

# Māori men: An indigenous psychological perspective on the interconnected self

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The positive relational practices of Māori men are seldom explored in academic research. Responding to this gap in the literature, this article explores how Māori men negotiate a positive sense of self and relationships. This research is guided by kaupapa Māori research practice, Māori cultural concepts, and relational understandings of identity and wellbeing. Our ethnographic approach involved direct observations, engagement in shared cultural practices and narrative interviews. During these interactions, participating men invoked a positive sense of self through accounts of belonging, reciprocity, dialogue, intimacy, and care for themselves, their whānau, and traditions. We found that Māori men's identities are negotiated through interactions with whānau (immediate and extended family), and particular places and practices. Our participants demonstrated how Māori men's positive self-constructions are fundamentally interconnected with other people, cultural traditions, socio-cultural practices, physical and symbolic places, as well as their own health and the health of those around them.

**Key words:** Māori men; interconnected self; identity; indigenous psychology; whakapapa; whānau; tūrangawaewae

## Background

Recent decades have seen a renewed emphasis on indigenous psychologies, the goal of which has been to develop psychological knowledge that is understood and experienced by, and is native to the people it is designed for (Allwood & Berry, 2006; Kim, Yang, & Hwang, 2006; Waitoki & Levy, 2016). Such developments of indigenous psychology in Aotearoa are also part of a response to the colonial tendencies of North American and European psychology today (Hodgetts et al., 2010; Nikora et al., 2017). The self is central to psychology, and in mainstream North American and European psychology the self is conceptualised as an autonomous and separate unit. In contrast, a Māori sense of self is fundamentally interconnected. It is made up of personal and collective identities and takes form through ongoing interactions with other people, the environment, physical and spiritual domains, history and the present, and extends beyond the individual body (Love & Waitoki, 2007; Marsden, 2003; Mead, 2003). As Durie (2012) argues, when Māori think about themselves they often do so with relation to a collective body, which demonstrates that Māori identities “exist in relationship to something else” (p. 157). This ‘something else’ is the environment we inhabit and are part of, the people within that environment, and the objects we hold dear.

Although individualism, as prescribed within the dominant Anglo-American psychology (Hodgetts et al., 2010; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) is foreign to traditional Māori intellectual narratives of the self, less individualistic accounts have been available in the social sciences for some time. The notion that Māori identity is relational and emplaced resonates with William James’ (Hermans, 2013) argument that the self is not just located within the skin of a person or separate from the environment and other people. James argued that the self-relevant parts of the environment belong to the self, promoting the notion that the self extends beyond the body – the extended self. The extended self stands in contrast to

the Cartesian dualistic notion of the self as a separate entity from the environment, and people within that environment. The extended-self challenges psychology’s focus on the self as largely ego-centric, preferring a more ‘ex-centric’ approach.

The ‘ex-centric self’, includes our environment, activities and whatever else draws the internal self, outward. More recently, Hermans and Geiser (2012) have argued that we can only understand the self when we realise we are living both in an internal space (inside our minds or in our skin) and an external or extended space (the space outside of our body). Central here is the concept of the dialogical self. The word dialogical means ‘relating to’ so in this sense the self is ‘relating to’ the internal and external space. Māori notions of interconnectedness are very similar to the Chinese tradition of the cobweb self where the self “is an indispensable vehicle for achieving societal goals and the self is a team player in society” (Li, 2013, p. 30). So to privilege the Chinese cobweb self, dialogical self, and ex-centric self, is to privilege the pluralistic nature of what it means to be human. This is not to discard the dominant global approach to psychology, but to understand its usefulness within the cultural context of its own development and the possibility for the diversity that indigenous psychologists bring.

## Research Focus

This article documents how Māori men draw upon their culturally-patterned relationships with other people, traditions, objects and places to construct their sense of self. Men’s identity is important as it is linked to wellbeing, heritage and group affiliation. It enables us to look at the personal and social-self understandings of men and how they ‘do’ being men in the world. Advancing concepts germane to Māori men’s lived Māori cultural identities, provides a way for such men to be understood within the historical contexts of both the Māori world and settler society. As we will demonstrate, the collective nature of Māori culture remains a crucial anchor

point for the formation of our participants’ identities and relationships that can lead to positive health outcomes (Durie, 2003). By taking a strengths based approach, we explore the positive and relational dimensions of Māori men’s lives and draw attention to their resourcefulness and resilience in navigating the complexities of contemporary society. Such an approach to research sits in contrast to the widespread coverage of Māori men’s failings in education, unemployment, crime, health, high prison rates, and lower life expectancy than Māori women and non-Māori generally (Ministry of Health, 2010, 2013).

According to Stanley (2002), psychology has tended to see Māori men “as the perpetrators of the problems. There is very little focus on finding solutions for Māori men, with Māori men” (p. 81). Unsurprisingly, Māori men’s shortcomings are apportioned to individual self-negligence with little regard to the long term impacts of colonisation and the social determinants of health (Hokowhitu, 2004; Marmot, 2005). By drawing upon Māori notions of interconnectedness and interdependence (Durie, 2002; Hodgetts et al., 2010) this article promotes accounts of belonging, inclusion, trust, reciprocity and support, that these men can utilise to invoke a sense of wellness and self that is broader and more dynamic than the picture painted in academic research or mainstream media portrayals (Rankine et al., 2011; Wall, 1997).

The remainder of this article is presented in three sections that explore the ways in which Māori men in this study foster the interconnected Māori self in different spheres of their lives and through a range of Māori relational practices. To begin with we overview our research strategy which includes a description of the participants, processes of engagement and kaupapa Māori methodologies. Section two focuses upon the findings where the men’s sense of self is expressed through their connectedness to their tūrangawaewae (traditional place to stand, place where one has the right to stand), whanau (immediate and extended family), kaumātua (elders) and whakapapa (genealogy) from which health can be derived. The third and final section will provide some concluding comments and implications for psychology.

**Research Strategy**

This article draws upon accounts of five Māori men in working class occupations, who engage in traditional and more contemporary Māori cultural practices. Our participants either lived in their traditional homelands or visited regularly (see Table 1) and were contacted through the first author’s personal and familial networks. This in-depth qualitative research was not designed to search for universal truths (Flyvbjerg, 2001) among Māori men, but rather considers the role Māori cultural concepts have had in our participants ability to flourish (Kingi et al., 2014).

An ethnographic approach was utilised over a 12 month period in an attempt to observe the participants within their everyday contexts through observations and by participating in shared practices (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2013; Simmel, 1997). Communication and engagement with these men occurred in their homes, the homes of their relatives, at community or whānau events or on their marae (ceremonial courtyard and ritual arena specific to the socio-cultural

history of a sub-tribe and or tribe). The emphasis was on engaging openly with these men and producing material that could inform a joint interpretation of their lives, rather than simply obtaining information to be analysed solely by researchers. One to one narrative interviews were conducted to ensure “rich or ‘thick’ descriptive accounts. For some of the men, interviews took the form of ‘walk-along’ discussions where participants were prompted by the meanings of their surroundings and environments with relation to the topic at hand (Evans & Jones, 2011). In some cases, this meant discussing life experiences outside of their children’s kohanga reo (early childhood centre) and kura kaupapa (total Māori immersion primary school). On another occasion, this meant participating in a ‘whānau-golf’ day or the dismembering of a beast (cow) in preparation for a family tangihanga (traditional Māori death ritual/funeral process). In this regard, the first author witnessed the multiplicity of roles the participants held and how these roles would sometimes converge, overlap or remain separate. Thus, the observations looked locally at particular events in order to understand the broader systemic elements of people’s socio/cultural worlds.

**Table 1: Demographic details for Participants**

Pseudonym	Age	Iwi (tribal affiliations)	Occupation	Partner	Children	Current place of residence
Waka	36	Taranaki	Tertiary student	Yes	Yes	Hamilton
Winiata	44	Tuhoe	Fencing/Spraying	Yes	Yes	Ruatoki
Pāora	45	Tuhoe	Security	Yes	Yes	Whakatane
Awa	38	Ngati Awa	Operations manager (factory)	Yes	Yes	Whakatane
Tame	40	Tuhoe	Manager of At Risk Youth programme	Yes	Yes	Rotorua

This research was guided by a Kaupapa Māori framework, which meant legitimising Māori ways of being, values, core assumptions, ideas and knowledge as important aspects of research (Jones, Crengle, & McCreanor, 2006; Smith, 2012). The need for kaupapa Māori research is particularly evident today because of the failure of ‘mainstream’ psychological research to respond openly to indigenous knowledge and the survival or well-being of indigenous people (Stewart-Harawira, 2013). A kaupapa Māori approach does not, however, mean discarding all European knowledge, but instead views Eurocentric ways of knowing as possessing some insights whilst being generally relative to the cultural context of its own development.

The decolonising of Eurocentric research also requires us to challenge colonial notions of the individual, as the decontextualised and autonomous self, and to instead

advance the notion of the self as the relationally and collectively situated person. Another part of drawing upon a kaupapa Māori approach is to understand the position of the researchers. The first author is of Tūhoe descent and raised within traditional Māori ways of being and knowing. The second author is of Kai Tahu descent and the third author is of Pākehā and Dutch heritage. The authors have between 10 to 20 years working within the kaupapa Māori research space and are members of the Māori & Psychology Research Unit (University of Waikato).

The analysis process was guided by the research corpus and shaped by a Māori knowledge paradigm and Māori cultural concepts. In addition, we drew on the notion of researchers as bricoleurs (Kincheloe, 2005) who can operate inter-disciplinarily to combine methodological and analytical strategies required for a specific project. This analytic strategy engages with the critical nature of everyday life and the complexities of men's interactions, relationships and well-being. Our analysis moved beyond the description of specific stories to make broader observations about the ways in which social relationships and practices are rendered meaningful through these narratives (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2013). By drawing upon Māori cultural knowledge as a key interpretative and analytic framework, we question the Eurocentric nature of psychology taught in Aotearoa that positions Euro-American psychology as superior to Māori worldviews, and which impoverishes our understandings of the relational nature of being Māori (Nairn, 2012; Nikora et al., 2017). More specifically, this article contributes to work on indigenous psychologies that is anchored in a Māori understanding of the self, which for Aotearoa emphasises the retention of an identity as Māori and the centralising of Māori aspirations and priorities beyond those set by mainstream psychology.

## Analysis

### *Tūrangawaewae, marae and the interconnected Māori self*

Being Māori is felt, embodied, and emplaced (Hodgetts, Rua, King, & Te Whetu, 2016). The men in this research argue that their sense of self is culturally, relationally and geographically located within their tūrangawaewae. Tūrangawaewae means 'a traditional place to stand', where the men can say: "I belong here. I can stand here without challenge. My ancestors stood here before me. My children will stand tall here" (Mead, 2003, p. 43). Connecting to the place of one's ancestors is important for Māori to sustain whakapapa as a core part of the Māori interconnected self. For Winiata, his sense of self as a Māori man is "to know where you're from". To know who you are and where you are from constitutes an embodied and enacted form of knowledge where whanaungatanga (relationships) and whakapapa (genealogy) are embedded in place and layered with various forms of cultural knowledge, practices, expectations and obligations.

Winiata's tūrangawaewae is in Te Urewera, the densely forested ancestral homelands of the Tūhoe tribal people. Winiata's sense of belonging is inextricably connected with

this landscape: "...with the bush, how you live in the bush and obviously living up here [in Te Urewera], that's a big part of your life". Winiata also describes the importance of hunting and farming in this area where he is enculturated into his tribal whakapapa (ancestral genealogy). One of Winiata's aspirations is to ensure he passes on his practical skills and knowledge of 'the bush' to younger generations, most of whom now live in urban centres. By bringing nephews, nieces and his own children out of the daily 'humdrum' of life in the settler society and back to spend time in Te Urewera, Winiata can ensure younger whānau have an embodied and emplaced experience of their belonging in this place as their tūrangawaewae (place of belonging).

When Winiata talks about Te Urewera and the hunting and camping, he reflects upon his origins, which are ancient. These landscapes are sustained by personal and regular visits where positive experiences are derived for Winiata and his whānau. Intimate knowledge of the landscape ensures that the place lives within them as much as they live within the place. The attachment Winiata has with Te Urewera is what can be referred to as the 'Tūhoe-Te Urewera synonymity'. For Te Awekotuku and Nikora (2003), this is the notion that, "people make places just as much as places make people. People and places derive their identities from each other to a significant extent" (p. 11). The synonymity between people and landscapes can provide beneficial qualities for men who are part of a broader cultural narrative regarding what it is to be a Māori man. To separate the human and physical environment is to transgress traditional notions of the interconnected Māori self as Te Awekotuku and Nikora (2003) explain:

*Tūhoe retain a strong sense of being Tūhoe, and a very deep sense of attachment with Te Urewera. This attachment is more than an emotional and cognitive experience. It is both an actual and symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/affective meanings to Te Urewera forged through genealogy, cosmology, pilgrimage, narrative and economics (Te Awekotuku & Nikora, 2003, p. 15).*

Engagement with the ancestral environment, including stories relating to the creeks, hills, ranges, ridgelines, rivers, flora, and fauna in Te Urewera, is associated with the geography of the participants' identities as Māori men connected to their tūrangawaewae. A sense of well-being materialises in the physical and cultural elements of Tūhoe's ancient relationship with Te Urewera.

Within the vastness of one's tūrangawaewae, the other significant places are marae, which exist as important cultural institutions in this landscape. The marae is the heart of a hapū (sub-tribe) and is the epitome of collective identity. The marae is the ceremonial courtyard and the ritual arena specific to the history of the hapū. Marae are important socio-cultural spaces, as is summed up by Te Rangihau (1992, p. 186): "The marae is the repository of all the historical things, of all the traditions, all the mythology and other things which make up the tangibles of Māoriness...". The marae is also a geographical space for these men where a sense of well-being is derived through interaction between kin of the marae, and the physical environment occurs. For example, Tame talks about his sense of self as "being involved with the marae when I can".

Participating in marae affairs, Tame's identity as a hapū and tribal member where heritage, care, respite, belonging and the cultivation of relationships are enacted. Through participation in whānau activities, events and cultural institutions at the marae, belonging and a sense of community occurs for these men. Without relegating all Māori cultural knowledge and practices to this space, the marae does provide the men with a cultural bastion that strengthens their identity as Māori interconnected selves.

Various scholars have argued for the importance of addressing indigenous health through culturally holistic approaches that emphasise the health-enhancing impacts of community ties and secure links to place (Hodgetts et al., 2016; Penehira, Smith, Green, & Aspin, 2011). Māori models of health emphasise the complex interplay between people and their environments. As such, the health of a person includes the places in which they reside and the relationships in these places. The men's engagement and emplaced practices reproduce a shared cosmological bond with their marae and tūrangawaewae (place to stand) by reminding these men that they are a product of their environment and that they can draw strength from their history and from belonging in such places. This connection between social activity and the physicality of marae can be so 'taken-for-granted' that one can forget how culturally distinctive the marae can be for one's sense of being Māori. This was particularly so for Waka:

*To put it into context, you don't know you're Māori until you step out of the game. So when we went to Hong Kong, we didn't realise how small New Zealand was and you didn't realise how distinct you were. Just, for example, a tangihanga. Grew up around the marae, somebody passes away, they come to the marae and groups come on and all that.*

'The game' to which Waka refers is the Māori world and its cultural mores. In using this metaphor, Waka alludes to the taken-for-granted Māori ways of being and interacting in spaces such as the marae, knowledge of which is cultivated through regular engagements. Waka reflects on how this taken-for-granted world was ruptured when he travelled overseas. Having a strong association with whānau, hapū and iwi and being involved in associated tribal practices is considered a central element to these men's Māori identity and competence in the Māori world (Durie, 2006). Remaining connected to the Māori world also depends upon access to key cultural and geographical features such as land, and marae. Being geographically disconnected from one's tūrangawaewae (traditional place to stand), as many 'urban Māori' who reside primarily in the settler society are, does not make these people any less Māori. It can, however, make it more difficult for people in such situations to realise their cultural selves in traditional ways (Durie, 2006). Regular visits to one's ancestral land and marae, for those who know where it is, provide one means of reconnection to, and exploration of, the self and ancestral place to belong. For example, Awa has been taking his children back to the marae to participate in whānau volunteer working days. During these visits his children have the opportunity to explore and discover who they are as members of their whānau and hapū:

*I've been taking my kids back (to the marae) and*

*they go, "Koro [grandfather/elder/kaumātua], there's someone with our name over there", and my dad goes, "...that's my father, that's your great grandfather" and the connection I've seen in them. The rest of the day I see them sitting around that headstone, touching it and "...why does he get this big monument dad?" and I go "...because he was a chief for our people and because they thought he was special".*

For Awa these visits have ensured the cultural connectedness of his children, "I'm confident my children under my guidance, I can get them to close the [cultural] gap, I'll push them across to close the gap". Awa's actions are opportunities for making whakapapa connections and represent one aspect of a cultural process towards a vibrant Māori identity. For the children, being with their koro (and kaumātua) on the marae and being able to ask questions ensures intergenerational connectedness. Their koro represents the living face of those ancestors who have passed and affirm the children's sense of connection and belonging in place.

In sum, the participants' sense of belonging is bound to their tūrangawaewae or ancient sense of geographic place(s), as much as it is to their whakapapa. Places like Te Urewera are proverbial constants in their lives and reinforced by the whakataukī (saying) "Whatu ngarongaro te tangata, toitu te whenua - People perish but the land is permanent" (Durie, 2001, p. 115). The permanency of place, like the marae, is a helpful notion for these men against a backdrop of colonial destabilisation in their lives. The marae is an everyday institution for these men. Not all Māori have retained such connectedness. However, these men have. Connectedness to their tūrangawaewae (traditional place to stand) and marae provides strength and cohesion for these men as well as their past and future generations. Connections to place, the past and cultural institutions in the present provide a sound relational and material basis for expressions of Māori identity.

### Whānau

In the on-going engagements with these men there were constant references to their partners and children as significant to their sense of who they are. In fact, all but one of the men were interviewed in their homes where partners, children, and/or extended whānau members were present. Family members would often be involved in parts of the interview as they busied themselves with everyday routines that involved cooking meals, making cups of tea, cuddling their babies, and reassuring the older children as they played outside. Having family members around allowed the men to engage them as a sounding-board for recalling events, people and practices. The men would also be corrected or reminded about seemingly unremarkable and taken-for-granted aspects of their lives. Pāora, for example, talks about the balance he has with his wife, the support she provides for him and their children. When Pāora's 14-year-old son walks past us in our interview, he is prompted by his son's presence. Pāora claims his son sometimes snuggles up to his parents at night to feel assured and connected:

*...he's loved to the max by his mother, his sisters they spoil him and he's not whakahīhī [vain or conceited]... He's all respect when he talks to people. Quite a humble*

*boy and for us that's the boy we want. Even at 14, 15 in a month, sometimes he'll jump in between me and his mother at night and sleep with us bro. Which isn't really romantic, but that's who he is and for us as whānau we're cool with that (Pāora).*

A sense of humility, kindness and regard for others are values the men highlight as important features for who they and who their children are. This is consistent with Pere's (1991) reflections on aroha (love/support) being at the core of whanuanga (relationship/sense of family connection). As a fundamental Māori concept, aroha (love/care/support) underpins relational care through actions and everyday practices as a contribution towards the well-being of whānau. In talking about his son and associated relationships, Pāora presents himself as a caring Māori father who is a key link in whakapapa. In this way, aroha is central to Pāora's sense of self through parenting and nourishing the psyche or spirit of whānau as a way of honouring and reaffirming their whakapapa. The concept of aroha (love/support) extends beyond words. For Pere (1991, p. 6), it entails actions, in that "each person respecting and caring for the other engenders a climate of goodwill and support". Even though Pāora's son is no longer a child, Pāora is reassured that his son has retained closeness with his parents and siblings.

Such intimacy in interconnectedness is important to these men, especially those who have a large whānau. Kinship binds these men to their whanaunga (relative, relation, kin), where they draw warmth, aroha and resources from their entire family and extended whakapapa. Pāora and Winiata are first cousins and they share over 80 first cousins with whom they are in constant contact. Awa is one of seven siblings as well. Tame has five other siblings, and was raised by his grandfather among his uncles, aunties and cousins. Waka reflected upon the influential nature of his whānau,

*Definitely the whānau, mother, dad, brothers. That's the influence really. My mum has 11 brothers and sisters...I thought that was usual until you move away from your home and you think, 'ah, 11's a humungous family'. I thought everyone has 11. The old man has 14 brothers and sisters so it's like that was the norm. Big families, heaps of cousins was the norm...*

A collectivist approach to the men's sense of self is lived through connections with whānau. Subsequently, the men find well-being within collectivist groupings or whānau beyond their immediate selves. Oishi and Diener (2009) have shown how different cultural groups appear to derive well-being by different means. These authors compared the well-being of Asian and European Americans and found that:

*European Americans appear to gain and maintain their well-being by achieving goals that they pursue for their own enjoyment and fun. On the other hand, Asian Americans seem to attain and maintain their well-being by achieving goals that they pursue to make important others happy and meet the expectations of others (p. 104).*

The Māori men in our research identify with their cultural and whānau groupings, and to the associated obligations to each other as a pathway to enhanced health for themselves

and the other people with whom they share whakapapa. Briefly, whānau like whakapapa is associated with relational, psychological and material resources, but it also relies on cultural knowledge of how to be, and act as part of the network.

Relationships with significant others are beneficial to people's physical and mental health as they can help make sense of the world by ordering it and reproducing it in meaningful ways. Such relationships can also provide what Stone (2005) calls a 'perceptual position'. That is, the men can use the perspectives of various people to generate insights and understandings of the world and their place in it through other whānau members. Knowledge of reciprocity, expectations, roles and responsibilities to the whānau are gained by being an active member and through caring practices associated with whanuanga (process of establishing relationships; relating to others) and whakapapa. If whakapapa is not nurtured through regular caring practices, and the physical practice of 'seeing', or kanohi kitea, disruption of the interconnected Māori self may follow. The Māori interconnected self relies on social relationships.

### *Kaumātua*

A further extension of the men's whakapapa is the role kaumātua (elders) play in their lives. Kaumātua are seen as pillars of tradition within Māori culture who offer wisdom, humility and a living link to the past as suggested by the following whakataukī (proverbial saying) "he kitenga kanohi, he hokinga whakaaro – to see a face is to stir the memory" (Dyall, Skipper, Kepa, Hayman, & Kerse, 2013, p. 65). This whakataukī illustrates the role kaumātua can have in recounting lived connections with those ancestors long past and the traditions associated with their lived memories. The cultural strength of Māori communities comes from kaumātua who hold the knowledge of Māori cultural lore/law, act as the primary practitioners of cultural practices (since they have the strongest links to the past), and can be the cultural face of the whānau (immediate and extended family).

Durie (2003, p. 76) states, "the standing of the tribe, its mana (power/authority), as distinct from its size, relates more to the visible presence and authority of its elders than to the vigorous activities of its younger members". Such a perspective is also reflected in Pere's (1991) Te Wheke Health Model which has a dimension called 'hā a koro mā, a kui mā' which can be translated as 'breath of life from forebears'. Pere proposes that well-being comes from a positive awareness of elders and the influential role they play in the whānau and community and also in the transmission of traditional and historical knowledge. So when Winiata considers his identity as a Māori man he immediately states, "To respect your elders". For the participants, to respect one's elders is to acknowledge one's whakapapa and the presence of their kaumātua (elders) enhances the importance of their interconnected selves. The reverence held by the men towards their kaumātua is also reflected in comments about cultural practices and contributions to daily life:

*I know my role at home [on the marae<sup>1</sup>] is to do the kitchen role because I know I'm not up to that calibre of*

1 Ceremonial courtyard and ritual arena specific to the socio-cultural history of a sub-tribe and or tribe.

*my uncles and all the rest [of the elders] at home (Waka).*

There is an expectation here that kaumātua roles occur within religious or cultural contexts, where their advice and wisdom is a taonga (tangible or intangible thing of value) to be appreciated and respected. While kaumātua assume these positions of responsibility, they are also watchful and mindful of people showing leadership within the whānau by engaging in expected practices by which they can make contributions to the group effort in spaces such as the marae. Awa, for instance, comments:

*Some of the kaumātua want me to be there [on the paepae tapu; sacred oratory space of the cultural experts], but my role is really around the functioning of the marae so they [kaumātua] can focus on the tangihanga. So I'm just trying to help that come together (Awa).*

This quote reveals how Awa's kaumātua see his leadership potential. However, Awa thinks he still needs to increase his cultural knowledge to attain the status of someone who can operate confidently in the ritualised spaces of the marae. Instead, he offers his skills in other ways and more in terms of the daily management of the marae. Both Waka and Awa are middle-aged men and they understand the demands placed on kaumātua, so to support these elders, they provide what Durie (2003) calls 'industrial and executive leadership'. In this regard, Waka and Awa lead the day-to-day affairs of the whānau, marae and hapū (sub-tribe), but their kaumātua retain the status, tradition and integrity of their people. Without kaumātua leadership "a Māori community will be the poorer and at least in other Māori eyes, be unable to function effectively or to fulfil its obligations" (Durie, 2003, p. 76). Consequently, when the participants talk about 'respecting your elders', they are referring to the cultural health of their community. Their *mana* (power/authority) or identity as Māori men is related to the health of kaumātua who represent their tribal identity. Having kaumātua present in their lives, and the authoritative knowledge kaumātua are seen to hold, reaffirms the interconnected view of the self. The more practical industrial and executive leadership offered by men such as Waka and Awa combined with that of kaumātua and other whānau preserve the *mana* (power/authority) of a well-functioning and integrated hapū (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribe).

The men also reflect on the importance of regular everyday engagements with their kaumātua as a way of being present with them. For example, Waka commented, "Because we were always over their place mowing the lawns doing whatever because they couldn't do it...help out with their gardens." Such mundane activities or socio-cultural practices are important to whanaungatanga as they can build and maintain relationship. When Tame returns to visit his grandfather, who raised him, there is no expectation that he will be treated any differently to his experiences during childhood when the home was full of whānau. Tame states: "I'm 40 years old and I'm still sleeping on my grandfather's couch". He laughs at this notion, but for him where he sleeps is irrelevant as being home and embracing his whakapapa and associated whanaungatanga with his koroua (elder/grandfather) is more important than his own personal comfort and needs. Tame seamlessly moves back into the space as if nothing has changed, since Tame and his koroua

have an interconnection that always exists. Connectedness in these moments reflects a 'natural rhythm' of people's everyday practices which act as pointers to understanding the importance of such innocuous activities (de Certeau, 1984) in relation to sustaining one's whakapapa and whānauangatanga. Building and maintaining these relationships in these moments is a sacred process as bonds of association and obligation are developed and practiced. It is a process that connects generations and keeps core values of respect, connection, reciprocity and support within Māori culture – from which these men construct much of their core selves and sense of belonging – alive into the future.

Whakapapa and Whanaungatanga as relational constructs

Whakapapa and whanaungatanga as cultural concepts emphasise the importance of the interconnected self in terms of being part of a larger social group where "human life is woven into relationships and situations and is not independent of context" (Hodgetts et al., 2010, p. 140). Here, we define whakapapa as 'genealogy', and as a cultural institution that allows one to lay claim to kin and tribal ancestral lines and group identities. In this regard, our participants can claim multiple whakapapa (genealogies) as well as a connection to the natural Māori world and the Māori cosmological realm. For this article, we define whanaungatanga as being a 'process of establishing relationships and/or relating to others'. Such relationships can occur within and outside of one's whakapapa. The importance of recognising these two Māori cultural concepts is in the men's ability to invoke an affiliation to whānau, hapū (sub-tribe) and iwi (tribe) membership through birth-right and broader whanaungatanga (relational) networks and associated practices (Mead, 2003) that contributes to a positive sense of self. Opportunities to solidify quality relationships with others occur through the men's participation in whānau life, cultural events, and traditions. These men's identities are relationally embedded into their whakapapa and the "social and cultural structures that connect them to others in multifaceted ways" (Hall & Lamont, 2013, p. 49). Pere (1982, p. 11) made clear the importance of whakapapa for Māori:

*Traditionally, every adult person was expected to know and to be able to trace descent back to the tribal ancestor, or back to at least the common ancestor after whom the group with whom one lived was named. The rights and claims that an individual could make to the resources of the group she or he related to, or identified with, depended on such knowledge.*

The social bonds fostered through whakapapa and whanaungatanga (processes of establishing relationships/relating to others) are central to the Māori self, and for enhancing our participants' health. In valuing their social networks, the men define themselves with relation to others in ways that reflect their relational being, where broader processes shape their identities. Building and maintaining a cobweb of relational links through family and community ties is a sacred process through which bonds of association and obligation are developed and practiced. Opportunities to participate and build relationships or whanaungatanga allow the men to respond to the socio-cultural challenges facing Māori in contemporary times, where cultural isolation and fragmentation can lead to identity loss and ill-health.

Whakapapa and whanaungatanga offers the men a set of relationships they can draw upon for comfort, support, and identity so they need never feel alone. A connectedness to family networks and support systems also offers a 'multiplier effect' (Hall & Lamont, 2013) by which the men link with others, and benefit from the people and resources held in this social systems. In this regard, the men are always part of a 'social whole' where a sense of pride, belonging, connectedness and support occurs.

The importance of whakapapa as a social tool that binds people together is reflected in Waka's upbringing. Waka experienced the importance of developing a meaningful relationship to his whakapapa through the decision-making of his step-father who ensured that he remained connected to his biological father. Knowing the totality of a person's whakapapa was the intention of Waka's step-father, as he recalls:

*My biological father is Tūhoe. My step dad who's Ngāti Porou, pretty much brought me up as his son, was legally adopted too. (He) wrote to my biological dad and said, 'Your son's here if you want him to come home for holidays, come pick him up'. So it was actually the step dad that made the contact and wanted me to go (Waka).*

Such extracts speak to how whakapapa is an anchor point for Māori society that holds people together and governs the relationships between kin. Even if a person does not know their whakapapa today, someone else may, and this relationship transcends personal identity to bind them to larger group-based identities (Ritchie, 1992). Waka's step-father wanted him to know his whakapapa intimately, and physically experience it through time spent with his biological family via *kanohi kitea*, *the seen face*. *Kanohi kitea* provides a cultural guideline towards ongoing and meaningful contact within the Māori world (Dansey, 1995). Waka's example reflects the point that the interconnected Māori self is not simply a cognitive psychological process, but one that must be experienced materially.

The Māori world expects people to enact their whakapapa through seeing each other physically, allowing opportunities for relationships to be established and to be reaffirmed. Processes surrounding whakapapa evolve and are negotiable but one thing is certain, whakapapa always requires nurturing as Waka experienced. *Kanohi kitea* (seen face) also involves seeing the ancestors, since whakapapa links those living today with earlier generations and thus extends beyond the notion of the separate Cartesian self. The contemporary Māori self thus reflects the living face of the ancestors and their associated stories. Consequently, through *kanohi kitea* the Māori interconnected self provides the men with a historical sense of relatedness to their whānau (family/families) and a manifestation of collective identity. As is the case with all our participants, Waka's experience of his entire whakapapa moves beyond simply acknowledging bloodlines, and demonstrates how a meaningful and realised relationship with his whakapapa was encouraged.

Whanaungatanga is a cultural concept that allows people to locate themselves across time and place, and is similar to whakapapa in terms of connectedness with generations past, present and in the future. Whakapapa reflects the

relational dimensions of their identity that extend beyond the individual self. A dialogue with ancestors, is reflected in the Māori greeting, 'nō hea koe?' (where are you from?) or 'ko wai to whānau?' (who is your family wider/extended?). These questions are an attempt to locate the person through whakapapa and the spaces that whakapapa inhabits. This is an effort to 'see' the individual in the totality of their ancestral whakapapa (genealogy/genealogical ties), including their waka (ancestral voyaging canoe), iwi (tribe), hapū (sub-tribe), marae (ceremonial courtyard of the hapū) and whānau. These are points of narrative reference for creating connectedness to that person's interconnected self by recounting links both current and past. The simple Māori greetings are endeavours to 'see that person' within their familial and celestial totality. The individual is valued within that larger context of their whakapapa, and the question 'what is your name?' may come later, after connectedness and familiarity is formed with the person's whakapapa.

### Concluding Comments

In our research, Māori men reflected their knowing of who they are by acknowledging interdependence through shared whakapapa (genealogy) and whanaungatanga. Their identities extend to other people, including *kaumātua* (elders) who can often embody their tribal identities. Fostering whakapapa through whanaungatanga (shared relational bonds), *kanohi kitea* (the seen face) and *tūrangawaewae* enhances the men's sense of being beyond the individualised Cartesian self, promoted in mainstream psychology. Yet, whakapapa and whānau are understandings that are compatible with classic European and American scholarship on the dialogical self, which see people as literally sharing parts of themselves with the environment and those around them. This relational notion of the self, evident in the lives of our participants, is important as it can buffer whānau living in economic hardship from adversity and negative portrayals.

Our research with Māori men could have easily adopted a negative, bleak and problem-focused orientation as often occurs within psychology (Wong, Steinfeldt, Speight, & Hickman, 2010). Our approach addresses the paucity of holistic and strengths-based research on Māori men in psychology (Hodgetts, Nikora, & Rua, 2011; Hodgetts & Rua, 2010; Hodgetts et al., 2016; Hutchings & Aspin, 2007; King, Hodgetts, Rua, & Te Whetu, 2016; Stanley, 2002). Instead, we present examples of Māori men who care and nurture others, and make positive contributions to their community. Our participants are agentic in their capacity to articulate and present a more complex and humane version of themselves whilst questioning the negative portrayals. That such identities as Māori interconnected selves are in play, demands the development of psychological understandings capable of generating a meaningful response relative to the cultural context of these men. Indigenous psychologies offer an approach to understanding the self beyond the dominance of mainstream Eurocentric psychological knowledge. However, much more needs to occur if we are to better understand the dynamics of Māori men's sense of self, place and position in society beyond the deficit approach.



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