Understanding Cultural Relationships: Whānau, Whanaungatanga and Māori Student Attainment of University Entrance in a Mainstream Secondary School in Aotearoa, New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to understand the importance of cultural relationships in supporting Māori student achievement of University Entrance. This research is based on the stories of five female ākonga Māori, all of whom completed five years of secondary education, and their whānau. It looks deeply into their relational experiences of whanaungatanga and whānautanga with their school, and the impact this had on their academic achievement of NCEA Level 3 and University Entrance.

The results highlight the importance of culturally grounded transformative praxis and the risk of attempting to incorporate culturally located principles such as whānau and whanaungatanga into a schooling context, while still operating within historical hegemonic frameworks.

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E noho ana ahau i roto i te manaakitanga o ngā iwi o Aotearoa[1]

My education in Canada in the 1970s and 80s was similar to the colonial curriculum delivered in New Zealand. While Canadian History was a compulsory subject, the focus was on how Canada was *settled* first by French Colonists, then British. I was taught about the battles between the British, the French and the (Colonial) Americans to claim sovereignty over the New World. Indigenous peoples were secondary characters in these histories, mentioned as allies, guides, or more often as a wild, potential danger lurking in the forest. I learned that they, now *civilised*, lived on government reservations, but I had no understanding of where these reservations were or what the living conditions were like. I was completely oblivious to residential schools. I grew up never having met or even seen a First Nations person, except on TV where they were primarily cast as one-dimensional sidekicks or background characters. No one talked about them. They were *others*. My ignorance changed when I went to university in northern Ontario, in a city that was the hub for indigenous communities and reservations further north. As a student teacher there, I was told by an associate teacher on my first teaching practicum to 'ignore the native kid down the back as they're never here for long.' This moment stands as the start of my journey towards critical consciousness of the systemic inequities for indigenous peoples created by colonisation.

My arrival in New Zealand in the late 1990s was a cultural awakening. I came to teach at a secondary school in a community that was, on the surface, proud of its strong bicultural identity. People got along, Māori and non-Māori, as evidenced each Saturday at every sporting venue in town. In my naivety, I thought I had

[1] I begin this thesis with my pepeha. "The pepeha is an introduction for any person and their affiliations in a Māori context for one purpose, to *make connections*." (Opai, 2022). My pepeha, loosely translated states: I am a foreigner from Canada/My ancestors are English and Irish/Hockley Valley in Ontario is my standing place/I stay under the generosity of the tribes of Aotearoa New Zealand.

landed in some sort of post-colonial nirvana. I soon became aware of the cracks; a large wealth gap, significant social, educational and health disparities, and a subversive sense of us and them. When I married into a Māori *whānau* (family), my cultural lens on the fabric of society in Aotearoa, New Zealand was sharply refocused. The unsettling niggles of inequity and othering I had experienced conceptually, were a daily reality for the people I loved.

A few years ago, our nephew came to live with us for the second half of his year 13 when his mum moved to Australia for work. He had been educated in a *kura kaupapa Māori* (Māori immersion school) until the end of NCEA[2] Level One when he began to attend a mainstream school. He had achieved sound results in both NCEA Levels One and Two, however when he moved in with us in July, he had attained fewer than 10 of the 60 credits required for his Level Three Certificate. He felt lost and was resigned to his situation. I watched in awe as my wife transitioned into full-blown Aunty mode, requesting a meeting with the principal to ask how they had allowed our nephew to flounder, and to co-construct a plan with the school to support his success. We dropped him at the school gate every day until the very end of that school year, long after classes had finished for other seniors in the school and past the end of the NCEA examination period. With the collective effort of our nephew, our whānau and his school, he finished the year having attained not only his NCEA Level Three certificate, but University Entrance (UE)[3] qualification, and a letter of acceptance to a university as well.

I've reflected on that story numerous times in my career since that year. There are lessons for us as educators, schools, and a system. Lessons about systemic failure, but also about expectations, nurture, care, and what can be achieved when we commit to work as a collective and are willing to do *whatever it takes* to support success.

Education is internationally recognised as a primary influence on personal, societal, and global outcomes. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2010) identifies education as a key Social Determinant of Health, impacting on short and long-term

[2] The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is the main national qualification for secondary school students in New Zealand. (NZQA, *How NCEA Works*, n.d.)
[3] University Entrance (UE) is the minimum requirement to go to a New Zealand university. (NZQA, *University Entrance*, n.d.)

health inequities and life expectancy. The United Nations (2022) prioritises inclusive and equitable quality education as fourth of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for global transformation by 2030. Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN General Assembly, 2007) specifically protects the right of indigenous children to "all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination" (p. 13). In Aotearoa, New Zealand, the disparities in equitable educational outcomes between Māori students and their non-Māori counterparts has been evident for as long as formal education has existed. Hegemonic policies and practices have existed in the education system since The Education Act of 1877 through to the current New Zealand Curriculum, which have served to disadvantage Māori students (Consedine & Consedine, 2012). A 2019 study by Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL, 2019) found that 21 of 100 Māori school leavers get University Entrance. The report goes on to state that attainment of a degree level qualification is a "strong predictor of long-term prosperity" (p. 10).

The New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER), reinforces this finding, outlining the significant negative impact of leaving school without qualification or not going on to tertiary education:

> This could decrease their chances of employment by 12–33%. When they do achieve employment, their incomes will be up to $20,000 lower per year. They will have lower health literacy, be more likely to smoke, with an increased chance of obesity and poor health outcomes. They are more likely to experience mental health distress and depression. Their self-esteem will be lower, and their social and civic participation will also be lower than average.
>
> (NZIER, 2021, p. 14)

Higher education does not simply benefit individuals, it also contributes to our country's economic growth and social cohesion (Alton-Lee, 2017). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD, 2013) economic survey sights the large gap in educational achievement as a significant factor impacting Aotearoa New Zealand's macroeconomic success, stating:

> From both a social and economic point of view, it will be essential to develop more fully the human capital of the fast growing demographic group of ethnic minorities. Better teaching quality is needed, with more attention devoted to diversity of student needs and learning approaches to keep children in school." (p. 99)

The responsibility secondary schools hold as qualification providers within the New Zealand Qualifications Framework is significant. Students who gain their qualifications while at secondary school have better outcomes than those who gain similar qualifications through tertiary providers. In his report to the Ministry of Education, Earle (2010) found that Level One to Three certificates attained through a tertiary provider, while equivalent in level to school qualifications, were associated with lower employment and income than school qualifications, with social outcomes similar to those of people with no qualifications.

Each of the three iterations of New Zealand's Māori Educational Strategy, Ka Hikitia (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2008b, 2013, 2020a) have at their core the strategic goal of Māori enjoying and achieving education success as Māori. Inherent in this goal is the call for change in the structures and practices within our educational system that have disadvantaged Māori from achieving their potential. Ministry of Education funded initiatives Te Kotahitanga (2003-2012), He Kākano (2010-2012), and Kia Eke Panuku (2014-2016) worked with mainstream secondary schools to build capacity to bring the vision of Ka Hikitia to life. Central to the evidence-based, culturally sustaining pedagogies and leadership practices promoted within these initiatives was the development of culturally grounded relationships with Māori students, their whānau and communities based on kaupapa Māori principles of *whānau* and *whanaungatanga* (Bishop et al., 2007). Alton-Lee's (2015) evaluation of Phase 5 of Te Kotahitanga measured significant gains for Māori students' attainment of NCEA qualifications in participating schools when compared to similar schools outside the initiative. A recent study in the Ministry of Education's Best Evidence Synthesis Programme: Hei Kete Raukura, demonstrates the ongoing and sustained gains made by one Phase 5 school who took these practices forward (Education Counts, n.d.). Despite this, the gap in attainment of

NCEA qualifications at all levels nationally has remained essentially constant since 2013. This gap is most inequitable at UE where year 13 *ākonga Māori* (Māori students) still, in 2022, are 26% less likely to leave with a UE qualification than their European classmates after five years of secondary schooling (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2023).

My involvement with Te Kotahitanga and Kia Eke Panuku as a teacher and leader gave me insight into the importance of developing culturally sustaining praxis in supporting the achievement of ākonga Māori. In my experience, there has been significant focus on research and professional learning around culturally sustaining praxis in years nine and ten, but less so in years 11 – 13. This observation, coupled with the overwhelming inequity in qualifications that exists for ākonga Māori leavers after five years of secondary schooling, has prompted this research project. I acknowledge that there are many factors that contribute to academic outcomes for ākonga Māori, and there are also many facets involved in culturally sustaining praxis. This study explicitly focuses on just one aspect: culturally grounded relational praxis.

This project is centred around the following research questions:

1. How significant are whanaungatanga relationships in supporting Māori learners' attainment of University Entrance?
2. What are the characteristics of effective whanaungatanga relationships at year 13?
3. How can secondary schools effectively operationalise Māori concepts such as whānau and whanaungatanga to support the success of Māori learners at NCEA Level 3 to attain University Entrance?

This research is based on the stories of five ākonga Māori, all of whom completed five years of secondary education, and their whānau. It is presented following the conventions and structures of academic writing, while at the same time always attempting to work in ways that demonstrate my respect as an outsider, for the culture of these ākonga. The Introduction provides the context and motivation underpinning this research. Chapter One reviews relevant literature relating to this research to establish a contextual foundation for this study. Chapter Two explains

my methodology, methods, and ethical considerations within this project, and also introduces the participants. Key findings are presented in Chapter Three and discussed in relation to the literature in Chapter Four. Chapter Five provides a conclusion to the thesis, reflecting on the findings in relation to the research questions. It also outlines the contributions and limitations of this study and makes recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As acknowledged in the Introduction, I came into this research with background knowledge through previous participation in both Te Kotahitanga (2009-2012) and Kia Eke Panuku (2013-2016). The significant and profound learning I experienced between 2009 and 2016 was deepened further through my engagement with the Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning (Maisey, 2022) in 2020-2021. Foundational to each initiative, were the epistemologies and processes of Kaupapa Māori and Critical Theory. These will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter. Within these theories, the following processes are necessary for emancipatory change:

> **Conscientisation:** Conscientisation is becoming consciously aware of the part we play in keeping things the same by supporting and perpetuating the status quo… This new awareness may disrupt our thinking.
>
> **Resistance:** Resistance is the 'doing' following the disruption… Resistance is about no longer accepting or turning a blind eye to acts of social injustice but doing something about them.
>
> **Transformative Praxis:** Transformative praxis requires the merging of conscientisation and resistance in order to create new, more equitable, social realities.
>
> (Poutama Pounamu, n.d.c)

This literature review will be structured around each of these processes. Section one will look critically at the influencing factors that impact on the status quo for Māori students in our education system. The second section will discuss examples of resistance to the current inequities for Māori in mainstream education. Section three will explore the transformative praxis necessary to effect equitable change for ākonga Māori in mainstream education.

Section One: Conscientisation

To fully understand the current inequities for ākonga Māori in our education system, social, political, and colonial influences must be viewed through a critical

lens to understand their influence on current discourses and conditions contributing to the status quo. *Critical* in this context refers to the critique of power in social structures evident in Critical Theory, which will be discussed further later in this chapter.

> To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity.
>
> (Freire, 2005, p. 47)

Discourse of Discovery

The starting point of conscientisation in any colonised country stemming from Europe must begin with the discourses of discovery that underpinned claims of ownership over foreign lands. These discourses were shaped and reinforced by the Doctrine of Discovery. Developed in the 15th century as a series of declarations by popes (known as *papal bulls*):

> The Doctrine of Discovery provided a framework for Christian explorers, in the name of their King or Queen, to lay claim to territories uninhabited by Christians…The Doctrine asserts that non-Christians on these discovered lands were not human and therefore the land was empty or "terra nullius".
>
> (Ngata, 2019)

The Doctrine not only enabled explorers to claim indigenous land, it also "opened up the bodies and souls of indigenous peoples to a colonising gaze which only saw them as inferior, subordinate, and in fact less human than them" (Jackson, 2012, p. 1). In Aotearoa, this established a colonial climate where Māori and Māori culture were cast as *the other* and regarded as inferior to everything European (Consedine & Consedine, 2012).

The resulting hegemonic practices entrenched in laws and policies in all aspects of New Zealand society created an infrastructure designed to deliver white privilege (Consedine & Consedine 2012, p. 219). Consedine and Consedine (2012) also contend that the notion of Māori as the other continues to be "deeply embedded in the unconscious [beliefs] of Pākehā New Zealand" (p. 210).

Colonisation and the Māori Learner

New Zealand was colonised as the colonial era was well underway and imperialist strategies were finely honed. Education systems were common tools of colonial assimilation, used to extinguish indigenous cultures and languages around the world, and to control indigenous peoples (Pihama & Lee-Morgan, 2019).

Schooling became compulsory for Māori in 1894 (Calman, 2012), and education became a primary driver of hegemonic ideas, not only embedded into the psyche of *Pākehā* (New Zealand Europeans), but many Māori as well (Consedine & Consedine, 2012; Pihama 2019). From the outset, the primary function of the education system for Māori, underpinned by the Education Ordinance of 1847 and the Native Schools Act of 1858, was English language and customs, and manual instruction in preparation for working class occupations (Calman, 2012). Pihama and Lee-Morgan (2019) state that, in fact, the very "success of imperialist expansion relied upon schooling to fulfil the colonial intentions of Christianizing, civilizing, and the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into roles as domestic laborers" (p 21). To this end, education for Māori students within the native school system generally finished at the end of intermediate level. Some of the more able students were provided limited support from the government to attend one of the Māori church boarding schools for a further two years, although they were not able to matriculate (Calman, 2012). Lack of educational opportunities for Māori students within New Zealand stood in stark contrast to the academic pathways created in the system for Pākehā students during this same period, with the first university established in 1869 (University of Otago, n.d.).

When graduates of Te Aute College, a Māori boys' boarding school, were enabled to matriculate and attend university in the late 1800s by rogue principal John Thornton, the government's response was swift. The ensuing change to policy and curriculum ensured Māori were tracked away from academia and towards manual work (Bishop, 2005; Jenkins & Morris Mathews, 1998; Walker, 2016), resulting in an education system that created a fifty-year hiatus of Māori graduates.

Expectations and Ethnicity

Le Grange (2016; 2018) describes colonisation in two phases, explaining:

> First generation colonialism was the conquering of the physical spaces and bodies of the colonised, and second generation colonialism was the colonisation of peoples' minds through disciplines such as education, science, economics, and law. (p. 8)

It is difficult to draw a direct correlation between early colonist attitudes and current academic expectations of Māori students. Recent studies have shown, however, lower expectation of academic success of indigenous students remain, both at classroom level and systemically, in postcolonial schooling contexts.

The influence of teacher expectations on student outcomes have been researched extensively since first examined by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968). This study examined what it called the *Pygmalion Effect* where teachers' expectations of their students influenced their sense of self-efficacy, which in turn impacted on academic outcomes. The teachers' expectation that students either could or couldn't achieve, for whatever reason, was demonstrated to play out in a self-fulfilling prophesy. This study, while controversial, was none the less ground-breaking and continues to be replicated with similar results (Timmermans, et al., 2018), entrenching it in both educational and psychological research.

More recent research in the field has focussed on those factors that influence teacher expectations of their students' abilities. Dusek and Joseph's (1983) meta-analysis identified a range of stereotypes based on gender, race, socioeconomic status, among other factors, that influenced teachers' perceptions of academic potential. Particularly prevalent within studies across colonised countries, are commonly held low expectations of indigenous students. In Australia, Dandy et al., (2015) found that both teachers and trainee teachers consistently held low expectations of performance for Aboriginal students. These results are mirrored in other countries with similar British colonial histories (Flanagan et al., 2020; Gebhard, 2018; Riley & Ungerleider, 2012). In each case, teacher expectations of achievement are low for indigenous students. In each case also, educational outcomes for indigenous students are significantly lower than other ethnic groups.

Researchers have come to similar conclusions in Aotearoa New Zealand, finding that teacher expectations were lower for ākonga Māori than New Zealand European students (Hynds et al., 2017; Timmermans & Rubie-Davies, 2022; Turner et al.,

2015). This finding reinforces Blank et al. (2016), who contend that, despite teacher intentions, unconscious bias and negative expectations of Māori students continue to maintain the status quo of inequities within education. Turner (2013, cited in Blank et al. 2016) found that teachers had lower expectations for and more negative beliefs about Māori students than any other ethnic group in their classes. While the lower expectations themselves may not be unconscious, the dispositions behind the values and beliefs underpinning those expectations may well be. Swartz (1997) argues that dispositions are not a conscious form of knowledge and they "owe their specific efficacy to the fact that they function below the level of consciousness and language" (p. 105).

Shields (2012) contends that educators accept, often without thinking, "that if people fail to achieve, they just did not try hard enough—and worse, we blame them" (p. 29). Shields draws from the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) on *habitus*, a term meaning "a collection of norms and traditions that over time have come to establish the boundaries of what is acceptable and "normal" and what is not acceptable within the educational context" (p. 29). This habitus forms knowledge frameworks within educational institutions that do not value the social, economic, or cultural capital marginalised students bring to school. Blaming individual students and their families for lack of academic success, rather than understanding the impact of systemic habitus, is a specific knowledge framework known as deficit thinking.

Bishop and Berryman (2006) found that deficit discourses about ākonga Māori significantly influenced achievement. So much so, the first tenet of their Effective Teaching Profile states; "[Effective teachers of Māori students] positively and vehemently reject deficit theorising as a means of explaining Māori students' educational level" (p. 273). The ensuing Te Kotahitanga professional learning cycle (GEPRISP) prioritised a process of discursive repositioning at the start of the cycle as a precursor to subsequent professional growth (Te Kotahitanga, n.d.b). Deficit theorising continues to impact negatively on educational outcomes for Māori students. More recently, Berryman et al., (2015) found it essential to unlearn or disrupt "embedded discourses about Māori students and their home communities in order to relearn more emancipatory discourses of potential and social justice" (p. 60).

In the senior secondary level, the BERL report (2019) cites deficit discourses as a reason why only 21% of Māori leavers attain UE, contending the education system, "still carries a racist legacy where Māori culture is seen as a barrier to success and Māori are channelled into unskilled labour. These outcomes don't happen by chance and have been influenced by historical racism in education" (p. 6).

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Conscientisation with regards to Te Tiriti o Waitangi sits within the realisation of individual and collective responsibilities within it.

> The relational intent of the Treaty of Waitangi was understood by many iwi as mana ōrite. This, as a metaphor for interdependent relationships, brings responsibilities to both groups to maintain the mana of the other, and understand the mana of both as ōrite.
>
> (Berryman, et al., 2018)

Contrary to contra proferentum[4], The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, established equal consideration of the English (The Treaty of Waitangi) and Te Reo (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) versions; the combined interpretation of the articles was presented as the principles of Partnership, Protection and Participation (Tawhai, 2023). This merging of documents through the development of principles has contributed to continued oppression and unequal power relationships that do not uphold mana ōrite (Tawhai, 2023). Te Maro and Averill (2023) call for Tiriti led transformation of educational policies and practices through a relationship "where the partnership and provisions of Te Tiriti exist and flourish" (p. 15).

Bishop, Ladwig and Berryman (2014) put this in practical terms for educators, saying:

> educational institutional leaders and practitioners should structure and conduct their practices in such a way as to seek to mediate potential tensions by actively minimizing domination, coordinating actions, resolving conflicts, and negotiating relationships…where power is shared between

[4] Contra Proferentum is "A rule of legal interpretation primarily applying to documents. If any doubt or ambiguity arises in the interpretation of a document, the rule requires that the doubt or ambiguity should be resolved against the party who drafted it." (Oxford Reference, n. d.)

> self-determining individuals within non-dominating relations of interdependence. (p. 188)

Educational Debt

The Closing the Gaps policy introduced by the New Zealand government in 2000 (Turia, 2000) created a discourse within education, about the education gap between Māori and Pākehā. Ladson-Billings (2006) called into question the focus on the achievement gap as a way of explaining the persistent inequalities in education. A gap implies deficits and short term fixes. She argued a more accurate metaphor was an educational debt: a debt compounded over time and comprised of historical debt, economic debt, socio political debt and moral debt owed to Māori. The Auditor-General's Summary of Our Education for Māori report (Provost, 2016) reinforced this important shift in discourse, building on the metaphor:

> When a person has a debt, they can either be preoccupied with how much is owed (the gap) or they can do something about reducing the debt. Handwringing won't reduce the debt. Only by changing what you are doing, and changing attitudes and behaviours, will you reduce the debt. (p. 4)

Section Two: Resistance

Resistance to the status quo of inequity for Māori in education began within a wider resistance movement in the 1970s and 1980s that Durie (2012) refers to as the *Māori Renaissance*. According to Durie, this movement, led by Māori, critiqued the impact of colonialism on social and economic conditions for Māori at the time and focused on building Māori potential. The emergence and development of Critical Theories and Kaupapa Māori theories during this time not only informed resistance but were in themselves acts of resistance. Freire (1998) makes strong connections between the process of conscientisation and resistance, and self determination:

> I like to be human because in my unfinishedness I know I am conditioned. Yet conscious of such conditioning, I know I can go beyond it, which is the essential difference between conditioned and determined existence.
>
> (p. 54)

This section will look closely at the development of Critical and Kaupapa Māori theories as acts of resistance and their influence on emergent resistance within mainstream education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Critical Theory

Critical theory traces its philosophical origins to Immanuel Kant who first suggested Critical Philosophy in 1781 (McKernan, 2013). Kant's use of the word *critical* defined a philosophy which "before affirming, weighs, and, before assuming to know, inquires into the conditions of knowledge" (Weber, 1949, p.1). His philosophy informed Karl Marx's critique of capitalism in the 1800s (McKernan, 2013). Established on Marxist foundations in 1923, The Institute of Social Research at Frankfurt University, often referred to as the Frankfurt School, is generally accepted as the birthplace of Critical Theory (Corradetti, 2017; How, 2003; McKernan, 2013). With Hitler's rise to power, the Frankfurt School relocated to America in 1933 and was affiliated with Columbia University (Corradetti, 2017; McKernan, 2013). Critical theorists' use of *critical* refers to critique rather than criticism (How, 2003). Other key concepts embedded within Critical Theory include reason, antipositivism, reification, commodification, emancipation, and freedom (Corradetti, 2017; How, 2003). Many other critical theories have evolved from Critical Theory in the humanities and social sciences (McKernan, 2013).

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory emerged in America in the 1980s in response to a dissatisfaction with traditional civil rights discourse and was "motivated by a desire to understand how a regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of colour had been created and maintained in America" (Brown & Jackson, 2013, p. 14). Race is understood as a classification created by Europeans for the purpose of colonialism, oppression and discrimination with no connection to biological reality (Fuentes, 2019; Mills, 2022). Salmond (2022) cites the use of race in the 1987 'Lands' case where The Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti o Waitangi was reframed as an agreement between the crown and the *Māori race*. This same case embedded the merged principles discussed previously. This judgement, she argues, reinforces:

> a binary distinction between 'Pākehā' and 'Māori' – along with its linked counterparts 'civilised' vs 'savage', 'settler' vs 'native, 'white' vs 'black', 'the West' vs 'the rest', 'science' vs 'superstition', 'Kiwi' vs 'iwi' – [that] lies at the heart of race-based thinking in Aotearoa New Zealand. (p. 10)

While Kaupapa Māori theory has been a primary lens through which hegemonic colonial practices have been critiqued in Aotearoa, New Zealand, Critical Race Theory has also served as a significant epistemological base for educational research (MacDonald, 2019; MacDonald & Reynolds, 2017; Milne, 2017).

Critical Pedagogy

Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, first published in 1970, forms the foundation of Critical Theory in education. He developed his theory to critique the role of education in the creation and maintenance of a culture of silence for those dispossessed in his home country of Brazil (Freire, 2005). Key themes include his conceptualisation of the banking concept of education, where "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (p. 72). The banking concept, he argues, is an oppressive strategy to perpetuate a culture of silence as it does not allow for the development of critical thought for those oppressed. Significantly, Freire states, "it is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors" (p. 56).

Freedom for the oppressed, he contends, comes through two processes. The first is the development of critical consciousness, or *conscientização,* followed by *praxis* or action against the oppressive elements of reality. It is through these processes that the oppressed are able to "leave behind the status of *objects* to assume the status of historical *Subjects*" (p. 160).

Kaupapa Māori Theory in Education

Kaupapa Māori is a term that means a Māori way of doing things (Durie, 2017; G. Smith, 1992), but also a Māori way of thinking that honours Māori aspirations (G. Smith, 1997). The Kaupapa Māori movement emerged out of the socio-political contexts of New Zealand in the 1970-1980s, which resulted in heightened political consciousness and thinking about Māori in New Zealand society (Bishop, 2005; Durie, 2017). Graham Smith (2003) contends this period of time was a critical

moment in Māori history as there was collective conscientisation of many Māori people resulting in resistance to colonial forces and increased responsibility for their own condition.

Graham Smith (1997) positions Kaupapa Māori as both a theory and strategy to resist hegemonic discourses. Pihama (2010) agrees, stating "to think and act in terms of Kaupapa Māori while experiencing colonisation is to resist dominance" (p. 7). At its inception then, Kaupapa Māori was seen as "both a movement and a consciousness" (Pihama, Cram & Walker, 2002, p. 33). While there were social and political movements across a range of sectors, education was forefront within this resistance and within the development of Kaupapa Māori Theory. In response to their negative experiences within education, Māori communities established *Te Kōhanga Reo* (Kaupapa Māori immersion pre-school) in 1982 (G. Smith, 2009). This initiative formed the foundation for subsequent educational intervention at primary school (te Kura Kaupapa Māori), secondary school (Te Kura Tuarua) and at Tertiary level (Wānanga) (G. Smith, 2009). Graham Smith's seminal thesis *The Development of Kaupapa Māori: Theory and Praxis* (1997) emerged from this resistance movement in education.

Prevalent in his foundational theorising of Kaupapa Māori, is the influence of Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy (G. Smith, 1992; 1997). Kaupapa Māori, for some Māori, was positioned as a local mode of critical theory with the goal of emancipation (L. T. Smith, 2017). Graham Smith (1992; 1997) outlined six elements that underpin Kaupapa Māori initiatives: *Tino Rangatiratanga* (relative autonomy principle); *Taonga tuku iho* (cultural aspirations principle); *Ako Māori* (culturally preferred pedagogy); *Kia piki ake i nga raruraru o te kainga* (mediation of socio-economic factors); *Whānau* (extended family management principle); *Kaupapa* (collective vision principle).

Although Kaupapa Māori theories may have initially been primarily focused on resisting the status quo to create a space free of colonial influence, emphasis on Māori epistemologies has also become central to Kaupapa Māori discourse.

> There is more to Kaupapa Māori than our history under colonialism or our desires for self determination. We have a different epistemological tradition, one that frames the way we see the world, the way we organise ourselves in

> it, the questions we ask, and the solutions that we seek. It is larger than the individuals in it and the specific 'moment' in which we are currently living.
>
> (L. T. Smith, 2017, p. 25)

Within this discourse, the principles of *Whakapapa (*genealogy*), Te Reo (*Māori language*), Tikanga Māori* (customs and values), (Pihama et al., 2002; L. T. Smith, 2015) and *Mātauranga Māori* (Māori knowledges) (Pihama et al., 2002; Durie, 2017) are prominent and position the validity and legitimacy of te ao Māori as fundamental to Kaupapa Māori contexts.

Kaupapa Māori research grew out of the larger Kaupapa Māori movement, in resistance to traditional Western research methods that reinforce the notion of cultural superiority and undermine Māori epistemologies, for the benefit the researcher (Bishop & Glynn, 1999b). Kaupapa Māori research was seen within the wider effort for Māori self-determination (L. T. Smith, 2017). In 1990, Graham Smith summarised Kaupapa Māori research as:

> 1. being related to 'being Māori';
>
> 2. being connected to Māori philosophy and principles;
>
> 3. taking for granted the validity and legitimacy of Māori, the importance of Māori language and culture; and
>
> 4. concerned with 'the struggle for autonomy over our own cultural wellbeing.'
>
> (G. Smith, 1990 cited in L. T. Smith, 2017, p. 23)

Bishop and Glynn (1999a) began to explore ways in which Kaupapa Māori theories could influence mainstream educational practices to address hegemony and power imbalances contributing to Māori underachievement. Subsequent research in this field has had a significant influence on pedagogy (Bishop & Berryman, 2006), leadership (Bishop, 2023), and policy (Bishop et al., 2010; Durie, 2003, 2006; A. McFarlane, et al., 2008). These areas will be explored further in the next section.

Section Three: Transformative Praxis

Shifts towards transformative praxis have been evident within the New Zealand education system over the past two decades. There has been increasing critique of policy development, leadership and pedagogical praxis, as well as evidence of decolonising and indigenising across the education sector. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2016) emphasises that decolonising approaches focus on the power relationships between indigenous people and settler society created by colonial processes, practices, and ideologies. Indigenisation refers to the normalisation of indigenous ways of being and knowing (Hoskins & Jones, 2022).

Decolonisation and Indigenisation

Māori Principles in Mainstream Education: A cautionary note

Acts of transformation within the education system have included increasing references to concepts embedded in te ao Māori. While their use in the mainstream may be critically motivated, the risk of superficial appropriation in the name of indigenisation is high when the concepts are interpreted through a non-Māori lens. Heaton (2018) states these contradictions are inevitable when epistemological concepts are transferred from one culture to another. Examples of this include concepts such as *Rangatiratanga*, or chiefly and sovereign status, redefined from a male perspective based on European understanding of 'chief' (L. T. Smith, 2021). Other complexities such as the relationship between the individual and society, and understandings of the dynamics of whānau, hapū, and iwi simplified and categorised to make sense in colonial paradigms (Bishop & Glynn, 1999b; L. T. Smith, 2021). Indeed, even dynamic historical and scientific events such as the navigation and migration of Māori across the Pacific have been reimagined and simplified to a single story to fit within colonial constructs (Bishop, 1997b; L. T. Smith, 2021).

The terms *whānau* and *whanaungatanga*, among other Māori concepts, feature prominently across educational policies, strategies, and guidelines at both a national and school level. Whanaungatanga is one of the four guiding values underpinning the professional code and standards for teachers in New Zealand (interestingly all

four values are borrowed from te ao Māori). In its definition, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand states:

> Whanaungatanga: engaging in positive and collaborative relationships with our learners, their families and whānau, our colleagues and the wider community.
>
> (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2017, p. 2)

The definition provided above is a clear example of the epistemological reframing Heaton refers to; *whanaungatanga* reduced to *engaging in positive and collaborative relationships.*

With a move towards a greater consideration of Te Tiriti and Matauranga Māori across the education sector, it is more important than ever that Māori philosophies, values, principles and practices are not simply whitewashed to fit into a Eurocentric box; a process Battiste (2008) refers to as the *add and stir* model. McNatty and Roa (2002) identify whanaungatanga as one such Māori concept that risks becoming "divorced from [its] cultural roots to such an extent that two speakers using the same word can completely fail to understand one another" (p. 88). Le Grice et al., (2017) feel this is already the case, stating whanaungatanga, "has long been invalidated through everyday colonising dynamics." (p. 94)

A. McFarlane et al., (2008) places the concepts of whānau and whanaungatanga as central and critical to any theorising from within a Māori worldview.
Transformative relational praxis for teachers of ākonga Māori, must start with a culturally located understanding of whanaungatanga and whānau.

Whanaungatanga

As a non-Māori attempting to understand whanaungatanga, I am very aware of my own cultural lens and the limitations this places on my ability to fully comprehend the breadth and depth of this construct widely regarded as fundamental to Māori. I am also aware that non-Māori anthropologists have made contributions in this research space in pursuit of decoding Te Ao Māori for the benefit of colonial observers. While I acknowledge their work, I will not be referencing it here, instead looking to understand through the theorising offered by Māori researchers.

In a recent interview, Koia (2022) lamented the 'tick box' approach many in education take towards the use of Māori concepts. Using whanaungatanga as an example he stated:

> This isn't something that just sits in a framework. This isn't something that we put in our school values [and on] colourful posters…these are cornerstones of who we are as Māori. Don't let people think 'whanaungatanga is relationships.' That's not it, it is so much more than that.

Whanaungatanga has been discussed as a value, a principle, and a process, however at its core is family or kinship. Rangihau (cited in Love, 2004) speaks of whanaungatanga as kinship that allows one to draw strength from the collective resources of the family group. Durie (1994) describes it as a fundamental intergenerational support process. Love (2004) defines whanaungatanga as social roles and kinship bonds that ensure the continuity of the whānau through the preparation and nurturing of future generations. Within these roles are obligations, commitments, and responsibilities to others within the whānau (Durie, 1985; Love, 2004; Pihama & Cameron, 2012; Rameka, 2018; G. Smith, 1997;). Mead (2016) also describes whanaungatanga as a Māori principle associated with *tikanga* (protocols, customs), encompassing expectations and obligations of those connected through *whakapapa* (bloodlines), but also extends this relationship to include non-kin who become like kin through shared experiences.

Throughout many writings about whanaungatanga are themes of both interconnections and interdependence. Walker (2013) speaks of the interconnectedness of whanaungatanga, stating, "it exists in layers, both vertical and horizontal: it extends between and across generations as well as forward into the future and back into the past" (p. 19). Whanaungatanga not only connects past, present and future, it is also interwoven with other fundamental Māori values and principles. Mead (2016) identifies the value of *manaakitanga* (nurturing relationships, looking after people, and being very careful about how others are treated) as an essential and expected dimension of whanaungatanga. Whanaungatanga is also interconnected with principles and philosophies linking

physical, cultural and spiritual domains of being (Cranston, 2018; McNatty and Roa, 2002, Pere, 2003; Rameka, 2018).

Whanaungatanga relationships by their very nature are interdependent. Love (2004) states that whanaungatanga relates to seeing oneself as part of a system. Individuals bound together through whanaungatanga expect support from their *whanaunga* (relatives), however the collective group also expects support from its individuals (Mead, 2016). Le Grice et al (2017) discuss whanaungatanga as a practice demonstrated through *whāngai* (to raise another child as your own) processes wherein the wider whānau assume collective responsibility for individual children with the knowledge that it not only supports the individual child, but also strengthens the bonds of the wider whānau allowing the collective to thrive. Through whanaungatanga, Pere (2003) states, one learns "that everything across the universe is inter-related and is perfect until it is compared to something else or is influenced by negative forces" (p. 26).

Whānau

Durie (1985) identified whānau as a cornerstone of health as the it not only serves as the major support system for Māori, but also is fundamental to identity and a sense of purpose and belonging. Māori orientation around family fosters "a group (rather than individual) identity [and] stands in contrast to the Western attitude to maturity" (p. 485). The Western goal of independence is not considered to be a healthy state for Māori as "the individual has no validity of his own" (p. 495). A. Macfarlane et al., (2008) support this assertion and go on to say that the whānau structure is "a living entity, reaching across all contexts in Māoridom" (p. 107). This is evidenced in Kaupapa Māori Theory, where the principle of whānau is fundamental (Bishop, 1995; Pihama et al., 2002; G. Smith, 1992, 1997; L. T. Smith, 2017, 2021).

As with whanaungatanga, the concept of whānau has often been interpreted and reduced to fit with western constructs. Heaton (2011) points to one example of this in the New Zealand Curriculum where taha whānau, an identified aspect of Durie's

(1994) Te Whare Tapa Whā[5] model, has been defined as simply 'social wellbeing' with a focus on relationships generally, rather than those specific to family.

A. Macfarlane et al. (2008) highlight the connection between whānau and Māori identity. In te ao Māori, the self is "conceptualised within the context of the collective or community, and not as a totally autonomous and separate entity" (p.119). This is an important consideration for schools when understanding the concepts of whānau and whanaungatanga and how they may be incorporated within educational contexts. Berryman and Eley (2019) emphasise belonging as foundational to student success, and warn that a persistent focus on excellence, without also supporting a sense of belonging, can result in severe consequences for students. This is particularly pertinent for Māori learners who "overwhelmingly associate Māori identity with the concept of belonging" (Duckworth et al., 2021, p. 5). Māori concepts such as tino rangatiratanga are interpreted as 'self-determination'; the 'self' understood in western epistemologies as pertaining to an individual, as opposed to "a clear understanding among Māori people that such autonomy is relative, not absolute, that it is self-determination in relation to others" (Bishop, 2012, p. 39).

Metaphors

In an effort to gain deeper understanding of whānau and whanaungatanga, Tuhakaraina (2015) explores the metaphors within the words through a process called *reo huna* (hidden language). She identifies *hā,* defined as breath, essence, taste, breathing (Te Aka, n.d.), and expands on this definition through the words of Rose Pere (2003) who describes *hā* as the breath of life from, "the divine parents, the great spirit, the creators of everything across the universe" (p. 16). Interestingly, *ngā* in whanaungatanga is also related to breathing, or taking breath (Te Aka, n.d.). *Whā* makes reference to *ngā hau e whā* the four winds drawing people together (Dayman, 2015). Also embedded within both words is *Au,* defined as I or me (Te Aka, n.d.). The position of *au* at the centre of whanaungatanga can be seen as symbolic of Rangihau's (1967) description of *Au* from a Māori perspective, stating,

[5] "Dr Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā model compares *hauora* (*hau* – the breath of life, and *ora* – wellbeing) to the four walls of a *whare* (house), each wall representing a different dimension. All four dimensions are necessary for strength and symmetry" (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

"when they are talking about themselves [they] are not saying 'I am I', but are saying 'I am we'" (p. 4).

Implications

Educational research into effective practice for Māori learners has been very clear about the important role of whānau and whanaungatanga in supporting success. Angus Macfarlane et al. (2008) determine these concepts to be vital and central to Māori understandings of human development. Graham Smith (1992, 1997) outlined Whānau (extended family management principle) as one of the six elements that underpin Kaupapa Māori initiatives. His work in the development of Kaupapa Māori Theory is founded within education and serves as "a theory of change [that] provides exciting potential for intervening in the general Māori schooling crisis" (G. Smith, 1992, p. 13). He cites whānau as a major feature in successful education interventions such as Kura Kaupapa Māori where school structures based on this principle are established to create a network within which whānau "assist meaningfully in the education of their children" (G. Smith, 1992, p. 17). Bishop and Glynn (1999b) state the implications for the principle of whānau in mainstream education are immense. The concept of whānau contains within it both cultural aspirations and cultural practices (Bishop, 1995, 1997a; Bishop and Glynn, 1999a) and, when used as a metaphoric basis of relationship frameworks in schools, can support Māori learners to achieve their potential.

Transformative Pedagogy

Te Kotahitanga research and professional development project operated from 2001-2013, and provided an evidence based pedagogical approach for mainstream schools, based on Kaupapa Māori principles (Bishop, 2003, 2012). Te Kotahitanga brought together previous concepts of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas 2002, cited in Bishop et al., 2007) and relational pedagogy (Sidorkin, 2002; Cummins, 1995; cited in Bishop et al., 2007), alongside the narratives of Māori students, their whānau, their teachers and principals, to create the *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relations* (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop et al., 2007, 2010). This framework is explicit in determining that, to support Māori learners' achievement, mainstream schools need to foster relationships:

- where power is shared between self-determining individuals within non-dominating relations of interdependence
- where culture counts;
- where learning is interactive, dialogic and spirals;
- where participants are connected to one another through the establishment of a common vision for what constitutes excellence in educational outcomes.

(Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop et al., 2007, 2010, 2014)

Kia Eke Panuku professional development and research initiative built on the knowledge generated through Te Kotahitanga between 2013-2016 (Kia Eke Panuku, n.d.a). Pedagogical theorising within Kia Eke Panuku, resulted in the development of *Cultural Relationships for Responsive Pedagogy* repositioning relationships and clarifying their nature as culturally located, understood in praxis as:

- our students, their whānau and our colleagues are treated in the same way we would want them to treat ourselves or members of our own family
- we value each other as whānau, collaborate and work as one for the common good, requiring us to share what we have including power, perceived or otherwise
- we respect and come to know who our students and their whānau are, where they come from and what their prior knowledge and cultural experiences are and what this means for our self and others

(Berryman et al., 2018, p. 5)

Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning grew iteratively from understandings gained through Te Kotahitanga and Kia Eke Panuku as well as other Kaupapa Māori and culturally responsive research (Poutama Pounamu, n. d. a). Pedagogical growth is facilitated through their Critical Cycle of Learning, seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Poutama Pounamu Critical Cycle of Learning

(Poutama Pounamu, n. d. b)

The model, based on the combined a processes of Critical Pedagogy and evidence based inquiry, has had significant impact on the activation of critical theories of participants (Corlett, 2020; Maisey, 2022).

Transformative Leadership

Internationally, transformative leadership in education is defined through a critical lens of the systems and practices that undermine social justice.

> Transformative Leadership begins with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others.

(Shields, 2010. p. 559)

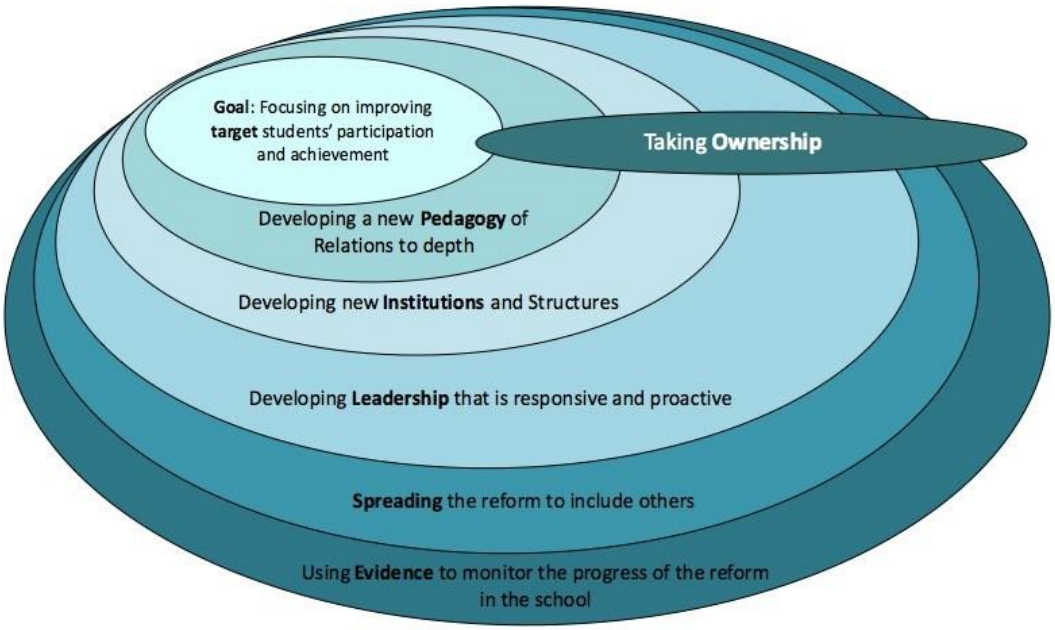
Shields (2012) differentiates Transformative Leadership from other models by the foundational discourse of critical theory that underpins it. She cites Burns (1978) who calls for the necessity to consider "how both power (composed of motive and resources) and power relationships are central to comprehending the "true nature of leadership" (Shields, 2012, p. 20). Central also to Transformative Educational Leadership is "an acknowledgment that the school is inextricably embedded in the

wider society" and, therefore, must focus on "preparing students to be both individually successful as well as thoughtful, successful, caring, and engaged citizens of the global community" (p. 21). In essence, Shields contends that education has the potential to transform outcomes not only for individuals, but for society as a whole. Transformative Leadership "recognises the need for leaders to bring to their work certain types of individual characteristics as well as to make use of specific processes" (p. 22). This combination of characteristics and processes come together in the eight key tenets of Transformative Leadership theory:

> • the mandate to effect deep and equitable change;
> • the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice;
> • a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice;
> • the need to address the inequitable distribution of power;
> • an emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good;
> • an emphasis on interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness;
> • the necessity of balancing critique with promise;
> • the call to exhibit moral courage. (p. 21)

In Aotearoa New Zealand, transformative leadership praxis is inextricably connected to culturally sustaining relational praxis. The GPILSEO model for sustained transformations emerged through Te Kotahitanga and Kia Eke Panuku (Bishop et al., 2010) seen below in Figure 2.

Figure 2: GPILSEO model



(Kia Eke Panuku, n. d. b)

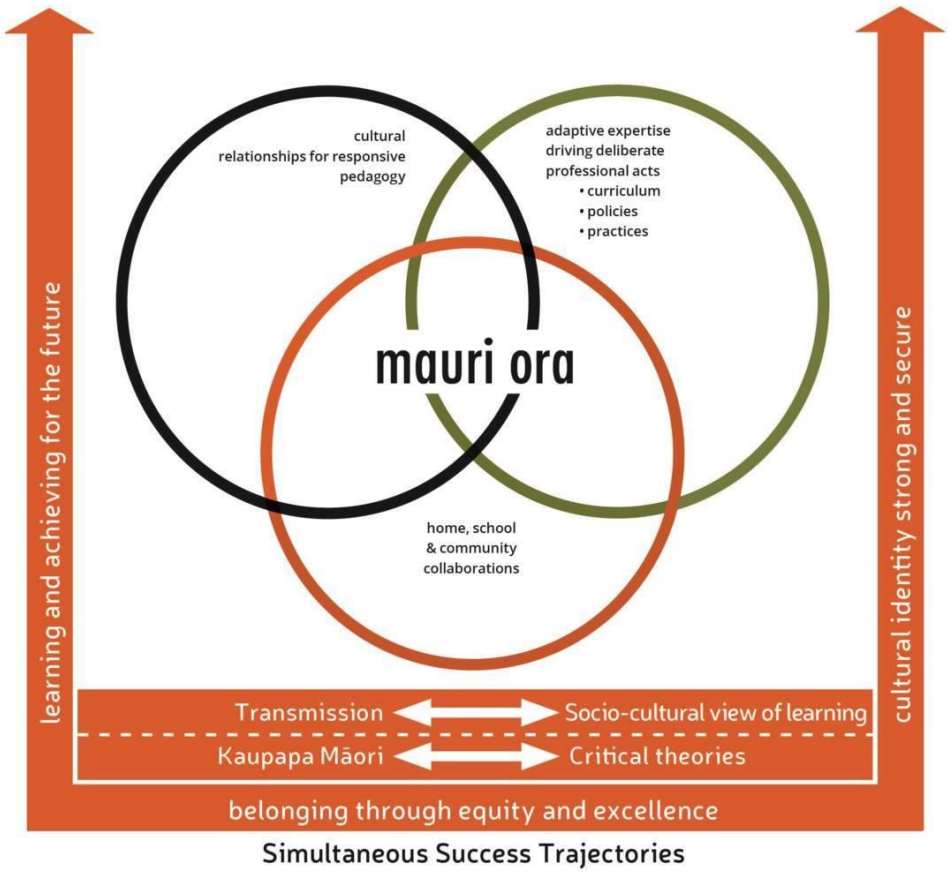
This model was designed to 'scale up' the reforms made in the classroom through Te Kotahitanga to school level and system level, to address disparities comprehensively. With the goal of improving the achievement and participation of ākonga Māori at the centre, the model provides leaders with a framework of leadership, pedagogical and systemic reforms required to support and sustain the goal (Bishop et al., 2010). This model formed the theoretical basis of He Kākano, a Ministry of Education professional development programme designed to support culturally responsive leadership in schools (Ke Kākano, n.d.).

Within Kia Eke Panuku, whanaungatanga relationships were identified as key to implement change in schools (Berryman et al., 2015). The nature of the relationship between whānau and the school is important as not all connections have positive or significant outcomes on student achievement. Robinson et al. (2009) found the most educationally powerful connections are those where the school and whānau work together towards a joint intervention embedded in teaching and learning. With an effect size of 1.81 it is "one of the most educationally powerful strategies" (p. 150) leaders can promote to support student

outcomes. This specific, collaborative whānau-school relationship based on the principles of whanaungatanga sits within one of the three critical contexts for change in the Kia Eke Panuku Ako model for school reform (Berryman & Eley, 2017).

The Ako: Critical Concepts for Change model, as seen in Figure 2 below, was developed through both Kia Eke Panuku and Poutama Pounamu research and development. It forms the basis for systemic reform at all levels the education system, with particular relevance for school leaders.

Figure 3: Ako: Critical Contexts for Change Model



(Poutama Pounamu, n.d.c).

Within this model, success (of the system) is seen as creating a foundation of belonging through equity, excellence to launch ākonga Māori towards future learning and achieving while simultaneously being strong and secure in their

cultural identity. These are referred to as *simultaneous success trajectories* (Berryman & Eley, 2017, 2019). The central part of the model outlines the three contexts of reform that need to be deliberately attended to at the same time in order to create *mauri ora* (essence of life) (Berryman & Eley, 2019).

Transformative System

National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)

NCEA is Aotearoa New Zealand's national system for formal qualifications in secondary schools. It was introduced in 2002, replacing norm-referenced assessments with standards-based assessments; a shift that was intended to be more equitable for underserved learners (Strathdee, 2003; Shulruf, Hattie, & Tumen, 2010).

As can be seen in the following description, the structures within the system are complicated and have been shown to be a barrier to achievement, particularly for Māori students (NZQA, 2022a, 2022b). I provide details about NCEA here, as it is important to understand when considering the findings of this study.

In the current NCEA system (2023), students generally work towards a Level 1 Certificate in Year 11, a Level 2 Certificate in Year 12, and a Level 3 Certificate in Year 13 by earning credits acquired through assessments in each subject. Assessments are based on standards common throughout the country, managed by the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA). University Entrance (UE) is an additional qualification to NCEA Level 3. It is the top qualification awarded by New Zealand secondary schools, and the minimum requirement to attend New Zealand universities. To earn UE, students must earn a minimum of 14 credits in at least three UE approved Level 3 subjects. In addition, students are required to meet literacy and numeracy requirements at NCEA levels 1 and 2. It is important to note that not all Level 3 subjects are UE approved subjects, with many vocational subjects offered in schools ineligible for the qualification (NZQA, 2022a). It is also significant to know that there are two types of standards through which students can gain credits: Achievement Standards (AS) and Unit Standards (US). Unit Standards can contribute to an NCEA qualification; however, they do not count for University Entrance (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2022a).

To be awarded UE students require:

- NCEA Level 3 (80 credits overall, with 60 credits at Level 3)
- Three UE approved subjects - at Level 3, made up of:
    - 14 credits in each of three approved subjects
- Literacy - 10 credits at Level 2 or above, made up of:
    - 5 credits in reading
    - 5 credits in writing
- Numeracy - 10 credits at Level 1 or above

(New Zealand Qualifications Authority, n.d.)

Although NCEA aimed to transform assessment, in part, to remove disparities for students in Aotearoa New Zealand's secondary schools, achievement data gathered by NZQA calls into question the success of the system. In the ten years from 2012 to 2021, an average of 18.8% of Māori students were able to navigate NCEA from Year 11 through to UE, 24.6% fewer than their New Zealand European (NZE) classmates (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2021, p.25). Over the same period, 29.5% of Year 13 Māori students left school having attained UE, compared to 59.54% of NZE students (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2021, p. 16). NZQA's action plan for ākonga Māori success, Te Kōkiritanga: 2020-2023 (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2020) has been developed to address these disparities within our qualifications system, and NCEA is currently undergoing review and revision through the NCEA Change Programme (NCEA Education, n. d.).

MOE Policy development

Policy within the New Zealand educational context has made increasing shifts towards transformative education that addresses equity issues for marginalised students, particularly within the last few years. This discussion is organised chronologically, highlighting changes to language, values and requirements to capture emerging conscientisation and resistance. It also compares policy intended for mainstream contexts to those created for kaupapa Māori contexts to not only show the difference, but the increasing influence Kaupapa Māori theory has had on mainstream policies over time. Policies and frameworks relevant to this discussion include:

- The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007)
- Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (Ministry of Education 2008-2009)
- Kiwi Leadership for Principals (Ministry of Education, 2008)
- Tū Rangatira: Māori Medium Educational Leadership (Ministry of Education, 2010)
- Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners (Education Council, 2011)
- Our Code, Our Standards; Ngā Tikanga Matatika, Ngā Paerewa (Education Council, 2017)
- The Leadership Strategy for the teaching profession of Aotearoa New Zealand; Te Rautaki Kaihautū mō te Umanga Whakaakoranga o Aotearoa (Education Council, 2018)
- Ka Hikitia: Ka Hāpaitia – The Māori Education Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2020a)
- National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) (Ministry of Education, 2020b)
- Te Hurihanganui: Me Mutu Te Kaikiri – Anti-Racism in Action (Ministry of Education, 2020c)
- Te Kōkiritanga 2020–2023: NZQA's Action Plan for Ākonga Māori Success (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2020)

As evidenced through the following discussion, separate policy frameworks have been developed for mainstream schools and for Māori medium schools. These documents have run parallel to each other and have provided significantly different guidance to teachers and leaders within each context. More recently policy for schools has become more cohesive, bringing ideas together to provide frameworks applicable to the entire sector. As the majority of Māori learners attend mainstream schools, this seems to be a critical shift to enable transformative educational experiences for all ākonga Māori across the system.

The New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa

The current New Zealand Curriculum (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007) serves as a touchstone to realise the shifting discourses in education. The Vision, Principles and Values sections establish a framework for decision making and

curriculum design for school leaders and boards of trustees. There is some evidence of aspects of transformative praxis through the values of Equity and Diversity, the principle of Inclusion, and reference to identity and citizenship in the vision statement. There is also reference to the Treaty of Waitangi and Cultural Diversity as principles that should underpin all decision making. The language used when describing each of these aspects, however, leans towards a 'one size fits all' model with no evidence of the critical theory that underpins transformative praxis, for example, "the curriculum acknowledges the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the bicultural foundations of Aotearoa New Zealand" (p. 9). The use of the word 'acknowledge' is passive and certainly does not indicate a need for transformative praxis, particularly since there is no specific recognition of Māori as partners under Te Tiriti anywhere in the document, nor any indication of the inequities within the system that underserve ākonga Māori. Te Ao Māori perspectives were primarily left for Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017), first released in 2007, which is unfortunate as mainstream educators would have benefited from the culturally responsive and relational approach of this curriculum:

> This Curriculum emphasises the socio-cultural aspects of teaching and learning. The home, the community, the culture and hapū of the learner all contribute to the education provided by schools. For learners to succeed, the school, the home, hapū, iwi and community must work together effectively and consistently. This Curriculum upholds the cultural identity and heritage of learners and their families. (p. 3)

Kiwi Leadership for Principals, Tū Rangatira, Leadership Strategy for the Teaching Profession of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Kiwi Leadership for Principals (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2008a) is a "model of leadership that reflects the qualities, knowledge and skills required to lead New Zealand schools" (p. 5). This document, released in the same year as Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success 2008-2012 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2008b), is much more explicit in stating, "our commitment to the principles of the Treaty obliges a distinctive focus on ensuring excellent education outcomes for Māori" (p. 10), although falls short of providing a mandate for deep and equitable

change for Māori in saying, "our task is to expand on the emerging successes for Māori" (p. 10), implying a *keep calm and carry on* approach rather than a transformative shift. In this model, relationships are seen as central to the principal's role, however noticeably absent is the notion of power sharing or relationships based on mana ōrite. Language such as manage, consult, build and network does not indicate reciprocity in relationships or power sharing in decision-making. Tū Rangatira (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2010), provides a model for educational leadership in Māori medium. As with Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, this document is intended for leaders working within Māori medium, implying it is not relevant for leaders within the mainstream, which is unfortunate as much of its content is transformative in nature. The Guiding Principles alone: Māori Potential, Cultural Advantage, Inherent Capability, Mana Motuhake, challenge knowledge frameworks and deficit thinking that contribute to inequities for ākonga Māori in the mainstream. Within this model, the learner is placed very explicitly at the centre of all aspects of leadership, the learners themselves referred to as *Ngā Mokopuna* (grandchildren), placing whānau like relationships at the core of all leadership roles and areas of practice.

Fortunately, with the release of the Leadership Strategy for the teaching profession of Aotearoa New Zealand (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018a), and the Educational Leadership Capability Framework (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018b), key aspects of Tū Rangatira were brought into the mainstream, albeit eight years later. Within these documents, the leadership roles and actions outlined in Tū Rangatira have been embedded as a basis for leadership at all levels within mainstream early childhood education services, kura and schools. Notable also is a shift in the language used, providing a mandate for transformative leadership based on a clear moral purpose:

> Te Tiriti o Waitangi is seen as a commitment under which Māori and all other New Zealanders may live together in the spirit of honourable relationships, with the promise to take the best possible care of each other. This requires the injustices caused by colonisation to be addressed and all New Zealanders to engage in creating a positive future that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

(Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018a, p. 6).

Within this statement is a commitment to power-sharing and relationships reflecting mana ōrite. Another subtle but significant language shift in policy around this time is reference only to Te Tiriti, rather than The Treaty. This was a deliberate act of resistance by government (NZSTA/MOE Te Tiriti workshop, personal communication, 18 November 2020), in recognition of the Te Reo and, therefore, only legal version of The Treaty.

Tātaiako and Our Code Our Standards

The Code and Standards required for professional certification to teach within the New Zealand education system have taken a similar journey towards providing a mandate for transformative praxis. The Practising Teacher Criteria (PTCs) were developed in 2010 (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2015) as a requirement for appraisal, attestation, and certification of all teachers within the education system. Within the criteria, learners are referred to as ākonga, and a statement around obligations under The Treaty of Waitangi does form one of the four overarching statements:

> The Treaty of Waitangi extends equal status and rights to Māori and Pākehā. This places a particular responsibility on all teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand to promote equitable learning outcomes.
>
> (New Zealand Teaching Council, 2015, p. 9)

Although the focus on Māori learners is implicit through the use of 'ākonga' throughout the document, within the twelve criteria themselves, only two (criteria 3 and 10) refer specifically to ākonga Māori. Within the PTCs, teachers were required to critically reflect on their own beliefs and the impact they have on their practice (criteria 12), although there is no indication this related to distribution of power or Critical Theories. Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners (Teaching Council, 2011), informed by Ka Hikitia: Managing for success 2008-2012 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2008b), provided a framework of five cultural competencies required of teachers to achieve the goal of "Māori learners achieving educational success as Māori" (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2011 p. 1). The competencies of Wānanga, Whanaungatanga,

Manaakitanga, Tangatawhenuatanga and Ako were not formal criteria but were linked to each of the PTCs (p. 2). In 2017, the Teaching Council released Our Code Our Standards (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2017), replacing the PTCs. Within the four areas of the Code of Professional Responsibility, and the six Standards for the Teaching Profession, the cultural competencies are clearly integrated and, therefore, now required for certification for all teachers within the profession.

Ka Hikitia, Te Hurihanganui

Ka Hikitia: The Māori Education Strategy, was first released by the Ministry of Education in 2008 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2008b) and is now in its third iteration, Ka Hikitia: Ka Hāpaitia (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2020a). At the core of the strategy is a clear vision with a moral purpose: "Māori are enjoying and achieving education success as Māori." As discussed previously, Ka Hikitia has been increasingly influential in informing other policy frameworks in education since 2008, including changes to the Education Act in 2020, mandating school governance that:

- ensures every student at the school is able to attain their highest possible standard in educational achievement;
- takes all reasonable steps to eliminate racism, stigma, bullying, and any other forms of discrimination within the school; and
- gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including by achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students.

(Education and Training Act 2020 no 38, p. 120-121)

The influence of Ka Hikitia: Ka Hāpaitia is also evident in the Education Work Programme (Hipkins, 2018) towards the 30 year vision for education:

> The 30 year vision and objectives form the core of our overall approach to education. To create change, it is important to embed Ka Hikitia into this framework to ensure we are aligning vision, purpose and action within our education system to support Māori enjoying and achieving education success as Māori.

(New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2020a, p. 5)

The five outcome domains of Ka Hikitia: Ka Hāpaitia align with the five overall objectives for education. The outcome domains reflect many of the aspects in both the tenets of transformative leadership and the three contexts for change in the Ako: Critical Contexts for Change model, with a clear expression of the need to address issues of power within the system:

- Te Whānau: Education provision responds to learners within the context of their whānau
- Te Tangata: Māori are free from racism, discrimination and stigma in education
- Te Kanorautanga: Māori are diverse and need to be understood in the context of their diverse aspirations and lived experiences
- Te Tuakiritanga: Identity, language and culture matter for Māori learners
- Te Rangatiratanga: Māori exercise their authority and agency in education

(New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2020a, p. 5)

Te Hurihanganui, launched in October 2020 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2020c), is even more explicit in its focus on addressing racism and inequities in education through its "blueprint for transformative system shift." The blueprint is based on six interdependent design principles critical to achieving transformative reform within the education system:

- Te Ao Māori
- Tino Rangatiratanga
- Whanaungatanga
- Te Ira Tangata
- Mana ōrite
- Te Hangaitanga

Within this model, whanaungatanga is understood as:

> Whanaungatanga is clearly demonstrated in the relationship and responsibility that is experienced between parent and child.

> Whanaungatanga recognises the love and manaakitanga for one's child alongside high expectations and responsibility that this child will realise their potential. Whanaungatanga exemplifies the collective connections that teachers can have for and with ākonga and their whānau. Whānau-type relationships can better promote inclusion of diverse learners into the learning process. This happens when teachers treat ākonga Māori (and others) as they would their own.
>
> (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2020c, p. 8)

Te Hurihanganui principles require schools to be transformative, grow understandings of critical theory and Māori cultural capital, and develop mana ōrite relationships. Although Te Hurihanganui is not a policy per se, its development and launch, alongside other key policies such as Ka Hikitia: Ka Hāpaitia, the Education and Training Act 2020, and the statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2020b), and their alignment with the five objectives of the Education Work Programme (Hipkins, 2018), demonstrates a clarity and coherence in the transformative vision for education in New Zealand.

Policy development in New Zealand education has been characterised by almost parallel streams, with policy for mainstream schools and leaders looking very different to that directed at Māori medium, and documents such as Tātaiako introduced as supportive guidelines rather than mandated competencies. Although obviously seen as a necessary approach at the time, one wonders about the 'othering' effect this may have had on the culture within education and its impact on the mindset of educational leaders and teachers. Fortunately, transformative and critical approaches and ideas prevalent in Māori centred policies have been steadily brought into mainstream policy through deliberate acts of integration. The language in current policy has also become progressively less ambiguous and more urgent in calling for a transformative change across the entire system.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the socio-political influences contributing to the current inequities for ākonga Māori in education. Significant research and discourses of conscientisation, resistance and transformative praxis within the context of educational reform in Aotearoa New Zealand were also explored. These combined processes have established the theoretical basis of this study.

The moral imperative and mandate for transformative leadership and pedagogical praxis is becoming more and more obvious with each review and refresh of current policies within education. Culture shift takes time, however, as has been proven historically, government policy has a significant influence on the nature of schooling, the praxis of leaders and educators within the system, and the experiences of students, for better or for worse. The current direction of education policy is steadily building a transformative foundation, at least in theory, where a shift in culture is possible with the leadership and pedagogy of those committed to equity and social justice.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

Māori have legitimate concerns of research epistemologies that stem from the social history and culture of the dominant race which serve to reinforce the status of that group over others (Battiste, 2008; Bishop, 1997b; Scheurich & Young, 1997; L. T. Smith, 2005). Also of significant concern, has been persistent focus in research to solve what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021) refers to as the 'Indigenous Problem'. In this approach, described by Bishop (1997b) as 'social pathology' the researcher frames Māori as having a pathological condition that needs fixing. Their experience as a researched people has resulted in a belief that, "the word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary" (L. T. Smith, 2021, p. 38). This knowledge was forefront in my mind and influenced both my theoretical and practical approach to this study.

As a Pākehā Canadian researcher wishing to work within a Māori space, my methodological approach required careful consideration. This was compounded by the power differentials that existed because of my position as assistant principal at the school within which I wished to base this research. My motivation to undertake this research stems from a commitment to my obligations as a treaty partner to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and a determination to seek social justice for Māori learners who have been chronically underserved by a system I am part of. It was imperative that my research approach reflected my intention to undertake this project as an act of service. My research paradigm has been influenced and developed through three main theories and methodologies: Kaupapa Māori Theory and Critical Theory, as brought together by Culturally Responsive Methodology. My methods, by extension, were undertaken deliberately as a practical representation of the philosophies and methodologies underlying this research.

This chapter is be divided into two sections. Section one discusses the three methodological and theoretical foundations that supported this research. Section two provides an overview of my research method and procedures, with links to relevant literature.

Section One: Methodology

This research was positioned within the methodological framework of Culturally Responsive Methodologies which draws primarily from Kaupapa Māori Theory and Critical Theory (Berryman et al., 2013a). Culturally Responsive Methodologies are discussed in detail in part three of this section. While not guiding my research process per se, Kaupapa Māori theories and methodologies and Critical theories were both foundational in the development of my research epistemology. Their influence is outlined below.

Kaupapa Māori Theories and Methodologies

I acknowledge that Kaupapa Māori research is, in its very essence, by Māori, for Māori (Cram, et al., 2018; Jones 2012; Pihama et. al, 2002; L. T. Smith, 2015, 2017). While my research was not undertaken through a Kaupapa Māori process, considerations of Kaupapa Māori methodology were significant within this research, particularly in terms of the potential negative impact power differentials could have. Bishop and Glynn (1999a) provide a framework to guide considerations of power sharing within a Kaupapa Māori research process:

- Initiation: Who initiates the project?
- Benefits: What are they? Who are they for?
- Representation: Whose interests are represented?
- Legitimation: How will Māori perspectives be legitimated?
- Accountability: Who will the researcher be accountable to?

(p. 129)

As a non-Māori researcher wishing to work with and for Māori, critical reflection on initiation, benefits, representation, legitimation, and accountability was necessary at all phases of this research.

Initiation: This project was initiated as an attempt to respond to my frustrations with a secondary education system that has and continues to allow Māori learners to leave school with inferior qualifications to their non-Māori peers. While I initiated this research, I was joined by participants who also felt strongly about this issue and who wanted to contribute to a solution. Not everyone who I invited to participate

agreed to take part, particularly students who did not gain UE. I respected their wishes and moved forward with those who were happy to engage.

Benefits: This research was undertaken for the benefit of Māori students who I have seen and continue to see leave education without the qualifications they have a right to access equitably: qualifications that statistically determine quality of life outcomes.

Representation: The interests of past, present, and future Māori learners in mainstream schools were at the forefront of this research. When representing the voices of the Year 13 student participants and their whānau, I was conscious of doing so in a manner that reflected the mana of each person who gifted their knowledge and experiences to this project.

Legitimation: The only perspectives sought in this research were those of Māori students and their whānau. I intentionally did not include other participants from the education sector in this project to enable the voices of Māori students and whānau to be heard clearly without struggling to create space among other voices.

Accountability: I was accountable to my participants and their desire to contribute to more equitable outcomes for Māori students in education. To this end, it was important to ensure their words and intent were accurately analysed and represented in this research through collaborative storying.

Kaupapa Māori theories are underpinned by a range of culturally embedded principles. As a researcher aspiring to work responsively, developing an understanding of these principles was important in the growth of my cultural competence. Graham Smith's (1997) critical change factors for schooling, are foundational in in Kaupapa Māori Theory: *Tino Rangatiratanga* (relative autonomy principle); *Taonga tuku iho* (cultural aspirations principle); *Ako Māori* (culturally preferred pedagogy); *Kia piki ake i nga raruraru o te kainga* (mediation of socio-economic factors); *Whānau* (extended family management principle); *Kaupapa* (collective vision principle).

Tino Rangatiratanga and *Whānau* are principles that, arguably, sit at the heart of Kaupapa Māori (Pihama et al., 2002). Within the principle of Tino Rangatiratanga**,** researchers are positioned in such a way as to fit within the autonomy and agency

of the participants (Bishop & Glynn, 1999a, 1999b). Also implicit is an understanding that Māori are self-determining in their engagement with research (L. T. Smith, 2015). This principle, embedded in Te Tiriti, guarantees Māori control over their cultural knowledge, language and tikanga (Bishop & Glynn, 1999a, 1999b; L. T. Smith, 2015). Under this principle, any new knowledge gained through research is for the benefit of Māori, not the researcher (Bishop, 2005).

The principle of whānau, when applied to research, guides how a research group is organised and defines the relationships and responsibilities of those within the group, including that of the researcher (L. T. Smith, 2017). This principle is also fundamental to Culturally Responsive Methodologies and frameworks (Berryman et al., 2013). Bishop (2005) describes the process as participatory as well as participant driven. It requires the researcher to step away from positivist modes of research and reposition themselves as a participant within a process guided by a "*whanau of interest"* (Bishop & Glynn, 1999b). Cultural norms, values and practices such as *whakawhanaungatanga* (establishing relationships in a Māori manner) are fundamental to the principle of Whānau within a Kaupapa Māori approach (Berryman et al., 2013a; Bishop & Glynn, 1999b; Pihama et al., 2002). Bishop and Glynn (1999b) describe whakawhanaungatanga as a research strategy that positions relationships at the centre of the research, addresses power and control issues within the research, and involves the researcher somatically within the research process.

Kaupapa Māori methodologies have created a space for research that "assumes the existence and validity of Māori knowledge, language and culture" (L. T. Smith, 2015, p. 48). As such, many of the concerns Māori have with colonial methodologies have been addressed. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2015) outlined key questions that underpin Kaupapa Māori research:

(i) What research do we want to carry out?

(ii) Who is that research for?

(iii) What difference will it make?

(iv) Who will carry out this research?

(v) How do we want the research to be done?

(vi) How will we know it is a worthwhile piece of research?

(vii) Who will own the research?

(viii) Who will benefit? (pp. 48)

These questions helped me to create and maintain clarity of the purpose and goal of my research throughout this project. They also assisted in developing my research design to best serve the aspirations and interests of my participants.

Critical Theories and Methodologies

Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy have been discussed in Chapter One. The philosophy of Critical Theory in research praxis is evident in Critical Qualitative Inquiry. Denzin (2015), defines it as:

> NOT JUST a qualitative study. This is ethically responsible activist research. The avowed social justice commitment focuses inquiry on research that makes a difference in the lives of socially oppressed persons.
>
> (p. 32)

Approaching a research study of this nature would have been irresponsible unless through a critical lens. Undertaking research through Critical Qualitative Inquiry includes valuing indigenous methodologies (Kovach, 2016). It also includes being ethically accountable to those represented in this study, and politically accountable in the context of social justice (Critical Methodologies Collective, 2022).

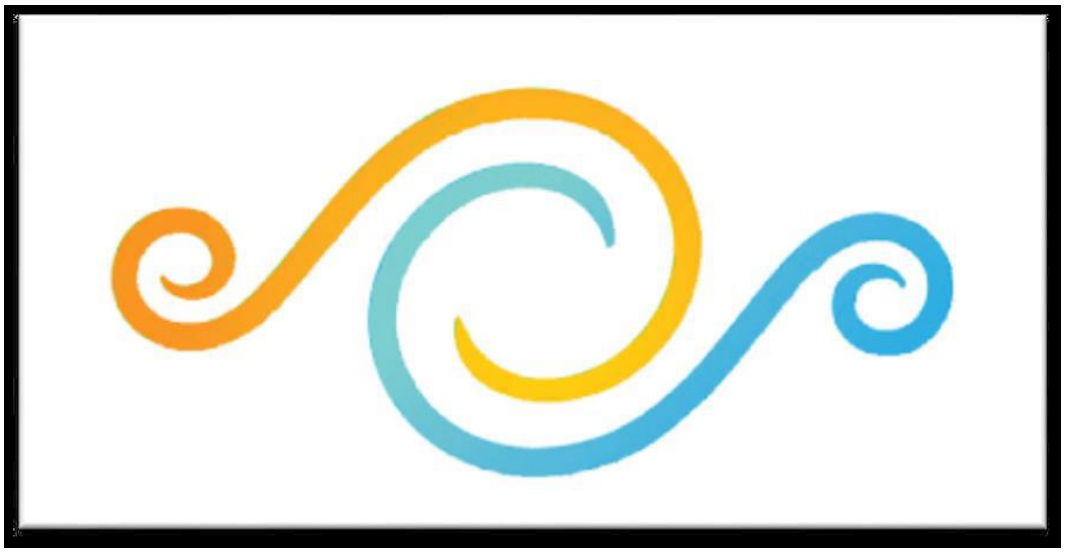
Culturally Responsive Methodologies

Berryman, SooHoo, and Nevin (2013a) describe Culturally Responsive methodologies as a drawing together of Kaupapa Māori Theory and Critical Theory to provide a framework for researchers who aim to achieve socially responsible outcomes for minoritised groups. Being culturally responsive does not require the researcher to be a member of the minoritised group, however, it does necessitate the researcher to "develop contexts within which the researched community can define, in their own ways, the terms for engaging, relating, and interacting in the co-creation of new knowledge" (Berryman et al., 2013a, p. 4). The researcher must develop what Freire refers to as a critical consciousness, through the deconstruction of internalised dominant discourse (Berryman et al., 2013a). Bishop (cited in L. T.

Smith, 2017) argues that non-indigenous people have an obligation as Tangata Tiriti to support Māori research and can be useful allies in research if they are genuine in their desire to support the community in which the research is situated.

Within this framework, the researcher is required to "develop contexts within which the researched community can define, in their own ways, the terms for engaging, relating, and interacting in the co-creation of new knowledge" (Berryman et al., 2013a, p. 4). To this end, the responsive researcher is one who listens to those with whom they want to engage and commits to co-creating and nurturing relationships of trust and respect. These interactions are facilitated in a dialogic space represented by the Figure 1 below:

Figure 4: The Responsive and Dialogic Space



(Berryman et al., 2013a, p. 22)

The spiral or *koru* design is based on the fern frond and representative of new growth in te ao Māori. The two koru in this figure represent the researcher and participant, each bringing their own identities, knowledge, and experience to the space they create together through culturally responsive connection based on trust and respect (Berryman et al., 2013a).

Culturally responsive methodology requires the researcher to work in a responsive, dialogic space, within a framework considering the following principles and implications in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Principles and Questions to Ask Self and Implications for Responsive Research.

Guiding principles and questions to ask self when seeking to work in culturally responsive ways	Implications for researcher seeking to work in culturally responsive ways
Learn from multiple sources • Do you come prepared with some social or cultural knowledge of the people with whom you are seeking to engage?	**Do the work before the work** • Find out about the person/group with whom you wish to work. • Learn about/understand the wider social agenda within which this person/group is located. • Be prepared for a long term rather than a momentary commitment.
Bring your authentic self to the research • What subjectivities, positionalities, and ideologies do you bring to the research? • How will they broker your access? • Are your own rituals of encounter respectful and humble as a visitor in someone else's place?	**Arrive as a respectful visitor** • Be prepared for them to ''feel you as well as see you''. • Listen and wait to be invited. • Learn to use all of your senses.
Bring a relational and dialogical consciousness • In what ways do you convey open mindedness? • What are your intentions/research questions? • What roles might people play?	**When/if you are asked to respond** • Clarify who you are, your personal self before your professional self. • Be upfront about your research intentions. • Ask for their ideas. Listen respectfully to their ideas and understand how your agenda may change in response. • Be patient, be flexible, and be prepared to change.
Enact ongoing critical reflection • How have the relationships affected the research endeavor? • How has the research endeavor affected the relationships? • How is the work evolving as a result of this collaboration? • How have lives benefitted as a result of this collaboration?	**If you are asked to stay to co-construct the research** • Remain patient, flexible, and prepared to change. • Read your participants and expect that they will be reading you. • Learn together and own together. • Question your own assumptions • Recognize and respect resistance. • Be open to a new relational consciousness.

Assess shared relationships and agreements	When the research is finished
• What have you learned about their values, beliefs, and epistemologies? • How will constructed understandings contribute to your continued work/relationship? • How has the work benefitted and how will it continue to benefit the group you are working with? • How do you know this?	• Understand that the relationship and the responsibility to the group remain.

(Berryman, et al., 2013a, pp. 22-23)

Researcher positionality

Culturally Responsive Methodology requires the researcher to know and understand their own subjectivity within the research, to critically reflect on their own way of knowing, and to be clear about their positionality within the research (Berryman et al., 2013b; Lahman et al., 2011; Rodriguez et al., 2011). Researcher positionality is often discussed in terms of *insider* and *outsider* (Bukamal, 2022). Within this research, I acknowledged my position as both an outsider and insider. I know my cultural lens has been shaped initially through my experiences from early childhood through to early adulthood in Canada, and later through my adult life in Aotearoa. This placed me as an outsider to this research as I have no lived experience either, a) as an indigenous student, or b) as a student at all within the New Zealand education system. My heritage also positioned me as an outsider to Aotearoa's colonial past, although I feel a great responsibility as a descendant of colonists in the wider British imperialist regime to work towards systemic transformation and transformative praxis. As one who has married into a Māori whānau, and is a mother to a Māori daughter, I felt deeply and personally connected to this research. My professional journey as a teacher and senior leader has been profoundly impacted by professional learning I have undertaken through the national Ministry of Education funded initiatives Te Kotahitanga (Te Kotahitanga, n.d.) and Kia Eke Panuku (Kia Eke Panuku, n. d.), as well as The University of Waikato Poutama Pounamu Blended Learning programme (Poutama Pounamu, n. d.d). My learning journey has heightened my critical awareness of the inequities within our education system and, indeed, within many other social constructs in Aotearoa. In this sense, I see myself as an insider to this research as I regarded this

work as an act of resistance to the chronic inequities that persist for Māori learners in our current education system.

Section Two: Methods

Qualitative Research

> Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.
>
> (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015)

Qualitative approaches have been prevalent in research in the humanities, social sciences, and education since the mid-twentieth century (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Although there are several research designs available to the qualitative researcher, one of the most widely used is that of narrative inquiry, a method that "begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals" (Cresswell, 2007, p. 54), most commonly through conversations between the participants and the researcher (Clandinin, 2016).

Constructivist Grounded Theory

Grounded theory provides a framework for induction of theory from qualitative data and rests on the premise that data should be used as a means to generate theory rather than verify it (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Constructivism in research is based on a paradigm that denies the existence of objective reality (Mills et al., 2006). *Constructivist Grounded Theory* departs from its methodological predecessor through a fundamental shift in epistemology, based on the assumption that social reality is multiple and constructed, positioning the researcher as subjective within the research process, (Charmaz, 2015, 2021; O'Connor et al., 2018). Understanding how my reality had been shaped by my history and experiences, and the lens this created as a researcher was a significant and ongoing process throughout this project. Charmaz (2017) refers to this as *methodological self-consciousness* and is a necessary process for a researcher undertaking critical qualitative inquiry. A research journal was a valuable tool enabling reflection and metacognitive processing of my own subjectivity at all stages of this research.

Collaborative Storying

In keeping with key principles and practices of a Culturally Responsive researcher, my approach to data collection, processing and theorising was that of *Collaborative Storying*. This process is participatory in nature, in that it positions the researcher and participants as collaborators of the research (Bishop, 1995, 1997a; Bishop & Glynn, 1999a). Kovach (2010) identifies storying and conversation as "congruent with the indigenous paradigm" that "holds a deep purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others" (p. 40). The development of the collaborative story begins with multiple stories gathered through sequential semi-structured, conversational interviews as chat (Bishop, 1995, 1997a; Burgess, 2002). This approach to interviewing is crucial in allowing voices to be heard without researcher imposition. A series of interviews as chat (Bishop, 1995) were undertaken as a basis for this research. The conversational and dialogic nature of this technique is intended to create non-hierarchical, co-participation in the interview process by both the participants and the researcher.

Section Three: Research Procedure

Based on the relational principle of whanaungatanga, I invited former students, with whom I had established relationships during the course of their schooling, to participate in this research. To address potential power issues, young adult participants who had recently graduated from Year 13 from the research setting school were invited. Young adult participants, who are hereafter referred to as *kōhine* (female adolescent), were initially contacted via text messages to allow them to consider their participation without feeling pressured. Follow-up phone calls, emails and texts were made to interested participants to answer questions and provide additional information about the research project. Once kōhine participants were established, I also invited other members of their whānau to participate. Arrangements of place, date, and time for interviews as chats were co-constructed with each participant to ensure they felt comfortable with the interview setting. Interview venues ranged from participants' workplaces and university libraries to community facilities and kitchen tables. Kōhine interviews were held separately from whānau interviews. Both group and individual interviews were conducted, determined by circumstances and the wishes of the participants. All interviews were

carried out face to face. This process of engagement was highly relational, which aligned strongly with my culturally responsive positionality, and was especially appropriate given the focus of this research. My engagement with participants during interviews was guided by the broad phases of *pōwhiri* (a formal Māori welcome to visitors), as applied to *hui whakatika* (restorative conferencing) (Berryman & Bateman, 2008), and adapted for culturally responsive research encounters:

- opening rituals: respecting space and boundaries, determining who speaks and when (**led by the research participants**);
- clarifying who you are / where you have come from (**collective responsibility – researcher and research participants**);
- declaring intentions (**articulated by the researcher**);
- coming together as a group (**collective responsibility – researcher and research participants**);
- building relationships and making initial connections, including sharing whakapapa or genealogical connections (**collective responsibility – researcher and research participants**);
- exploring the research *kaupapa* (topic); face-to-face interactions, non-threatening, open and honest discussions; achieving shared understanding; allocating time; using *whakawhitiwhiti kōrero* (spiral discourse/ongoing conversation) as opposed to linear questions; active listening; enabling silences (**collective responsibility – researcher and research participants**);
- sharing *kai* (food);
- closing; summarising decisions and agreements; and upholding mana (dignity) (**led by the research participants**)

(S. Macfarlane 2013, p.142)

In many of the interviews, I was very conscious that I was entering into participants' physical space, as well as their cultural space. I was careful to approach each engagement openly and responsively, taking the lead from participants in terms of protocols and rituals. In some cases, we began and closed with karakia, for other participants this was not part of our process. Whakawhanaungatanga was

prioritised, establishing connections with each other and the kaupapa before beginning the recorded interviews. Interviews were guided with a small set of open-ended research questions; however, the conversation was led by the participants to include any content they felt was important or relevant. A sample of these questions is below. Some of the questions were adapted when interviewing whānau participants.

- Tell me about your journey through high school.
- When you think of *whānau*, what does that mean to you?
- Did you get a sense of whānau at school? Where?
- What is your understanding of *whanaungatanga* relationships?
- In what ways did you see evidence of whanaungatanga relationships at school in year 13?
    - Were there changes over time from years 9-13?
- In what ways could whanaungatanga relationships have been strengthened in year 13?
- How important to you as a learner in year 13 were whanaungatanga relationships at school?

Each conversation concluded with asking if there was anything else the participants wanted to discuss. It was often during this portion of the interviews as chat where participants expressed their thoughts most freely. Following the recorded portion of our interview as chat, we continued to chat over *kai* (food).

Ongoing collaborative analysis and meaning making was facilitated in the creation of the collaborative story. The sequential aspect of the interviews and analysis allowed me to revisit key themes with participants and created the responsive, dialogic space within the research consistent with Culturally Responsive Methodology (Berryman et al., 2013b).

Analysis of data

Interviews were recorded and written transcriptions were created. Participants were then given their transcript and asked to add, delete or edit content as they saw fit. Once transcripts were finalised, they were read and annotated making note of emerging themes. The following phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clark, 2021) were used to guide this process:

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the dataset.

Phase 2: Coding.

Phase 3: Generating initial themes.

Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes.

Phase 5: Refining, defining and naming themes.

Phase 6: Writing up.

(Braun & Clark, 2021, p. 34)

Subsequent collaborative conversations with student participants during phases four and five allowed for further exploration, clarification, and refinement of the initial themes in relation to key ideas from their previous interviews. Transcripts were also entered into an online word cloud generator to identify the prevalence of key words used during interviews as chats. The processes of collaborative conversations with participants and word cloud generation were undertaken as a means of triangulating the relevance of initial themes. In keeping with Constructivist Grounded methods (Charmaz, 2021), quantitative academic and attendance data were analysed alongside qualitative interview data to provide links to the wider social context of the experiences of participants in this study.

The Participants

Kōhine participants all attended secondary school until the end of Year 13 and were a combination of those who had attained UE and those who had not by the end of their schooling. Each of them is introduced in this section.

Kōhine Participants

Sally

Sally attended the research setting school for all five years of her secondary schooling. At the end of year 10, Sally's asTTle[6] Maths score was at curriculum level 4a, her Reading at 5b and writing at 5p. Sally's pathway through NCEA included subjects at each level that lead to a programme of study at year 13 with six

[6] asTTle is a standardised assessment tool, developed to assess students' achievement and progress…asTTle provides teachers and school leaders with information that can be used to inform learning programmes" (Ministry of Education, n.d.)

UE Approved subjects. Sally earned an Excellence endorsement in NCEA levels 1, 2 and 3, and gained a total of 87 credits at Level 3. Despite this achievement, Sally did not gain the University Entrance qualification. Whilst she earned the requisite credits for UE in English and Te Reo, Sally did not gain the necessary 14 credits in a third UE approved subject required to attain the University Entrance qualification. The university Sally is currently attending accepted her into her preferred programme based on the strength of her other results.

Amelia

Amelia attended a Kura Kaupapa Māori until the end of year 10. She transferred to the research setting school in Year 11 and was there for all three of her senior years. Amelia enrolled into the bilingual unit at the research setting school, which meant that her form class and several of her year 11 subjects were delivered to a core of students within the programme. In Years 12 and 13, Amelia attended mainstream classes while maintaining her bilingual form class and teacher. Amelia's subjects at NCEA Levels 1 and 2 enabled Amelia to have a programme of study in year 13 that included five UE approved subjects. While still in year 12, Amelia also earned 16 credits in NCEA Level 3 Te Reo, a UE approved subject. Amelia gained an overall Excellence endorsement in NCEA Levels 1 and 2, and a Merit endorsement in Level 3. She also gained the requisite UE credits in Te Reo, English and Te Reo Rangatira, as well as her literacy and numeracy, enabling her to earn University Entrance as her leaving qualification. Amelia is currently attending university.

Beth

Beth attended the research setting school for all five years of her secondary schooling. At the end of year 10, Beth's asTTle Maths score was at curriculum level 4a and her Writing was at 5p. In NCEA Level 1, Beth was enrolled in five subjects, each with clear pathways to UE approved subjects at Level 3. Beth earned 93 credits at Level 1 with a course endorsement of Merit in Art. In year 12, Beth enrolled in the school's Services Academy[7] as she aspired to enter the services. The subjects in Beth's Level 2 programme moved away from a UE pathway with three

[7] Services academies are military-focused programmes delivered within secondary schools. (Ministry of Education, n.d.)

of her subjects at Level 2 not leading to UE approved subjects at level 3. The remaining three subjects did provide a possible UE pathway; however, this was limited due to the nature of some assessments in these subjects. In year 13, Beth was enrolled in two subjects with the potential to earn credits towards UE, along with two non-UE approved subjects and two studies. This meant she was not eligible to gain UE in Year 13. Beth left her secondary schooling with an NCEA Level 3 Certificate. She also met UE Numeracy requirements. Due to a pre-existing medical condition, Beth was unable to enter the services. She is currently working at an aged residential care facility with the hope of gaining qualifications in the health care sector through her work.

Tiwai

Tiwai attended the research setting school for all five years of her secondary schooling. At the end of Year 10, Tiwai's asTTle results indicated her reading curriculum level was at 4a, her writing at 5b and her maths at 3a. In Year 11, Tiwai was enrolled in five NCEA Level One subjects that had a pathway to UE, and one vocational subject that did not. She earned 97 credits, however, did not gain all 10 compulsory Numeracy credits in Level One, a requisite for eligibility of NCEA qualifications at any level. At Level Two, Tiwai was enrolled in three vocational subjects, two subjects with a clear UE pathway, and another subject with a possible UE pathway. In Year 13, Tiwai had four Level 3 vocational subjects and two studies on her timetable. Although Tiwai earned enough credits at Level Three to gain her NCEA Level Three Certificate, she was not awarded the qualification due to the shortfall of Level One Numeracy credits. Tiwai is currently working in catering and intends to enrol in tertiary education as a mature student to pursue her interest in social work.

Destiny

Destiny attended the research setting school for all five years of her secondary schooling. Her final asTTle results in Year 10 indicated her reading, writing and maths were all at curriculum level 5b. In Year 11, all six of Destiny's NCEA Level One subjects had a clear pathway to UE. In Year 12, Destiny was enrolled in two vocational subjects and four subjects with clear pathways to UE. Destiny earned an overall Merit endorsement for both her Level One and Level Two Certificates,

as well as a Merit subject endorsement for statistics at both levels. At Level 3, Destiny was enrolled in three UE approved subjects and two that were not. Destiny earned 102 credits at Level Three, including the 14 credits in each of her UE approved subjects necessary to gain University Entrance. Destiny is currently undertaking a three-year apprenticeship in joinery.

Whānau Participants

Whānau members of two student participants agreed to engage with this research. Whānau of two student participants did not wish to participate. The whānau of the fifth student participant did agree to participate, however were unable to as their personal circumstances changed over the course of this research preventing their engagement with this process.

Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted with the approval of The University of Waikato Division of Education Research Ethics Committee, approval number FEDU020/22. Approval for conducting this research was sought from the research setting school principal and Board of Trustees prior to initiating any contact with potential participants. All students involved in this research were 16 years of age or older and had completed their final year at secondary school. Each participant was provided with an information sheet, introductory letter, and consent form prior to the start of the research project. Participants were assured that the school's name and the individual names of participants would not be disclosed. Participants were each able to review their interview transcription and were given the option of having any of their information included or erased from the recordings. Participants were supported to understand their right to withdraw from the research project with no disadvantage to themselves. They were able to withdraw up to the point at which they verified and annotated their transcriptions prior to the construction of the collaborative story. Each participant was provided with my contact details, the contact details of my supervisor, and the School of Education Ethics committee. Throughout my research, I worked with a cultural advisor to ensure my approach and engagement was culturally responsive and appropriate.

Summary

The epistemological foundation provided by Culturally Responsive, Kaupapa Māori, and Critical theories and methodologies informed both my research paradigm and my research design. The theoretical base of this research located it within a Critical Qualitative Inquiry framework. I was grounded by my social justice positionality, and I understood my subjectivity within this research. Through my philosophical approach and practical design, I endeavoured to support my research participants, myself, and the research itself in providing a safe and culturally appropriate space within which new knowledge could be created together.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

Introduction

This research explores culturally responsive relationships that support the success of Māori students in Year 13. It is intentionally done through the lens of Māori students and their whānau.

The main focus of our discussions was on their experiences while student participants were studying at NCEA Level 3 in year 13. However, it is also important to have an understanding of individual experiences prior to year 13 to provide context to their final year. The first section of this chapter outlines the individual journeys taken by each student leading up to the start of their final year of schooling.

The findings for the remainder of the chapter are presented as a collaborative story constructed from transcribed individual and group interviews as chat with kōhine and whānau participants. The collaborative story has been constructed around themes that emerged from responses to the interview questions, as well as other points of discussion raised during interviews.

Section One: Journeys toward Year 13

As a starting point with each conversation, kōhine were asked to talk about their aspirations when they began year nine, and to describe the journey that led them through high school to year 13. Their stories illustrate the range of experiences, aspirations and challenges each kōhine brought as a foundation to her final year at secondary school.

At the start of their journey at the secondary school, each kōhine carried with them a range of hopes and aspirations for their future. Sally arrived at the school, having already found out about the school's junior academic programme, with clear goals in mind:

> In year 9 I just wanted to give everything a go. We had JCEA[8] in years 9 and 10 which was a good step up from Intermediate. The highest you could

[8] The research setting school's internal junior certificate programme.

> get in JCEA was gold and I was determined to achieve that in both my junior years.

Although attending another school in years nine and ten, Amelia also had clear academic aspirations and career goals:

> I've always been someone that wanted to go far in school and go to uni and all of that. I wanted to be a pilot at first…in year 9 and 10 at my old school, we didn't have the best science department. So, I moved over to [the research setting school].

Tiwai, too, arrived in year nine having already established a career goal for herself. While at intermediate school, Tiwai was told by her teacher that she would make a good social worker. This comment, along with her interest in the job through whānau who worked in the field, established a firm career goal for Tiwai. However, in her junior years, Tiwai's future aspirations sat just behind more immediate goals:

> When I started high school, it was just all about the atmosphere and everybody, the gossip, whatever's going on. Around the end of year 9, year 10 I thought, 'oh, I'd better buckle down I'm going to be in year 11 next year.'

When Beth arrived at the research setting school, she had aspirations in sport:

> When I came to high school, I really just wanted to be a rugby player, like that was my main goal and that was what I wanted to be when I was at that age. I continued playing rugby as we grew into the years at school and rugby just slowly dropped down and there was no team to play for, so I sort of lost hope for that.

When Destiny arrived in year nine, her vision for her future was less clear than most of the other kōhine, and her experience in the junior school less settled:

> I actually didn't think I was going to make it to year 9, but in year 9 I honestly don't think I had many aspirations… for a while I just cruised through year 9 and 10 hoping that I would find something that I would

> enjoy… I went to [an Activity Centre[9]] for a little bit in year 9 and I think about half of year 10. I did like it there you know, we used to make lunch and stuff there, and we used to go out and stuff, but lots of students there were Māori. There were no white, Pākehā students. They didn't want to go back to school…but I kind of wanted to go back to school. I wanted to do something better, I had expectations for myself.

Although the focus of this study was on their experiences in year 13, both Beth and Tiwai felt it was important to address issues that were apparent to them in some of their junior classes. Tiwai felt that what was needed was what she termed 'balance'. When asked to expand, she explained there were two aspects:

> like cultural balance, as well as just having the same energy and just talking to people the exact same way you do to every other student in the class and approaching them.

In teasing out what she meant by cultural balance, Tiwai continued:

> cultural balance it's like you know when we'd walk into the [school based] whare, they would have kapa haka and Māori songs playing, and you walk into a classroom and it's just talking or silence…Cultural Day, that's cool, but that's one day a year.

When asked to expand on the statement about balance of treatment in the classroom, both kōhine explained:

> Beth: The teachers would always go to the white ones before all of us.
>
> Tiwai: We used to get the [holds index finger up]. Always have to wait.
>
> Beth: For, like it to be explained to us, or the paper brought up to us. They'll get the paper explained to them and we'll get the paper given to us.

Beth continued to describe her feelings of unfair treatment in the junior school:

[9] Activity Centres, "provide a specialised Learning Programme for secondary school students in Years 9–13 who are at risk of disengaging from schooling and/or at risk of low educational, social or vocational outcomes." (Ministry of Education, n.d.)

> they [non-Māori students] always got attention no matter what. Whether they were playing up in class or just making a scene in class it was alright. For us [Māori students] it was 'go to the office' or 'think about your actions' or 'you're not allowed to do that because no one else is doing it' sort of thing.

At the end of year 10, standardised test results (asTTle) indicated the kōhine were writing above the national mean score, and their reading levels were within one curriculum sublevel from the mean. All of the maths scores were below the national mean, but within one curriculum sublevel of each other, with the exception of one kōhine whose score was a full curriculum level lower. This means kōhine had essentially made similar academic progress to each other, particularly in literacy, as they began their journey through NCEA.

Upon entering NCEA Level One in year 11, some kōhine talked about their becoming more future-focussed and intent on finding their passion and working towards it. Sally's experience through years 11 and 12 was driven by her very clear career goal:

> I enjoyed the challenge of studying for exams and exploring more subjects. I had a lot of support from my teachers and peers…I had my mind set on going to the Air Force straight after school. I didn't plan on going to uni or asking for alternative career options because I knew what I wanted and where my pathway was going.

Her journey through NCEA Levels One and Two was more straightforward than those described by the other kōhine. At the start of year 11, Amelia moved to the research setting school from a *kura kaupapa Māori* (Māori-language immersion school) and found herself overwhelmed in a mainstream school with a significantly larger roll:

> When I moved over it was a lot at once…it was my decision to go into [the bilingual class] to get me through…just to be more comfortable at school coming from the full immersion to the mainstream.

However, Amelia found it difficult to maintain her motivation for study through her NCEA journey, while also balancing other aspects of her life as a teenager.

> I'd say year 11 was the year I tried the hardest and then it just went lower and lower as I was going on. I'm not sure why, but I feel like I was picking up more extra things on top of all of it, like kapa haka and [my parttime job].

Tiwai also talked of the challenges she faced in remaining focused on working towards her goals in NCEA Levels One and Two, while also enjoying new experiences as an adolescent:

> When I started year 11 it was all becoming real; getting ready for the big wide world, and I have a few family that are in social work, and I just got kind of turned on for it. I got interested, I was working towards it for a while. I wanted to do something [career wise] that I wanted to do every day and just helping people in any way. I kind of dropped the ball a bit – boys.

However, she was also clear that the bigger challenge for her was finding herself questioning her long-held career goal:

> But in saying that, that wasn't the biggest issue around year 11 [or] year 12. It wasn't the biggest distraction; I was in Tourism, and I was really enjoying it and it was kind of shifting me back and forth. So, I was playing around with those two career paths.

Contrary to Amelia and Tiwai, Destiny developed more clarity around her future career goals and became more focussed as she progressed through her senior years:

> In maybe like [year] 11 or 12…my best friends at the time both left school, but I stayed at school because I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. And I just started thinking I don't want to be a bum, I want a good job with money, so I just kind of changed my mind set and started to focus a bit more on school and thinking about my future. I didn't want to be on the benefit and stuff like that.

Destiny's ambition led to her enrolling in a Tourism course at a local tertiary institution at the end of year 12, however:

> I was working in the hospitality industry at the time, I was getting sick of school because all my friends were leaving and, in a way, I felt pressured to hurry up and find my passion which I thought was travel and tourism. But

> they didn't end up running the course because there weren't enough people, so then I came back to school [for NCEA Level 3].

Beth, having lost her hope for a career in rugby, spent her years in NCEA Levels One and Two searching for a pathway that would lead to a career she would find fulfilling:

> I started wanting to become an artist, and then I lost interest in that…then I started at [the school's services academy] because I actually wanted to be in the army…But then I had a medical condition that stopped me from going in there, so then I actually had lost full interest in the army because I had no chance of going in. And then, after that I wanted to become an engineer/mechanic. I started going to trades [work experience programme] but then I missed the one day and I had fallen so far behind I didn't go back and then I lost full interest in that. And then I had no other interest in anything else, so I had just been looking for anything that's there.

At the end of this search, as she entered her final year of NCEA, Beth was still unclear of her future aspirations:

> Then I had myself stuck for a while. I still am stuck; I'm still trying to figure out what I want to do. I just want to be able to give back to people, always give a hand, yeah.

Five students through the same school, each having shown similar potential but with very different experiences. At the start of their final year:

- Sally was single-mindedly headed towards the air force
- Amelia had already completed 14 credits in NCEA Level 3 Te Reo Māori, a UE approved subject, with definite plans for university
- Destiny was returning to school because her plans to leave at the end of year 12 fell through,
- Tiwai was conflicted about her career goals, and
- Beth's main goal was, "actually just to stay in that school and prove my parents wrong; prove to them I could actually stay."

Section Two: Exploration of whānau and whanaungatanga

Conversations in each interview explored participants' understanding of characteristics underpinning *whānau* and *whanaungatanga* relationships. When thinking about whānau, Tiwai was able to clearly articulate what whānau-like relationships looked like to her:

> Wholesome. When everyone is around each other we're just talking, laughing, catching up. It's just love. Family. Enjoying each other's company. Just healthy… It's more of an accepting value, accepting people kind of thing.

Destiny seemingly understood the complexity of whānau-like relationships, finding it challenging to identify characteristics:

> It's being supportive, loving, I don't know why that's a hard question, no it's not but, characteristics, I guess just being there for you and supporting you, giving you advice.

Beth also explored her understanding of whānau-like relationships through the lens of her own whānau:

> My family is always against each other all the time, so my whānau wasn't, I didn't think of *whānau* as us…I sort of just see that [whānau] as looking out for each other, looking after each other and being there for each other. And just support.

The notion of support featured strongly in the narratives. Amelia also identified support as being central to her understanding of whānau-like relationships:

> I would say it is mostly support, close connections and tikanga, I don't have the right words, yeah but I'm always looking for that support from my family.
>
> I'm always stressed. And I always have them asking me if I'm ok and calling me. Because being away from them in general is hard. And just doing little things to make sure you are on the right track and stuff like that.

All kōhine had clear ideas of the characteristics underpinning whānau-like relationships. Central to their understanding were themes of love, nurture, protection, guidance, support, acceptance, and care.

When considering *whanaungatanga*, kōhine demonstrated an understanding that relationships based on whanaungatanga are different to other relationships they may form with people. Amelia described whanaungatanga as layers of support she had around her:

> I would say you have your family-family and then it goes, you can have your friends, I still consider them my whānau…and then I've got people that support me that may not be related but they support me.

Whānau interviewed also talked about whanaungatanga in terms of layers of support. One whānau described this as *wraparound*, explaining:

> The support was there, her mum would support me, and my brothers and sisters, you know, wanted to run a raffle, or wanted to help send her away. When I was a bit short, they'd be right there with me with our trust fund. And it was constant talking on the phone, we'd have video chats, and any of her certificates and that, they wanted to see how she was progressing, which was happening.

Sally differentiated whanaungatanga from what she termed *normal* friendships:

> Whanaungatanga is…a close connection with others but it's on a different level to just a normal friendship.

She continued,

> Just being open and comfortable with each other, being able to learn and teach each other different things without any judgment and all that kind of stuff, I guess. You're just there to support and encourage each other.

Sally continued to explain the significance of relationships based on whanaungatanga to her own sense of belonging, connection, and wellbeing:

> I would say it is different to other types of relationships in a way that with whanaungatanga it is about binding people from different backgrounds etc.

> together. You form a close connection with others through this relationship. It provides the foundation for a sense of unity and belonging… Whanaungatanga to me is all factors of *Te Whare Tapa Whā*[10](the four-sided house): *Taha Wairua* (spiritual side), *Taha Tinana* (body/physical side), *Taha Whānau* (familial/relational side) and *Taha Hinengaro* (mental/emotional side).

Sally's all-encompassing description of whanaungatanga was echoed by whānau:

> Whanaungatanga means your family, who you are, where you've come from, your whakapapa, your being overall…your whole body, spiritually, physically, emotionally, mentally. Everything.

These descriptions demonstrate a clear understanding of the multi-faceted and interdependent nature of whanaungatanga and the impact this has on a person's sense of identity, purpose, connection, and wellbeing.

In describing their understanding of whānau-like relationships and whanaungatanga, participants identified subtle but distinct differences. Whānau-like relationships were those characterised by feelings of protection, love and support. Whanaungatanga was explained as an ecosystem of relationships based on mutual responsibility, connection, and reciprocity. These distinctions align with Pihama and Cameron's (2012) clarification:

> Where whānau is the extended family relationship, whanaungatanga is a practice of how we relate to each other…Whanaungatanga defines the relationships, obligations, and responsibilities between whānau members. (p. 240)

Kōhine and whānau understandings of whanaungatanga and whānau-like relationships go well beyond simply positive relationships. As discussed in the following section, positive teacher-student relationships are significant, however they may have limited impact on academic outcomes for the kōhine interviewed. In contrast, relationships developed based on the principles of whānau and

[10] "Dr Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā model compares *hauora* (*hau* – the breath of life, and *ora* – wellbeing) to the four walls of a *whare* (house), each wall representing a different dimension. All four dimensions are necessary for strength and symmetry" (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

whanaungatanga do play a key role in supporting academic success, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Positive relationships in year 13

Kōhine felt that they had developed strong relationships with at least some of their teachers by the time they reached year 13. They considered their relationships with teachers, and the resulting connection they felt to the school, to be meaningful influences on many aspects of their learning in Year 13.

Some kōhine identified that their relationship with key teachers had played a significant role on their attendance during their final year of school.

The strength of Destiny's relationship with her teachers was sometimes a determining factor in her decisions to attend class:

> Sometimes you don't like a teacher, so you say, "I don't want to go to class" kind of thing but because I had a good relationship with them, I was like, "no, I'm going to go to class.

This sentiment was echoed by Tiwai:

> When you pull up to school and none of your bros have showed up and you've just got to get through the day by yourself, and you can just go up to the teachers and talk to them [for the whole] class, they make you feel comfortable. You can see the patterns cause only certain students will go to certain classes, you'll see the reason, at least that's what I picked up.

The additional support Beth felt when she joined the school's services academy had a significant impact on her motivation to attend school regularly:

> And then when I joined the Services Academy, I just felt like I had a whole lot more support, like a whole lot more. It just made me want to come to school every day at the academy.

Sally connected her regular attendance to those classes where her learning was supported by positive relationships with the teacher:

> I think it is important to have good relationships with your teachers because it benefits your education a lot better. If you understand what you're learning, then it motivates you to go to school and actually attend class…I did find it important to me because it made being at school fun.

All kōhine discussed struggles with motivation at various points during Year 13. Positive relationships were seen as important in supporting them to persevere when presented with challenges in their final year of schooling.

Amelia made a clear connection between her relationship with the teacher and her motivation to complete required tasks:

> I'd say the teachers I did like were the classes that I did the most work. And then the teachers that I wasn't as close with…they were just talking to you, and it wasn't engaging. I feel like those were the classes I struggled in the most.

Kōhine identified the important role strong relationships with their teachers had in supporting their learning and achievement in class. All of them talked about the importance of being able to talk freely and comfortably with their teachers in order to make sense of their learning, as illustrated by comments from Sally:

> Having a good relationship with teachers made asking questions in class easier because I wasn't afraid to ask for help. It stimulates your learning as well because you feel comfortable and heard.

And then from Beth, who said:

> The more I would conversate with the teacher, the easier the work would be explained or the easier I would see they are explaining it, just by conversating with them every day. I don't know how it made it easier, but it just seemed to make it easier the more I talked to them.

Kōhine also expressed an appreciation of stronger, deeper relationships with their teachers in year 13 and the feelings of connection created as a result.

Beth expressed clear feelings of comfort she associated with her relationships with her teachers:

> It was real easy in year 13, bonding with teachers and that. They were just, I don't know, it was just like coming home sort of thing.

Sally seemed surprised but content at the strength of the relationships she made with her teachers by year 13.

> My relationship with teachers became a lot stronger. I made close connections with many of my teachers who I have had since years 9 and 10, something I never thought would happen.

Destiny, followed by Tiwai, also both recognised they had sound connections with their teachers in year 13:

> She'd always come over to us and have some laughs. Especially in my last year, just because I was doing better, I got along a lot better with my teachers.

> I reckon a lot of the teachers do a really good job with connecting with other students, because I saw a lot of that. We were all close with the teachers.

All kōhine interviewed recognised that positive relationships with their teachers created comfortable, welcoming, and interactive learning environments that made them feel connected to school. However, across both individual and group interviews, themes also began to emerge around the necessity that the relationship move, beyond simply *positive*, towards effective whānau-like and whanaungatanga relationships, specific to year 13, in order to significantly impact on academic outcomes.

Whānautanga in Year 13

Cranston (2017) draws on the term *whānautanga* "to conceptualise the actions of a group of people who begin to act as whānau" (p. 265). Whānautanga was evident in varying degrees across interviews with Kōhine.

Whānautanga with their peers

One area kōhine were noticeably clear about the significance of whānau-type, or whānautanga relationships was with their peers. Feeling deeply connected to each other was seen as an important contributing factor to their success in year 13.

Tiwai and Beth both said they found it difficult to complete their final year at school. When asked what made it so tough, Beth was quick to respond:

> It was my friends. Like, I'd have nothing to do for morning tea and lunch, so I'd just go home.

Tiwai agreed:

> I just kind of just lost interest in school and because a lot of my friends which played a big part of my school were off doing their own thing [had left school] that played a big part of it, not having the mates. [Staying until the end] was a struggle, it was a struggle. But I've got to prove a point.

When asked how important whānau type relationships with school-based peers were to them in year 13, they replied:

> Tiwai: Very. We were all good for each other
> Beth: Yeah. And kept each other on the right path.

Amelia identified that the sense of whānau she felt with students in her form class was significant to her learning and achievement:

> We had our own year 13 group where we were always making sure each other were on track, ok and getting to class. It was a different relationship.

Sally also made a clear connection between strong peer relationships and her learning and achievement:

> It wasn't just teacher-student interaction but also peer support. Having friends you can study with is an excellent way to help you think more. It definitely made me think outside the box which benefited my learning.

In addition to whānautanga shown among friends and peers in her own year group, Amelia also felt the protectiveness of an older sibling for the younger kōhine in her form class:

> My form class. It's a bit weird but there were five of us year 13s and then we had year 11s in our class, and they were like my *teinas* (younger sisters), my juniors and we always had that little connection between us. If anything went wrong with one of them, we'd support each other. We were always taking care of the year 11s like our little siblings.

All kōhine placed a high value on this sense of whānau at school with their peers, connecting it with attendance, belonging, purpose, motivation, resilience and learning; all key levers for success.

Whānautanga with their teachers

Kōhine discussed the importance of relationships with their teachers going beyond simply positive and friendly to demonstrate the characteristics of nurture, protection, guidance, acceptance, support and care they associate with whānau. The significance of whānautanga at school in relation to their achievement was clearly understood by kōhine, as articulated by Destiny:

> I think it was pretty important. When you have a whānau relationship you feel like you've got support and if you don't have that relationship, or support you're just like fuck it, you know?

Amelia was also emphatic:

> Very important. There's a lot of classes I wouldn't have passed if it wasn't for the teachers.

Their narratives illustrate a range of experiences of whānautanga and the impact this had on their academic journey and outcomes. The sections that follow are key themes that presented in relation to whānautanga during interviews.

Have high expectations for me

Kōhine were each asked to describe a teacher who they felt had shown a sense of whānau toward them in year 13. Interestingly, above all other qualities, kōhine universally described teachers who demonstrated high expectations for achievement, along with high levels of care. Tiwai recognised this quality as *tough love*:

> I think it's because she's got a hard head and she's straight up and she's cool. Yeah, that's really it. She's a cool person to talk to and she like hammers it into you to do the best you can in anything and everything. She's cool…Tough love.

Beth spoke of a teacher who *was always on her case*:

> Ms.___ was a good teacher. She was one to always be on your case to get your credits and just smash it out, you know. She was real good. She really wanted all her students to achieve. Not just Achieve, it was Achieve with Excellence!

Destiny described an influential teacher who *was always hassling her to do better:*

> Teachers, they used to always tell me like, "you know you can do better", or like "you should…" but I kind of just flicked it off. Mrs. ____, she was really good. She had an influence on me, like a good influence just her words and she was very supportive. I guess she was always hassling me to do better.

Amelia reflected on a teacher who *pushed her* to do better:

> I think Mr ___ did well with me in the way he taught. He seemed scary, but he still pushed you. He would ask the people who don't answer questions in class to like talk and say their answers. And then, if you didn't get work done, you'd be scared to go to his class, but in a good way. It wasn't like "I'm never going to that class again because he always wants all this work done" but at least it pushed you...I realised the outcomes I had while being under his teaching were quite good. He also would joke around a lot so that strengthened our relationship.

Sally spoke of a teacher who gave her *pep talks:*

> She is the kind of teacher who never gives up on you…She made me feel a lot more confident in my work and would tell me to trust my instinct because I am capable of reaching my full potential. Her pep talks always gave me that extra boost of confidence.

In each example, it was clear that the teachers' high expectations were built upon an already sound foundational relationship of care and support.

While all kōhine were able to identify teachers who maintained high expectations for them as a learner, they also spoke of teachers who did not. Amelia talked about her experience:

> In some classes I could drop so far behind and the teachers wouldn't notice. And then it would show in all my assignments. Eventually they'd like "oh, she isn't doing well, oh she's not doing any of her work."

Sally agreed:

> Yes, they never really followed through. If they knew we were behind, they just didn't really do anything.

When asked how this affected them as learners, Sally explained:

> It just makes you want to prioritise other classes.

Amelia adding:

> I feel like we did that a lot in year 13. The harder the class was, we were like 'oh we'll go to this class and do all the work in this class,' and then your "easy" classes you're just like 'oh whatever'

Beth described her feelings of frustration in some of her classes where she felt no one, including the teacher, wanted to be:

> No one really showed up to school in year 13 so the classes were practically empty. Well, our classes we were taking anyway. They were empty as. They only had max 8 people in them. I used to think that having less students in the class would be easier to teach and easier to learn but they were so boring and there wasn't a difference.

Tiwai talked of a situation where she felt her effort to catch up was not reciprocated by a teacher:

> I was doing those catch-up classes, and I had finished the first one [achievement standard], and I wasn't sure [if I'd gained the credits] because

> that whole year Ms. ____ didn't moderate it or whatever, so it never popped up [on my results] for that whole year. And then I was like, 'that one hasn't popped up, I'm not going to do the other one.'

Tiwai's feelings of invalidation resulted in her not completing the Level 1 Numeracy credits required as a baseline in order to gain any NCEA qualifications.

Through the narratives it became clear that, in those circumstances where teachers openly demonstrated a belief in their students' ability to achieve and cared about their success, kōhine rose to meet those expectations. In classes where they felt there was a lack of these qualities from the teacher, they were less likely to achieve. Amelia connected this to her motivation level, explaining:

> I feel like at least they cared, at least you know they care about how much work you're doing.

Adding it made her feel less alone in her learning:

> It was just a lot less on your plate when they were on your case about everything.

Create an inclusive learning whānau

During interviews with kōhine, it became evident that they strongly identified as part of a larger group. In addition to the sense of whānau they had with their own friends, kōhine felt protective of their peers and felt strongly about inclusion and fairness in their classes. Some kōhine wanted to discuss the inconsistencies they observed in teachers' interactions with individual students. Tiwai explained:

> you kind of saw it sometimes, some teachers may not have as much patience with other students. Sometimes understandable, sometimes a bit like 'oh'… As a teenage girl with all my opinions and everything [I thought] it's not really fair.

Beth concurred:

> I would say, I don't mean to be racist or anything, but I would say like the white, or like the Pākehās, I would say that they had a whole lot more attention than us Māori students.

As stated earlier in this chapter, Beth acknowledged the issue as more noticeable in the years prior to Year 13 but observed perhaps it was because "no one really showed up to school in year 13." Indeed, attendance data across Beth's Year 13 (primarily vocational) classes indicated that, by Term 2, 17% of her classmates had left or stopped attending school. This rose to 42% by Term 3 and 55% by Term 4. It is also quite possible that the issue was less visible to her in Year 13 as Beth's classes contained nearly 100% Māori students, with just one student in each class who was not.

She went on to reflect about the influence her feelings of discrimination had on the decisions she made about her academic pathway through the senior school:

> That's sort of why I did join [the school's services academy] because I could see that everyone in [there] had a privilege of everything, but in other classes, not all classes, but some students would have more privilege than us Māori students. And the teachers would always go to the white ones before all of us.

Amelia, like Tiwai, did not like to see her classmates misunderstood or treated unfairly:

> They'd have a good relationship with me, but then they wouldn't have a good relationship with others in the class...I've seen a lot of students get given up on and it's kind of sad…it affected how I perceived those people, those teachers, because I know what people go through on the daily and it doesn't help when you want to do the work, but you just physically can't because of how [emotionally] drained we get managing everything… I think it is very important that they create a relationship with every student.

Kōhine wanted to feel a sense of whānau at school. They actively engaged in whānautanga with their peers and sought out teachers and classroom experiences where they felt a similar sense of whānau.

Support and guide my future success

In her analysis of schools effecting positive academic outcomes for Māori students, Cranston (2018, p. 246) noticed that teachers, "had all begun to assume the same

responsibility to nurture these students as though they were part of their own family." In each interview with kōhine, significant time was spent discussing issues related to their navigation of the NCEA system. A range of challenges were surfaced along their journeys. What emerged, was an illustration of the significant connection between whānautanga and nurture, and academic decisions and outcomes for each kōhine.

In relation to the requirements for University Entrance, Amelia, Destiny and Sally were very aware of the minimum requirements for UE, and the importance of attaining the qualification, regardless of whether they intended to attend university after their secondary education:

> Amelia: So, my three UE subjects are Te Reo Māori, Te Reo Rangatira [full immersion] and English. So, I'm lucky because I am fluent so that helped me…get UE.
>
> Destiny: So, I came back to school, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, just did my work, made sure I took UE classes just in case I did want to go to uni… yeah, just in case the way you take at least 3 classes.
>
> Sally: No, uni wasn't on my radar, but it doesn't mean to say I wouldn't try to get UE. I knew that I would need a backup plan, so I always kept my options open.

In each case above, kōhine were able to identify one or more teachers who guided them through the course decisions they made to stay on track for UE. In contrast, both Beth and Tiwai seemed less informed of the significance of gaining UE to broaden their opportunities following secondary school. Tiwai, who still intended to gain tertiary qualifications in social work, expressed a sense of resignation and lack of control over the steady decrease in subjects leading towards UE from NCEA Level 1 to 3. It was explained to her during the interview that, in year 11, she had 5 subjects that would have led to UE approved subjects in year 13; in Year 12 she had 3, then at year 13, she had no UE approved subjects. When asked whether she

thought that pathway led to where she wanted to go, considering her career goals, Tiwai replied:

> Na, not really. Honestly that was kind of a fluke year [Year 13].

Beth was also unaware of the narrowing of her courses during her three years of NCEA, or the implications for her future options. She was surprised, replying "Oh?", when it was pointed out to her in the interview that she had five subjects in year 11 that could have led to UE (she, in fact, earned a Merit endorsement in one of them). When asked if she was aware of what was happening to her pathway towards UE when those five subjects in year 11, went to two in year 12, and one in year 13, she replied:

> No. It probably was explained, like I probably did have it explained to me, but me being young and dumb back then I probably wouldn't have cared or probably didn't understand what they meant.

Narratives indicated a clear distinction between the experiences of kōhine who were on track for UE, and those who were directed towards vocational subjects. The three kōhine who were enrolled in UE approved subjects demonstrated a greater understanding of the qualification system and control of their navigation through it. In contrast, the two kōhine who were in non-UE approved subjects in year 13 indicated less agency in the decisions made around subject choices and their pathway through NCEA.

The importance of ongoing support in career planning and decision making in year 13 became very evident. All five of the kōhine began Year 13 in very different places. Destiny started her year not knowing what her long-term goals were beyond high school:

> My main goal was to figure out what I wanted to do, because if you think about it, it wasn't that far away, and I was still really unsure.

Beth also started her final year with mixed feelings, having exhausted her pursuit of career options. She decided instead to focus on achieving her short-term goal of completing NCEA Level Three:

> I don't know why I did [return to school in Year 13]. I just wanted to gain my levels really. That was the only reason why I did come to school. I don't think I actually did gain them though. I think I got my level 2? 3? One of them. But I had no idea what I wanted to do after high school. When I got to year 13 my goal was just to gain my credits and prove to my parents I could stay in school and actually graduate.

Tiwai, as stated previously, began Year 13 torn between two possible future careers:

> I was in Tourism, and I was really enjoying it and it was kind of shifting me back and forth. So, I was playing around with those two career paths [social work and tourism].

Sally had clear career goals at the start of year 13, however, was forced to change direction midyear:

> I had always planned on going to the air force and pursuing a career in aviation…due to Covid, I had to change my plans of going to the air force and think of going to uni. This is when I reached out to the careers teacher and [the dean] for help.

Of the five kōhine, Amelia is the only one who is currently pursuing further education in the area she intended at the start of Year 13:

> I did Māori, and I got my UE in Māori, and I wanted to go to uni for Māori.

Kōhine all expressed an awareness of the future being upon them in ways they had not experienced in previous years. This awareness created a high stakes environment unique to year 13. Although each kōhine had a different story, their narratives demonstrated their need for nurture and guidance at critical points in their

NCEA journey. Whānautanga at school is particularly important in relation to NCEA as the system is not necessarily well understood by whānau. When one whānau member was asked whether they knew much about NCEA, she responded:

> No, no, no I didn't. I didn't really understand it…I didn't take much notice of that…I just thought she was doing alright… I kept asking her, 'how's your credits?' and she was always happy to show me her reports…There were no bad comments about her. Everything was either 'excellent', or 'doing well in such and such', or 'you can do better in that next time' or something, but nothing for me to jump up and down about.

Whanaungatanga in Year 13

Durie (1997) defines whanaungatanga as "the process by which whānau ties and responsibilities are strengthened" (p. 2). Central to whanaungatanga is a deep understanding of the obligation of each individual to uphold every other individual so that the collective can thrive (Mead, 2016; Kawharu, 2020). Smith (1997, p. 449) refers to whanaungatanga as, "the practice of whānau." In the context of education, whanaungatanga obliges educators to understand they are part of a larger social ecosystem where the success of the collective requires each individual within it to thrive. To this end, whanaungatanga relates to leadership and pedagogical praxis that is underpinned by a personal sense of responsibility to the collective good. Emerging themes from the narratives relating to whanaungatanga indicate variability in the depth of understanding of this principle within the schooling context.

Know me as a learner and a person

Across the interviews, there was a strong sense that kōhine wanted their teachers to know them as both a learner and as a person. While they felt this was important at all levels, the unique challenges of year 13 and NCEA level 3 necessitated particular emphasis in this area.

As stated previously, motivation emerged as a significant challenge for kōhine in their final year of schooling. This sentiment is illustrated by Sally and Amelia, who felt it was an issue that was widespread across their year group:

> Amelia: Everyone just dropped
> Sally: Yes, people stopped coming to school [around Term 3]
> Amelia: Yes. I was just drained. Going to school was just the same thing over and over again and I just got sick of it.

Attendance data indicates that there was indeed a drop in attendance, although it was disproportionately more Māori students who stopped coming to school. In Term Three, 19% of Māori students in the year group had stopped attending or left school (11% non-Māori). A further 20% of Māori students had a drop in attendance of at least 20% from earlier in the year, 11% of whom were attending less than half of their classes (as compared to 6% and 2% respectively for non-Māori students). When asked if they felt there were teachers at school who had picked up on this collective loss of motivation, particularly for Māori students, Amelia responded:

> Yes, but they didn't really do much about it. It was very obvious that we had, but they were just sort of like, oh, no.

Kōhine expressed a desire for their teachers to maintain close monitoring of where they were at both academically and personally, in order to address issues related to motivation. Sally appreciated her dean, who "would do constant well-being checkups." Amelia also felt this individualised approach was important to understand the impact of outside issues on them as learners:

> There's a lot that happens at home that the teachers don't know. It's not easy to tell your teacher, "I'm not doing well" you know? So, just a conversation, a check-up, maybe a little meeting just to get that relationship going because I know some students absolutely hated their teachers for being on their backs about everything. It wasn't more to do with the work, it was more to do with their own things going on. It's like they get angry at you for not doing the work but [do] not ask why.

Kōhine also felt their levels of motivation were connected to the teacher understanding how they learned. Beth explained her frustration in trying to understand subject content delivered in a manner that did not meet her needs:

> I used to try and work hard in the class to gain my credits for it, but I just could never understand the work in there. But like he would always come

> and explain it to us but what he'd be explaining was not what I wanted to be doing so I was slowly losing my interest.

In contrast, Tiwai described her experience in a class with a teacher she felt knew her well:

> Yeah, like when you're doing your work and then you can just like call out 'Miss, can you help me?' and then they find a way to make it easier for you to understand because personally they know how you work.

Amelia was very cognisant of the nature of pedagogy that best supported her learning:

> Māori students are very oral learners. So, it's really hard for us to get given a workbook where you have to read all this stuff and answer these questions. That's not an easy learning style for us, so I feel like I struggled with stuff like that. But, with English, for example, I could talk about all these things that I've been through and that's a part of my NCEA and essays – like I'm getting credits for talking about how I feel, you know? Stuff like that.

Sally also showed a clear understanding of herself as a learner and placed great importance on teachers knowing how their individual students preferred to learn:

> I think teachers need to be more open-minded about their students' capabilities. I know that great learners come in all types, and everybody learns differently…I would say I am more of a slow learner but that is because I like to have a deep understanding of what I am required to do. So, with all of that comes support.

What became apparent across the interviews was that good relationships with teachers did not on their own, necessarily support their learning. Kōhine wanted their teachers to know them as a person, but also as a learner; both elements are interdependent of each other and need to happen simultaneously to effectively support success. Interestingly, while most kōhine were able to clearly articulate the importance of the teacher knowing them as learners, Beth in particular put the responsibility of learning upon herself and did not call into question the teacher's role to move the relationship past personal to learning:

> What I can say is, teachers, they done enough to make me feel like whānau, it was just my own decisions. I would choose not to do that or choose not to go there. They would always greet me, say hello, say goodbye, have a good day so that felt like whānau but I don't think there's anything else that teachers can do but try and bond with their students. Anything stronger than that I don't think so.

Mills (2022) discusses this self blame in terms of a moral psychology skewed, as a result of colonisation, "toward privileging [the coloniser], taking the status quo of differential racial entitlement as normatively legitimate, and not to be investigated further" (p. 40).

Design a programme that meets my needs

Programme design is not an element that one would necessarily connect to whanaungatanga, however, for the kōhine interviewed, it became a significant part of the discussion. Programmes based on the principles of whanaungatanga should be designed to enable success and support learners to thrive.

By the time Tiwai and Beth reached NCEA Level Three, they were both in programmes consisting primarily of vocational subjects, although Beth was in a UE approved maths class. As stated earlier, both students had struggled to find a clear pathway through NCEA towards a career path and NCEA Level Three was no different, Tiwai concluding:

> I made my mind up in year 13 that I would just work and live [after school] … I decided to study later on and do the social work thing… and do the [bridging] course in order to do all of that stuff.

Beth too, had come to a similar conclusion:

> I just wanted to just gain my levels really. That was the only reason why I did come to school. I don't think I actually did gain them though.

Destiny had a different experience in her final year, her course of study sparking an interest for a career in the trades:

> I've just always kind of liked, you know, when we get furniture in a box I'd always put it together and I was like in school in [Trades course], I thought, "oh, I might give this a go" and it was good.

The three kōhine who were in three or more UE approved subjects at level three talked about differences in programmes across their timetable that had an impact on their ability to achieve the required 14 credits. In particular, they spoke of the balance between internal and external assessments (exams) in specific subjects, and the impact this had on their chances of attaining UE.

The three UE approved subjects Destiny was enrolled in offered at least 14 of the total available credits through internal assessments, with the balance offered through external exams. Destiny was strategic in her approach to gaining UE in these subjects:

> ***So, did you get all those credits before exams?***
>
> Yup, I'm pretty sure I did, well I passed all the internals.
>
> ***Was that part of your plan?***
>
> Yup (laughs)

Both Amelia and Sally were enrolled in Level Three programmes where only two of their UE approved subjects allowed them to gain 14 credits internally.

> Amelia: In all my classes I passed all the internals, it was just the exams. We only had enough credits to have passed with UE in the exam. You had to pass one of the (external) papers.
>
> Sally: I took five (UE) subjects and was confident in passing two of those subjects because it gives you more than 14 credits before exams…I had to rely on my exams and pass at least one paper in any one or all of these other three subjects. Obviously, that didn't happen, and the worst part is I didn't pass any of them…When I got my results, I was genuinely surprised…I was

> also confused about how I endorsed with Excellence but didn't get UE. It made me question whether I could go to Uni or not.

Sally and Amelia selected their year 13 subjects based on their year 12 subjects without any real awareness of the potential implications for gaining UE. Both students spoke of their frustration of feeling at a disadvantage in gaining UE in comparison to their peers in other UE subjects. Sally also noted the irony that she graduated from secondary school with a Level Three NCEA certificate endorsed with Excellence, yet still fell short of gaining UE. Given that UE is a baseline qualification for general entry to university, not specialist programmes, Amelia made the following observation in hindsight:

> I get it if you are doing [a course like] Engineering at uni because they have a lot of exams, but that's the only thing at uni I know of that has lots of exams. [Everyone else] should still be able to get those credits internally then choose if you want to do the exam.

Sally agreed and recommended:

> Schools could support year 13 students a bit better if they create [programmes offering] the same number of credits for all subjects across the board. Including internals and externals because students tend to fall behind the line from external credits.

Create a relationship with me that is mature, meaningful, and interdependent

Through shared experiences, Mead (2016) writes the principle of whanaungatanga extends past whakapapa relationships to include non-kin who become like kin. In the final year of secondary schooling, both kōhine and whānau wanted and expected relationships with the school that reflected the kinship of whanaungatanga.

Kōhine recognised that they had matured over their time at secondary school. They identified that effective relationships with teachers were built on a recognition of them as young adults and on more equal standing than in previous years.

Destiny recognised her own maturation over the years she spent at high school. She also reflected on her desire to be treated differently as an older learner in year 13:

> Not giving them attitude anymore (laughs). I guess being mature too and just joke around about stuff sometimes and they'll do it too.
>
> I felt like being spoken to more like an adult because I was acting more like one.

Beth, as well, acknowledged her own growth and the positive impact that had on her relationships with teachers:

> I was actually quite mischief…to me it was no fun not being in trouble. So, I just sort of like kicked myself out of it and just conversating with them more made me grow respect for them, just getting to know them and knowing that I could talk to them actually brought on a lot of respect towards teachers.
>
> By the time we had hit year 13 the majority of us were already bonding with all the teachers, so the majority of us had already screwed our heads on.

Amelia's comment followed by Sally's, demonstrate their increased sense of agency and power within their relationships with teachers:

> In year 11 it was like "oh no, I got a growling" but in year 12 and 13 you understood why he was like that and were like "oh yeah, that is my fault, I should keep doing work."
>
> Over the years, my relationships grew stronger with my teachers and by the time I was in year 13 I had built a good learning foundation for myself. I spoke up more, asked questions and sought help when needed.

Participants felt a sense of pride in their senior position within the school as year 13 students, as expressed by Tiwai:

> When you get to year 13, you're the top of the top.

Some of the participants also felt responsibility as senior leaders to develop whanaungatanga relationships with younger students.

Sally reflected on the importance of her role as a prefect within the school:

> We interacted with our assigned year nine classes and other students through council groups, mentoring workshops, sports etc. All of these interactions helped us to be better leaders for younger students to look up to and aspire to be like one day.

Reciprocity emerged as a key feature to many of the student-teacher relationships kōhine valued in year 13. The kōhine wanted to feel the relationship was mutually beneficial and supportive, as expressed during an interaction between Beth and Tiwai:

> I actually enjoyed the teacher's company and just being able to conversate with the teacher about anything, and actually being an ear for the teacher as well. It was just good to see a smile on the teacher's face from just saying hello or good morning. Just seeing them boost a bit of energy in their bodies after hearing hello, or good morning, it was wholesome.
>
> Yeah, and being interested in each other's personal lives, well not too personal but like, you know.

Amelia also saw the importance of feeling both supportive and supported in a significant relationship she described with a teacher:

> She wasn't my teacher, but she always turned to us when she needed help with the students, like as Prefects and as the seniors of [the bilingual class]. Sometimes it's easier to go to the students, for the students to talk to them because they listen better sometimes. She always had our back throughout year 13 as well, just stood up for us when we needed it.

Kōhine expressed an appreciation of the more mature nature of the relationships they formed at year 13 and were happy to contribute to the wider collective of the school community. However, although described in terms of reciprocity, much of the benefit seemed to be gained by the school. When asked of the support provided to her by the school in return, one kōhine stated:

> There is a lot of independence required in Year 13 though, in terms of studying, extracurricular activities etc but you figure it out.

Whānau also noted the one-way nature of the relationship:

> They've also got their work to worry about as well as help look after the younger ones… At the end of the day, I felt there should have been more study periods, maybe at lunchtime or afternoon. Organised ones.

Within the principle of whanaungatanga, is an expectation that individuals will be supported by near and distant kin (Mead, 2016). Both whānau interviewed gave clear descriptions of whanaungatanga within the context of their wider whānau. One whānau commented on the network supporting their kōhine:

> She also knows that there's always a home. Always there. As she was growing up, her older sisters were there as well, my daughters, but she also has two other sisters on her mother's side as well. So, I allowed her to go wherever she wanted to stay if she wanted to. Most of the time she was with me until her last year of schooling and then she made her decision, she said 'I'd kind of like to live with my sister for a while.'

The other whānau describing a similar collective of support:

> Coming to support her when she was playing sports. My sister and brother would come in. Or sending her back if there was a rugby game there because she loved playing rugby. Plus, she had her dad's mum there, who also supported her. So, a big support came from there and then I had a brother in Wellington, who named her, and he was a very good support and kept in touch with her as well on zoom calling or chat. He was a very big supporter.

However, neither whānau felt they had a similar relationship with the school or saw the school as part of the whanaungatanga network supporting their kōhine. Both

whānau talked of their relationship with the school in terms of an as-needed basis, one whānau responding:

> No, No. I guess I didn't really need to go in for her. The only time I think I went in for her was she didn't have the correct uniform… Apart from that, I've never had to go into school at all.

The other whānau reflecting:

> I probably didn't do as much as I should have there. I didn't think there was a need. When [the school] had teacher/parent [evenings], I would ask [my daughter], 'is there any need for me to go?', and if there was then I would go. Most of the time she was progressing well, so there was no reason for me to attend those meetings, when other parents might need more time.

Interestingly, as revealed earlier by Beth, this whānau blames themselves for the limited relationship with the school, without calling into question the nature of the opportunities created by the school to build relationships. Report evenings and discipline issues were discussed as normalised means of engagement. This traditional view of schooling was reinforced by one whanau's strategy for success:

> I kept saying to her to choose her friends wisely. I said, 'never mind those Māori girls, go to the white girls they're the ones that will push you up there girl.'

This statement illustrates a belief that hegemony is alive and well in today's schools, and in order to succeed Māori learners, still, must leave their culture at the gate.

Whānau could see the benefit of strengthening whanaungatanga ties between the school and home, although neither saw opportunities to do this through the existing school structures they had experienced, one whānau observing:

> It is important. I think that most young ladies need that extra support as well. It just depends, if the parent wants it as well, but it is no good trying to tell

> parents, ‘You have to attend this or attend that’, especially if they’ve got busy lives.

However, they went on to ask,

> But how would you make it different?

Their question reinforces low or no expectations of the school to engage in relationships with whānau in ways other than historical practices. It also illustrates a perspective that the status quo position of the school as external to whanaungatanga networks is somewhat fixed and unchangeable.

The other whānau did see a way forward, suggesting an alternative:

> Even talking like this is good for the students. It doesn’t have to be at school it can be at the weekend, over coffee, or anything. Just bringing everyone together. That helps because we do that a lot, you know back home with the kids because we’ve got a lot of little ones and we all want them to do well. And we always use like, ‘Cousin ____ is a Prefect’ and they’re buzzing.

The relationships kōhine described with their teachers did take on different characteristics in year 13 than in previous years, however, whānau narratives did not demonstrate a changed relationship with the school from previous years. Although some aspects of reciprocity and interdependence were evident in the narratives, the school was seen as an entity independent of whanaungatanga networks supporting kōhine.

Summary

The interview data presented in this chapter provides insight into the experience of each kōhine at year 13. The collaborative story created with their voices reveals key themes related to the significance of whanaungatanga and whānautanga relationships at year 13, and the characteristics of those relationships. Through their narratives, it also became evident that:

- whānautanga and whanaungatanga were not universally experienced by kōhine in support of their achievement at Year 13, indicating a limited understanding and variable application of these concepts in schooling contexts by teachers.
- some kōhine and whānau do not call into question existing practices undermining achievement, instead blaming themselves and maintaining traditional expectations of their relationships with school, thus illuminating continued and pervasive hegemonic thinking in relation to education.

These themes will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter in relation to both the research questions and related literature.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study sought to understand the importance of cultural relationships in supporting Māori student achievement of University Entrance. Specifically, fundamental Māori principles of *whānau* and *whanaungatanga* are explained in relation to their understanding and practice within a schooling context, from the perspectives of Māori students and their whānau.

I initially undertook this research to better understand how mainstream schools conceptualise and practice Māori concepts, and to find potential areas of development to better support Māori learners in year 13. Retrospectively, I have become blatantly aware of the irony of this objective. Unpacking foundational concepts in te ao Māori in order to *harness* them in mainstream schooling is about as Pākehā an approach as one could take. My own epistemological lens had me sorting and organising the emerging themes to serve as a sort of check list of how to *do* whanaungatanga.

Then, I listened again to the voices of the participants, and this research was guided in a different direction. The narratives have uncovered two key findings. Firstly, relational experiences at both a classroom and systemic level were variable and did not support the academic potential of all kōhine Māori. Secondly, these often minimal relational experiences were tolerated and accepted, in some cases with gratitude. Gratitude appeared quite normal, with few expectations for the school to change, regardless of whether participants' personal aspirations or potential are met.

These two findings are symptomatic of a deeper issue of the dynamics of power in the relational realm of schooling. Attempts to incorporate principles such as whānau and whanaungatanga into a schooling context, while still operating within historical hegemonic frameworks, are potentially counterproductive at best. At worst they are damaging, as the status quo is preserved beneath a veneer of cultural understandings and rhetoric, without being substantiated by responsive praxis. The result is a reinforcement of existing power imbalances with a feel good factor for

those in power. The danger is a resulting complacency and lack of responsibility which undermines transformative change.

This chapter discusses these two key findings in conjunction with my initial research questions:

- How significant are whanaungatanga relationships in supporting Māori learners' attainment of University Entrance?
- What are the characteristics of effective whanaungatanga relationships at Year 13?
- How can secondary schools effectively operationalise Māori concepts such as whānau and whanaungatanga to support the success of Māori learners at NCEA Level 3 to attain University Entrance?

In responding to each finding, key learning will be discussed, and connections made to relevant literature.

Section One: Application of Māori Relational Concepts in Mainstream Schools

Kōhine in this study all experienced relationships with the school in year 13 that they defined as friendly and positive. However, the results indicated that key characteristics demonstrating a deep, culturally centred understanding of whānau or whanaungatanga were less apparent. Cultural relationships are a precursor to responsive pedagogy (Berryman & Eley, 2019). Cultural relationships, by the very inclusion of the word *cultural*, are embedded within a particular culture. *Whānau* and *whanaungatanga* must be understood and practiced from the perspective of Māori understandings of the concept rather than superficially appropriated if schools, leaders, and teachers are to genuinely engage with Māori ākonga, whānau, and communities.

The characteristics specific to relationships based on the principles of whānau and whanaungatanga identified by participants in this study align to those discussed in Chapter One. Where evident, these characteristics support the achievement and potential of kōhine to attain meaningful and relevant leavers' qualifications at the completion of their secondary schooling. It is important for educators at all levels

of the sector to consider the component characteristics of both whānau and whanaungatanga in order to fully understand what it means to authentically put these cultural relational principles into practice.

Understanding the principle of Whānau in Educational Contexts

The sense of whānau kōhine felt, in aspects of their schooling experiences, played a significant role in their motivation to persevere and achieve in their final year. They actively sought out spaces (physical, emotional, and spiritual) within the school where they would experience a sense of whānau and avoided those where they did not. They used words such as care, acceptance, inclusion, support, guidance, high expectations and belonging to describe these spaces. While not interviewed, in my experience many educators would consider they already do bring many of these qualities to the relationships they create with their students. Indeed, each characteristic encompasses a range of understandings and practices depending on the cultural contexts. The important consideration, then, is to understand that kōhine are describing these qualities in relation to situations where they felt *as whānau*. It is the practice of each characteristic *within the context of whānau* that is the substantial factor. The difference between creating a positive learning environment and creating a sense of whānau is significant. Pedagogical practices that create whānau like learning spaces have been referred to as *whānautanga* (Cranston 2018; Education Counts, n.d.; Virtue 2021). Cranston (2018) observed whānautanga in teachers who "had all begun to assume the same responsibility to nurture these students as though they were part of their own family" (p. 246).

Berryman and Eley (2019) warn of the dangers of presuming all students attach the same meaning and influence of belonging to their educational experiences. Rameka (2018) describes being and belonging as inextricably linked for Māori. Durie (1985) emphasises the centrality of belonging to Māori identity and sense of purpose. Historically, the dominant paradigm of Aotearoa, New Zealand's education system has been based on European industrial models more concerned with processing students than with nurturing them (Eley & Berryman, 2020). Evidence of this paradigm can still be seen, particularly in senior secondary school, through systems that have, and continue to sort students towards academia,

vocations, or the workforce (Bolstad & Gilbert, 2008; New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2022a, 2022b). The kōhine involved in this research echo the voices of many Māori students before them (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop et al., 2009; Highfield & Webber, 2021; Major 2017) emphatically stating that conditions of connection, belonging and nurture are fundamental precursors to learning and thriving.

There are examples within New Zealand's education system that demonstrate an understanding of the profound importance of whānau to Māori learners. Te Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori were established with *whānau* as the "central organising concept [that] intervenes as an institutional structure and context, and it also intervenes at the modal level" (G. Smith, 1997, p. 89). The curriculum document for early childhood education, *Te Whāriki*, (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017) identifies *Whānau Tangata* ('family and community') as one of four founding principles woven through all aspects of learning, creating a curriculum that "describes the ways Māori perspectives of belonging and being could be enacted" (Rameka, 2018, p. 368). In the tertiary sector, foundation programmes intentionally designed around the concept of whānau, have effectively supported second-chance adult Māori learners into higher education contexts (McMurchy-Pilkington, 2013).

Conversely, within the New Zealand Curriculum for mainstream schools (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007), whānau does not feature as a concept or principle. In fact, the word *whānau* appears only eight times, primarily as part of a list of groups outside of schools (i.e., family, whānau and community) to consider when implementing the curriculum.

The Ministry of Education draft curriculum refresh, Te Mātaiaho (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2022), does reconceptualise whānau for educators. Projected to take effect in 2026, the refreshed curriculum makes increased reference to the word itself. However, more significantly, the refresh explicitly locates every learner *within the context of whānau* and requires educators to build and sustain relationships with whānau. Kōhine and whānau in this study would agree with this but they had difficulty conceptualising this as whānau based on their experiences.

Understanding the principle of Whanaungatanga in Educational Contexts

Interviews with kōhine in this research also exemplified the importance of whanaungatanga relationships with teachers and the school at all stages of schooling, but particularly at the senior secondary level. As discussed in Chapter One, relationships based on whanaungatanga are embedded in a collective rather than individual mind set. Collectivism is fundamental to Māori identity and epistemology (Fox et al., 2018; A. Macfarlane et al., 2008). To engage in such relationships, a deep understanding of the interdependent nature of this relationship is required, as well as a sense of responsibility and obligation to each other for the collective good.

While kōhine and whānau in this research share the significance of whanaungatanga to their lived experience and wellbeing, illustrations given sit predominantly within personal rather than school based relationships. In a schooling context, all kōhine are able to provide examples of whanaungatanga relationships with their peers and place high importance of the contribution of these relationships to their academic success and resilience in completing secondary school. In discussing their relationships with teachers, kōhine are more likely to provide examples of positive, friendly relationships rather than those exemplifying an understanding of collective responsibility and interdependence. Whānau interviewed do not perceive their relationship with the school as fitting in with their understanding of whanaungatanga, instead providing examples that align with traditional institutional relationships.

In discussing whanaungatanga it is worth considering equity. A true collective mindset, fundamental to whanaungatanga, requires all within the collective to think "we are not successful (as a collective) unless *each* of us is successful." Obligation to provide what is needed for those who may need more support is central to this paradigm. Responsibility to maximise the potential of each individual in the collective is central to this paradigm. Personal accountability to the collective is central to this paradigm. (Durie, 1985; Love, 2004; Mead, 2016; Pihama and Cameron, 2012; Rameka, 2018; G. Smith, 1997). This is a more authentic nature of equity. The practice of whanaungatanga sits in contrast to the western ideologies of

individualism upon which New Zealand's education system is founded (Kēpa & Manu'atu, 2011). The incorporation of whanaungatanga praxis in mainstream educational settings requires a fundamental paradigm shift. A glimmer of hope towards this shift can be seen in the vision statement for The Refreshed New Zealand Curriculum -Te Mātaiaho (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2022):

> We, the ākonga of Aotearoa, know our world is connected, our wellbeing is collective, and that we have a shared responsibility to each other…We have a strong sense of belonging. This builds the foundation to be courageous, confident, compassionate, and curious (p. 13).

Written by young people, for young people, this statement shows a clear understanding of whanaungatanga and collectivism. As with much of the learning about pedagogy over the last twenty years, it is the voices of our youth that compel us to do better.

Section Two: Equity in experiences of whānautanga and whanaungatanga

Significantly, kōhine in this study reported experiencing varying degrees of whānautanga and whanaungatanga from teachers and the school. In Table 2 below, the range of their experiences of each praxis are identified in column 1, summarised in column 2, and exemplified in column 3.

Table 2: Relational Experiences of Kōhine as Compared to Culturally Understood Concepts of Whanaungatanga and Whānautanga

Praxis	Elaboration	Experience
Superficial Whanaungatanga Appropriating whanaungatanga to suit their own purposes and tick their own boxes and the system's boxes, not being responsive to students' potential but to their perceived need	• Friendly • Operating within traditional hegemonic frameworks – success/failure is the responsibility of the student.	"They'd have a good relationship with me, but then they wouldn't have a good relationship with others in the class...I've seen a lot of students get given up on and it's kind of sad."

Selective Whanaungatanga Activating some aspects of whanaungatanga with more culturally authentic practices and intent, and who are responsive to kōhine aspirations and potential but who don't go over and above	• Positive learning environment • Focus on relationships • Still operating within traditional relational frameworks – Home/school boundaries	"Yeah, like when you're doing your work and then you can just like call out 'Miss, can you help me?' and then they find a way to make it easier for you to understand because personally they know how you work."
Whanaungatanga Building culturally sustaining practices that are responsive to, and take personal responsibility for, kōhine reaching their potential.	• Understands bigger picture – individual success for collective good. • Understands equity	"I didn't want to go to uni because I didn't want to be in debt but also there weren't a lot of subjects on offer that attracted me to study… My Māori teachers helped me to see that studying Māori at uni would be a good thing for me especially because I did quite well at school. I am glad I spoke to them otherwise I would have been totally stuck."
Whānautanga Culturally grounded transformative praxis – working with whānau and *as whānau* to ensure kōhine aspirations and potential are able to flourish and they have real life choices.	• Nurture and care • Whatever it takes – over and above • Unconditional support • Responsive • High expectations • Collective effort	"She is the kind of teacher who never gives up on you." "She was just really open and good to talk to. She would just listen…She had an influence on me, like a good influence just her words and she was very supportive. I guess she was always hassling me to do better." "She was very supportive of my learning and seeing me succeed. For example, if I was having any sort of trouble keeping up with assignments or anything school-related, she would talk to me and my family to help find ways to get me back on track. She always went above and beyond."

Note. This table sets out the range of relational experiences of kōhine as compared to cultural understandings of whanaungatanga and whānautanga. Column 1

provides an overall definition of each praxis. Column 2 is and elaboration of each definition, highlighting the theoretical and practical components of each praxis. Column 3 provides an example of how each praxis was experienced by kōhine.

Each of the kōhine could give examples where whānautanga and whanaungatanga were notably absent over the course of their journey through NCEA and in year 13. However, the absence of whānautanga and whanaungatanga seemed to be disproportionately experienced by those kōhine whose pathway through NCEA led them into vocational subjects by year 13.

The pathway experienced by both Tiwai and Beth, characterised by increasing vocational programmes assessed by Unit Standards rather than Achievement Standards is reflected in national data. By NCEA Level Two, 31% of programmes for Māori students are assessed using Unit Standards, compared to 18% for European students. By Level Three, at a rate of 68%, Māori students were far more likely than their European, Asian or Pacific peers, to be entered into programmes that did not meet the requirement for University Entrance (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2022b).

The correlation between the experiences of whānautanga and whanaungatanga, and educational pathways and outcomes for Māori students may be difficult to describe or quantify. However, Beth and Tiwai's journeys do raise questions for schools to consider:

> Are students in vocational classes experiencing the same levels of guidance, care, and high expectations as those in programmes on track for UE?
>
> Does the absence of whānautanga and whanaungatanga contribute to Māori students being pathwayed into vocational programmes i.e., are decisions made about academic pathways based on relationships rather than ability?

With just 19% of Māori students leaving secondary school with University Entrance nationally (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2022b), schools and the education system need to start asking more critical questions about, learning contexts, programme design and decision making processes that have contributed to inequitable outcomes for Māori students.

Section Three: Shifting Practice

The New Zealand Education and Training Act 2020 represents an extensive rewrite of the education policy, incorporating several previous Education Acts and intended to be the blueprint for transformation in education. Section 127 of the Act outlines primary objectives for school Boards of Trustees. These include:

- ensures every student at the school is able to attain their highest possible standard in educational achievement;
- takes all reasonable steps to eliminate racism, stigma, bullying, and any other forms of discrimination within the school; and
- gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including by achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students.

(Education and Training Act 2020 no 38, p. 120-121)

Also in 2020, the third iteration of New Zealand's Māori Education Strategy, Ka Hikitia: Ka Hāpaitia, was released. It established several outcomes for the education sector, including:

- Education provision responds to learners within the context of their whānau.
- We will support Māori learners and their whānau to be informed and demanding decision-makers, with high expectations of our education services.
- We will also support Māori learners and their whānau to plan and pursue the education pathways that they aspire to.

(New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2020a, p. 5)

The voices of kōhine and whānau in this study indicate a stark contrast between the rhetoric of the government's so called transformative policies and the lived experiences of Māori learners and their whānau in at least one of our schools. The findings indicate kōhine and whānau participants have low expectations in terms of the relationship and pedagogical practices they expect to experience with teachers and the school. Instead, they are either tolerating or developing strategies to manage the status quo. Whānau members describe their relationship with the school in

traditional terms, with interactions primarily occurring in formal school settings, or in response to school contact due to a concern. Kōhine describe both observed and experienced inequities at points during their secondary schooling. Significantly, despite their descriptions, some kōhine and whānau are unable to envision a relationship with teachers or the school that is any different to what they and their peers have experienced, in some cases blaming themselves for how teachers and the school have related to them.

What does it take to move beyond the rhetoric?

The results from this study indicate that, currently, ākonga and whānau expectations of our system are often resigned to the status quo, even in circumstances when educational aspirations are not met. Both Tiwai and Beth entered the secondary system with aspirational educational and career goals that were systematically diminished over the course of their journey through NCEA to the point of simply wanting to stay in school until the end of Year 13. Significantly, both kōhine left school with the intention of getting their education elsewhere, likely paying for it. Considering this outcome for these kōhine *as whānau*, is this acceptable? One whānau in this study describes actively encouraging their kōhine to surround herself with non-Māori students as a strategy for successful navigation through senior secondary school and NCEA. Considering these conditions *as whānau,* is this acceptable? Freire (2005) contends these discourses of tolerance and resignation stem from "self-depreciation [which] is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them" (p. 63).

Instead of the informed and demanding decision makers with high expectations of our system described in Ka Hikitia, whānau and kōhine in this study have put their energy into developing strategies to achieve *despite* the system. MacDonald and Reynolds (2017) claim mainstream schools steer clear of cultivating critical consciousness in relation to power as it would upset the status quo. This claim is substantiated by Freire's (2005) observation:

> The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their

> intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them (p. 73).

Paradoxically, critical consciousness of Māori learners and whānau is exactly what is required to enable the education sector to meet their own desired outcomes. Destiny's journey serves as an illustration of this premise. Having spent a significant proportion of her junior secondary years at an alternative education facility, the whānautanga relationship with one key teacher supported her to get back into the mainstream and to critically navigate NCEA successfully through to UE.

Summary

This chapter reviewed key findings of this research in relation to the three research questions as well as literature reviewed in Chapter 1. Kōhine and whānau participants all described conceptual understandings of whānau and whanaungatanga that were central to their lives and identity. Their experience of whānautanga and whanaungatanga in secondary education, particularly when navigating NCEA was wide ranging. School relationships representative of whānautanga and whanaungatanga were more prevalent for kōhine in programmes with pathways to University Entrance than for those who were in vocational programmes. Whānau participants did not describe their relationship with the school within the context of whanaungatanga, instead characterising their interactions in hegemonic terms. Furthermore, some kōhine and whānau expressed little or no expectation for the status quo to change. These results highlight the gap between the rhetoric of Ministry policies that aspire to be transformative, and the ongoing lived experiences of ākonga and whānau within our education system.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The seed for this study was sown nearly thirty years ago in Canada when I was told, as a student teacher, to 'just ignore that native kid at the back of the class.' I am reminded of that comment from time to time when the failings of our education system in Aotearoa, New Zealand are tolerated, and chronic Māori underachievement is explained away, framed with rhetoric like, "who are we to judge what success looks like, anyway?"

This research is the story of five adolescents who are currently making their way in the world as young adults. All five began NCEA in programmes with the potential to progress to University Entrance. By NCEA level 3, three were in UE eligible programmes. All three left secondary school to progress their academic and career goals through further study. Two kōhine were in vocational programmes by NCEA Level 3. One completed secondary school unsure of her qualifications, and the other left with no qualifications. Both still dream of pursuing their academic and career goals but have put this on hold until they can enrol as adult students when their lack of secondary school qualifications is no longer a barrier to enrolment. What does success look like? Perhaps the better question is, on what do we judge our own success?

> While not all students will share identical academic aspirations, similar attainment of UE across ethnicities is an integral part of achieving overall education equity
>
> (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2022a, p. 2)

This research looked deeply into the relational experiences of whanaungatanga and whānautanga of these five kōhine and their whānau, and the impact this had on their academic achievement in NCEA. This chapter will discuss key findings and their implications for educators. Limitations will also be outlined, and recommendations made for future research.

Section One: Key Learnings

This study aimed to understand the significance of cultural relationships in supporting Māori students to attain University Entrance. It also sought to gain insight into the schooling experiences of Māori students and their whānau in relation to the principles of whanaungatanga and whānau.

While progressing through this research, it was evident that each kōhine had warm memories of their time at secondary school, and they all held the school in high regard. Through the collaborative story, however, it became apparent that their relational experiences at school were not consistent. A correlation emerged between the depth of experiences of whanaungatanga and whānautanga at school and academic outcomes. Kōhine on academic pathways leading to University Entrance were more likely to experience relationships with their teachers and the school reflective of culturally sustaining understandings of these principles, than the kōhine who were on vocational pathways through NCEA. One kōhine's journey served as an example of the potential to change the trajectory of academic pathways, from alternative education in the junior school to achievement of UE in year 13; achieved through culturally grounded and transformative praxis of whānautanga and whanaungatanga.

Whānau participants described their relationship with the school in traditional terms with defined boundaries and regarded the school as separate to their whānau and whanaungatanga connections. Interactions with the school occurred on an as required basis, predominantly at the request of the school. While one whānau could envision a relationship with the school more aligned with their understanding of whanaungatanga, the other could not. Neither had an expectation that the school would change.

I was struck by the humility and tolerance shown by all participants through their stories. Regardless of whether personal and academic aspirations were met at the end of their secondary schooling, kōhine accepted this outcome without calling into question the responsibility of the school. This discourse was echoed by whānau. Though admirable qualities, the humility and tolerance shown in this instance seem to illustrate entrenched, intergenerational discourses of hegemony in education.

Section Two: Implications

The education policy platform that has been developed in Aotearoa New Zealand is extensive. In 2020, a groundswell of policy was released or refreshed, underpinned by The Education Training Act 2020, and supported by The Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP), Ka Hikitia—Ka Hāpaitia: The Māori Education Strategy, Tau Mai Te Reo: The Māori Language in Education Strategy, Te Hurihanganui: A Blueprint for Transformative System Shift, Te Kōkiritanga 2020–2023: NZQA's Action Plan for Ākonga Māori Success. The strategic intent towards transformative shift in the sector is evident in these documents and is beginning to be seen in subsequent reforms such as the introduction of The Refreshed New Zealand Curriculum: Te Mātaiaho (Draft, 2022), and the NCEA Change Programme 2024-2027.

The call to educators is clear. Deconstruction and reconstruction is happening at a theoretical level. The challenge lies in the application of these policies through transformative praxis in schools. As shown in this study, equitable outcomes will not be achieved simply by borrowing principles from Te Ao Māori and applying them within colonised constructs. Transformative change will only happen if schools are prepared to deconstruct colonised paradigms and structures so deeply embedded, they may seem unchangeable. McLaren (2020) reminds us, this is not so:

> But what does political praxis in the service of permanent human liberation entail? It means recognizing that the structure of reality is never permanent and although it is often reified in order to appear to be permanent, that can never really be the case because the structure of reality is never finished.
>
> (p. 1245)

Culturally sustaining and transformative praxis in the relational realm of mainstream education in Aotearoa New Zealand is, arguably, fundamental to other transformative change within the system. It is possible that the praxis of whanaungatanga and whānautanga, when embedded within the understandings from Te Ao Māori, can be transformative in changing academic trajectories for ākonga Māori. (Education Counts, n.d.; G. Smith, 1997; Virtue, 2021). This

research further supports this discourse and provides clarity between culturally grounded practice of these concepts, and simply developing positive relationships. Positive relationships alone did not support the academic outcomes and aspirations of the kōhine in this study. Nurture did. Care did. Unconditional support did. Guidance did. Expecting the best for them and of them did. Going above and beyond for them did. Relating to them *as whānau* did.

Whanaungatanga requires schools and educators to understand their place within a wider collective. This entails a deconstruction of traditional power relationships, and reconstruction of interdependent relationships based on personal and collective responsibility. Whānautanga involves growing and nurturing our ākonga as we would our own whānau. This is more than a pedagogical shift; it is a philosophical and cultural shift. The implications of this for our education system are significant.

Section Three: Limitations and Recommendations

The limitations of this study are related to the number and the nature of participants involved. With five ākonga and two whānau represented in this research, the sample size is too small to extrapolate broader conclusions. The fact that all participants are connected to a single school, also creates limitations in the ability to make generalisation across other regions within Aotearoa New Zealand. A larger sample across a wider range of schools would further inform the findings of this research.

This study surfaced questions that could form the basis of future research in this area:

- To what extent do relational factors impact the decisions made about academic pathways for ākonga Māori at senior secondary school?
- Do ākonga in vocational programmes at NCEA experience school relationships based on the principles of whanaungatanga and whānautanga to the same degree as ākonga in UE programmes?

The impact of relationships on academic pathways through NCEA is an area of study worthy of further investigation. Since its inception, NCEA has provided significant data to analyse trends, outcomes, and discrepancies for students in

Aotearoa, New Zealand. NZQA's (2022a, 2022b) insights papers clearly outline sustained and pronounced inequities in the system for Māori and Pasifika students and a defined trend, for Māori in particular, towards vocational pathways through NCEA. While the outcomes are very apparent, the contributing factors and potential solutions are less so. NZQA proposes closer tracking of progress and course design as strategies to address inequities. The results of this study suggest that, without also looking closely at how relational factors influence academic pathways and outcomes, tracking and planning will fall short of desired outcomes for ākonga Māori.

Summary

Education is a social construct. This relatively simple realisation is a fundamental first step to deconstructing and reconstructing an education system that has underserved, and undersold, Māori learners since its inception in Aotearoa New Zealand. The possibility of profound and sustainable change is within our reach.

> Critical educators have come to recognize that only by sheltering the persecuted, and only by creating the conditions of possibility for new and emancipatory forms of praxis in all spaces of human sociability can we obtain as a people a new birth of freedom. (McLaren, 2020. p. 1248)

The current system has been built based on epistemologies from another time and place. If our genuine intent is to create an equitable system that enables ākonga Māori to succeed at rates equal to their non-Māori classmates, we need to stop tinkering and attempting to fit Te Ao Māori into colonial paradigms. We have the knowledge, the tools, the theories, and the policies to support transformative reconstruction of our education system and praxis at all levels. We just need the will and the courage to do it.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Information Sheet

Exploring *Whanaungatanga* and Māori student attainment of University Entrance in a New Zealand secondary school.

Researcher: Kristin McGill

1. This project is part of a Masters thesis being undertaken in the Division of Education at the University of Waikato. This research project has also been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Division of Education.

2. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project looking into the significance of whanaungatanga relationships in supporting Year 13 Māori students to achieve University Entrance.

3. I would like to record a series of semi-structured group interviews with both students and whānau. You will have control over your contribution to these interviews and can choose to withdraw.

4. The group will be involved in the review of transcripts to make meaning from the interviews.

4. When I am not using them, the recordings and any written excerpts or quotes taken from it will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at my home. No one apart from myself and my supervisor will have access to them. They will be stored for the duration of the research after which they will either be archived in a location of your choosing or destroyed if you so choose.

5. You may choose to remain anonymous in this research project if you wish.

6. I would like to use the data collected in this research as the central data for my Masters thesis.

7. A copy of the transcripts will be made for you, and the master copy will be kept in a secure place during the project, and on completion at a location also of your choosing.

8. You will hold joint copyright with myself and the other participants over the transcript and materials produced.

12. If you agree to take part in this interview, you have the following rights:

a) To refuse to answer any particular question and withdraw from interviews at any time

b) To ask any further questions about the interviews or research project that occurs to you, either during the interview or at any other time

c) To remain anonymous should you so choose – anything that might identify you will not be included in conference papers, academic articles or any other report about the findings of the research

d) To take any complaints that you have about the interview of the research project to my supervisor, Dr Mere Berryman (mere.berryman@waikato.ac.nz), or the University's Division of Education Human Research Ethics Committee (University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3204, soe-ethics@waikato.ac.nz)

I will contact you in a week or two to see if you would consider participating in this project. I am happy to discuss this further with you or answer any questions.

(Contact details provided)

Appendix B: Introductory Letter to Participants

Tēnā koe,

My name is Kristin McGill, and I am an assistant principal at ****** School where I have taught for twenty-five years. I am currently undertaking research to complete my Master of Education thesis at the University of Waikato.

This research project is focussed on supporting Māori students to gain University Entrance. As part of this project, a series of semi-structured group interviews will be undertaken during the project, and I would like you to participate in these. I would also like you to be involved in the review of transcripts to make meaning from the interviews.

Accompanying this introductory letter is an 'Information Sheet' which will give you some basic information about the project and what would be involved if you decided to participate. Please take time to read it so that you will be comfortable with and aware of the process and the details of the research. I am happy to answer any questions you may have to help clarify the process or any issues you are unsure of.

I really appreciate that you might be willing to give your time and energy to assist with this research.

If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor, Dr Mere Berryman.

Ngā mihi,

Kristin McGill

(Contact details provided)

Appendix C: Consent Form

University of Waikato Division of Education Ethics Committee
Consent Form for Participants

Name of Project: Investigating the importance of *Whanaungatanga* and Māori student attainment of University Entrance in a mainstream New Zealand secondary school

I have read the Information Sheet, discussed it with Kristin and I am happy that I understand it. I also understand that I can request further information at any time. I know that:

1. It is my own decision to take part in this project.

2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time. If I choose to do so, I will not be disadvantaged.

3. I understand I can add to, change, or withdraw any material that I contribute to the project up to the point at which I am verifying and annotating my transcriptions prior to the construction of the collaborative story.

4. All data from the project will be kept in secure storage.

5. I understand that I do not have to answer questions that I do not feel comfortable with.

7. I agree that the recording of my interview and accompanying material may be quoted in publications.

8. I am aware that the results of the project may be published as a thesis, conference presentation, journal article, or other such academic publications.

9. The data collected will remain confidential to the participants, researcher and supervisor.

10. At the end of the project, any personal information will be returned to participants, other than that required by the University's research policy.

11. I understand that I will remain anonymous in this project. I am also aware that, while every effort will be made to protect my anonymity, this cannot be guaranteed.

I agree to take part in this project:

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Question Schedule

Overarching research questions:

- How significant are whanaungatanga relationships in supporting Māori learners' attainment of University Entrance?

- What are the characteristics of effective whanaungatanga relationships at year 13?

- How can secondary schools effectively operationalise Māori concepts such as whānau and whanaungatanga to support the success of Māori learners at NCEA Level 3 to attain University Entrance?

Interview questions:

Students:

1. What is your understanding of whanaungatanga relationships?
2. In what ways did you see evidence of whanaungatanga relationships at school in year 13?
3. In what ways could whanaungatanga relationships have been strengthened at school during year 13?
4. How important were whanaungatanga relationships at school to you as a learner in year 13?

Whānau:

1. What is your understanding of whanaungatanga relationships?
2. In what ways did you see evidence of whanaungatanga relationships with the school when your student was in year 13?
3. In what ways could whanaungatanga relationships have been strengthened with yourself and the school when your student was in year 13?
4. How important were whanaungatanga relationships with school to you as whānau when your student was in year 13?