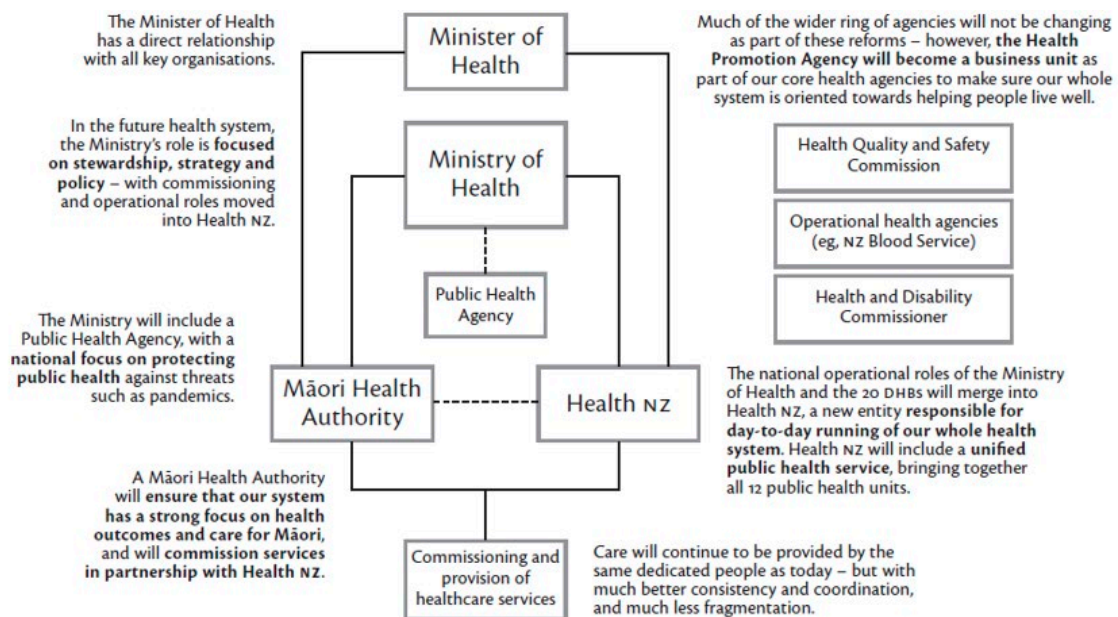
Note. From *Hauora: Report on stage one of the Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry*, by Waitangi Tribunal, 2023, p. 175. (https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_195476216/Hauora%202023%20W.pdf).

the set date for the Tribunal hearing (Harawira, 2024). The Tribunal hearing for the MHA finally took place in May 2025 (Rātana, 2025), with the *Hautupua* report concluding that "the process followed by the Crown to disestablish Te Aka Whai Ora breached Tiriti/Treaty principles" (Waitangi Tribunal, 2024, xvi). At the time of writing, the National-led government is inviting public submissions on the proposed amendment to the Healthy Futures Bill (favouring English in its renaming), which would deprioritise te Tiriti commitments and relegate Iwi Māori Partnership Boards to a merely consultative role (Andrews, 2025).

Objectives

In late 2021, public submissions were invited to comment on the proposed Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Bill as a part of the Labour Government's consultative process. Although there was a barrage of anti-Māori talk within Pae Ora submissions (Black et al., 2023), some submitters—particularly those affiliated with health professional groups, iwi, and hapū—wrote lengthy and detailed recommendations to strengthen the te Tiriti implications of the Bill (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2022).

In light of the overwhelming media narratives that disseminate malignant messages about equity initiatives for Māori (see, e.g., Moewaka-Barnes et al., 2012; Phillips, 2023), we see a need to amplify counter-narratives that are evidence-based and informed by organisations that are directly involved in, and affected by, the decision-making process regarding health restructures and the (dis) establishment of the MHA. This article embodies counter-storytelling as a critical race tenet (Came, 2014; Waitoki et al., 2024) to amplify narratives within the Pae Ora submissions that endorsed the establishment of the MHA as a Tiriti obligation and outline the reasons and intentions underlying these. Critical race theory asserts that racism is normalised in Aotearoa society (Asafo & Tuiburelevu, 2021; Brayboy, 2006; Waitoki et al., 2024), and counter-stories are crucial for this study to uncover narratives frequently submerged under the dominant rhetoric that reinforces epistemologies of ignorance (e.g., colourblindness that denies racial hierarchies and differences) and whitewashes racialised inequalities and inequities (Brayboy, 2006; Waitoki et al., 2024).

Methods

Both Māori and tauiwi scholars whose works are informed by te Tiriti o Waitangi (Berghan et al., 2017) and/or Kaupapa Māori theory (Simon, 2021; Smith, 2003) as an anti-racist praxis were involved in the analysis of this article. We focused on group submissions, as we were interested in the voices of established entities that have potentially worked with—or within—the health system and chose to contribute a submission. First, we downloaded publicly available group submissions from the parliamentary website (New Zealand Parliament, 2024). An initial screening was done on all group submissions, and we identified 155 that mentioned the term "Māori Health Authority" (and related terms such as MHA or Te Aka Whai Ora) at least once. All analysed quotes from the submissions can be viewed at https://shorturl.at/K6G8n.

We then performed an inductive content analysis (Vears & Gillam, 2022) of all paragraphs and statements making references to the MHA. Following the steps of inductive content analysis coding, we identified content categories and subcategories that aligned with our research objective of unpacking patterned narratives surrounding the MHA in the Pae Ora Bill. Parts of submissions ae presented as quotes to provide context for our derived categories.

Within the submissions, we identified two overarching thematic categories that recognised the essential roles of the MHA: (1) Reasons for endorsing the MHA (comprising four subcategories), and (2) Recommendations to augment the efficacy and capacity of the MHA (comprising seven subcategories).

Thematic category 1: Reasons for endorsing the MHA

A path to honour te Tiriti o Waitangi

A fully realised te Tiriti o Waitangi aspiration would see a reciprocal and dynamic relationship between the Crown kāwanatanga and Māori tino rangatiratanga (Jackson, 2020; Matike Mai Aotearoa, 2016). Many submitting groups acknowledged the establishment of the MHA as a step forward for the Crown to fulfil its responsibility under te Tiriti, provide opportunities for HNZ to work in equal partnership with the MHA to make collective decisions, and to empower Māori to exercise tino rangatiratanga in commissioning services essential to Māori.

> We support the Government's approach to establish a new MHA that will progress meeting the Crown's obligations for Māori health under te Tiriti o Waitangi and work to address the intergenerational impacts of colonisation, hurt and systemic discrimination within New Zealand's

health system. (Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission)

Improving Māori health is not just about achieving equitable health outcomes: it is about enabling tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake for whānau, hapū and iwi. Centring on the Crown's obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi is critical to fulfilling this goal. We strongly support the establishment of a MHA, with the remit to commission and fund kaupapa Māori health services, provide strategic and policy advice on hauora Māori and work in partnership with HNZ. (The Royal Australasian College of Physicians)

The justification for endorsing the MHA by certain groups was grounded in the interim recommendation of the Waitangi Tribunal during the initial hearings of the Hauora claims in 2016, which proposed the creation of a standalone Māori primary health authority. This recommendation emerged from the necessity to redesign health structures that truly reflect a partnership arrangement between Māori and the Crown across all primary care structures (Waitangi Tribunal, 2023). The Pae Ora Bill further advanced this recommendation by instituting an autonomous MHA with the authority to influence decisions over primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare.

> We support the Government to resource the establishment of the MHA led by Māori at hapū, iwi and hāpori levels. This is in response to Māori aspirations and to the Waitangi Tribunal's Hauora: Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry (Wai 2575). This is a significant example of the Crown making efforts to uphold obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi within the health sector by centring a by Māori, for Māori approach to hauora. (Office of the Children's Commissioner)

The Waitangi Tribunal's 2023 *Hauora* report also delineates preliminary Treaty principles to inform the Crown of its role to address Māori health inequities through (1) partnership, (2) active protection, (3) equity, and (4) options. The goals of the Pae Ora Bill, including the establishment of the MHA, were interpreted by some groups as a proactive response aligned with these guiding principles.

> The [Royal Australasian College of Physicians] has advocated for a MHA, grounded in the wider set of principles recommended by the Waitangi Tribunal's WAI 2575 Stage One Report, (rangatiratanga,

equity, active protection, options and partnership) and the so-called "alternate view" on Māori Commissioning included in the Health and Disability System Review's final report. (Royal Australasian College of Physicians)

The Network supports the establishment of the MHA and recognising iwi-Māori partnership boards as a means of exercising tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake. The Network sees both of these entities as critical to achieving Aotearoa's equity goals. We commend the Bill's commitment to giving effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and support the framework provided. Persisting inequities highlight the need to give effect to the articles, in particular Article 3 [ōritetanga], which contains a provision that guarantees equality between Māori and non-Māori. (Public Health Clinical Network)

Note that some scholars have argued that an emphasis on Treaty principles may detract from the legally binding text of te Tiriti o Waitangi, which is often subject to softened or ambiguous interpretations under the guise of reconciling it with the English-language Treaty of Waitangi (Mikaere, 2011).

Māori-led solutions to address inequity for Māori

With key insights into Māori determinants of health, the provision and delivery of kaupapa Māori services, and Māori practices of healing (e.g., rongoā), some groups underscored the specialised expertise inherent in the MHA to address the gaps within the current health system. The MHA was regarded as instrumental in proposing and implementing Māori-led solutions for mitigating the entrenched inequities in Māori health outcomes caused by institutional racism and the intergenerational legacy of colonisation and te Tiriti breaches.

> The [Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists] support the Pae Ora's commitment to Te Tiriti through the establishment of the MHA, and view this as an important step in the promotion of Māori wellbeing. Its mandate to prevent, reduce and delay ill health of tangata whenua in collaboration with other agencies enables Māori to define, determine and decide how Pae Ora is realised within a world view encompassing Wairua Ora, Mauri Ora, Whānau Ora and Wai Ora. For all components of the new system the embedding of culturally informed approaches to wellbeing and health workforce development are

critical components of transforming the health and disability sector. (Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists)

This Bill honours the vision of Māori health leaders for an independent Māori health system to deal with persistent inequities and racism that our people experience when dealing with the health system. It is a huge step forward from our present reality, and if it had already been in place, we would not have seen nearly the amount of inequity and disparity that Māori have contended with during the Covid-19 pandemic. (Addiction Practitioners Association Aotearoa New Zealand)

Decolonising and addressing institutional racism within health systems

The establishment of the MHA has been viewed by some groups as a transformative initiative because no other Crown entities have taken such an ambitious step of endowing decision-making authority to a Māori statutory entity. It represented a pivotal stride towards decolonising health systems through an "ethic of restoration" (Jackson, 2020) that restores the kawa based on te Tiriti o Waitangi. For the first time, there was an entity in the health system (the MHA) that would operate within the tino rangatiratanga sphere, thereby overturning decades-long monolithic approaches (i.e., colour-blind or overpowered kāwanatanga sphere models where the Crown makes decisions for all) to making healthcare decisions.

The MHA will be . . . the first of its kind with partnerships across governance, policy and health and disability services. It will require decolonising old relationships and building new partnerships to lead to culturally bound and clinically safe effective health and disability services with shared leadership across Iwi Māori Partnership Boards. (Te Rau Ora)

In response to the overwhelming evidence of the monolithic approach of Crown agencies to Māori health, the Tribunal stated that: The failure to address negative social determinants, then, can be considered a form of institutional racism. Institutional racism was defined by witnesses in our inquiry as 'inaction in the face of need'. This inaction can be conscious or unconscious; it can manifest through the deliberate actions of individuals or result simply from 'the routine administration of public institutions that produce inequitable social outcomes'. (Tamaki Legal Barristers & Solicitors)

An Indigenous right under UNDRIP

The Cancer Society Auckland/Northland Division accented the Indigenous rights of the MHA that are promised under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), to which Aotearoa is a signatory. Specific reference was directed to Article 24 that outlines the Crown's obligation to take the necessary steps to ensure Indigenous peoples achieve the highest attainable standard of health, have access to all social and health services without discrimination, and can maintain Indigenous health practices.

The inclusion of sound representation of Māori at decision making level reflected in the creation of the Hauora Māori Advisory committee, the inclusion of Iwi-Māori partnership boards, formation of a MHA along with Māori representation on HNZ is a positive way forward for Māori to reclaim tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake for their health. However, we also wish to also highlight that the restructure of our health system as a rights issue within the broader scheme of Indigenous rights, should also consider the clauses of the UN Declaration of Indigenous rights Article 24. (Cancer Society Auckland/Northland Division)

Thematic category 2: Recommendations to augment the efficacy and capacity of the MHA

Seven specific recommendations were proposed by different groups to strengthen the capacity of the MHA.

Equal responsibility with HNZ

Concerns were raised by a few groups about the MHA not having adequate power as the entity is consigned to a teina position compared to its HNZ counterpart, which assumes a tuakana role. Māori public health organisation Hāpai te Hauora, which reviewed the differential functions of the MHA and HNZ, found the former faces greater constraints in developing locality plans, evaluating and monitoring services, commissioning services, and arranging for the provision of services.

The roles of HNZ and the MHA seem to have defined with the notion of equality and partnership in mind, in that a number of functions are the same. However, there are clear omissions or inclusions which are concerning. (Hāpai Te Hauora)

The role of the MHA in relation to locality plans is too limited only being required to review locality

plans and no decision-making role. As part of having more power, we believe the MHA must be able to respond to Māori community needs in ways that allow it to commission services and shift funding to communities for issues of particular significance. (National Hauora Coalition)

There were also apprehensions about the MHA being treated as an advisory body rather than an entity with the expertise and capacity to formulate health strategies specifically for Māori.

> The Bill provides that the Minister must have regard to the advice of the MHA when preparing health strategies. We recommend that the Hauora Māori Strategy should be jointly developed with the MHA. We further suggest that the Minister should take account of advice from the Māori Health Authority when monitoring and reviewing health strategies and assessing how the system has performed against the strategies. (New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine)

Equal partnership with the MoH

Some groups contended that the authority of the MHA should be elevated to the same level as the MoH to reflect the true partnership between Māori and the Crown aspired within te Tiriti. The reality that the MoH would hold overriding power over the MHA indicates that the Crown continues to position itself as the ultimate authority.

> To increase mana motuhake, the MHA should be on the same level as the MoH in terms of policy advice to the Minister of Health and other Ministers and agencies on health matters. Article two of Te Tiriti [tino rangatiratanga] cannot be achieved if the MoH is the sole chief steward of this policy advice. (Health Coalition Aotearoa)

> The MHA needs to have a clear partnership relationship with the MoH to be more reflective of true partnership. The current positioning of the MHA within this legislation is deeply reflective of the entrenched hegemonic views of western society, with immense egalitarian intentions, but no practical rigour, or no intention to power share. (Hāpai Te Hauora)

> While we applaud the creation of a MHA with commissioning powers and believe this to be a key step toward achieving equitable health outcomes for Māori, we share concerns with others in the sector that the current Bill falls short in upholding the principles and articles of Te Tiriti. For example, while the Bill gives the MHA joint decision-making authority with HNZ, true partnership requires the Authority to be given joint decision-making authority with the MoH and the Minister of Health. (New Zealand Medical Association)

Create tino rangatiratanga and relational spheres

The Matike Mai Aotearoa (2016) report proposes constitutional models featuring discrete rangatiratanga and kāwanatanga spheres of influence along with a relational site of joint decision-making which flowed obviously and early from discussions about the relationship in te Tiriti and the manaaki in tikanga. Some groups proposed recommendations wherein the role of the MHA could be better clarified and aligned with Matike Mai models. This would involve establishing a Māori-led entity with tino rangatiratanga while opening up opportunities for that body to be equal partners in making collective decisions in the relational sphere.

> The regulatory statement goes on to note that the MHA "will operate in the space where the exercise of kāwanatanga and rangatiratanga overlap" and is seen as a mechanism for the Crown to meet its obligations of partnership and accountability to Māori (p. 14). If the MHA is operating in the relational space and is viewed by the Crown as a mechanism to meet Treaty obligations but is not the Treaty partner—then who is the Crown partnering with? Is it iwi-Māori partnership boards? Their remit within the Bill has been confined to a locality level. (Stop Institutional Racism)

> The Commission recommends that a tino rangatiratanga representative body such as the National Iwi Chairs Forum or a new representative body (for example, national layer established for the Māori partnership boards) is made responsible for appointing the board of the MHA, the Hauora Māori Advisory Committee and the tangata whenua representatives of the HNZ Board. It should be directly involved in any other appointment processes outlined under this Bill. The Commission also recommends that appropriate measures are taken to ensure that the MHA, and the Hauora Māori Advisory Committee is directly accountable to this tino rangatiratanga representative body. (Human Rights Commission)

The MHA needs to be independent

In relation to the recommendation to further strengthen the capacity of the MHA, numerous

groups advocated for the independence of the MHA in the decision-making process related to Māori health and the healthcare workforce, without interference from HNZ and the MoH.

> We note that within the proposed Bill, the MHA—whilst being an independent entity—sits within the Article One [kāwanatanga] framework of the Government, with its members appointed by the Minister of Health, rather than as a truly independent entity as would be offered in recognition of the retained authority of rangatiratanga in Article two of Te Tiriti. (Canterbury Infant and Young Child Feeding Network)

> The MHA is established as an Independent Statutory entity, however, the independence of the authority itself is neither clear nor transformational in its current iteration, and lacks actionable powers or functions which will enable it to give effect to the responsibilities placed upon it (such as to improve Māori outcomes, and to promote Māori health and to prevent, reduce, and delay the onset of illness for Māori). Hāpai recommends that the Bill provides for the independent MHA to be able to act independently and to have the authority to work aggressively towards achieving Pae Ora, which cannot be achieved if the MHA is hamstrung by Crown bureaucracy. (Hāpai Te Hauora)

Partnership approach to resolving dispute

Many groups spotted the problematic clause in the Bill wherein the MoH would be granted the ultimate decision-making authority in disputes between the MHA and HNZ. Subsequently, submitters proposed recommendations advocating for either the chair of the MHA or Te Puni Kōkiri | Ministry of Māori Development to work in equal partnership with the MoH and HNZ to resolve disputes in a te Tiriti-compliant manner.

> We would like to see an amendment to this clause [on disputes between HNZ and the MHA] to reflect a partnership approach that reflects Article one of Te Tiriti o Waitangi regarding the minister making ultimate decisions on the MHA, including when it is in dispute with HNZ or when its board is not performing. The wording we highly recommend is that: "the Minister and the MHA Chair must reach an agreement on all decisions of the MHA, including when it is in dispute with HNZ or when its board is not performing". (General Practice New Zealand)

> The Bill also provides that the Minister of Health makes the ultimate decision on disputes between MHA and with HNZ. The Minister of Health alone should not determine disputes, particularly given he is not subject to the health system principles in the Bill's current form. Nor should a decision be made without reference to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The significance of the Māori health issues that will likely form the basis of any dispute between HNZ and the MHA mean that the Minister of Health and Minister for Māori Development should jointly make any ultimate decision on disputes. (Te Puna Ora o Mataatua)

Expand the funding capacity of the MHA

Some groups pointed out that the unequal budget allocations for both the MHA and HNZ implied that the Pae Ora Bill was not fully in compliance with te Tiriti o Waitangi. There was a call for a legislated commitment to progressively increase the MHA's budget so that more funding could be channelled to Māori health services to address inequitable health and healthcare access gaps for Māori.

> There should be legislative mandate for the MHA and HNZ to have an equal partnership. This is particularly important given the vast differences in budget allocations. There should be a legislated commitment to increase the MHA budget year on year so that, by 2030, it has an equitable share of Vote Health. The current budget commitment is not Tiriti-compliant as it does not enable mana motuhake and does not meet the Tiriti principle of options. (Health Coalition Aotearoa)

> We acknowledge that the MHA has been awarded commissioning rights that were not recommended by the HDSR 2020 report. Notwithstanding, the budget allocation does not meet the Tiriti o Waitangi principle of options. The budget of HNZ will be in the region of $15bn; conversely, the MHA, we understand, will be c.$120m. Furthermore, such vast differences in funding will create a power imbalance, which will likely mean there will not be an equal partnership between the entities. The commissioning budget of the MHA feels tokenistic and wholly disproportionate. (Kookiri ki Taamakimakaurau Trust)

HNZ to share te Tiriti responsibilities alongside the MHA

The MHA was to hold specific roles in the health restructure in improving Māori health. However, concerns were raised by certain groups regarding the potential abdication of responsibilities by HNZ and other Crown officials in ensuring culturally

safe care provision, upholding te Tiriti aspirations, and engaging in consultation with hapū and iwi, particularly if the clause on "improving Māori health" was made specific only to the MHA. All Crown entities have te Tiriti responsibilities and obligations that cannot be delegated or transferred. It would be unsustainable for the MHA to execute all the mentioned roles as a smaller entity that received less funding than HNZ.

> We would like to highlight the overall need for compliance with Te Tiriti across all the new agencies and as legislated through the Bill. Early in the process of the health reforms, many contributors mentioned concerns that equity and Te Tiriti matters would be left for the Māori Health Authority to deal with. We cannot allow for system compliance to be left to one entity while allowing others to shift responsibilities or even claim compliance by proxy. (Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists)

> The law must clearly show how all the new health structures will uphold both the principles and articles of Te Tiriti. This includes consultation with whānau, hapū, or iwi, and hapori Māori, cultural safety, expertise and responsiveness, and commissioning kaupapa Māori services. This is not just the responsibility of the MHA. (Cancer Society of New Zealand)

Discussion

Our review of 2021 Pae Ora Bill group submissions (including those from health professionals, hapū, iwi, government sectors, and community groups) identified overwhelmingly positive responses for the establishment of a Māori Health Authority (MHA). As the first attempt of instituting a Māori statutory entity in the Aotearoa health system, the Labour-led government's preliminary effort to consider te Tiriti application in the health sector was commended by group submitters. Institutions and organisations providing healthcare have been solely controlled and resourced by the Crown for decades and are thus embedded in Western and colour-blind norms. Within a te Tiriti o Waitangi framework, the MHA embodied the tino rangatiratanga sphere (Matike Mai Aotearoa, 2016), and it was labelled by its chief executive officer, Riana Manuel, as the beginning of a Treaty partnership turning into a functional and operating reality (Husband, 2022). Indeed, group submitters expressed their hopes for the MHA to address racism in health structures, work with a bottom-up approach, and, in collaboration with hapū and iwi,

design hauora Māori-based health services and plan and implement kaupapa Māori solutions to reduce health inequities. While the MHA exercised its authority over Māori structures, HNZ and all other stakeholders within the health system hold crucial roles in addressing institutional racism—this responsibility could not be left solely to the MHA and Māori staff as a form of cultural labour (Tan et al., 2025).

However, concerns were also raised by health organisations about the constrained abilities of the MHA to exercise tino rangatiratanga in the proposed Pae Ora structure in 2021. As our review makes clear, group submitters urged for the MHA to have equal authority as HNZ as well as to be able to form equal partnerships with the MoH when it came to identifying priorities and designing health plans for Māori. In a few instances, the MHA was construed as a teina that would be dependent on HNZ and the MoH, with the latter having overriding power and more financial capacity. A subordinated entity relegated to a consultative role or tokenistic representation will have limited decision-making power to drive change (Brayboy, 2006; Waitoki et al., 2024), as Te Kāhui Rongoā Trust reminded us in their submission: "More of the same under a different structure will not deliver change." The Bill expected the MHA to ensure cultural safety in healthcare delivery and the administration of health structures. Envisaging the sustained fulfilment of this role becomes challenging if the MHA were to be disestablished (which has since occurred), particularly when HNZ is not held to comparable standards.

The call to overturn the MHA came during a time of escalating racist and white supremacist sentiments targeting Māori (Phillips, 2023; Simon, 2021), including opposition to sharing power between local councils and iwi Māori on water resource management (Shine, 2023), and discouragement of the use of te reo Māori across government sectors ("Government's Move", 2023). The coalition government has recently directed an update of the HNZ logo that gives precedence to the English name, which has a larger font size compared to the te reo name (Te Whatu Ora). The oppositional voices to the Pae Ora Bill were acknowledged at an early stage by submitters from Māori trusts, iwi, and hapū. For example, Te Rūnanganui o Ngāti Hikairo wrote:

> There is much concern within New Zealand that the MHA is perceived as a separatist system. There are many international examples of indigenous health systems with the mandated authority to

operate independent but also interdependent of the mainstream health system that derives substantial benefits to their nations. We are not just interested in a separatist Māori Health System but a health system that is responsive to the needs of its Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. These international examples demonstrate the effectiveness of indigenous led accountability that has synergy with the mainstream health system. However, to achieve this arrangement, the authority must be the senior partner i.e., MHA where this pertains to Māori across the health continuum.

Reverting to a nationalist health structure fundamentally supports a colour-blind agenda (Asafo & Tuiburelevu, 2021; Waitoki et al., 2024) while Māori continue to endure health inequities and a deliberate displacement of decision-making power. Those opposing the MHA did not see "race talk" in Aotearoa as underpinned by a wilful ignorance of the country's history of settler colonialism and an inclination of tauiwi to obfuscate their active involvement in perpetuating hierarchies of racial power (Black et al., 2023; Simon, 2021; Waitoki et al., 2024). WAI 3307 claimants stated that the disestablishment of the MHA "would mean that Māori will continue to be particularly impacted by racism and stereotyping in primary healthcare, and experience a significantly lower standard of health, including significantly shorter lives than non-Māori" (Kuka & Moxon, 2024, p. 3). The disestablishment also overlooks the crucial role of the MHA in engaging with iwi and hapū, alleviating the disproportionate burden of auditing carried out by Māori health organisations, ensuring that planning and service delivery directly address Māori aspirations and needs, and advancing the Hauora Māori strategy (Kuka & Moxon, 2024).

Waitangi Tribunal claimants have suggested that the intentional decision to not engage in consultation with Māori regarding the disestablishment of the MHA, coupled with the effort to initiate such consultation only after proposing an alternative model, constitutes a manifestation of "prejudice" (Kuka & Moxon, 2024, p. 8). An urgent Tribunal hearing was granted a week before the conclusion of the coalition government's 100-day plan, just before the last day for tabling a Bill on abolishing the MHA (Te Kohao Health, 2024). The National Hauora Coalition (2021), through a targeted engagement process with iwi, Māori service providers, and key informant groups for rangatahi and tangata whaikaha, reported widespread support for the proposal to establish a standalone MHA. There were high expectations for

the authority to embody Māori values, possess the right functions, and be adequately resourced from the outset (National Hauora Coalition, 2021).

A number of submitters raised the issues of "rights" relating to the exercising of tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake. The key thing to understand here is that while Māori are at the mercy of majority-white voters, this produces an outcome of democratic disability (O'Sullivan, 2021) because of the lack of informed opinion, racism, and misinformation. This is a huge inhibitor to progressing towards mana motuhake. The MHA, while a gradualist approach to achieving mana motuhake in public policy, was nevertheless needed. This approach would have built the required trust for Pākehā and tauiwi to become comfortable with progressing towards a dual-authority model initially with the idea that Māori in the long term could take full responsibility for their own hauora concerns. This trust model is seen in co-governance models like the Waikato River Authority, and the assertion of full autonomy is consistent with desires in areas like those in Māori education. Initiatives like the Waahi Paa birthing unit and the call by the Kīngitanga to build a Māori hospital are all examples of the desire for tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake in the hauora space (Tyson, 2024).

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the specific focus on narratives around the MHA in this article means we have overlooked the broader contexts surrounding recommendations for the Hauora Māori Advisory Committee (whose role is to advise the Minister of Health on matters relating to MHA and to the Public Health Advisory Committee), further implementation of te Tiriti o Waitangi, and other suggestions to address Māori health inequities. Second, our study only examined the narratives of the MHA within group submissions. Therefore, we have not accounted for narratives within individual submissions, including those submitted on behalf of a group, community, or organisation. Lastly, we were mindful that there were a few group submissions that voiced against the establishment of the MHA. It is beyond the scope of this article to delve into the narratives that undermine te Tiriti aspirations, as we are interested in counter-storytelling to oppositional voices more commonly highlighted in the media against the MHA.

The Waitangi Tribunal (2023) has asserted that "tino rangatiratanga over hauora Māori should be an intrinsic facet of a Treaty-compliant primary

health system" (p. 158) and that "tino rangatiratanga of hauora Māori is necessary to pursue health equity" (p. 160). Many group submitters recognised the MHA as a statutory entity that would embody the tino rangatiratanga sphere to make decisions informed by, with and for Māori (Matike Mai Aotearoa, 2016), and as an initial step for the MoH and HNZ to operate in an equal partnership in healthcare decision-making. The function of kāwanatanga under te Tiriti, in this case, centres on the effectiveness of healthcare provisioning. While, in the orthodox sense, tino rangatiratanga under te Tiriti was guaranteed to hapū by the Crown—given that the Treaty relationship was between these two entities—we argue that there is a need to recognise both the status quo and the future development of healthcare provisioning in Aotearoa. At this stage, it would be unrealistic for hapū and iwi collectives to independently provide comprehensive health services to their own communities as some iwi have yet to reach final Treaty settlement with the Crown (Coates, 2024).

Further, we contend that greater attention should be directed towards the MHA as a potential first step towards genuine tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake within the health system. The current social and political climate may not allow for separate or alternative envisionings of equitable health systems. However, the MHA can be viewed as part of the foundational architecture for tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake—or at least as a recognition of O'Sullivan's (2021) proposition that tino rangatiratanga can only exist outside of the Crown. In this light, the MHA may be understood as having been consistent with the evolving vision of Matike Mai Aotearoa (2016), which is still in the process of establishing itself. Therefore, the idea that Crown entities such as the MHA can contribute to the provisioning of tino rangatiratanga should not be dismissed entirely.

Conclusion

The abolishment of the MHA stands in stark contrast to the overwhelming majority of group submitters who wrote explicit endorsement statements for the establishment of an MHA and provided recommendations for strengthening its capacity. The submissions of health professionals, hapū, and iwi should have been prioritised and considered when making decisions about the future of the MHA as they drew upon their expertise and experience in health organisational structures, healthcare provision, and/or kaupapa Māori services. Submitters viewed the MHA as a

mechanism to honour te Tiriti within the health sector, implement Māori-led solutions to address health inequities, support decolonisation, disrupt institutional racism, and uphold Indigenous rights enshrined within UNDRIP. Inaction in the face of need is institutional racism defined. The repeal of the MHA, the only beacon of hope for many in the health system in decades, is an action that can only be viewed as a colonial settler government retrenching power and maintaining white supremacy.

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Glossary

hāpori	community
hapū	subtribe or larger tribal group
hauora	holistic health
iwi	tribal kin group
kaupapa	approach
kaupapa Māori	Māori based topic/event/enterprise run by Māori for Māori
kawa	protocol
kāwanatanga	Crown governance
Kīngitanga	Māori king movement
mana motuhake	Indigenous sovereignty
manaaki	hospitality
mauri	life essence

ora	health, vitality
ōritetanga	equality
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
rangatahi	young people
rangatiratanga	self-determination
rongoā	traditional Māori healing
tangata whaikaha	people with disabilities
tangata whenua	Indigenous peoples
tauiwi	non-Māori
teina	mentee
te reo	language
te Tiriti o Waitangi	the Treaty of Waitangi; New Zealand's founding document
tikanga	custom and law
tino rangatiratanga	self-determination
tuakana	mentor
wai	water
wairua	spirituality
whānau	family

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NEEDED BUT NOT ALONE

A navigation guide for Māori and Pacific postgraduates in STEM

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Abstract

Māori and Pacific researchers are working hard to transform our research system to enable Māori and Pacific postgraduate students to thrive in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Yet barriers remain, and each new postgraduate generation inherits evolving challenges and opportunities to navigate. This paper is written for Māori and Pacific people who are about to enter the postgraduate STEM space, recognising that we need our own words to help future students to navigate this journey. It will be challenging at times, but our kōrero shared here highlights that when you find the right people, be authentic to yourself and set boundaries, the journey becomes easier to navigate. This paper operates as a survival guide for Māori and Pacific STEM postgraduates as we continue to hold the doors open to spaces that desperately need you. We look forward to smiling at you from across the room in department meetings.

Keywords

experiences, Māori, Pacific, postgraduates, science

Introduction

Every generation of Māori and Pacific scholars within the academy has contributed to ground-breaking transformation in a rapidly changing academic profession, and each generation has had different experiences (Kidman et al., 2015). The first generation of Māori scholars were not only often the first of their iwi, hapū and whānau to attend university, they then battled within the academy to simply "exist", often becoming the one and only of their discipline creating pathways to follow (Durie, 2005; Ngata & Buck, 1986). Subsequent generations led cultural, political and academic reforms, holding the line as sole Māori researchers in their departments, while challenging colonial paradigms to decolonise not only the institutions but also ourselves, and making space for Indigenous methodologies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) (Ruru & Nikora, 2021; L. T. Smith et al., 2016). The current generation of both Māori and Pacific STEM scholars are now more likely to have whānau who have gone to university (Kidman et al., 2015), and are building capacity within the system (with increasing attempts to value Māori STEM researchers and our scholarship) (Povey et al., 2022). Despite this, the university system does not retain many of the Māori and Pacific researchers it invests in. Only 5% and 2% of academics employed in New Zealand are Māori and Pacific, respectively, and these percentages are even lower in science departments (McAllister et al., 2019, 2022; Naepi, 2019).

These scholars now hold a responsibility for wayfinding their positions as valued scientists qualified in Western science, valued scientists qualified in understanding mātauranga and Kaupapa Māori approaches, or valued interspace agents that stand in both worlds (Ruru & Nikora, 2021). It is important to note that people who are knowledgeable in both mātauranga and Western science rarely exist within university STEM departments. This is because mātauranga is often still treated as "less than" or "outside" Western science traditions, by both the academy and non-Indigenous scientists.

However, the current generation of Māori early career scholars are also likely to have substantially more student debt, be subject to financial insta-bility (short, fixed-term contracts), be burdened by heavy leadership responsibility and struggle to access mentorship (due to high demand and not enough capacity in the system), as well as be delayed in starting their own families compared with their senior Māori lecturers and professors (Kidman et al., 2015; Pihama et al., 2019). There is limited literature on strategies and advice for emerging Indigenous scholars, but Staniland et al. (2020) found the key navigation advice of Māori business academics to be "developing a strategy" and "carving up", "carving in comfort" and "carving a purposeful career". This paper offers some guidance to the new generation of early career Māori and Pacific STEM researchers for navigating some of the aforementioned challenges based on the authors' lived experience.

There has been a significant increase in research over the past decade by Māori and Pacific researchers that outlines our experiences in universities (Abraham, 2023; Baice et al., 2021; Funaki, 2023; Kidman 2020; Leenen-Young et al., 2021; McAllister et al., 2020, 2022; Naepi, 2021; Pacific Early Career Researchers Collective et al., 2022; A. Smith et al., 2021; Theodore et al., 2017; Tuiloma & Jones, 2022). Disciplines of STEM are often particularly hostile environ-ments for people who are not cis, able-bodied, white men (Cech, 2022; McAllister et al. 2025).

Consequently, the underrepresentation of Māori and Pacific people in STEM has been documented previously (McAllister et al., 2022; McKinley, 2005; Naepi et al., 2021). While it is important to name and describe the many ways that Māori and Pacific people are excluded from the academy, exploring strategies for survival as Māori and Pacific people is also necessary. Regardless of our collective experiences, we want to remind Māori and Pacific postgraduates that there is space for them in the academy and in STEM: "This is absolutely where you belong" and "There are people that will support you and there are opportunities to make meaningful gains for Māori and Pacific people in science." We have engaged with and conducted science for centuries: "You're standing on the shoulders of all your tīpuna who navigated the largest sea … Science is in you." By simply being here and taking up opportunities as Māori and Pacific postgraduate students in STEM, we are contributing to creating and expanding spaces. Ultimately, by being here in these institutions, we and you are creating space for more Māori and Pacific in STEM: "Do it, you are so needed and wanted", "Don't let the institutions tell you what you can and can't do." It is with these whakaaro in mind that we collated this advice for prospective Māori and Pacific STEM postgraduate students.

Methods

The words of advice in this paper come from a collective of Māori and Pacific past and present postgraduates in STEM and are collated from their responses to the open-ended question "What advice would you give to prospective Māori and/or Pacific students who are looking at beginning postgraduate research in STEM subjects?" This question was delivered as part of an online survey built and delivered using Alchemer as part of the Te Pūnaha Matatini research project Alternative Visions of Science. Details regarding data collection and analysis have been outlined in full by McAllister et al. (2022). In brief, the question addressed in this manuscript is one of 23 questions presented in a survey designed to identify barriers and promising practices experienced by Māori and Pacific postgraduate students in STEM subjects at universities in New Zealand. An analysis of the key challenges faced by students has been outlined by McAllister et al. (2022), and our future work will focus on how existing practices within universities are being used to foster comfort among Māori and Pacific STEM postgraduate students.

Our cohort comprises 29 Māori and Pacific collaborators and co-authors recruited through existing networks, word of mouth and social media to participate in the survey and participate in analysis, writing and editing of manuscripts. These connections were facilitated through online hui, emails and shared documents between 2020 and 2024. All authors had either undertaken postgraduate research in STEM subjects at a New Zealand university or were current postgraduate students. For this commentary, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) was used to identify themes within the data with initial coding completed by Tara McAllister and reviewed by Sereana Naepi and Leilani Walker. All authors and collaborators were invited to write, edit and review this paper to ensure agency over the messaging and content.

From conception to publication, the Alternative Visions of Science project has aligned with Kaupapa Māori research approaches (see L. T. Smith, 2021, for further detail) with the central principle that this work is co-created by a collective of active collaborators. One deviation from McAllister et al. (2022) is our use of "Māori and Pacific" instead of "Indigenous". It was appropriate then to use the term "Indigenous" to connect our other work to international scholarship and to acknowledge our shared connection to Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa knowledge systems. However, in this case, we wish to speak directly to those who will follow in our footsteps with specificity and familiarity that recognise the whenua and the moana that laps at Aotearoa shores. This paper is both about and for Māori and Pacific postgraduate students in STEM. While we acknowledge that these groupings are broad and diverse, we have chosen to lash our waka or vaka together for the purpose of this paper.

We have included Māori and Pacific together out of necessity—there are so few Māori and Pacific in STEM that it becomes necessary to draw on our connection to Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa and face the often isolating experience of being a graduate student in STEM together. However, we also wish to acknowledge the tensions in this necessary alliance: Māori and Pacific are not the same. Māori are tangata whenua and come with many different lived experiences and connections to whenua. Pacific is a large heterogeneous group, and Niue, Cook Islands and Tokelau are also part of the wider New Zealand settler state realm (McLean & Quentin-Baxter, 2017). So while this paper provides insights that reflect the here and now of being Māori or Pacific in STEM, as our numbers increase there will be different papers and different advice to be shared.

Results

Below is a thematic analysis of our answers to the question: "What advice would you give to prospective Māori and/or Pacific students who are looking at beginning postgraduate research in STEM subjects?" We explore key survival strategies connecting to themes of whakawhanaungatanga, kia Māori te tū / o oe o le Pasefika moni, set boundaries and mauri tū, mauri ora.

Whakawhanaungatanga—connect with your people

One of the most common pieces of advice received was to find your people and your network. Connect with those people in and associated with your postgraduate institution who provide cultural normality, safety and wellbeing. To survive and succeed you may need to "find the right people in the right places who have the knowledge to support you and can keep you safe" and to "build a support network that will actually provide you with the support you need". Academia and many Pākehā-dominated STEM institutions can be places that drain your energy and knowledge basket, rather than contribute to it. However, as a postgraduate, you will connect with a community of supervisors, peers and mentors who are all different and are potential sources of differing types of support as you navigate STEM. These are the people who understand your research topic, methodology and methods, the research journey, and the STEM system both within your institution and more broadly at the most relevant national and international levels. Today, more and more supportive pan-discipline Māori and Pacific mentors have also formed rōpū to facilitate postgraduate success. Selected examples include groups such as Te Koronga (see *MAI Journal* 2023 Volume 12 Issue 1: Te Koronga Special); MAI (Māori and Indigenous), a postgraduate network managed by Ngā Pae o Te Maramatanga; Te Kūwaha (NIWA's Māori Environmental Research team); Manaaki Taiao (Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research Māori researchers rōpū); Te Ara Pūtaiao (pan-Crown Research Institute Māori network); Puāwai (a postgraduate Māori- and Pasifika-led group based out of Victoria University of Wellington); and Te Rōpū Pūtaiao (Otago University), who provide whakawhanaungatanga and mentoring, and are supported by the Division of Sciences and kaiāwhina who are academic staff from all of the different science departments.

With these resources and communities, you will need to recognise that while some people will have multiple roles in your journey, "they will have limitations, so pick people that will complement each other". At the end of the day, it will often be up to you to build these support networks because "no one can do it alone, and no one should have to". Tuākana that you start connecting with during your studies will continue to support and nurture you as you pursue your career, just as you in turn will fulfil that role for those who follow. Therefore these "connections matter the most".

Choose appropriate supervision

A very common piece of advice for prospective Māori and Pacific postgraduate students is to choose the right supervisor(s). After all, your relationship with your supervisor is central to the success of your research training. We suggest that "before you begin your postgraduate journey, research your potential supervisors" and "be choosy", and there may be circumstances when it is necessary to "pick your supervisor over your topic". It was highlighted that while academics are highly trained experts in their fields, that does not automatically mean they will be great teachers or supervisors. For some, "having present, and supportive supervisors makes a massive difference". Furthermore, as Māori and Pacific students, it is even more critical to find a supervisor who "respects your values and can support you in conducting research that interests you".

You may consider trying to find a "[Māori and Pacific] supervisor on your supervisory team if you can" or "a peer/tuakana/teina network you can tap into". Key characteristics to consider when selecting a supervisor include an understanding of Māori and Pacific worldviews, the use of Kaupapa Māori and Pacific methodologies, and whether they have experience supervising Māori and Pacific students. Furthermore, even if your potential supervisor is supportive in principle, consider whether they are "able and prepared to provide adequate supervision" to you specifically.

Supervisors play a pivotal role in postgraduate experiences. A supervisory team will help you to navigate the unknowns of the university systems and provide guidance and research expertise. If possible (but it is highly improbable that you will), find someone "who knows how to change the system to embrace our needs better" because "unfortunately, there is still racism within institutions and that is an extra battle that [you] do not need". The right supervisors will help clear a path for you and those who come after you, including shielding you from institutional racism. Collaborators stressed the importance of choosing "a supervisor who can ensure you are covered

with a safe korowai around you and your mahi, especially when it involves us and our whānau and that the tikanga around your mahi is tika and pono for our whānau/hapū me ngā iwi".

Speak directly to "potential supervisors [to] find out how they connect with researchers from different backgrounds to themselves" and "don't be afraid to ask questions and talk with potential supervisors about what they can offer you". We also recommend asking "current and previous students of their research group about their experiences". However, it is important to note that while a particular supervisory style might suit some students, it might not suit you. Ideally, you want a supervisor "who supports you and understands you": Do you thrive with more independence? Do you want a supervisor who provides more regular check-ins? Once you have settled on a supervisor, taking an active role in setting reciprocal expectations is also critical. Especially given the ways that our lived experiences often differ from those of other students, it is worth "negotiat[ing] the work dynamic early on, and potentially the power dynamic". Asking questions about how often you will meet and how they are going to support you (e.g., with setting goals and milestones, opportunities for collaborations and presenting, taking leave for whānau emergencies, kaupapa, tangi or personal/mental health days, expectations of working hours) is also helpful. It is also worth keeping an eye out for potential red flags that may suggest a potential supervisor might not be a good fit for you. This could include a supervisor having too many students, having poor communication, being not willing to explore your research interests, having previous students who do not complete their studies, being interested in Indigenous research but not in collaborating with Indigenous academics or engaging directly with hapū or iwi.

While your supervisor is intimately involved in your research and can be a mentor for your project, it is essential that you build support systems outside of that unique and important relationship.

Connecting to mentors

Connecting with Māori and Pacific mentors could be, and often is, incredibly important to thriving during your studies. Mentors can include members of your supervisory team but also other academics, researchers, staff, students or experts both within and outside the university and country who can guide you in your research. Many universities now have dedicated Māori and Pacific STEM mentorship programmes such as the Tuākana Programme (Rewi et al., 2022) at the University of Auckland and Te Rōpū Āwhina at Victoria University (Richardson et al., 2017). We recommend joining these groups while also trying to connect with more senior Māori and Pacific staff. Mentors can be spread across the landscape geographically and can also come from "whānau, local community, in your department and within the wider institution". They often enable a strong sense of belonging within very colonial institutions and are vital in helping guide you through institutional structures on your haerenga. Māori and Pacific mentors can also keep you grounded as "checkpoints" that enable you to "question the value of your work in terms of who it is for".

More senior Māori and Pacific mentors have the experience to help you navigate the institution and signal what possible moves to make next. Because there are so few Māori and Pacific academics in our universities, and even fewer in science departments, sometimes it is not possible to have Māori or Pacific mentors and we must search for other allies. Pākehā and tauiwi academic mentors can also be important advocates through our journeys. They can pick up extra labour to navigate institutional barriers and use their privilege to evoke institutional change. Conversely, Pākehā and tauiwi academics benefit significantly from mentorship of Māori and Pacific tauira as it often brings many opportunities for them to learn and grow.

Even when you are very selective in choosing your mentors and supervisors, problems can arise, requiring you to navigate the choppy seas between mentors. A pebble turned over and over in the awa has its rough edges smoothed. However, sometimes when a person is tumbled around in a colonial institution, their edges can sharpen. It is important to note that the positive, supportive relationships you have with different supervisors, mentors and other allies might not be held between all those different people. In situations in which you are receiving conflicting information, a skill that you develop in the academy is to make the final call yourself. Keep your reasons for why you do your research top of mind and practise listening to your puku. In holding relationships with different people who are no longer able to hold them with each other, we can act as a conduit to weave perspectives and knowledge together and continue to indigenise STEM for smoother sailing of those who follow.

Build a community of support

While guidance from specific mentors is important, also consider who will be "your people" while

you are at university. Although cross-discipline support structures for Māori and Pacific scholars might be present at your institution, not all communities come ready-made. You may need to seek out and build your community of support from both formal and informal structures within the university and institutions, even if it is just a small group of friends you regularly study with.

Building a community is about finding people you can rely on. It is important to find the support you personally need. Often support is available, but sometimes we are too whakamā to ask for it. This can mean talking to the Māori or Pacific coordinator at the university, asking about all the available resources or "finding an Indigenous support network of some kind". Your community is a space for honesty where you can tell them "what sort of support you are going to need, whether that's to stand up for you in meetings, to pass on opportunities or just to be a kind of ear". It is acceptable to search outside of your discipline and institution for connection too: "Even if there is no one else in your discipline, find an arts grad student or anyone," or even consider whether there is a "network that links regions that could get you in contact with other people in your situation". Communities of support, including online communities, exist within and outside of the university environment.

The negative effects of isolation within the academy can be reduced by having strong external networks. These networks could be your wider iwi, hapū, whānau or other communities, and can be in person or online. It is important to continue to have time for your friends and whānau, who were your community before you entered postgraduate studies and will still be there when you finish. Hui and conferences are also great places to find community; meeting and connecting with other Māori and Pacific folks at conferences can often be more important than the content of the conference itself. If you are isolated within your institution, it is vital to maintain these connections, through emails, professional networks such as LinkedIn and kānohi ki te kānohi catch-ups where possible.

It can also be advantageous to have social and peer-to-peer networks that can act as a safe place to share trials and tribulations. Ideally, people within these networks will understand and empathise with the specificity of being a Māori or Pacific postgraduate today, where institutional drivers for inclusion affect how we navigate space daily (McAllister et al., 2022).

Kia Māori te tū / O oe o le Pasefika moni

Another important strategy for thriving as a post-graduate student is to remain steadfast, authentic and unapologetically yourself, which is captured in the essence of the above title in both te reo Māori and Samoan. While being authentic we must be cognisant of the perceived expectation that we speak for all Māori or Pacific people and know everything about the Māori and Pacific worlds (McAllister et al., 2022). It is important "to be strong and stay true to who you are, no matter how uncomfortable it is for the people in the STEM faculty you belong to". Remind yourself, as you progress in your postgraduate degree, that you have every right to be a STEM researcher. Our people have always been and continue to be scientists, researchers and experts, as told in our stories and songs. As you enter your studies, you will need to be fearless, strong and unapologetic, and maintain your mana: "If there is a time where you will need to stand up for your whakaaro, whānau and whakapapa, that will be the time." Don't let "universities define what you can and can't do".

That said, there are many ways to be Māori or Pacific in STEM. Not everyone has to be a disruptor, and remaining steadfast can simply mean existing as a Māori or Pacific scientist, no matter where you are on your haerenga of (re-) connection to your Māoritanga or Pacific identity. There is no one set way to be a Māori or Pacific scientist, and having whakapapa means you are enough. We all navigate what it means to be Māori and Pacific scientists within our own contexts, and for some people that positioning develops and evolves over time. Be proud of who you are as you bring a different worldview, new skills and ideas that are a gift to the institutions we are attempting to navigate. You can counteract feelings of loneliness and isolation by reminding yourself that you are a product of those gone before and an ancestor to those yet to come: "Remember when you feel alone, you are standing on the shoulders of all your tīpuna who navigated the largest sea. Science is in you!"

Set boundaries

It is vital to "set clear boundaries about your time" as many Māori and Pacific postgraduates in STEM end up doing a great deal of extra, often unpaid labour (McAllister et al., 2022): "People will want you to be involved with things like outreach which you will feel like you can't say no to. It's OK to say no; this kaupapa is a long-term journey that we take together. Academia won't be fixed overnight

so if you can't attend the event, it's OK." Māori and Pacific students can also become the "token" fill-in for other inadequate staff members for culturally specific papers, such as mātauranga papers, as well as reviewers for other students, often without equitable compensation. Due to the small pool of Māori and Pacific postgraduates in institutions, we will also "be inundated with requests for teaching, tutoring, guest speaking, facilitating on subjects related to our subject and/or culture, although we may not be experts in these areas". There is a danger here of exploitation, so a supervisor who can help navigate and advise on when to say no is helpful. As a postgraduate student, these requests will often come from more established staff. While some of these requests can contribute to building our CVs and demonstrate excellence, it is important to "say no to things that are asked of you if you are not comfortable or feel overworked. The best success is you succeeding." Remember to be consciously protective of your time, dedicating it to purposes that relate to the success of you and your whānau. Setting boundaries empowers you to have the journey you want in STEM, finding balance between the cultural service you may want to do and the academic work you need to do.

Postgraduates start their journeys at different stages of their lives. You may have no additional responsibilities and can focus solely on your studies, or you may have a family or other commitments to consider when studying: "While our courses were the same as other students' our home lives were simply different. We would study between picking up kids from ECE [early childhood education] and supporting whānau. Studying was one aspect of our busy lives." With this in mind, it is important to treat postgraduate study like a job. Seriously consider whether you can financially support yourself during the study and how much time you can realistically dedicate to studying. Apply for all the scholarships and funding that you are eligible for. If your scholarship stipend or existing funds are not enough to support you and your whānau, you may need to consider working part-time during your studies. Remember this will require your time and energy, and therefore, changing your course to part-time may be more realistic to avoid burnout. Finding work that aligns with your career goals or addresses your wellbeing needs can be beneficial to your overall experience.

Mauri tū, Mauri ora

"My peers were working long hours and I thought I had to too." Another recurring piece of advice was to "take care of yourself and switch off".

We stress the importance of looking after yourself because "mental health is a real issue in research, particularly STEM as it is a different way of thinking compared to Te Ao Māori". Seek out the help and support that is available through your networks and communities. Most universities and institutions, for example, have free counselling and health services, which we recommend you take full advantage of throughout your studies. Additionally, by setting expectations with your supervisor, taking breaks will be something encouraged and your wellbeing will be a focus of your time with them. We also acknowledge that many Māori and Pacific postgraduate students also have responsibilities outside of their studies, and fulfilling those commitments is a necessary part of your overall wellbeing. Aim to include activities that promote your physical, spiritual, mental and social wellbeing regularly.

Conclusion

We hope that this paper becomes redundant and that these strategies and theories will not be needed in the coming years. However, while we continue to keep the doors open and work on the wider structural reforms, this advice is necessary to ensure that we survive while institutions prepare themselves to ensure that we thrive. "We are right behind you and we've got your back." Kei ngā kaiarataki pūtaiao o āpōpō, tōminahia te mātauranga, whāia kia tata mai, purutia kia mau, e pikitia ai te panekiretanga o tō maunga tiketike.

Glossary

awa	river, stream, creek
haerenga	journey, trip
hapū	subtribe
hui	meeting, to gather
iwi	tribe, extended kinship group
kaiāwhina	helper, assistant, advocate
kānohi ki te kānohi	face to face, in person
kaupapa	topic, purpose, matter for discussion
Kaupapa Māori	a research approach that is informed by Māori philosophy and principles and is by Māori for Māori
kōrero	account, discourse, conversation
korowai	cloak
mahi	work
mana	prestige, authority, status

Māoritanga	Māoriness, Māori way of life, Māori culture
mātauranga	Māori knowledge systems
mauri tū, mauri ora	A whakataukī that can mean "an active soul is a healthy soul". It is often used to signify that stability and connectivity are essential, for both communities and individuals to thrive and achieve well-being.
moana	ocean
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
pono	be true, honest, genuine
puku	stomach
rōpū	goup
tangata whenua	Indigenous people
tangi	funeral
tauira	student
tauiwi	foreigner, non-Māori
teina	less experienced person
Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa	the Pacific Ocean
tika	to be correct, just and true
tikanga	custom, correct procedure, habit
tīpuna	ancestors
tuakana	expert person
tuākana	expert people
waka/vaka	canoe, vehicle
whakaaro	thought, opinion
whakamā	shame, embarrassment
whakapapa	genealogy
whakawhanaungatanga	a process of establishing relationships
whānau	family
whenua	land

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